

Contents:

- 49 Editorial
- 51 Paul to the Colossians
- 55 The Arrows of Him Who-Suffices
- 65 My Impregnable Retreat
- 72 For You are Bought With a Price
- 75 "More Than Conquering"
- 79 There Has Come New
- 87 "When It Delights God"

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**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR MARCH 1996  
BEING THE SECOND NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-SEVEN**

**EDITORIAL**

IN the northern hemisphere this is the season of renewal. All around us there is a vigorous burst of life after months of stillness and coldness. The winter speaks of death; the spring speaks of life out of death, however dimly it may be.

It is fitting that it was at this time of year our Lord was crucified, and three days later He was roused from among the dead. But nothing in the present system can perfectly picture the truth of this evangel and its significance for humanity and all the universe.

We are always encouraged by the spring season. There is indeed a manifestation of God from the creation of the world (Rom.1:20). But if this is all we have for learning of Him, our feelings of optimism are bound to disappear soon. Springtime may picture resurrection in its renewal, but it is far from paralleling the power, vitality and glory that is in Christ as the Firstfruit of those who are reposing and the One Who is our Life.

The seasons are cycles, repeating themselves over and over again. What God is doing in Christ leads forward to a consummation which is not a ceasing, but an achievement. The ancient practices and symbols of spring that have been incorporated into our culture, the songs and flowers and decorated eggs, and even spring itself, cannot establish a firm grasp of the evangel concerning the cross and vivification of Christ.

The death and resurrection of Christ are not cyclical renewals, and the evangel does not speak merely of reformation and improvement. In that Christ died "He died to Sin once for all time" (Rom.6:10). "In Christ shall all be vivified" (1 Cor.15:22).

The human ideas that make up so much of “Easter” actually reinforce wrong thinking about the death and resurrection of Christ. The old is decorated. And the decorated thing is temporary, like spring itself. This cannot reflect the evangel which speaks of a new creation and an actual achievement that is certain of full and final realization.

The changes that are channeled through Christ are not fading and transient but lead from glory to glory as Paul expressed it in 2 Corinthians 3:18. God’s grace, God’s peace, God’s love—these are blessings in Christ that various contributors have focused upon in this issue.

Especially in dealing with Paul’s evangel and the secrets associated with his apostleship, we find a happiness and a confidence unparalleled by terrestrial experience. The terminology itself is full of optimism: conciliation, reconciliation, delight, love. But when such terms are associated with God’s work in Christ they become powerful in lifting our spirits and effecting changes in our lives. God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself. It was God’s delight to sever Paul and unveil His Son in him; and His delight reaches forward in the future to the reconciliation of all. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!

As David’s experiences led him to a growing reliance on God as his Impregnable Retreat, so may our experiences lead us to an increasing confidence in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as Job tenaciously focused upon God through his severe sufferings, so may our hearts be focused on God’s multifarious wisdom, transcendent grace and vast love. When Christ was roused from among the dead, there began a new “spring-time” that speaks only of good, of life and righteousness, that will never fade, but will only increase to that consummation when God is All in all.

D.H.H.

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*The Epistles of Paul*

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## PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS is the complement of the doctrinal section of Ephesians. Two mysteries dominate both. Ephesians elaborates the present Secret Economy, which concerns the *members* of the body of Christ: Colossians dwells upon the secret of Christ, Who is the *Head* of that body. Ephesians, however, *teaches* the truth, while Colossians *corrects* departure from it.

### TO THE BRETHERN IN COLOSSE

The epistle is addressed, in the first place, to Colosse. Yet it was also sent to Laodicea, and, indeed, is especially meant for all who had not seen Paul’s face in the flesh (4:16; 2:1). Like its companion epistles, Ephesians and Philipians, the very mode of communication is in accord with its contents. Flesh has no place. Paul is bound (4:18). He could not go to Colosse in order to tell them these transcendent truths by word of mouth, but is compelled to have his words committed to writing, so that they will be seen rather than heard, and not only can be transported vast distances, far beyond the reach of his voice, but may be imperishably preserved for the future. And so they have come to us.

The recipients of this epistle are distinguished by two tokens—holiness and faith. On God’s side they were saints, hallowed by contact with Him. On the human side they had believed in Christ. The faith of the Colossians is expressly said to be in Christ Jesus (1:4).

## FRAMEWORK OF COLOSSIANS

Introduction (1:1,2)

Report of Epaphras to Paul (1:3-8)

The Secret of Christ

–Its Realization (1:9-2:7)

Correction of Doctrine (2:8-23)

Correction of Deportment (3:1-4:1)

The Secret of Christ

–Its Expression (4:2-6)

Tychicus to the Colossians (4:7-9)

Conclusion (4:10-18)

The literary framework gives us a clear clue to its contents. Within the Salutations and Mutual Reports, the whole body of the epistle deals with the details of the Secret of Christ. First the apostle, in one of the most sublime passages in Holy Writ, sets forth the secret glories of Christ as the Son of God (1:9-2:7).

At the close of the epistle he speaks of this again, desiring to make it known (4:2-6).

The bulk of this letter deals with correction in doctrine and deportment necessitated by departure from the Secret of Christ. A knowledge of this secret is vital to the spiritual welfare of all who know God.

Rationalism and ritual, the philosophy of the nations and the relation of Israel, are the two great enemies to the truth which find correction in Colossians.

Every false theology or philosophy which places anything of human origin between God and man, is set aside by the great truth that Christ is God's Complement. As our Complement He displaces all the decrees and rites of Judaism. In Christ we are complete and need naught else to fit us for the Father's presence.

The secret of Christ is presented in its future aspect in Ephesians. There is to be a harvest era in which Christ is

to be supreme, not only on earth, but in the heavens also. His sway will be universal (Eph.1:10,22,23). In Colossians, however, the emphasis is placed on His past headship in creation and His present headship in redemption with a view to a future reconciliation of the universe. The unity of creation has led philosophers to trace it back to a common origin, by some called a "primordial germ." This first element in creation, however simple it may be said to be, must possess within itself a potential universe. The Son of God, the Firstborn of Creation, is the satisfactory solution to all questions which concern creation. Creation did not begin in chaos but in Christ. It will not end in ruin wrought by man but in universal reconciliation wrought by the blood of His cross.

## THE INVOCATION

The invocations in Paul's three prison epistles are identical. Just as the body of each epistle commences with blessing or thanking, so the first wish of the apostle's heart for his readers is *grace*. Divine favor lavished upon those who deserve God's indignation will yet be the most precious gem in the crown of His glory. His creatures will be awed by His infinite might. They will be amazed by the wonders of His works. They will marvel at His wisdom. Their hearts will swell with thankfulness for His kindness. Far more precious will be the praise and worship which His mercy will call forth. Yet the highest adoration and the deepest affection will come to Him from those who realize the depths of the deficiency of their deserts and the corresponding heights to which His grace has exalted them.

We should make more of His grace. Not only should it warm our own hearts at all times, but it should pervade our walk and our service. Oh, how great a transformation would it work in the heralding of the evangel, if it were presented

in its purity and power! Grace that Saul encountered on the Damascus road. Grace that Paul received to serve the saints. Grace that enabled him to suffer for Christ's sake. Let us not confine it to the past, to our call, when we first believed. This invocation is not for unbelievers, but for us. Our salvation is not only *by* but *to* or *in* grace (Eph.2:5). Not only did it begin with grace, but it continues so, and will finish with the greatest display of all, when our bodies will be transfigured and glorified.

First grace, then peace. First justification, then reconciliation. Were God not gracious, what could there be but indignation and enmity? But now that His favor hovers over us as a benediction, we may have peace with Him, peace in our spirits, peace with our fellow-saints and the world, yea, we may enter into the peace *of* God, and enjoy some measure of the calm with which He is filled, Who knows the end from the beginning, and Whose great aim is to overcome all enmity with love, and clasp His whole creation to His heart in the bonds of perfect and perpetual peace.

#### FROM GOD OUR FATHER

These blessings can come from one source alone—from God, Who now looks upon us as His children, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between us, our Saviour and Lord. We are no longer merely creatures of the great Creator. We have entered the circle of His family and now are children of an affectionate Father. He will be gracious to us and give us peace, through the work of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Indeed, He is our Peace, for He not only reconciles us to God through the blood of His cross, but removes the barriers between the saints, and makes the despised Uncircumcision one with the privileged Circumcision.

A.E.K.

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### Notes on the Book of Job

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## THE ARROWS OF HIM WHO-SUFFICES

IT IS BECAUSE Job was afflicted with unusual evil that his words and thoughts go beyond the usual wisdom. Without his trial Job would have spoken, concerning any such evil as he was suffering, much as his associates spoke. It is the experience of severe affliction coupled with his uncompromising recognition of God as God (*cp* Rom.1:21), that makes Job probe deeper into the meaning of this evil.

In Job 4 and 5, Eliphaz had voiced conventional wisdom concerning sufferings. He had determined to his own satisfaction that what Job was experiencing was Eloah's correction for iniquity, "*the admonition of Him Who-Suffices*" (5:16-18). The implication was that if Job would acknowledge his sins, and like Eliphaz, "inquire of El" (5:8), he would be rescued out of his afflictions (5:19-27). "Behold this, we have investigated it; it is so. Do hear it; and you, get to know it for yourself."

#### JOB'S REPLY

If this bluntness at the end of Eliphaz's speech leaves us gasping, it does not silence Job. In chapters 6 and 7, the afflicted man stays his course. He continues to affirm that (1) his sufferings are extreme, (2) God has given them, and (3) he would have God remove them by taking away his life.

The words of Eliphaz are, on one hand, like "insipid food" (6:6), and, on the other hand, like the "treacherous" torrents of water that rush down the dry "wadis" in the rainy season (6:15). They do not relate to the realities of Job's situation, and thus are tasteless; but they also offend, and thus

are treacherous. If all that can be said is that no mortal is righteous before God (4:17) and that God saves the needy (5:15), then all Job can do is resume his plea for death.

Eliphaz has focused attention on Job. Job would turn it back to God. Where Eliphaz had spoken of the *admonition* of Him Who-Suffices, Job would speak of the *arrows* of Him Who-Suffices (6:4). Eliphaz measured God's sufficiency for human needs in terms of correction and discipline in light of human sinfulness. But Job could not, in all honesty and reality, see his afflictions as divine admonition. His sufferings were deep and real; they were "arrows;" but they were arrows from *Him Who-Suffices*.

And that is the problem! Job's sufferings were from God, Who is sufficient in dealing with every sorrow and every woe. Unlike Eliphaz, Job cannot feel any confidence in understanding how the "arrows" relate to God as the All-Sufficient One. But Job is convinced these arrows are not simply divine correctives of secret sins he may have committed.

Nevertheless, they are from God Who is sufficient. They are "frightenings," but frightenings from Eloah, Who is in charge. Job does not know the *why*, but he is keenly acquainted with the *what*. Consequently, Job turns away from Eliphaz and makes requests of Eloah. Since Eloah is sufficient in bringing His arrows upon Job, He is sufficient to take away Job's sufferings by taking away his life.

Indeed, Job errs in not relating God's sufficiency to a deliverance that is full of blessing and life, to a bringing of joy out of the sorrows and consolation out of frightenings. But he is right in focusing his attention on God as the One Who is Sufficient. In this way he is being prepared for a fuller grasp of the ways and character of God.

The divine title, *Eloah*, and the verb, *disposed*, in Job 6:9 share the same root, word-element, "subject," in Hebrew. Eloah is the *To-Subjector*; Who can *subject* His operations

6 **+Then Job** <sup>1</sup>answered, + <sup>1</sup>saying:

2 **O** that my vexation could be <sup>1</sup>weighed, yea weighed<sup>-</sup>.  
And they could <sup>1</sup>take up my woe <sup>1</sup>upon the scales  
together with it.

3 <sup>1</sup>Because now it is <sup>1</sup>heavier <sup>f</sup>than the sand of the seas,  
Therefore my words are impetuous.

4 **For** the arrows of Him Who-Suffices are <sup>wi</sup>in me;  
Their venom is <sup>w</sup>what my spirit has been drinking;  
Frightenings from Eloah are <sup>1</sup>arrayed against me.

5 Does an onager <sup>1</sup>bray over verdure?  
<sup>if</sup>Would a bull <sup>1</sup>low over its fodder?

6 **Is** insipid food being eaten without salt?  
<sup>if</sup>Or is there taste in the ooze of purslane?

7 **My** soul refuses to touch them;  
They are like bread of sickness to me.

8 **O** <sup>lg</sup>that my request would <sup>1</sup>come,  
+That Eloah would <sup>lg</sup>grant my expectation,

9 +That Eloah would be <sup>1</sup>disposed <sup>+</sup>to <sup>1</sup>crush me!  
May He <sup>c</sup>let loose His hand and <sup>1</sup>clip me off!

10 +**Then** there would <sup>f</sup>still <sup>1b</sup>be this consolation for me,  
+While I <sup>1</sup>flinch in the travail which He is not sparing,  
That I have not suppressed the <sup>sa</sup>words of the Holy One.

11 **What** is my vigor that I should wait?  
And what is my end that I should prolong my soul?

12 <sup>if</sup>Is my vigor the vigor of stones,  
<sup>if</sup>Or my flesh like bronze?

13 <sup>if</sup>Isn't it that there is nothing in me to help myself,  
And all prosperity has been driven away from me?

14 One who is in despondency should <sup>1</sup>have kindness  
from his associates,

+Even if he should forsake the fear of Him Who-Suffices.

15 **My** brothers, they are treacherous like a wadi,  
Like a channel of wadis that <sup>1b</sup>overflow,

16 <sup>1</sup>That become somber<sup>1 f</sup> because of ice,  
And snow <sup>1</sup>obscures <sup>on</sup> them.

to the crushing of Job. As it turns out, Eloah was not *disposed* to crush Job, but rather to bless him. But at this point, Job was not aware of this purpose of the One Who-Suffices.

WORDS OF A DESPERATE MAN

It is a struggle, however, for Job to keep his attention on God. This is reflected in chapter 6, where he alternately addresses God and then his associates. Job first traces his woe to Eloah (verses 1-4), and then, by a series of parables, intimates that his associates' words are irrelevant and meaningless in the present situation (5-7). Next he turns again to Eloah, pleading for Him to grant him death (8-10), and then once more he turns to his associates, describing their words as unhelpful, and even more than that, as treacherous (11-30). (But finally, in chapter 7, Job will turn entirely from the instruments of human wisdom before him and plead his case, with God alone in view.)

In 6:11-27 we see a man "in despondency" (v.14), appealing to his associates to treat him as one who is truly suffering and does not know why. They have jumped to the conclusion that Job needs correcting, but Job knows well that this is not the explanation of his suffering. They are looking for something that does not exist, as travelers in the arid Mideast may look for water that is not there (6:18-21). Their acquaintance with Job should not have led them to think of him as a deceiver (22,23). They cannot point to any specific error on his part (24). "How can correction from you be correcting?" (25).

These indeed are words of a desperate man (26)! The more he thinks about what his associates are saying, the more frustrated he becomes. They are not *disposed* to face Job as he is; they do not subject their thoughts and words to the fact that someone in dire straits and needs is before them, whose situation cannot be dismissed as a simple matter of divine correction (27-30).

- 17 **In the season when they 'thaw they are effaced;  
In the bright warmth they are extinguished  
from their <sup>ri</sup>place.**
- 18 **Caravans are 'sent aside from their way;  
They 'ascend into the wasteland and 'perish.**
- 19 **The caravans of Tema look for waters;  
The wayfarers of Sheba expect to find them.**
- 20 **But they are ashamed that each one trusted the place;  
They come <sup>fr</sup>to it, and they are 'abashed.**
- 21 **'Thus have you now become <sup>7</sup>to me<sup>cs</sup>;  
You 'see catastrophe, and you are 'fearful.**
- 22 **'Indeed have I said, Grant something to me?  
+Or, Pay a bribe from your fortune in my <sup>fr</sup>behalf?**
- 23 **+Or, Deliver me forth from the hand of a foe?  
+Or, You shall ransom me from the hand of terrifiers?**
- 24 **Direct me, and I' shall <sup>c</sup>keep silent,  
And <sup>wt</sup>where I have erred, <sup>c</sup>make <sup>7</sup> me understand.**
- 25 **<sup>wt</sup>How <sup>M</sup>savory<sup>~</sup> are <sup>sa</sup>words of uprightness,  
+Yet <sup>wt</sup>how can correction<sup>-</sup> from you be correcting?**
- 26 **Are you designing to correct with declarations,  
+Yet treat <sup>7</sup>as wind the <sup>sa</sup>words of a desperate<sup>l</sup> man?**
- 27 **Indeed, you would 'cast lots <sup>on</sup>for the orphan,  
And you would 'barter over your associate.**
- 28 **+Yet now be kindly disposed; face <sup>i</sup> me;  
+ I shall assuredly not 'lie <sup>on</sup>to your face.**
- 29 **Relent, I pray; let it not 'become iniquity,  
And relent further; my righteousness is at stake in it.**
- 30 **Is there iniquity 'on my tongue?  
<sup>if</sup>Or does not my palate 'understand woes?**
- 7 **'Has not a mortal a hard enlistment on the earth?  
And his days, are they not like the days of a hireling?**
- 2 **Like a slave who is gasping after shade,  
And like a hireling who is expecting his wages,**

6:21 7--cs to me: Hb to him.  
6:25 M-- savory: Hb harassing.

## HIM WITH SIGHT

Job continues to speak of his pitiful situation in chapter 7, but as he proceeds we become aware that he is no longer addressing his associates but rather God Himself. The One “with sight” in the first line of verse 8 is surely Eloah. He is the One Who places a guard over Job (7:12), Who has made a great thing of him, checking him every morning and never taking His probing heed from him (17,18); He is the Preserver of mankind (20).

There is much here that is radical, expressing the bitterness of Job’s soul (11), and much of what Job says is uninformed in that it does not express reliance on God for salvation to a good consummation. But what Job says is right in its recognition of the deity of God. Job traces his woe to God, and this is right. But Job’s only hope is that the God Who dismays and frightens him (14), will bring him death soon (15).

## DREAMS AND VISIONS

Job’s reference to dreams and visions from God (7:14) connects with the rather melodramatic description Eliphaz had made of his own “visions of the night” in 4:12-16. Yet where Eliphaz brought his clearly overdrawn account of a mysterious dream to the very conventional and pious question, “Can a *mortal* be righteous before Eloah?” (4:17), Job’s restless dreams aroused in him the cry, made more shocking by being addressed directly to Deity, “What is a *mortal* that You should make a great thing of him?” (7:17). Where Eliphaz would speak of God as One at a distance from impure humanity, Job faces Eloah and speaks of Him as One Who checks him every morning and tests him every moment (7:18)! Hence, while Eliphaz seems to speak more reverently than Job about God, his words end up directing our thoughts away from God to man’s sinfulness. Yet

- <sup>3</sup> **So am I allotted months of futility for myself,  
And nights of misery have they assigned to me.**
- <sup>4</sup> *if* **When I lie down, +then I say, When shall I rise?  
+Yet the evening is interminable,  
And I am surfeited with restlessness  
until the morning gloaming.**
- <sup>5</sup> **My flesh is clothed with maggot and dirty scab;  
My skin is split apart and is 'fetid.**
- <sup>6</sup> **My days are fleeter *f*than a weaver’s shuttle,  
And they shall *all* conclude  
*i*with the limit of the weaving thread.**
- <sup>7</sup> **Remember that my life is a wind;  
My eye shall not turn back to see good.**
- <sup>8</sup> The eye of Him with sight shall not regard me;  
**Your eyes will look *i*for me, +but I will not be there.**
- <sup>9</sup> As a cloud *all*vanishes and 'goes away,  
**So one descending to the unseen shall not ascend.**
- <sup>10</sup> **He shall not return any *f*more to his house,  
And his *ri*place shall not recognize him *f*again.**
- <sup>11</sup> *mr***Indeed for me, I shall not keep back my mouth;  
O let me 'speak in the distress of my spirit;  
O let me 'importune in the bitterness of my soul.**
- <sup>12</sup> Am I the sea or the sea monster  
**That You should place a guard over me?**
- <sup>13</sup> **For I said, My cot shall comfort me;  
My bed shall bear away my concern;**
- <sup>14</sup> **+Yet You have dismayed me *i*with dreams,  
And *f*with visions You have 'frightened me.**
- <sup>15</sup> **+So my soul would 'choose strangling,  
Death, rather *f*than my bodily staunchness.**
- <sup>16</sup> **I reject this; I would not 'live for the eon;  
Let *f* me alone, for my days are a transitory breath.**
- <sup>17</sup> **What is a mortal that You should make  
a great thing of him,  
+Or that You should set Your heart 'on him?**

Job's impetuous words keep focusing attention on God as directly involved in his sufferings.

GOD'S TARGET MARK

Eliphaz had said that "humanity is born to misery" (5:7). But he presented this truth as a simple fact, without making any association with God. In the following verse, 5:8, Eliphaz drew attention to his practice of inquiring of El, but the point of all this was to divert Job's attention from his misery to God's providence for the needy and correction of the crafty.

In contrast to this, Job describes his own misery in vivid terms (7:3-5), and boldly traces this to God. Eliphaz had implied that Job's misery was a judgment on him for his sins, some craftiness that might not be clear to Job's associates but was clear to God. To this Job replies (without addressing Eliphaz directly, but rather facing Eloah), "I have sinned" (7:20). But is this the reason for his misery? "Yet what do I contrive against You, O Preserver of mankind? Why have You established me as Your target mark, that I should become a load to You?" (Job 7:20).

We may deem these words irreverent, even though we understand how Job is led to utter them. He is extremely harassed. But he refuses to look for any other cause than God Himself. Job is like a target mark. And if so, then this is of God.

Eliphaz was satisfied to view misery simply as a fact of human existence, almost as without cause or purpose. Job could not do so. If his woe cannot be traced to God, then there is no hope at all. But since it is God Who sends arrows of misery upon Job as a target mark, then He can take them away.

The words of Job 7:21 are among the most weighty and revealing of the book. Job means them as a plea for death as an end to his affliction, but for us today, viewing them

- 18 **+Or You should check him** ʻevery morning,  
And **You should test him** ʻevery moment?
- 19 **How long?**  
**Shall You never** take Your probing **heed from me,**  
**Never** ʻlet me ʼrelax even **until I swallow** ʻ my saliva?
- 20 **I have sinned,**  
Yet **what** do I ʼcontrive ʻagainst You,  
O **Preserver**<sup>l</sup> of ʼmankind?  
**Why have You** <sup>pl</sup>established me ʻas Your target mark,  
**+That I should become** ʻ a load <sup>on</sup>to <sup>S</sup>You<sup>ph</sup>?
- 21 **+ wt** **Why** do You not ʼbear my transgression  
And ʼpass over ʼmy depravity?  
**For now I shall lie** ʻin the soil,  
**And You would** <sup>m</sup>seek me early, **+but I will not be** there.

7:20 *S-ph* You: Hb me.



in light of the evangel of our salvation, we can appreciate their great relevance to Job's situation. Eloah would indeed bear Job's depravity, but in doing so He would put the depravity to death so that Job will live. What Job wanted was death. But what God brings is enlightened life.

Consequently we see that the book of Job is not a treatise on human sinfulness and divine judgment, but a masterpiece concerning human suffering and divine purpose.

D.H.H.

## JOB'S OUTLOOK IN THE DEBATE

The debate between Job and his associates does not appear to start with any idea that there is an ultimate issue to life, one that requires the fact of resurrection. Death appears to conclude the present life, and any future is not within the outlook of any of the arguments. In Job's first reply to Eliphaz he speaks of our days as an enlistment, those of a hireling (7:1), and he puts the position thus: "As a cloud vanishes and goes away, so one descending to the unseen shall not ascend" (7:9).

However, as Job proceeds, seeking for a solution to his case, he does develop the theme, though without reaching any concrete solution. A point of change is perceived in 14:14 when Job asks, "If a master dies shall he live again?" and he declares, "All the days of my enlistment I shall wait until my relief comes." The problem will not be settled until Yahweh Himself ministers the required glory. He is the Source of all, and to Him all leads.

—adapted from notes by E. H. Clayton

## CHANGES IN THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

According to an article in the December 4, 1995 issue of *Time* magazine, "evolutionary theorists" are beginning to conclude "that biological change often occurs in sudden fits and starts," rather than gradually through immense periods of time. They still speak of vast time periods and hold fast to the basic evolutionary theory, but it is now explained that about "543 million years ago . . . within the span of no more than 10 million years, creatures with teeth and tentacles and claws and jaws materialized with the suddenness of apparitions. In a burst of creativity like nothing before or since, nature appears to have sketched out the blueprints for virtually the whole of the animal kingdom. This explosion of biological diversity is described by scientists as biology's Big Bang."

It is disturbing that "nature" should be thought of as creator (*cf* Rom.1:20,21), but it is intriguing to see that the evidence uncovered by scientists has led the reporter, if not the biologists, to speak of a "burst of creativity."

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## *Samuel, the Last of the Judges*

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## MY IMPREGNABLE RETREAT

"WHEN SAUL HAD SEEN David going forth to meet the Philistine,<sup>1</sup> he had said to Abner, chief of the military host, Whose son is this lad, Abner? And Abner had replied, As your soul lives, O king, how should I know? Then the king had ordered, You inquire! Whose son is this stripling? So, when David had returned from smiting the Philistine, Abner had taken him and brought him before Saul, while the head of the Philistine was still in his hand. Saul said to him, Whose son are you, young man? David replied, The son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite" (1 Sam.17:55-58). It seems possible that, before the battle, Saul may have seen David only in his fits of madness, and so he did not recognize him when he clothed David in his royal coat (1 Sam.17:38); and the king did not remember him after the battle either.

## JONATHAN'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

David had not yet become the king's son-in-law, and the people may have wondered why the publicized promise (given to any victor over Goliath)<sup>1</sup> was not confirmed. But David did receive the love of the king's son Jonathan, which was more marvelous to him than the love from women (2 Sam.1:26).

"It came about . . . that Jonathan's soul was tied to David's soul; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. On that day Saul took him [into permanent service] and would not

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1. i.e., Goliath the Philistine of Gath (1 Sam.17:23).

allow him to return to his father's house. Jonathan contracted a covenant with David, since he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David along with his coats and even his sword and his bow and his girdle. Then David went forth with the men of war; wherever Saul sent him, he proceeded intelligently, so that Saul set him over the men of war; and it seemed good in the eyes of all the soldiers and also in the eyes of Saul's courtiers" (1 Sam.18:1-5).

Jonathan, too, was captured by the charm of David. When Jonathan stripped off his royal garments and gave them to David, he tacitly handed over to him the right of succession to the throne, for he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan's covenant with David was based on his love for him; thus David would always have the full support of Saul's heir apparent.

Obviously Saul had no idea that Samuel had already anointed David to become his successor; so there was no sign of jealousy. Saul was delighted to have a military aide who was able to lead others, to win battles, and to be a friend of his son. David had been popular with all the soldiers after his victory over Goliath, and his popularity increased as he joined them as their leader in battle after battle. Even Saul's courtiers admired David's military leadership, since he showed discretion and practical ability.

When the record says: "he proceeded intelligently," it refers to more than common human intelligence. This causative verb form would also mean that "he gained intelligence" or that "he gained insight," i.e., insight concerning Yahweh's loving purpose for Israel and for its future king. David would never forget that Samuel, at the bidding of Yahweh, had already anointed him for this highest office.

#### SAUL'S JEALOUSY AND FEAR OF DAVID

David's increasing popularity among the soldiers and

the people drove a wedge between him and Saul. At a time when David and the army came back from smiting the Philistines, "the women from all the cities of Israel went forth singing and dancing in choruses *to meet king Saul* with tambourines, with rejoicing and with three-stringed instruments" (1 Sam.18:6). We may assume that they chanted additional verses to celebrate the victories of king Saul and his military aid, and not just the one recorded in verse 7: "Saul has smitten his thousands, yet David his myriads." Obviously the whole song was not designed to disparage Saul; and the thought rhyme in verse 7 could be paraphrased to say (in prose), our two heroes have killed many, many enemies.

Yet Saul had not the maturity and security to accept the couplet chanted by the women, and to endorse it; so it rankled and festered into incurable jealousy. "Saul's anger grew exceedingly hot; this matter was displeasing in his eyes, and he said, To David they have ascribed myriads, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. What more can he have but the kingship? Saul was jealously eyeing David from that day and beyond" (1 Sam.18:8,9). Saul may have remembered Samuel's prophetic words: "Yahweh has torn the kingship over Israel away from you . . . and has given it to an associate of yours who is better than you" (1 Sam.15:28).

"It came about on the morrow that an evil spirit from Elohim<sup>2</sup> prospered on Saul. He prophesied [in ecstasy] inside the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as he did day by day; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. Saul lifted up the spear thinking, I shall smite David into the sidewall. Yet David got around his presence twice" (1 Sam.18:10,11).

Saul was well aware of the fact that the spirit of Yahweh

2. cf *Unsearchable Riches*, January 1996, p.38.

prospered on David; hence everything was going right for David. Since the spirit of Yahweh had withdrawn from Saul, everything went wrong for him, and an evil spirit from Elohim was frightening him (1 Sam.16:14). So “Saul was *fearful* because of David’s presence . . . . Saul put him away from himself; he made him his chief of a thousand who marched forth and came in before the soldiers . . . . When Saul saw that he was proceeding very intelligently, *he shrank away from his presence*” (1 Sam.18:12,15). This would mean, he removed him from his presence, hoping that David would be killed in battle.

#### MICHAL LOVED DAVID

“Now Saul’s daughter Michal loved David . . . . So Saul thought I shall give her to him; let her be a trap for him, and let the hand of the Philistines come to be against him . . . . Then Saul said . . . No delight has the king in a bride-price, but rather in a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king’s enemies . . . . [David] delivered them in full to the king, to become son-in-law to the king. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife” (1 Sam.18:20-27).

Saul’s repugnant demand was designed to assure David’s death, just as almost all his dealings with David; he even urged his son Jonathan and all his courtiers to put David to death. So Jonathan warned his friend to go into hiding, and he pleaded with his father on David’s behalf. Jonathan insisted, “Let not the king sin against his servant . . . for he has not sinned against you, and his deeds have been of very good service to you. When he took his soul in his palm and smote the Philistine, and Yahweh wrought a great victory for Israel, you saw it and rejoiced” (1 Sam.19:4,5).

So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, at least for the time being, and he swore, “As Yahweh lives, he shall assuredly

not be put to death” (1 Sam.19:6), and he admitted him to the royal palace as heretofore. It was a temporary reconciliation, for Saul’s jealousy returned. Whenever David smote the Philistines, each victory made David more popular with the army and with the people of Israel, and increased Saul’s fear of him.

Once again, when David was playing the harp for him, “Saul sought to smite David with the spear . . . yet he dodged from Saul’s presence, as he smote the spear into the side-wall. So David fled and escaped” (1 Sam.19:10). He went to his own house; obviously he thought that Saul had just succumbed to the evil spirit that influenced his actions.

Yet “it occurred in that night that Saul sent messengers to David’s house to observe him and to put him to death in the morning. But Michal his wife told David, saying, If you are not providing for your soul an escape tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death. Michal had David descend through the window that he might go and run away and escape” (1 Sam.19:11,12). Obviously the house joined the wall of the city, allowing him to be lowered without being detected by those who had the house under surveillance.

Then she decided to delay discovery of his departure by putting a dummy on the couch, so as to give the impression that David was sick in bed. She used many small figurines, like those which Rachel hid in her saddle basket (*cf* Gen. 31:34); thus Michal built up the dummy on the couch. She covered it with David’s cloak and put goats-hair gauze in the place where his head would have been (1 Sam.19:13).

“When Saul sent messengers to take David in, she said, He is ailing.” When Saul heard of it, he sent them back to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me on the couch to put him to death” (1 Sam.19:14,15). When the messengers entered David’s room, they found a dummy on his bed. Saul resented his daughter’s disloyalty in deceiving

him; yet she claimed that David had threatened her with death (1 Sam.19:16,17).

#### DAVID WENT TO SAMUEL

“As for David, he ran away and escaped [after Michal had helped him to descend through the window]. He came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him” (1 Sam.19:18). Obviously they discussed all the recent events, and Samuel may have advised David to fully trust in Yahweh Elohim Who would always rescue him from those who waited in ambush for his soul. Samuel may have added that the Elohim of benignity would go before him and enable him to sing of Elohim's strength and be jubilant each morning over His benignity.

At a later date (without hinting at Saul) David spoke of his enemies (in ambush for his soul, Psalm 59:1,3); thus his verses would be a consolation for those in similar distress.

#### IMPREGNABLE RETREAT

This term is a conspicuous characteristic of David's psalms, such as: “May Yahweh answer you in a day of distress; *May* the Name of Jacob's Elohim *be* your *impregnable retreat*” (Psa.20:1). He used this verb form again (in Psa.107:4): “Yet for the needy He *makes* an *impregnable retreat* from humiliation.”

David used the noun as an attribute of the Deity: “Yahweh shall become an Impregnable Retreat for the crushed, An Impregnable Retreat in seasons of distress” (Psa.9:9,10).

“On the day Yahweh rescued him from the palm of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul, [David] said: . . . My El, my Rock! I take refuge in Him . . . my Impregnable Retreat” (cf Psa.18:heading, v.2).

“Our Impregnable Retreat is the Elohim of Jacob” (Psa.46:7).

“Elohim . . . is known as an Impregnable Retreat” (Psa.48:3).

“He only is my Rock and my Salvation,  
My Impregnable Retreat; I shall not slip . . . ”  
(Psa.62:2,6).

“But Yahweh shall be my Impregnable Retreat,  
And my Elohim, the Rock of my refuge” (Psa.94:22).

“Blessed be Yahweh, my Rock,  
Who is teaching my hands for the attack,  
My fingers for the battle,  
My Benignity and my Fastness,  
My Impregnable Retreat and my Deliverance for me,  
My Shield; in Him I take refuge” (Psa.144:1,2).

#### A DAVIDIC INSCRIBED PSALM

*When Saul sent, and they kept watch over the house to put him to death.*

*Rescue me from my enemies, O my Elohim;  
From those rising against me,  
may You make me impregnable.*

*Rescue me from those contriving lawlessness,  
And from men of bloodshed, save me.*

*For behold, they wait in ambush for my soul . . .*

*For Elohim is my Impregnable Retreat.*

*The Elohim of benignity to me shall go before me;  
Elohim, He shall let me see the fate of those  
who lie in wait for me . . .*

*But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength  
And be jubilant each morning over Your benignity;*

*For You are the Impregnable Retreat for me,  
And my Haven in the day of my distress.*

*O my Strength, to You I am making melody,  
For Elohim is my Impregnable Retreat.*

(Psa.59:1-3,9,10,16,17)

H.H.R.

(To be continued)

### FOR YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

WE MARVEL at the reality of God's love for us. In Psalms 8:4 we read, "What is a mortal that You are mindful of him?" In this the psalmist speaks of the total unworthiness of any human to have God "mindful" of him. What aspects of any human make this attention on God's part a proper thing for Him? There are none in ourselves, for as the apostle Paul writes in Romans 3:23, "... all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God." Just before this Paul employs Ecclesiastes 7:20 ("There is not a righteous man in the earth who does good and never sins"), observing in Romans 3:10,11, "Not one is just—not even one. Not one is understanding. Not one is seeking out God."

It is easy to conclude that from man's standpoint there is absolutely no justification for God's lavishing His attention and His love on His creation. In no sense, in no degree however small, can mankind be said to have earned His love or somehow to have become deserving of it.

Yet in 1 John 4:8 we find the profound statement, "for God is love." At verse 10 of the same chapter we read, "In this is love, not that we love God, *but that He loves us . . .*" From His basic nature flows all of the blessings He has poured out and continues to pour out upon us. In Paul's words, The "love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us" (Rom.5:5). Furthermore, God's love is so tenacious, so unalterable that nothing in all creation "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom.8:35-39).

### IN GOD'S SIGHT

We are undeserving of God's love, but God *is* love, and He pours out His love in our hearts. In this, we grasp that His point of view is radically different from ours.

Paul comments on this in Ephesians 1:3-5, speaking of God's blessing of choosing us in Christ before the disruption of the world, "we to be holy and flawless *in His sight*, in *love* designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus." God's sight focuses on His goals which so clearly display His love. In Ephesians 2:1-10, the apostle writes of our unworthiness as "sons of stubbornness," and of God's *vast love* toward us nevertheless. Here again God's viewpoint is centered on the oncoming eons and His achievement in Christ Jesus.

### WITH A PRICE

Let us turn back to 1 Corinthians 6:20, where we read, "For you are bought with a price;" and 7:23, where Paul writes, "With a price are you bought." In the world of business, we know that the price anyone pays for something is in fact the buyer's value for it. If the asked price is too high, the buyer does not buy, but if the price is seen as commensurate with the value perceived by the buyer, the purchase is made. In the price God has paid for us, for you and me, we learn of the value He places on us, our real worth *in His eyes*. It is not a view of what we are in ourselves, but what we are in Christ as will be fully manifested in the achievements of God's purpose.

The price God has paid, in His love, is the giving of His Son on our behalf. We read in Romans 5:8, "God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ died for our sakes."

Quite some years back while I was very much a beginner in learning the glorious truths of the conciliation, a friend asked me if I knew John 3:16. "Of course!" I replied.

The King James Version's rendering of that passage was possibly the very first passage I had committed to memory. So he asked, "How does it go?" I replied that he knew it as well as anyone, but he persisted until I recited the verse for him. He then asked what it was that God loved; what did the verse identify as the object of God's willingness to pay so great a price as His Son, the Beloved? The world! This world with all its failures and faults is valued so highly by God that He has paid a price for it that we are hard pressed to grasp.

Hard pressed to grasp—until we begin to catch a glimpse of His goals of sonship and the display of the transcendent riches of His grace and the heading up of all in the Christ—both that in the heavens and that on the earth. Consequently, with Paul, we bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that "having been rooted and grounded *in love*," we should be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and depth and height of that vast love (Eph.3:14-21).

William S. Penn, Jr.

#### THEOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England has issued a report entitled, *The Mystery of Salvation*, in which the traditional teaching of an unending hell of torment has been rejected. Among the reasons for this change is "that the picture of a God who consigned millions to eternal torment was far removed from the revelation of God's love in Christ." However, the report seems to have substituted a view of divine failure for the older doctrine of divine malevolence. According to the report, "Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total nonbeing."

Similar questionings of the idea of endless suffering are being heard among Protestant "Evangelical" groups, and even within the Roman Catholic Church. As for us, we pray for all who teach God's Word and believe that Christ died for them, that they may come to place their confidence in the living God and in His Son Who came into the world to save sinners, and Who died for us all.

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#### *Designated Beforehand in Love*

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#### "MORE THAN CONQUERING"

"BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight, *in love* designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved" (Eph.1:3-6).

Could there ever be such a "love letter" as this? All of the epistles convey the apostle's devotion, but here God's fervent love is emphasized. The approach present, that "... in grace, through faith are you saved," must surely sweep aside all barriers in overwhelming, incomparable love! Brother A. E. Knoch, once wrote something to the effect that the *driving force of fear is impotent compared with the drawing force of love*. How true this is. The apostle Paul, who had plainly written of being an ambassador, beseeching for Christ's sake, "Be conciliated to God" (2 Cor.5:20), is here setting a supreme example in bringing the evangel by first presenting God's wonderful love!

Reaching down through long, intervening years, this letter is very personal and private; in God's wisdom, these gracious words have been completely enigmatic to all but the recipients, "the saints who are also believers in Christ Jesus" (Eph.1:1). It is equally true to say that all the apostle's letters, which contain many secrets, continue often to be misunderstood by each successive generation.

Paul had previously described how every individual of

God's choice was to be "conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). To our finite minds this may seem incredible. Having announced one of the greatest revelations ever communicated to man concerning God's purpose, he then challenged the power of the whole created universe in reference to this operation of God's love (Rom.8:35-39). Listing suffering, the awe-inspiring might of powerful opponents, all dimensions, time itself, and even the grim specter of death, he concluded that nothing could possibly undermine or frustrate the love of God. He further invigorated with a victorious acclamation: "What, then, shall we declare to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? Surely, He Who spares not His own Son, but gives Him up for us all, how shall He not, together with Him, also, be graciously granting us all?" (31,32).

#### GOD OPERATES THROUGH HIS CREATURES

The careful encouragement and guidance of God's indwelling spirit is essential if we are to further understand that we are needed by God in the furtherance of His plans! How may we, with feeble, disabled faith otherwise have the temerity to associate ourselves with Paul's triumphant cry, "Nay! in all these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us" (Rom.8:37).

"It is supremely important that we acknowledge in worshipful adoration that all is *of* and *for* God. But this should not blind us to the further fact that all is *through* His creatures. Not only creation, but reconciliation, is *not directly* His work, but was done in and through His Beloved. God is our Saviour. But that should not shut our eyes and hearts to His Christ, and His sufferings and exaltation. God chose those who are in the body of Christ before the disruption of the world, yet He also called Paul as the medium *through* whom to make it known. He has predestinated

and foreknown all of His saints, but He has also provided the evangelists through whom they are called. He actually prepares the good works in which He wishes us to walk."<sup>1</sup>

During a recent Scripture study meeting the thought was expressed that nothing new seemed to be emerging from God's precious Word. This opinion was generally and gently rejected, but it turned minds to that scene in Athens, when the "wise" of that world, the Epicurian and Stoic philosophers, assembled at the Areopagus to hear the apostle Paul. Some were heard to observe, "Whatever may this rook be wanting to say?" (Acts.17:18). How significant that an ecclesia was not established at Athens!

During the ensuing group discussion many members paid warm tribute to the dear saints who labor unceasingly, like the apostle, "... to be presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus" (Col.1:28). God's precious Word has been wonderfully preserved, and it is from these, and these alone, that we have learned of our Father's loving purpose! These truths are enhanced through patient service.

Firmly insisting on his authority to be bringing the evangel, Paul declared, "For which cause I am suffering these things also, but I am not ashamed, for I am aware Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard what is committed to me, for that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). In like manner, we need not be ashamed to refer again and again to the revelations unfolded, both from the Word and also from the many studies and articles in our printed literature.

#### THE VASTNESS OF HIS LOVE

What can it possibly mean to be "*more than conquering*"? Should we make the mistake of thinking that victory alone over the world-mights of darkness is the only reason

1. *cf Unsearchable Riches*, vol.43, p.275.

for suffering, then perhaps we have not fully grasped, the real, universal achievement encompassed within Christ's victorious cry, "It is accomplished!"

"Through death into life everlasting  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
Over us sin no more hath dominion,  
For more than conquerors we are."

Of course, there is victory. The outcome of our conflict with the Adversary was never in any doubt. Lest this statement may be misconstrued as arrogant, it is hastily added that the victory is ours *in Christ Jesus!* How could the triumphant outcome be otherwise? God rescues us out of the jurisdiction of darkness and transports us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col.1:13).

Consequently, reviewing the influence of our Father's wise calling, we can now see that opposition from the Adversary, darkened apprehension, sin and estrangement, disobedience and offence, were all essential in our individual lives. These all serve their purpose in ultimately bringing creation to a final revelation of our great Father's loving purpose. Without such contrasts—and our very last thought is to disparage the pain and gravity of these—there could be no true and reverent comprehension of the vastness of His love.

In Christ Jesus, we rejoice in this realization of the Father, Whose power is infinite, Whose mighty wisdom defies our understanding, Whose love cannot be measured, and Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). If we would behold Him as He desires, then we must stand, in silent adoring wonder before the ugly, hideous cross of Golgotha. There, if our spirits are strengthened, we may hear the tender, compassionate words of our Lord: "According as the Father loves Me, I, also love you. Remain in My love" (John 15:9).

Donald Fielding

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*The Conciliation of the World*

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## THERE HAS COME NEW

OVER nineteen hundred years ago in the city of Corinth in Greece there was a group of believers in Christ Jesus. They had accepted the evangel that Christ died for their sins and had been roused to a victory in which they shared (*cf* 1 Cor.15:1-4,20-28,50-57). But like us, who also believe, they had a few problems traced to the fact that they were human beings, descended from Adam, mortals and sinners in the flesh. And stemming from these problems, as must be expected, further problems were created for the whole body of believers in Corinth and for the apostle Paul who had brought the evangel to them.

The evangel was a message of grace and peace from God (2 Cor.1:2), but this was given in the midst of human struggles. There was consolation from God, but this meant there would have also been suffering and affliction (1:3-7). How else could there have been consolation? God was faithful (1:18), but how could this have been apprehended if there had not been disappointments in their lives? The believers were sealed with the earnest of the spirit in their hearts (2 Cor.1:22), but this could not have been appreciated apart from the slippery insecurities of human experience.

## SECOND CORINTHIANS

This is a pattern throughout 2 Corinthians, the applying of the evangel to continuing human circumstances. While facing the old problems of human flesh, of pride and jealousy, the apostle meets these problems with powerful and glorious revelations of truth in the evangel he was dispens-

ing. Where the lusts of the flesh had led to dishonorable behavior (*cf* 1 Cor.5) and so to further sorrow and distress among the ecclesia and for Paul (2 Cor.2:1-8), there was also a growing appreciation of God's provisions and the patterns of His operations (2:14-17). Where there was a struggle in heralding a message that was based entirely on faith and not on perception, upheld by spirit and not by flesh, sustained by expectation and not by present comforts and health in the flesh (chapter 3), there was an increasing acquaintance with God's spiritual power in the evangel (chapter 4).

The problems are related to the old things, not merely to problems of the flesh but also to revelations God gave of Himself in the law and His dealings with Israel, which were centered in the flesh. The evangel given to Paul was centered on the spirit. In this respect it was like the "new covenant" spoken of in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. But it embraced a wider scope and was removed more fully from the flesh and the earthly concerns than the prophets had envisioned. "So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. *Lo! there has come new!*" (2 Cor.5:17).

#### GOD CONCILIATES US TO HIMSELF

At this point in his letter, Paul presents a new revelation of God that is also found in his epistle to the Romans. This is the message of the conciliation.

"God conciliates us to Himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18). God has established a *change* between us and Himself. The Greek word for *conciliate* is a compound term composed of the elements "down" and "change." Without claiming too much concerning these elements, we would, nevertheless, draw attention especially to the idea of "change." This is a concept also involved in the English word "conciliate." To conciliate is to effect a *change* from

estrangement and antagonism to agreement and even good will. A good picture in our own day is the breaking *down* of the Berlin wall, which was (from a human standpoint) a bulwark of enmity.

In the evangel dispensed by Paul we learn that God has effected a change in the relationship of human beings to Himself. And He has done this *through Christ*, that is, through His death. The change is one from *enmity* to *peace* toward God and *access* in God's *grace* into His presence as our *Father*. This is how Paul presents it in his epistles:

"Being, then, justified by faith, we may be having *peace toward God*, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom we have the *access* also, by faith, into this *grace* in which we stand . . ." (Rom.5:1,2). "For if, being enemies, we were *conciliated to God* through the death of His Son, much rather, being conciliated, we shall be saved in His life. Yet not only so, but we are glorying also in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we now obtained the *conciliation*" (Rom.5:10,11).

"For you did not get slavery's spirit to fear again, but you got the spirit of sonship, in which we are crying, 'Abba, *Father!*' The spirit itself is testifying together with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom.8:15,16) "Now, seeing that you are sons, God delegates the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, *Father!*'" (Gal.4:6).

In Ephesians and Colossians the word of the conciliation is expanded to a revelation of reconciliation which is applied to the body of Christ and finally the entire universe: "And coming, He brings the evangel of *peace* to you, those afar, and *peace* to those near, for through Him we both have had the *access*, in one spirit, to the *Father*" (Eph.2:17,18). "In [Christ Jesus] we have boldness and *access* with confidence through His faith" (Eph.3:12). "In [the Son of God's love] the entire complement delights to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all to Him (mak-

ing *peace* through the blood of His cross) . . .” (Col.1:20). This change from enmity to peace, from estrangement to access, from alienation to sonship, is what God establishes in Christ, making Himself known in a new and glorious way. Paul calls it “the secret of the evangel” in Ephesians 6:19, where he speaks of a genuine need when he requests prayers for boldness in making it known.

Although we seem to want things that are new, we also hesitate to give up the old. Believers from Paul’s day to the present have often vacillated in their attitudes toward the evangel. We see it is a message of grace, peace and glory that is wholly out of God. “Yet all is of God . . .” (2 Cor. 5:18). But the flesh keeps doubting and even denying that this can be true. It is great that God has conciliated us to Himself, *but*, we reason, there must be some catch. We suppose that it would be safer to qualify this bold declaration of peace with some “if’s” and conditions, in order to insure restraints on the flesh. In this way we make the discipline of the flesh dependent on the flesh. Hence the power of the evangel of peace is, in fact, denied.

Let us not hesitate to take these words of 2 Corinthians 5 candidly and unreservedly as they are written. Through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, God has achieved for us the removal of enmity and all the barriers to His heart that we have erected. He has brought forth a change from estrangement to peace toward Himself as our Father. Let us hold to this evangel tenaciously as we continue to live in these perilous times of increasing agnosticism and outright enmity toward God (*cf* 2 Tim.3:1-9).

#### GOD WAS IN CHRIST

The message of conciliation that Paul was dispensing has as its foundation that God has established a change, channeled through the death of His Son for sinners and enemies. This is a new revelation concerning God. Under

the old covenant associated with Sinai, God was revealed in His power, but as it responds to human actions, whether good or bad. This led to some acquaintance with God’s mercy in certain circumstances, and with His indignation and stern judgments in many other circumstances. But in the giving of His Son, God is revealed in His power as it flows from this Gift. Consequently, we are now seeing God in a new and fuller way. He is seen in Christ.

Hence we read, “. . . *God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them*” (2 Cor.5:19).

In ordinary cases, especially when definitions are made, or one thing is being identified with another, the various verb forms of “be” are not needed in Greek. It is not necessary to say, for example, Red *is* a color; all that is needed in Greek is to say, Red color. When the word “is,” or, in the present case, “was,” appears, something more than identification of being is in view. The figure of speech called “ellipsis” is involved here, where something is left out that can be supplied by the context and general development of thought.

Following the lead of 2 Corinthians 4:6, where Paul spoke of “the knowledge of the glory of God *in* the face of Jesus Christ,” we are surely justified in seeing a figure of omission in the words “God was *in* Christ.” God was [making Himself known] in [the death of] Christ. We learn of God as He reveals Himself in Christ, bringing about tremendous blessings for the world.

#### CONCILIATING THE WORLD

Some have thought that by the word “world,” Paul must refer to the world of believers only. It is pointed out that Paul addresses the believers in verse 18 in revealing that God conciliates *us* to Himself through Christ, and so it is concluded that verse 19 must be restricted to the same

group. But the context has already spoken of what Christ did for “all” (v.14) and has distinguished the special salvation of believers (*cp* 1 Tim.4:10), by the words “those who are living” (v.15). Indeed, the word “world” is clearly a poor term to use if a restricted portion of humanity is in view.

If something is done by God through the death and resurrection of His Son it is a certainty. It has been done, even though it may not be believed by many and may not be fully realized by any of us. This is why Paul was beseeching all peoples, “Be conciliated to God!” (2 Cor.5:20). He was not entreating them to do something God had already done. Rather he was beseeching that they accept, believe and enjoy what God had already done through Christ. It was at the cross that God was revealing His heart in His Son, by conciliating the world to Himself. And so, as ambassadors, we are beseeching for Christ’s sake, “Become even now, in your heart and lives, what God has achieved on your behalf. Be conciliated to God.”

For us to be conciliated to God in *awareness* is a matter of *accepting* and *believing* and *retaining* the evangel that God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself. It is exactly as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, concerning being saved. What God has done is done. But our present appreciation and appropriation of the blessings announced in the evangel arise from our believing the evangel. For us to experience the joy and peace of our conciliation with God (which is what the entreaty “Be conciliated to God!” means) we need to hold fast to the evangel of 2 Corinthians 5:19. Even though there is no evidence, in what we see and hear and feel with our fleshly senses, that God was actually making Himself known in Christ conciliating the world to Himself, nevertheless we believe it, and consequently we experience in spirit the blessings of the conciliation. We are becoming what God has made

us in giving His Son for us; we are becoming, in increasing appreciation, conciliated to Him.

Since God is conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, there will eventually come a time when all will experience it. This is brought out later in Colossians 1:20 where we learn that “in Him,” that is, in the Son of God’s love (v.13), there is divine delight to *reconcile* all enemies on earth or in heaven to God, through the blood of Christ’s cross.

#### NOT RECKONING OFFENSES

The world is much involved in offending God. In language that speaks crudely of Him, and in determination to prove its independence of Him there is unspeakable offense. But still God is not reckoning their offenses to them.

Nevertheless, the world’s offensiveness is understandable. No faith has been given to the majority of mankind concerning the evangel of God’s revelation of Himself in Christ. All of humanity is locked up in stubbornness so that God may be merciful to all (Rom.11:32).

What is perhaps more remarkable than the world’s offensiveness, however, is the continuing offense of unbelief among ourselves as believers. Here again we must acknowledge that not all are given the same measure of faith, but it surely is shocking to hear believers speak of God as far less than He claims to be in His Word. Is it not offensive to Him that He is presented as one who takes risks, not knowing how things will turn out, and as one who will consign certain human beings to everlasting torment, or will simply annihilate them even though Christ came into the world to save them? None of us perhaps fully appreciates the certainty of God’s peace, the transcendence of His grace, the reality of His righteousness, the greatness of His power or the vastness of His love as it is revealed in Christ. And where we fail in this, lacking confidence in

His declarations and reliance on Him as the living God, we offend. But He is not reckoning our offenses to us. May God increase our faith in this gracious word!

#### HUMAN OFFENDING HUMAN

We might add a word here about human beings giving and taking offense in relationships among ourselves. This certainly lies behind those “works of the flesh,” that Paul terms, “enmities, strife, jealousies, furies, factions, dissensions, sects, envies” in Galatians 5:20. In Colossians 3:8 the apostle speaks of similar practices of the old humanity, including “anger, fury, malice, calumny,” and these too are offenses against others. Strife and jealousies and anger invariably arise out of the practice of holding against them, the offenses committed by others against ourselves. Rather than becoming imitators of God as beloved children (*cf* Eph.5:1), we let the offenses of others fester in our hearts, and consequently we miss much of the joy and peace that flows from the evangel.

The solution, Paul says, is: “Let the word of Christ be making its home in you richly, in all wisdom . . .” (Col.3:16). Surely then, this word of Christ which includes what is called “the word of the conciliation” in 2 Corinthians 5:19 is powerful in arbitrating in our hearts to the end that we less and less harbor resentment of offenses committed by others against us and less and less resort deliberately to offending others out of anger and envy and malice.

The word of the conciliation is that God was revealing Himself in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, and not reckoning their offenses to them. God is not reckoning your offenses to you. He is not reckoning my offenses to me. What a gracious and *powerful* word this is! And how blessed we are to be living in this most acceptable era (2 Cor.6:2) when the word of the conciliation is made known!

D.H.H

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#### *Studies in Galatians*

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#### “WHEN IT DELIGHTS GOD”

(Galatians 1:10-17)

*For, at present, am I persuading men or God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I still pleased men, I were not a slave of Christ. (1:10)*

With these words, having completed the introductory, preparatory portion of the epistle (1:1-9), Paul now begins his personal defense. The dominant theme of the entire epistle is *Paul's defense of his own evangel*. On this behalf, he would first defend his apostleship. If he has been commissioned by Christ Himself to proclaim this evangel, then it is a true evangel. Therefore, it is to be accepted accordingly by all who are in Christ; and, it is to be heeded and personally applied by all who come under its blessing.

The epistle began with the words, “Paul, *an apostle, (not from men, neither through a man . . .)*” (1:1). Now, beginning in verse 10, Paul begins to demonstrate the truth of this initial affirmation. He does so through the word “for,” which refers us to his repeated, insistent declaration, “If anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!” (1:8,9). That is, the reason why an “anathema” (i.e., a certain, adversative judgment) must fall upon any who bring a *different* evangel (*cp* 1:6b) to those whom God is actually blessing according to *Paul's* evangel, is because, in announcing his evangel, the apostle is not persuading “[as to] men,” but “[as to] *God*.”

Idiomatically, the Greek word for “persuade” (*peithō*, PERSUADE) is also rendered “have confidence” (e.g., “those who *have confidence* in money,” Mark 10:24; *cp* Gal.5:7-10).

No one would imagine otherwise than that, in performing

his evangelistic labors, Paul was seeking to persuade *men*, not God. If, however, the word “persuading” is taken literally, without allowance for an ellipsis such as “as to” (i.e., “persuading [as to]”), the sense would then be merely the trite fact that Paul was seeking to persuade men, not God. In that case, however, the causal conjunction “for,” in relating us back to verses 8 and 9, would introduce an illogical statement. The sense would then be that the reason why an anathema must befall those who bring a different evangel, is because, in performing his ministry, Paul sought to persuade men! Of course it does not follow from the mere fact that Paul’s ministry was on behalf of *men* (not God), that *this* constitutes grounds for the pronouncement of an anathema upon Paul’s opposers.

Therefore, the elliptical “as to” (“persuading [as to] men or God?”) or “in” (“having confidence [in] men or God?”) must be understood when considering Paul’s words here. Then, the sense is, “Am I having confidence (in) men or (in) God?” Or, when expressed using the English “persuade”: “Am I persuading (as to) men or (as to) God?” The point then becomes that, in proclaiming his evangel, *Paul* is confident in (or persuaded as to) the truthfulness of his message, for his message, first of all, is *God’s* message. And, because *that* is so, *therefore* (“For,” 1:10a) it follows, “if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema!” (1:9).

In proclaiming his evangel, Paul’s confidence is in *God*. Therefore, the apostle’s ministry of seeking to persuade others was first of all founded upon his own persuasion as to what God had revealed to him through Christ.

Hence, Paul must further add, “If I *still* pleased men, I were not a slave of Christ” (1:10b). Paul’s words here should be considered in connection with his related declaration in Galatians 5:11: “Now I, brethren, if I am *still* heralding circumcision, why am I *still* being persecuted?”

Consequently [i.e., “In that case, then,”], the *snare of the cross* of Christ has been nullified.”

For a time, after Saul of Tarsus (as Paul was originally known) first became acquainted with the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 9:27), he continued on, seeking the righteousness which is in law, according to Moses (Phil.3:6; John 7:23). Saul anticipated the restoring of the kingdom unto Israel, according to the times and eras which the Father placed in His own jurisdiction (Acts 1:6,7).

During this period, Saul was a member of the ecclesia of believing Jews at Antioch. All such ones lived in expectation of Israel’s promised kingdom, according to the writings of their prophets, while seeking to become blameless themselves according to the law, in anticipation of that day. Believing Jews were zealous for the law (Acts 21:20); they practiced circumcision and sought to keep the law of Moses (*cp* Acts 15:5). Jesus Himself had warned that any of that calling who were “workers of *lawlessness*,” had no relationship with Him and would *not* enter into the kingdom of the heavens (*cp* Matt.7:21-23; James 2:10).

Therefore, during that early period, before Saul was *severed* from his law-observing brethren for the work to which God (“the Holy Spirit”) had called him (Acts 13:2), Saul too must have heralded circumcision. In so doing, he, in a righteous sense, *pleased men* by doing that which those who were seeking to establish their own righteousness according to law (*cp* Rom.10:3,4), rightly deemed essential to entrance into life in the terrestrial kingdom.

Were Paul, *now*, however, to *still* “please men” by *continuing* to herald circumcision, as he says, “I were not a slave of Christ” (Gal.1:10b).

After having been severed from his past associations, that he might now be engaged in the service of that glorious evangel of God which, apart from law, bestows a declaration of righteousness on *all* who are *believing* (Rom.

3:21,22), it would be entirely out of place for Paul still to be pleasing men by heralding circumcision.

That is, such service, now, by Paul, could only “please men” in the case of any who continued to deem such a rite essential for themselves, even though they erred in supposing that it should be imposed as well on the believers of the nations (Acts 15:1,5). In connection with the evangel of the Circumcision and its service, such a rite was indeed essential; even so, it has no place whatever in connection with the evangel which Paul was heralding among the nations (Gal.2:2). Hence, were Paul now to continue to enjoin circumcision even on those of the nations, doing so out of a motive merely to please those who imagined that this was necessary, he could not be “a [worthy] slave of Christ.”

Today, when we ourselves become persuaded as to the evangel which God first revealed to Paul, our confidence too is in God. We can no longer have confidence in the false, human traditions which we first embraced. We must now set aside various ceremonies and observances, ones which we should never have practiced in the first place. If we would be faithful, legalistic scrutiny of days and foods, besides giving heed to sundry do’s and don’ts as prerequisites to salvation, must all be repudiated. This is so, even if in so doing we should incur the *displeasure* of man as a result.

#### NOT IN ACCORD WITH MAN

*For I am making known to you, brethren, as to the evangel which is being brought by me, that it is not in accord with man. For neither did I accept it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:11,12)*

Again, the reason why (“for”) Paul was not *seeking* to please men, and was *not still* pleasing *men*, was because the evangel which he brought was not in accord with *man*. And, in turn, the reason why his evangel was not in accord with man, was because he neither accepted it from a man nor was he taught it by a man.

“Those who were disturbing the Galatians had no message except what they had received [and corrupted and mis-applied] from the twelve apostles. But Paul is unwearied in his insistence that he received nothing from them (*cp* Gal.2:6). His revelation was a fresh revelation made known to him by the Lord Himself. If Paul merely proclaimed what the twelve taught, why did he not receive it through them? What need for the Lord to descend and call him on the Damascus road? Why should he be severed from the rest at Antioch? Why did the *believing* Jews in Jerusalem oppose his ministry among the nations?”<sup>1</sup>

Just as in verse 1 Paul declares that his apostleship is neither of human origin nor derivation, he now makes a similar claim concerning his evangel. Paul’s evangel is not “in *accord* with (*kata*, DOWN) *man*.” That is, his evangel itself is not based upon some pre-existing message which was already being taught by someone else. Paul—unlike ourselves, who take our evangel from him—did not simply repeat some extant message which was already in the hands of those who were in Christ before him.

This was because “*neither* did [he] *accept* [his evangel] from a man, nor was he taught it [by a man],” *but he accepted it through a revelation of Jesus Christ, and he was taught it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The way this text is rendered in the Concordant Version, is expedient for the ordinary reader in an idiomatic version. Yet with the added words “it came,” even as with no indication of either the ellipsis or of the parallel construction which obtains in the Greek, it lacks the forcefulness and clarity of the more precise sense, as we have sought to bring out in the preceding paragraph.

Paul did not accept his evangel “from [*para*, BESIDE] *a man*,” nor was he taught it by *a man*. The word “man” is in

<sup>1</sup> I. A. E. Knoch, THE CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.280.

the singular, as in the phrase “through *a man*,” in verse 1. In accepting and learning his evangel, since Paul did not stand “beside” *any* man in so doing, neither did he thus stand beside any particular man.

The emphatic intimation here, however, through the repeated, singular form, is implicative of a *particular* man. “It points unmistakably to Peter who figures so prominently in this recital. The circumcisionists asserted Paul’s dependence on the elder apostles and the Jerusalem church. They insinuated that he had received his gospel from Peter. Whence, said they, could Paul have derived his knowledge of Christ, but from this fountainhead? This was the fulcrum of the argument which Paul foils.”<sup>2</sup>

In a wider sense, neither is Paul’s evangel in accord with man, with respect to the entirety of the human race. The Hebrew term for human being is *adm* (“Adam”). The Circumcision evangel is very much concerned with the human race, not just Israel, and God’s purpose for it on the earth and in the flesh. So Paul has in mind to distinguish his evangel from that of the Circumcision (which *is* in accord with humanity). The apostle does not simply make a general contrast between a message from God that is divine in nature, and one concerned with ordinary human thinking and philosophy. It is not only that Paul’s evangel was not “secular” or was not in accord with human wisdom (this *is* in view in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, for instance). But Paul’s evangel is also different from that of the Circumcision which has much that accords with humanity, though indeed being of God and concerned with Christ.

It seems that, broadly considered, “not in accord with humanity” incorporates both these ideas: (1) not in accord with human wisdom and thinking (as in 1 Corinthians 1), and also (2) not in accord with God’s message concerning

<sup>2</sup> V. Gelesnoff, PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, p.35.

Israel and the nations, the earth, and the place of humanity as promised from Adam and on through the prophets. Yet the context of Galatians makes it clear that (2) is what Paul has predominantly in view here, “at present” (1:10).

While Paul is indeed relating “his story” in chapters 1 and 2, nevertheless his account focuses on “the grace of Christ” (1:6), “a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:12), that is, “the evangel which is being brought by me” (1:11). So both Paul’s story, and the message given to him, have this one pattern: not in accord with humanity, and being in accord with God and a revelation of Jesus Christ that came from God.

#### SEVERED FROM JUDAISM

*For you hear of my behavior once, in Judaism, that I inordinately persecuted the ecclesia of God and ravaged it. And I progressed in Judaism above many contemporaries in my race, being inherently exceedingly more zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (1:13,14)*

Paul’s use of the term “Judaism” in itself by no means implies any disparagement (*cp* his related expression, “judaizing,” Gal.2:14; *cf* Acts 15:21). Under Judaism, Paul had been circumcised the eighth day, and, in his majority, had become a Hebrew of Hebrews. In relation to the righteousness which is in law, he had been becoming blameless (Phil.3:5,6), even if he was a member of the sect of the Pharisees, which had added many vain traditions to the law.

The point is that “Judaism” simply refers to the institutions of the Jews, the observance of the law of Moses as understood and practiced beginning with the Babylonian exile. The traditions of Paul’s “fathers,” were by no means all vain traditions of men, but were, in many respects, a devout and intelligent observance of the law, as handed down from one generation to the next.

Though the expression “Judaism” was perhaps originally coined by non-Jews, of whom some doubtless used the word

with a connotation of contempt, it would, when naturalized among the Jews themselves, lose this idea, and even become a title of honor. The case of the term “Christian,” which was likewise originally a term of reproach (*cp* Acts 11:25; 26:28), is a parallel case: “For let not any of you be suffering as a murderer, or as a thief, or an evil doer, or as an interferer in other’s affairs; *yet if as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed, yet let him be glorifying God in this name . . .” (1 Peter 4:16).

Paul’s *behavior*, however, once, in Judaism, in the days of his unbelief, was another matter. As he says, “he inordinately persecuted the ecclesia of God and ravaged it.” Indeed, not only had he endorsed Stephen’s assassination (Acts 8:1), but he had continually “breathed out threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). He had supposed himself bound to commit much contrary to the name of Jesus the Nazarene, and so had acted accordingly. He locked up many of the saints in jails, and even deposited a ballot to despatch them. At all the synagogues, often punishing them, he compelled them to blaspheme. Being exceedingly maddened against them, he persecuted them as far as the outside cities (Acts 26:9-11).

Yet it was *also* true that he had progressed in *Judaism* itself, above many contemporaries in his race, being inherently exceedingly more zealous for the traditions of his fathers (1:14).

Paul’s point is that there was nothing in his former career to account for his becoming a herald of the cross. “His prechristian career was such as to exclude all possibility of his receiving any doctrine from the followers of Jesus Christ, least of all from Peter, whom, as leader of the Nazarenes [Acts 24:5], he could only regard as an arch-heretic to be hunted to death.”<sup>3</sup> Thus the apostle proves that it

3. V. Gelesnoff, PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, p.37.

was simply absurd to suggest, as certain of his enemies were insinuating, that he had received his evangel from Peter.

*Now, when it delights God, Who severs me from my mother’s womb and calls me through His grace, to unveil His Son in me that I may be evangelizing Him among the nations . . .* (1:15,16a)

The particle *de* (YET), though sometimes, as here, rendered “now,” is often translated “yet,” which captures more of its essence. For example, “*Yet* now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is manifest . . .” (Rom.3:21); or, “*yet* God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us . . .” (Eph.2:4). Though sometimes only slightly so, *de* is an adversative connective, in the sense that that which follows this expression and to which it refers (e.g., God’s righteousness, or, His mercy and vast love) stands against the subject which precedes it. Just as God’s righteousness, mercy, and vast love, blessedly stand against human sin, thus also God’s “delight” to unveil His Son in the foremost sinner (1 Tim.1:15,16), Saul of Tarsus, stood against Saul’s Judaism, in which, in his unbelief, he had so ferociously persecuted the ecclesia.

To clarify this point, instead of saying, “Now, when it delights God . . .” we will say, “Yet, when it delights God.” Then the sense becomes more apparent: It is true that, as Saul, Paul had once been engaged in *Judaism*, and had progressed in *Judaism* above many contemporaries in his race. “*Yet* when it delights God,” He *severed* Paul “from his *mother’s womb* and call[ed him] through His *grace*” (1:15).

Thus it becomes evident that “mother’s womb,” here, is not literal but figurative. Indeed, through the severing of the umbilical cord, all infants, when first born, are severed from their literal mother’s womb. But Paul, in the considerations before us, was severed from *Judaism*. Judaism was that which had long been *nourishing* him, as well as being that in which he had enjoyed much *growth*. Hence, he speaks of it as having been his “mother’s womb.”

Thus, Paul was severed *from* Judaism, and even *from* those of its practitioners who were believers in Christ (*cp* Acts 13:2). Yet Paul was “severed *for* the [i.e., that] evangel of God . . . concerning His Son . . . Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom.1:1-4), which, in its most complete form, has been preserved for us in the epistle to the Romans. This evangel of God—which is also the evangel of Christ (Gal.1:7)—was revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ Himself. Hence, with reference to the one to whom Christ had revealed this evangel, Paul termed it “my evangel” (Rom.16:25). This is the evangel *which* Paul brought (1:11); the evangel *which* he heralded among the nations (2:2).

When it delighted God to unveil His Son in Paul, He simply did so. Nothing is too marvelous for Him (Jer.32:17,27). In this, Paul becomes “a pattern of those who,” even when they do not as yet believe, “are *about to be* believing on [Jesus Christ] for life eonian” (1 Tim.1:16). Even in the days of their unbelief, it may be truly said of them that their faith is “*impending*.” Thus it was that, “whoever were *set* for life eonian,” “*they* believe” (Acts 13:48). It is those for whom eonian life has been *arranged*, who believe on Christ. This is because the Lord “*overwhelms*” the unbelief of “those who are *chosen*” (2 Tim.2:10), “with faith and love in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim.1:14).

*I did not immediately submit it to flesh and blood, neither came I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I came away into Arabia, and I return again to Damascus.* (1:16b,17)

Paul had not received his evangel from those who were apostles before him, and was acting under a sense of a unique divine call that admitted of neither human validation nor supplement. Therefore, rather than seeking out one or more of the twelve *for any reason whatsoever*, Paul instead came away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

J.R.C.

(To be continued)