

Contents:

- 193 Editorial
195 The Atmosphere and the Waters
201 It is Becoming So
210 Saul's Schemes and God's Spirit
213 Human Will and
the Ministry of Law
225 "Even the Death of the Cross"
229 The Soul's Yearning
and God's Humbling
237 God Gives and God Withholds

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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR SEPTEMBER 1999
BEING THE FIFTH NUMBER OF VOLUME NINETY

EDITORIAL

MOST of our readers are acquainted with the words of the apostle Paul where he declares, "Have a *pattern of sound words . . .*" (2 Tim.1:13). Still, in my experience, it seems that we all need to endeavor to heed this counsel more faithfully. By doing so, many misapprehensions and misunderstandings may be avoided.

Paul's fuller statement here is as follows: "Have a pattern of sound words which you hear from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. The ideal thing committed to you, guard . . ."

The apostle would not have us use a pattern of sound words, even those which we hear from him, except in a way that is reflective of "faith and love," indeed, of "faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." In order that one's custom here might be a *living* and *holy* custom, one's employment of a pattern of sound words cannot simply be "technically correct"; it must also be exhibited in a spirit of faith and love as that which is in Christ Jesus. Or to be more "sound" concerning this very point, our employment of a pattern of sound words, must be according to the work of Christ in us, engaging us thus, for any such faith and love is not native to ourselves; it must come from Him.

The "ideal (thing)" committed to us, is the very words of the sacred scriptures themselves (*cf* 2 Tim.3:15-17). This we are to "guard," yet not through the weaponry of fleshly tactics, but through the power of the indwelling holy spirit of God: "The ideal thing committed to you, guard through the holy spirit which is making its home in us" (2 Tim.1:13,14).

Most strikingly, immediately after declaring this solemn adjuration to Timothy, Paul then declares: "Of this you are aware, that *all* those in the province of Asia were turned from me . . ." (2 Tim.1:15).

Here Paul juxtaposes two thoughts: (1) “Beloved Timothy, it is imperative that *you* have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from *me*”; and (2) “Of this, Timothy, *you* are aware, that *all* those in the province of Asia were turned from *me*.”

By his evident interrelating of the two statements, Paul plainly intimates the connection between the two facts, and, the deeper considerations concerning each one. Drawing on facts explicit to each statement itself yet also intimately related to its counterpart, we may state the wider thought thus: An instrumental cause of all in the province of Asia turning away from Paul, was their failure to maintain a pattern of sound words which they heard from him, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. And, therefore, if, under God, Timothy would save himself as well as those hearing him (*cp* 1 Tim.4:16) from a similar fate, he *must* “have [and use] a pattern of sound words” himself, even the pattern of sound words which he heard from Paul.

In an originative and essential sense, the only sound expressions which can be identified with our faith, are the very words of Scripture itself, of which our faith consists. These are the words—“taught by the spirit” (1 Cor.2:12,13)—with which, fundamentally, we are to *speak*.

We cannot rightly judge the sense and application of any certain scriptural declarations until we are first of all able to distinguish Scripture itself from those contrary words which are merely those of human “wisdom”—however zealously, sincerely, and seemingly spiritually, expressed.

“Now the spirit is saying explicitly, that in subsequent eras some will be withdrawing from the faith . . . [doing so] in the hypocrisy of false expressions, their own conscience having been cauterized” (1 Tim.4:1,2). “O Timothy, that which is committed to you, *guard*, turning aside from the profane prattlings and antipathies of falsely named ‘knowledge,’ which some are professing. As to the faith, they swerve. Grace be with you! Amen!” (1 Tim.6:20,21).

J.R.C.

THE ATMOSPHERE AND THE WATERS

⁶ **And Elohim** ¹**said:** **Let an atmosphere come to be in the midst of the waters, ⁺that it may ^{bt}be separating ^{bt}waters [›]from waters. ⁷And it came to ¹be so[~]. ⁷⁺ **Elohim** ^{1d}**made** [›]the atmosphere and ¹separated ^{bt}the waters ^{w f}under [›]the atmosphere ⁺ ^{bt}from the waters ^w above [›]the atmosphere. ⁸ **And Elohim** ¹**called** [›]the atmosphere ⁼Heaven. **And it ¹became evening, and it ¹became morning: the second day.****

THE SECOND SAYING of God is involved in the first, as we have seen. The action of separating the gaseous envelope of the earth from the fluids was provided for in the creation of light. Indeed, the light was but the result of the activity of God’s spirit.

And so it is with all of God’s achievements. All are found first in Himself, and are only the outworking of what was within Him. By the multiplicity of His wonders we are bewildered, and fail to trace all to their Source. But here, at the very outset, the matter is simpler, and the chain complete. God is Spirit, the vibration of which produces light, the energy of which separates the atmospheric gases from the watery fluids (Gen.1:6).

We easily overlook the Deity in His operations. And we are not logical enough to trace them to their first and ultimate Origin. We do not realize that mere “natural” forces are not intelligent enough to act independently. Not only the *power* is divine, but its *control* is in His hands. It was not the light that thought out the idea of separating the

air from the waters. God provided both the energy and its direction. To remind us of this we are not told that the effect of the light was such that the gas ascended and the water separated of itself. To forefend such silly, “scientific,” atheistic ideas, *God* once more *spoke*. And so it was at the beginning of each day. Nothing evolved of itself. But all unfolded its divine potentialities at a simple statement of His will.

Once more we hear the simple, yet magnificent statement of what is to be. The Deity does not need to use the imperative voice in nature in order to express His will. As He alone supplies the power, all He needs to do is *use* it, and foretell the result just as He does in all predictive prophecy.

The Original reads, “There is coming to be an atmosphere in the midst of the water, and there is coming to be a separation between water and water.” In the first instance (v.3) the statement is simply repeated, “It is becoming light.” Now, however, the record simply reads, “And it came to be so.” This formula is used in the Hebrew in all the following cases, but here it does not appear in the Hebrew text until the end of verse 7. As it was preserved at this point, following the divine declaration, in the ancient Greek translation, we restore it.

THE STAMPING

The “firmament” of the Bible has been the sport of scholars. It is given as conclusive proof that this book is full of ignorant fables. We are told that the ancient Hebrews thought the heavens were a “firm” hollow shell on which the stars were fixed. It is true that the Septuagint Greek translation uses a words which means “solid,” and that the Vulgate Latin version made it *firmamentum*, from which the AV took its “firmament.” But the inspired Hebrew term, in the STAMP family, does not give support to these

ideas. It gives us the divine viewpoint, not the human. It looks at it as a whole from above, not as man sees it from the surface of the earth (Gen.1:6-8).

Like water, air *flows*. Water flows downward into the lowest hollows of earth’s surface, and the atmosphere fills all the rest and rises far above both. To put it another way, water and air fill all the low spots and seek their level. The land is very uneven, but the waters fill the seas, and the air forces its way into every depression on the dry land.

This characteristic is figured for us in the highly pictorial vocabulary of the Hebrew tongue by comparing it to the thin layer of foil which was STAMPED out of metal, such as copper, silver or gold, to overlay the wooden parts of the tabernacle (Ex.39:3; Num.16:38,39), and the carvings of idols (Isa.40:19; Jer.10:9). This Hebrew stem, *rqo* STAMP, as a noun, *rqio*, is their name for the atmosphere. It covers the contours of the earth like the thin foil which was stamped out to overlay the sacred furnishings of God’s dwelling place. The atmosphere is the costly covering of the earth. Next to light, it is the principal factor which changed it from a chaos into a fertile, life-sustaining habitation for plant and soul life.

THE ATMOSPHERE

So accustomed are we to the air in which we live that its marvels escape us. As we have seen, we can live without food or water for hours at a time, yet a very short time without air is usually fatal. Normally, we go without food or water for hours at a time, but we breathe in or out almost constantly.

Neither can we stand very great changes in quantity of air. This is dependent largely on the pressure, and changes with elevation above sea level. It takes time for the body to adapt itself to even small variations, for the pressure of the air within cannot be suddenly altered. As a conse-

quence, mankind is confined to the surface of the earth, and finds it difficult to climb the higher mountains.

The most important functions of the atmosphere for humanity are connected with *life* and *light*. It makes the celestial luminaries visible to our eyes and provides our bodies with vital oxygen apart from which we cannot survive, and which is joined with the other elements of which living tissues are formed. About one-fifth of it is a vitally essential gas, without which there could be no soul-life on the earth. It may be that this is referred to in the formation of Adam, when Yahweh Elohim blew into his nostrils the *breath of lives* (Gen.2:7), for the oxygen is that part of the air which is absolutely essential to life. When man ascends to the higher altitudes, where it is scarce, it is necessary to supply it by artificial means.

THE SEPARATIONS

A striking feature of the restoration of the six days is the sevenfold recurrence of the word *separate*. God *separated* between the light and the darkness (Gen.1:4). The atmosphere is the *separation* between the waters above and beneath (Gen.1:6,7). On the fourth day the luminaries *separate* between the day and the night (1:14) and *separate* between the light and the darkness (1:18). It will be noted that the first one separated abides, while the second eventually vanishes. Darkness and night will be done away (Rev.21:25; 22:5). So also with the waters. Those beneath the atmosphere are found on the new earth as a river of life (Rev.22:1; 22:17), while those above became the deluge of death (Gen.7:21).

THE TWO WATERS

Had we written this, we probably would have said that the atmosphere is *above* (not in the *midst* of) the water, and would not have made a separation *between* the waters, for

we seldom consider how much water or moisture there is in the upper reaches of the atmosphere. In order to appreciate God's marvelous mercy in placing water above as well as beneath the atmosphere, we will imagine that the water, being heavier than air, must always remain below. Then the ground, even if it was once saturated, would dry out and become absolutely unfit to support life of any kind. As it is, there are lands with so little moisture that they cannot be inhabited. Water is more necessary for life than food. Plants, as well as soul life, will shrivel up and die apart from a proper supply of moisture. Nevertheless, there are regions, in the center of continents, more than a thousand miles from a sea, which have more than enough water, especially in the equatorial belt.

How wise is the wonderful provision that water is not only heavier than air but can also be changed so as to float in it! It is very variable, changed by heat from a solid to a fluid and a gas. We are well acquainted with the fluid, water, but some know little of it as solid ice, while most of us seldom recognize its invisible gaseous condition unless it cools enough to show its shape in clouds or fog.

BEFORE THE DELUGE

But we must not take the present conditions as normal for antediluvian days. We never read of rain falling on the earth until the deluge. Indeed, we are distinctly told that Yahweh Elohim did *not* bring rain on the earth. At that time humidity came *up* from below and irrigated all the surface of the ground (Gen.2:5,6). Subirrigation is a much better method of watering plants than surface flooding or rain. It would be much more used in arid regions if it were not so expensive. It is probable, however, that in those days, the moisture was not only absorbed by plant life, but *rose* through it into the air and was stored *above* until the deluge, when it descended for forty days and forty

nights. Combined with the water from beneath and that which came through the crevices of the heavens, it covered the whole earth (Gen.7:11). Under present conditions it soon descends as rain. But then it may have been stored as invisible vapor. It may be that the limits of this method were reached at the time of the deluge, so that it gradually came down.

THE RAINBOW

God has given us a continual reminder of this in the rainbow. This was not visible to the antediluvians because the atmospheric conditions were not such as would refract the light into the multicolored arch which we see today. *Now* this is God's guarantee that no repetition of the deluge is possible. The moisture repeatedly forms globules of water which fall as rain. They had neither rainbow nor rain in Paradise or in the rest of the earth in that eon. As the moisture went up for two thousand years, more or less, depending on which chronology we take, it is not at all astonishing that the deluge covered the earth. That is nearly as long, or longer, than from the birth of Christ to the present.

I have seen magnificent rainbows, with an unbroken arch showing all the colors of the spectrum. At the grand canyon of the Colorado, I saw it as a rainround, a full circle, without ends. In the yawning depths of the abyss the "ends" continued to form another inverted bow, completing the upper semicircle.

But the most soul-stirring of them all I saw on the hills above the lake of Galilee. What a picture! What solemn associations! In the center, below me, was the lake, recalling all the sacred scenes centered around my Lord and His disciples, while high above the sign of God's unconditional covenant spanned the lake from shore to shore. God and His Beloved were brought very near by these visible tokens of their presence.

A. E. Knoch

IT IS BECOMING SO

THE earth and the heavens about it had come into such a state of chaos and vacancy that only God, the One Who created the earth in the first place, could revive it. No fortuitous combination of elements or circumstances could change the situation. It was a world lost in darkness and disorder, hostile to life, cold and empty. God Himself must act, and when He does act it will necessarily be evident that all that occurs must be traced to Him.

Popular theories speak of movements and interactions of celestial bodies, of physical and chemical forces, of time and chance, all involved in bringing out some primordial spark of life. It is claimed that one thing led to another, though perhaps through billions of years and billions upon billions of misses and near misses. But what caused the "one thing" and the conditions required for the whole process?

Beginnings of life and development of good cannot be traced to blind chance. They must be traced to God Who possesses enlightened purpose and the power to carry it out. This One is Elohim, being now presented by His words and deeds in the first chapter of Genesis.

Blind chance is no explanation for light and life and order. It is like chaos, though far worse because it is thought of as something that replaces and excludes God. The chaos and vacancy and darkness of Genesis 1:2 plead for God as One responsible for and to what He has created.

Now in Genesis 1:6 God speaks again, this time saying, "Let an atmosphere come to be in the midst of the waters, that it may be separating waters from waters." These are

words which speak of putting things in order. God is the Placer (in accord with the Greek word *Theos*), the Subjector (in accord with the Hebrew title, *El*), Who orders things effectively and well.

Elohim's opening words of Genesis 1:6 may be expressed in English more literally as "It-is-becoming, atmosphere. . . ." This helps us see that the verb declares or announces a *developing* change. But the Hebrew verb could also properly be rendered "It-shall-become," thus emphasizing the *prophetic* nature of the words which Elohim uttered. These words are God's declaration of what will come to be. His command is actually a proclamation. What He says here can be relied upon.

In the CV the clause (literally rendered) "and it is becoming so" is moved from the end of verse 7, where it appears in the Masoretic Text, to the end of verse 6 where it appears in the Septuagint. This is in harmony with the pattern of verses 9, 11, 15, 24 and 30 (see also verse 20, CV), where it follows immediately after declarations of Elohim. The statement is a certification that what God has spoken is faithfully carried out.

Are we willing to apply this principle to all of God's declarations? What God has spoken is certain of coming to be so. Often there is no problem because, as with the words of Genesis 1:6, what God says has clearly been shown to be true and experienced with appreciation. But much of what God says in Scripture has not yet been realized. It remains as a promise and must be taken in faith apart from sight.

Even though much of what God has spoken has not yet come to be so in experience, it must become so. The first chapter of Genesis reminds us to be patient and expectant concerning the great promises of good that God has made. Very many scriptural declarations of God concern "things to come" which have not yet come. And the human tendency has been to dilute or alter the sense of these

unfulfilled promises because of the long periods of time between the declaration and its coming to be so. Motivations may be sincere, but if the fulfillment is not clearly and exactly a becoming so of what God has said, we may surely question the claims of fulfillment.

Let us consider a few examples:

THE SERPENT'S HEAD

When, by its craftiness, the serpent had usurped authority over humanity in the garden of Eden, Yahweh Elohim declared in terms very much the same as found in Genesis 1:6, "And I shall set enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall hurt you in the head, and you shall hurt Him in the heel" (Gen.3:15).

The second half of this curse is sometimes called the "protoevangel," or first presentation of the evangel, the good news of God's deliverance of sinners through the gift of His Son. The prophecy is expressed in figurative language, but its sense is easily discerned. It concerns the Descendent of the woman, Who will take away the headship or authority that the Adversary had seized in the garden, doing so at His cost, suffering in the very act of triumphing over the enemy. It concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ (*cf* Rom.1:1,3,5), His death on the cross (*cf* Rom. 3:24; 5:6-9) and the annulling of Satan's authority and acts (*cf* 1 Cor.15:24-27; 1 John 3:8).

Numerous human traditions have weakened the sense of Genesis 3:15, suggesting that its fulfillment will not be quite *so* as stated. Foremost are those teachings which, at best, confuse the issue of the Adversary's loss of headship, if they do not contradict it altogether. Another field of warfare against this prophecy is the advancement of ideas concerning supposed human contributions to the nullifying of Satan's authority. In this way the truth of Christ's victory and the centrality of His cross is drastically diluted.

No matter how loud and continuous the claim that everlasting hell or irreversible annihilation is no victory for Satan may be, such outcomes still would stand as triumphs of his authority. He led humanity into disobedience, and the doctrines of eternal loss must, in effect, trace that loss to his original usurpation of leadership. The doctrines of eternal loss might still allow the hurting of Satan's head to mean that he fails to gain *all* he wants. But an incomplete annulling of Satan's authority, or the exercise of divine authority over the creatures of God's hands with the tools of suffering and loss could never stand as a true triumph of the Seed of the woman.

The subjection of all under the feet of Christ is the coming-to-be-so of Genesis 3:15. Then He will "be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power" (1 Cor.15:24-27). Whenever this occurs, the protoevangel becomes the realized evangel in the hearts of all, so that "in the name of Jesus," the Saviour, every knee will bow and every tongue will avow the Lordship of Christ (Phil.2:10,11). For then God's delight and purpose to head up all in the Christ will be achieved in recognition by all throughout the universe, both that in the heavens and that on the earth, (Eph. 1:9-11) to the glory of God the Father. Peace will have spread everywhere, embracing all, because of the Seed of the Woman and the blood of His cross (Col.1:20).

That is the testimony of God's Word as to the fulfillment of His word to the serpent in Genesis 3:15. It shall become so.

HUMAN COOPERATION

The promise concerning the Seed of the woman was spoken to the serpent. Humanity stood in the position of hearers, or rather overhearers. They were not invited to participate in the hurting of the serpent's head, nor even offered the message of triumph as a matter of their choice,

as though it needed their verification by a faithful response. It was simply a declaration of what would become so.

The travail of the woman spoken of in Genesis 3:16 and the sweat of the man spoken of in 3:19 were channels for the continuance and preservation of the human race, but the promised victory was centered solely in the Seed Who would come. When Cain ("Acquired") was born, Eve centered upon what she had "acquired," naming him accordingly.

The groaning and travailing, in toil and in child-bearing, whether that given to the male or to the female, is not something we can boast in as our humanly contrived contribution to the defeat of the Adversary. Like humanity's hate and cruelty at the cross, our infirmity and enmity through the centuries only emphasizes our inability to rid ourselves of Satan's headship. If Mary was blessed, or made happy, or we are graciously granted experiences of suffering along with our believing, this is evidence of God's operations in and for us. What we do is only evidence of our need of a Saviour. When Genesis 3:15 becomes "so" it will be recognized that the annulling of the Adversary's headship was the victory of Christ alone.

THE PROMISED LAND AND KINGDOM

When His disciples came to Jesus after His resurrection and posed the question that was so dominant in their mind, "Lord, art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus gave a very important reply. He said, "Not yours is it to know times or eras which the Father placed in His own jurisdiction" (Acts 1:6,7). All through His ministry Jesus had directed attention to the kingdom, which, by His own testimony, had drawn near. But the promises of this great realm to be centered in a definitely prescribed area of the earth, and directed through a chosen people, go back to the twelfth chapter of Genesis and extend

through all the sacred scriptures of old. Not one of them can fail of realization.

At least two thousand years had passed since Yahweh had declared to Abram, "I shall make you into a great nation, and I shall bless you; I shall indeed make your name great, and you will be a blessing; I shall indeed bless those blessing you, and I shall curse the one maledicting you. In you all the families of the ground will be blessed" (Gen.12:2,3). And about a thousand years had come and gone since He had said to David, "Your house and your kingship will be authenticated before Me for the eon; your throne, it shall become established for the eon" (2 Sam.7:16).

We cannot be satisfied in thinking these declarations were fulfilled in the days of Joshua or Solomon. What was said has not even yet *become so*. The disciples were not confused into supposing that they were enjoying the blessings spoken of by Yahweh in Genesis and all the prophets. Christ had been with them, manifesting many of the powers of the kingdom, granting some of its blessings as a foretaste now and again, but that was not the fulfillment of the promises. The "times of restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon" (Acts 3:21) had not arrived. They were still praying as Jesus had directed, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt.6:10).

Later, when it became obvious that the coming of the kingdom was still being delayed, Peter wrote, "Now of this one thing you are not to be oblivious, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not tardy as to the promise, as some are deeming tardiness, but is patient because of you, not intending any to perish, but all to make room for repentance" (2 Pet.3:8,9).

This theme is similarly taken up in the book of Hebrews with the recognition that they had not yet entered into the Lord's "stopping" (Heb.3:7-4:13). "You should not, then,

be casting away your boldness, which is having a great reward, for you have need of endurance that, doing the will of God, you should be requited with the promise. For still how very little, He Who is coming will be arriving and not delaying . . . By faith we are apprehending the eons to adjust to a declaration of God, so that what is being observed has not come out of what is appearing" (Heb. 10:35-37; 11:2). The signs that had been appearing, and the great work of the cross, in their own days, had indicated the Lord's soon return and the establishment of the kingdom. And yet what they observed was that Rome still ruled, and what was promised in the prophets remained *not so*. The message was faith and endurance, steadfastness in "looking off to the Inaugurator and Perfecter of faith, Jesus, Who, for the joy lying before Him, endures a cross, despising the shame, besides is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb.12:2).

SPIRITUALIZING THE WORD

If the words of Genesis and Samuel concerning the land and the kingdom cannot be found fulfilled in the reign of Solomon with all its splendor and the extent of its sway, then we must take it that the standard of exactitude in fulfillment is as high as it was in Genesis 1. If the disciples living under the ministry of Jesus for three years and more did not find in His presence with them the fulfillment of the promised kingdom, then we surely can express the strongest of doubts that this fulfillment has existed even in the hearts of the most faithful and reverent of saints from the first century until now.

We have made the standards for the "becoming so" of what God has said too low. Not just preterists who claim the kingdom was set up in the year 70 A.D. or amillennialists who see it as existing today in the "church," but all of us who believe fall short in appreciation of the glory and real-

ity of God's fulfillments of His promises of blessing. How can we fully appreciate them until they have become so? But we can, as God gives us grace, believe what He has said and expect it will become so in fullest harmony with what He has said.

To be sure, we are not always clear about what exactly it is that God has said. But this is not the fault of what He has said, but of the corruption of our understandings by our traditions and imaginings, as well-meaning as these may be. Poor translations of the Scriptures, pride and stubbornness, these all have their parts as well. But we must insist that (to use two passages of scripture that have often been used to suggest the kingdom is currently in operation) if the kingdom of God is inside the chosen (Luke 17:21) and is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit (Rom.14:16,17) it is not here in the body of believers today in any sense of wholeness, no matter how mature and faithful one may be, or righteous by human standards. It is surely *reflected* in the lives of believers, but until *all* of God's declarations concerning it have become so, it still remains a matter of promise and expectation, both for Israel in its terrestrial aspects and for us in its celestial aspects.

We will be greatly aided in joyful patience by holding fast to these foundational lessons concerning God, His word and His ways, given in the first chapter of Genesis. "God said . . . and it came to be so." Like Abraham, let us not be infirm in faith despite all that we observe to the contrary (Rom.4:19).

EXPECTATION IS NOT MORTIFYING

It is because of God's declarations of good news to us that we are able to endure afflictions with joyful anticipation. In His evangel to us God has spoken concerning gratuitous justification "through the deliverance which is

in Christ Jesus" (Rom.3:24). Furthermore He has said in His Word, "Being, then justified by faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and added, that through our Lord Jesus Christ "we have the access also, by faith, into this grace in which we stand," and even beyond this, "we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God" (Rom.5:1,2). God's grace at the cross and in our expectation bears the gracious fruit of endurance in our lives.

All around us there is much to discourage and distract us. This good news concerning righteousness and deliverance that God has spoken has not come to be so in fulness of experience and realization. Infirmity and failure and affliction make that evident. But "we may be glorying also in afflictions, having perceived that affliction is producing endurance, yet endurance testedness, yet testedness expectation. Now expectation is not mortifying, seeing that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us" (Rom.5:3-5).

We have heard God's declarations of grace, and we believe that all He has declared concerning us He is able to bring to pass; we fully anticipate that what He has said will come to be so. Like Abraham we are invigorated by faith, "giving glory to God, being fully assured also, that what He has promised, He is able to do also" (Rom.4:20,21). "For the saving grace of God made its advent to all humanity, training us that, disowning irreverence and worldly desires, we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in the current eon, anticipating that happy expectation, even the advent of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who gives Himself for us, that He should be redeeming us from all lawlessness and be cleansing for Himself a people to be about Him, zealous for ideal acts. Speak of these things and entreat and expose with every injunction" (Titus 2:11-15). D.H.H.

SAUL'S SCHEMES AND GOD'S SPIRIT

SAUL continued to try and grasp David. He was like humanity groping in the darkness (Acts 17:26, 27), and like Israel struggling with Christ's "hard sayings" (John 6:60). He simply could not catch him. Realization of the truth comes by revelation from the Spirit of God, not from the efforts of the flesh. Apart from God's enablement we cannot discern between an idol in a cloak and the truth.

1 SAMUEL 19:11-24

¹¹ ⁷It ^boccurred⁰ in that night ⁺that Saul [']sent messengers to David's house to observe him and to ^cput him to death in the morning. ⁺But Michal his wife [']told [']David, [']saying⁻, If you are not ^mproviding [']for your soul an escape[!] tonight, tomorrow you will be ^cput to death[!]. ¹² ⁺Michal [']had [']David [']descend through the window ⁺that he might go and run [']away and [']escape. ¹³ ⁺Michal [']took [']the teraphim and [']placed them [']on the couch. ⁺She ^plaid [']goats' hair gauze where his ⁷head[~] should be, and [']covered it [']with his cloak. ¹⁴ So ⁺when Saul [']sent messengers to take [']David in, ⁺she [']said, He is ailing. ¹⁵ ⁺Yet Saul [']sent [']the messengers back to see [']David, [']saying⁻, [']Bring [']him up to me [']on the couch to ^cput him to death. ¹⁶ ⁺When the messengers had [']come in, ⁺behold, there were the teraphim [']on the couch, and [']goats' hair gauze where his ⁷head[~] should be. ¹⁷ ⁺So Saul [']said to Michal, Why did you deceive me thus and [']send [']my enemy[!] away so ⁺that he might escape? ⁺Michal ^{bsa}replied to Saul, He [']said to me, [']Let me go! Why should I ^cput you to death?

¹⁸ ⁺As for David, he ran away and [']escaped. ⁺He [']came to

Samuel at ^dRamah and [']told [']him [']all ^wthat Saul had done to him. ⁺Then he and Samuel [']went away and ^{bsit}stayed in the homestead. ¹⁹ ⁺Now [']Saul was [']told, [']saying⁻, Behold, David is in the homestead [']at Ramah; ²⁰ ⁺so Saul [']sent messengers to take [']David in. ⁺When ⁷they^{~cs} [']saw [']the assembly of prophets prophesying and Samuel standing stationed[!] over them, ⁺then the spirit of Elohim ^{lb}came on Saul's messengers, and ^mtogether they [']prophesied in ecstasy. ²¹ ⁺When they [']told it to Saul, ⁺he [']sent other messengers; [']yet they ^mtoo [']prophesied in ecstasy. ⁺So Saul [']sent messengers ⁺again, the third group; [']yet they ^mtoo [']prophesied in ecstasy.

²² ⁷Now the anger of Saul grew [']hot⁰, and he himself ^malso [']went to ^dRamah. ⁺When he [']came as far as the cistern [']of the threshing site which is [']on the ridge⁻, ⁺he [']asked, [']saying, What about Samuel and David? ⁷They^{~c} ^{bsa}replied, Behold, they are in the homestead [']at Ramah. ²³ ⁺As he [']went [']from there[~] to the homestead [']at Ramah, ⁺the spirit of Elohim ^{lb}came on him, on him ^mtoo, ⁺while he [']went on walking⁻ and [']prophesying in ecstasy until he came [']to the homestead [']at Ramah. ²⁴ ⁺Then he ^mtoo [']stripped off his clothes, and he ^mtoo [']prophesied in ecstasy before Samuel; ⁺he lay [']fallen naked all [']that day and all [']night. Therefore they [']say, Is Saul ^malso [']among the prophets?^o

A SIGN GIVEN TO SAUL

David escaped to Samuel at Ramah, and Saul sent messengers three times to apprehend him. The prophesying of Saul's messengers, and also of himself, should have called to Saul's mind his own appointment to the position of king. He had received three signs, one of which was prophesying in ecstasy (1 Sam.10:1-7). The same God Whose Spirit came upon Saul to verify his appointment to the throne now restrained Saul. This served as a divine sign that Saul was not to touch David. But Saul, like the flesh and like Israel, failed to heed the signs.

The failure of the messengers to apprehend David is similar to the messengers sent to Christ to question Him or entrap Him with His words. Their mouths were stopped, and they bore witness, "Never speaks a man thus!" (John 7:46; Luke 20:40).

This incident also calls to mind the sending of messengers to Elijah three times to apprehend him. (2 Kings 1:1-18). The first two groups sent to Elijah were consumed by fire. In 1 Samuel 19:20,21 the messengers sent to David were not injured. In both cases the problem was a failure to recognize and revere God's will and words. The differences in the examples show that they represent different aspects and times. David represents Christ coming in grace. Elijah's time represent the times of tribulation and the "rod of iron" rule.

There is great comfort for us in seeing that God's arm is never short to deliver His chosen. Whether the opposers simply fall backward to the ground (John 18:6), or whether they are plagued (Ex.7-12; 1 Sam.5-6; Rev.8-9), they can do no more or less than God determines. And God's hand should be seen in it all. Dagon, Goliath and Saul all fall prostrate before God (1 Sam.5:3-4; 17:49; 19:23-24). Whether the Presence is testified by the ark of the covenant, by God's anointed, or by His prophet, the same God is powerful in all situations.

J. Philip Scranton

HEINZ AND BRIGITTE HOFFMANN

We sorrow to report the deaths of our beloved brother and sister **Heinz and Brigitte Hoffmann** of *Konkordanter Verlag* (Concordant Publishing Concern of Germany). Heinz died on June 20, after an extended illness; his wife Brigitte, suddenly on August 12.

On two occasions, Heinz and Brigitte made extended visits here, to the Concern in California, conferring with Brothers Herman Rocke and Dean Hough in their common translation work, that of the *Concordant Version of the Old Testament*.

The One Who is Operating All

HUMAN WILL AND THE MINISTRY OF LAW

*For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen! I am entreating you, **then**, brethren, by the pities of God. . . (Rom.11:34-12:1a).*

*Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, according to the power that is operating in us, to Him be the glory in the ecclesia. . . I am entreating you, **then**, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called (Eph.3:20-4:1).*

Question:

I find your logical argument against free will compelling: Either human behavior occurs deterministically or indeterministically (or some combination of the two). If determinism is true, then whatever occurs is the effect of those causal factors which produce it; hence free will is false. But if determinism is false, then whatever occurs is either a thing of chance itself or else the outcome of a random event; hence free will is also false.

That settles it, then; free will is false. It is wonderful to see, however, that "determinism"—that is, *divine* determinism or causality—is scripturally *revealed* to be both true and universal. You made that point clearly as well by showing that the scope of the "all" that is

out of, through, and for God (Rom.11:36), is necessarily all that exists and all that occurs. This is evident, since the entire point of Paul's rhetorical questions of Romans 11:34,35 together with the apostle's causative expression, "*seeing that*" ["out of Him, through Him, and for Him is all"], requires this sense.

Your point is also well taken where you emphasize that we must not reject this truth simply because it is so unpopular, and since, at first, even to ourselves, it seems wrong. We should hardly expect such an important truth to be "popular" in the world in which we live; likewise, the unenlightened conscience is by no means a reliable guide. I have already conquered most of my uncomfortable feelings concerning the teaching of God's universal deity simply by *believing* the teaching of God's universal deity!

This brings me, however, to my question, which is this: Since men do *not* possess free will, why, then, do the Scriptures nevertheless contain such an abundance of commandments and entreaties, whether through Moses, for the nation of Israel, or through the apostle Paul, for believers of this present administration?

My pastor claims that the very fact that the Bible is replete with laws and exhortations, and, with punishments for disobedience, proves that free will is true. His argument is that it would be foolish and unjust to command men to do the impossible. Besides this, if free will were not true, then freewill-based moral responsibility would be an impossibility. Since God is not foolish and unjust, and since any suggestion that freewill-type moral responsibility is unwarranted is unthinkable, therefore, free will is true.

While I realize that, somehow, my pastor's arguments must be mistaken, it is not fully clear to me how this is so. I would appreciate your help.

Answer:

It is important for believers to understand the place of

entreaties and exhortations in relation to their walk and service. Clearly, all who are naming the name of the Lord are to "withdraw from injustice" (2 Tim.2:19). This is even as Paul is saying, "As children of light be walking (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), testing what is well pleasing to the Lord. And be not joint participants in the unfruitful acts of darkness, yet rather be exposing them also, for it is a shame even to speak of the hidden things occurring, done by them" (Eph.5:9-12).

Even though we are justified apart from law (Rom.3:21,24), and, for us, grace reigns for life eonian (Rom.5:21), this in no way diminishes the importance of an obedient walk, which remains essential to faithful service.

The apostle Paul's writings are filled with "the imperatives of faithfulness," with the many instructions and warnings which are vital to our walk in the Lord.

There can be no doubt of the importance of our obedience; and, therefore, of the importance of the many corresponding entreaties and exhortations given to us with a view toward our heeding of their testimony. Insofar as our duty is concerned, it is clear that God's "directions" to us rehearse the various particulars of which our duty consists. As Paul declares, "What I am writing to you is a precept of the Lord. Now if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant!" (1 Cor.14:37b,38).

In this respect, there is little confusion as to the purpose of entreaties of virtue and exhortations of righteousness. Nevertheless, much confusion remains in connection with any such words of instruction. The confusion and error related to issues of our obedience consists primarily in our failure to recognize the Source of our obedience and to rely on God alone with a view toward the fulfillment of that very obedience. Our failure is that of failing to recognize our need of *the saving grace of God* in order for our obedience actually to occur.

Reasoning from the fact that the sons of Israel of old were entreated to obey all the law of Moses lest they become subject to all of the law of Moses' curses, one ancient school of thought, known as Pelagianism, concluded that, therefore, man, in himself, at all times, is able to obey the entirety of God's law, *doing so apart from* (any further) *divine grace*. The teaching of Pelagianism has been aptly summed up thus: "Since no grace is needed, none is given."

Since your pastor claims that duty proves ability (otherwise God is foolish and unjust), he should become a Pelagian. According to the Pelagians, men have no further need of divine grace—no need of the holy spirit of God and its powerful workings—in order for them to perform plenary obedience. Insofar as obedience is concerned, regeneration is unnecessary. Like the Israelites of the wilderness, the Pelagians' slogan is, "All that Yahweh speaks we shall do" (*cf* Ex.19:8). If it is their duty to live lives of purity and righteousness, then they will live such lives in their own strength, albeit while thanking God for their native powers.

As might be expected, the propagation of thoroughgoing Pelagianism did not have great success, and was soon replaced with semi-Pelagianism. This is because all but the blindest of sinners recognize at least something of their own insufficiency. Therefore Pelagianism's specious argument that sinners already have all the grace that they need, seemed simply unbelievable. Hence semi-Pelagianism soon gained the day, and even today remains by far the most popular means of deception in opposition to the truth of the evangel and the realization of God.

Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism can be both summed up and compared by the following illustrations: The Pelagian's prayer to God is, "I thank you for already having given me all that I need in order to obey You, in the gracious gift of my native powers, which gift, when joined

with my own exercise of free will, will ensure my success in all my moral endeavors." By way of contrast (however slight), the semi-Pelagian's prayer to God is, "I thank you for already having given me much that I need in order to obey You, in the gracious gift of my native powers, and, for offering to give me the rest that I need, in the gracious gift of Your holy spirit, which gifts, when joined with my own exercise of free will, will ensure my success in all my moral endeavors."

More specifically, Pelagianism says to God, "Thanks for Your help. Since You have already given me all that I need except for ensuring the proper use of my will, on which all depends, I will now get about the business of doing what I must in order to *save myself* from being disqualified for reward and/or for exemption from eternal punishment. If I succeed in my endeavor, I will then call *You* my Saviour." Semi-Pelagianism says to God, "Thanks for Your help. Since You have already given me much that I need and offer to give me the rest that I need except for ensuring the proper use of my will, on which all depends, I will now get about the business of doing what I must in order to *save myself* from being disqualified for reward and/or¹ for exemption from eternal punishment. If I succeed in my endeavor, I will then call *You* my Saviour."

Semi-Pelagianism has the tremendous advantage over Pelagianism not only of being more credible, but of affording a greater place to piety—while, just as surely even if

1. The careful reader will note that even the believer in the divine graces of the final salvation of all and/or of the saint's election in Christ who nonetheless holds to free will with regard to moral behavior, is likewise of the semi-Pelagian position in this respect. The self-righteousness of the Universalist or Calvinist who holds to free will in practical affairs is no better in this vital aspect than that of the self-righteousness of the Arminian who does the same, while maintaining this same pride-filled doctrine as well even in relation to his own salvation.

more furtively, in the end, effectually making men their own saviours, according to their own “free wills.” Since semi-Pelagianism still leaves ample room for self-pride and autosoterism (i.e., “self-salvation”) while at the same time granting a needful place to a measure of further grace, the more creative and sincere of its proponents are able to convincingly represent it as being the very truth of God.

Since your pastor is a “conservative, non-Calvinistic evangelical,” even if he should be unfamiliar with the term “semi-Pelagianism,” he nonetheless holds the above-described view, known historically as semi-Pelagianism, or in modern times, as evangelical Arminianism. While semi-Pelagianism claims that the grace termed “the *assistance* of the holy spirit,” is *indispensable* both to regeneration and faithful service, it also claims that this grace is *insufficient* for the realization of these same objectives. While semi-Pelagianists may place great stress upon the sinner’s need of “grace,” it is not the all-sufficient and saving grace of God which they have in mind, but only the “possibility-making” grace of their own imaginations.

By whatever name, this is the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and, of nearly all present-day Protestant bodies as well. It is a fact that semi-Pelagianism (not to mention Pelagianism) was repudiated and strenuously opposed by all of the original teachers of the Reformation. Indeed, it was the primary goal of the original reformers to overthrow this very teaching, which, as the mainstay of the Papacy, was the reformers’ principal objection to Catholicism.²

2. As Martin Luther, in opposing the doctrine of free will, declared in replying to his opponent Erasmus, “You alone . . . have attacked the real thing, that is, the essential issue. You have not worried me with those extraneous issues about the Papacy, purgatory, indulgences and such like—trifles rather than issues—in respect of which almost all to date have sought my blood . . . You, and you alone, have seen the

Now, in reply to your pastor’s arguments, let me respond to his second argument first, which is that, since, to him (and to nearly all others as well), it is “unthinkable” that freewill moral responsibility should be a non-reality it is therefore to be considered a vital constituent of all true reality, let me say the following: Such a claim is idolatrous. You, I, *and your pastor as well*, are but poor, stupid sinners. Nothing could be more imprudent than for any of us to approach this question of free will with the conviction that since free will is necessary as the very basis of moral responsibility as ordinarily understood, therefore free will must be deemed an unquestionable truth.

What, did the Word of God come out from us? And, what, are popular ethics in a world of darkness to be deemed that to which God Himself must submit if He would retain His righteousness? By no means. Whatever God actually does is what is right; and, whatever God actually reveals is what is true.

Likewise, whatever follows from true premises is that which constitutes a valid conclusion. A valid conclusion is necessarily a true assertion, not merely a logical conclusion; therefore, it constitutes conclusive evidence of a proposition. Indeed, apart from careful, correct engagement in such considerations of critical thinking, it is impossible to determine the true sense in which the Scripture is to be understood. To say that we care nothing about such “intellectual” disciplines, and since, purportedly, being spiritual, have no need of them, is tantamount to saying that we care nothing about and have no need of the only basis upon which any question may actually be decided. Further, we may hardly, at any time, much less *a priori*,

hinge on which all turns, and aimed for the vital spot. For that I heartily thank you . . .” (Martin Luther, *THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL, Historical and Theological Introduction*, p.42 (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957).

reject whatever fails to please us or meet the approval of our conscience, or, whatever is unpopular in the world, including in the world of Christianity.

Now, in reply to your pastor's first argument, let me say the following: You will recall that, succinctly stated, his claim is that since it would be both foolish and unjust to command men to do what is impossible, and since God is neither foolish nor unjust yet He instructs men to obey Him and imposes penalties upon their disobedience, therefore, free will is true.

Your pastor's first error here, of course, is the egregious one of presuming that whatever may seem foolish and unjust to him, is necessarily foolish and unjust. Amazing as it may seem to some, it might just be that God would have wise and righteous reasons for doing what we fondly imagine to be foolish and unjust.

Secondly, it hardly follows that if God's purpose in instructing men to obey Him is not what we presumed it to be—namely, that of affording the human a venue within which he might exercise free will—therefore, God could have no other purpose in instructing men to obey Him.

Thirdly, your pastor misrepresents the actual scriptural presentation. In the Scriptures, God does not command men to do the impossible, that is, to *do* that which they cannot *do*. Instead, He commands them to do that which it is impossible for them to do *ultimately of themselves*. It is altogether righteous and wise to command a blind, self-reliant sinner to do that which he can by no means do of himself—even as, also, to impose temporary disciplinary penalties upon him for his disobedience—that he might learn of his true condition and desperate situation and turn to God and be saved.

Similarly, it is altogether righteous and wise for God to instruct His saints as well to do that which they can no more do of themselves than the most wretched of sinners

can do of themselves, that they might turn to God more fully and be saved from the sin of ignorance of their own intrinsic, fleshly condition, even as from their dreadful self-glorying in fancying themselves as the key to victory.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR IMPOTENCE

In their disputation over free will, Erasmus, in his *Dia-tribe* against Luther, had argued that such words as found, for example, in Deuteronomy 30:19 (“Life and death I have put before you, the blessing and the malediction. Now *choose life* that you may live . . .”), constitute evidence of free will. As he claimed, “What could be more clearly stated? It leaves man freedom of choice.”

Luther's reply to all such arguments was as follows: “What could be more clear than that at this point you are blind? [Is your argument here] in [the text's] use of the word ‘choose’? Does it, then, come to pass that as soon as Moses says ‘choose,’ they do choose? In that case, there is . . . no need of the Spirit.

“Here is the matter in a nutshell: . . . By statements of this sort, man is not told what he can do [of himself], but what he ought to do [in his duty to God]. It is true that [in our voluntary behavior] we stand where two roads meet, and only one of them is open—indeed, neither is open [in a ‘free will’ sense]; and the law shows us how impossible is the one, that leading to good, *unless God bestows His spirit*,³ and how broad and easy is the other if God [leaving us to ourselves] lets us go that way.

3. It is a great advance when we are able to recognize that all of the virtue and goodness that is, indeed, present in unbelievers, is not the outworkings of their “free wills,” but is the result of common grace, of the operative power of the *spirit* of God, according to the counsel of *His* will (*cf* Eph.1:11). A man can not get anything if it should not be given him out of heaven (John 3:27), out of God Himself, Who makes the world and all that is in it, Who is giving to all, life and breath and all (Acts 17:24,25).

“By the law is knowledge of sin,’ says Paul (Rom.3:20). He does not say: *abolition*, or *avoidance* of sin. The entire design and power of the law is just to give knowledge, and that of nothing but of sin; not to display or confer any power. This knowledge is not power, nor does it bring power; but it teaches and displays that there is here no power, and great weakness. What can ‘knowledge of sin’ be but knowledge of our weakness and badness?

“. . . What if I prove that the nature of words and use of language, even among men, is not always such as to make it an act of mockery to say to the impotent, ‘If thou art willing,’ ‘If thou shalt do,’ ‘If thou shalt hear’? How often do parents thus play with their children, bidding them come to them, or do this or that, only that it may appear how impotent they are, and that they may be compelled to call for the parent’s hand? How often does a faithful physician tell an obstinate patient to do or stop doing things that are impossible or injurious to him, so as to bring him by experience of himself to a knowledge of his disease or weakness, to which he cannot lead him by any other course?

“And what is more common and widespread than to use insulting and provoking language when we would show our friends what they can and cannot do?

“I merely mention these things to show Reason how stupid she is to tack her inferences on to the Scriptures, and how blind she is not to see that they do not always hold good even in respect of the words and the dealings of men . . .

“If, now, God, as a Father, deals with us as with His sons, with a view to showing us the impotence of which we are ignorant; or as a faithful physician, with a view to making known to us our disease; or if, to taunt His enemies, who proudly resist His [preceptive] counsel and the laws He has set forth (by which He achieves this end most effectively), He should say: ‘Do,’ ‘Hear,’ ‘Keep,’ or: ‘If thou shalt hear,’ ‘If thou art willing,’ ‘If thou shalt do’; can it be fairly

concluded from this that therefore we can do these things freely, or else God is mocking us?

“Why should not this conclusion follow rather: therefore, God is trying us that by His law He may bring us to a knowledge of our impotence, if we are His friends; or else, He is really and deservedly taunting and mocking us, if we are His proud enemies? For this, as Paul teaches, is the intent of divine legislation (*cf* Rom.3:20; 5:20; Gal.3:19,24).

“The *Diatribē* dreams that man is whole and sound (as to human view, in his own sphere, he is); hence it argues from the phrases: ‘If thou art willing,’ ‘If thou shalt do,’ ‘If thou shalt hear,’ that man is being mocked, unless his will is free. But Scripture describes man as corrupted and led captive, and, furthermore, as proudly disdainful to notice, and failing to recognise, his own corruption and captivity; therefore, it uses these phrases to goad and rouse him, that he may know by sure experience how unable he is to do any of these things.”⁴

THE PURPOSE OF ENTREATIES

In our concerns over issues of free will, beyond all these important logical considerations which demonstrate the untenableness of the freewill’s position, it is especially wonderful simply to learn that the apostle Paul, as God’s spokesman, in at least two places, explicitly *tells* us why God entreats us to heed His word. *Since all* is out of, through, and for Him, *therefore*, our God and Father entreats us to heed His counsel: “*Seeing that* out of Him and through Him and for Him is all . . . I am entreating you, *then* . . . to present your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well pleasing to God, [which is] your *logical* divine service” (Rom.11:36-12:1).

Since it is evident, then, that we are the men of God’s

4. Martin Luther, *op.cit.*, pp.151-153; 157,158.

counsel (*cp* Isa.46:11), the *agents* of that of which He Himself is the first cause, a most important consideration follows from this fact. That consideration is that we should therefore be apprised of and instructed in the particulars of His will, “good and well pleasing and perfect” (Rom. 12:2b), even as come under the influence thereof accordingly *with a view to the realization of His intention in our lives*. “For *His* achievement are we, *being created* in Christ Jesus for good works, which *God makes ready beforehand* that we should be walking in them” (Eph.2:10).

Similarly, in Ephesians 3:20-4:1, Paul declares, “Now to Him Who is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, according to the power that is operating in us—to Him be the glory in the ecclesia— . . . I am entreating you, *then* . . . to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called.”

Since *God*, according to the *power* that is *operating* in us, is able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending, and since the glory in the ecclesia is ultimately to be ascribed not to the members of the ecclesia themselves but to their God, Paul declares, “I am entreating you, *then*.” Here, too, in Ephesians, even as previously, in Romans (*cp* Rom.9:20-23; 11:33-12:2), since we are the agents of the divine counsels, the clay being formed in the Potter’s hands in order to become His eventual, finished achievement, it is obviously the part of wisdom that we should be entreated in His faithful ways. This is so as surely as it is His goodness to us to nourish us in the word of His vast love, together with the word of His all-sufficient grace by which He has *chosen* to save us (*cf* Eph.2:5,7; Rom.9:11).

May these considerations serve to foster us in the word of God’s grace, that we may be learning to be relying on our God and Saviour (1 Tim.2:3; 4:10), while having no confidence in flesh (Phil.3:3).

J.R.C.

“EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS”

WE FIND in the first chapter of Colossians a plain statement of God’s grand consummation: “And [Christ] is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who is Sovereign, First-born 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), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens” (Col.1:18-20).

That the ecclesia is privileged to be presented as holy and flawless and unimpeachable in God’s sight (Col.1:23), and to serve in connection with this glorious achievement of peace, beneath so great a Head, is rich sustenance for the spirit which defies all human description. This unique revelation, which should constantly impart life and peace (Rom.8:5-8), is treasured by us all.

Yet what an awesome cost! However diverse might be the individual circumstance or personality—whatever nationality, gender, or vocation—this one deep and abiding truth is profoundly etched upon our hearts and our spirits: *The blood of His cross*.

Heed the overwhelming wonder of so great an obedience. He Who emptied Himself in form and likeness and fashion humbled Himself in obedience unto death, “even the death of the cross” (Phil.2:6-8). How did God receive this presentation of evident love and humility? We know that as Jesus stepped up from the Jordan river, His Father declared, “This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight” (Matt.3:17), but surely through the words of the

great apostle we may subsequently read the answer to that heartbreaking, orphan cry, "My God! My God! Why didst Thou forsake Me?" (Matt.27:46), when he wrote: "Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" (Phil.2:9-11).

HIS SACRIFICE DEMEANED

This glorious message of God's vast love is entrusted to the ecclesia and is published in millions upon millions of copies of the Scriptures. All around this world, which is beset with conflict, oppression, frustration and misery, this evangel is available. Here is the answer to all the problems which afflict humanity.

Why is this not welcomed with eager hearts? It is "because, knowing God, not as God do they glorify or thank Him, but vain were they made in their reasonings, and darkened is their unintelligent heart. Alleging themselves to be wise, they are made stupid, and they change the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of a corruptible human being and flying creatures and quadrupeds and reptiles." Accordingly, "they alter the truth of God into the lie . . . and offer divine service to the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for the eons! Amen!" (Rom.1:21-25).

Brother A. E. Knoch has written on this passage, "There is no surer road to degradation than to degrade the object of our worship."¹ But what should be declared concerning those who make no distinction between the declarations of Scriptures *prior* and those *subsequent* to the death and

¹ I. A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.230.

resurrection of God's beloved Son? By such means His sacrifice is demeaned, made of little consequence. For such the precious shed blood of Christ's cross changes nothing! This surely must rank as the most shameful offense.

GRACE WILL BE INCREASING

God's purpose, through the great sacrifice at Golgotha, is largely unknown today. Members of the ecclesia are denounced, even persecuted, when they request that God's righteousness, wisdom, power and love in the cross of Christ be honored. There is great opposition to the revelations of gratuity and grace in God's giving of His Son for sinners.

Yet all knowledge is relative. Equally, grace will be increasing where necessary, and, in God's own time, each will receive the knowledge of the truth and sing for joy. It is consoling to reflect that when the grievous error of restricting the exaltation of Christ is exposed to them, then the perpetrators will in their despair be lifted up through the grace of God's love. In his summation Paul declares, "Yet now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is manifest (being attested by the law and the prophets), yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith, for all, and on all who are believing, for there is no distinction, for all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God" (Rom.3:21-23).

AN UNASHAMED WORKER

In the meantime, let us be apprised of the real dangers of deception. "Satan himself is being transfigured into a messenger of light" (2 Cor.11:14). Can there be a more despicable deception than this, that many who are, as far as we are aware, sincere believers, should hold lightly the most significant and valuable Gift in the universe?

Inevitably, we will have occasion to fellowship and worship with others. From a variety of many well-meaning preachers we may listen to sermons based on the Scrip-

tures. But frequently, it is soon apparent from their words that there is not merely a lack of understanding, but some, perhaps like the ones to whom the apostle Peter referred, in connection with an apprehension of the Scripture, are twisting what Paul wrote, “as the rest of the scriptures also, to their own destruction” (2 Pet.3:14-16).

Revelation imparted foreknowledge to the apostle when he urged young Timothy, “Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth” (2 Tim.2:15). And further, he wrote, “yet from profane prattlings stand aloof, for they will be progressing to more irreverence, and their word will spread as gangrene” (2:16,17).

In speaking of the qualifications of a teacher, Brother Knoch reminded us that, “Most of the believers today need adjusting quite as much as those to whom Ephesians was addressed. Their doctrine and experience is limited to the teaching of our Lord while on earth, or his apostles in the book of Acts . . . How few go to Paul’s final presentations and modify even his previous ministries to accord with these transcendent truths! This is the task of the true teacher today. He must, first of all, be an adjuster.

“He must also be a dispenser. Much of the teaching we hear fails to emphasize the grace of God and the gracious character of His gifts. He is not running a bargain counter or a commercial enterprise, but a free dispensary. Very few believers even know what He has for them. It is the duty of the teacher to put them into possession of their riches in Christ Jesus.”²

“Furthermore, brethren, rejoice, adjust, be entreated, be mutually disposed, be at peace, and the God of peace will be with you” (2 Cor.13:11).

Donald Fielding

²*Unsearchable Riches*, vol.64, p.247,248.

THE SOUL'S YEARNING AND GOD'S HUMBLING

BEFORE proceeding with our studies in Ecclesiastes it may be well to point out a peculiar morphological feature of this author. The five books, though they are independent, are yet “dove-tailed” together by the way in which the final thought of each leads directly to the next. The effect is that each successive composition is of the nature of a digression from the composition standing before it, but a digression which is expanded into an independent piece of writing.

The Third Book (5:10-6:12) resumes and carries forward to completion the train of thought developed in Book I. There the Assembler was engaged in surveying the various departments of human activity; here he analyzes the spring of all activity under the sun—the soul’s desire, or yearning (6:2). The mode of treatment is both simple and methodic. The thoughts are drawn in orderly sequence: maxims (5:10-12); illustrations (5:13-6:6); reflections (6:7-12). The Book opens with a series of maxims setting forth the vanity of desire in its several phases. These are followed by a number of typical instances supporting the ideas expressed in the maxims. Then follow practical reflections suggested by what has been gleaned in the course of investigation.

Like the preceding, this Book is also followed by a string of “notes” responding to the questions of 6:12. These embody in pithy sayings the results which wise thinking has yielded (7:1-12).

In the First Book, where the author successively subjected to review the various phases of human activity, with the only result that each was found wanting, the sentiment was voiced that all labor, though bringing a sense of pleasure, fails to give genuine satisfaction. Now this line of thought is carried one degree further: What has been found to be true of outward activity is found to be equally true of the inward principle which prompted it. Ecclesiastes asserts that the soul is not satisfied with the attainment of the objects yearned for. This is the starting-point of the present book:

¹⁰ One who **loves^l silver is never^l satisfied** with his **silver**,
And one^a who loves^l iⁱ superabundance
never has enough income;
This^{mr} too is vanity.

Having thus stated the main thesis of the present discussion, the Assembler proceeds to establish it. He points out that attainment without satisfaction is a familiar experience. He then observes the added fact, attested by concrete examples in actual life, that attainment is frequently attended by hurt and followed by failure, while on the other hand genuine happiness is found to exist where the most coveted objects of human envy are absent—

¹¹ **When goods increase^e**
 those who **devour^l them multiply;**
And what profit are they **to their possessor save**
for the sight of his eyes?

¹² The **sleep of the servant^l is sweet,**
if **Whether he eats little⁺ or^{if} much⁻;**
+Yet the plenty which the **rich man⁺ has,**
it does not permit^l him to sleep.

These considerations have paved the way for introducing the two contrasts which occupy the place of prominence in this book: On the one hand is a picture of God-given pros-

perity and God-given satisfaction in it, and on the other hand is the opposite picture of the same God-given prosperity and the satisfaction withheld. These companion pictures emphasize the idea, which is unweariedly reiterated, that happiness is not within the power of man, but is the direct and special gift of God to the individual:

¹³ There **is a travailing evil I have seen under the sun:**
Riches are kept^l by their possessor to his peril;

¹⁴ **+Then these riches perish**
*i***through some experience of evil;**
+Then he begets a son, when there
is not anything left in his hand.

¹⁵ **Just as he came forth from his mother's belly,**
Naked shall he return, to go as^w he came;
+ He shall not take up anythingⁱ from his toil
which he may^{go} carry in his hand.

¹⁶ **+ This^{mr} too is a travailing evil;**
Exactly as^w he came, so shall he go,
And what advantage is it to him
*w***since he toiled for wind?**

¹⁷ **Moreover, all his days are in darkness⁷ and mourning[~],**
+With much⁻ vexation and illness^c and wrath.

¹⁸ **Behold, that which I^l have seen**
 that is **good, w^l that is fitting, is:**
To eat and to drink and to see good in all^{his} one's
toil^w that he is toiling under the sun,
 During the **number of days in his life**
*w***that the One, Elohim, has given to him,**
For that is his portion.

¹⁹ **Moreover, concerning any^h man to whom the One,**
Elohim, gives riches and substance,
And^c gives him power to eat^f of it and to obtain
his portion and to rejoice in his toil,
This good, it is a gift of Elohim.

²⁰ **For he shall not be much- mindful
of the days of his life,
For the One, Elohim, is keeping him humble
in the rejoicing of his heart.**

In 5:19 Ecclesiastes speaks of natural happiness as being God's gift to the individual. The thought is amplified in verse 20 by the assertion that natural happiness, like all things belonging to the eonian system, is alloyed with humbling (*cp* 1:13; 3:10).

That which is wrought under the sun, as also the times and seasons, has been designed by God for man's discipline and training. Parents spoil their children by giving free vent to their wishes; rulers corrupt manhood by lavish prodigality of favors to their supporters. But God's methods are adapted to man's present constitution, which is a strange admixture of good and evil. All His ways have in view the debasing effect of unstinted gratification. His dispensation of the good that gladdens the heart is tempered by the humbling which chastens the spirit. In all His methods is discernible a subtle combination, an exquisite balance of goodness and severity whereby spiritual aspirations are developed and heightened and baser instincts are curbed and subdued.

The vanity or transitoriness of the soul's yearning appears most fully in the light of death. "This too is a travailing evil; exactly as he came, so shall he go, and what advantage is it to him since he toiled for wind?" (Ecc.5:16). In concluding this composition Ecclesiastes dwells on this thought.

**6 There is an evil under the sun that I have seen,
And it lies great upon humanity:**

² **When a man to whom the One, Elohim,
gives riches and substance and glory,
And he has no lack to his soul
of all that it yearns for,**

**+Yet the One, Elohim, does not give
him power to eat of it
'Because a foreign man eats it,
This is a vanity, and it is a travailing evil.**

³ **If a man begets a hundred children
and lives for many years,
+So that the days of his years become a multitude,
+Yet his soul is not satisfied with good,
And also there is no tomb for him,
I say, A stillborn child is better off than he.**

⁴ **For it comes in vanity,
And in darkness it goes away,
And in darkness its name is covered over.**

⁵ **Moreover, it neither saw the sun nor knew anything;
Thus this had more rest than that man,**

⁶ **+Even supposing he lived twice a thousand years
and saw no good;
Are not all going to the same place?**

Only two points need to be noted here. He has been describing the spectacle of accumulated wealth with happiness withheld by God, and pronounced it the worst of all fates—an abortion is better than he. He passes on to practical reflections:

⁷ **All of a man's toil is for his mouth,
+Yet even then the soul is never filled.**

⁸ **For what advantage has a wise man
over the stupid one,
And what for the humble man who knows
how to walk in front of the living?**

The recognition of ability to enjoy the details of passing life as a God-given thing and the spectacle of the man to whom Elohim does not give the power to eat of his wealth (6:2) naturally lead on to the thought that God acts on fixed principles which the individual is powerless to alter.

- 9 **Better** the sight of the eyes
*f*than the *g*roving of the soul.
This *mr*too is vanity and a grazing on wind.
 10 **What** *w* has come to be has already
 been called by its name,
And *w*that *h*which *h*man is has been foreknown!
 + **No** *t* one *l*can *g* adjudicate *wi*against Him
Who is mightier *f*than he.

And since man is incapable of resisting his Maker, what is the use of following “words” (“theories” or “doctrines”) which pretend to further man’s welfare but in reality only multiply vanities?

- 11 **When** there are many words the vanity increases!
What advantage is that to *h*man?
 12 **For** *a*who knows *l* what is good for a *h*man in life
 During the number of days in his transitory life,
 Seeing +that He *ld*makes them like a shadow?
*w*For *a*who can *l*tell *g* a *h*man what shall *h*come
 after him under the sun?

Who can tell what is good for a human in this life, or who can tell what shall come afterwards? These questions are dealt with in the notes which fill the interval between this Book and the next.

NOTES

- 7 A good name is better *f*than the best attar,
And the day of one’s death *f*than the day of his
 birth.
 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning
*f*than to go to a house of feasting
In *w*that it is the terminus of every human;
 + **Thus** let the living *g*lay this *g*on his heart.
 3 **Better** is vexation *f*than mirth,
For *i*with a troubled countenance

- the heart may be made better.
 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning,
And the heart of the stupid in the house of rejoicing.
 5 **Better** to hear the rebuke of a wise man
*f*Than for one to hear *l* the song of the stupid.
 6 **For** as the sound of the briars under the pot,
So is the mirth of the stupid man;
 + **This** *mr*too is vanity.
 7 *t* Extortion makes a wise man *l*raving,
And a *g*bribe *l*destroys *h*the heart.
 8 The *af*end of a matter is better *f*than its beginning;
 A long-suffering spirit is better *f*than a haughty
 spirit.
 9 **Do not** be *l*rash to be vexed in your spirit,
For vexation *l*rests in the bosom of the stupid.
 10 **Do not** say, *w*Why *b*is it *w*that the former days
*b*were better *f*than these present times?
For it is not *f*in wisdom that you ask *on*about this.
 11 **Wisdom** is good with an allotment
And an advantage to those seeing the sun.
 12 **For** in the shadow of wisdom
 it is as in the shadow of silver,
And the advantage of knowledge is that
*w*wisdom *m*keeps *l*alive those possessing it.

This series of sayings (7:1-12) is suggested by the two questions which concluded Book III, and which relate to the present life and the hereafter. *Who knows what is good for a man in life . . . Who can tell a man what shall come after him under the sun?*

I understand these questions as the interposition of an imaginary objector, and the notes that follow as the rejoinder of the Assembler.

The keynote to these sayings is found in the recurring word “better,” which reveals both the point and purpose

of these sayings and the relation they sustain to the discussion standing before them.

To the roving soul (6:9) casting an envious eye on another's wealth Ecclesiastes says (in view of the instances considered): Since appearances are often misleading, it is not possible to decide that one's life is truly prosperous and happy until we know how it terminates. To the questions bearing on what is good in life and the hereafter the Assembler answers: (1) What is really good is not determined by personal preferences, but by the general effect of a thing upon humanity. (2) Man's future may, in a general way, be inferred with a certain degree of probability from the present. The thought developed in this string of sayings rests upon a series of "oppositions" arranged in two groups, which must be taken together, though the proverb of 7:7 separates them:

A good name, established at death and the consideration of death as the terminus of our lives exert a wholesome influence on the living (7:1,2).

Vexation and a troubled countenance and the seeking of self-improvement in the house of mourning work to improve the heart (7:3,4).

Rebuke from the wise is better than giddy mirth which is transitory (7:5,6).

The end of a matter, establishing the truth of a forecast, is better than the beginning where questions are raised as to the possible outcome (7:8).

Patience is better than a rash spirit which is a sign of stupidity (7:9).

It is not wisdom to judge the present, which is incomplete, by the former days, which afford a complete view by their entirety (7:10).

Both wisdom and silver defend against external attack, but wisdom also affects the life—the life of character (7:11,12).

V. Gelesnoff

GOD GIVES AND GOD WITHHOLDS

PROSPERITY WITH SATISFACTION is a rarity. But if it occurs even briefly in our lives it is the gift of God. The book of Ecclesiastes looks at human experiences with God in view, and throughout it remains consistent in its testimony that all that we experience is given to us by Elohim.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-7:12 considers a number of human situations including, specifically, prosperity with satisfaction and prosperity without satisfaction both of which are from God. But along with these considerations, the Assembler points to one experience that we all share alike, and that is our mortality and the certainty of death. In this also Ecclesiastes keeps God in view as the One Who gives what we receive.

This "high" view of Deity is unusual outside the Scriptures, and by itself it may tend to pessimism and bitterness, but within the context of God's Word as a whole, it is most edifying and uplifting. When God is seen not only as the wise and powerful Subjector and Placer but also as the God of expectation and goodness, His deity in giving and withholding is seen as full of purpose and glory.

Like the book of Job and much of the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes stands out from most other books of the Sacred Scriptures in that it does not deal in a special sense with the nation of Israel and God's distinct promises concerning that chosen people. What is said concerns humanity as a whole and its common, transitory experi-

ences of struggle, gain and loss. Yet it accords fully with all of God's Word in focusing attention on God.

ELOHIM IS GIVING

Hence in speaking of the days of life given to each of us, all filled with times of much vexation and toil as well as times of repast and good, the Assembler observes that these are given to us by that One, Who is Elohim (5:17,18). If some of us are given riches and substance, along with the power and occasion for rejoicing in them even for a short while, Elohim is the One Who gives them. Such good "is a gift of Elohim" (5:19).

ELOHIM IS NOT GIVING

On the other hand, for some who are given illness and toil and then granted riches and substance and glory, all given by Elohim, there is no strength and time and occasion for the enjoyment of the riches. This also is from Elohim Who does not give such a one the power or opportunity to eat of the fruit of his toil (6:2,3). Entirely apart from whether or not a pattern of fairness and needed discipline or deserved reward may be detected, this is a fact of human life, and more importantly *a fact of divine operation*.

God gives toil and vexation. He gives riches and substance. He gives joy and satisfaction. And He withholds that joy and satisfaction. Our days as human beings, whether Israelites or not, and our many experiences are all to be traced finally to God.

HE WHO IS MIGHTIER

In Ecclesiastes 6:3-6 the Assembler gives an example of human experience in life, a unique life of one individual which is not different in its ending and its vanity from the life of anyone else. God gives a certain individual many years and many children, but He also gives this man the

experience of never getting to enjoy the good he has and even being denied a tomb commemorating his memory. His life ends exactly the same way as that of a stillborn child who never saw the light of day.

At this point the whole problem that is greater than the transitoriness of life, that is, the problem of death, is brought before us once again in Ecclesiastes. The stillborn child "comes in vanity, and in darkness it goes away" (6:4). But the same fate awaits us all. "Are not all going to the same place?" (6:6).

That is tragic and sad and depressing. But it is true to the human situation. But what is hopeful and uplifting in all this is the truth that God has given the life and experience of both this man and the stillborn child. It is a great blessing to know that "no one can adjudicate against [God]" (Ecc.6:10). God is mightier than any human being, and this is our hope and the source of great satisfaction for us all.

WHO KNOWS WHAT IS GOOD?

It may seem that we have jumped too quickly from the Assembler's words of apparent pessimism concerning mankind to conclusions of optimism concerning God. Yet this is poetry, and it calls for interpretation based on what is suggested as much as on what is said. "Who knows what is good for a man in life during the number of days in his transitory life?" (Ecc.6:12). Only God, Who is in charge of our days, and Who "makes them like a shadow" to us, can know what is truly good for us in life and in the times that shall come after us. Only He can know. And it follows that since He *can* know He *does* know, and in truth He Who is making them like a shadow to us, is making them for good even though we cannot see that this is so.

But we who have heard the evangel of God's righteousness and love in the giving of His Son for sinners, the truth of a good purpose and consummation is no longer like a

shadow. For “we are aware”—it is clear to us “who are loving God” *that God is working all together for the good* (Rom.8:28). Where the Assembler could only hope with poetic suggestion we believe with explicit expectation.

We do not apologize for bringing the evangel presented in Romans into the shadowy longing for an evangel presented in Ecclesiastes. The Assembler records the facts of the human situation, and he points to Elohim as responsible and involved, and he expresses the questions that arise from these facts. Now we who believe find that what we are believing is indeed the answer to the Assembler's questions. “For even as in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified” (1 Cor.15:22). D.H.H.

THE FIRSTFRUIT OF THOSE REPOSING

We are continually being reminded, by the death of a fellow believer, of the importance of Christ's resurrection. Paul wrote with exultation: “Christ has been roused from among the dead, the Firstfruit of those who are reposing” (1 Cor.15:20). This is our consolation and expectation in the recent loss of two diligent teachers of the Word. **Pastor R. Clay Kent** of Palm Harbor, Florida, died on August 12 after many years of boldly and eagerly heralding the message of grace and reconciliation that is in Christ Jesus. Then on August 29, **Pastor Leonard A. Bowerman** of Lansing, Michigan, who always labored with good humor and zeal, was put to repose, anticipating that happy expectation when we will all be always together with our Lord. They will be greatly missed by their families and friends and the many who profited from their toil and enthusiasm. Since they both were “believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also” for them both, who are now reposing, “will God, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him” (1 Thess.4:14).

Also on September 11 our Brother **Arthur Cronk** of Norwalk, Ohio, was put to repose at the age of 84. A great encouragement to our work for many years, we are thanking God for the way in which Art's staunch faith is still being echoed in the life of his son, Charlie, and other family members and friends. Jeff Priddy spoke of these things at the funeral on September 14. Being justified in the grace of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, “we may be becoming enjoyers, in expectation, of the allotment of life eonian” (Titus 3:7).