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**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MAY 1999
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY**

EDITORIAL

THE SACRED SCRIPTURES bring God into our lives. They are very honest about human weaknesses and never avoid the unpleasant things of human experience. But in doing so they always keep God in view, sometimes even in disconcerting ways.

My own studies recently in the book of Job, and now in Ecclesiastes, have helped me immensely in facing personal struggles and losses. It is not simply a matter of misery loving company. These books speak of the very universal, human experience of evil in full recognition of God's supremacy and responsibility. Consequently, they are powerful in preparing us for the evangel of God which we find in Paul's epistles.

In Job, the Scriptures speak of physical misery and pain. The evil faced by the Assembler was of a different sort: the psychological sorrow and despair that comes by the transitory nature of every human gain. The evil that came to Job was more basic, more down-to-earth, and more obvious. That faced in Ecclesiastes was more subtle, more obscure perhaps, but in certain ways no less devastating.

Physical pain on one hand, or mental travail on the other, both are part of human experience. We may not experience the intensity of pain and despair of Job or the Assembler; but we know something of such evils. And like these men of God we can never endure and mature apart from the recognition that God gives these experiences for His own reasons and purposes, under His directing hand of faithfulness and by His wise heart of love.

The lessons learned from nature, as Brother Knoch points out (*cf* p.108) aid us in becoming acquainted with

God. What we perceive in the world around us and what we experience in our lives work together to give meaning to what is written in God's Word. Certainly any suffering and discouragement we receive helps in grasping and appreciating the riches of God's love and grace made known in the evangel.

Yet from the human standpoint, the message of the gratuity of God's grace in Christ Jesus is not prospering. The truth that all is out of God and comes about through His operations and is for His glory is made secondary to considerations of human morality and daily activities. Human religious tradition holds back much of the light in God's Word, even in these days of increased availability of ancient manuscripts and means for accuracy in translation.

This would be discouraging to the point of downright despair if we forget that God is still God, and He is still operating all together in accord with His purpose. The very revelation of God given in the Sacred Scriptures is that He knows what He is doing and is doing it wisely and effectively. The evangel of His love, commended in the death of His Son for sinners, is the foundation and the strong tower of our faith. In this we have so much more than Job or the son of David. Once we catch a glimpse of the reliability of God and the vastness of His love, we are given peace and even thankfulness in our little troubles, knowing they have a place in God's purpose and will, for our good and His glory.

May the circumstances of our lives not distract us or blind us to the greatness and glory and grace of God. May we be like Job and the Assembler in acknowledging God as the great Disposer of both our temporary experiences and lasting blessings. May our experiences of evil not turn us away from reliance on the living God and rejoicing in His Word. Faithful is God Who is calling us and will be doing it also.

D.H.H.

In the Beginning

GENESIS 1:3-5

³ **And Elohim 'said: Let light come to be! And it 'became light.** ⁴ **+ Elohim 'saw `the light that it was good.** **+Then Elohim 'separated ^{bt} the light + ^{bt} from the darkness.** ⁵ **And Elohim 'called ^ʔ the light Day, and ^ʔ the darkness He called Night.**

And it 'became evening, and it 'became morning: day one.

NOTES AND CROSS REFERENCES

And: common Hebrew conjunction used here adjunctively to carry forward the previous thought.

And Elohim said (literally, *And He-is-saying, Elohim*): conjunction joined to simple, active, incomplete form of verb SAY (Englishman's Concordance, p.105), followed by Divine Title as subject of verb; this clause occurs ten times in Genesis 1 (verses 3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,28,29).

Let . . . come to be! And it became (literally, *it-is-becoming . . . and-it-is-becoming*): both verbs are simple, active, incomplete forms of *become* (E.C. p.360), first used to express a command, then its exact fulfillment; *cf* the expression, *so it came to be*, in Gen.1:6 [7],9,11,15,24,30.

light: masculine, singular noun, E.C. p.32, occurs six times in Genesis 1 (verses 3,4,5,18); *cf* 2 Sam.23:4; Job 26:10; 29:3; 38:24; Psa.27:1; 36:9; 43:3; 97:11; 119:130; Isa.2:5; 45:7; 51:4; 58:8,10; 60:1,3,19,20; 2 Cor.4:6.

Elohim saw (literally, *and-He-is-seeing, Elohim*): conjunction added to simple, active, incomplete form of verb SEE (E.C. p.1141) followed by Divine Title as subject of verb.

the light: direct object particle followed by definite article and masculine, singular noun.

good: masculine, singular adjective in the Hebrew word family, GOOD, E.C. p.476, entry 3 (or: simple, active, complete form of verb, *be-good*, E.C., p.476, entry 2); occurs seven times in Genesis 1 (verses 4,10,12,18,21,25,31).

Elohim separated (literally, *and-He-is-separating, Elohim*): simple, active, incomplete form of verb SEPARATE, E.C. p.187, followed by Divine Title as subject of verb; a complete listing of the occurrences of the verb *separate*, classified by grammatical form, follows:

Simple, Passive, Complete

- 1 Ch.12:8 these *separated* themselves to David
Ezr.9:1 have not kept themselves *separate*

Simple, Passive, Imperative

- Nu.16:21 *Separate* yourselves from the midst
Ezr.10:11 and *separate* yourselves from the peoples

Simple, Passive, Incomplete

- 1 Ch.23:13 yet Aaron *was set apart* to sanctify
Ezr.10:8 he himself *be separated* from the assembly
Ezr.10:16 Ezra the priest *set apart* various men

Simple, Passive, Participle

- Ezr.6:21 by *separating* himself from the uncleanness
Neh.10:28 everyone who had *separated* himself

Cause, Active, Complete

- Ex.26:33 The curtain *will separate* for you
Lv.20:24 Elohim, Who *separates* you from the peoples.

- Lv.20:25 you *will make a separation* between clean
Lv.20:25 Which I have *separated*
Nu.8:14 you *will separate* the Levites from
Nu.16:9 the Elohim of Israel *has separated* you
Dt.10:8 Yahweh *separated* the tribe of Levi
Dt.29:21 Yahweh *will separate* him from all the tribes
1 K.8:53 You Yourself *separated* them to be
Ezk.22:26 they do not *differentiate*

Cause, Active, Infinitive

- Gen.1:14 *to separate* day from night,
Gen.1:18 *to separate* light from darkness.
Lev.10:10 *to differentiate* between the holy and
Lev.11:47 *to differentiate* between the unclean and
Isa.56:3 *yea separate* me from His people
Ezk.42:20 *to separate* the holy from the profane

Cause, Active, Incomplete

- Gen.1:4 Elohim *separated* the light from the darkness.
Gen.1:7 *separated* the waters under the atmosphere
Lev.1:17 its wings, yet *shall not separate* it.
Lev.5:8 its nape, yet *shall not separate* it.
Lev.20:26 I *am separating* you from the peoples
Dt.4:41 Then Moses *separated* three cities
Dt.19:2 you *shall separate* for yourselves three
Dt.19:7 Three cities *shall you separate* for yourself.
1 Ch.25:1 *set apart* for service the sons of Asaph,
2 Ch.25:10 So Amaziah *separated* them out
Ezr.8:24 I then *separated* twelve,
Neh.13:3 they *separated* out of Israel all those
Isa.56:3 saying; Yahweh *shall separate*
Ezk.39:14 they *shall set apart* men for continual

Cause, Active, Participle

- Gen.1:6 that it may be *separating* waters
Isa.59:2 depravities have become *separators*

between the light . . . between the darkness: preposition (E.C. p.212) occurring twice, followed by nouns with definite article attached.

Elohim called (literally, *and-He-is-calling, Elohim*): conjunction added to simple, active, incomplete form of verb CALL, E.C. p.1117, followed by Divine Title as subject of verb.

Day: masculine, singular noun, DAY, E.C. p.508; *cf* Psa. 19:2; 74:16.

and . . . He called: conjunction added to simple, active, complete form of verb CALL, E.C. p.1117; *cf* Gen.2:19; 3:20; 17:5; Ex.2:10; Isa.9:6; 54:5.

Night: masculine, singular noun in the Hebrew word family KEEP-BACK, E.C. p.470; *cf* Psa.92:2; 104:20.

evening: masculine, singular noun in the Hebrew word family MIX, E.C. p.975; *cf* Gen.8:11; Ex.12:6,18; Psa. 104:23; Zec.14:7.

morning: masculine, singular noun in the Hebrew word family QUEST, E.C. p.266; *cf* Psa.5:3; Ecc.11:6.

day one: masculine, singular noun in the family, DAY, followed by the cardinal number ONE, E.C. p.41, *cf* Gen.1:9; 11:1; Ezek.37:16-24.

“Where is this, the pathway where light tabernacles, and where is this, where darkness has its place? . . . I am Yahweh, and there is no other. Former of light and Creator of darkness . . .” (Job 38:19; Isa.45:6,7).

“And the light is appearing in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not . . . It was the true light—which is enlightening every man—coming into the world” (John 1:5,9).

“For the God Who says that out of darkness light shall be shining, is He Who shines in our hearts, with a view to the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ . . . For you were once darkness, yet now you are light in the Lord. As children of light be walking . . .” (2 Cor.4:6; Eph.5:8,9).

THE LIGHT OF LIFE AND LOVE

THE RESTORATION of the earth from the chaos of the abyss was effected by *vibration*, as apparent in *light* (Gen.1:2,3). But this was a recurrent phenomenon, for it was alternated with *darkness*. Darkness, however, is not a positive, forceful manifestation in Hebrew, but a negative, impotent thing, as is evident from the Hebrew word, which signifies KEEP-BACK. This is well illustrated by Abraham, who did not *keep back*, or *withhold* (AV) Isaac, his son, when he was called upon to offer him up to God (Gen. 22:16). It is simply the absence of light. It is practically ignored, however, in the following account, for it effected nothing. At *first* the light alone is called “Day” (Gen.1:5). Thereafter, however, except on the seventh day, the evening and the morning are added to it; yet it is still reckoned a “day.” We also use the word day as distinct from darkness or night, and also for the whole period of twenty-four hours, which includes both.

It was the recurrent *light* that accomplished the restoration of the earth. It separated the atmosphere and the seas from the dry land. It provided the vitality for the verdure and the soul life in the water and the air and on the land. The stages in this restoration were marked by the recurrence of darkness. The work was evidently done during the day, for the vibratory power of God’s spirit not only made the scene visible, but provided the energy that separated the waters and made the atmosphere and supported the verdure, as well as the living souls which can-

not exist without these to this day. Yet *after* the day's work was done, we read "*and it became evening*" (skipping the night), "*and it became morning*," which made a whole day. "Evening" is just before the night, and "morning" follows it. In the night no work is done (*cf* John 9:4).

THE LENGTH OF THE DAYS

Much has been made of the *length* of the days by scientists, falsely so called, with the purpose of discrediting the inspired account of *creation*, although these days are not concerned with the original *creation* at all, but the *restoration* of the earth. Now, however, the latest scientific theory, based on the study of atomic energy, claims that creation took a very short time, much less than six days!

The length of time it takes to accomplish a given task is altogether dependent on the conditions under which it is done. I am told that a process somewhat similar to that of the restoration, in which the solid, liquid, and gaseous elements of the abyss were separated into land, water and air—that of refining crude oil into asphalt, the various liquid products, and gas—has been greatly accelerated by newer methods. As we know nothing of the precise conditions which obtained during the six days, we have no real premises on which to reason out the length of time. Under some conditions it might have taken what we call billions of years, under others an infinitesimal part of a second. We cannot measure absolute time without a standard, and the day itself is the basic unit of chronology.

It is quite true that the word "day" is used, with a figurative force in divine revelation. The "Lord's day," or the day of Yahweh, seems to last somewhat over a thousand years. Man's day has already run much longer than that. That these are figurative "days" is evident from the fact that, while they are *like* ordinary days in some respects, they *differ* from literal days, not only in their length, but

in being composed of many such days in time. Moreover, they are not repeated with periods of darkness between. But the days of the restoration have every feature of literal days such as we are acquainted with in our own lifetime, which have been recurring throughout man's history. The days of the restoration are composed, not only of light, but of evenings and mornings. As such they would make a rather complicated figure of speech.

The length of time consumed in any action is not an infallible measure of the result. I have often been criticized because of the briefness of my messages. But I would rather speak a minute to the heads and hearts of my hearers for their edification, than an hour to their hulks to their stupefaction. When I was in Europe, my relatives showed me an old church in which one of my ancestors had preached. They also exhibited the collection bag at the end of a long pole, so as to reach down the rows, with bells on it to wake up the drowsing. They told me that it was not only used for that purpose, but also to prod anyone who snored too loudly. I am told that, in these days, a modern audience can endure only about twenty minutes of solid sermon.

Time, like space, is only relative. If we should travel around the earth at the same speed as the sun, we would live only one continued, literal day, from our standpoint. Theoretically, if we had a vine with us we could transform water into wine in a single day. God is independent of time as He is of space. So Christ could transmute water into wine without either time or effort (John 2:1-10). Consequently, I would have no difficulty, on that score, in believing modern scientists, that creation was the work of an instant. Then, of course, it would not strain my faith at all, to believe God, when He tells us that He took six days for the restoration of the earth.

But, just as we cannot fully learn the lesson of light during the night, unless it is followed by the day, so, on the

larger spiritual scale, men cannot learn the larger lesson of God's illumination during the evil eons. They sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and grasp it only after the rousing from among the dead, when they live in the sevenfold radiance of the eons of the eons, or stand before the great white throne. Only those whose hearts have been illuminated by God's holy spirit, get a glimpse of the glory. But even their eyes must look through a dark glass, lest the blazing brilliance blind them, so long as they are in the flesh.

BECOME, NOT BE

Fault has been found with the CV rendering: *Let light come to be! And it became light.* It is a great pity that, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the difference between the simple (be) and the *causative* form (become) of the so-called substantive is practically ignored in our popular versions. During the restoration of the earth there was continual *change*, not merely a repeated *state*. Translators into English have our profound sympathy in this case, however, for English idiom makes it almost impossible to be faithful to the original in this matter. So the CV often changes it to ^bcome, and sometimes into ^bbe, where the context directs it.

NATURE THE HANDMAID OF REVELATION

Nature is God's primer, full of illustrations, with words, which give us the vocabulary of His revelation. The first lesson is taught us daily at the rising of the sun. Darkness gives place to *light*. God is light. In Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). This constant contrast is given us in order that we may grasp His glory. Just as the light unfolds to our admiring eyes the wonders of the visible creation, so the power of His spirit reveals to our minds and hearts the marvels of the spiritual realm. In the beginning, His initial act in the restoration of the earth was to illuminate

the scene by the vibration of His spirit in producing *light*. We know what this was because He rehearses this in our experience every day.

Missionaries to the heathen who have never heard of God have grave difficulties, I am told, in making Him known. I have sometimes thought that they should first begin with the book of nature and interpret it by the Scriptures. Beginning with light and darkness, the day and the night, which are known to the most ignorant savage, they could reveal Him Who is light, as well as the powers of darkness, and His Son Who is the Light of the world. Showing first that all life depends on light in nature, they could go on to make known the Life of all that lives, as well as His Son, Who descended into the darkness of death for their sakes in order to express His love and win them for Himself. Nature is known by all, and God has given it to illustrate His revelation.

We are all training to be missionaries among the celestials, so we should be deeply interested and sympathetic to the problems of our missionaries on earth. Their greatest task is to reveal God to those who do not know Him. One of the first difficulties is a name. Choosing one they already have is fraught with many dangers, for none is like Him. In China there was much discussion on this theme for many years, for none of the pagan titles fully fitted. Even in English, we attach only a vague notion of deity to the title "God," instead of the definite idea of the Subjector. I have often wished that we could change to this, but it seems to be impracticable, so I seek to associate this idea to the title as much as possible. The Greek version has it better, for there He is called *Theos*, the Placer.

Nature speaks a universal language. In order to reveal God as Light and Life and Love, I would point to the lesson of light as illustrated every day and night, and show how good the light is compared with the darkness. Life

and death may be used in the same way to show that He is the Living One. I would press the point that man's life depends upon death, for all his food must die that he may live, and so prepare for the death and resurrection of the Saviour. I would use the many examples of love and hate among mortals to prepare for the revelation of the love that gave His Son to reconcile all to Himself.

NATURE TEACHES

The apostle Paul has given us the highest revelation of God and His Christ. But this by no means supersedes or abolishes the teaching of nature. Paul himself appeals to the Corinthians, who were going contrary to natural instincts. He does not refer them to previous revelation or give them fresh instructions, but asks the question: "Is not even *nature* itself *teaching* you . . . ?" (1 Cor.11:14). Even the nations, by nature, fulfill some of God's law, although their great mistake is to go contrary to nature (Rom.2:14; 1:26). Yet some of the saints, doubtless influenced by the false rendering of *soulish* by "natural" (1 Cor.2:14; 15:44, 45,46), seek to be unnatural in their speech and conduct, as if nature were sinful. This leads to an unnatural, artificial, unwholesome mode of life, which is to be deplored. Let us be natural.

But let us also learn from nature the lessons which God teaches through it. We cannot understand the Scriptures themselves without this preparation. "God is light" means nothing at all to one who has not learned what light is from the primer of nature. The greatest of scholars dare not forget his abc's. And, conversely, let us not fail to use the Scriptures to reveal to us the full *lesson* of nature, the great and glorious truth that it is not a meaningless jargon, without significance, purposeless and vain, but a revelation of the Deity, through which His creatures may learn of His attributes and divinity, and, moreover, by means of

which He can reveal His inmost affection for them in His written revelation.

NIGHT AND DARKNESS

Darkness, the "keeping back" of light, may furnish the most instructive lesson in all nature. We usually take the night for granted, as if it were normal, an essential and indispensable feature of human existence. Quite the contrary is the truth. In the new earth there will be no night and no darkness. (Rev.21:25). The literal meaning of the Hebrew stem, as usual, gives us a correct clue as to its place in God's plans. It signifies **KEEP-BACK**. It is abnormal. God is *keeping back the light during* the first few eons in order that men may appreciate the light. It is a daily lesson that all have learned to some extent. It has made many sun worshipers, but it leads none to worship the God Who made the sun. Like sin, it is a temporary and intermittent evil, introduced as a foil to reveal the light.

Because it gives us a temporary respite from the duties of the day, and helps us to recuperate our failing faculties by entering into a death-like sleep, we welcome the shades of night, and fail to see its essentially evil character. This is shown us in the Scriptures, where the darkening of the sun, moon and stars and the kingdom of the wild beast (Matt.24:29; Mark 13:24; Rev.8:12), are shuddering portents of judgment. Some of the sons of the kingdom will be cast into outer darkness where there will be lamentation and gnashing of teeth (Matt.7:12).

But all this is only a picture of the *spiritual* darkness which holds sway in the world today. At the advent of Christ, even Israel, the one nation to whom God had revealed Himself, is represented as sitting in darkness and the shadow of death (Isa.9:2; Luke 1:17). If that was true of them, how much more so of the nations today! The unintelligent hearts of the so-called "heathen" nations are certainly

as dark as ever (Rom.1:21). Even so-called Christendom, with all its religion and ritual, has far more darkness than light. Few, indeed, have turned their backs on the light of nature and reason, and entered the holy place and revelled in the light of revelation. And, of these, far fewer bask in the bright blessings of the Shekinah glory, for they do not see that the curtain has been rent, so that the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God beams upon them in the face of Christ (2 Cor.4:6).

The *activity* of God's spirit is manifested in the three "ells," *light, life* and *love*. The *passivity* of His power is evident in the three "hells," *darkness, death*, and *indifference*, if we take the word "hell" in its true meaning of that which is *imperceptible*. We *perceive* light and *experience* life and *revel* in love, but our senses are *numbed* by darkness, we enter the *imperceptible* in death and we are *calloused* in indifference. So far as the earth is concerned, God created light in one verse in Genesis, and life in the first chapter, but it takes the whole Bible to create love. Figuratively speaking, light is only the root, and life the tree on which love is the fruit. These are three stages in God's revelation, but the highest is love.

Many years ago a manuscript was sent in by a very intelligent and beloved brother, seeking to show that all *evil* is due to the *absence* of God. At that time we did not know the vast difference between evil and sin, so that there seemed to be much evidence in its favor. Adam sinned when God was absent from Eden. But there were other Scriptures which seemed to show that evil occurred in His *presence*. In fact many of His judgments consisted in the infliction of evil. Why, He is even said to be the Creator of evil. I was very much inclined to publish the article of this beloved brother, even if I had my doubts. Now I am most thankful that I did not do so, for it led to the study and separation of evil and sin.

It is *sin*, not evil, that comes from the withholding of God's spirit. Adam and Eve indeed had light and life, nevertheless they were in a measure of darkness, for their eyes were closed to spiritual light, even if they did see the forbidden fruit. The serpent predicted that their eyes would be unclosed if they ate of it, and, sure enough, they had never seen *themselves* until after they ate! More than that, although they had more light, which should have kept them from sinning, death was now operating in them. The lack of life is even more provocative of sin than the lack of light. And the lack of life led to the lack of love, so that they feared God and hid themselves.

For the present, let us thank God for the darkness that enables us to appreciate the light, yet, at the same time, we may exult in the future, when we will bask in the full blaze of His effulgence without being blinded by His glory. Then the light that restored the ruined earth will restore us, and enable us to enjoy its full fruitage of eonian life, and everlasting love.

A. E. Knoch



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“REJOICING NEVERTHELESS”

“FOR is any of humanity acquainted with that which is human except the spirit of humanity which is in it? Thus also, that which is of God no one knows, except the spirit of God. Now we obtained, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may be perceiving that which is being graciously given to us by God, which we are speaking also, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, matching spiritual blessings with spiritual words” (1 Cor.2:11-13).

Throughout the precious words of Scripture we are able to trace many delightful parallels. These are not contrived by our fancy, but the spirit which is of God leads us, with clear perception and refreshing joy, to observe what is there. They seem to draw our eyes and hearts for consolation into every relevant and wonderful page. May we consider the following example from incidents which occurred during the ministry of our Lord and His *choice instrument*, the apostle Paul:

“John averred to Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we perceived someone casting out demons in Thy name, who is not following us, and we forbade him, for he followed not with us.’ Yet Jesus said, ‘Be not forbidding him, for there is no one who will be doing a powerful deed in My name, and will be able swiftly to speak evil of Me. For who is not against us is for us. For whosoever should be giving you a cup of water to drink in the Name, seeing that you are Christ’s, verily I am saying to you that by no means should he be losing his wages’” (Mark 9:38-40). Compare this expression of profound wisdom with the like understanding of the apostle:

“Now I am intending you to know, brethren, that my

affairs have rather come to be for the progress of the evangel, so that my bonds in Christ become apparent in the whole pretorium and to all the rest, and the majority of the brethren, having confidence in the Lord as to my bonds, are more exceedingly daring to speak the word of God fearlessly. Some, indeed, are even heralding Christ because of envy and strife, yet some because of delight, also; these, indeed, of love, having perceived that I am located for the defense of the evangel, yet those are announcing Christ out of faction, not purely, surmising to arouse affliction in my bonds. What then?—Moreover, seeing that, by every method, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being announced, I am rejoicing in this also, and will be rejoicing nevertheless” (Phil.1:12-18).

Without the spirit of God which is searching all, *even the depths of God*, we would not presume to examine such verities. In similar manner to those who stood together with Job awaiting the words of Yahweh, we also would be in fear and trembling. With Elihu, we also would declare, “He Who-Suffices, *we* cannot find Him out” (Job 37:23). Yet to us it is confided, “For who knew the mind of the Lord? Who will be deducing from Him? Yet we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor.2:16)!, and again, “. . . you may become blameless and artless, children of God, flawless, in the midst of a generation crooked and perverse among whom you are appearing as luminaries in the world” (Phil.2:14).

MONOTHEISM

Life in Egypt for the Hebrews was, for a time, very pleasant. This was not to last, and indeed, a time came when persecution was intolerable. The story of the exodus and the effective leadership of the patriarch, Moses is well known. During the forty years which were spent in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula, something happened that was to have a resounding effect on this people,

and not on these alone. In a region which was known for worship of a multiplicity of gods, for the first time, *monotheism*, that is, a religious system based on the belief that only one God exists in the universe, became known!

Loathe to yield to this unique faith, the surrender of adherence to idols came slowly, but as the nomadic and divisive social patterns of these Hebrews changed, and conquests of the Canaanite cities led to increasing prosperity, so it appeared to the other nations that this belief in one God and the imparted code of laws was very impressive. Certainly it seemed that God was fulfilling His promise to watch over the interests of this nation.

PURPOSE OF THE EONS

If the revelation of belief in one God was quite overwhelming for the neighboring tribes among the Canaanites, then imagine the staggering effect among the celestials to learn of God's plan for the ecclesia, ". . . which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all"! (Eph.1:23). Let us revel in the glorious words:

God is ". . . to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Eph.3:9-11).

Yes, how the celestials must have been completely astonished! But the spiritual forces of wickedness among these must have been utterly frustrated! Everything they had done in their hatred had not changed a single thing. To the contrary, their opposition had provided the essential contrast to God's gracious gift of love, in the all-embracing sacrifice of His beloved Son. What divine wisdom is brought to light through this amazing revelation! It is evi-

dent that this is not kept secret from the celestials. As Israel was to the Canaanites, so the body of Christ is to the celestials. This is a delightful parallel, illuminating the wisdom of God.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

Whenever a child of God manifests nobility in unselfish love or compassion, wherever some devotion is expressed in striving, without any hope of reward, to present God's precious Word sincerely, in brief, when we are walking in newness of life, we are not just bringing the celestials a foretaste of the future blessings for them when these bodies of our humiliation are transfigured. But rather, and this is to be preferred, most humbly, such walk is for Him Who gave Himself for all, a fitting tribute of unintermittent thanksgiving.

This leads into another heart-stirring illustration. This time, may we turn to the wondrous words of our Lord: "And Jesus, being seated facing the treasury, beheld how the throng is casting the coppers into the treasury. And many rich cast in much. And one woman, a poor widow, coming, casts in two mites, which is a quadrans. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, 'Verily, I am saying to you that this poor widow casts in more than all who are casting into the treasury. For all cast out of their superfluity, yet she, out of her want, casts in all, as much as she had—her whole livelihood'" (Mark 12:41-44).

"Twice we are exhorted by our apostle to reclaim the era (Eph.5:16; Col.4:5). Let us remind ourselves that, in all the glory and perfection which we will enjoy above, we will lack one way of honoring our Lord and glorifying Him, that is, by a walk in faith and obedience. And just this brings Him an honor which we cannot accord Him when above. Therefore we should prize such occasions and use them to the full" (*Unsearchable Riches*, vol.46, page 253).

MORE COMPASSIONATE, NOT LESS

All God's acts are dictated by love. Though the evil of humanity *grieved His heart*, and He regretted making humanity on the earth (Gen.6:6), the deluge was not a detached judgment. He sympathizes with His creatures and His heart goes out to them even when they are disobedient.

The spirit of humanity is not at any time able to comprehend why the apostle should be rejoicing in his sufferings that Christ should thus be heralded (Phil.1:18). But, conversely, graced with the glory of the spirit of God and awaiting the summons of our Lord, are we at present indifferent to the groaning and travailing of creation?

Does the sheer prodigality of human life after years of miserable pain and sorrow which afflict humanity leave us unmoved? Surely, this same spirit makes us *more compassionate, not less!*

We are awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our bodies. "Now, similarly, the spirit also is aiding our infirmity, for what we should be praying for, to accord with what must be, we are not aware, but the spirit itself is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings" (Rom.8:26).

On every side we witness unceasing research and investigation. There is a helplessness in it all. Timothy was warned that in the last days many would be immoral and vain, "... always learning and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth" (2 Tim.3:1-9). With Paul, from whom we all derive so much strength, we must be, "... reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us. For the premonition of the creation is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God" (Rom.8:18,19). May we always keep the glory of the consummation foremost in our minds, but especially in our hearts.

Donald Fielding

God and His Work

THE INITIAL ACTIONS OF GOD

THE ACTIONS of God are expressive of His being. The fact that God *creates* (Gen.1:1) tells us much about His power and ability. But this has been put into question by the introduction of chaos, vacancy and darkness into the scene (Gen.1:2). Now, starting with Genesis 1:3-5, we are becoming more acquainted with God by means of His further actions, which deal with the chaos and darkness. These initial actions of deliverance are expressed by the common verbs, *say, see, separate* and *call*. These activities, especially the first two, are basic in human affairs, and it is not without significance that we find God dealing with the emptiness and darkness of Genesis 1:2 by means of these very elementary actions.

The vibrating of God's spirit (1:2) is directed through His words "Let light come to be," and is then centered in the light that came to be. So also God powerfully enlightens us by His Word, revealing Himself while dealing effectively with the chaos and darkness of our individual lives. What He says identifies the goal of good, which is then perceived.

The further actions of God in this passage certainly have the goal of good in view. God separates between two opposites, dividing the evil from the good, and identifies each by a name by which they are called. These actions, however do not, in themselves, speak of the goal, but are directed toward it. They bring order where there once was chaos. But The darkness which is called "night" is only a temporary part of the process toward the goal of permanent, and fully appreciated light.

GOD IS SAYING

The second action, therefore, directly attributed to God in Scripture is that He *says* or speaks a thought. He did not speak in English of course, saying the words, "Let light come to be," or, even more literally, speaking in the form of a declaration, "It is becoming light." Even if we could reproduce the Hebrew words here accurately, we would not grasp by that means what is being revealed in Genesis 1:3. It is unimportant as far as we are concerned what the words *sounded* like. The likeness that we are interested in is the likeness to God which His message conveys. The vital point is that these words were spoken *by God*, and that they were keen and operative (*cf* Heb.4:12), reflecting His glory.

We did not hear this commanding declaration, but we who believe know something of the character of the words of God. We know something of the traits of this first recorded message of God because we have become acquainted with the power and music and enlightenment of God's words to us. "The opening of Your words is enlightening . . . Refined is Your promise exceedingly" (Psa.119:130,140). His words are *inspired* and *beneficial* in countless ways to the believer (*cf* 2 Tim.3:16,17).

On hearing the evangel of our salvation, and on believing also, we "are sealed with the holy spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). The word has come to us that Christ died for our sins, that He was entombed and has been roused (1 Cor. 15:3,4). With the hearing and accepting of this faithful saying (*cf* 1 Tim.1:15), we received spiritual enlightenment and invigoration (Gal.3:2,3), like Abraham many centuries ago (Rom.4:20).

Anyone who has ever heard and believed the word of gratuitous grace (*cf* Rom.3:24), no matter the measure of faith, will have had some inkling of the glory of that

which God *says*. His words are powerful and effective, enlightening and invigorating.

We read these words of Genesis 1:3-5 over and over again, and we discover anew each time how fitting they are, how basic and fundamental, yet profound and inexhaustible. They encourage and assure us, for once God has spoken of good to come, that good cannot fail of coming.

The words declaring the coming of light and order and life in Genesis chapter one are, according to the psalmist, still going forth, day after day, into the entire earth, recounting the glory of God (Psa.19:1-6). So also His words to Israel restore and rejoice the hearts of His people (Psa.19:7-14). Even so believers today are lifted up and strengthened by "the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God" (2 Cor.4:4). For we have heard a word of truth and love, paralleling the words of Genesis 1:3, given by "the God Who says that, out of darkness light shall be shining . . . Who shines in our hearts, with a view to the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6).

Human disbelief is merely darkness. Human stubbornness and irreverence and enmity are only chaos. They cannot withstand the power of life-giving light. As soon as God removes the ignorance, whether by graciously granting faith or by showing the truth visibly in the Person of His Son, the light will come forth and do its work until all are enlightened and the darkness is eliminated everywhere.

GOD IS SEEING

God's direct activities have led to good. His work of creating and then of speaking in conjunction with the vibrating of His spirit have dealt with disorder and darkness and ended with good. This is what God always looks forward to. Through "world might of . . . darkness" (*cf* Eph.6:12) He has subjected His creation to the vanity of suffering,

corruption, groaning and travailing, but He has done so “in expectation.” He anticipates with a sure and certain hope that it will end in good, so that “creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom.8:18-25).

What will God see when the present corruption is finished? To what end is God leading the current situation of a creation groaning in chaos and darkness? The evangel that light shall shine out of the darkness in and through the faith of Jesus Christ leads to good. Every knee shall bow and every tongue avow that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, and God will be All in all (Phil. 2:10,11; 1 Cor.15:28).

God will not rest until He *sees* that which He set out to achieve. “From the toil of His soul He shall *see* light, and He shall be satisfied by His knowledge” (Isa.53:11). That is the great and glorious goal of God, toward which all His actions are directed. In Genesis 1 God’s seeing of light came “from” what He said, from His word. The light which God will see in the consummation will come “from the toil of His soul,” centered most specifically in that toil of the suffering and shame of His Son, foretold in Isaiah 53.

GOD IS SEPARATING

God’s work of separating light from darkness is a great work. But it is not a goal in the same sense as the seeing of good. It is, as we have noted above, part of God’s process in reaching that goal, but it is not the goal itself. As long as darkness remains, even though it is separated from light, the goal has not been reached. Eventually there will be no more darkness at all, fully in accord with John’s vision of the new earth (Rev.22:4). We who believe are rescued out of the jurisdiction of Darkness and transported into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in accord with God’s delight to reconcile all to Him through His beloved Son

(Col.1:13-20). The purpose of God will not be realized until all darkness is gone.

Hence the separation of darkness from light represents an important step forward, while further manifesting God’s wisdom and power. A period of darkness remains, of necessity under current conditions, teaching us daily, by contrast, the values of light. In this sense we can say that darkness clarifies light. But once it has fulfilled its purpose it can be removed so that light alone remains. The jurisdiction of darkness continues now separately from the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, but that kingdom of light and love must increase and broaden until all creation comes under its sole sway.

There is a pattern here which is carried through in many of God’s eonian operations. Abram is separated from his family, and Israel is separated from the other nations. Saul and Barnabas are severed from the other apostles, Paul from his birth connections, the believers from the unbelievers. These separations are channels for many blessings, but none of them represent final states. All separations will come to an end, and the light and the joy and the peace and the love which is gained through the blood of the cross will remain alone.

GOD IS CALLING

God gives names to the channels of blessing and those of ignorance and shame which stand in contrast to them. These names speak of the place and function of the thing named in God’s eonian operations, but more than this they are evidence of the purposefulness of the Supreme Subjector. The fact that God gives names to the darkness and the light is an indication of God’s control over them. God calls the separated period of darkness “night” and continues to see to it that its function is carried out; once that occurs, night will be no more. And God calls the separated

period of light “day” and, through the accomplishment of the cross and the victory of the resurrection, God patiently but surely calls the day into its uninterrupted destiny.

The name *night* is not permanent; the name *day* will always remain and increase its scope. Peter speaks of the “day of the Lord,” while hurrying forward to “the presence of God’s day” (2 Pet.3:10-13).

Paul says to us that we who are “of the day” are not appointed to indignation “but to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess.5:8,9). This is our calling, to be of the day. We might truly say that God calls us “those who are of the day,” for indeed we are called “sons of the light and sons of the day” (5:5). By thus calling us, we are certain that we will come into the full enjoyment and appreciation of all that the day of God means. “Faithful is He Who is calling you, Who will be doing it also” (5:24).

All the grand designations by which God calls us will be realized in full by His faithful operations. We are called “saints,” hallowed in Christ Jesus (1 Cor.1:2), and named Those-Who-Are-Called-Into-The-Fellowship-Of-God’s-Son (1:9). We are The-Called-In-The-Grace-Of-Christ people (Gal.1:6; 2 Tim.1:9). But those who are not given these callings today are not doomed to remain outside of God’s callings of light and love forever. For Christ has died for sinners, and God is the Saviour of all mankind.

The darkness is needed for awhile in order to learn about the light. The light is brought into our lives by what God says. God’s Word continues to separate for us between the darkness and the light. But the *day* is coming because of the faithful operations of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when there will not be any more night. Thus God will call all into the light, and He will see that the light is very good.

D.H.H.

The One Who is Operating All

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

WE LEARN that man’s volitions and actions cannot be such that they occur apart from all necessity by a consideration of God’s certain foreknowledge of such very events as those which are comprised of voluntary human behavior.

To make this clear, I wish first to show that God has a certain foreknowledge of man’s voluntary acts; second, I would prove that it follows from this that man’s voluntary acts cannot be such that they are devoid of all necessity or causality.

One might suppose that it would be wholly unnecessary to set forth such arguments on behalf of any who are sincere and impartial. Do not the Scriptures give abundant testimony to the foreknowledge of God, and is not causality the first dictate of common sense? Yet some deny God’s foreknowledge of voluntary acts; and nearly all wish to claim that—the infallible prophetic word of God notwithstanding—voluntary behavior is devoid of all necessity. It therefore becomes needful to prove (1) that God already knows that of which the future consists, and (2) that voluntary behavior, therefore, cannot be such that it is devoid of all necessity.

By way of introduction to our present topic, that of divine foreknowledge and its significance, it should be noted that our interest here is not simply to learn whether God knows the future, but to perceive what this entails, if indeed He knows the future.

The question before us is whether foreknowledge precludes free will. But before we address that specific ques-

tion, we will do well to recognize what the fundamental issues concerning free will are, in any case—whether or not God knows the future.

In philosophy, the view that man's volitions and actions ultimately occur apart from all necessity or causality, is termed *libertarianism*. The similar popular view commonly termed "free will," likewise entails it being true that human choice is ultimately uncaused, that is, that it is finally "indeterministic" in nature.

Proponents of free will recognize that if it should be so that human behavior, in fact, is of a deterministic nature, the notion of freewill moral responsibility (i.e., of categorical could-have-done-otherwise) would thereby be precluded. Such ones, however, not only wish to *hold* men responsible (i.e., accountable or liable), but wish to claim that men *are* "*morally responsible*." What is intended by this phrase is the claim that men are responsible (i.e., liable) for their moral deeds *because* they possess a power of "free will" over them.

By such artful use of the term "responsible," cleverly seeking to get what they want by using a legitimate term in an illegitimate way, proponents of free will do not intend merely an affirmation of the fact of the accountability of the doer of the deed. Instead, they wish to claim and give credence to the necessarily false notion that within the human there exists an ever-present, absolute power of contrary choice, a faculty of choice which is finally undetermined by all influences and conditions, whether of heredity, environment, present state of mind, immediate circumstance, or anything else whatsoever.

Such ones suppose that through their denial of determinism, they will be able to maintain this very notion of absolute contrary choice. Hence, in considerations of ultimate issues of human choice, they opt for and affirm indeterminism while denying determinism. It is not that they are, *ipso*

facto, against the proposition of determinism in relation to human behavior. It is only because they are against what the proposition of deterministic human behavior entails, that they therefore have decided against determinism.

Such a bias-based rejection of determinism, however—especially of the *divine* determinism of God's operation of all—is not wise. What of it if a certain proposition (determinism) precludes a certain popular notion and ethical opinion (free will)? That does not make the proposition false; hence it should not be rejected on such a basis.

It is not as if the Scriptures, whether by declaration or corollary, actually affirm the notion of free will. Free will is merely presupposed, and is therefore read *into* the Scriptures. It is not that it is *found* there; it is rather that advocates of that view, inferring its presence and abhorring any thought of its absence, unwittingly seek to *put* it there.

In denying determinism, the free willer necessarily involves himself in indeterminism. Yet indeterminism is just as incapable as determinism in affording any room for free will. This is because an ultimately uncaused event is truly an unaccountable event. Being due to nothing, it can be traced to nothing; hence no one is responsible for it. It is an event of sheer chance: uncontrolled, and uncontrollable. Specifically, it is not an event over which one might even conceivably exercise control, whether to bring it to pass or to prevent its occurrence.

Since both determinism and indeterminism (or any combination of the two) preclude free will, free will, therefore, cannot be true. Further, since in all possible worlds, free will is precluded, it is impossible to give any objective account of how it might exist. That which is necessarily unreal, cannot be made real by the mere force of rhetoric. All that one can do in the interests of free will is to engage in circular arguments on its behalf, special pleading, on the assumption of a necessarily incorrect premise,

that of the validity of traditional ethics, which demand the existence of free will.

VOLITION CONNECTED TO ACTION

In this first principal section, I wish to demonstrate that God foreknows what man will do; that, specifically, He has an absolute and certain foreknowledge of the voluntary, moral actions of men. If God did not foreknow, He could not foretell, peremptorily, and to a certainty. If God had no more than an uncertain guess, He could declare no more than an uncertain guess.

It should similarly be noted that if God did not already know what men's future choices will be, neither could He foreknow those events which are dependent on and the consequences of these choices. The knowledge of the existence of the one depends on the knowledge and existence of the other. Hence, one cannot be more certain than the other.

“Therefore, how many, how great, and how extensive soever the consequences of the volitions of moral agents may be, though they should extend to an alteration of the state of things throughout the universe and should be continued in a series of successive events to all eternity and should in the progress of things branch forth into an infinite number of series, each of them going on in an endless line or chain of events, God must be as ignorant of all these consequences as He is of the volitions whence they take their rise. All these events, and the whole state of things depending on them [i.e., upon the volitions of moral agents]—how important, extensive, and vast soever—must be hid from Him.”¹ That is, it must be so that

1. Jonathan Edwards, *FREEDOM OF THE WILL (A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame)*, p.62 (New York: 1881, Robert Carter and Brothers).

God knows nothing of future events which are the outcome of the choices of moral agents, if He knows nothing of the future choices of moral agents.

In light of these considerations, I would now observe the following:

Men's moral conduct—their virtues and their vices, their uprightness and their wickedness, things rewardable and punishable, praiseworthy and blameworthy—have often been foretold by God. Pharaoh's evil moral conduct, in refusing to obey God's command in letting His people go, was foretold (Ex.3:19; *cp* 7:4; 9:30; 11:9).

Josiah's righteous moral conduct in opposition to idolatry was foretold over three hundred years before he was born (1 Kings 13:1-6,32). This prophecy, effectually, was also a prophecy of the idolatry which Josiah would oppose.

1 Kings 21:20-22 foretold the wicked and foolish conduct of Ahab in which he would refuse to obey the word of Yahweh which came to him by the prophet Micaiah, choosing instead to hearken to the false prophets in going to Ramoth Gilead to his ruin.

In 2 Kings 8:12 the wicked moral conduct of Hazael, king of Aram, is foretold, to the consternation of Hazael himself. The prophet Elisha spoke of that which he knew, not what he conjectured, when saying that of the sons of Israel, Hazael would slay their young men, dash their infants to pieces, and rip up their pregnant women.

Long before his birth, the moral conduct of Cyrus is foretold, in his mercy to Yahweh's people and regard to the true Elohim, in turning the captivity of the Jews and promoting the building of the temple (Isa.44:28; 45:13; *cp* 2 Chron.36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4).

Nathan's prophecy against David (2 Sam.7:11,12) was fulfilled by the horrible wickedness of Absalom, in rebelling against his father, seeking his life, and lying with his concubines in the light of day.

The prophecy against Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13), was fulfilled by Jeroboam's wicked rebellion and usurpation. The prophecy against Jeroboam's family (1 Kings 14), was fulfilled by the conspiracy, treason, and cruel murders of Baasha (1 Kings 15:27).

The future cruelty of the Egyptians in oppressing Israel, and God's judgment of them for it, was foretold long before it came to pass (Gen.15:13,14).

The final obstinacy of those Jews who were left in the land of Israel, in their idolatry and rejection of the true God, was foretold in Jeremiah 44:26,27. In Isaiah 48, God tells the people that He had predicted those things which would be the consequences of their treachery and obstinacy, because He knew that they *would* be obstinate, and that He had declared these things beforehand for their conviction of His being the only true God.

The destruction of Babylon, together with many of its circumstances, was foretold as God's judgment for the great pride and haughtiness of king Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, for their wickedly destroying other nations, and especially for their exalting themselves against the true God and His people. Yet the prophetic word concerning these things was foretold before any of these monarchs existed (Isa.13,14,47; *cp* Hab.2:5-20; Jer.1; Jer.51)! The immorality which the people of Babylon, particularly her princes and great men, were guilty of in the very night that the city was destroyed (the revelling and drunkenness at Belshazzar's idolatrous feasts) was foretold (Jer.51:39,57).

The return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity is foretold in detail, peremptorily, and with many circumstances (Jer.31:35-40; 32:6-15, 41-44; 33:24-26). The very time of their return was announced (Jer.25:11,12; 29:10-12; 2 Chron.36:21; Ezek.4:6; Dan.9:2), and yet the prophecies represent their return as dependent upon their repentance, which itself is expressly and particularly fore-

told (Jer.29:12-14; 31:8,9,18-31; 50:4,5; Ezek.6:8-10; 7:16; 14:22,23; 20:43,44).

The sufferings pertaining to the Christ and the glories after these (*cp* 1 Pet.1:10,11), are abundantly foretold in Scripture. That the Messiah should suffer greatly through the malice and cruelty of men is both typically and literally set forth (*cp* Psa.22; Micah 5:1; Matt.27:35,43; John 19:24). Indeed, these things had to happen ("thus it must occur," Matt.26:54), that the scripture may be fulfilled. The event of the crucifixion was, at once, the outworkings of the malicious wickedness of men, and, the loving sacrifice of God. "For of a truth, in this city were gathered against Thy holy Boy Jesus, Whom Thou dost anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the nations and the peoples of Israel, *to do whatever Thy hand and Thy counsel designates beforehand to occur*" (Acts 4:27,28).

At the deepest level, the death of Christ was the work of God, according to the wisdom of His counsel, for the achievement of the desires of His heart in the salvation of all mankind (1 Tim.2:4; 4:10; 1 Cor.15:22-28) and the reconciliation of all, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens (Col.1:20). Ultimately speaking, though He does no wrong, and no conceit is in His [i.e., Christ's] mouth, yet *Yahweh desires* to crush Him, and *causes* Him to be wounded (Isa.53:10).

Following the resurrection of Christ, and the severing of Barnabas and Saul (who is also Paul), for the work to which God had called them, Paul met with many grievous persecutions. And yet these persecutions were foretold. The Lord said concerning Paul: "He is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel, for I shall be intimating to him how much he *must* be suffering for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15,16). As Paul himself declared, "And now, lo! I, bound in spirit, am going to Jerusalem, not being aware what I

will meet with in it, more than that the holy spirit, city by city, certifies to me, saying that bonds and afflictions are remaining for me” (Acts 20:22,23).

Likewise, the prophet Agabus declared, picking up Paul’s girdle, binding his own feet and hands, saying, “Now this the holy spirit is saying, ‘The man whose girdle this is, *shall* the Jews in Jerusalem be binding thus, and they *shall* be giving him over into the hands of the nations’” (Acts 21:11).

Similarly, Paul himself asseverated to the Ephesian elders, saying, “Now I am aware that, after I am out of reach, burdensome wolves *will* be entering among you, not sparing the flocklet. And from among yourselves *will* arise men, speaking perverse things to pull away disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29,30).

The entirety of the book of Revelation comprises, “The Unveiling of Jesus Christ, which God gives to Him, to show to His slaves *what must occur* swiftly” [i.e., in swift-ness] (Rev.1:1). This is so whether concerning the character of the various Jewish ecclesias of Asia Minor which will obtain there in the day of the Lord, or the many fearful judgments that will come upon the earth in that day, rehearsed throughout the scroll in such detail.

Most notably, the day will come when “the seventh messenger trumpets. And loud voices occurred in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of this world became our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall be reigning for the eons of the eons! Amen!’” (Rev.11:15). Though Satan is to be bound during the thousand years’ glorious reign of Christ, this is only “until the thousand years should be finished. After these things, he *must* be loosed a little time” (Rev.20:3b). Then, “Satan *will* be loosed out of his jail. And he *will* be coming out to deceive all the nations which are in the four corners of the earth” (Rev.20:8a).

Indeed, in Revelation 17:17, we are told why the nations who serve as the men of God’s counsel in bringing such fear-

ful judgment upon the Jews in Babylon will do so: “*for God imparts to their hearts to form His opinion*, and to form one opinion, and to give their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God *shall* be accomplished” (Rev.17:17).

The various prophecies rehearsed above, are but a few of the far greater number of prophecies that might also be set forth in still more abundant testimony of the fact that God foreknows the moral volitions and actions of men.

THE OUTCOME OF GOD’S OPERATIONS

Beyond the rehearsal of the prophetic word, no doubt the greatest proof that God knows the future is because God controls the future. *Seeing that* out of Him and through Him and for Him is *all*, Paul therefore rhetorically affirms that no one *knew* the mind of the Lord, became His adviser, or gives to Him *first* (cf Rom.11:34-36). Thus it becomes evident that the all that is out of, through, and for God, is all that exists and all that occurs.

Since all is *out of* God, God certainly knows all that will occur, prior to its occurrence. Since all is *through* God—Who is *operating all* according to the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11)—it is evident that God is by no means ignorant as to the outcome of His own operations. Since all is *for* God and will yet redound to His glory (cf “to Him be the glory,” Rom.11:36), we may be certain that God *knows* what He will do before He does it, of which the events of history are the result, according to His own unspeakably wise designs and powerful operations.

THE NECESSITY OF THE CONSEQUENCE AS RELATED TO PROPHECY

Finally, I would prove, apart from other demonstrations of the same conclusion, that on the ground of divine foreknowledge alone, human volition cannot be of a nature such as to debar all necessity. That is to say, it cannot be

of such a nature as is claimed under the banner of “free will,” which therefore is necessarily a false concept.

It is true that foreknowledge does not *cause* future events. But it is just as true that foreknowledge *proves* that both future events and the human volitions from which they result, *are caused*. Therefore, the volitions and events of which the future is comprised, cannot be volitions and events of “free will,” since free will is claimed to be an ultimately uncaused phenomenon.

It is evident with regard to a thing whose own existence is infallibly and ineliminably connected with something which has or has had existence, that the existence of that thing itself is necessary. Even as the existence of knowledge of the past makes it so that the events of the past are necessary, the existence of knowledge of the future makes it so that the events of the future are necessary. The existence of actual knowledge of past events, makes it too late to alter the past. Likewise, the existence of actual knowledge of future events, makes it too late to alter the future.

Most cannot believe that, “Yahweh has *made everything* for its own pertinent end, yea even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov.16:4). Hence, they speak of His “permissive decree,” or of His “allowing” the occurrence of evil, the implication being that God *only* “allows” events to transpire while causing none of them to occur—whether the good or the evil—within the sphere of human conduct.

It is the *inevitability* of the future and *the lack of ultimate human control* concerning it, to which they object, when seeking to distance the Deity from the course of history and the affairs of His own universe, having no room in their view of things for the fact that God makes the world and all that is in it (Acts 17:24).

The fact is, however, that there is no more *fatality* (i.e., inevitability) in the universal *operations* of God, than that which already obtains in the universal *foreknowledge* of God, this latter proposition being affirmed at least for-

mally by nearly all who are naming the name of the Lord. Hence, to be consistent, if one wishes to object to the deity of God (i.e., to His Subjectorship in the operation of all), one should object as well both to His omniscience and to His prescience. Our teaching of God’s universal deity no more entails it being so that free will is false, than the teaching of God’s universal knowledge, including universal foreknowledge, likewise entails it being so that free will is false. Hence it does not become those who decry our teaching concerning God’s deity to do so because of its preclusion of free will, when their own teaching of God’s foreknowledge is open to the same fleshly objection.

In light of all the things we have considered here, it becomes evident that not only is the popular notion of free-will responsibility a seriously mistaken concept, but that the freewill suppositions commonly associated both with *praise* and with *blame* are gravely confused and mistaken as well. Hence our attitude concerning matters of praise and blame, and our response to actions which evoke either praise or blame, have become in need of adjustment.

Since the notion of free will is demonstrably false, it follows that the practice of either praising or blaming *because* of one’s supposed exercise of free will in the acts for which one is praised or blamed, should be repudiated. The viability of praise and blame stands alone, apart from free will. Both praise and blame are already practicable and enjoy a proper sphere of operation, prior to the introduction of any spurious notions of free will. All that is necessary here is to rid both of these terms from the freewill *inferences* which many have made concerning them, which inferences they have consequently foisted upon these words themselves.

Both praise and blame must be confined to the excellence, or ignominy, of that which one *does* or that which one *is*, even as for the *motive* from which one acts. To praise is to laud and acclaim; to blame is to charge with wrongdo-

ing, even as, often, to connote liability. Thus understood, even in a world devoid of “free will,” praise and blame retain a vital place and maintain an important sphere of service. The glory of virtue and the horror of vice, the importance of the advocacy of righteousness and the condemnation of sin, even as the incentive of reward for good and the deterrence of punishment for evil—none of these practical realities or salutary practices are diminished whatsoever by one’s repudiation of free will.

It is a wonderful thing to view others, and yes, to view oneself as well, as those whose ways and deeds are “of God,” both in cases in which one’s actions are of God faithfully speaking as well as decretively speaking, and in cases, too, in which one’s actions are not of God, faithfully speaking, even though, decretively speaking, they are of Him.

It is true that even with this realization, we will still have our reactionary attitudes of pleasure or displeasure, and, sometimes, even of anger or pride. But when these things arise in us, as we accept anew that the offense at hand was “part of the all” that is out of, through, and for God, *our outlook on life will be revolutionized*, and that in a most helpful way. Then, according as God gives grace, we may become more mindful of our own duty to deal graciously with the offense of others (Col.3:13) than desirous to maintain offense and bitterness.

In closing, we can only say, O, the *depth* of the riches and the wisdom and the *knowledge* of God! How inscrutable His judgments, and untraceable His ways (Rom.11:33)! We marvel and praise our God and Father in consideration of His operation of all and His knowledge of all. As the Psalmist declares, “Your eyes saw my embryo, and my days, all of them were written upon Your scroll; the days were formed when there was not one of them” (Psa.139:16). What a joy, and what a peace, in believing (Rom.15:13)!

J.R.C.

WISDOM AND TOIL

WITHIN the book of Ecclesiastes there are five “books” presenting the words of the Assembler concerning the works of the human, viewed finally as God’s word concerning His works. In the first “book” (1:12-2:26) the author analyzes the perplexing problems of *individual* experience in the spheres of wisdom and toil. First of all he takes up wisdom, and in tracing knowledge finds that the condition of affairs under the sun is not what it should be, and that it is beyond man’s power to correct. “What is distorted cannot be set in order, and what is lacking cannot be counted” (1:15).

Further pursuit of knowledge yields nothing beyond this positive idea. To go beyond is useless labor (“a grazing on wind”), which, while augmenting vexation and pain, contributes nothing of value towards the solution of the riddle (1:12-18):

¹² **I myself, the Assembler, came to be king over Israel in Jerusalem.** ¹³ **+ I ^gapplied `my heart to inquiring` and [>] exploring` ⁱby wisdom ^{on}concerning all ^wthat is done under the heavens: it is an experience of evil Elohim has given to the sons of humanity to humble them ⁱby it.**

¹⁴ **I saw `all the ^ddeeds ^wthat are done under the sun, And behold, the whole is vanity and a grazing on wind.**

¹⁵ **What is distorted! `cannot [>] be set in order`, And what is lacking ⁱcannot [>] be counted`.**

¹⁶ **I `spoke with my heart, [>] saying`, Behold, I `have ^cgrown ^{mm}great and have added in wisdom**

- Over all who ^bwere over Jerusalem before me;**
 + **My heart has seen much⁻ of wisdom and knowledge.**
 17 + **Then I ^gapplied my heart to know wisdom,**
 + **As well as to know⁻ about raving and frivolity;**
I realize ^wthat even this, it is a grazing on wind.
 18 **For in much wisdom is much vexation,**
And he who ^ladds knowledge ^ladds pain.

DEEDS AND TOIL

The Assembler turns to the sphere of toil. As a king, he is endowed with the combination of all objects of human envy, and enters upon an experiment, by which the several kinds of good things are successively subjected to review. First, he accumulates without limit all possible objects of pleasure, and then engages in all kinds of human effort. The experiment includes the pleasures that are called frivolities; he gives himself freely to them, but while experimenting in frivolity he retains all the while "wisdom of heart" that could reflect on the frivolity.

The experiment is successful considered as an experiment. Success in achieving these enterprises brings with it an impression of pleasure; but when reflection is turned upon them there is no satisfaction. Ability to gratify his every wish and carry out his extensive undertakings has, after all, only met the wants of physical existence. Rich delights have pandered the soul, pleased the eye, tickled the palate, but have only appeased the feeling of hunger the same as a common meal, providing nothing for the spiritual cravings (2:1-11):

- 2 I^l said in my heart: Do ^gcome ^pthen,**
Let me probe you ⁱwith rejoicing;
 + **Now ^{see}look ⁱat what is good.**
 + **But behold, even this was vanity.**
 2 [>] **Mirth, I said, is a raving,**

- And [>] rejoicing, what then is it ^dachieving?**
 3 **I explored within my heart**
[>]**by stimulating⁻ my flesh ⁱwith wine**
 (+**While my heart was leading ⁱwith wisdom**)
And [>]by getting a hold⁻ ⁱon frivolity,
Until ^w I should see just where good may be
for the sons of humanity
 In ^w**what they ^ldo under the heavens**
 during the **number of days in their lives.**
 4 **I ^cmade great things as my ^dworks;**
I built houses for myself;
I planted vineyards for myself;
 5 **I ^dmade gardens and parks for myself,**
And I planted in them trees of every fruit.
 6 **I ^dmade reservoirs of water for myself,**
To irrigate from them the sprouting grove of trees.
 7 **I acquired menservants and maidservants,**
And any sons born in the household became mine;
Moreover, ^mabundant⁻ cattle, herds
and flocks became mine,
 More ^f**than all who ^bwere ⁱover Jerusalem before me.**
 8 **I collected ^malso silver and gold for myself,**
 + **The valuable treasures of kings and provinces;**
I ^dprovided male singers^l and female singers^l
for myself,
And with the rich delights of the sons of humanity,
⁷**a wine waiter^l and wine waitresses^l.**
 9 + **As I grew greater and added more ^fthan anyone**
who ^bwas ⁱover Jerusalem before me.
Indeed my wisdom, it stayed [>]by me.
 10 + **All ^wthat my eyes asked for I did not deny ^fto them;**
I did not withhold my heart from any rejoicing,
For my heart had rejoicing from all my toil,
And this itself ^bwas my portion from all my toil.

- ¹¹ **+Yet when I' faced ⁱ all my ^ddeeds
^wthat my hands had done,
 And ⁱ the toil ^wthat I had toiled ^λin doing⁻ them,
 + Behold, the whole was vanity and a grazing on wind,
 And there was nothing of advantage under the sun.**

TO SEE WISDOM

Next, with burdened heart, the Assembler turns reflection on to wisdom itself, together with its opposites, raving and frivolity (2:12), to see if here any genuine satisfaction is to be found. He sees at once that wisdom excels its opposite as light excels darkness; but this is neutralized by the further consideration that both are involved in the same destiny of death; so that in the presence of the King of Terrors the pursuit of wisdom, despite infinite superiority to its opposite, seems not only profitless but "evil" (vs.17). "Since the destiny of the stupid man is also mine, and it shall befall me, to what advantage then have I been wise? Hence I spoke in my heart, This too is vanity" (2:15).

- ¹² **+Then I' turned around to see wisdom
 compared ⁺with raving and frivolity
 (For what will the ^hman who [']comes after the king do
^λBeyond ^wwhat others have already done?),**
¹³ **And I' saw ^w there is more advantage
 for wisdom ^fthan for [']frivolity
 Just as there is more advantage for [']light
^fthan for [']darkness;**
¹⁴ **The wise man uses his eyes in his head,
 +While the stupid man walks^l in darkness;
 +Yet I' realized ^{mr}indeed ^wthat the same destiny
[']befalls [']them all.**
¹⁵ **+So I' said in my heart,
^{as}Since the destiny of the stupid man is ^{mr}also mine,
 and it shall befall me,**

- + To what advantage then have I' been wise?
 +Hence I spoke in my heart, ^w This ^{mr}too is vanity.**

FRUIT OF TOIL

Next he returns to survey the fruit of his toil wherein he had toiled under the sun. But this again appears hateful in the light of death, and the necessity of leaving it to a successor, who may prove to be frivolous. The thought and energy expended in the accumulation of goods do not even guarantee that after his departure they will be used in accordance with his wish. The survey has in all its departments ended in illusion (2:18-23):

- ¹⁶ **For there is no remembrance ^λof the wise man
^{wi}or the stupid man for the eon;
 In the days which are already coming
 everyone is forgotten;
 + ^{how}Alas, the wise man [']dies along with the stupid one!**
¹⁷ **+Then I hated [']life,
 For ^{on}to me the ^dwork was evil
^wthat was done under the sun,
 For the whole is vanity and a grazing on wind.**
¹⁸ **And I' hated [']all the fruit of my toil
 for which I was toiling under the sun,
^wThat I would [']leave to the ^hman
 who shall ^bcome after me.**
¹⁹ **+ ^aWho knows^l if he shall be [']a wise or a frivolous man?
 +Yet he shall have authority [']over all the fruit
 of my toil for which I toiled,
 And in which I was wise under the sun;
 This ^{mr}too is vanity.**
²⁰ **+So I' turned around again ^λwith despair⁻ [']in my heart
 Over all the fruit of toil for which
 I had toiled under the sun.**
²¹ **For there is a ^hman whose fruit of toil is
 in wisdom and in knowledge and in success,**

- +Yet to another ^hman who has not toiled ⁱfor it,
he must ^lgive it as his portion;
This ^{mr}too is vanity and a ^{mm}great evil.**
- 22 For what is ^bcoming to a ^hman ⁱfor all his toil,
And ⁱfor the shepherding of his heart
which he is toiling under the sun?**
- 23 For all his days, pains and vexation are his experience;
Even in the night his heart will not lie still;
This ^{mr}too, it is vanity.**

THIS TOO IS FROM ELOHIM

The knowledge the Assembler has gained is now summed up and wisely related to the hand of Elohim (2:24-26):

- 24 There is nothing better ⁱfor a ^hman
than ^wthat he should eat and [~]drink
And cause [~]his soul to [~]see good ⁱfrom his toil;
This ^{mr}too I [~]see that it is from the hand of Elohim.**
- 25 For ^awho can ^leat, and ^awho can have ^lpleasure
outside ^{of} ⁷Him^{~cs}?**
- 26 For to the ^hman who is well pleasing before Him,
He gives wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing;
<sup>+Yet to the sinner^l He gives the experience
of gathering[~] and of collecting[~] together,
To give it to one who is well pleasing
before the One, Elohim;
This ^{mr}too is vanity and a grazing on wind.</sup>**

These concluding verses gather up the results. Thus far the experiment has shown that while the processes have been satisfactory and enjoyable the result has invariably been disappointing, even despairingly so when considered in light of the future. Evidence forces the conclusion that present enjoyment is man's only portion. But the important thought occurs that even appreciation of life as it passes is a gift of God, and is not in the power of the seeker.

V. Gelesnoff

FROM THE HAND OF ELOHIM

OUR EXPERIENCE of evil (Ecc.1:13) includes the discovery that nothing on earth is permanent. "All the deeds that are done under the sun, . . . behold, the whole is vanity and a grazing on wind" (1:14). All our efforts and all our gains of good are transitory. We toil and strive with our hands, concentrate and examine with our minds, seeking for our wants and needs, but the pleasures and satisfactions do not last. The figure of speech used here is appropriate; it is like "grazing on wind."

Yet this is *given* to us by God. It is from His hand (Ecc. 1:13; 2:24-26).

GIVEN BY GOD

None of us are rulers in Jerusalem, of the line of David, and few have the means and opportunity to apply our minds and hands as the Assembler could do. But his endeavors and investigations were given to him by God, and our toil and learning have also been given to us by God. We do learn from his reports here in Ecclesiastes, but we verify the truth of what he says by our own experiences. The important lesson for us in this book is to recognize, as the Assembler recognized, that whatever experiences we have and whatever lessons we learn from them are from God's hand.

It is true that we make decisions and do things with our hands. But if we trace our experiences only to ourselves and do not recognize the hand of God behind them all, then we must despair. The Assembler faced all *his deeds* that

his hands had done (2:11). But in the end he associated the experience and the lessons learned with the hand of *Elohim* (2:24).

HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

The Assembler applied his heart, or as we would say today, his mind, “to know wisdom” and such opposites of wisdom as “raving and frivolity” (1:17). This brought him a great deal of *vexation* and *pain* (1:18). He sought mirth (2:2) and frivolity associated with wine (2:3). He accumulated houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, reservoirs of water, servants, cattle and flocks, silver and gold, music and rich delights (2:4-8).

Most of us cannot accumulate such riches, though, to be honest, we do struggle for things that appeal. But wisdom acknowledges in truth, they do not give us lasting pleasure or real contentment anymore than his accumulations gave lasting pleasure to the Assembler.

To be sure, the Assembler found that this wisdom of knowing the vanity of frivolity was far better than the frivolity (Ecc.2:13). But this only temporized the frustration, for “the destiny of the stupid man is also mine, and it shall befall me. To what advantage then have I been wise?” (2:14,15).

This led the Assembler to exclaim, “Then I hated life . . . and I hated all the fruit of my toil for which I was toiling under the sun, that I would leave to the man who shall come after me” (2:17,18).

THIS TOO

All advantages are temporary and relative. Wisdom is better than frivolity, but in the end the wise toiler dies and the stupid, frivolous person dies. If they have gained some good, it is left to someone else. “This too is vanity” (2:19); “this too is vanity and a great evil” (2:21). Not only this,

but even while alive, those who toil diligently with pain and vexation are troubled with unrest even in the night, and “this too, it is vanity” (2:23).

As a whole, the best that can be said is that the enjoyment of good is better than stupidity, even though both are transitory. “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and cause his soul to see good from his toil” (2:24).

Having said this, the Assembler changes his refrain from observing “This too is vanity,” to “This too is from the hand of *Elohim*.” The good of enjoying the fruit of one’s labor is fleeting, and so it certainly is vanity, like everything else. But it is good, nevertheless, and the Assembler seizes the point, adding to it that vital recognition of God that gives Ecclesiastes its special place and value among human assessments of human experience.

The new observation, “This too is from the hand of *Elohim*,” is like the old observation, “This too is vanity,” in one respect at least. Both assessments include the little word “too.” All these human experiences are vanity, or transitory. But they also are all from the hand of God.

“HE GIVES”

It is *Elohim* Who *gives* the relative goodness of “wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing” to the one who “is well pleasing before Him” (2:26a). It is also *Elohim* Who *gives* the experience of gathering possessions which ultimately must be given to others (2:26b). He gives the fleeting goodness to some, and He gives the fleeting-ness of gathering and collecting to all, for all are sinners.

In this, as we have insisted, lies the value of the Assembler’s wisdom. Compared with the revelations given to Paul, for example, the book of Ecclesiastes takes us only a small step forward in appreciation of God. But the recognition of God as the One Who gives human experience

is essential to our appreciation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The death of Christ on the cross tells us nothing great or glorious about God unless it is from the hand of God. The salvation of sinners tells us nothing of God's power and love unless it is from the hand of God. Our calling and expectation reveals nothing about God's grace and purpose unless they are from His hand.

PRESENT DANGERS

We live in a world where the recognition of God is denigrated. The traditional, religious presentation of God as an arbitrary tyrant full of eternal wrath against bad people and favoritism toward others for uncertain purposes, is much to blame for this. There are other powerful influences involved, indeed, but whatever the reasons, the fact remains that agnosticism is growing in the minds of modern humanity.

In anger, even in mild annoyance, God is cursed in everyday speech apart from much confidence in His existence, let alone a recognition of Him as the Source of all things. The language is intended to tell more about the speaker than anything whatever about God.

God is also sometimes spoken of more favorably, even prayed to, in formal, ritualistic, pious ways apart from any deep conviction that He is there. This also is done more to bring attention to the human being than the One Who gives us all, and upon Whom we rely for breath and life and meaning for existence.

Consequently, the book of Ecclesiastes is a most valuable portion of God's Word for mankind today. It faces the issues and problems of human experience honestly and forcefully. But more than this, it does so, clearly tracing these experiences to the hand of God, from which all experiences truly come.

D.H.H.