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Unsearchable Riches

A BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR GOD AND HIS

WORD

VOLUME LXXXVIII

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Unfinished

Unfinished—that is what life seems to be,
A thing of vision—what we *want* to be,
Of futile effort—oasis never found,
Of highest hope—yet hope dashed to the ground,
Of great resolves, though seldom carried out,
Of fine ideals which end in dread and doubt;
E'en if attained, they cannot satisfy;
All earthly things must mock us when we die.

But soon the many things which here we miss
Will gladden in a life of perfect bliss.
The jarring notes of discord and of pain
Resolve in perfect cadence—greater gain,
Far greater gain through having known the ill,
Through having learned of God to just “be still,”
Through having learned that humans all are frail
And *One alone* is strong and will prevail.

L. Cock

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR JANUARY 1997
BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-EIGHT

EDITORIAL

GOD'S GLORY AND PRAISE is the grand goal we have set before us in this little magazine and in our meetings, as well as our translations and other literature. All our efforts to recover and clarify and make known His Word are only means to reveal His wisdom, power and love. All our suffering and endurance have little value if they do not lead to the laud of His name and fame. Worship must arise from all that we do, or it is wasted effort. We depend upon this spirit to hallow every word and every expression in our ministry.

Many dark and dismal clouds in Christendom have come to obscure the brilliance of His radiance, so that few can perceive His honors as the One and only God, the Deity Supreme, Who loves all His creatures and wisely plans all good and all evil to bring them close to His heart when He has achieved His end. Many are not able to see Him as the Creator and Sustainer and Reconciler of the universe. Instead they imagine a mirage in which chaos commences and carries on and concludes creation. His love is eclipsed by such doctrines as eternal torment, His wisdom is blotted out by ignorance of His plans and purpose, His power is diminished by His apparent inability to cope with sin.

To chase these sullen clouds from the sky, to clear away the thick fog from the ground, we reach right back of all human speculation and translation to divine revelation. Nor do we repeat the past processes and offer our own. With our translation we furnish the apparatus to test and confirm it, for we do not desire to stand between anyone and the light. Our concordance, unlike the usual ones of

Bible translations, is a concordance of the *inspired original*, not of a traditional version. The ordinary believer, if his *heart* is in it, can find out what God has said. That this is the best means to bring Him adoration and praise is evident, for nothing can compare with His own Word to reveal His will and unveil His heart. A. E. Knoch

THERE are many things in the modern world that get us stirred up, mostly distressing changes in attitudes and apparent increases in harmful activities. But Paul tells us not to be noting what is being observed, but rather what is not being observed (2 Cor.4:18), where in fact there are stirring and glorious revelations that are eonian.

Astonishing and very unexpected things happened in our Lord's ministry as recorded in Matthew. The kingdom was near, and yet commandments that exceeded the demands of Sinai had to be followed fully and perfectly for anyone to enter into it. Upright Job was severely afflicted, while wicked people prospered, and Job's associates pontificated about ancient ethical principles that did not harmonize with what was *presently* in front of their eyes. In Galatians we find a reformed blasphemer upset because people who had received the evangel from him were trying to reform themselves.

Most unexpected of all, *crucifixion* as God's purposed means for the death of His Son, channeled through the Roman, Pilate, jolts our complacency. In all of these themes, featured in this issue of our magazine, there is much that is surprising and stirring. Yet also they all lead to a revelation of God's glory. And once something of God's glorious consummation is seen, "face to face," in all these operations we find ourselves exclaiming with Paul, "O, the depth of the riches of God's wisdom!" D.H.H.

The Word of the Cross

CRUCIFIXION

CHRIST *died*. He shed His *blood*. He was *crucified*. These terms differ from one another in their relation to us. Each brings a special benefit, which is its opposite. He *died* that we might *live*. Through His *blood* He *suffered* that we may *enjoy* His *salvation*. He was *crucified* that we may be *glorified*.

Through their sacrifices the Jews were familiar with death and bloodshed. But none of their ritual gave specific foreshadowing of the shameful execution of a criminal. It is in Paul's evangel for the nations that the theme of crucifixion comes to the fore. Here it is revealed that this shameful death brings not only life and joy, but celestial glory.

The fact that the sin offering in Israel, which foreshadowed the great Sacrifice, was neither painful nor shameful, suggests that we consider closely the circumstances connected with the crucifixion of Christ. There we will find that the priests of Israel who were appointed to offer the sacrifice would not and could not use this method. Even Herod could not. Only Pilate, by the authority vested in him by Rome, the ruler of the *nations*, could crucify the Lord of glory (Luke 22:66-23:25).

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Although the nation of Israel, in the flesh, was not founded on any association with crucifixion, it did commence in *death*. The Creator must not have something with which to work. His glory demands that there be nothing on which to base His achievements. So the nation of Israel

began with the dead bodies of Abraham and his wife. And from such a source will spring the greatest of all nations. Neither were they petted and protected from all harm, so that they could become greater than the rest by their own power. Rather the opposite, so that their future glory will be entirely due to Yahweh Elohim Himself.

The sacred scrolls committed to Israel contained many types and predictions concerning their promised Messiah, not only His glories, but His *sorrows* also. But the latter did not appeal to them, so were largely overlooked. When He came to them in lowliness, as a Man of sorrows, they rejected Him. Even His own disciples had overlooked these, expecting that He was about to be *redeeming* Israel, rather than be rejected and crucified. So, after His resurrection He said to them, "O foolish and tardy of heart to be believing on *all* which the prophets speak! Must not the Christ be *suffering* these things, and be entering into His glory?" And, beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them, in all the scriptures, that which concerned Himself (Luke 24:19-27).

THE CHIEF PRIEST

After He was arrested, Christ was taken to the house of the chief priest (Luke 22:54). Although they charged Him with blasphemy and demanded His death, and would probably have stoned Him if the Roman law had allowed it, the chief priests were compelled to turn His execution over to the nations. If left to Israel and their religious leaders, Christ would probably never have been done to death by crucifixion.

The law of Moses called for sacrifices for sin. The victim had to be without blemish, so that there was no fault in it, no just cause for being killed. It was the duty of the chief priest to see that this was so. In this light, it was right that Caiaphas sought to put the great Sacrifice to death, but

he was very wrong in his motives and in trying to convict Jesus of blasphemy (Matt.26:57-68). Moreover, the sacrifices were not allowed to suffer. The blood was drained from their veins, so that they lost all sensation before they died. But Caiaphas allowed them to buffet Him and slap Him. The blood was not allowed to leave Him until just before He let out His spirit (Matt.27:49-68).

PILATE

Under the law, in Israel, and especially in connection with the sacrifices, crucifixion was unknown. The chief priest and Israel were the instruments God used to accomplish the death of Christ, but not the form of that death or the indignities and sufferings that accompanied it. Pilate was convinced that Christ was not guilty, and sought to assert his own innocence, but he, and the nations whom he represented are the means God used for the *suffering* and *shame* and the curse divine that led Him to be forsaken by His El (Matt.27:46).

Pilate was a "good" politician. Though he was not deceived by the priests and populace, and was convinced that Christ was not guilty, and desired to release Him, yet he judged that the interests of the state demanded that the majority should have their way, even though he washed his hands of it. Here we have a good example of human government in this present wicked world. Justice must often give way to expedience, and God's word concerning His Christ receives no hearing except among the few who have been chosen and called to suffer with Him.

BAPTISM AND CRUCIFIXION

Baptism was only a symbol of spiritual *cleansing* under the law of Moses and the ministries of John and Christ. In Paul's evangel it went much further, so that it signified *death, and entombment*, as well as *rousing* from among

the dead (Rom.6:4; Col.2:12). But there is no thought of shame or suffering or alienation from God, which are the vital features of Christ's death for us, sinners of the nations. Crucifixion on our part goes much further and affects our life far more vitally than baptism, to which no shame is attached.

The reason why Paul no longer baptized, after he had done so is that *baptism makes void the cross* (1 Cor.1:17). This change in the apostle's practice just at the time when the present secret administration was being gradually introduced should show clearly that, as an outward act, it is not in keeping with the foundation truth of this era.

The vast difference between baptism and crucifixion may best be seen in the literal occurrences. The crucifixion degraded Christ to the lowest level of human shame and abasement. What could be more disgraceful and humiliating than to be gibbeted on a pole, suffering not only the insults of men, but the curse of God? In contrast, His tomb (pictured by baptism), with its rolling stone as a door, was that of a rich and honorable counselor, Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50).

CRUCIFIXION, BRIEF IN TIME

The fact that Christ *could* have saved the malefactor at the time, as the unbelieving criminal suggested (Luke 23:39), and, *could* have saved Himself, as some suggested (Matt.27:40; Mark 15:30; Luke 23:37), and indeed, it *would* have been possible to avoid the cross altogether, as His own disciples desired (Matt.16:23; Mark 8:33)—all this suggests that God had a most important object in crucifixion, and that was the revelation of His highest attributes by means of it. He could save none who were not lost, nor manifest the depth of His love except to His enemies. But there is one vital difference, and that lies in the realm of *time*.

The "kenosis" or emptying Himself of the form of God

to become like a human, and the consequent humiliation and obedience even to the death of the cross (Phil.2:6-8), occupied only about thirty-three years, a third of a century. In contrast to this short span of time, His glory in the future as a result of this, will be immeasurably prolonged. The first thirty years of His humanity was a comparatively mild form of lowliness, without much suffering or dishonor. His ministry in Israel for three years was accompanied by a greater measure of humiliation and disrepute due to the priestly and secular rulers and unbelieving Jews, but tempered by the faithful few who loved and adored Him. This lasted for only about a tenth as long as His previous preparatory period.

The climax of His career came when the religious leaders and political powers abused him and reviled Him and mocked His royal rights with a crown of thorns, and prepared to offer Him up as the Sacrificial Victim, finally fixing His human form upon a pole. This was the lowest depth of depravity to which humanity could sink Him. This occupied but a minute measure of His ministry, to be counted in hours. It brought Him as low as man could bring Him, and is the basis for the truth of the cross, which speaks to us of debasement, degradation, dishonor, and brought with it the curse of God Himself. This terrible, intense torment lasted for three hours, but it is the basis of blessing for the infinite future.

SHAME AND GLORY

From this we can see two things clearly, that future glory is based on a contrast with shame, but especially that the shame is comparatively short, the glory of limitless duration. It will be of the greatest help to us to seek to realize this, especially if we are in the midst of humiliation or pain or perplexity, when due to faithfulness to God.

The element of shame and disgrace, added by cruci-

fixion to the sacrifice of Christ, will find its counterpart in the sublime celestial glories which will come to Him and to those who count themselves crucified with Him in spirit. They, along with Him, will become channels of the highest blessing in the future, among the celestials, but, with Him, they must first suffer, in a minute measure, the hatred and contempt of the wicked world.

Although Peter refers to the crucifixion of Christ in the book of Acts (Acts 2:36; 4:10), it is given to Paul, in his epistles, to speak of the crucifixion of the believer together with Christ. It is Christ's cross and our *association with Him* that raises us with Him into glories of the Celestial sphere.

Knowing God's plans for the blessing of those chosen in Christ in the highest place among the celestials, it is easy to see why He was not only a Sacrifice under the law, for those under it, like the offerings in Israel, but had to suffer much direr pain and shame. His death was not merely for salvation from the penalty of sin and transgression, but for justification and reconciliation and glorification of the believer in close association with Christ Himself, in His great work of subjecting and reconciling all to God the Father.

A. E. Knoch

EXCEPT IN THE CROSS

It was as much as a half century ago that Brother A. E. Knoch worked on a series of studies concerning *crucifixion* as the form of Christ's death. It was never completed, as he turned to other matters, especially work on the Hebrew Scriptures. But the article above is selected from the opening pages of his handwritten notes, and we hope to add several more articles from these notes during 1997. Some of his thoughts were left undeveloped, but it is evident that Brother Knoch intended to lay emphasis on Paul's unique use of the words "cross" and "crucifixion" in presenting his evangel. God's highest glories flow from this most shameful form of death and are based on it. Consequently, we say with Paul, "May it not be mine to be boasting, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal.6:14).

Studies in Galatians

GRACIOUSLY GRANTED, THROUGH PROMISE

(Galatians 3:10-29)

INITIALLY, the Galatian believers obtained the spirit *out of* tidings of faith, the glad-tidings of faith, which they subsequently heard and believed (Gal.3:2). This is because *out of* the *power* inherent in the evangel of Christ (*cf* Rom. 1:16), God's *chosen* ones graciously obtain the spirit and believe. This is what truly occurs, and, why it truly occurs, wherever one truly enters into faith. Those who believed, were, "*whoever were set for life eonian*" (*cf* Acts 13:48), the *grace* of our Lord overwhelming their unbelief "with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim.1:14).

Since the Galatians had "undertaken" (Gal.3:3) in *spirit*, it would be "foolish" to suppose that God would now reverse Himself, somehow expecting them to become completed in flesh. It is on this basis that Paul shows that it is correct to conclude: "He, then, who is supplying you with the spirit, and operating works of power among you [will be completing what He has undertaken]." That is, Paul assures, since you "undertook" in spirit, and even now *God* is continuing to supply you with the spirit and operate works of *power* among you, "*He, then . . . [will also be completing what He has undertaken]*" (*cf* Gal.3:2,3,5).

It is important for us today to believe and recognize that God is continuing to supply us with the spirit, even as to operate works of power among us. It is to be regretted that to the popular mind the thought of "spiritual works of power" evokes images of the sensationalistic, the pseudo-

miraculous, and the superstitious. While we have no need of these and do well to eschew all such spurious activities, still, we remain in vital need of God's genuine provision of spirit, even as of His faithful works of power within us.

It is with the eyes of faith that we perceive that when we continue in faithfulness, or in cases where we have faltered or failed and yet subsequently recover, that these experiences, ones both of sustenance and deliverance, reflect God's spiritual provision unto us even as His powerful operations, both in us, individually, and among us, collectively. Were it not so, I could not possibly compose this present writing; nor could you, the reader, find spiritual benefit in it. So it is, concerning all our activities of faith: they are the fruit of whatever measure of spirit God has been pleased to grant us, according to His present spiritual operations *in power*.

For whoever are of works of law are under a curse, for it is written that, Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things written in the scroll of the law to do them. (3:10)

"How striking the contrast! As many as are of faith [v.9] are *blessed*. *Accursed* is everyone who does not remain in all which has been written in the scroll of the law to do it. Who would be so perverse as to choose law? Yet the heresy of Galatianism is far more prevalent today than ever. Life under law [with blessing on the basis of law-obedience] can only come to one who keeps every precept perfectly at all times, yet is forfeited at the slightest infringement. Life through faith does not depend on conduct but on the One in Whom the faith is placed."¹

There are only two conceivable sources of blessing: (1) divine grace; and (2) human works of law. Only one of these, however, divine grace, is a viable source of blessing. The other, works of law, since it is infirm through the flesh

¹ I. A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.282.

(Rom.8:3), has been rendered ineffectual. That being so, whoever are "out of" works of law are under a curse. This is because, "Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in *all* things written in the scroll of the law to do them" (3:10; cit. Deut.27:26; cp 28:15).

The fact that under the law some were less sinful than others is not the point. What is important to see is that no one in Israel ever *deserved* blessing, but only cursing, and that in the fullest possible degree. Such is the *righteous* standard of the law. On the one hand, it was so unspeakably severe as to demand perfection from any who, by their own obedience, would obtain a single blessing or escape a single curse. Yet on the other hand, it was this very stringency of the law that ensured that *all* under its jurisdiction would be equally dependent upon God and His grace, if they would enjoy any blessing at all.

It is simply delusion to imagine that some under law were somehow more deserving of blessing than others, according to their works. Since all were sinners, *none* were deserving of any blessing whatsoever, according to the law's own *righteous* standard. Instead, *all* were wholly dependent upon divine *grace*—and grace alone—for any blessing received, however small or great.

It is true that on a basis of strict justice, the least infraction of the law would call forth all its curses. God was often *merciful*, however, and did not impose the law's full penalty, even though it had been repeatedly violated. This is because God is merciful; and, because He has the prerogative to be merciful "to whom He will" (Rom.9:18). For to Moses He is saying, "I shall be *merciful* to whom ever I may be merciful, and I shall be *pitying* whomever I may be pitying" (Rom.9:15; cit. Ex.33:19). These words, as such, are Paul's inspired interpretation of the actual divine declaration recorded in Exodus 33:19, which is, "I will be *gracious* to whom I am being gracious and will have *com-*

passion for whom I am having compassion.” Thus we learn that mercy is a matter of grace, even as that pity is the fruit of compassion.

It is vital to recognize that, under law, those who were characteristically faithful in their practice of law-obedience, thus were faithful, “according to the choice of *grace*” (Rom.11:5; *cp* Isa.26:12). Hence the blessing of such ones—since they too were sinners—was not “*out of*” law-obedience, but was instead *in* grace (Rom.11:6).²

The Galatians, however, having repudiated grace (1:6; 2:21), were simply seeking blessing “out of” law-obedience itself. They did not realize that blessing is never granted from such a source, even under law. How foolish they were, then, ones to whom the law had not even been given, who were not obliged to keep it, nonetheless to attempt to put themselves under it, even as to anticipate blessing on the presumed basis of their own ability to keep it!

Such is ever the confidence of fleshly man; he fails to realize that whatever *is* worthy in his walk is due to the grace of God alone, and that any further obedience rendered by him will itself likewise be dependent upon further grace, apart from which he will surely fail (*cp* Rom.9:29; *cit.* Isa.1:9). He reasons not, correctly, that since grace has granted him what virtue he has, he will likewise be dependent on grace alone for any increase in virtue, but instead, incorrectly, that since he ultimately has himself alone to thank for what virtue he has, he will likewise ultimately have himself alone to thank for any progress in virtue he may make. If there is a law that is to be kept, for obedience to which one may expect an increase in personal welfare, the fleshly man deems himself a worthy candidate to fulfill it. Such ones having confidence in themselves that

² These considerations alone show that the popular teaching of free will is but human delusion and vanity.

they are just (*cf* Luke 18:9), therefore proudly declaim, “All that Yahweh speaks we shall do” (Ex.19:8a).

Now that in law no one is being justified with God is evident, for the just one by faith shall be living. Now the law is not of faith, but who does them “shall be living in them.” (3:11,12)

It is not the province of law to justify, but to condemn. Effectually, the law merely says, “He who heeds my precepts shall find life in so doing”; which life no one ever finds since no one ever heeds its precepts (*cf* Lev.18:5; *cp* Luke 10:28). Like evil, law, too, is transitory. It lasts only until God’s purpose through its agency has been realized. Those who are “just” (as spoken of in Habakkuk 2:4), owe their righteousness not to law, much less to themselves, but to grace. Life comes to them not out of their imperfect (and so disqualified) law-obedience, but out of *faith*, that it may accord with *grace*.

Christ reclaims us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for our sakes, for it is written, Accursed is every-one hanging on a pole, that the blessing of Abraham may be coming to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we may be obtaining the promise of the spirit through faith. (3:13,14)

The pronoun “us,” here, refers to Paul and his Jewish brethren on whom the law weighed so heavily. Christ reclaimed them from the law’s grip. Thus, through His death on the cross (His “hanging on a pole”; *cf* Deut. 21:23), Christ cleared “those whoever, in fear of death, were through their entire life liable to slavery” (Heb.2:15), the slavery of the law.

The purpose of His death on the cross, further, was, “that the blessing of Abraham may be coming to the nations *in Christ Jesus*, that we may be obtaining the promise of the spirit through faith” (3:14).

“The sacrifice of Christ made provision for all classes and all contingencies. For those under law He bore its

curse, so that they may receive the blessing of Abraham. And He bore the sins of those not under law as well, so that they, too, may obtain the righteousness of Abraham. So both, through faith, receive the spirit, by which they may exceed the righteous demands of the law.”³

Since God has graciously granted the allotment to Abraham through the promise—and therefore, accordingly, through promise, has allotted the blessing of justification to us, out of Jesus Christ’s faith (*cp* Gal. 2:16)—the burning question is: “*What, then, is the law?*” (Gal.3:19). In preparation for answering this very question, Paul first points out the following:

Brethren (I am saying this as a man), a human covenant likewise having been ratified, no one is repudiating or modifying it. Now to Abraham the promises were declared, and to his Seed. He is not saying “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of One: And to “your Seed,” which is Christ.⁴ Now this am I saying: a covenant, having been ratified before by God, the law, having come four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not invalidate, so as to nullify the promise. For if the enjoyment of the allotment is of law, it is no longer of promise. Yet God has graciously granted it to Abraham through the promise. (3:15-18)

What, then, is the law?^p (3:19a)

Here is the answer:

On behalf of transgressions was it added . . . (3:19b)

“Law changes sin from a mere mistake to the overstepping of a divine command. It enhances the sinfulness of sin. Transgression is sin against a known law, entailing not only the usual penalties, but the added displeasure of

3. A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.282.

4. Christ, our *only* Saviour, is represented by the *singular* “seed” of Abraham. That is, even as Abraham’s offspring *alone* may possess their promised blessings, thus also our blessings in Christ depend *solely* upon His finished work (*cf Unsearchable Riches*, vol.81, pp.46-48).

God against one who defies His precepts . . . The promises Abraham received [which, incidentally, subsequently, came to be] in connection with the law, were unconditional; [ultimately speaking,] dependent only on God’s faithfulness. They were given without any reference to the law and [thus] do not depend on any legal observance for fulfillment.”⁵

Charin (“on behalf;” CV) is the accusative form of “grace,” and is used as a preposition with the genitive case (“of transgressions”).

The Authorized Version, at least as interpreted by some, is very misleading here in its rendering “*because* of transgressions.” The words “*because* of” have led some to imagine that transgression obtained prior to Moses; and that the reference here is merely to ceremonial laws which were temporarily added by Moses to an already extant timeless moral code (namely, to a code which, under Moses, was merely formalized as the “Ten Commandments”). All of this is perfectly false (as well as artful and unreasonable); yet it is instructive to note the lengths to which some will go in order to impose the law upon believers today.

The idea of the Greek word, *charin*, is that of an act done with the objective of somehow bringing favor (i.e., some type of benefit or advantage) to the object in view (*cp* Titus 1:5,11). This is just what the entrance of the law afforded to transgression. Hence the law was given *on behalf* of the resultant transgressions which came into being through the law. Where no law is, neither is there transgression (Rom.4:15); yet the bestowal of law gives rise to its violation, which is transgression. Transgression owes its very existence to law, and cannot exist apart from it. Thus, on behalf of transgressions, “law came in by the way, *that the offense should be increasing*” (Rom.5:20).

5. A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, pp.282.

THE ESSENCE OF THE EVANGEL

... until the Seed should come to Whom He has promised, being prescribed through messengers in the hand of a mediator. Now there is no Mediator of one. Yet God is One. Is the law, then, against the promises of God? May it not be coming to that! For if a law were given that is able to vivify, really, righteousness were out of law. But the scripture locks up all together under sin, that the promise out of Jesus Christ's faith may be given to those who are believing. (3:19c-22)

The law, on behalf of transgressions, however, was added "until the Seed should come . . ." (Gal.3:19c). This fact is of special relevance to our understanding of the evangel, since we are apt to fear that our sins may bar us from its benefits.

In speaking of himself and of his fellow Israelites who had now obtained the evangel which he proclaimed (*cp* Gal.2:15), Paul declares:

Now before the coming of faith we were garrisoned under law, being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed. So that the law has become our escort to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. Now, at the coming of faith, we are no longer under an escort, for you are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For whoever are baptized into Christ, put on Christ, in Whom there is no Jew nor yet Greek, there is no slave nor yet free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus. Now if you are Christ's, consequently you are of Abraham's seed, enjoyers of the allotment according to the promise. (3:23-29)

As is true of all scripture, to avoid misinterpretation, this passage must be kept within its context and understood accordingly. The context is that of the epistle to the Galatians which is a defense of the exclusively-Pauline teaching of justification by faith (the faith of Christ). Specifically, the context is that of the evangel of the Uncir-

cumcision (Gal.2:7)—the evangel *which* Paul was heralding among the nations (Gal.2:2).

This evangel is "in accord with the faith of God's chosen, and a realization of the truth which accords with devoutness, in expectation of life eonian, which God, Who does not lie, *promises* before times eonian, yet manifests His word in its own eras by heralding, with which [Paul] was entrusted, according to the injunction of God, our Saviour" (Titus 1:1-3).

These glorious declarations, however, are not revelations of the evangel of the Circumcision, but that of the Uncircumcision (Gal.2:7). Indeed, in a number of vital particulars, they are contrary to the Circumcision evangel. The evangel of the Circumcision consists only of pardon (which may be withdrawn); *it knows nothing of justification*. Under the evangel of the Circumcision, works of righteousness, according to Moses, are essential to life (i.e., to "remaining for the eon"; 1 John 2:17; *cp* Matt.7:21,23).

Yet under Paul's evangel, the evangel which, broadly speaking, is the evangel of the *Uncircumcision*, not only are we justified apart from law, but, "where sin increases, graces superexceeds" (Rom.5:20); where there is persistence in sin, grace increases accordingly (Rom.6:1), for life eonian (Rom.5:21). *This is not true under the evangel of the Circumcision.*

NO LONGER UNDER AN ESCORT

Therefore, *as it stands in relation to the Pauline evangel*, the law is nothing more than a *former* escort.⁶ It is but

6. adapted from A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.282. It should be noted that in declining to subject ourselves to the particulars of the *Mosaic* instruction, it is not that we have been given over to lawlessness. The entreaties of Paul for service in the evangel, inculcate a far more august (and encompassing) "morality" than that of the demands of Sinai.

an erstwhile servant; a pedagogue-slave which, while useful in its day in its ministrations on behalf of children, is now rendered wholly redundant, since the children have attained their majority.

Thus, on behalf of transgressions, the law was added (yet incidentally so, with respect to the original promises made to Abraham) *until* the Seed should come. Insofar as Paul and those of his fellow Israelites to whom this evangel had been granted are concerned, the law had become their escort to Christ. Now at the coming of the *faith* (through the advent of Christ; *cp* 2 Tim.1:10), *such ones* (“*we*”; Gal. 3:25) are no longer under an escort. Thus, whoever—*among those who are in view in this context*; namely, among those who are blessed according to Paul's evangel—are baptized into Christ put on *Christ*, in Whom—with respect to Paul's evangel and insofar as it is concerned—there is no Jew nor yet Greek, nor any other distinction, for all, thus blessed, are one in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:27,28).

Thus, in a figure, we become “of Abraham's seed”; that is, literally, we become enjoyers of an allotment *according to promise* (Gal.3:29). (It is not “the” allotment, or “the” promise; the definite article does not appear in the Greek.)

In service, or in the *Lord*, the slave was still a slave, the sexes were still recognized; but—under Paul's evangel—in *Christ*, in Whom we are complete (Col.2:10), all physical distinctions vanish. By faith, all who are called according to the Pauline evangel (*cp* Gal. 1:6-9) enter into the same high place of privilege, and are blessed with the common promise and righteousness of which this evangel consists. Thus, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, since all of the evangel's blessings are *graciously* granted to us, through promise, in Him.⁷ J.R.C.

7. adapted from A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.282.

He Shall Save His People

ASTONISHED AT HIS TEACHING

JOHN had announced the nearness of the kingdom (Matt. 3:2), and the spirit of God and His voice out of the heavens had identified Jesus as God's Son, the Beloved in Whom He delights (3:16,17). The way seemed to be opened up for the manifestation of Jesus as Saviour and King.

But the kingdom with its deliverance from the many evils of present life did not immediately appear. In fact, the next event recorded in Matthew was the trial of Jesus by the Adversary, in the midst of great weakness and travail (Matt.4:1-11). And here the very blessings of food and safety and rule that characterize the kingdom were set before Jesus, and He refused them. This refusal under the most difficult of situations shows clearly that the kingdom must come in accord with God's ways and will. The death of Christ as a basis for all the blessings of the kingdom must occur first. When our Lord receives the rule it will be as the Saviour Who does not only save and bless, but Who does so on a firm basis established by God.

There would be no blessing in having food and protection and divine rule where there is no power given over sin. For Jesus to have accepted earthly rule from the Adversary would not only mean that the worship is deflected from God, which is horrible beyond thought, but that Israel and all mankind would continue under the effects of sin and weakness of flesh. There was something far more vital than having all physical needs supplied and safety from all harm under perfect and wise rule. And this was salvation from sin.

A GREAT LIGHT

After this Jesus retired into Galilee, far distant from Jerusalem where the kingdom would be centered. Here the people sitting in darkness perceived a great light (Matt. 4:16), as Jesus heralded the very message spoken by John, saying, "Repent! for near is the kingdom of the heavens!" (4:17). The radiant hope of the kingdom drawing near did not seem to have been dimmed by the call for repentance. Loyal and capable followers were called, including Peter, the "Rock," and "immediately" leaving their work and family ties they followed Jesus (4:18-22).

The signs of the approaching kingdom continued in a positive way. Jesus led His disciples throughout Galilee, "heralding the *evangel* of the kingdom, and *curing every disease and every debility* among the people" (Matt.4:23). The type of thing the Adversary recognized Jesus could do as God's Son (4:3), but which He refused to do for Himself under those conditions, He now was actually doing among the sinners of Galilee. And the tidings spread, with *vast throngs* streaming to Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and the other side of the Jordan (Matt.4:24,25). The kingdom had drawn very near indeed.

But the problem of sin had not yet been dealt with.

THE TEACHING ON THE MOUNT

The mountain was the symbol of rule. Hence, in directing attention to the kingdom, Jesus ascended to a mountain and taught concerning the kingdom that had come so very near. As recorded in Matthew, His words take up the bulk of three chapters, 5:3-7:27. "And it came when Jesus finishes these sayings, that the throngs were *astonished* at His teaching, for He was teaching them as One having authority and not as their scribes" (Matt.7:28,29).

What astonished the Galileans was that Jesus, Who had

lived among them as one of them, could speak with such authority. But there seems to have been no more astonishment concerning the instruction itself than was felt at Sinai when Moses first delivered the message of Exodus 20-23. At that earlier time "Moses came and related to the people all the words of Yahweh and all the judgments. Then all the people responded with one voice and said: All the words which Yahweh has spoken we shall do" (Exodus 24:3). In neither case was there any sign of genuine inner enlightenment concerning human infirmity and need of a Saviour from sins.

Yet whether they noted it or not, there is for us even more of astonishment in what Jesus said than in the authoritative manner in which He spoke. Not even the least of the precepts given in the law could be annulled (Matt.5:19). The required standard of righteousness exceeded that maintained by the most diligent and disciplined of Israelites (5:20). Every precept had to be obeyed inwardly as well as outwardly, so that "You shall not murder" required also that "You shall not be angry with your brother" (5:21,22); and "You shall not be committing adultery" demanded also that "You shall not have any lust in your heart" (5:27,28) as well as severest restrictions on divorce and remarriage (5:31,32). The laws concerning sacrifices, though still in effect, involved important prerequisites such as removing offenses and settling debts (5:23-26). The law against perjury was shown to include a law against making oaths or saying anything that might bring dishonor to God or even Jerusalem or even oneself as an Israelite (Matt.5:33-37).

Not only were the laws given at Sinai intensified in this message, but some were even replaced by higher demands, in light of the approaching times of Jacob's troubles. What was commanded by Jesus could never be obeyed apart from God's spirit. This was especially so of laws concerned with just judgments. The people were to suffer unjust treat-

ment from outsiders and leave all the settling of accounts to God (Matt.5:43-47). And this astonishing requirement was followed by perhaps the most astonishing statement in the entire message: “You, then, shall be perfect (or: mature) as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48).

ASTONISHING PROMISES

The promises connected with these intensified demands were equally astonishing. Good deeds were required, but they must be done secretly and not at all motivated by rewards and praises from fellow humans (Matt.6:1-4), but rather in view of wages from God (6:8-13). “For if you should be forgiving men their offenses, *your heavenly Father also will be forgiving you*” (6:14). “Now you, when fasting, rub your head with oil and wash your face, so that you may not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father Who is in hiding, and *your Father, Who is observing in hiding, will be paying you*” (6:17,18). The heavenly Father was aware of their every need, so that they needed to seek first the kingdom and its righteousness, and all these provisions of clothing and food would be added to them (6:31-34).

It was in the following of all these laws, which in fact lay behind the laws as given at Sinai, that these Israelites would enter the kingdom and enjoy its blessings. When all hypocrisy and pride would be removed through the spiritual invigoration of the new covenant, and full reliance and confidence was placed in God, then they would request, and it would be given to them (7:7).

THE NARROWED WAY

The level of righteousness demanded was astonishing. The blessings promised on the basis of achieving this high level of righteousness were also astonishing. But the most astonishing thing about this entire message is the fact that Jesus spoke of these requirements and these blessings, and

the people received them, *as though they were certain to come about!* Yet how can the promises be fulfilled if the level of righteousness demanded for their fulfillment be impossible of attainment?

How is it possible that anyone would find “the cramped gate and narrowed way” which led away into life (Matt.7:13,14)? How is it possible that anyone would produce the “ideal fruit” required (7:16-20)? Would anyone be able to avoid anger toward a brother that makes him liable to the Gehenna of fire (Matt.5:22)? Would anyone be so free of lust and wrong thoughts that there is no possibility of loss in Gehenna (5:30)? Who of all those listening to Jesus on the mount that day could claim that they were perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect (5:48)?

Long before Jesus had finished this message, there surely arose in the hearts of many who listened the question the disciples later asked of the Lord, “Who, consequently, can be saved?” The answer would have to be the same as Jesus gave then: “With men this is impossible, *yet with God all is possible*” (Matt.19:25,26).

YOU SHALL BE PERFECT

The throngs listening to Jesus speak were sinners. They were not perfect even by the humanly manipulated levels of perfection set by the Pharisees. And yet Jesus said they shall be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect!

Here is a statement for the highest astonishment! The Authorized Version renders the future tense as a command: “Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect,” which is not entirely incorrect. The parallel word in the law given to Moses at Sinai is also expressed by an indicative verb: “Holy shall you become, for I am holy, Yahweh your Elohim” (Lev.19:2). But in Luke 6:36, where the Lord’s sermon on “an even place” is recorded, the Lord uses the imperative: “Become,

then, pitiful, according as your Father also is pitiful.” What is commanded is also promised! It is commanded as a test to display human inability, but it is promised as a revelation of divine ability.

As a command, the astonishment in Matthew 5:48 lies in the fact that it speaks of an impossibility for Israel and indeed for us all! As a promise, the astonishment lies in the marvel of God’s achievement. Israel must be brought to the point where they realize they cannot be perfect as God is perfect so that they shall be made perfect and holy and pitiful as their Father is perfect, holy and pitiful.

Ultimately Israel will be saved from their imperfection and immaturity, and so they will reflect the perfection of the heavenly Father. They will be saved from their sins, by their Saviour, Jesus.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF ETERNAL LOSS

It is surely ironic that portions of Matthew 5-7 should be understood and taught in defense of the doctrine of everlasting hell for the wicked. Entirely apart from the fact that the Greek word *aiōnios* (read into this context from Matthew 25:46) does not mean endlessness¹, and the fact that Gehenna does not refer to a place of fiery, conscious torment², imposing such a perverse idea on our Lord’s sermon makes a complete mockery and confusion of His message.

It can only be claimed hypocritically that Jesus is speaking of an everlasting destiny of misery, from which there is no possibility of escape, for certain individuals (not, of course, including ourselves). The demands placed on our Lord’s listeners are demands that no one could keep apart

1. cf A. E. Knoch: ALL IN ALL, pp.192-206; James Coram: “The Living God and the Eons,” *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.79, p.171.

2. cf James Coram: “The Gehenna of Fire,” *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 83, p.279.

from God’s gift of a Saviour from sins. God must make His people perfect as He is perfect, or else none of them will enter into the kingdom. Solely on the basis of the standards of righteousness laid down in these chapters, and apart from the Saviour’s salvation from sins, no one, whether they are God’s people Israel or not, can hope to receive the promises.

If the promise of maturity and perfection is to be fulfilled, God must open the eyes of the blind and give spiritual strength, which in fact He has promised to do in the giving of His Son as the Saviour of His people.

This is not to say that Gehenna and destruction as spoken of here are not serious realities. But we who believe that Christ died for our sins, and that this is the sole basis of our salvation and expectation of life, must surely be prepared in heart to treat our Lord’s words concerning future judgments with the greatest care and caution, lest we bring dishonor to His Name. It is well to ask how much anger lies behind the traditional interpretation of these passages. Where is the sense of humility and the turning of the other cheek, demanded by our Lord here, in the scenes of hell so often still presented in sermons of many Bible teachers? Why should we put limits to God’s grace and restrict the effectiveness of the cross of Christ by stubborn adherence to such concepts as double predestination³ or the idea that God has given up a measure of His sovereign will in favor of the free will of man? Why should we confine God’s justice to His work of judgment, and His love to His work of salvation, in order to defend the idea of everlasting loss?

It is not the sin of hypocrisy alone that is involved here. There is the sin of disbelief in the attempts to explain a passage like Romans 5:18 in terms of not all mankind being

3. Double predestination is the idea that God predetermined that some people would be saved, and the rest damned to everlasting hell.

justified, or 1 Corinthians 15:22 in terms of not all being vivified in Christ, or Colossians 1:20 in terms of a reconciliation through the blood of Christ's cross that does not reach every enemy in the universe. There is the failure (to our great present loss) of not relying on God as the living God Who is the Saviour of all mankind (1 Tim.4:10), and not glorifying Him for His goal of becoming All in all (1 Cor.15:28).

As for our Lord's ministry as recorded in the book of Matthew, we should eagerly view all His words of warning and dire predictions of judgment in the light of such promises as Matthew 1:21 ("He shall be saving His people from their sins"), and Matthew 2:6 ("For out of [Judah] shall come forth the Ruler Who shall shepherd My people Israel") and Matthew 5:48 ("You, then, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"). We should take to heart as literal truth the words of Ezekiel 36:25,26 and connect them unreservedly to the promise of Matthew 5:8 concerning the clean of heart: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idol clods I shall cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I bestow within you, and I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

In every way we should avoid a conclusion that sees God as dooming to an eternal hell those whom He does not yet give a clean heart and does not yet make perfect and mature as He is perfect. Here in Matthew God is setting forth astonishing demands, demands which are impossible for anyone to fulfill in their own strength, but He is also preparing Israel for the Saviour from sin and the granting of His spirit for power of righteousness that exceeds that ever shown by their most diligent law-keeper. And what is said about Gehenna and fire and the great fall of the sinner's (the "stupid" man's) house must be taken in rela-

tion to the overall goals announced. God can and does use warnings as motivations for repentance, and He can and does use the carrying out of His judgments for enlightening the eyes of the blinded sinners involved, as well as for purposes of discipline, but these are steps along the way and are not ends in themselves. In the consummation it will be seen and appreciated that Jesus is the Saviour from sins so that God may be known and relied on by all as the Saviour of all mankind. D.H.H.



JUDGMENT IN GEHENNA

THE FUTURE JUDGMENT SCENE described in Isaiah 66:23, 24 is much easier to understand when we become aware of what has already taken place at this very same spot, just outside Jerusalem. Here lay the gorge called the vale of the sons of Hinnom. The Israelites once built their high places here for the purpose of sacrificing their own children to the god Molech (Jer.7:31; 19:5; 2 Kings 23:10). Later this same spot was termed "Tophet," that is "Vomit" or "Abomination." This gloomy valley, the setting for Israel's most awful and offensive crimes, had already been turned by Yahweh into a place of judgment, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem. This was the spot that Yahweh picked to give His sinful people over to the sword so that it became known as the "Valley of Slaughter" because so many were slain on its slopes.

Because of the presence of so many unburied dead, this gorge became especially repulsive to the Jews, so was only inhabited by the birds and beasts of prey.

When these concluding lines from Isaiah's prophecy were read to the Jews in their synagogue, they knew full well that such words could only refer to the cursed vale of the sons of Hinnom, outside the city, which later became

known as the Gehenna. It was obvious to them that this would be the logical spot, in that future day, for God to deal out judgment. For many, many years this same valley had served as the “city dump” for the refuse of the townsfolk. Even the corpses of executed criminals were cast into it, to be devoured by the worms and the fires, which burned incessantly in order to destroy the filth and the stench.

Our Lord’s predictions about the coming kingdom closely paralleled those of the prophets, for He not only foresaw bountiful blessings but also fearful judgments. He elaborated upon what had been said about this period in previous predictions, explaining it more fully and shedding further light on many hazy points. He warned His hearers powerfully of the judgment which would one day envelop the vale of Hinnom. Unfortunately, faulty translation has hidden this fact from the eyes of most and severed the connection between our Lord’s threats and the warnings of Isaiah 66:24, because in every passage where our Lord referred to Gehenna, these versions mistranslate it “hell.” Perhaps this is done to lend support to the sagging doctrine of “everlasting torment,” yet it mars and mutilates the important link between those predictions in prior prophecies which deal with the same subject.

Like a diamond in its setting, this judgment scene in Gehenna fits into the framework of our Lord’s sermon. He first spoke about entering the kingdom, which at the same time He was still heralding as “near.” But, in contrast to this, He also warned them of the possibility that one might forfeit all its blessings by being caught in different snares, which can only mean becoming bound to certain sins . . . Such will be thrown into Gehenna at the kingdom’s inauguration. The severity of this judgment is seen from His dictum that merely calling a brother “Stupid” would make one liable to the Gehenna of fire (Matt.5:22).

On the other hand He offers comfort to those who will

endure affliction in that day because of their faith, with these words: “Now I am saying to you, My friends, be not afraid of those who are killing the body and after this do not have anything more excessive that they can do. Now I shall be intimating to you of Whom you may be afraid. Be afraid of Him, Who, after killing, has authority to be casting into Gehenna. Yea, I am saying to you, of this One be afraid” (Luke 12:4,5).

Here we may see the proper order of the process of this judgment of Gehenna. First the body is killed, and only after that is the corpse thrown into the valley with its smoldering fires and voracious worms. Therefore this is not a judgment in which the sinner suffers, for he is already dead. Likewise, it becomes very evident that this terrestrial tribunal cannot last forever.

Even though the Lord called it “eonian fire,” this only indicates that it will burn throughout one whole eon. That it must have an end is not difficult to prove. Scripture says definitely that at the end of the millennium the entire earth will be dissolved by combustion (2 Peter 3:12). Thus this place of judgment located in the vale of Hinnom will also melt and be decomposed like everything else on the earth’s surface.

M. Jaegle



THE CRAMPED GATE AND NARROW WAY

How earnestly did we once exhort sinners to leave the broad way which leads to destruction, for the narrow path that leads to life! (Matt.7:13,14). But, thank God, we learned the great truth that we are in Christ and share His life. How then could we be on a road that *leads to life*? I learned, moreover, that the entrance into life was *wide*, not *cramped*. It was entered by *grace*, not by *striv-*

ing (Luke 13:24). The narrow way was not the evangel but the *law*. That leads to life, for those who keep it, but, alas of the few who find it, none observe it. The precept given for life is for death (Rom.7:10).

The word “strait” is no longer understood, hence it is translated *cramped* in the Concordant Version. In its other forms it means *groan, distress*. We westerners do not know what a narrow road is. I lived on a narrow street. It was just wide enough so three automobiles could drive abreast. In the East a street is not narrow if a single auto mobile can squeeze through. It is wide, extra wide. It is narrow if pedestrians must go in single file. The word *cramped* means still more. It is so narrow that it makes one groan to squeeze through. That is the normal experience of one under the law of Moses. But the freedom we have in Christ is like the flight of a bird in the air. Not cramped, but spacious. Full of life, not leading to life. Not groaning, but singing!

The figure of the two ways was used by our Lord in proclaiming the evangel of the kingdom, before His rejection by Israel, with the cross out of sight, long before Paul was given his evangel for the nations, which is in force today. Yet even in that economy the gospel was not cramped. In the tabernacle the entrance was very wide indeed. Our Lord's words were immediately preceded by the basic law of the kingdom. “All, then, whatever you may be wanting that men should be doing to you, thus *you*, also, be doing to them, for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt.7:12). This law is the cramped gate and narrow way. Who can fulfill it?

A. E. Knoch

The above writing, “Judgment in Gehenna,” by M. Jaegle, is from *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.52, pp.74,75; the meditation, “The Cramped Gate and Narrow Way,” by A. E. Knoch, is from *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.24, p.150.

God's Purpose of Love

FACE TO FACE

THE SON OF GOD'S LOVE “is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, Firstborn from among the dead, that in all He may be becoming first, for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), whether those on the earth or those in the heavens” (Col.1:18-20).

Of all the many wonderful declarations of God's love for His Son, this surely is the most comprehensive. These words describe the full and glorious honors which are justly bestowed, but in addition, there is also a clear declaration of intent. As Firstborn among many brethren, our Lord is to lead this same ecclesia in a grand consummation of universal reconciliation. Moreover, this is achieved through the only means possible, *the blood of His cross!* How often we forget that it is this supreme sacrifice which will bring God the rich harvest of His heart's desire. We ourselves are graced “. . . in the Beloved: in Whom we are having the deliverance through His blood” (Eph.1:6,7).

GOD'S VAST LOVE

It is of paramount importance that we should not conclude that everything prior to Golgotha was failure or disappointment and that God was carrying out some vague sort of *rescue mission*. Throughout past centuries there have been disasters or tragedies which the casual observer will view as God's discipline and even anger, but a closer look, lovingly escorted by His spirit, must reveal a gradual

unfolding of our Father's immutable purpose, founded in His vast love, righteousness and grace.

"Let us not get the false idea that God, the Subjector, was unjust until the cross of Christ, and that then He set right the evil He had done. He did not change then. But He *manifested* His justice and love in the sacrifice of His Son. In Him, His Image and Likeness, He showed how *He* suffers, along with His creatures, as the victims of evil and sin. He *displayed* His righteousness even when He passed over the penalties of sins in the past, but especially in the current era, so that we can see His righteousness in the sacrifice of His Son. Before the cross His justice was but dimly discerned, as we see in the book of Job. Now it is definitely demonstrated by the suffering, death and resurrection of His Beloved.

"The sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God, although the sorest sin that man ever committed, has virtue in it to counteract and transmute all sin into a source of highest blessing to man and greatest glory to God. All eonian sin is necessary as a somber background for post-eonian blessing, through the value of His mediatorial offering. On the earth, in Israel and the nations, this gradually leads up to the consummation, through the *propitiation* of the kingdom until the *justification* of all (Rom.5:18) at the consummation. But for us, whose realm is among the celestials, justification is already our portion.

"In Christ's cross God displays *His* righteousness, so that He is Himself just, as well as the Justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus (Rom.3:26). We must not restrict our thoughts to the fact that He is *our* Justifier, through Christ. Before He could be that He must be *manifestly just Himself*. We must acknowledge that, to the limited understanding of a human, apart from His revelation, God may appear to be a ferocious fiend. In fact, almost all uninspired religions show Him as such by means of their idols and their

ceremonial rites. Even Christendom presents Him as an eternal tormentor in regard to the unbeliever. But the cross has proven, by the suffering of His Son, that He is far more than just or right, even *gracious* and *loving*.¹

BEFORE THE DISRUPTION

Writing to the dispersed expatriates who had escaped the cruel Roman persecution, Peter made it clear that they were ransomed, not with corruptible things, ". . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a flawless and unspotted lamb, foreknown, indeed, *before the disruption of the world, yet manifested in the last times*, because of you, who through Him are believing in God, Who rouses Him from among the dead and is giving Him glory, so that your faith and expectation is to be in God" (1 Peter 1:19-21).

Here is clear evidence that God made loving provision long before the apparent intrusion of sin. There was nothing unforeseen, nor should we even consider the appearance of sin as an intrusion. This was introduced as an essentially contrasting factor of revelation into His wise and wonderful affection. The separation and pain were real enough, as was the suffering of God. That the awful sacrifice of His Son was needed is sufficient proof of the infinite dimensions of God's love. Through our Lord's precious words we are granted a brief and quite intimate glimpse into the tender relationship between the Father and Son:

"I glorify Thee on earth, finishing the work which Thou hast given Me, that I should be doing it. And now glorify Thou Me, Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world is with Thee" (John 17:4,5), and again, ". . . for Thou lovest Me before the disruption of the world" (John 17:24).

"It is with awed hearts and unshod feet that we enter

1. A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.47, p.192.

into the pure precincts of God's love to His Son. We feel most unworthy to listen to such sacred secrets. Before the disruption, before sin or sorrow or a single sigh had sent its shadows across this scene, God's love for His Son had its birth. He came into the world, not to win God's love, but in response to it."²

While He hung, crucified, at Golgotha, our Lord's words were charged with profound significance, but what shall we declare concerning the silence of His Father?

“Was it for me He bowed His head
Upon the cross, and freely shed
His precious blood—that crimson tide?
Was it for me the Saviour died?”

IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

There are many startling considerations to be realized by those who are able to accept what this supreme sacrifice accomplished. This present day of grace, a glorious time of conciliation, was just one of many honors worthily lavished upon the Son of God's love.

The incredible revelation that the multifarious wisdom of God was to be made known to the celestials, *through a terrestrial ecclesia*, designated, called, and justified, was now granted. Disclosure of this amazing news, following Christ's exaltation, was first made known through the apostle Paul. For all; but especially the ecclesia, this unique plan in God's purpose, is full of tremendous significance. Firstborn among many brethren! Essential to His glory! “. . . how shall He not, together with Him, also, be graciously granting us all?” (Rom.8:32).

It was not immediately apparent, especially to His disciples, who looked for the restoration of the kingdom, but it now becomes obvious that the nation of Israel *had to reject*

² A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.168.

both King and kingdom. In fact, the kingdom itself could not be restored unless the King was put to death. Further; and here we must pause in profound adoration. The unfolding of this present secret administration of grace, “. . . concealed from the eons in God” (Eph.3:9), was completely impossible *prior to the shedding of His innocent blood on Golgotha's stake*.

The great longing of God's heart is to disclose and share His unbounded love with all creation. His first loving act was the gift of His Son: “Who is the Image of the invisible God, Firstborn of every creature, for in Him is all created, that in the heavens and that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, all is created through Him and for Him, and He is before all, and all has its cohesion in Him” (Col.1:16,17).

The divine condescension in this revelation is not at all fully comprehended. There are innumerable terms of endearment which only humans might fully appreciate. “Father,” “Son,” “Brethren,” and all the associated loving intimacy of other family relationships. These terms practically fill the whole of Scripture, and it is through these that we learn just a little of the deep meaning of tenderness and compassion; but especially, love.

The dire influence of death and sin in our members cause us to make the mistake of measuring His infinite wisdom by our own vain folly. In Scripture there are many apparent contradictions, but these only appear so because there is partial revelation of truth. We must not make premature judgments until we have, *not instalments alone, but the whole truth!*

GOD'S SPIRIT IS SEARCHING ALL

When considering the offense in Eden which left such a devastating legacy of death, and then the callousness

of the nation of Israel in first rejecting the offered kingdom and then crucifying the King, we are faced with two questions. (1) Could God not have foreseen these calamities? (2) If those involved, Adam and the nation of Israel, were helpless, being disabled, will they ultimately be held responsible for their deeds?

In love, our gracious Father has anticipated such reverent inquiry. We seek clear perception of His purpose, and we exult in all indications of His deity. At the long awaited consummation it is the glory of the Father and His Son which will ring throughout the whole universe in a grand acclamation of praise. We are urged to examine these matters, “. . . for the spirit is searching all, even the depths of God” (1 Cor.2:10).

“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.2:12-13).

Answering the first question it is evident that provision was made for the necessary humbling, self-awareness gained only through a knowledge of good and evil. The bleak estrangement which followed on our parent’s disobedience and sin also provided a situation where our gracious Father could reveal His great love. When the last enemy, death, is abolished, so the grievous effects of sin will have run their course. We perceive that the just, divine judgments of God are corrective; which will set matters right, and which will bring Him honor, praise and glory from all creation. Then will come to pass that great consummation, when, through His victorious Son, “. . . God may be All in all” (1 Cor.15:28).

We beseech our Father’s patience for even posing this second question. It is difficult, nay, hopeless, to view this

from our dying, disabled condition and with our feeble understanding. Whatever thoughts we may venture on this subject will inevitably be based on the subjective values of human justice. How dare we question the loving wisdom of God, “. . . Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will” (Eph.1:11). This imagined dilemma has already been rehearsed and answered in Scripture (Rom. 9:14-25), and as stated above, all God’s judgments are corrective. Suffice it then to reiterate this and also note that “God locks up all in stubbornness” (Rom.11:32). None will ultimately be held to be “responsible,” and thankfully, God’s judgments will not be based on human responsibility.

With hindsight (the ability to understand, after something has happened, what might better have been done or what caused the event), and even with our present bewildering standards of justice, we would no more consider Israel “responsible” in rejecting the kingdom restoration which we now know simply would not, and indeed could not, *in those days*, have happened.

Indeed there is much that God brings into our lives that “is hard to understand, till with a mind discerning, we trace His guiding hand So keep us, Lord, e’er trusting, supremely in Thy love, our all to Thee confiding, our hearts with Thee above.” Both in present struggle and in future judgment God is working out His glorious purpose.

“The knowledge of God’s Word is good, an acquaintance with His ways is better, but a realization of Himself is best. Faith accepts His sayings, confidence acquiesces in His ways, love rests in His essence. Let us believe what He says, and we will not only delight in what He does, but exult in what He is.”³

Donald Fielding

3. A. E. Knoch: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, p.340.

DISQUIETING THOUGHTS

THERE is often a conflict between what we think *ought to be* so and what *is* so. This is well exhibited throughout the debate between Job and his associates.

In his second address (chapter 20), Zophar tells Job how things should be, as firmly established by ancient wisdom: “Don’t you know this, from long ago, from when humanity was placed on the earth, that the jubilant song of the wicked is brief, and the rejoicing of the polluted lasts but a moment?” (Job 20:5). To think otherwise, as Job seems to have been suggesting, is disquieting to Zophar and creates a hurried sense of nervousness in him (20:2).

Good must be rewarded. Evil must be punished. And this is what Zophar’s belief in God is all about. “El shall evict” any gain of the wicked man “from his belly” (20:15). “He shall send against him the heat of His anger and shall rain it upon him as his nourishment” (20:23).

This is true, but what *should* be generally remains for now as what *shall* be fully realized but *is not* yet experienced. The great error with Zophar’s position is that he sees God only as an ongoing Enforcer of the principle that good is rewarded and wickedness condemned. To go beyond that and see God, as Job has been maintaining with a great struggle, as responsible for all things, shaping and directing both good and evil in accord with His own unknown design, would upset Zophar’s whole philosophy of life.

Consequently, Zophar takes a false position about the current and ongoing fate of wicked people that is easily shown to be wrong by most observable evidence. Zophar

JOB 20, 21

- 20** +Then Zophar the Naamathite ^lanswered, + ^lsaying:
2 Therefore my disquieting thoughts
are causing me to reply,
+ ⁱOn ^paccount of my hurried^r sense within me.
3 I am hearing admonition meant for my mortification,
And the spirit ^fof my understanding
makes me ^lrespond.
4 Don’t you know this, from ^flong ago,
From when humanity was placed^r on the earth,
5 That the jubilant song of the wicked is ^fbrief,
And the rejoicing of the polluted lasts ^fbut a moment?
6 Even if his dignity ^lascends to the heavens,
And his head ^ltouches ^g the thick clouds,
7 He shall perish ^g permanently like his own ordure;
Those having seen him shall say, Where is he?
8 He shall fly away like a dream,
and they shall not find him,
+For he shall be bolted away like a vision of the night.
9 The eye that glimpsed him + shall not ^edo so anymore,
Neither shall his ⁿplace regard him further.
10 His sons shall ^mseek benevolence from the poor,
+When his hands ^lrelinquish their virility.
11 His bones were filled by his adolescence,
+Yet that gain shall lie with him ^{on}in the soil.
12 Even if evil is ^lsweet in his mouth,
And he ^lsuppresses it under his tongue,
13 Though he ^lspar^{on}s it and does not ^lforsake it,
And he ^lholds fast to it ⁱon the midst of his palate,

claims that human history “from long ago” shows that “the rejoicing of the polluted lasts but a moment” (20:5) and that “he shall perish permanently like his own ordure” (20:7). Not only this, but Zophar insists that the children of such evil people will be impoverished (v.10); their estate will be lost (v.15), for El Himself will see to it (20:15,23).

Zophar is not viewing some far future adjudication but claims that serpents (undoubtedly associated with Genesis and the entrance of sin) will soon turn against the person who has followed the leadings of sin (20:16-18). Such a person, like Job, will lose all his ill-gotten gains before he dies (20:17,18). “When his affluence is full” (as Job’s has been) “there shall be distress for him; *every means of misery* shall come upon him” (20:22). It is as simple as that. Thus, in this way, Zophar interprets the horrors of Job’s situation displayed before his eyes.

With such a narrow viewpoint both of God and of the witness of history, Zophar is setting himself up for a fall. His whole principle that good is currently rewarded and evil clearly punished cannot stand before the facts of ongoing events and past records. If “dread” (v.25) and “total darkness” (v.26) is the “allotment” being assigned to the wicked person “by El” (v.29), then why can’t this be seen?

Zophar will take no direct part in the next round of speeches. This may suggest that he is abashed by the way in which Job so easily refutes his arguments. In any case, the exchange of thoughts in Job 20 and 21 makes it evident that if the principle of good being rewarded and evil being put down is to be maintained along with a recognition of God, then God must be involved in more than justly responding to human thoughts and deeds. God must be operating all things with some future and unknown goal in view. And this is the very hope Job has been clinging to and Zophar has been trying to extinguish.

- 14 Yet **his bread will be turned sour in his bowels;**
The **bile of cobras** is **within him.**
- 15 The **estate he has swallowed** down,
+ **he shall vomit it up;**
El shall evict it from his belly.
- 16 **He shall suck the poison of cobras;**
The **tongue of a puff-adder shall kill him.**
- 17 **He shall not see** ⁱ the **rillets,**
The **streams of torrents of honey and clotted cream.**
- 18 He ^c**must return** the fruit of his **labor**
and not ^sswallow it down,
And ^M**in** ^sthe **estate of his commerce,**
he has no ^tenjoyment.
- 19 **For he has maltreated, he has forsaken the poor;**
He has pillaged a house + which he did **not** ^tbuild.
- 20 **For he has not known ease in his belly;**
From his coveting, he has not ^mtried to ^tescape.
- 21 There **is nothing in store** ^oof his **food.**
Therefore his bounty cannot ^thope to last.
- 22 **When his affluence is full** ^t
there **shall be distress for him;**
Every means of misery shall come upon him.
- 23 **It shall come to be,** in order to **fill his belly,**
That **He shall send** ⁱagainst him the **heat of His anger**
And shall rain it upon him ⁱas his **nourishment.**
- 24 **He shall run away from a weapon of iron;**
From a **bronze bow it shall cut into him.**
- 25 **It will be pulled out and brought** ^tforth from his **body,**
And a flashing blade from his bile;
Dread shall ^ocome over him.
- 26 ^{all}**Total darkness** lies **buried** ^tfor his **secluded** ^triches;
A **fire** that was **not blown** upon **shall devour him;**
It shall imperil anything **surviving in his tent.**
- 27 The **heavens shall expose his depravity,**
And the earth will rise ^tagainst him.

JOB'S PANIC

If Zophar is disquieted by Job's attempts to associate his suffering with some divine operation apart from simple retribution for wickedness, Job's spirit is "impatient," (21:4) and he is "filled with panic and shuddering" (21:6) by any suggestion that it could be otherwise. Job believes in God as Judge and Rewarder just as much as his associates, but for Job this operation of adjudication cannot explain either his present sufferings or the facts concerning the present lives of clearly irreverent and wicked people. Job's entire soul shudders at such a narrow view of Deity and the experience of evil. If God's only connection with humanity lies in the realm of discipline then He can have little to do with Job's sufferings, and that cannot be!

"Face me," Job commands, "and be desolated, and place your hand over your mouth" (Job 21:5). If Zophar will look at Job fairly, in view of his own knowledge of Job's history, he will know that his pat explanations for evil will not serve. Then if he will honestly look around at humanity as a whole his disquietude will become desolation.

The great weight of evidence from the past and present shows that the wicked "become masterful with potent power" (21:7). "Their seed is established; their houses remain in peace, . . . and no club of Eloah is upon them" (21:8,9). Instead of his sons begging scraps from the poor (*cf* 20:10) "their youngsters go forth like the flock, and their children are dancing" (21:11). Far from their jubilant song being brief (*cf* 20:5), "they take up tambourine and harp, and they rejoice to the sound of the shepherd's pipe. They finish their days in well-being, and they settle down in a quiet moment to the unseen" (21:12,13). It is the exception rather than the rule when the wicked end their days in poverty and distress.

Moreover, those who irreverently mock the Deity, say-

- ²⁸ The ~deluge~ shall deport his house,
Spilling over in the day of His anger.
- ²⁹ This is the portion from Elohim for the wicked ^hperson,
And the allotment ^{sa}assigned him ^f by El.
- 21** ⁺So Job ^lanswered, ⁺ ^lsaying:
- ² Harken, yea hearken ^ˉ to my declaration,
And let this ^lbe your consolations to me.
- ³ Bear with me ⁺while I ^ˉ am speaking,
And after I have spoken ^ˉ, you may deride.
- ⁴ As for me, is my concern directed to a human?
And if so, for what reason
should not my spirit be impatient?
- ⁵ Face ^ˆ me, and be desolated,
And place your hand over your mouth.
- ⁶ ⁺ ^{if} When I remember this, ⁺ I am filled with panic,
And shuddering takes hold of my flesh.
- ⁷ For what reason should the wicked live on?
They develop ^mand become masterful
with potent power.
- ⁸ Their seed is established ^l with them ^ˆin their presence,
And their offspring ^ˆin front of their eyes.
- ⁹ Their houses remain in peace apart from alarm,
And no ^l club of Eloah is upon them.
- ¹⁰ ⁷Their~ bull impregnates and is never ^lfruitless;
⁷Their~ young cow ^ldelivers and does not ^lmiscarry.
- ¹¹ They ^mlet their youngsters ^lgo forth like the flock,
And their children are dancing.
- ¹² They ^ltake up ^{as} tambourine and harp,
And they ^lrejoice to the sound of the shepherd's pipe.
- ¹³ They ^{lall}finish their days in well-being,
And they ^lsettle down in a quiet moment to the unseen.
- ¹⁴ ⁺Yet they ^lsay to El, Go away from us,
⁺For we do not desire a knowledge of Your ways.

20:28 --- deluge: Hb crop of.
21:10 7-- Their: Hb His.

ing to El, "Go away from us, for we do not desire a knowledge of Your ways" end up holding on to the good they had planned to get. This wicked devising, at least, is as it appears to Job even though he was not in on their counseled plans (21:14-16). Job has not been in on God's counsels either, but assuming that the wicked will eventually receive Eloah's appointed cramps for their lawlessness, he determines that this must be presently secluded (21:17-19), and so reserved for another time.

Job's reply to Zophar in chapter 21 is devastating. It points clearly to observable evidence that Zophar has not admitted but which anyone "passing on the way" could verify (21:29). But Job does not exult in this triumph. It does not end Job's panic and shuddering to prove that wicked people prosper and that El does not bring the club of His anger upon them. Zophar's arguments have been offensive vanity (21:34) because they do not face the fact that an upright person like Job is being afflicted, and wicked people, both in the past and in the present, so often prosper. This is what should have been disquieting to Zophar instead of Job's attempts to relate these apparent inequalities to God. The critical question is why God has *not* brought His club on the wicked. There is something about God and His relationship to evil that cannot be explained simply by the principles of judgment and reward.

In chapter 21 Job makes little progress in this struggle to relate his sufferings to a wise and powerful Deity. He pays more attention to Zophar's arguments in chapter 20 than he has previously done to anything his associates have said. Because Zophar's arguments are so easily refuted, Job becomes more distracted than before from the major issue. The problem of evil in this world where God is in charge is deepened by the evidence Job lays before Zophar and us in this address.

Yet we have gained by this exchange in chapters 20 and

- 15 **What is He Who-Suffices that we should serve Him?**
And what 'benefit would we 'gain
that we should make intercession 'to Him?
- 16 **Behold, is not their good in their hand?**
 (Still, **the counsel of the wicked is far from me.**)
- 17 **How often is the lamp of the wicked 'extinguished**
+That their calamity 'comes on them,
That He 'apportions cramps in His anger?
- 18 **Do they 'become like crushed straw before the wind,**
+Or like trash that the sweeping whirlwind steals away?
- 19 **Is Eloah secluding payment for his^o lawlessness**
to give to his sons?
May He repay > him +that he may know!
- 20 **May his own eyes see his downfall,**
And may he drink 'of the fury of Him Who-Suffices.
- 21 **For what is his delight in his house after he is gone,**
+When the number of his months has run out?
- 22 **Who shall teach knowledge to El,**
+Since He Himself shall judge the exalted^l ones?
- 23 **This one 'dies in his robust plentifulness,**
His whole state snug and at ease;
- 24 **His viscera are full of fat,**
And the marrow of his bones is 'hearty.
- 25 **+Yet another 'dies 'with a bitter soul,**
+ Who has never eaten 'of good.
- 26 **They 'lie together ^{on}in the soil,**
And maggots 'cover ^{on} them both.
- 27 **Behold, I know your devisings**
And the schemes that you 'wrongly make ^{on}against me.
- 28 **For you are saying, Where is the house of the tyrant,**
And where are the tent tabernacles of the wicked?
- 29 **Have you not asked those passing on the way,**
And do you not 'admit their evidence,

21:19 his: i.e., a man's.

- 30 **That the evil one is 'kept back 'in the day of calamity;
'In the day of rage they are 'escorted safely?**
- 31 **Who 'denounces his way ^{on} to his face,
And 'who 'repays ' him for what he himself has done?**
- 32 **+When he' is 'fetched to the burying ground,
+ Watch is set 'alert over the grave-mound.**
- 33 **The clods of the wadi are sweet to him;
+ All humanity 'draws out after him,
And there is no numbering of those before him.**
- 34 **How +then can you 'comfort me with vanity,
+When only offense remains in your replies?**



21. We have learned that no matter how true something may be, it cannot be shown true by false claims. It is true that evil will not prosper, and indeed God will see to this. El Himself "shall judge the exalted ones" (21:22). But reliance on this principle cannot be established by pretending that it is observable and verifiable in current experience, or by supposing God has nothing in view beyond such works of judgment. We have also gained in being prepared a little more than before for the revelations of Himself and His operations that God gives in the latter chapters of the book. What we observe and hear and feel at present is not the consummation. D.H.H.

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES, VOLUME 87

Bindery work has now been completed, and *Unsearchable Riches* volume 87 (1996) is now available for shipment (clothbound, dark green cloth, 288 pages; \$20.00 per copy, \$2.00 s&h; California residents add sales tax). We regret that we cannot make these volumes available at a lower price; however, our basic production costs alone are substantially in excess of \$15.00 per volume, and bindery expenses are more than \$6.00 per book additional.