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**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JULY 1999
BEING THE FOURTH NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY**

EDITORIAL

WE have long given more attention to important, scriptural revelations which have been neglected (and often denied) by other ministries than we have to those we hold in common with all our brethren. Faith in God, our Creator and Father, finding joy and peace in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ Who died for our sakes, was roused from the dead, ascended and exalted, Who is our life and expectation—these, and many other teachings of God’s Word are shared with us by thousands upon thousands who have never heard of our little magazine or even the Concordant Version. And among those who *have* heard of our ministry are many who bitterly oppose it, and yet we recognize that we stand together with them on vital and basic issues at which the world in general scoffs.

It would seem better and wiser from the standpoint of human power and influence to seek out ways toward agreement so that the fundamental truth of God’s love in Christ might be advanced without all the present in-fightings and jealousies and political ambitions. Yet this is not the way set forth in the Scriptures; indeed it is rightly so that it should not even be considered. For truth is truth, and if it is diluted or compromised, whatever the motivation, it can no longer be the truth that mankind so desperately needs.

This is not to say that we see our ministry as wrestling with those of our brethren who have distorted the truth of the evangel. This would be contrary to Paul’s reminder in Ephesians 6:12. Like Paul, we would speak boldly and beseech prayers from our readers that we may do so (Eph. 6:18-20). But we must speak apart from anger and self-promotion, in accord with the disposition of Christ (Phil.2:5-8).

We would speak the truth with the realization that we all are members of one another (Eph.4:25).

It is difficult to understand how the evangel of God's gratuitous grace and vast love can appear so dangerous to believers, and how the truth of God's deity, that He is operating all things toward a goal of universal reconciliation and good can seem so threatening to spiritual growth, yet God's Word has made it plain that this would be so. We continue to point to such revelations from the Scriptures.

God is the Source of all things (a continuing theme throughout this issue). He has a purpose for evil, for judgment, for the many puzzling and transitory experiences of our lives. And He brings out the good end which He has purposed, apart from any contribution of our good works, in His grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus.

We testify to these true declarations of God's Word not in fear of the opposition they seem to arouse, and not in any spirit of pride or self-advancement, but with feelings much as Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:16. "For if I should be bringing the evangel, it is not for me to boast in, for necessity is lying upon me, for it were woe to me if I should not be bringing the evangel!" How can we not speak of the living God Who is the Saviour of all mankind? For we rely on Him. How can we not speak of the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God? For He has commended His love to us while we are still sinners.

We rejoice when other believers announce such a message of grace and seek to glorify God as He reveals Himself in Christ, even if they seem to oppose what they proclaim by additions from human traditions. We would avoid such distortions, though we recognize our own frailties. May God hasten the day when we all will be enlightened with realization of the truth (1 Tim.2:4). In the meantime, let us go forward together as God gives us grace, in making known His Word.

D.H.H.

LIGHT AND LUMINARIES

OUR popular versions do not discriminate between the Hebrew words, *aur* light (Gen.1:3,4), and *maur*, light-(bearer), or luminary (Gen.1:14-16). The herbage of the third day (Gen.1:11-13) could not have lived in total darkness. In my very early years we lived in a four-apartment house with a rather small yard in the rear. I wanted to grow a garden, and was very serious about it. But where? I had a brilliant idea. I would dig a cave under the back-yard and grow my garden in that! I dug quite a hole, but, to my chagrin, we moved to another place, where I could not dig at all. Not till I came to California did we have a garden, and I learned that gardens do not grow without *light!*

Whatever light there was on the earth up to the fourth day seems to have come from invisible sources. The luminaries, with which we are now so well acquainted, could not be seen. These play a very important function during the eons, for they not only give an appreciation of the source of light, and, through it, of God Himself—for He is light—but they are the basis of all time periods. We could hardly measure time without them. We could not set any dates or fill any appointments without such a calendar, or time-piece.

Besides being God's great clock, they are the visible representations of the invisible celestial powers. As the sun "rules" the day, so Christ as the *sun* of righteousness will rule in the day of Yahweh. The moon is not a true luminary, for it only reflects the light instead of giving it forth. So the rulers of darkness have a pale adumbration of the

true light. Moreover, the moon, unlike the sun, is variable, and so the rulers of this darkness, now waxed to the full, will wane to almost complete extinction when the sun competes with it in the day of Christ's glory.

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

THE LAMPSTAND

The light within the tabernacle was very different from that without. Its source is full of significance. The process by which it was made is in highest harmony with the elementary truths of the evangel. It was not a “candlestick,” which burned tallow tapers, but *lamps* which used *olive oil*. It is not by chance that this was produced by *beating* and *crushing* or *pounding*. These bring to our mind the great Antitype, Who is the Light of the world (John 8:12). Just as the olive berries are beaten with a rod in order to loose them from the tree, so He suffered at the hands of the soldiers (Matt.27:30). I once was witness to the beating of an olive tree just outside the window of the

Jewish pension at which I stayed in the new part of Jerusalem. Alas! How little did the Jewish children who did the beating understand of the sufferings of their Messiah which they rehearsed!

THE CRUSHING OF THE BERRIES

But the beating given the berries on the tree did not turn them into oil for the light. A much more painful process was pictured by the various ways in which the oil was expressed. First they are usually crushed into pulp in a stone mill. But this does not extract all of the oil, so that the pulp was sometimes sewn up in canvas or horsehair bags and trodden by the feet of the women. More often still it was put into small flexible baskets and placed under a wooden press operated by a screw or lever. But the clearest oil, such as was used for the lampstand in the tabernacle was extracted by *pounding* (Ex.27:20; 29:40; Lev.24:2; Num.28:5; 1 Kings 5:11 (25)). The same Hebrew stem is used in the recurrent phrase “*pound* their swords into plowshares” (Isa.2:4; Joel 3:10; Micah 4:3).

Thus is provided the illumination which comes from the oil in the seven-branched lampstand. This is the light that is shed abroad in the hearts of all the saints who are privileged to go inside the portiere. This is the illumination which is indispensable for all who desire to have fellowship with God, as set forth by the bread of the presence, and who wish to worship Him, as typified by the golden altar of incense. This is the light that Cain lacked. He sought to have communion with God and to sacrifice to Him in the darkness of unbelief. And today, even in Christendom, are there not myriads of pious religionists who are worshipping in the way of Cain?

The fact that oil is one of the symbols of God's spirit is evident from its use in *anointing* for spiritual *power* in ordaining a priest, a prophet, or a king. But its special sig-

nificance, as seen in the tabernacle, makes it the source of *light*. Darkness hides the *false*, light reveals the *truth*. Hence it is essential in any present offering to the Deity. It was absent from Cain's offering, which shows that it was false. This was confirmed by his later actions. In literal language we are told that, by *faith*, Abel offers to God more of a sacrifice than Cain, through which he was testified to that he is just (Heb.11:4). The light that he had came from believing God, and the lack of light on Cain's part arose from his refusal to accept God's Word. Apart from oil, from truth, from the light of faith, no worship or sacrifice can possibly be acceptable to the Deity.

THE DIM LIGHT

Notwithstanding the fact that the lampstand had seven lamps, the light it shed was not very bright. It was not to be compared with the Shekinah glory behind the inner curtain. Visiting the sites of archaeological explorations, I have seen hundreds of very ancient lamps. They were mostly quite small, shaped like a sauce dish, with an outlet for a wick opposite the handle, and could hardly have given as much light as a modern lamp with a chimney. They were burned all night through, for it was usually considered impossible to sleep in the dark. To say that a man's light had gone out was a feelingful figure of his death.

IMMATURITY

But even this had its significance. The holy place was not perfection. It was only the anteroom to the most holy. It typifies the time which the apostle Paul declared to be immature, an installment, when they saw by means of a mirror, in an enigma (AV, "through a glass darkly," 1 Cor. 13:9-12). Up to the time when Christ, the great Anti-type of all the sacrifices, expired on the cross, the curtain between the holy and most holy places kept out the light

of the glory, so it was comparatively dim in the first compartment, even as it was in Israel before Christ, the Light of the world, offered Himself to God.

THE CURTAIN RENT

But now the curtain is rent! The blinding light of the glory, such as Paul saw when he was called, is illuminating all as never before. Its full significance was never realized by the earlier apostles. Only in Paul's writings do we see the full and final and perfect illumination of the divine presence above the propitiatory. The glory light now shines, not only in the holy of holies, but illumines the holy place also. The very lampstand itself is glorified by its beams. Literally, where there was pardon, there is now justification, where there was redemption, there is now reconciliation. Where there was access to God only through intermediaries, through one nation, now all have access in one spirit to the Father Himself (Eph.1:18).

THE LIGHT OF THE GLORY

In the far future, the new Jerusalem will need no sun or moon to give it light, for the *glory* of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lambkin (Rev.21:23). Then the Shekinah will not be enclosed in walls, hid from mortal gaze, as in the tabernacle and in the temples, for there will be no temple on the new earth. But long before that blessed time, even today, we have this light, in spirit, for we are already a new creation in Christ (2 Cor.5:17). We also have been given a literal intimation of this when the apostle Paul met our God on the Damascus road. He saw a light *above* the brightness of the sun (Acts 26:13). What an appropriate introduction to his ministry! He it is who leads the saints beyond the light of nature, and even beyond the shadowy revelation given to the sacred nation in their holy place. He goes beyond the "veil."

LIGHTS WHOLE TABERNACLE

But we do not enter the holy of holies and close the curtain behind us, so that we no longer have the light of the lampstand or the communion of the table or the worship of the golden altar. No indeed! "Within the veil," that is, inside the central curtain, there is no provision for fellowship or adoration. Shall we then cease to commune with God or offer praise to Him? By no means! The curtain has not been pulled back behind us, so that we are shut out of the holy place. It was not pushed aside to let us through. It was *rent* from the top to the bottom. Now the two holy places are one! *All* is a holy of holies!

THE THREE LIGHTS

The tabernacle brings before us three distinct stages of light. All are of God and were made by Him to reveal Himself; yet they are very different, especially in the degree in which He is illuminated by them. Outside, in the court, the cosmic luminaries, the sun, the moon and the stars, shed the light of *nature*. This was not present inside of the tabernacle, for there were no windows, and the portiere at the doorway had no provision for holding it open. Indeed, it was so arranged that the worshiper had to turn his back to the rising sun in order to enter. Within was the light of *revelation*, the seven branched lampstand in the holy place, which shed its rays upon the bread of communion, and upon the golden altar of worship. And beyond the inner curtain was the Shekinah.

A clear differentiation of these three distinct kinds of light will help much to clarify God's grand methods in revealing Himself. The light in the court was the same as that given to all men in every place. The light in the holy place was only for the priests, the holy ones, the saints. And the glory light in the most holy was only for the chief priest, who entered once a year. He was a type of the entrance

of Christ into the divine presence after His sacrifice for the sin of the world.

LIGHT OF NATURE

Let us never despise the light of nature! *It was created to reveal God*. If men had eyes to see they would find Him and some of His attributes displayed on every side. By means of it God has manifested Himself to all men. His invisible attributes are descried from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His imperceptible power and divinity. God's indignation is not revealed against the irreverence and injustice of men who have no means of knowing about Him. In that case they would not be defenseless. But, with the light of nature, they have no valid excuse (Rom. 1:18-23).

But the light of nature fails woefully in eliciting the *worship* of Adam's race. Notwithstanding the knowledge of the Deity which it does impart, they do not glorify or thank Him as God. They reason, but their heart is not intelligent. Even today the scientists seek to awe the rest of us with their superior wisdom. Yet their continually changing and conflicting theories show them to be stupid. No man, such as I am, is in a position to prefer such a grave charge against his fellows, for he must include himself. But, in His revelation, God has convicted us all of these crimes. It is because of *this* that the race is sunk in a morass of immorality and corruption and contention. Every effort to cure this condition, apart from the recognition of God, is doomed to failure. Only the lights within the tabernacle can bring about eonian bliss.

The book of nature is full of lessons about the Deity. Scripture itself assures us of this. Where else is His infinite power so fully displayed as in the starry heavens? Where else are His inexhaustible resources so evident as in the visible creation? No matter where we look, whether it be

above at the mighty sun stars in their parabolic paths, or at the tiny insect beneath our feet, our hearts exclaim, "The hand that made you is divine!" Why, even if we were blind and deaf and bereft of the sense of smell, our own bodies are replete with superhuman wonders, so that we should bow down in the dust before its mighty Maker.

NATURE IN SCRIPTURE

Indeed, nature provides the illustrations for the book of revelation. It is not merely in accord with it, but much of it could not be understood without it. If there were no heavens and no earth, who could understand the very first sentence? All the way through it, nature provides most of the background, the figures, the symbols which are needed to understand it. Even the material types and shadows, such as the sacrifices and the tabernacle, depend on nature to a large extent for their significance. The natural qualities of wood and metal, plant and animal are woven into the fabric of divine revelation.

LIGHT OF REVELATION

But, alas, men are blinded by the god of this eon. The apprehensions of unbelievers are unable to perceive the Deity in the world about them, and they cannot see through the thick curtain of unbelief which bars God's revelation from them. Is this not typified by the thick portieres which made it impossible for outsiders to see the lampstand, the presence (or "show") bread, and the golden altar, inside the holy place? Christ is the Antitype of them all. All knowledge of God, all communion with Him, and all worship of Him must come through Christ as the Mediator. Yet He is hid behind a thick portiere of unbelief from all except the saints who have been hallowed by His blood, and called by His spirit, through His Word.

A. E. Knoch

God and His Work

FROM GENESIS TO ROMANS

THE PATTERN established in Genesis 1, at the very beginning, is followed throughout the Scriptures. First of all, anything and any person or group treated in God's Word must be seen as created by God. He is responsible for creation (Gen.1:1). Then this basic revelation of divine power is put to the test by the introduction of evil into the situations under consideration, as first traced in Genesis 1:2a. Finally God is seen again in each instance as the One Who successfully deals with the evil toward an appreciative realization of the good which He achieves, as fore-shown in Genesis 1:2b-2:3.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

Certainly this is so with all the scriptures concerning Israel, a nation brought forth and chosen by God which experiences centuries of failure and sorrow, while God all along leads them toward His fulfillment of His promises to them. David, one of many key and characteristic individuals in this nation, was formed by God and brought into many troubles. Often, indeed, these can be traced immediately to David's own faults, but even then, the Word makes it clear that nothing happened to David apart from God. At the end we also see that all the experiences of David are marked out for good, and for the glory of God Who is operating all. Hence David sang (Psa.139:1,5,13,14):

*O Yahweh, You have investigated me . . .
Back and front, You have besieged me,*

*And You set Your palm upon me . . .
 For You Yourself achieved the making
 of my innermost being;
 You overshadowed me in my mother's belly.
 I shall acclaim You,
 for You are fearfully distinguished;
 Marvelous are Your works.*

We can trace this pattern in other portions of the Sacred Scriptures, in the experiences of Job, in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt to the promised land, in the lives of the prophets such as Elijah, Jonah and Jeremiah, and of individuals such as Joseph and Hezekiah and Daniel.

The pattern is especially delineated in the life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in the cross and God's glorious victory, resurrection and exaltation of His Son.

SEVERED FOR THE EVANGEL

The book of Romans, in which Paul presents the evangel of God for which he was severed and which he announced, is a portion of God's Word of great and unique importance to us. And here this pattern established in Genesis 1 is especially apparent, for the evangel expounded in Romans is the revelation of a supremely critical operation of God in carrying out His purpose from creation, through darkness, into glory. Let us trace this pattern through some of the key statements of the evangel in Romans:

ALL OUT OF GOD

"Elohim created the heavens and the earth" (Gen.1:1).

God manifests His power in creating the world and displays it continually in the world that He has created. "For His invisible attributes are described from the creation of the world, being apprehended by His achievements, besides His imperceptible power and divinity" (Rom.1:20).

All is *out* of God (Rom.11:36), including humanity. He has caused our existence.

ALL HAVE SINNED

"As for the earth, it came to be a chaos and vacant, and darkness was over the surface of the abyss" (Gen.1:2a).

But mankind has become irreverent and unrighteous (Rom.1:18), even as the earth became corrupted by chaos, darkness and vacancy. "For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it . . ." (Rom.8:20). Mankind has become involved in this corruption. "All sinned and are wanting of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23).

Romans 1:18 through 3:20, summarized in 3:23 and recalled often throughout the epistle, corresponds with Genesis 1:2a. Sin and offense has corrupted the human race so that "God's indignation is being revealed from heaven on all the irreverence and injustice of men . . ." (Rom.1:18). "Wherefore God gives them over" (Rom. 1:24,26,28). "Wherefore, defenseless are you, O man!" (Rom.2:1). "For there is no partiality with God, for whoever sinned without law, without law also shall perish, and whoever sinned in law, through law will be judged. For not the listeners to law are just with God, but the doers of law shall be justified" (Rom.2:11,12); ". . . for we previously charge both Jews and Greeks to be all under sin" (Rom.3:9); ". . . by works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight" (Rom.3:20).

"Therefore . . . through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned" (Rom. 5:12); ". . . it was through one offense for all mankind for condemnation" (Rom.5:18); ". . . through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners" (Rom. 5:19). "For I am aware that good is not making its home in

me (that is, in my flesh), for to will is lying beside me, yet to be effecting the ideal is not" (Rom.7:18).

"Consequently, then, it is not of him who is willing, nor of him who is racing, but of God" (Rom.9:16). "Or has not the potter the right over the clay . . . ?" (Rom.9:21). "For God locks up all together in stubbornness" (Rom.11:32). All is "through" God (Rom.11:36).

GRATUITOUS GRACE

"And Elohim said: Let light come to be!" (Gen.1:3a).

Now, corresponding to these words of Genesis 1:3, God speaks to us with His good news. His words are true and full of power:

"Yet now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is manifest . . . yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith, for all, and on all who are believing Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus . . . where, then, is boasting?" (Rom.3:21,22,23,27). ". . . God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes" (Rom.5:8).

"The grace of God and the gratuity in grace, which is of the One Man, Jesus Christ, to the many superabounds" (Rom.5:15); ". . . it is through one just award for all mankind for life's justifying" (Rom.5:18); ". . . through the obedience of the One, the many shall be constituted just" (Rom.5:19).

"I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom. 7:25). "For what was impossible to the law . . . did God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh and concerning sin, He condemns sin in the flesh, that the just requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us" (Rom.8:3). "Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose that, whom He foreknew, He designates

beforehand also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also" (Rom.8:28-30). "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?" (Rom.8:32).

It is "of God, the Merciful . . . that He should be merciful to all" (Rom.9:16; 11:32). "O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable are His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and *for Him* is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!" (Rom.11:33-36).

LET GOD BE TRUE!

"And it became light" (Gen.1:3b).

The question regarding the evangel now becomes, "Will the righteousness and power and love spoken of in the evangel actually come to pass? Will that which the evangel declares to be so come about in realization and appreciation? Is it true, as the evangel declares, that God justifies and glorifies us whom He has foreknown and designated and called? Who would say no to this? Surely the declarations of good news in the evangel of God will become a fully realized reality for the believer. And this will be so not for the believer alone, but for all of whom the evangel speaks.

This is *because* of God, Whose expectation is "that the creation itself, also, shall be freed from the slavery of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom.8:21).

Despite all the traditions viewing God's justice in terms of final, eternal torment or hopeless annihilation and view-

ing God's grace in terms of a divine offer requiring human cooperation or in terms of an arbitrary divine election as an end in itself, despite all the claims of mature and respectable teachers in support of such mysterious dogmas, and despite the human failures and obscurity of those who have shared our viewpoint, we still must see the "well-message" of our deliverance and justification and expectation of glory as fully out of God, granted gratuitously in God's grace, solely through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus. The account of creation which opens the Scriptures themselves should guard against perversions of God and His ways.

"Now let God be true, yet every man a liar, even as it is written: 'That so Thou shouldst be justified in Thy sayings, and shalt be conquering when Thou art being judged'" (Rom.3:4). Paul speaks here of God's promises for Israel, which he insists will be faithfully performed by God despite Israel's unfaithfulness. It is true for us as well. What God has said, He will perform, just as His words in Genesis 1 concerning life and light on the earth came to be so.

GETTING IT RIGHT

This is not to say that teachers and theologians and clergymen and Bible students always get it wrong. The message concerning Jesus Christ is so clearly given in God's Word that we cannot escape it altogether. Indeed as believers we must be impressed and humbled with rejoicing, at least to some measure of realization at some point, by the overwhelming grace of our Lord (*cf* 1 Tim.1:14). A case in point is the remark of one of the editors of a popular "evangelical" magazine recently made in introducing an attempt to define the gospel: David Neff writes, "Human beings seem to have an infinite capacity for getting things wrong, and unfortunately, we have often gotten the gospel wrong, looking for ways to take some of the credit for our

own rescue or fearing that giving God all the credit robs sinners of responsibility."¹

Even here, the use of the word "responsibility" suggests that the evangel (or "gospel") places an obligation on the sinner which, whether claimed or not, opens the way for us to take some of the credit. A better term might have been "responsiveness" since the evangel does produce a response in the one who believes it as Paul shows us in Romans 6:2-17, for instance. But our response to the evangel is not the evangel itself, much less a requirement on our part that makes the evangel true. It is of greatest value to us in our response to the evangel to avoid the human tendencies this brother speaks of, and to see that the evangel is all of God, wholly in His grace.

THAT WHICH CALLS US

The sinner's response in faith, our daily walk, divine judgment, appreciation and praise and prayer and spiritual growth, these are all scriptural topics that have been wrongly presented and used as though they were part of the evangel. The evangel is not a set of instructions or even some sort of offer, but an *announcement* of good news concerning what God *has done* in Christ.

The Galatians distorted that evangel which called them in the grace of Christ (Gal.6,7). It announced that we are justified "by the faith of Christ and not by works of law" (Gal. 2:16). Paul says it tells of the Son of God, "Who loves me, and gives Himself up for me" (Gal.2:20), and this is what it says to each of us personally. "Now may it not be mine to be boasting, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal.6:14).

The testimony of Galatians is the testimony of Romans and that of all of Paul's epistles. It is in the pattern of Genesis 1 where the facts of God's deeds in creating and speak-

1. *Christianity Today*, June 14, 1999, p.50.

ing and calling and seeing are recorded. What is said in Genesis 1 impresses and affects those who believe it, especially in appreciation of God. Similarly, the evangel speaks of facts, and the facts concern what God does and what He achieves. And this has good effects on the believer.

OBJECTIVE TRUTH

We may complain that this makes the evangel itself too objective; it may seem academic and lifeless, a matter of “cold, hard facts.” The evangel certainly is a message of uncompromising facts. But the facts are not cold. We are sinners and helpless, but the warm and vitalizing fact is that Christ died for our sins. The truth is not something we have made true by our acts or feelings or the carrying out of responsibilities. God is the One Who foreknew and designates and calls and justifies and glorifies us (Rom.8:29,30). This is a message of happiness, comfort and peace, and a message of power.

The objective facts announced in the evangel do become subjectively part of the believer’s thinking and living. It is the fact that God’s love is commended to us in the death of His Son for sinners which led Paul and leads us into the subjectively felt, joyful and assuring persuasion that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom.8:38,39). It is the objective truth that in the death of Christ “we died to sin” and that even as He was roused from among the dead “we shall be of the resurrection also” that we are invigorated to be walking in newness of life (Rom.6:2-11).

It is ideal, then, to understand the lessons of Genesis which center, of necessity, on God Himself. It is ideal to appreciate this pattern, and also to recognize it again and again throughout the Word of God. And it is especially ideal to understand and recognize and hold fast to this pattern as it exists in the evangel of our salvation. D.H.H.

The One Who is Operating All

“WHY, THEN, IS HE STILL BLAMING?”

IT IS a great advance in faith to truly accept the basic truth of divine revelation that *all is of God*. Even so, while one may *accept* that it is the teaching of Scripture that, ultimately speaking, all is out of, through, and for God, one may still find this teaching problematic or even troubling.

Such unrest and worrisomeness over questions of God’s deity is by no means surprising among members of our society, in which the teaching of free will holds such a central place and is considered to be the touchstone of righteousness. As the English mathematician and philosopher Whitehead so astutely observed, “Western peoples exhibit on a colossal scale a peculiarity which is supposed to be more especially characteristic of the Chinese. Surprise is often expressed that a Chinaman can be of two religions, a Confucian for some occasions and a Buddhist for other occasions But there can be no doubt that an analogous thought is true of the West, and that the two attitudes involved are inconsistent. A scientific realism, based on mechanism, is conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men and of the higher animals as being composed of self-determining organisms. This radical inconsistency at the basis of modern thought accounts for much that is half-hearted and wavering in our civilisation. It would be going too far to say that it distracts thought. It enfeebles it, by reason of the inconsistency lurking in the background.”¹

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *SCIENCE AND THE MODERN WORLD*, p.73 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925).

If all is of God, however, it does indeed follow that the popular notion of freewill responsibility is false. This is so notwithstanding the fact that freewill responsibility is the foundational assumption of western ethics and jurisprudence, even as the implicit if not explicit dogma of the home, the church, and the school.

Ironically, those who rail against the teaching of God's deity, in so doing, only expose their own worldliness. They fail to realize that the present state of one's conscience is not the arbiter of truth, even as that societal mores are not decisive in the determination of righteousness.

It is not difficult to see how, long ago, free will became the morally-acceptable, societal norm, every way of a man seeming right in his own eyes and the wish becoming the father of the claim. The Latin saying, *Abeunt studia in mores*, sums it up well: "Practices zealously pursued pass into habits."

There is nothing more characteristic of the flesh than its desire to be independent of God; hence, its aversion to any thought of divine determination and control in the affairs of men. And, there is nothing more desirable to the flesh than the maintenance of self-pride; hence, the repudiation of the teaching of God's deity, since it leaves no room for self-pride.

It is often confidently claimed that the teaching that God judges men for their acts even though their acts fulfill His intention, "makes no sense," and is "unjust." In saying that this teaching of God's deity makes no sense, the thought is that it is absurd; and, in saying that it is unjust, the thought is that it is contrary to morality.

Any such claims, however—which are the principal bulwarks of free will—are purely subjective in nature, and can only be true themselves, if free will itself, first of all, is true. Obviously, if the teaching of free will is true, then the teaching of God's deity which contradicts it, is absurd

and unjust. But to assert, *a priori*, that the teaching of God's deity is absurd and unjust—apart from having proved free will to be true—is, at once, the moral failure of conceit as well as the fallacy of circular reasoning.²

The fact that such invalid arguments are nonetheless so persuasive and pervasive, and seem so upright to nearly all, merely evinces the power of conceit and prejudice—as well as the baneful, widespread effects of paucity of reasoning skills.

Let us not somehow feel "guilty" for believing that all is of God (and that free will, therefore, is false). We should instead recognize that the fact that to most people the denial of free will seems deeply absurd and unjust, is not any indication whatsoever that it *is* absurd and unjust.

Even if unwittingly, those who advocate free will nearly always appeal to their own sense of rectitude concerning this issue, implicitly equating that which *seems* right to them with that which actually *is* right, in fact. Yet if we who deny free will were to appeal to *our* own sense of rectitude concerning this question, likewise implicitly equating that which seems right to us with that which actually is right, our opposers, quite properly, would not be slow to expose any such "appeals to man."

Those who cannot wholeheartedly and unreservedly affirm that whatever the Scriptures actually reveal is true, and whatever God actually does is right, are disqualified even to approach this issue concerning God's deity and the question of free will. Those who claim that they would gladly believe that all is of God if this were truly the scriptural teaching who at the same time insist that this selfsame teaching is unreasonable and unjust, expose their own hypocrisy.

2. Circular reasoning, or "begging the question" (*petitio principii*), occurs when the premises presume, openly or covertly, the very conclusion that is to be demonstrated.

Few there are who are not ready to join voices with Paul's representative *protestor* of Romans 9:19 in declaring, "Why, then, is He still blaming? for who has withstood His intention?" This protest is entered in response to the protestor's own consideration of the preceding propositions made by the apostle: (1) The children not of the flesh but of the promise are those whom God reckons for the seed (Rom.9:8); (2) The blessing of Jacob instead of Esau was such that the purpose of God might be remaining as His own choice, not out of acts (Rom.9:11); (3) God will be merciful to whomever He may be merciful and be pitying whomever He may be pitying (Rom.9:15); (4) Consequently, then, it is not of him who is willing, nor of him who is racing, but of God, the Merciful. For the scripture is saying to Pharaoh that, "For this selfsame thing I rouse you up, so that I should be displaying in you My power, and so that My name should be published in the entire earth." Consequently, then, to whom He will, He is merciful, *yet whom He will, He is hardening* (Rom.9:16-18).

It is at this juncture that the *protestor* rejoins (as Paul puts it, "You will be *protesting* to me, then"): "*Why, then, is He still blaming, for who has withstood His intention?*"

It is vital to note that these words are not those of an innocent inquirer, asking in faith, nothing doubting, but of a vocal *protestor*, one who does not hesitate to drag the Deity before the bar of his own justice.

The protestor is not actually asking a question at all, but is instead entering a criticism. He is using a figure of speech, termed Rhetorical Question, in which a question is asked merely for effect, with no answer expected. The sense of the protestor's rhetorical question is this: "*It is wrong, then, for God to blame Pharaoh [for example], since God Himself hardened his heart, and, since his disobedience in which he resisted the revealed will of God was the fulfillment of God's own intention.*"

In replying, Paul answers this *protest* thus, by a rhetorical question of his own in which he declares:³

"O man! *who are you*, to be sure, who are answering again to God? That which *is* molded will not protest to the molder, 'Why do you make me thus?' Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor?" (Rom.9:20,21).

The protestor entirely ignores that it is *God* Who does these things. No one has the right to be "answering back" to God; by insinuation, effectually informing Him of what He must do if He should wish to maintain His righteous character. O man! *who are you*, to be sure, who are answering again to God?

Remarkably, in replying to his protestor, rather than somehow "backing off" under the supposed weightiness of the protestor's argument, Paul seeks instead to put him in his place through the use of metaphors, ones which, far from constituting a denial of God's deity, rather illustrate and confirm it. Paul has gone to considerable lengths to show that the human is that which *is* molded of God, and now only adds that it is not befitting that which is molded to *protest* to the Molder, saying, "Why do you make me thus?" (that is, "How dare you, God, if indeed You are righteous, *make* me the way that I am?").

By speaking of the *right* of the potter over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor, Paul makes it clear that, among men, God has the right—and is right in exercising that right—to make men thus: some as "*vessels* of indignation, adapted for destruction" (Rom.9:22), and others, as "*vessels* of mercy,

3. The apostle does not herein directly respond to the literal question which one might well ask who is simply seeking enlightenment as to *why* it is so, in fact, that God nonetheless "blames" those who fulfill His intention.

which He makes ready before for glory—us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also” (Rom.9:23,24).

WISDOM AND GOODNESS IN JUDGING

In the preceding exposition, “Divine Foreknowledge and Its Significance,” I proved that the correct understanding of Paul’s words in Romans 11:36, “seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all,” is that all that exists and all that occurs, except for God Himself, is out of, through, and for God. Accordingly, I affirmed that since this truth precludes the validity of the ethical notion termed “free will,” free will cannot be true. I also proved that since both determinism and indeterminism or any combination of the two preclude free will, free will is therefore not only a false notion but a notion concerning which it is impossible to give any objective account of how it might exist. Finally, in addressing the subject of divine foreknowledge, I proved that the existence of God’s knowledge of those events of which the future consists, entails the necessity of the consequence, namely that of the inevitability of the events foreknown, which teaching also precludes free will.

Now, at present, on behalf of those who have understood and accepted those previous considerations, as well as that stressed already in this present writing as to it being so that God *is* righteous and wise in blaming men for their wrongdoing even though their wrongdoing is according to His intention, the following thoughts are set forth.

Only one who has come this far is in any position to go any farther. This is because, logically, acceptance of truth precedes understanding of truth. God, first of all, *informs* us of what is true and what is right. It is only through His further granting of wisdom and insight that the *wisdom* of truth and the *rightness* of righteousness become more evident, and, more explicable.

Those whose settled response to truth is to pass it by unrecognized, since, to them, it is “absurd and unjust,” seem beyond human help. Still, we must remember that those who may indeed be beyond our ability to convince, are by no means beyond God’s ability to enlighten. We may be assured that in God’s own time, all will come into a realization of truth, for it is the will of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will that this should occur (*cp* 1 Tim.2:4; Eph.1:11).

Since even after we accept the truth that God nonetheless judges those who, ultimately, are not responsible for their actions, we may not see why this should be so, let us freely make our requests known to God concerning this question. That is, let us, then, prayerfully and reverently, in humility and meekness—not at all in a spirit of protest and unbelief, but in an attitude of faith and trust—simply *ask* our God and Father to enlighten us as to why it is so—seeing that it *is* so—that He “blames” His creatures for their wrongdoing, even though, therein, they have fulfilled His intention.

Now, for some, it may be God’s wisdom for them to remain in such a spirit of confidence and trust for an extended period, without His granting their request for understanding. If so, however, this may become a most salutary experience in itself, for how wonderful it is for us to grow simply in confidence and trust in God, which, at least for a time, may be taught best in the absence of the justification of truth instead of through its presence.

I would say, however, that insofar as the Scripture enlightens us on this issue and I myself am able to perceive, the answer to our question here may be found in the answer to the wider question, Why does evil exist? specifically, Why, in the universe of the almighty and all-wise God, Who is love, does evil exist? The answer to this question is that God is doing all things well; that, specifically, in order that

His own glory as *Saviour* might be made known, and that His creatures might enjoy the greater blessing of *deliverance* from sin and evil than that of never having experienced these maladies, God has wisely ordered that sin and evil should exist. If Christ would become our Saviour, He must first be crucified. Sin and evil, then, are indispensable to the greater, permanent good.⁴

It is not casting any disagreeable reflections on the Almighty to say He determined all things for good. Indeed, it is glorious to learn not only that there is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, but that we are “for Him”: “There is one God, the Father, out of Whom all is, *and we for Him*” (1 Cor.8:6a). Why are we here? For what purpose do we exist? The answer is, “for God”; that is, for God Himself, even as for His purpose in which we have a place. Just think of it: God actually has a *purpose* for each one of us, that we should exist rather than not exist and that His goal concerning us should be realized. Each one of us, then, is important to God; and, lest His purpose concerning any one of us should fail, He has ordered the universe in such a way that all is out of Him and through Him; all, in the end, being for Him as well.

To say that God “blames” us for our sins (even though

4. It is true that the measure of evil which exists will result in greater glory and blessing than that which would have resulted from a lesser measure of evil. It does not follow from this, however, that a greater measure of evil ought to obtain than that which, in fact, obtains. The will of God is not confined solely to issues of ultimate glory and salvation. It encompasses His present desires as well, including whatever present experiences of life He wishes to grant to each one of His creatures. In kind and degree, God gives humanity that particular “experience of evil” (Ecc.1:13; cf John 3:27) which accords with His wisdom and desire. This is evident, for all that God desires, He does (Psa.115:3; cf Isa.46:9-11). God is not simply operating all, but He is doing so according to the counsel of His own perfect will. Therefore, all things considered, our world is the best of all possible worlds.

our sins are ultimately sourced in His counsels), is simply to say that God *charges* us with wrongdoing where we have done wrong.⁵ As the Authorized Version has it, God “finds fault” with us. Hence, since we thus *are* “at fault” (that is, simply in the sense that we *have* done wrong), it should not be surprising that God charges us accordingly.

It is true, however, that our *liability* for our wrongdoing, is also hereby connoted, indeed, that it is entailed. That is, it is true that we who have engaged in wrongdoing, are not only charged therewith, but are also subject to whatever consequences God deems appropriate for that self-same wrongdoing.

Pragmatically, however, why should this surprise us? It is simply a fact—however we came by our sinfulness—that, in so many things, both our deeds and our motives *are* sinful; frequently, they are very sinful. Those who are sinful both in heart and hand, are sinful indeed, *and, are therefore in need of judgment*. That is, the sinner is in a terrible way. He must not be left to himself, simply to continue on in his refractoriness interminably. Here it is not a question whether the sinner is ultimately freewill-responsible for his own corrupt condition; the vital consideration is simply that neither Justice nor Love can ignore Sin.

It is true that our injustice serves God's purpose, in that by way of contrast, it commends His own righteousness. It is not true, however, that God—Who, through Christ, Who is the Emblem of God's assumption (in this case, that of God's assumption of “indignation”; Heb.1:3)—is unjust in “bringing on indignation” (that is, in subjecting the sinner to His own wisely contrived indignation, notwithstanding the good purpose which man's injustice serves; Rom.3:5). Even as Paul declares, “May it not be coming to that! Else

5. Nothing concerning free will follows from this fact; hence no such notion should be read into the text.

how shall God be judging the world?" (Rom.3:6). That is, since man's injustice serves God's *purpose* (and, it is true, is purposed of Him), it must not be imagined that man is therefore somehow to be exempted from judgment. Else (that is, If that were true), it would be impossible for God to judge the world at all.

Therefore, the sinner—for the glory of God as well as for his own good, and certainly according to his own need—is to be subjected to God's own *justice*, which, like all of the divine attributes, is in accord with the essence of God's nature, which is *love* (1 John 4:8). For the unbeliever, this will consist of "chastening in the day of judging" (2 Peter 2:9). "Chastening" (*kolasis*) is judgment which, though it may entail penalty, is nonetheless imposed *with a view to amendment* (cf Acts 4:21). Aristotle distinguishes "chasten," which is *disciplinary* (cf Heb.12:7-13) and has reference to the one who suffers, from "punish" (*timōreō*), which is inherently penal and has reference to the satisfaction of the one who inflicts (cf KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, entries "chasten" [p.47] and "punish" [p.236]).

Thus, through such considerations as these, we are learning why God, Who is love, is "still blaming" men for their sins. While their sins fulfill His present intention, they do so only with a view to the realization of His ultimate goal, which is to glorify His own name as Saviour, and to bless His creatures in such a way that would be quite impossible apart from the temporary presence of sin. O, the *depth* of the riches and the *wisdom* and the knowledge of God! (Rom.11:33a). How we marvel and praise our God and Father in consideration of His operation of all and His wisdom concerning all. Even as the Psalmist declares, "Behold, You delight in truth even in the hidden parts, and in the secret parts You cause me to know wisdom" (Psa.51:6). Hence we declare again, What a joy, and what a peace, in believing (Rom.15:13)! J.R.C.

THE ELUSIVENESS OF GOD'S ANOINTED

(1 Samuel 19:1-10)

19 + Saul ^{bp}urged > his son Jonathan and > all his courtiers to ^cput David to death⁻. +But Saul's son Jonathan had taken intense delight in David. ²+So Jonathan ⁱtold > David, > saying⁻, My father Saul is seeking to ^cput you to death. + ^{now}Therefore ^{pr}do be on guard in the morning! + You must ststay in concealment and hide yourself. ³+As for me, I shall go forth and I will stand >by the side of my father in the field where you are. + I' shall speak ⁱabout you to my father; +then what I ^{see}observe, + I will tell > you. ⁴+So Jonathan ⁱspoke well ⁱof David to his father Saul. + He ^ssaid to him, Let not the king sin ⁱagainst his servant, ⁱagainst David, for he has not sinned >against you, and ⁱhis ^ddeeds have been of very good service to you. ⁵+When he ^{bt}took his soul in his palm and ^ssmote the Philistine, and Yahweh ^{ld}wrought a great victory for all Israel, you saw it and ^rrejoiced. Why +then should you sin ⁱagainst innocent blood >by ^cputting David to death⁻ gratuitously? ⁶+ Saul ^hhearkened ⁱto Jonathan's voice, and Saul ^sswore, As Yahweh lives, he shall assuredly not be ^cput to death! ⁷+ Jonathan ⁱcalled > David, and Jonathan ⁱtold > him all these words. +Then Jonathan ⁱbrought David to Saul, and he ^{bw}was >in his presence as heretofore.

⁸+When there >^bwas war ⁱagain, + David sallied ^fforth and ^ffought ⁱagainst the Philistines; + he ^ssmote ⁱthem with a great blow so +that they ^ffled ⁱin view of him. ⁹+Now the evil spirit from Yahweh ^{bc}came >on Saul, +while he was sit-

ting in his house +with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp +with his hand. ¹⁰ + Saul sought to smite David +with the spear + into the sidewall; +yet he dodged from Saul's presence, +as he smote the spear into the sidewall. +So David fled and escaped.

A TYPE OF CHRIST

IT WAS no secret that Saul was seeking to put David to death. Jonathan knew it (1 Sam. 19:1-7) along with all Saul's courtiers; Michael knew it (19:11-17), and certainly David knew it well from those who warned him and from his own personal experience. For the third time in two chapters, we read that Saul tried to kill David by thrusting a spear through him (two times in 1 Samuel 18:10,11, and then here in 19:9,10). These three attempts were all made, while David sat in the same room with Saul, playing the harp, trying to comfort the troubled man. Should the martial skills of the king be called into question? How does one armed only with a harp escape in such close quarters? How does one repeatedly escape, who is chased all over the countryside by the king and his army? And, amidst his fugitive ramblings, the hunted repeatedly finds time to deliver and aid the very nation that is hunting him.

David was typical of Christ in the many attempts that were made upon his life, and he also represents Christ in his elusiveness to Saul's persecution. How did the Lord Jesus escape, when the whole synagogue and a growing crowd thrust Him from the synagogue and the city, and then carried Him to the bluff to throw Him headlong to His death (Luke 4:16-30)? How did He twice escape when they had picked up stones to stone Him (John 8:59; 10:31-39)? The answer is hidden in the very reason the Jews wanted to kill Christ.

The identity of Christ was the crucial question in all these circumstances. At Nazareth they asked, "Is not this

Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22). In Jerusalem, the Jews could not abide such a statement as, "Ere Abraham came into being, I am" (John 8:58). Who was Christ, and who was David? In both cases it can be answered that they were God's Anointed. They each represent the start of the dynasty of the kingdom of God, David as the foreshadow, and Christ as the Reality.

Yet the perfections of Christ so far excel even the character of David. Christ is the Light of life. "And the light is appearing in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not" (John 1:5). The elusiveness of Christ in those situations was much more than a simple use of supernatural power. It was an illustration of truth. Darkness cannot overtake, or overwhelm, or limit light in any way. Light is a positive emanating force. Darkness is the absence of that force. Darkness is negative. Christ is truth and light, and the darkness of mortal humanity, even in the garb of God's chosen nation, could by no means clutch this Light and Truth.

"They pick up stones, then, that they should be casting them at Him. Yet Jesus was hid and came out of the sanctuary. And passing through the midst of them, He went and thus passed by. And, passing along, He perceived a man, blind from birth" (John 8:59-9:1). Even while "escaping" Christ made time to help the needy. And this healing of the blind man stood as a testimony to the very Jews who would have killed Him (John 9:30). To the man born blind, the Jews' quandary over Christ's identity was far more inscrutable than the fact of his healing. As Christ said in the close of the chapter, the Pharisees who were observing were becoming blind to what was before their eyes (John 9:39-41). And the Brilliance surpassing the noonday sun walked through the midst of the blind, and they could not lay their finger on Him, until the Father's appointed time.

J. Philip Scranton

THE TIMES AND SEASONS

IN the First Book, or chapter, of his work Ecclesiastes was wholly occupied with the problems of individual experience in the sphere of mental and technical activity; the Second Book (3:1-4:8) is wider in its outlook: The writer approaches the task of surveying the work of God.

- 3 For everything there is a stated time,
And a season for every event under the heavens:**
- ² A **season to give birth and a season to die;**
A **season to plant and a season
to chop down** what is **planted**;
- ³ A **season to kill and a season to heal;**
A **season to breach and a season to build;**
- ⁴ A **season to weep and a season to make merry;**
A **season of wailing** and a **season of dancing**;
- ⁵ A **season to fling** away **stones** and a **season
to collect** stones together;
A **season to embrace and a season
to stay far from embracing**;
- ⁶ A **season to seek and a season to** ^m**count as lost;**
A **season to keep and a season to fling** away;
- ⁷ A **season to tear and a season to sew;**
A **season to hush and a season to speak;**
- ⁸ A **season to love and a season to hate;**
A **season of war and a season of peace.**

The times and the seasons as a whole are subjected to review. They are introduced with the phrase, "To every-

thing there is a stated time, and a season for every event under the heavens" (3:1). These important words indicate the special points dealt with in this section. Two distinct terms are used, referring to stated (or set) times and appropriate times (or seasons):

The word rendered "stated times" signifies a time definitely set apart for a special purpose, by royal edict or divine appointment, as is clear from its occurrences. It is used in Ezra to denote the time specified by the chief officials for the adjustment of the mixed marriages among the returned captives (Ezra 10:14). Similarly it is used concerning the leave of absence granted to Nehemiah by letters of Artaxerxes (Neh.2:6), the Divine appointments relative to the temple services (Neh.10:34, 13:31), and the establishment of the feast of Purim by decree of Esther and Mordecai (Est.9:27,31).

The meaning which inheres the word translated "season" is clear from its usage in other parts of Ecclesiastes. We will take two of the most typical occurrences. "The wise heart shall know *season* [appropriate time] and judgment" (Ecc.8:5b). Note the setting of the passage. The whole section deals with subjection to authority, and the thought is emphasized that within the limits of obedience to the king there is safety: "He who observes instructions shall know no evil matter" (8:5a). In what follows, Ecclesiastes seems to have in mind the possible objection that resistance to evil is as much of an obligation as submission to right, to which answers Ecclesiastes that the wise know when each is in proper order. Akin to this is a passage further on, "Happy are you, O land, whose king is a son of notables, and whose chiefs eat in *season* for mastery and not for a drunken bout" (Ecc.10:17). The idea is doing a thing in the proper manner at the proper time; its meaning is what we should express by the metaphor of *place*: "Everything is good in its proper place."

The connections, therefore, in which the two terms are used suggest the ideas of divine appointment and appropriateness, so that the import of 3:1 is that, since for every work there is a time divinely determined, the events of our lives must be seen in relation to God's arrangement of things. Hence the idea (developed in Book Four) that events are neither good nor evil in themselves, but according to their relation to God's time of approving them. Hence, too, the thought (which forms the special subject of Book Five) that human happiness does not consist in carrying out one's every wish, but in fitting them with God's season; so that while the drift of things is irresistible, the individual can, by adapting himself to it, achieve satisfaction in his undertakings.

HISTORIC EPOCHS

The times and seasons spoken of in Ecclesiastes 3:1, then, are the predetermined times which pass over Israel and over all the kingdoms of the countries (1 Chron.29:29), the phases in the experience of nations which constitute historic epochs, the historic stages which mark the accomplishment of God's purpose among the nations of the world.

That this is the meaning is abundantly clear, not only from the scope of the passage, but also from the usage of the same phrases in other parts of Scripture. Can anyone believe, for example, that there is a proper time for any individual to kill and to heal? What are we to make of "a time to heal" according to this interpretation? Can one heal or restore the life of his fellow man which he has taken away? When all the passages where the same phrase is used are read together it becomes evident that the expression "kill and heal" refers to the administration of justice, the sentencing and pardoning of transgressors against civil law. In this poetic enumeration of the times and seasons our author unfolds a procession of history,

the great underlying principles of historic movements. The piecemeal experiences which make up the history of nations are passed in review, each touched with that marvelous felicity of descriptive suggestion which is the chief charm of the Assembler's style.

The seasons are twenty-eight in number. They commence with "birth," (3:2a) i.e., creation, when God gave outwardness, expression, to the archtypal thoughts of His mind, and they conclude with "peace" (3:8d). The intervening times are times of estrangement, marked by confusion, waste, ruin, toil, sweat, pain, passion, and blood. They are an epitome of the history of mankind: they begin with "death" (3:2b), pointing back to the sentence pronounced in Eden, and end with "war" (3:8c), looking forward to the great battle (later prophesied on the fields of Armageddon) which closes the history of Man's day.

FITTING IN ITS SEASON

- ⁹ **What advantage** does **the** ^d**worker**^l have
in ^w**what he is toiling?**
- ¹⁰ **I see** ^w**the experience** ^{that} **Elohim gives**
To the sons of humanity to humble them ⁱ**by it.**
- ¹¹ **He has** ^d**made** ^w**everything fitting in its season;**
^{mr}**However, He has** ^e**put** ^w**obscurity in their heart**
^f**So** ^{no} ^w**that the** ^h**man may not find out** ^w**His** ^d**work,**
That which the One, Elohim, does
from the beginning ^{+ fr}**to the terminus.**
- ¹² **I know that there is no good** ⁱ**for them**
ⁱ**But if to rejoice and to** ^d**achieve good in** ^{his}**one's life;**
- ¹³ **And, moreover, anyone of** ^w**humanity,**
^w**That he should eat and** ^w**drink**
and ^w**see good** ⁱ**from all his toil,**
It is a gift of Elohim.
- ¹⁴ **I know that whatever the One, Elohim, is doing,**
It ^w**shall** ^b**be for the eon;**

Onto it there can **be nothing to add,**
And from it there can **be nothing to subtract;**
 + **The One, Elohim, He does it**
*w***that they may fear ^f before Him.**

¹⁵ *w***That which ^bis, it already was,**
And ^wwhat is to ^bcome already has ^bbeen;
And the One, Elohim, He shall seek out
 \what has **been pursued^d** away.

Having stated the times in poetic form, Ecclesiastes proceeds to consider them. First, he draws respecting them certain deductions which necessarily follow from the revealed character of God (3.9-15); then he considers them from a matter-of-fact view of the actual condition of things (3:16-4:8). Considering the times which God has appointed for Adam's sons in the light of the Creator's character, Ecclesiastes expresses the conviction: "He has made everything fitting in its season; however, He has put obscurity in their heart, so that the man may not find out His work, that which the One, Elohim, does from the beginning to the terminus" (3:11).

No one can find out how God is working His purpose out through the "seasons." His ways transcend human thought, but He has made everything fitting in its season and is working from the beginning to the terminus.

GOD'S APPOINTED PURPOSE

Ecclesiastes next gives expression to the thought that God's appointed times were in the very nature of things intended for man's profit and enjoyment. "I know that there is no good for them but to rejoice and to achieve good in one's life, and, moreover, any one of humanity, that he should eat and drink and see good from all his toil, it is a gift of Elohim" (3:12,13). Whatever *is*, is for a purpose, and that purpose is God's thought in creation.

This is true, not only of the works of nature, but also of the events of history.

Another fact which follows from the truth of the Creator's supremacy is the immutability of the times. God acts on fixed principles which no effort of the individual will ever influence or alter. "I know that whatever the One, Elohim is doing, it shall be for the eon; onto it there can be nothing to add and from it there can be nothing to subtract" (3:14). The tremendous importance of this truth in its bearing upon man's conduct Ecclesiastes will develop in a subsequent chapter, meanwhile he ventures to suggest one of its practical values—to foster man's dependence on God.

The One, Elohim, He does it
that they may fear before Him. (3:14)

In this statement Ecclesiastes is borne out by Paul, who, in his sermon to the Athenians, declares that God has determined the seasons of the nations that they should seek Him (Acts 17:26,27).

Ecclesiastes concludes this side of the survey with voicing the oft reiterated belief (emphasized at the close as the chief aim of the book) in a future rectification. "That which is, it already was, and what is to come already has been; and the One, Elohim, He shall seek out what has been pursued away" (3:15). Here are two ideas: the law of "recurrence," in virtue of which the times ever repeat themselves; and the seeking out or "inquisition" of the times. He has already stated, in the preceding verse (14), that the times are leading up to *the eon*: They contain the seeds which will then yield their fruit. In other words, we may compare the times to a flight of stairs, leading step by step to the golden age of peace.

PRESENT CONTRADICTIONS

¹⁶ +**Yet further, I have seen under the sun,**

Where **the** ^{ri}place of judgment is,
there^d is ^wwickedness,
 And where **the** ^{ri}place of justice is,
there^d is ^wwickedness.

¹⁷ **I** said in my heart:

As for ^wthe righteous and ^wthe wicked, **the** One,
Elohim, shall judge both of them.
For ^wHe has ^{pl}set^w a season for every event
 and ^{on}for every ^ddeed.

¹⁸ **I** said in my heart:

It is ^{on} ^{sp}account of the sons of humanity
 That **the** One, **Elohim**, seeks to manifest them
And to show ^w them ^wthat they themselves are beasts.

¹⁹ **For** the destiny of the sons of humanity

And the destiny of the beast,
 + It is **one** destiny for them;
As death is for **this** one, **so** is death for **that** one,
And **one** spirit is for all;
 + There is **no** advantage for the human ^fover the
beast,

For the whole is vanity.

²⁰ **All** are going to **one** ^{ri}place;

All have ^bcome from the soil, and **all** return to the
soil.

²¹ ^aWho is knowing about the **spirit**
of the sons of humanity,

Whether it is ^wascending ^wabove,
And the **spirit** of the **beast**, whether it
 is ^wdescending ^wbelow to the earth?

²² **+So** **I** saw that there is **nothing** **better** for ^a ^hman

^fthan ^wthat he ^brejoices in his ^dworks
'Since that is his portion;

For ^awho can ^bbring him to see
ⁱ what ^w shall ^bcome after him?

⁴ **And** ^wagain ^w **I** ^bsaw ^wall the exploitings

^wthat are **done**^l under the sun;
 + **Behold**, the **tears** of ^wthose **being** **exploited**,
And there is **no** **comforter**^l for them;
 + **Vigor** is ^fin the **hand** of their exploiters^l,
And there is **no** **comforter**^l for them.
² **+So** **I** lauded^w ^wthe **dead**^l, those **who** had already died,
^fOver the **living**, those **who** are ^fstill alive;
³ **+Yet** **better** ^fthan **them** **both** is ^wthe one
who ^fstill has **not** come into **being**,
Who has **not** seen ^wthe **evil** ^dwork
^wthat is **done** under the sun.
⁴ **And** **I** saw ^wall the **toil** and ^wall the **success**
of the ^dwork done,
That it was **jealousy** of one **man** ^fover his associate;
This ^{mr}too is **vanity** and a **grazing** on **wind**.
⁵ **The** **stupid** **man** **folds**^l ^whis **hands**
And **eats**^l ^whis **own** **flesh**;
⁶ **Yet** **better** is one **palm** full with **rest**
^fThan **both** **hands** full with **toil** and a **grazing** on
wind.
⁷ **And** ^wagain ^w **I** ^bsaw a **vanity** under the sun:
⁸ There **was** **one** person, **+but** there **was** **no** **second**;
 There **even** **was** **no** **son** ^wor **brother** for him;
 +**Also** there **was** **no** **end** to **all** his **toil**,
^{mr}**Yet** his **eyes** were **not** ^bsatisfied with his **riches**.
 +**Then** he said, **For** ^awhom am **I** **toiling**
And **making** ^wmy **soul** **lack** ^fgood?
This ^{mr}too is **vanity**, and it is an **experience** of **evil**.

In these verses Ecclesiastes proceeds to show that the previous representation is not borne out by the actual state of things. "Yet further, I have seen under the sun, where the place of judgment is, there is wickedness, and where the place of justice is, there is wickedness" (3:16). In spite of the reasonableness of the earlier deductions, they are

at variance with actual experience. The actual condition of things in the world tells a very different tale. The times are often seen reversed: wickedness is seen in the place of justice, and while this fact may be construed to argue for a future rectification, it more often leads to the view that man is not different in his end from the beasts (3:16-22); suffering under oppression which makes death preferable to life (4:1-3); skill attained at the price of baneful rivalry and bitter competition fostering idleness in some and egotism in others (4:5-6); tireless effort dismayed by the recognition of its lack of its satisfaction (4:7-8)—all these realities which cannot be ignored force totally different conclusions.

The survey has yielded the following result: the theoretic side, founded on deductions flowing from the character of the Creator, argues that the “times” are for man’s good; the practical side, resting on stubborn facts which everywhere stare us in the face, argues that the times and seasons contribute to man’s misery and suffering. The reflective process has established an antagonism between good and evil. Here for the present the consideration of God’s work is allowed to rest. But the clash between the ideal and the actual—the discrepancy between the traditional adoration of the works of the Lord, and the growing difficulty of the recognition of evil in the world—has given rise to a number of perplexing practical questions. These are dealt with in a string of “notes” (4:9-5:9).

NOTES

When studying the form of this work we find that the intervals between some of the “books” are filled with strings of sayings, which sustain some relation to the preceding matter; in fact, they are in the nature of “notes” dealing with the practical side of certain points that have emerged in the course of investigation.

In the group before us we have a series of four maxims arranged in pairs, each pair being founded upon an antithesis.

1. *The Value of Friendship* (4:9-12)

- ⁹ **Two** are better ^fthan **one**
^w**Because** there is better reward for them in their
toil;
¹⁰ **For if they** ^lfall, **one** can ^lraise up ^hhis partner;
⁺**But woe to him, the one who** ^lfalls ⁺when
there is **no second** person to raise him up.
¹¹ ^{mr}**Also, if two** ^llie down together ⁺ it is warm for them,
⁺**Yet for one, how** can he keep ^lwarm?
¹² **And if** somebody can ^loverpower him ^{who is} **single,**
Then **two** can ^lstand firm in **front of him** who attacks.
⁺ **A threefold** ^lthread cannot ⁱ quickly be ^lpulled
apart.

In a previous paragraph our author has been speaking of competition as fostering idleness in some (*The stupid man folds his hands*, 4:5), and isolation in others (*Better is one palm full with rest*, 4:6) In this maxim Ecclesiastes seeks to show that both these attitudes towards rivalry are as harmful as rivalry itself. The word “toil” is elsewhere rendered by “misery” (e.g. Judges 10:16). The point is, that the trouble involved in human associations, arising from differing mental attitudes, interests, temperaments, etc., is amply rewarded by such advantages as sympathy, help, strength. *Two can stand firm* (4:12) here has the sense of *holding one’s own*: two or three can hold their own where one would be overpowered.

2. *The Vanity of Adulation* (4:13-16)

- ¹³ **Better** a boy, **provident and wise,**
^f**Than** a king, **old and stupid, who does not know**
how to take **warning** ^{any} ^fmore.

- ¹⁴ **For from a house of 'prisoners' one came forth to reign,**
Even though in his kingdom he was born destitute!;
¹⁵ **Yet I saw 'all the living' who were going**
 about **under the sun**
 Staying **with the second 'boy**
who 'stood up "in his stead.
¹⁶ **There was no end to all the people,**
to all before whom he 'was set,
^m**Yet 'those coming later were not rejoicing in him;**
^m**Indeed this 'too is vanity and a grazing on wind.**

There is no historical allusion here: it is a pictorial representation of matters of general experience. "Better is a boy, provident and wise, than a king, old and stupid, who does not know how to take warning any more. For from a house of prisoners [i.e., the womb] one [the foolish king] came forth to reign; even though in his kingdom he was born destitute. I saw all the living who were going about under the sun, staying with the second boy [i.e., the successor, as in 4:8] who stood up in his stead. There was no end to all the people, to all before whom he [the successor of the stupid king] was set, yet those coming later were not rejoicing in him; indeed this too is vanity and a grazing on wind" (4:13-16). The thought of the whole is: In essence, apart from the trappings of royalty, the king is as destitute as any youth born in obscurity; both were born naked (*cf* 5:15) and what does this external finery amount to? When the old king is gone, all the world flocks to his successor; but that successor will equally be forsaken in his turn.

3. *The Vanity of Folly* (5:1-7)

- 5 Guard your feet ^{as}when ^w you 'go**
to the house of Elohim;
⁺ To go **near to hear** is better ^fthan that **the stupid**
 should ^ooffer sacrifice,

- For they know' nothing but to do evil.**
² **Do not be 'rash ^{on}with your mouth,**
And your heart must not 'hasten to bring forth
speech before the One, Elohim;
For the One, Elohim, is in the heavens,
And you are on the earth;
Therefore, let your words become few.
³ **For as 'a dream comes' ⁱwith much responsibility,**
⁺**So the voice of a stupid person comes**
ⁱ**with many words.**
⁴ **Whenever you 'vow a vow to Elohim,**
do not 'delay to pay it,
For He ^{is}has no delight in those who are stupid;
[^]**That which you 'vow, pay.**
⁵ It is **better ^wthat you should not vow**
^f**Than ^wthat you should vow and not 'pay.**
⁶ **Do not ^{lg}allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin^r,**
And do not ^{ls}protest before the temple messenger
that it was an error.
Why should the One, Elohim,
be wrathful ^{on}at your voice
And ^mbring harm [^]to the ^dwork of your hands?
⁷ **For in many dreams and vanities,**
⁺ there are **many^r words;**
[^]**Therefore fear [^]the One, Elohim.**

This has obviously in mind the materialism produced in some by the spectacle of wickedness seated in the place of justice. Two maxims enjoining reverence in things divine are contrasted with the folly of speaking against God. The drift of thought is best apprehended from the parallelism of clauses:

- Obedience better than sacrifice (5:1)
 Ignorance better than neglected light (5:4,5)
 Hasty words improper because God is greater
 than man (5:2)

Hasty words dangerous because God may
requite man (5:6)

Image: Dream (5:3)

Image: Dreams (5:7)

Speaking against God is like the talking in sleep of an
overworked brain.

4. *The Value of Wisdom* (5:8-9)

- ⁸ **If you should see extortion of the destitute¹
And pillage of judgment and justice in a province,
Do not be amazed over the event,
For one lofty official above
another lofty official is observing,
And other lofty officials are over them.**
- ⁹ **+Yet an advantage to the land in all respects is this:
A king devoted to the field that it be served.**

The writer has before him the effects of oppression noticed in the survey. We follow the reading of the Septuagint: "If you should see extortion of the destitute and pillage of judgment and justice in a province, do not be amazed over the event, for one lofty official above another lofty official is observing, and other lofty officials are over them" (5:8). The object of the passage is to emphasize the fact that, strange as it may seem, God has a purpose in all that takes place. Verse 9 seems to illustrate the effects of recognizing or ignoring that truth by rulers: the one looks upon the province as a thing to be developed, the other looks upon it as a field of extortion. V. Gelesnoff

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ELOHIM DOES IT

THE SECTION of Ecclesiastes under consideration (3:1-5:9) presses the point that all our experiences are out of God and they are given for some reason. The experience of changing times and seasons (3:1-8) are given to the sons of humanity to humble us (3:10).

Whatever happens, whether we are able to rejoice in it (3:13), or we would like to see it changed (3:14a), God does it to the end that we grow in awe-inspiring fear of Him (3:14b).

But, according to Ecclesiastes 3:11, we cannot always trace the reasons and purposes of God very clearly. Nevertheless, He is working "from the beginning to the terminus" (3:11).

He is responsible for the cycles of human experience (3:15), for judgment and its consequences (3:16-21) and our ignorance of the future (3:22). This means that exploitations of humans, one against the other, our tears and jealousies, our stupidities and dissatisfactions (4:1-8), these all are given to the sons of humanity by God for His own reasons. Whatever is done, Elohim does it (3:14).

It was wisdom in the days of the Assembler, and it is wisdom today, to know that God is behind our experiences. But for us who have been given revelations of God's grace and purpose in Christ Jesus, there is less of "obscurity" concerning that which God does than in those ancient times. We do not know why God gives terrible seasons of war and sorrow and loss as well as happy times, and this not in apparently strict equality, though we do learn that no

one escapes the experience of evil altogether (Ecc.1:13). But, as believers, we are aware of many things about God's operations that the Assembler did not know.

"We are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God" (Rom.8:28). God is making known to us "the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in [Christ Jesus]) to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ—both that in the heavens and that on the earth—in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:9-11). We are aware of the One we have believed, Who indeed abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption (2 Tim.1:9-12).

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

The exact meaning of the Hebrew term in Ecclesiastes 3:11 translated "obscurity" by the CVOT is in dispute. It is the word generally rendered "eon" in our translation, and others, including Vladimir Gelesnoff, have preferred that sense here as well.

In his comments of this passage, Brother Gelesnoff wrote: "The phrase, 'He has set the eon in their heart,' is very striking. The rendering 'world' in the current versions, and the marginal alternative 'eternity,' rob the passage of its grand meaning. In perfect harmony with the whole cast and character of Hebrew prophecy, the 'times' of Ecclesiastes culminate in the golden age of peace. The character of the Messianic age is painted in colors most gorgeous and brilliant in the prophets; but the crowning glory of the Messianic eon is peace."¹ Hence our brother felt that such a "far-off, vague, indistinct" presentiment

1. *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.5, p.113.

in the hearts of mankind was what the Assembler had in mind in this passage.

Yet many, including Brother A. E. Knoch, have concluded that some such sense as "obscurity" is intended here. Brother Knoch has defended this rendering in an article appearing in *Unsearchable Riches*, volume 29, starting on page 371. The following selections from that article have guided in the current CVOT rendering:

HE HAS SET THE WORLD IN THEIR HEARTS

"Obscurity, in more than one sense, gathers around this passage (Ecc.3:11, AV). It is not clear what is meant by the words themselves, and they give no ground for what follows. The tendency of translators and expositors is to render it as the Septuagint, changing the word *world* to *age* or *eon*. Some prefer to make it *eternity*, and the teaching that God has set eternity in men's hearts (whatever that may mean) is quite popular in some circles. But why should this keep men from finding out what God is doing? Indeed, would it not be a help rather than a hindrance.

"First let us note the context. It concerns the fact that there is a *season* for everything (Ecc.3:1-9). Then the assembler of these sayings asks, 'What profit has the doer in what *he* toils?' The answer is, 'I see the experience which God gives to the sons of humanity, to be humbled by it' Our life is not the aimless, purposeless, empty thing which it appears to be. Its evil and toil is a gift from God in order to lay us low before Him. With all our striving, how little do we accomplish! But the main object, the real profit, lies in our failure, so that we may take our true place before God.

"*In its season* God makes everything lovely (verse 11). See how beautiful is the flower in its bud and bloom! But soon thereafter, what a change! The season is past. One who had never seen the flower until its petals are faded and decayed, could not conceive how beautiful it was in

its time. This is the picture which is presented to us as introductory to the statement which we are studying. That which is disintegrating does not give us a proper idea of its beauty when it is in its prime

“Men see things out of season, in the time when they are disintegrating, and their hearts are too dark to recognize this and look back to their origin or forward to their consummation. They see only a small portion of the process, and even this at its worst stage, hence are sure to be led astray without a revelation from God Himself. Those who have this may exult that all begins in God’s love and will terminate in its full display, even though, at present, it may appear to some as if His hate were the ruling factor in His dealings with mankind.

“But why translate *obscurity* in place of *eon* or *age*? The Hebrew stem *olm*, which is here used denotes OBSCURE. This is clear from the fact that it is rendered *secret*, *hide*, *blind*, and *dissemble* in the Authorized Version. The meaning *eon* or *age* is only a derived one, seeing that the eons were obscure to them. It also denotes an adolescent damsel or stripling. It is quite in order to fall back upon the basic sense when this is manifestly in accord with the context. We know that it is true that God gives men obscurity and that they do not know God’s doing on account of it. All other renderings fail to satisfy the context. It must be something which incapacitates men mentally. Obscurity does this.”

GOD IS THE PLACER

We conclude that the context does support the translation “obscurity” in this passage. God Himself *puts* (or “gives”) this obscurity into the human heart. Since He has done so, we may be certain that He will be the One Who removes that obscurity, as indeed He has begun to do through the later revelations of His Word, in the hearts of those who believe.

D.H.H.