

Contents:

- 241 Editorial
- 243 God All in All
- 251 O Foolish Galatians!
- 263 The Voice of One Imploring
- 271 Dais of Christ
- 277 How Long?
- 286 The Living Redeemer

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**UNSEARCHABLE RICHES FOR NOVEMBER 1996  
BEING THE SIXTH NUMBER OF VOLUME EIGHTY-SEVEN**

**EDITORIAL**

WITH THANKSGIVING we complete another volume of *Unsearchable Riches*, in which we have endeavored to witness to the evangel of the grace of Christ and the glories of His God and Father. No doubt our readers will agree with us that no experience in this life gives strength, satisfaction and encouragement like spending time in meditating on God's Word and sharing the good news with others, whether by speaking or writing, whether privately in conversation or letter, or publicly in gatherings or publications such as this.

This is because God's spirit invigorates us through His tidings (see Brother Coram's comments on pages 257-262). Especially the evangel revealed to Paul and preserved for us in his epistles works continually in those who are believing, bearing the fruit of the spirit in their lives (Gal.5:22,23). But all of God's Word from Genesis to Job to Matthew to Revelation is beneficial for equipping us for good acts (2 Tim.3:16,17).

To be sure, as Brother A. E. Knoch testifies (see pages 243-250), there is a conflict between human thinking and God's declarations. We feel that God could not really have created evil, but God says He does (Isa.45:7). We are fearful that the evangel of grace will break down restraints on human wickedness, but God tells us it is His power for salvation (Rom.1:16). We reason that God's operations of judgment and condemnation are ends in themselves, but God speaks of His delight to bring all into reconciliation through the blood of Christ's cross (Eph.1:10; Col.1:20).

What a joy and genuine source of spiritual invigoration there is in discarding the idea of an everlasting hell and accepting the truth that "God has a goal. He intends to become All in all" (p.246).

This, in turn helps us to distinguish between the process and the goal (p.246). So many apparent contradictions in Scripture and controversies concerning fundamental issues are resolved by this principle, as illustrated in our series on Galatians and Job and Matthew.

"God is our all, in things great and small" (p.250). The great fact of human stubbornness, and all the myriad, little expressions of this stubbornness in individual lives, was the background that led Paul to exclaim with praise that all is out of God and through Him and for Him (Rom. 11:36). This is what Job also was struggling to see in the midst of his massive affliction and loss. Human wisdom, as voiced by Job's associates, which would distance God from such evils (except as expressions of His judgments) only increases despair (see pages 277-287).

The full realization of God as our all is still ahead. But in His grace there is movement toward this goal in our experience as believers. Regarding our faith and walk in faith, Brother Fielding writes, "There is a pattern here that is shared by us all. There is a progression" (p.271). Although such progress is often uneven, and in some instances seemingly truncated altogether, yet God is faithful, and the more we focus on Him as the living God, out of Whom all is, the more our present way will partake of the spirit of the goal.

As we grow in the realization of God we grow out of discouragement and despair. And as we hold fast to the evangel of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we lose our grip on anxiety and fear. "Now to our God and Father be glory for the eons of the eons! Amen!" (Col.4:20).

D.H.H.

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*Reliance on the Living God*

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### GOD ALL IN ALL

DO YOU BELIEVE ALL of God's Word? When I first came to know God I went to the meetings of the "Plymouth Brethren" and learned many a precious truth from them which, at that time, was almost unknown in the nominal churches. The Lord's coming, the need of "rightly dividing," a little as to the body of Christ, the difference between the church and the kingdom—these all found a place in my heart and mind at the very beginning of my life of faith. But I also received warnings against "non-eternity," and "soul-sleep," and "universalism," etc., to which I gave due heed.

At that early date my life course was determined by the acquisition of Wigram's Concordances. Next to the Scriptures, they have been of the greatest value in my spiritual development.

These give a list of each word in Greek or Hebrew and all of its occurrences in English. This has been my lexicon, for the usage of a word is the only safe index of its meaning. These also showed how discordant our English translation is and led me to go back to the original.

The Brethren claimed to be unsectarian, but when I persisted in having fellowship with all of good conduct in the body of Christ they put me out, though this was the original basis on which their movement was founded. This proved a great blessing, for I was now free to believe what is in God's Word apart from all religious restraint.

I had two objects before me: to believe *all* of God's Word, and to suffer the persecution which must necessarily follow. I was conscious that there were quite a few

texts in the Word which made me uncomfortable. I knew the so-called “explanations,” but they appeared to be only a form of unbelief.

The salvation of all troubled me from the very first. The Brethren changed God *wills* all men to be saved, to God *wishes*, but my concordance showed me that it was the Brethren who wished it so, not God. He works all things according to the counsel of His will. They also altered “the *Saviour* of all” to “the Preserver of all.” Since it was necessary for them to corrupt God’s Word on this theme it was clear that they did not have the truth. Romans five and First Corinthians fifteen and Colossians one contained statements which I could not believe because they contradicted many other passages dealing with the fate of unbelievers. It was only after the truth as to the eonian times was opened up to me that I was able to exult in their glorious unfoldings.

I now found myself able to accept and approve of those statements in the Bible which stumble so many saints, and cause so much unbelief, which may be concentrated in the one case of Pharaoh. God hardened his heart, and will judge him for doing that which he was forced to do. Is this right?

Not only that, but God was greatly glorified by Pharaoh’s opposition. How then can He judge him? A believer in eternal torment finds it impossible to charge God with such an atrocity, and refuses to believe it, or “explains” it away. But once we see God’s ultimate and that judgment, in God’s Word, sets matters right, all is clear and acceptable. God’s glory demands expression. Pharaoh, earth’s highest, is the best means. He is too soft, so he must be hardened. Eventually, at the consummation, he will be reconciled. But that is not possible until he has realized the enormity of his sins, and suffered their just penalty, set by God Who *is just*, not vindictive.

But even then I was not satisfied. There were still passages in God’s Word which did not receive my hearty acquiescence. I had a horror of implicating God in sin, so how could I echo the apostle’s words “all is out of Him” (Rom. 11:36)? *All* out of Him—the evil, the misery, the opposition to His will? Yet the passage itself insists that He locks up all in stubbornness (Rom.11:32). Other passages, such as the sixth of Isaiah, boldly tell us that He blinds men’s eyes so that they cannot see. Pharaoh’s is no isolated case. It is very evident that God uses these things in order that His glory may be manifested. Is it then God’s will that men should sin? That cannot be. What is sin?

Once I found out that sin is failure, I saw that I had been making God the greatest of all sinners, so long as I believed that He could not save all, or that He had not been able to keep sin out of the universe, or that it was contrary to His purpose. Failure is sin, and if we imagine that God has failed in any particular we make Him the Sinner of sinners. God will not fail, and has not failed.

The first thought which came to me then was, “shall we, then, do evil that good may come?” Never! But immediately I was reminded that this is the very charge that was hurled at Paul! Could there be any better proof that I was on the right track? *God* does evil that good may come, for He is wise and powerful and loving. But men are foolish and weak and hateful, so cannot use evil, except in the most limited degree. A father may be trusted to put his child’s finger near enough to the hot stove so as to teach it to fear the fire, for he loves the child. Otherwise it is a most dangerous and erroneous doctrine. But God is not a man. That is the trouble with theology. It is always deifying man and humanizing God.

So it was that I arrived at my goal: to believe all of God’s Word and to suffer persecution like Paul. He was falsely charged with teaching men to do evil (Rom.3:5-8), and he

was reproached for saying that God is the Saviour of all mankind (1 Tim.4:10).

But, above all, I now have a *real God*, Whom I can worship and adore without the least reservation. He harms, but He heals, and both together, the harming as well as the healing, is a blessing to His creatures as well as a glory to Himself.

It is our object to lead our readers to this same goal, where they can accept *all* of God's words and give Him *all* the adoration of their hearts.



#### THE PROCESS AND THE GOAL

**GOD HAS A GOAL.** He intends to become All in all His creatures (1 Cor.15:28). He will accomplish this by way of reconciling all His enemies by the blood of Christ's cross, by justifying, vivifying, and saving all mankind at the consummation (Col.1:20; Rom.5:18; 1 Cor.15:22; 1 Tim.2:4; 4:10). But before this there is a long and painful preparatory process, a weary way which leads His creatures to this consummation, much of which seems as dark and distressing as the goal is bright and filled with blessing.

Almost all of us are short-sighted. We see a part of the way but we do not see the end. We confuse the going with the goal. Our Bible translations are partly to blame, for they fail to clearly mark the fleeting nature of the process, as it is in the original languages. And if an honest attempt is made to carry this across in a concordant version, it clashes with our conventions and our hard hearts. God grant that we may faithfully witness, in our renderings, when God reveals an absolute fact concerning God and His *purpose*, and when it is only a temporary *process*, for this He has clearly indicated in the ancient manuscripts.

Judgment is God's strange work. He uses it on the way.

Men make it the end. No matter how an unbeliever is dealt with, whether he dies as a result of sin, or by the direct intervention of God, whether he be cast into outer darkness or into Gehenna, *this is not his end*. All who do not belong to Christ will be roused from the dead and judged before the great white throne. There they are not forgiven, or saved, but judged. *But this is not their end*. All these will be cast into the lake of fire, to suffer the second death. *Even this is not their end*. God does not reach His goal in any of His disciplinary measures. These only prepare His creatures for it. Let us not confuse the going with the goal.

Very little is said to us about God's goal until Paul completes the orbit of God's Word with his later revelations. Hints there have always been by which hearts in tune with God have been filled with high hopes. But it is not until the meridian sun of God's grace has come from behind the clouds of sin and law, to reveal the deepest recesses of God's immanent love to the most undeserving of the race, it is not until the truth for the present was made known that God tore aside the veil of the future completely, and gave us an unclouded view of His ultimate. Once we revel in this we will never go back to previous revelation on this theme, for like the curtain of the tabernacle, it seems to hide, rather than reveal the full blaze of the Shekinah glory.

The usual way is to view the goal in the darkness of the way. We go back to passages which deal with judgments and allow them to throw their dark shadows across the consummation. We should *believe* that *God* will *justify all* mankind (Rom.5:18), and view the previous judgments in the light of this final achievement. We bring up passages which tell of death, to darken God's declaration that it will be abolished. We should *believe* that *God* will make death inoperative at the *last*, and view the previous passages in this glorious light. We turn to tests which prove that unbelievers will be lost or destroyed, and, with these

passages, dim the great declaration that God wills the salvation of all. We should illumine them with the later and higher revelation. We find God's enemies in the fiery lake at what seems to be the close of revelation, and misuse this fact to deny God's declaration that all will be reconciled (Col.1:20). We should not take one to destroy the other, but believe *both*, for reconciliation *follows* estrangement, and it alone accords with God's final goal.

How perverse and blind have we often been! When God says *all*, we have said *some*. When God speaks of a very small fraction of mankind, such as the living nations who stand before Christ to be judged according to their treatment of Israel (*cf* Matt.25:31-46)—a mere handful as compared with all mankind—then we make their sentence hopeless and extend it to *all*! Faith has almost fled from the earth. What calls itself faith is mostly a masquerade, for it refuses God's Word for the traditions of men, yet insists that it is genuine.

Let us allow the light of the latest revelation to illumine the earlier, partial unfolding, and let us not use the earlier to eclipse the latest, the highest, and the only complete unveiling of God's mind and heart.

Why should we be Jonahs, sitting under our withered gourd, furious because God does not fulfill the word which we have proclaimed. What about the truthfulness of God's Word? Must it not be upheld? Would it not make God a liar if He repented and did not overturn Nineveh in forty days? The idea that God has a heart as well as a mouth, and had compassion on the creatures He has made was heresy in Jonah's eyes. Are we not far worse than Jonah? He actually had to take back God's express declaration. We need only retract our own false inferences from it, dictated by the heart altogether out of harmony with His loving goal, which our dim eyes have failed to discern, even though it is written in letters of gold across the horizon of the far off

future, and is clearly visible to every heart which has been humbled by His grace, and which beats in unison with His love. God grant that we are no Jonahs!



#### GOD ALL IN US

Most delightful is it to contemplate that distant day when God will be All in *all*. Because of the unbelief of Christendom we are prone to emphasize the second *all*, and rightly insist that it admits of no exceptions. *Every* creature of His hand will then be close to His heart. Yet we should not confine our contemplations to the number alone, but also maintain the full meaning of the first *All*. God will not occupy a small fraction of our lives, nor even half or three-fourths. He will be *everything* to us. There will be nothing in our experience that will not be divine. Every occurrence, each incident, large or small, important or trivial, will come to us consciously as a gratuity given by God, and it will bring a constant response of adoring worship.

#### GOD SOMETHING IN ALL

Perhaps it would not be too much to say that God is *something* in everyone in this life. Even the unbeliever and the atheist, especially in their earlier years, have at least a tinge of God-consciousness, especially when overwhelmed with sudden terror or dismay. But it is not until He reveals Himself to His chosen, that they begin to *realize* the part He plays in their lives, and that He becomes the focus of their consciousness. At first this may be very weak, but, as they become mature, He takes a larger and larger place in their experience. The heathen have idols made by human hands. Let us beware lest we also worship a deity who is not and will not be our all, made by human heads.

## GOD ALL IN SALVATION

In these days the standard question which is pressed upon the unbeliever is, "What must I *do* to be saved?" This leaves the impression that the sinner must have a hand in his salvation. He must repent, or reform, or join the church. Even Paul's reply to the Philippian warden, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved . . ." (Acts 16:31) is distorted, as though it were a meritorious deed, when, in fact, it is of *faith* that it may accord with *grace*, not with works (Rom.4:16). And the faith is that of God's chosen (Titus 1:1). Salvation is all of God. It begins with His choice before the disruption (Eph.1:4), which eventuates in His call and justification and glorification (Rom.8:30). Nothing is left to us. He alone gave His Son, the sacrifice that saves. May we add nothing to it!

## GOD ALL IN LIFE

But the *believer* need not wait until that day. As he matures he will gradually realize that God is All to him now. At first he seeks to inject himself and his will, and the unknown god of chance into the affairs of life. Then he begins to see that God is in all the great crises, the important decisions. But finally he wakes to the fact that everything, no matter what its size or duration, is under God's control. All space and that which fills it is subject to the Great Disposer. All time and every event that occurs in it is planned and put in its appearance when God wills. God is our all, in things great and small! So we anticipate the glorious goal to which He is guiding His universe. May this be the precious portion of all who have partaken of His peace!

A. E. Knoch

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The preceding studies are adapted from three editorials appearing in *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.24, pp.65-69; vol.26, pp.131-134; and vol.42, pp.225,226.

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*Studies in Galatians*


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## O FOOLISH GALATIANS!

(Galatians 3:1-9)

*O foolish Galatians!* (3:1a)

It is only because of the extremity of the Galatians' error in their repudiation of the grace of God (*cf* 2:21), that the apostle is led to speak thus, explicitly declaring unto the Galatians that in respect of their repudiation of divine grace they are *foolish* indeed.

By his explicit characterization of the Galatians as "foolish," Paul was prepared to risk initial offense for the sake of eventual good; the eventual good that would come whenever *the Lord Himself* (*cp* 5:10a; Rom.14:4c), through these very words of Paul's, would bring the Galatians to a realization of the truth.

It has been the part of inspiration as well for Paul to speak thus, in consideration of the needs of every believer, down the centuries, whom God would enlighten in the truth of the evangel. Often, that we might truly acquire wisdom, it is needful for us to know not only that of which it consists, but that of which it does *not* consist.

It is not that Paul's appraisal of the Galatians as "foolish" was inaccurate; nor can we charge him with having overstated the case. It is only that, for so long as one *remains* foolish, he cannot be expected to respond favorably to any true appraisal of his condition.

It is to be regretted that in everyday speech the word "foolish" is usually used connotatively, in a disparaging or demeaning sense. It is often a term of belittlement or ridicule. Indeed, it is in a consideration of this common usage

of “foolish,” together with an awareness that we do well not to demean or ridicule others, that we hesitate to speak at all of others as being foolish.

The primary definition of “fool,” however, is “One who is *deficient* in judgment, sense, or understanding”; likewise, a “foolish” thought or deed, is one “Having or resulting from poor judgment; unwise.”<sup>1</sup> This accords with the Greek term for “foolish,” *anoêton*, the elements of which signify “UN-MINDED” (i.e., “thoughtless,” in the sense of deficiency of proper thought). Any secondary or tertiary definitions of foolish such as “ridiculous” or “gullible,” not to mention connotations of derision, denigration, or scorn, are not the essential meaning of either “fool” or “foolish.”

It is true that we do well to minimize both our declarations and thoughts in consideration of such ideas as those which these lesser definitions of “foolish,” and especially their connotations, call to mind. But it is also true that we do well to note, whether in ourselves or others, that which constitutes deficiency in judgment, sense, or understanding, especially where the measure of that deficiency is extensive.

All such deficiency is “foolishness”; it is a deficiency of *wisdom*, which is the highest and best application of knowledge. Since it is impossible to know what is wise apart from a knowledge as well of that which precludes wisdom, it is vital that we be mindful not only of that which is wise, but also of that which is foolish. Those who are foolish, are those who engage in that which is foolish; in that which is marked by deficiency in judgment, sense, or understanding. To imagine that it is the *sine qua non*<sup>2</sup> of love to avoid appraising others as foolish even where this is the case, is itself a foolish notion.

1. AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY, second college edition, p.274 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

2. i.e., indispensable condition or element; Latin: “without which not.”

It is rather that, as a rule, it is the *sine qua non* of *prudence* not to *inform* a fool of his foolishness. This is because, “The foolish despise wisdom and discipline” (Prov.1:7); and, because “The way of a fool seems upright in his own eyes” (Prov.12:15). “Wisdom is too high for the fool” (Prov.24:7). Indeed, “Though you bray the fool in a mortar, in the midst of the grist with a pestle, his folly shall not go away from him” (Prov.27:22). Accordingly, then, “Let a bereaved bear encounter a man, but certainly not a stupid [i.e., undiscerning] person in his folly” (Prov.17:12).

#### “JUSTIFIED IN HIS BLOOD”

*Who bewitches you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was graphically crucified?*<sup>?</sup> (3:1b)

“Who” is the indefinite pronoun, *tis*, signifying ANY. When possible, the Concordant Version seeks to preserve its indefiniteness by rendering it **any**, **some**, or **certain**. Idiomatically, however, it must often be rendered **who**, **whose**, **which**, **what**, **why**, or with negatives, **one**. Paul’s point, then, was not to inquire specifically as to just “who” it was who had bewitched them; nor does he seek to elicit just “what” particular means any such ones had used unto this end. His point is rather—since it was evident that they *had* become “bewitched”—that *something* must have bewitched them. This sense, stated as a rhetorical question, may be expressed thus: “[In light of your profound withdrawal from the faith,] is there not “*something* that *bewitches* you—before whose eyes Jesus Christ was graphically crucified?”

“Graphically” is an idiomatic variant of *prographō* (BEFORE-WRITE), which literally means, “write before” (e.g., Eph.3:3). Paul had “written before” the mind’s eye of every one of the Galatians that Christ had died for their sakes, and that—in the bloody death of His crucifixion—they were now justified (*cp* Rom.5:8,9). It was ever the burden of Paul’s

ministry to declaim the word recorded in Romans 8:32, which is: “*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?”

This is the truth which Paul vividly outlined and clearly set forth concerning “Christ crucified,” graphically presenting it before the eyes of the Galatians. It is not at all that he denied the horror of the cross or sought to minimize it, but that he did not specifically rehearse the details of its terror. Much less did he employ any account of our Lord's sufferings merely to evoke the maudlin, thus stirring the emotions while leaving the intellect quiescent, specifically in the knowledge of the evangel itself.

“The phrase ‘openly set forth’ [ASV; ‘graphically,’ CV] is regarded by some as proof of the oratorical ability of the apostle. He possessed—so we are told—an eloquence which had at its disposal the whole armory of rhetoric, and he captured an audience by drawing vivid, impressively realistic pictures of the scenes attending the betrayal and death of our Lord.

“Modern preachers, nursed in the artificial atmosphere of academic theories, imagine that eloquence, imagination, descriptive ability, are the most effective weapons of a herald of the cross, and that, equipped with these, the truth is sure to ride on prosperously from conquest to conquest.

“Imbued with the idea, they strive to fascinate an audience with animated word pictures of the scenes enacted in the garden of Gethsemane, the judgment hall of Pilate, and the hill Golgotha. The audience is spellbound and visibly moved. Moist eyes are in evidence everywhere. A solemn hush pervades the room.

“At the conclusion of the service commendatory remarks flow in profusion. The sermon is unanimously pronounced ‘wonderful.’ The congregation disbands and everybody goes home. By the time the afternoon repast is over, popular

mood turns to a lighter vein. The effect of the sermon has worn off. Its elegant style and rhetorical flourishes have volatilized. Many begin to feel that a visit to the ‘movies’ would fittingly complement the sermon.

“Why has such a seemingly impressive oration failed to produce a lasting impression? How did it come to pass that it so readily resolved itself into thin air? Just because the preacher's preoccupation with the circumstantial events of our Lord's death prevented his understanding its deep purpose and vital import. In divorcing the external events of our Lord's passion from the underlying purpose, his preaching became sentimental, producing emotional ebulliciencies, ecstatic raptures, anomalous and spectacular experiences, outbursts of gush, while the intellect remained inactive and the conscience dormant.

“The apostle disdained the artifices which form the stock in trade of professional evangelists and preachers (*cp* 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:10). He never wasted a second in reciting the chain of circumstantial events which brought about the death of God's Son. He pushed his way above and beyond these. The purpose of God for the universe converging in the cross of Christ was the one object engaging his mind. The bearing of the cross on the tremendous questions of law, sin, life—these were the initial truths which he strove to impart to his hearers—these were the truths which he set forth lucidly and convincingly, which he drove home to the mind by the irresistible power of his logic and burned into the heart by the consuming passion of his love.

“So powerfully were these truths presented by the apostle and so profoundly did they grip the Galatians, that they yielded an immediate harvest of precious fruit. So firmly were they convinced of the truth of the evangel that their faith weathered the storm of persecution. They suffered ‘many things’ for truth's sake. That they should now remove to a different evangel, and meander in bypaths of

legalism, after so splendid a record, was a strange enigma, a positive 'marvel,' which the apostle could only attribute to 'bewitchment.'"<sup>3</sup>

Though in Galatians 3:1, "bewitches" is a figure of speech, it is quite an apt metaphor. When believers withdraw from the faith, their situation is not unlike one in which, in certain religions of the world, a "witch" "casts a spell" upon its victim, thus rendering its captive subject to its own wicked behests and sinister designs.

Similarly, the situation that literally obtains in cases in which even believer's themselves begin to withdraw from the faith, is one in which they now "give heed to deceiving spirits and the teachings of demons, in the hypocrisy of false expressions, their own conscience having been cauterized" (1 Tim.4:1,2).

It is evident that these deceiving spirits themselves are but Satan's own agents. This is because wherever believers are found "antagonizing" (INSTEAD-THRU-PLACING) the words of the apostle Paul, we are to account for this, not by a mere acknowledgement of the infirmity of the flesh, but by recognizing that, at a deeper level, what has occurred is that such ones have fallen into "the trap of the Adversary, having been caught alive by him for that one's will" (2 Tim.2:25,26).

Paul was mindful that, in our response to such fearful encounters, we must, first of all, "*not* be fighting"; then, we must rather, "be gentle toward all, apt to teach, bearing with evil, with meekness training those who are antagonizing, *seeing whether God* may be giving them repentance to come to a realization of the truth (and [whether] they will [then] be *sobering up* out of the trap of the Adversary, [hitherto] having been caught alive by him for that one's will)" (2 Tim.2:24-26).

3. Vladimir Gelesnoff, PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, pp.62,63.

#### THE SPIRIT'S OWN TESTIMONY

*This only I want to learn from you: Did you get the spirit by works of law or by hearing of faith? So foolish are you? Undertaking in spirit, are you now being completed in flesh? So much did you suffer feignedly? Since, surely, it also is feignedly!* (3:2-4)

Paul astutely reduces the dispute between himself and the Galatians to a single issue. The strength of his protest lies in its appeal to the Galatians' own experience, which they cannot well deny. Yet the success of his argument assumes that they are honest enough to acknowledge the facts, being sensible enough as well to apply them logically.

The Galatians could not honestly deny that they got the spirit through the glad-tidings of faith, *not* through works of law. Accordingly, they got the spirit of sonship, in which they cried, "Abba, Father!" the spirit itself testifying together with their spirit that they were children of God (*cp* Rom.8:15,16; Gal.4:6).

The sense of the phrase "So foolish are you?" literally, is "*Thus* foolish are you?" That is, rhetorically, Paul asks the Galatians, "Are you foolish in the following way?" Namely, he asks them, Are you foolish in such a way so as to be supposing that while, as you yourselves must acknowledge, you have *undertaken* in *spirit*, you must now, nevertheless, go on and become *completed* in *flesh*?

Having assured them that any such notion is a foolish notion, in a similar vein, Paul then continues on, inquiring, "*So much* did you suffer *feignedly*? Since, surely, it also is feignedly!" That is, the Galatians were as aware that they had genuinely obtained the spirit by the tidings of faith, as they were likewise aware that their sufferings for the name of Christ were not a sham but were altogether real. They could not honestly deny the former fact any more than the latter, though to justify their recent apostasy, they would be constrained to deny both of these propositions.

Paul has the Galatians on the horns of a dilemma. Turn which way they will, they simply cannot (1) remain honest, and (2) continue to acknowledge Paul's authority as an apostle, while at the same time justifying their own departure from his teaching.

When the truth is reduced to a single issue expressed in its simplest form, its acceptance is still dependent upon the integrity and sensibility of those to whom it is presented. Those who will not face the simplest of facts and respond appropriately thereunto, show that, at bottom, their difficulty is not so much intellectual but moral; not so much ignorance as stubbornness. To all that precludes their position, they may indeed interminably continue to respond by the words, "Yes, but." But what they may no longer do for even an hour, subsequent to such a crisis, is to continue to respond thus out of a clean heart governed by a sound mind.

#### SOURCED IN TRUTH AND GRACE

Paul is willing to rest his case on this one item of evidence. Verse two (along with its repetition and amplification in verses 5 and 6) is the linchpin of the apostle's argument, the Galatians' own experience of having received the spirit. He deems it irrefutable that they got the spirit not *ex ergōn nomou* ("out of acts of law"), but *ex akoēs pisteōs* ("out of hearing [i.e., tidings] of belief [i.e., faith]").

By the phrases "by works of law" and "by the [tidings] of faith," we are not to understand two alternative *methods* of common principle, but two proposed *sources* of mutually-exclusive, antithetical principle. One is false, the other true, in reference to being that out of which the spirit is obtained.

Paul does not present two alternative means by which man, ultimately by his own efforts, secures his acceptance before God; the one works, the other faith. It is not that one human means of gaining the divine acceptance is now

supplanted by another human means of doing the same thing. Even if faith is reduced to acquiescence, assent, or even non-resistance, thus understood, as a human means of gaining God's acceptance, it retains a meritorious nature evoking reciprocity, to which Righteousness itself must grant its just due. Such a schema merely replaces one system of merit with another. "It simply substitutes the mental act of having faith for the bodily one of being circumcised."<sup>4</sup>

"Suppose one man to rely on his own faith and another to rely on his own works; then the faith of the one and the works of the other are equally of the same filthy rags."<sup>5</sup> This is the whole point: if we are relying on *anything* of ourselves, whether our works *or* our faith, we have repudiated grace and are fundamentally mistaken in our understanding of Paul's evangel.

It is not that the Galatians got the spirit on the basis of a believing *act* of hearing, even if most suppose this to be so. Such reasoning is based upon the assumption that since "works of law" describes one type of human action, "hearing of faith" must describe some alternative type of human action. This interpretation attributes to Paul the thought: "You got the spirit not because you did X but because you did Y." Such an understanding, however, is impossible, not because it is simplistic and naïve (though it is certainly both of these), but because it accords with fleshly glory and human pride, while failing to accord with either monotheism or divine grace.

*Akoē* literally means "hearing" (e.g., Mark 7:35). Sometimes, however, where it was noted that it was used metonymically of "that which is heard" (e.g., Matt.24:6; Rom.

4. G. M. Taylor, cit. in THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, by Richard B. Hays, p.140 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983); cit. "The Function of *Pistis Christou* ['Faith of Christ'] in Galatians," *JBL* 85 (1966) p.75.  
5. William Law, op. cit., p.139; cit. A. G. Hebert, "'Faithfulness' and 'Faith,'" *Theology* 58 (1955) p.379.

10:17), the Concordant Version renders it “tidings,” in reference to the message itself which is *associated* with the “hearing” thereof. This clearly appears to be the sense as well in Galatians 3, verses 2 and 5, in the phrase, *ex akoês pisteôs*, which can be better rendered in accord with the context as “tidings of faith,” instead of “hearing of faith.”

This is so, for, in the nature of the case, the Galatians got the spirit *out of the tidings* (or “message”) of faith, which they subsequently heard and believed. The glad-tidings of Christ which are “of faith” (i.e., which pertain or relate to faith), do so in that they constitute the object of faith; that is, that which is believed, based upon that which is heard.

As “Isaiah is saying, ‘Lord, who believes our *tidings*?’” (Rom.10:16; cit. Isa.53:1). Even so, to those who do believe, according as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those bringing an *evangel* of good!” (Rom.10:15; cit. Isa. 52:7). “Consequently, faith is out of *tidings*, yet the *tidings* through a declaration of Christ” (Rom.10:17).

It was not, however, “by,” in a transactional sense, the Galatians’ *acceptance of tidings of faith*, that they “qualified for,” or “met the requirements of,” getting the spirit. By their acceptance of the evangel, the Galatians gained a beginning in the knowledge of God, according as it is in Christ Jesus. They did not thereby gain a right to any endowment of the spirit of God.

Instead of gaining a right to spiritual blessing by an acceptance of spiritual truth, it is rather that *out of the power inherent in the message of the glad-tidings of Christ* (the “tidings of faith”), God’s *chosen ones graciously* obtain the spirit and believe. This occurs in the day when it delights God to unveil His Son in them, according to the pattern which Christ Himself established in the salvation of Saul of Tarsus, who is also Paul, the apostle of the nations (*cp Gal.1:15,16; 1 Tim.1:12-16; 2 Tim.2:10*).

*He, then, Who is supplying you with the spirit, and oper-*

*ating works of power among you—did you get the spirit by works of law or by the hearing of faith . . . ?* (3:5)

In declaring, “He, then, Who is supplying you with the spirit, and operating works of power among you—” Paul does not complete his thought. Yet he then goes on to repeat the preceding question once again: “Did you get the spirit by works of law or by the hearing of faith . . . ?” Since the only true answer to this question is that they got the spirit by the hearing (i.e., tidings) of faith, Paul then rejoins, “He, *then*, Who is supplying you with the spirit, and operating works of power among you—”

It is as if Paul wishes for the Galatians themselves to be honest enough and perceptive enough to gladly supply the self-evident omission, which is, “. . . will be completing what He has undertaken.” Thus the full sense becomes: “He, then, Who is supplying you with the spirit, and operating works of power among you, [will be completing what He has undertaken]” (*cp Phil.1:6*).

*. . . according as Abraham believes God, and it is reckoned to him for righteousness? Know, consequently, that those of faith, these are sons of Abraham. Now the scripture, perceiving before that God is justifying the nations by faith, brings before an evangel to Abraham, that In you shall all the nations be blessed. So that those of faith are being blessed together with believing Abraham.* (3:6-9)

There is a foundational agreement in kind between Abraham’s calling and faith and our own calling and faith. Similarly, since the most just thing that any man can do is to believe God’s own word, when we ourselves also, even as Abraham, believe the word of His promise, our so doing is reckoned to us “for [i.e., “into”] righteousness” (Rom.4: 22-24). God appraises our believing as being among (and so, thus He accounts it “into”) that class of deeds which He deems righteous. Even though faith extends no “rights” to its possessors, and is itself a gracious gift, it is nonethe-

less considered righteous by God Himself, besides being full of practical value for ourselves.

We are to know, “consequently, that those of faith, *these* are sons of Abraham” (3:7). Faith does not make God’s promise true; instead, it finds it true. Faith’s acceptance of the divine promise does not entitle its bearer to the promise’s blessing; rather, it *convicts* its possessor of the *truth* of the promise’s blessing. Faith has no value whatsoever as “legal tender.” It simply acknowledges that which was already true prior to and wholly apart from its subsequent acceptance thereof. It is not that we will obtain the blessing, “*if* we will believe it true.” It is instead, that we *will* be blessed; *and*, we *believe* that this is true.

Since the scripture, “perceiving before” that God is justifying the nations by faith, it therefore, prototypically, “brings before” an evangel to Abraham, declaring that, “In you *shall* all the nations be blessed.” “So that,” those *of faith* are being blessed together with *believing* Abraham.

Our being “blessed *together*” with Abraham is on the common ground of faith, according to *grace* (Rom.4:16). It is not that our blessing “together” with him affords us the identical future allotment which God has appointed for Abraham. Similarly, while God will grant *us* eonian life even if we should be persisting in sin (*cf* Rom.5:20-6:1), no such principle obtained in the case of Abraham, concerning whom law-obedience still retained a vital place unto the realization of the blessing (*cf* Gen.26:5), its certainty in grace notwithstanding. This is so, even though Abraham’s blessing also, even as our own, ultimately depended upon God alone.

A striking commonality of *grace* through faith obtains between ourselves and Abraham. Hence, in respect thereof, we indeed become “sons of Abraham.” May we have “confidence in the Lord,” that one day not only the Galatians but every believer from every era will be made to stand in faith, full of wisdom, according to truth.

J.R.C.

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*He Shall Save His People*

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### THE VOICE OF ONE IMPLORING

WHEN nearly two thousand years ago, our Lord was generated in the form of humanity in the womb of Mary, a messenger appeared to Joseph and declared: “Now she shall be bringing forth a Son, and you shall be calling His name Jesus, for He shall be saving His people from their sins” (Matt.1:20,21). Jesus came to save. But there was no immediate deliverance of Israel from their sins. In fact Matthew chapter 2 tells of the political opposition to the little Boy as “King of the Jews” (2:2). Instead of saving His people Jesus was saved from a massacre within Israel by being taken outside the land. Joseph and Mary took the child and *fled* into Egypt (Matt.2:13-18).

Meanwhile the sins of pride and jealousy and deceit and murder continued within Israel, and the result was “lamentation and much anguish” (Matt.2:18).

Such intervening events cannot keep the promise of Matthew 1:21 from being fulfilled, but in making the sins of the nation more evident with the resulting sufferings ever multiplying, they prepare the people for the appreciation of God’s saving work. They add to the accumulating evidence that Israel is unable to save themselves, and if they are to be saved they must be saved by the Saviour.

### THE KING OF THE JEWS

The King had come, but not yet the kingdom. The Saviour had been born, but not yet the salvation born in realization. Nevertheless, when the King reigns He will reign not only as Ruler and Judge, but as Saviour too. God had

promised this as described, for example, by Zechariah the prophet (Zec.9:9):

Exult exceedingly, daughter of Zion!  
 Raise a joyful shout, daughter of Jerusalem!  
 Behold, *Your King* shall come to you!  
 Righteous and *bringing salvation is He* . . . .

The saving work of the King is in view in other prophecies as well, though not always expressed with these exact words. In Micah 5:2,4, which is cited in Matthew 2:6, the terms are “Ruler” and “shepherd,” but the point is the same. God intends to deliver His people Israel by means of Jesus, the King Who will “shepherd them in the strength of Yahweh” (Micah 5:4).

#### JOHN THE BAPTIST

More years passed before John comes imploring the nation’s repentance, “for near is the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt.3:1). This call for repentance (a change in mind) reflects the words of Yahweh through Ezekiel: “. . . turn about and turn back from all your transgressions . . . and make yourselves a new heart [the symbol for the mind] and a new spirit” (Ezek.18:30-32); and again, “I assuredly am not delighting in the death of the wicked one, but rather that the wicked one may turn back from his way and live” (Ezek.33:11).

To be sure, the message, both through Ezekiel and through John, seems at first glance to place the whole responsibility for changing their mind and turning back and living righteously on the sinners. But the place of Jesus as Saviour is not made clear by a word that centers on what the people must do. Is Jesus to be manifested and known as Saviour from sins simply by telling sinners to stop sinning? Is this the fulfillment of Matthew 1:21?

Indeed it is not. The call for repentance does not bring the changes in thinking and acting that are needed, and

so the imperative must ultimately be seen as a declarative founded on the promise that the Saviour Himself will save His people.

In accord with this, John is presented in Matthew 3:3 as the one spoken of in Isaiah 40:3. He is preparing the way for the Saviour, and the call to repentance is not a limiting qualification to this presentation. The whole of Isaiah 40 defines the Saviour as the One Who actually saves His people, not One Who merely instructs them to save themselves. Note the following declarations from that chapter (verses 1,2,10,11,29):

Comfort, oh comfort My people!  
 Says your Elohim.  
 Speak to the heart of Jerusalem,  
 And proclaim to her  
 That her enlistment is fulfilled,  
 And her depravity is dealt with benevolently,  
*That she has taken from the hand of Yahweh  
 Shelters from all her sins* . . . .  
 Behold, my Lord Yahweh shall come with steadfastness,  
 And His arm ruling for Him;  
 Behold, His reward is with Him,  
 And His wage is before him.  
 Like a shepherd He shall graze His drove;  
 In His arms He shall gather the lambkins together,  
 And in His bosom He shall carry them . . . .  
 He is giving vigor to the faint,  
 And to the one who is without virility  
 He is increasing staunchness . . . .

In keeping with Israel’s calling, the promise was for a *sheltering* from sins; justification as presented in Paul’s evangel was not yet in view. But, that salvation is God’s provision is true of every calling. The people who are told in Ezekiel 18:31 to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit are themselves to be *made* new by Yahweh,

according to Ezekiel 36:26. “*I will give* you a new heart and a new spirit.” Because of His spirit which He grants to them they will obey<sup>1</sup> all Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances (Ezek.36:27).

#### REPENT!

So also with repentance. The people must change their minds, but ultimately it will be seen that doing this is God’s endowment. Peter completed the message begun by John when he declared to Israel, “Now the God of our fathers rouses Jesus, on Whom you lay hands, hanging Him on a pole. This Inaugurator and *Saviour*; God exalts to His right hand to *give repentance* to Israel and the pardon of sins” (Acts 5:30,31).

Repentance and the producing of fruit worthy of repentance are presented by John as prerequisites of the kingdom of the heavens. But the people are sinners. The most disciplined of them and the most intelligent are “Progeny of vipers” (Matt.3:7). How can such sinners and hypocrites produce such fruit? It will never happen by human strength in following commands, or by fear of punishment. It can happen only by God’s own rescue through His Son, Who will save His people from their sins.

Nevertheless, human inability must be made clear, and that is vividly being made known to us in the book of Matthew, in the account of our Lord’s ministry and Israel’s rejection of Him. Consequently, we find that the promise of Matthew 1:21 seems shoved to the background as we listen, in chapter 2, to the lamentations and anguish of the “Rachels” of Israel, and follow in chapter 3 the sobering warnings of John.

1. The Hebrew word translated “obey” in Ezekiel 36:27 literally means “do” and is the same word translated “make” earlier in this verse and in Ezekiel 18:31.

#### THE IMPENDING INDIGNATION

As Jesus would also do after him, John the baptist speaks sternly in strong words to the Pharisees and Sadducees. The words of rebuke are well deserved, and the prophecies of divine indignation ahead are timely, but they must not be severed from their whole context concerning the Saviour-King. Religious zeal, with its failures covered up by hypocrisy (the Pharisees) and outward assurance with its inner weaknesses covered up by practiced pretense (the Sadducees) are great offenses, and there are times throughout human history when the indignation of God is poured out against these and all such sin. But divine indignation is not the end of God’s dealings with sinners, nor in any way an end in itself. The end in view is presented in passages like Matthew 1:21 and 2:6, and though that goal is not immediately realized it will not be abandoned or even modified because of inevitable human failure and the necessities of divine judgment.

The idea that God’s anger is permanent and that it is to be eternally expressed against a portion of humanity in unending torments of hell, or in the hopelessness of annihilation, is itself an offense against God. It involves the pharisaical notion that certain human beings are considered more important than others by their Creator. It involves as well a sadducean indifference concerning God’s operations. It makes confusion, at best, of the meaning of divine love, righteousness and wisdom, if not emptying these terms of all meaning whatsoever.

#### THE AX AND THE FIRE

Because the kingdom had drawn near it was not only appropriate but necessary for John and the Lord to point to the day of indignation which must precede the blessings of Christ’s rule.

“The figure of fire is used freely of our Lord’s ministry

in Matthew's account. John the Baptist not only warned them that the ax was already lying at the root of the trees, and those which did not produce fine fruit would be hewn down and cast into the fire, but he characterized our Lord's ministry as two kinds of baptism, one in holy spirit and one in fire.

"He would winnow out the grain in the nation, yet He would also burn up the chaff with fire unextinguished (Matt.3:10-12). So that, even in Israel itself, the kingdom judgments are figured by fire. Our Lord repeats the Baptist's warning with special reference to the false prophets."<sup>2</sup>

This had been made clear by the prophets, who sometimes even used the figures of speech used here by John. Note how Isaiah had spoken of hewing down trees, and of fire in, in describing that future day of vengeance (10:33,34; 34:8-10):

Behold the Lord, Yahweh of hosts  
 Shall lop off the foliage with terror,  
 And those high of stature shall be hacked down,  
 And the haughty, they shall be abased.  
 He will fell the thickets of the wildwood with iron,  
 And Lebanon shall fall before the Noble One . . . .  
 For Yahweh has a day of vengeance,  
 A year of repayment for Zion's cause.  
 . . . its earth will become pitch blazing forth;  
 By night and by day it shall not be quenched;  
 For the eon its smoke shall ascend . . . .

These things will occur, but they cannot stop the salvation provided by the Saviour from eventually embracing the whole of Israel and the nations round about as well, and, although it was not specifically revealed to John, this achievement will eventually embrace all mankind (1 Tim.4:10).

<sup>2</sup> A. E. Knoch: *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.35, pp.272,273.

#### UNEXTINGUISHED FIRE

In view of the significance of the Name Jesus and of His purpose in coming into this world it is impossible that Matthew 3:12 can be speaking of an everlasting hell. Nevertheless, as incomprehensible as it may be, this idea which erodes the very foundation of evangelical truth has been implanted into this passage.

To translate this passage using the term "unquenchable" and thus to indicate that the fires must burn forever, is to say that even before our Lord began His ministry, it was possible that He would not save some of His people, even many, from their sins. Indeed, if repentance and a turning away from wickedness is seen as wholly dependent on the individual sinner, it would already seem unlikely, if not impossible, that anyone would ever be saved from their sins.

This problem, however, is easily cleared away by recognizing that the word "unquenchable" is a mistranslation. There is no contradiction between Matthew 1:21 and 3:12 because the Greek adjective here indicates merely that the fire will not be quenched by anyone. It is not that it is some kind of super-blaze that must burn on endlessly, but rather it will burn without interference until it has burned up the "chaff" that fuels it.

The language here, as most agree, indicates a parallel with Isaiah 66:24, which reads in the Authorized Version: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched . . ." Let us note this carefully. The passage says the fire will not be quenched, but it does not say it is unquenchable. This is a significant point, for in Isaiah 34:10, quoted earlier, and in at least two other passages from the prophets, the same language is used of fire that clearly is not eternal. Jere-

miah speaks of the gates and citadels of Jerusalem being devoured by fire that shall not be put out (Jer.17:27). And Ezekiel tells of the trees in the Negev being burned with a blaze that also shall not be quenched (Ezek.20:47). In these cases the fire continues without interruption or interference until all that it is burning is burned up.

It is puzzling that this distinction between “unquenchable” and “not quenched” has not been recognized. *The New English Bible* translation, for example, says of the fire, in both Jeremiah 17:27 and Ezekiel 20:47, that it “shall not be put out;” but of the fire in Matthew 3:12 that it “can never go out.” In this way, some hope is preserved for those coming under the judgments described by the earlier prophets, for a fire that is not put out can still burn out. But hope is, in effect, entirely cut off for some by this translation of John’s introduction to Jesus, the Saviour!

John was no more speaking of some kind of a miracle fire that could not possibly go out than were Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. By translating his words in such a way, the faithful imploring of John is changed to a threat of unbelievable horror that effectively eclipses the evangel concerning the Saviour.

Matthew concludes the account of John’s ministry with his baptizing of Jesus and the words of God “out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight’ ” (Matt.3:17). God has no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek.33:11), but He does delight in His Son Who is the Saviour of sinners. Uncertainty concerning the results of John’s imploring and the certainty of stern judgment against human sin cannot negate the expression of love and delight in this divine announcement, paralleling in fullest harmony the announcement of Matthew 1:21, but rather serve only to make that announcement all the more glorious.

D.H.H.

### DAIS OF CHRIST

IT USED to be, “Are you saved?” Later, perhaps as the sad conceit of such an approach began to filter through our vanity, we moderated our question to, “How long have you known the Lord?”

Even this more positive presentation was inadequate. Eventually our viewpoint toward the evangel changes from one of anxiety concerning ourselves to one of thanksgiving and praise concerning God. Now often, when in the company of our brethren, we inquire into matters such as how the truth of God’s gracious conciliation first dawned on our imprisoned spirits, and how God has led us to rejoice in the secret of His will.

There is a pattern here that is shared by us all. There is a progression. Not only do we have to relearn much of what we have been taught in our early years, but even then there is no immediate maturity or wisdom. It has been declared that just as we may not ascend several floors in a building without the aid of stairs, so it is impossible to comprehend the wondrous revelations of the perfection epistles of the apostle Paul without the blessings of the prior, rich unfolding wisdom of his letters to Thessalonica, Rome, Corinth, and Galatia.

### NOT YOURS, BUT YOU

“Yet Jews from Antioch and Iconium come on, and persuading the throngs, and stoning Paul, they dragged him outside the city, inferring that he is dead” (Acts 14:19).

“Let us remember that Paul was stoned but once (2 Cor.

11:25) and this by the gentiles just as soon as the evangel breaks through to them. The Jews reject the evangel and call down judgment. How dire must be the punishment due to these uncircumcised aliens for stoning the chosen vessel God had sent for their salvation! This is surely the opportunity demanded by grace to show its potency. They drag his body, battered and bleeding, outside the city, but his spirit flies far ahead to the paradise of the new earth, and soars into the heights of the third heaven. There he sees the despised, undeserving gentiles . . . ruling the celestial realms as members of Christ's body and 'blessed with all spiritual blessing among the celestials' (Eph.1:3). Here we reach the summit of grace, the secret (1 Cor.2:7) which God had prepared for those who love Him. Though Paul was not really dead, it is well to note that, from this time on, he reckons himself and all believers as having died, and as living a resurrection life (2 Cor.1:9)."<sup>1</sup>

As a father with his beloved children (1 Thess.2:11), Paul delighted to share the evangel of God. Writing to the stumbling ecclesia of Corinth, he declared, "Lo! this third time I hold myself ready to come to you and I shall not be an encumbrance, for I am not seeking yours but you. For the children ought not to be hoarding for the parents, but the parents for the children. Yet with the greatest relish shall I spend and be bankrupted for the sake of your souls, even if loving you more exceedingly diminishes your love for me" (2 Cor.12:14,15).

#### MINORS IN CHRIST

Can we possibly imagine what it must have been like for the apostle to restrain his elation at the wonder of God's revelations? How he must have yearned to share the glory of it all with them. Yet this was not to be. Using

<sup>1</sup> I. A. E. Knoch, CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.201.

a form of expression known as a simile, Paul was not hesitant in stern rebuke. "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, as to minors in Christ. Milk I give you to drink, not solid food, for not as yet were you able" (1 Cor.3:1,2). May our God and Father patiently escort us in minority so as to avoid these many pitfalls of division and arrogance.

God's Word is full of superb figures of speech. By way of pause or slight digression, may we give some thought concerning these which is provided on page 349, Appendix A of the CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT:

"God, Who studded the sky with jewels and carpeted the earth with colors, has written His revelation in language which reflects the beauties of His visible creation. The diction of the East and of the Scriptures is full of fine figures, over which we walk with ruthless tread, seldom stopping to admire the blooms beneath our feet. It is the voice of feeling as well as fact. Nor is its beauty merely ornamental. Unless our eyes are opened to their presence and we feel their force, we may fail to enter beneath the surface of bare facts, into the heart of God's truth, and be led astray by mere externals."

The following figure may help illustrate the dilemma which we ourselves will face when bringing the evangel: Despite the present traffic congestion on our roads, we all enjoy the pleasures of driving a vehicle. We visit lovely mountain scenes, picturesque harbors, remote valleys; and we travel many miles to enjoy the grandeur and peace of huge, silent forests. Also, we are pleased to instruct our children in this same skill and mobility. Yet it would be totally irresponsible for us to simply hand them ignition keys to drive some vehicle, without instruction and without escort. What would we give to board a solo aircraft and soar away! But just imagine the dire results if we ventured forth *without adequate instruction and experience*.

## JESUS CHRIST'S FAITH

In the maturing of our faith there are differing degrees of progress. Some saints have little difficulty in setting aside the gnawing fears of imagined conditions of "back-sliding" for example. Yet it takes time *and a thorough grasp of Scriptures*, to be reassured concerning the reality of being chosen, called, and justified. Nothing imparts more profound peace than to learn of our righteousness being based, not on our feeble faith, but rather, *through Jesus Christ's faith!* (Rom.3:22; 5:1).

Despite this supremely comforting reassurance, many of us undergo momentary discomfiture when we read: "Faithful is the saying: 'For if we died together, we shall be living together also; if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also; if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us; if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful—He cannot disown Himself'" (2 Tim.2:11-13). Here, it is urged that we must not make the grave mistake of confusing the award of reigning, with the security of our salvation. As noted above, but for emphasis stated once more, *this great salvation is all based on the sure foundation of the saving grace and faith of the Son of God's love.*

But concerning the reigning, along with our apostle we strive to contend the ideal contest. There may be times when in some distress or distraction we may be disturbed by the haunting memories of the initial pressures and anxieties of an immature understanding of God's loving power and wisdom.

Nevertheless, progress is made in dissipating these anxieties as we focus attention on God and His grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Wherefore we are ambitious also, whether at home or away from home, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Cor.5:9). The evangel stirs us to faithful evangelizing: "For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, as of God entreating through us. We are beseeching for Christ's sake,

'Be conciliated to God!' For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him" (2 Cor.5:20,21).

## WE TRUST GOD

With the blessed expectation of our being snatched away together with those dear ones who sleep in the Lord, to meet Him in the air, and thus be appearing at the dais of Christ (2 Cor.5:10), one might imagine that all concerns of the security of our salvation would be at rest. Well, with regard to eonian life, this is so, but still there is confusion. Is it possible that here, where there is requital or award for meritorious service, we might possibly forfeit anything at all of those matters which now seem so precious? Certainly; those matters are centered in the self and the flesh. It becomes increasingly obvious, especially in maturity, that our concept of the virtuous or commendable is far from reliable. In this we trust God. We submit, trembling, all the many aspects of our service for His loving consideration. If there is aught remaining, we shall be very, very thankful!

"One of the most gracious aspects of the dais is its influence on our present service and conduct. If all realized that much that we do will be made a bonfire in that day, it would radically revolutionize 'Christian' service. If we would only remind ourselves that the race is not to the swift, unless they observe the rules, we would be more concerned to heed the Scriptures, and not walk disorderly. Even if we attain the highest honors among men for the passing period of our earthly life, what is that if it puts us in the lowest place in the coming eons? That is a very mean motive, but the grace of it lies in the fact that the very same selfish desire to have the pre-eminence, when viewed in the light of the dais, will cure us of it now, when we need such help . . . Let us learn this precious lesson.

God's grace is not exhausted in effecting our salvation. He continues to be gracious in using us in His service."<sup>2</sup>

As we grow toward maturity in appreciating the dais of Christ we see how vitally it is associated with God's grace. Afflictions and sufferings are graciously granted to us (Phil. 1:29), which in turn produce endurance (Rom.5:3), which is rewarded at the dais with reigning (2 Tim.2:12).

#### APPLAUSE

"For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is grave, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is agreeable, whatever is renowned—if there is any virtue, and if any applause, be taking these into account. What you learned also, and accepted and heard and perceived in me, these be putting into practice, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil.4:8,9).

Donald Fielding

2. A. E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.39, pp.236,239.

#### REPOSING IN CHRIST

The following friends in faith were put to repose during 1996, in addition to other brethren whose deaths we announced in previous issues: **Pearson G. Rutter**, age 89, Whittier, California; **Robert A. Racer**, 78, Dunkirk, Indiana; **L. Josephine Hawes**, 89, Los Altos, California; **Charles Fletcher**, 95, St. Catherines, Ontario; **Irma Degen**, Medicine Hat, Alberta; **Myrtle Hansen**, 93, Brea, California; **Clara Snider**, Grandville, Michigan; **Amos D. King**, 94, Richmond, Virginia.

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### Notes on the Book of Job

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#### HOW LONG?

BOTH Bildad's second address and Job's reply begin with the question, How long? This expression indicates impatience with each other, both Bildad and Job finding the "declarations" of the other personally offensive (18:2; 19:2).

We may well consider Job more justified in this than Bildad who sits apart from the pain and sorrow that racks every corner of Job's being. But this does not mean that Bildad does not genuinely feel ill-treated (18:3) and deeply desire an end to the present turmoil.

At one time or another, and increasingly (so it seems) as we grow older, we find ourselves crying out, How long is this going to go on? Our distresses, like those in these chapters of Job, often arise from offenses committed by acquaintances and even those who are close to us. These seem more acute than hurts suffered because of what our world calls "acts of God," such as storms or earthquakes or droughts. This is because we feel we can't do anything about the latter, but we can do something about personal offenses, usually by trying to get the offender to stop his offensiveness.

Of course this only tends to increase the unpleasantness. The question, "How long?" must eventually be asked of God if it is to lead us to any real solution. We have noticed that Job began that way, directing his attention to Eloah, and, though Job becomes more and more occupied by the offenses of his associates, he still is able to rise above the human conflicts and concentrate his mind on the Deity. This struggle to keep the divine operations in

view reaches what may be its highest level in chapter 19. The “How long?” of 19:2, addressed to Bildad, becomes directed to Eloah in the “crying out” and the “imploring” of 19:7. And this leads Job’s heart to the stirring *declarations* of 19:23-27a. The question, “How long?” becomes the faithful declaration “I know my Redeemer is living,” and the expectant declaration “I shall perceive Eloah.”

#### BILDAD’S SECOND ADDRESS

For Bildad the question, “How long?” introduces a reproof to Job for his continued declarations (*cf* Job’s complaint in 16:3) which, in Bildad’s eyes, betray a lack of understanding and of proper respect (18:2,3). Addressing Job with sarcasm, Bildad points to his anger as something that harms Job but really has no lasting effect on the larger world (v.4).

The rest of Bildad’s speech is a development of a major theme of all three “comforters,” namely, that the wicked will suffer for their wickedness. The word “moreover,” introducing verse 5 indicates that Bildad means to add these remarks about the fate of the wicked to what he has already said in criticism of Job. Although Bildad speaks in general terms, he intends Job to understand this has direct bearing on his case.

Hence Bildad observes that Job tears his own soul to pieces (v.4); in accord with this, Bildad points out, the wicked one’s own counsel shall fling him down (v.7); he will fall into a trap by his own feet (18:8-10). Job is himself the wicked person Bildad describes.

(Perhaps we may be excused in detecting a tone of satisfaction in Bildad’s description of the fate of the wicked in 18:11-16. The images of frightful tormentors and the devouring of internal organs were much later incorporated, and expanded, by preachers and theologians and even poets like Dante, in their concept of hell.)

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### Concordant Version of Job

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## JOB 18-19

**18** <sup>+</sup>Then Bildad the Shuhite <sup>1</sup>answered, <sup>+</sup> <sup>1</sup>saying:

<sup>2</sup> **How** <sup>fr</sup>long before <sup>7</sup>you<sup>~Q</sup> shall <sup>pl</sup>make an end to these declarations?

**May** <sup>7</sup>you<sup>~Q</sup> understand, and after that we shall speak.

<sup>3</sup> For **what reason** are we reckoned like beasts Or counted **unclean in your eyes?**

<sup>4</sup> O one **tearing his soul to pieces in his anger, On account of you** shall the earth be forsaken, **And the rock be shifted from its** <sup>ri</sup>place?

<sup>5</sup> **Moreover,** the **light of the wicked shall be extinguished, And the flare of his fire shall not brighten.**

<sup>6</sup> The **light in his tent, it will become dark, And his lamp above him, it shall be extinguished.**

<sup>7</sup> **The steps of his virility shall become constricted, And his own counsel shall fling him** down.

<sup>8</sup> **For he will be sent forth into a net** <sup>i</sup>by his own feet, **And he shall walk about on the mesh.**

<sup>9</sup> A **snare shall hold him** <sup>i</sup>by his heel; A **snag shall** <sup>c</sup>hold fast onto him.

<sup>10</sup> The rope **line is buried** <sup>l</sup>for him in the earth, **And a seizing device for him on his track.**

<sup>11</sup> **Decadent things frighten him round about, And they hound him** <sup>ʔ</sup>at his every footstep.

<sup>12</sup> **His virility shall** <sup>b</sup>be turned to **famishing, And calamity stands ready** <sup>l</sup>against his reproductive organs.

18:2 7--Q you: Hb you, plural.

To Bildad, Job is *living* proof of the principle that the wicked pay for their evil thoughts and deeds. Job's virility has turned to famishing (v.12). His skin is devoured by boils from head to feet and his organs are attacked by a further infestation of the "firstborn of death" (perhaps a deadly disease), as Bildad expresses it in 18:13.

Finally Bildad declares that the wicked will lose everything, his fame, his habitance, his descendants (18:14-10), with his only legacy being the appalling horror others will feel when they view the ruins of one who knew not El (18:20,21). It is unnecessary for Bildad to add explicitly what he has said implicitly: "How like you, Job!"

However, looking beyond what Bildad implies about Job, we must ask, What does all this say about God? Bildad's words present the Deity as One solely interested in reward and retribution when it comes to His dealings with humanity. Otherwise, God does not involve Himself much in the affairs of earthly creatures.

In the end, as we will see, Yahweh decisively refutes the restrictive view of the three by claiming responsibility for all things. And by the example of Job's "consummation," God shows that He has a purpose for the good of that which He has made.

#### ELOAH HIMSELF HAS OVERTURNED ME

Job's question, "How long?" is directed to Bildad and his companions in reference to their treatment of him. In 19:2-5 Job gives eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But once again he is able to pull himself away from useless (and generally disastrous) fightings with human opponents and to focus on God.

His associates need to face the fundamental truth that Eloah Himself has overturned Job and encompassed him in His trap (19:6) for His own reasons and purposes. And then they need to contemplate the necessary implications

- <sup>13</sup> **His skin shall be 'eaten ~<sup>i</sup>by sickness~;**  
The **firstborn of death shall eat his organs.**
- <sup>14</sup> **He shall be pulled away from his tent**  
where **his trust** had dwelt;  
**And it shall <sup>e</sup>make him march**  
to the **king of decadent** things.
- <sup>15</sup> **It shall tabernacle in his tent <sup>f</sup>which no longer is his;**  
**Sulfur shall be sifted <sup>on</sup>about his homestead.**
- <sup>16</sup> **From beneath, his roots 'dry up,**  
**And from above, his harvest** branches are **'snipped off.**
- <sup>17</sup> **His remembrance perishes from the earth,**  
**And he 'has no<sup>t</sup> name on the face of the open place.**
- <sup>18</sup> **They shall thrust him from light into darkness,**  
**And they shall chase him from the habitance.**
- <sup>19</sup> **He will 'have no<sup>t</sup> progeny and no<sup>t</sup> posterity<sup>o</sup>**  
**<sup>i</sup>among his people,**  
**And there will be no survivor**  
in the places of **his sojourning.**
- <sup>20</sup> **<sup>af</sup>Westerners are appalled <sup>on</sup>at his day of ruin,**  
**And easterners hold back in horror.**
- <sup>21</sup> **<sup>u</sup>Surely these were the tabernacles**  
of an **iniquitous** man,  
**And this was the <sup>ri</sup>place of one who knew not El.**
- 19 <sup>+</sup>So Job 'answered, <sup>+</sup> 'saying:**
- <sup>2</sup> **How <sup>fr</sup>long shall you afflict my soul**  
**And crush me <sup>i</sup>with declarations?**
- <sup>3</sup> **These ten <sup>du</sup>times have you 'mortified me;**  
**You are not 'ashamed that you 'ill-treat <sup>></sup> me.**
- <sup>4</sup> **<sup>+</sup>Yet indeed, even if I truly have erred,**  
**My error would 'lodge <sup>`</sup>in me.**
- <sup>5</sup> **If truly you would 'magnify yourselves over me**  
**And 'plead <sup>on</sup>against me my reproach,**
- <sup>6</sup> **Know indeed that Eloah Himself has overturned me,**  
**And His weir trap has encompassed <sup>on</sup> me.**

18:13 --- <sup>i</sup>by sickness: Hb components of [he shall eat components of his skin].

18:19 progeny . . . posterity: Hb word order is posterity . . . progeny.

of this fact in light of Job's previous devoutness and walk in the fear of God.

Job cries out: "Violence!" but is not answered, and no right judgment has appeared (v.7). Eloah has blocked Job's path, and placed him in darkness, has stripped his glory from him, has taken him from his high position among mankind, has broken him down and removed his expectation; He has heated up His anger against him (19:8-11).

Furthermore, Eloah has brought opposers against Job and put any friends far from him (19:12-19). Rather than enlightening Job and adjudicating the problem so others can see the truth, God has sent His troops against him with the result that sojourners and servants see Job as a foreigner, and those he provides for see him as repellent.

Indeed, as Bildad noted, Job's skin and bones and flesh are sorely under attack (v.20). Everything about Job is a source of agony and complaint. His list is so long that, like his associates, we feel wearied in listening to them. But in Job's tracing of these evils to God, we are being prepared for a powerful revelation of divine wisdom and goodness.

This preparation for deeper appreciation of God is solidly constructed on Job's unswerving insistence that God is not a disinterested party in all this evil, whose only concern in it all is, at best, to see that the wicked get what they deserve. "Be gracious to me! be gracious to me, you, my associates!" Job shouts out, "*For the hand of Eloah has touched me*" (19:21).

As he has done before, Job has traveled from the position of personal attacks against one who has attacked him to the position of pouring out his soul to Eloah. Now in 19:22 he reverts briefly to ask his associates a question, but one that involves God as much as themselves: "Why are you pursuing me *like El* and are not satisfied with my flesh?"

Job's sufferings involve his flesh, his bones, his organs, his skin. El has brought these afflictions upon him, and

- 7 **Behold, I am crying out: Violence!**  
**+Yet I am not being answered;**  
**I am imploring,**  
**+Yet there is no right judgment.**
- 8 **He has diked up my path, and I cannot 'pass;**  
**+ He <sup>h</sup>settles darkness over my tracks.**
- 9 **My glory He has stripped from <sup>on</sup> me,**  
**And He 'takes away the crown from my head.**
- 10 **He 'breaks me down round about, so +that I 'go away,**  
**And He 'uproots my expectation like a tree.**
- 11 **+ He 'heats up His anger <sup>on</sup>against me,**  
**And to Himself He 'reckons me as one of His foes.**
- 12 **His troops 'come together**  
**And 'heap up their road <sup>on</sup>against me,**  
**And they 'encamp round about > my tent.**
- 13 **He has 'put my brothers far away from <sup>on</sup> me,**  
**And my acquaintances' have 'surely estranged**  
**themselves from me.**
- 14 **My near kinsmen have shunned me,**  
**And my acquaintances' have forgotten me.**
- 15 **The sojourners' in my house and my maidservants**  
**'reckon me 'as an alien';**  
**I have become a foreigner in their eyes.**
- 16 **I call to my servant, +yet he does not 'answer;**  
**'With my mouth I 'supplicate to him.**
- 17 **My scent has become alien to my wife,**  
**And I have become repellent to the sons**  
**of my mother's womb.<sup>o</sup>**
- 18 **Even youngsters have rejected ' me;**  
**I 'rise up, and they 'speak 'against me.**
- 19 **All <sup>ad</sup>men of my intimate group abhor me,**  
**And those I have loved are turned 'against me.**
- 20 **My bones cling 'to my skin and ' my flesh,**  
**And I 'escape only 'with the skin of my teeth.**

19:17 mother's womb: lit., belly.

his associates relentlessly add to every pain by placing the ultimate responsibility on Job himself. Will no one join Job in pleading to God for enlightenment?

MY REDEEMER IS LIVING

It is because Job feels no one is paying attention to what he is trying to say that he exclaims, "O that indeed my declarations were written down! O, that they were delineated in a scroll, with iron pen and lead, that they should be hewn in rock for the future!" (19:23,24).

Perhaps no words of Job are more worthy of being preserved in stone than these that follow in 19:25-27b. Deity is seen here as ultimately concerned with deliverance not simply pursuit (*cf* v.22), and as alive and actively involved toward this end. The visible evidence of diseased skin and physical exhaustion, along with Job's appearance as an alien will give way to a triumphant acquaintance with Eloah as Job's Redeemer.

Even after Job had expressed hope for a heavenly Witness in chapter 16, he fell back into a despair where the best outlook seemed to be the unseen (17:13), and he cried, "Where indeed is my expectation? And my good hope, who shall regard it?" (17:15). Now he has just said of Eloah, "He uproots my expectation like a tree" (19:10). But despite all evidence to the contrary, Job holds fast to a reliance on God, and expectation bursts forth.

As we read Job's words here, we can almost feel the exultation of his voice. Then suddenly he seems to writhe in pain as if convulsed by sharp cramps, and cries, "My innermost being is consumed in my bosom" (v.27c). The burst of conscious assurance is gone, and Job has only strength enough to utter one final word at the human level. If these men are plotting against Job by seeking the cause of all his problems within himself, they need to think about how their principle of retribution can apply to them (19:28,29).

- 21 **Be gracious to me! be gracious to me,  
you, my associates!**  
**For the hand of Eloah has touched <sup>i</sup> me.**
- 22 **Why are you pursuing me like El  
And are not <sup>l</sup>satisfied <sup>f</sup>with my flesh?**
- 23 **"O <sup>lg</sup>that indeed my declarations <sup>+</sup> were <sup>l</sup>written down!  
"O <sup>lg</sup>that <sup>+</sup> they were <sup>l</sup>delineated in a scroll,**
- 24 **<sup>i</sup>With iron pen and lead,  
That they should be hewn in rock for the future!**
- 25 **<sup>+</sup>Yet as for me, I know my Redeemer<sup>l</sup> is living,  
And after this He shall arise on the soil;**
- 26 **And <sup>af</sup>behind my skin <sup>~</sup>I will stand erect<sup>~</sup>,  
And from my flesh I shall perceive Eloah,**
- 27 **Whom I<sup>l</sup> shall perceive for myself,  
And my own eyes will see, and not an alien!  
My innermost being is <sup>all</sup>consumed in my bosom.**
- 28 **<sup>l</sup>If you are saying, <sup>wf</sup>How may we pursue <sup>></sup> him?  
And: The root of the matter is found in <sup>7</sup>him<sup>~cs</sup>,**
- 29 **Shrink for yourselves from the presence of the sword  
(For fury brings the <sup>=</sup>wretchedness of the sword)  
That you may know <sup>w</sup>what adjudication is.**

19:26 --- I will stand erect: Hb they will encompass this.  
19:28 7--cs him: Hb me.



That may be a good put down and a telling line for the debate, but the climactic point was made in verses 25-27b concerning the Redeemer and the standing erect and the perceiving of Eloah. And that applies to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar as well as to Job.

With this expectation in view, we can be excused for taking Bildad's and Job's opening words in these chapters and asking, not in frustration but in joyful anticipation, How long? How long before these things shall occur in full?

D.H.H.

## THE LIVING REDEEMER

JOB'S THOUGHTS jump from complaint and rage to bursts of confidence and hope, but there is a consistency in his overall desire to relate his sufferings to God, with understanding. His impatience with his associates stems from their efforts to direct Job's mind away from this focus. In the meantime God remains silent and apparently distant and unconcerned, which seems to support Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar.

What Job speaks is so (*cf* 42:8), though it is without knowledge and understanding (*cf* 38:2,4; 42:3). Job does not begin to *realize* what it means that we receive both good and evil from God (2:10) until he both experiences the evil and is given God's revelation of Himself. The great declarations of Job 19:25-27b are true, but they are not settled into his consciousness; they are not yet a part of his being.

For Job, the knowledge that his Redeemer is living has not yet become realization in chapter 19. But it is so, and gloriously so.

This is one of the grandest passages in Scripture, which has given many troubled people relief and hope through the centuries. In God's wisdom it speaks of the deliverance that is in Christ Jesus and the expectation of seeing Him Who died and was roused from the dead on our behalf, even though Job could have known nothing of this great evangel.

But there are textual problems related to this passage. Perhaps this is because it stands out so brightly within its context and states that which cannot be confirmed by empirical evidence and human experience. It seems to say too much at this point in the book and for Job in his situation and time. But whatever the reason for this textual corruption, the result is a certain measure of uncertainty in translation. It is clearly an expression of hope, but there is room for debate concerning several of the details.

In earlier stages in the attempt to produce a Concordant Version of this passage, more emendations were made

than presently included in our translation. One of the most significant of these was in the first line of verse 25 which was rendered, ". . . I know the Redeemer shall come to be." The verbs *live* and *become* are very similar in Hebrew and could have been confused in the transmission of the text. Also it is possible that the small Hebrew letter indicating "my" was originally attached to the verb indicating future action.

But we have ended up keeping the reading as given in the extant Hebrew manuscripts, without emendation. It seems especially fitting that Job would speak of the Redeemer as "*my* Redeemer." This parallels similar statements of Joseph (Gen.48:16) and David (Psa.19:14), both of whom endured much affliction and rejection and looked to God for deliverance. That they saw God in this personal way as *their* specific Redeemer seems to support the idea that Job shared this viewpoint.

It is certainly true that Job deeply desired Eloah to appear and speak to him, and this would be naturally expressed in Hebrew by the common verb "become." There was no visible sign of the Redeemer, yet indeed He does come to be, or appear, later as events unfold. But the word "living" is also appropriate in this context, not that Job thought the absence of the Redeemer indicated He was dead, but that Job's afflictions indicated Job was close to death, and this is what made it so important to Job that his Redeemer was continuing to live.

For us, however, in our present experiences of evil and needs for endurance, we know Christ as our Deliverance (*cf* Rom.3:24; 1 Cor.1:30; Eph.1:7), Who is living as the One Who *died* and *rose* from the dead. Indeed, He is more than our living Redeemer, for in Him we have the assurance of justification, vivification and reconciliation. And we, each one individually and personally, shall perceive Him with full appreciation, to the glory of God the Father.

## INDEX TO VOLUME LXXXVII

Anathema, Let Him Be . . . . .	9
Arrays of the Living Elohim . . . . .	35
Arrows of Him Who Suffices . . . . .	55
“Be Conciliated to God” . . . . .	235
Concealed in God . . . . .	169
Dais of Christ . . . . .	271
Deity of God, The . . . . .	195
Endurance of Job, The . . . . .	23
Enoch and Elijah . . . . .	211
Epistles of Paul, The . . . . .	5,51,111,147
Evangel of the Uncircumcision . . . . .	181
For the sake of His Delight . . . . .	127
For You are Bought With a Price . . . . .	72
God All in All . . . . .	243
Hand of Eloah, The . . . . .	154
How Long? . . . . .	277
If Not God Indeed Who? . . . . .	134
Job, Notes on the Book of . . . . .	23,55,134,154,214,277
Living Redeemer . . . . .	286
More than Conquering . . . . .	75
My Impregnable Retreat . . . . .	65
Not Already Perfected . . . . .	175
Obituaries: L. Abbott 110, W. Dane 110, I. Degen 276, C. Fletcher 276, M. Hansen 276, J. Hawes 276, T. Jodar 110, A. King 276, R. Racer 276, H. Roche 97, P. Rutter 276, C. Snider 276	
O Foolish Galatians! . . . . .	251
Paul to the Colossians . . . . .	51
Paul to the Philippians . . . . .	5
Paul’s Personal Epistles . . . . .	147
Paul’s Promise Epistles . . . . .	111
Prayer of Faith, The . . . . .	103
Salvation and Judgment in the Book of Matthew . . . . .	203
Samuel, the Last of the Judges . . . . .	35,65
Set for Life Eonian . . . . .	43
Studies in Galatians . . . . .	9,87,117,181,226,251
Studies in Matthew . . . . .	203,263
There Has Come New . . . . .	79
“Through the Faith of Christ” . . . . .	226
Truth of the Evangel, The . . . . .	117
Voice of One Imploring, The . . . . .	263
Ways of God and Man, The . . . . .	167
“When it Delights God” . . . . .	87
Witness in the Heavens, A . . . . .	214