

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 111th Year
(1909–2020)

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Volume 111

Number 1

Concordant Version of the Old Testament

Over a century has passed since a “concordant version” of the Scriptures was first proposed by A. E. Knoch and Vladimir Gelesnoff. When the translation of the Greek Scriptures, or “New Testament,” was then published in 1926, an announcement was made that work had begun on the Hebrew Scriptures (“Old Testament”). Now after all these years, with thanksgiving to God, we announce that the entire CONCORDANT VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT is now in print and available to order.

By analyzing the contextual usages of each Hebrew and Aramaic word, a single English word was first selected as its most suitable equivalent. Then, to achieve readability, some words were given a limited number of idiomatic variants that are harmonious with the sense derived from the investigations. English words used as the common translation of particular Hebrew words, and even idiomatic variants, were not used for other Hebrew words.

Boldface type was used for words (or even parts of words) having exact counterparts in the Hebrew. And lightface type was used for words (or parts of words) which were added to clarify the meaning of the respective word in the Hebrew text. In addition small symbols and abbreviations were inserted between or attached to words to represent omitted terms, to indicate grammatical features and the sources of emendations to the Hebrew text.

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Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS
WORD

VOLUME 111

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THE SECRET OF CHRIST

CORRECTION

PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, through God's will, and brother Timothy, ² to the saints and believing brethren in Christ in Colosse:

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We are thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying^o concerning you, ⁴ on hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have ^{io}for all the saints, ⁵ because of the expectation being reserved^o for you in the heavens, which you hear before in the word of truth of the evangel, ⁶ which, being present ^{io}with you, according as in the entire world also, is bearing^o fruit and growing^o, according as it is among you also, from the day on which you hear and realize the grace of God in truth, ⁷ according as you learn it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful dispenser of Christ ^{ov}for us, ⁸ who makes evident also to us your love in spirit.

⁹ Therefore we also, from the day on which we hear, do not cease^o praying^o ^{ov}for you and requesting^o that you may be filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ¹⁰ you to walk worthily of the Lord ^{io}for all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing^o in the realization of God; ¹¹ being endued^o ⁱwith all power, in accord with the might of His glory, ^{io}for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² at the same time giving thanks to the Father, Who makes you competent ^{io}for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light, ¹³ Who rescues^o us out of the jurisdiction

of 'Darkness, and transports us into the kingdom of the Son of His 'love, ¹⁴ in Whom we are having the deliverance, the pardon of 'sins, ¹⁵ Who 'is the Image of the invisible 'God, Firstborn of every creature, ¹⁶ 'for in Him is 'all created, 'that in the heavens and 'that on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or sovereignties, or authorities, 'all is 'created^o through Him and ^{io}for Him, ¹⁷ and He' 'is before all, and 'all has its cohesion in Him.

¹⁸ And He' 'is the Head of the body, the ecclesia, Who 'is 'Sovereign, Firstborn ^ofrom among the dead ones, that in all He' may become^o 'first, ¹⁹ 'for in Him the entire complement delights to dwell, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile 'all ^{io}to Him ('making peace through the blood of His 'cross), through Him, whether 'those on the earth or 'those in the heavens.

²¹ And =you, being once 'estranged^o and enemies in 'comprehension, 'by 'wicked 'acts, ²² yet now He reconciles 'by His 'body of 'flesh, through His 'death, to present =you holy and flawless and unimpeachable in His sight, ²³ since surely =you are persisting in the faith, 'grounded^o and settled and are not being removed^o from the expectation of the evangel which =you hear 'which is heralded in the entire creation 'which is under 'heaven of which I', Paul, become^o the dispenser. ²⁴ I am now rejoicing in my 'sufferings ^{ov}for =you, and am filling up in my 'flesh, in His stead, the deficiencies of the afflictions of 'Christ, ^{ov}for His 'body, which 'is the ecclesia ²⁵ of which I' become^o a dispenser, in accord with the administration of 'God, which is granted to me ^{io}for =you, to complete the word of 'God—²⁶ the secret 'which 'has been concealed^o from the eons and from the generations, yet now is made manifest to His 'saints, ²⁷ to whom 'God wills to make known 'what are the glorious 'riches of this 'secret among the nations, which 'is: Christ among =you, the glorious 'expec-

tation—²⁸ Whom we' are announcing, admonishing every human and teaching every human in 'all wisdom, that we should present every human mature in Christ Jesus; ²⁹ ^{io}for which I am toiling also, struggling^o in accord with His 'operation, 'which is operating^o in me 'with power.

2 For I 'want =you to 'perceive what the struggle amounts to which I am having ^{ov}for =your sakes and for 'those in Laodicea, and whoever have not seen my 'face in flesh, ² that their 'hearts may be consoled, united in love, and ^{io}to 'all the riches of the assurance of 'understanding, ^{io}unto a realization of the secret of the God and Father of 'Christ, ³ in Whom all the treasures of 'wisdom and 'knowledge are concealed. ⁴ 'Now I am saying this, that no one may be beguiling^o =you 'with persuasive words. ⁵ For 'even if, in 'flesh, I am being absent, ^{bt} nevertheless, in 'spirit, I 'am ^{tg}with =you, rejoicing and observing =your order and the stability of =your 'faith ^{io}in Christ.

⁶ As then =you accept 'Christ Jesus, the Lord, be walking in Him, ⁷ having been rooted^o and being built^o up in Him, and being confirmed^o in the faith according as =you are taught, superabounding in it 'with thanksgiving.

⁸ Beware that no 'one shall be 'despoiling =you through 'philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with 'human 'tradition, in accord with the elements of the world, and not in accord with Christ, ⁹ 'for in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily. ¹⁰ And =you 'are 'complete^o in Him, Who 'is the Head of every sovereignty and authority, ¹¹ in Whom =you are circumcised also with a circumcision not made by hands, in the stripping off of the body of 'flesh in the circumcision of 'Christ. ¹² Entombed together with Him in 'baptism, in Whom =you are roused together also through the faithfulness of the operation of 'God, 'Who rouses Him ^ofrom among the dead ones, ¹³ =you also being dead to the offenses and the uncircumcision of =your 'flesh, He vivifies us together ^{tg}jointly with Him,

dealing graciously^o with all our offenses, ¹⁴erasing the handwriting of the decrees against us, which was hostile to us, and has taken it away out of the midst, nailing it to the cross, ¹⁵stripping^o off the sovereignties and authorities, with boldness He makes a show of them, triumphing over them in it.

¹⁶Let no one then be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, ¹⁷which are a shadow of those things which are impending—yet the body is the Christ's. ¹⁸Let no one be arbitrating against you, who wants, in humility and the ritual of the messengers, to parade what he has seen, feignedly, puffed^o up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹and not holding the Head, out of Whom the entire body, being supplied^o and united^o through the assimilation and ligaments, is growing in the growth of God. ²⁰If then you die together with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as living in the world, are you subject to decrees^o: ²¹“You should not touch, nor yet taste, nor yet come into contact” ²²(which things are all for corruption from use), in accord with the directions and teachings of human beings?—²³which are (having indeed an expression of wisdom in a willful ritual and humility and asceticism) not of any value against the surfeiting of the flesh.

3 If then you are roused together with Christ, be seeking that which is above, where Christ is, sitting^o at the right hand of God. ²Be setting your mind on that which is above, not on that on the earth, ³for you die, and your life is hid^o together with Christ in God. ⁴Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, then you also shall be manifested together with Him in glory.

⁵Deaden then your members that are on the earth: prostitution, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and greed, which is idolatry, ⁶because of which the indignation of God is coming^o on the sons of stubbornness—⁷among

whom you also once walked, when you were living in these things.

⁸Yet now you also put^o away all these: anger, fury, malice, calumny, obscenity out of your mouth. ⁹Do not lie^o to one another, stripping^o off the old humanity together with its practices, ¹⁰and putting^o on the young, which is being renewed^o into recognition, to accord with the Image of the One Who creates it, ¹¹wherein there is no Greek and Jew, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but all and in all is Christ.

¹²Put^o on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, pitiful compassions, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, ¹³bearing^o with one another and dealing graciously^o among yourselves, if anyone should be having a complaint against any. According as the Lord also deals graciously^o with you, thus also you. ¹⁴Now over all these put on love, which is the tie of maturity. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ be arbitrating in your hearts, for which you are called also in one body; and become^o thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ be making its home in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing yourselves; in psalms, in hymns, in spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And everything, whatever you may be doing, in word or in act, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, the Father, through Him.

¹⁸Wives, be subject^o to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your own wives and be not bitter^o toward them. ²⁰Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not vex your children, lest they may be disheartened.

²²Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-slavery, as human-pleasers, but with singleness of heart, fearing^o the Lord. ²³All, whatsoever you may be doing, work^o from the soul, as to the

Lord and not to human beings, ²⁴ being ° aware that from the Lord =you will be getting° the compensation of the enjoyment of an allotment: for the Lord Christ are =you slaving. ²⁵ For he `who is injuring shall be `requited° for that which he injures, and there `is no/ partiality.

4 Masters, `tender° that which is righteous and `equitable to your `slaves, being ° aware that =you´ also `have a Master in the heavens.

² In `prayer be persevering, watching in it `with thanksgiving, ³ praying° at the same time concerning us also, that `God should open for us a door of the word, to speak the secret of `Christ, because of which I am `bound° also, ⁴ that I should make it manifest, as I `must speak. ⁵ In wisdom be walking toward `those outside, reclaiming° the era, ⁶ =your `word being always `with grace, °seasoned° with salt, perceiving how =you `must `answer° each one.

⁷ All my °ac affairs shall be made `known to =you by Tychicus, a `beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord, ⁸ whom I send to^d =you °for this same thing, that =you may know that which concerns =you and he should be consoling =your `hearts, ⁹ together with Onesimus, a `faithful and beloved brother, who `is one ° of =you. They shall make `known to =you all things `here.

¹⁰ Greeting° =you is Aristarchus, my `fellow captive, and Mark, `cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom =you obtain directions: if he should come to^d =you, receive° him), ¹¹ and Jesus, `termed° Justus, `who `are ° of the Circumcision. These are the only fellow workers °for the kingdom of `God who^a become a solace to me.

¹² Greeting° =you is Epaphras, `who is one ° of =you, a slave of Christ Jesus, always struggling° °vfor =you in `prayers, that =you may stand mature and fully °assured° in °all the will of `God. ¹³ For I am testifying of him that he `has much misery over =you and `those in Laodicea and `those in Hierapolis.

¹⁴ Greeting° =you is Luke, the beloved `physician, and Demas. ¹⁵ Greet° the brethren in Laodicea, and Nympha and the ecclesia °c at her house. ¹⁶ And whenever the epistle should be read ^bto =you, ^{do} cause that it should be read in the Laodicean ecclesia also, and that =you´ also may read that out of Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus: “Look to the service which you accept in the Lord, that you may be fulfilling it.” ¹⁸ The salutation is by my `hand—Paul’s. `Remember my `bonds!

°Grace be with =you! Amen!

EDITORIAL NOTES

WE GIVE special attention to Paul’s letter to the Colossians in this issue. It begins on page 2, in place of the usual poem, with the Framework as used in the first edition of the Concordant Version. Its usefulness is especially noted on page 19 under the subheading, THE LITERARY STRUCTURE.

The revised CV of Colossians as it currently stands follows. Changes in 2:12 are of particular interest. The terms “Entombed together” and “are roused together” both reflect what we recognize now as *fact* verb forms, where the fact of the action is emphasized irrespective of the time. Furthermore, the phrase, “through faith *in* the operation of God” is changed to a more literal rendering of the Greek: “through the faithfulness *of* the operation of God.” To be roused together in Christ is certainly a matter of faith, and indeed of our faith. But here Paul points to God’s faith in His faithful operation of rousing.

In accord with Brother Knoch’s desire that the CV translation be an ongoing project, he himself discusses on pages 13-19, changes made in Ephesians 1:15-17 from the first edition (called the “Complete Edition”) to the later editions. In this case, he maintained that the original thought was correct, but not well expressed in English idiom and according to the Concordant principle of consistency.

Along with, and beyond such matters, may we all be rejoicing in the revelations of “the Christ of Colossians.” D.H.H.

HIS GRANDEST GLORIES

CHRIST and His highest honors come before us in Colossians, even as the *saints* and their celestial blessings are the theme of Ephesians. There the transcendent truths of the present secret administration were set forth as they affect the believers among the nations, who become peers of an election out of Israel in spiritual, supernal dignities. Here these tremendous truths are a halo on the brow of *Christ*. His glories as the Messiah of Israel on the earth are magnified to universal dimensions. *All is created* in Him in the beginning, and *all* is reconciled in Him at the consummation (Col.1:16-20). On earth, at present, He is not confined to Israel in flesh, but, in spirit, is found *among the nations*. This is the basis of their future bliss (Col.1:27).

Colossians and Ephesians are very similar, for they teach the same truth, though from different standpoints. To fully appreciate and enjoy these epistles, which are two of the most precious portions of God's revelation for us in this secret administration, it is necessary that we clearly grasp the distinctive view presented in each. Even as Philippians can only be understood in the light of *service*, so Colossians can only be clear to those who see that it deals with *Christ's* relation to the present, even as Ephesians was especially concerned with the place of the *saints*, especially the Uncircumcision.

In reference to the body of Christ the two epistles are complementary. In Ephesians the emphasis is on the *members* of the body, while Colossians presses *Christ's headship* over the ecclesia. Ephesians elaborates the relation of the members to God and to one another, as well as to

Ephesians and Colossians are Complementary 11

Christ Himself. Colossians is largely confined to our connection with Him alone.

In Ephesians, the bulk of the epistle is concerned with an orderly and positive presentation of the truth. Colossians, however, devotes the corresponding space to the correction of departures from it.

Ephesians is general, with no local allusions. Colossians is concerned with a special situation, and a particular ecclesia.

In Ephesians the previous disabilities of the nations *in flesh*, alienated, guests, without prospects, far off (Eph. 2:11-13) are used to form a contrast to their present *spiritual* privileges as fellow-citizens, members of God's family, with a part in the temple (Eph.2:19,20). In Colossians this contrast is replaced by comparing Christ's limited glories in Israel, *in flesh*, with His vast *spiritual* glories among the nations and in the entire universe. This contrast is not directly expressed, as in Ephesians, but is evident in the figures of the kingdom (Col.1:13), and the startling announcement that He is *among the nations* (Col.1:27) whereas He would not leave the land during His ministry to Israel, before His crucifixion.

In Ephesians the body of Christ is the complement of the universe (Eph.1:23). In Colossians we are complete in Him. There the ecclesia is the final factor in bringing all under the headship of Christ. On the earth His headship is exercised through His apostles and the holy nation. These are, figuratively speaking, His "filling" on earth, who share His spiritual might and majesty, and so are, officially, a part of Him. The ecclesia which is His body has the same function in His celestial dominions. These two, earth and heaven, constitute the universe, so that no more "filling" is needed to administer all creation. Hence we are the final "filling," the *plērōma*, or complement, that which fully fills, so that no more is needed. The adminis-

tration of the universe is amply provided for, both on earth and in the heavens.

In Colossians Christ is a double Complement. He is all that God needs (Col.2:9), and all that we need (Col.2:10), to be complete. God needs a visible and tangible expression suited to the capacities of His creatures, and Christ fulfills this fully by means of the body in which He came to do His will (Heb.10:5).

We, also, find our Complement in Him. All the rites and ceremonies pertaining to the flesh, such as circumcision and baptism, which were deemed essential to a standing before God, are now found in His death, His burial, and His rousing. What *He has done*, not what *we do*, fully equips us for the divine presence. In Ephesians, *we* are the complement of all, but in Colossians *He* is our Complement.

In time, our choice is carried back to before the disruption (Eph.1:4). Christ is carried back to creation, for He is the Firstborn (Col.1:15). Our blessings are among the celestials. *All* was created in and through and for Him (Col.1:16). We are joint-members of the body (Eph.3:6). He is Head of the body (Col.1:18). We, as His complement, *complete* the universe (Eph.1:23). He uses the entire complement to *reconcile* the universe to God (Col.1:20). In Ephesians the secret consists of the *joint*-enjoyment of the allotment among the celestials, the *joint*-membership in the body, and *joint*-participation in the promises by the *saints* among the nations. In Colossians the same truth is expressed by putting *Christ among* the nations, instead of in Israel, to whom He has hitherto been confined (Col.1:27).

The secret of Christ, that He is to head up the entire universe (Eph.1:10) had been partially made known to the prophets of old, though not in its fullness, "as it is now revealed" (Eph.3:5). That part of this secret which they made known, His messiahship to Israel, is used as a back-

ground in this epistle. His future kingdom in the new earth is used to figure His present spiritual dominion, "the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col.1:14). His future presence in Israel, constituting them the ruling nation, finds its parallel in His present spiritual presence among the nations, constituting them His complement for the future administration of His celestial realms (Col.1:27; Eph.1:21-23).

"YOUR FAITH" AND "ACCORDING-TO YOU^p FAITH"

Colossians is by no means a repetition of Ephesians. Even those paragraphs which seem to be parallel have minute variations which, when sympathetically examined, will show how exquisite the separate details harmonize with the special subject of the whole. Thus, in Colossians, we read of "*your* faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints" (Col.1:4), which is very simple and readily understood. Why then, in Ephesians, should we find "the *according-to you* faith, and the [faith] for all the saints" (Eph.1:15)? The Authorized Version renders both "your," but the Revisers, who were keen in such matters, changed it to "which is *among you*." One of the best German versions reads "*in you*." Another has "*with you*," but puts "*concerning you*" in the margin, as the real translation. Luther has "*with you*." The YOU is plural (*p*).

Before examining the evidence, let us remind ourselves that Ephesians is devoted to setting forth precisely what this marginal reading ("concerning you") suggests, that is, the special faith which concerns us in this administration as distinct from the truth for other times, and, besides, it seems to have no special bearing on any particular group of saints (as the Ephesians), unless this passage is so interpreted. If all the saints in Christ Jesus are before us, and the apostle refers to that body of faith which is especially theirs, then this peculiar wording, "the *according-to you* faith" is not only fitting but necessary to express his thought.

But, if he is simply referring to the faith exercised by the special group whom he addresses, then the simple “*your* faith,” as in Colossians, is appropriate. One phrase fits Ephesians, the other Colossians.

But how should THE according-to YOU (*tên kath humas*) be translated? That it should not be rendered simply “your,” as in the Authorized Version, seems beyond question, first, because this is the regular rendering of the simple genitive pronoun OF-YOUP (*humōn*), which occurs ever so often, and concerning which there is never any difference of opinion. Consequently the *accusative* pronoun, with the connective DOWN (*according-to* with the accusative), a combination which occurs but seldom, should at least be translated otherwise in order to preserve the distinction. In order to help us to arrive at a clear conception of the nature of this special phrase in Greek we present a number of passages in which this same combination is found, grouped according to the nature of the context, which helps to determine the translation into English.

THE *according-to* YOU or ME

Acts 24:22 [Felix] shall investigate *your affairs*
 Eph. 6:21 may become acquainted with *my affairs*
 Phil. 1:12 *my affairs* have rather come
 Col. 4: 7 All *my affairs* shall be made known.

This group seems to sustain the idea that it does not refer to possessions so much as to things pertaining to the person in question. Felix would investigate the circumstances leading to Paul’s arrest and the charges against him. The saints would wish to be informed of Paul’s case at court. Paul’s faith would hardly be included in the reports, as this is contained in the letters themselves.

THE *according-to* [SOMETHING]

1 Tim. 6: 3 teaching in *accord with* devoutness
 Titus 1: 1 truth which *accords with* devoutness
 Heb. 11: 7 righteousness which *accords with* faith

In these passages *harmonious relation* is expressed plainly by the connective which we are considering. Teaching and truth cannot possess devoutness but they should never conflict with it. Righteousness cannot have faith, but it can be in accord with it. From these passages we may see clearly that mere possession is not in view when this connective is used.

THE *according-to* YOU [SOMETHING]

Acts 17:28 some poets *of yours* have declared
 18:15 questions about . . . a *law of yours*,
 Eph. 1:15 the faith which *relates to you* [this faith *of yours*]

Here we have the closest parallels to our text. Certain Greek poets sustained a relation to Paul’s hearers, and the law was related to the Jews as this faith was related to those who received Paul’s epistle. The law reference is especially helpful, for we are well acquainted with the relation of the law to the Jews. It applied particularly to them and to no others, which seems to be the special point of the passage, for Gallio would not judge according to a law not pertaining to his jurisdiction.

The question of idiomatic translation alone remains. The phrase “of yours,” is a peculiar English idiom, in which two signs of the genitive (*of* and *-s*) are added to a word already genitive (*your*), giving it, not only emphasis, but a vague kind of relativity. This seems to serve very well in connection with the law, as most readers are more or less clear that it was exclusively for the Jews. It would also serve in Ephesians if it were as well known that *the* faith which it reveals relates exclusively to the saints today. Would “this faith of yours” convey the same impression as “this law of yours?” It is questionable, but it may be wise to use it to secure uniformity.

The expression “according-to” does not always comply with the demands of English idiom, as these examples

abundantly show. Hence it is necessary at times to use substitutes, as “suited to” (1 Cor.12:31), “savor of,” “corresponding to,” “relate to,” as was done in this passage (Eph. 1:15). In view of the following sentence, “and that for all the saints,” however, which should make its meaning clear, we are considering the rendering “of yours,” which will be uniform with the two other occurrences, and avoid the use of the word “relates” in this single passage. Then it will read, “Therefore, *I* also, hearing of this faith *of yours* and that for all the saints . . .”

In passing, let us note that the phrase “when hearing” is not intended as a mark of *time*. A participle is a tenseless verbal adjective. Hence we use *when* to make it *indefinite*. The very highest authorities and Greek scholars, as well as one version, give the participle a “present” force, but this is utterly untenable, although English idiom compels the addition of the present verb in many passages. Here is where a sublinear should help. The Keyword edition has all these verbs in lightface because they are not in the Greek. “On hearing” or “when hearing” show the basis of Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer.

Perhaps the idiomatic “*on* hearing” would show this best. The point is that he could not thank or pray as he did until first he had heard. In Colossians he heard of their faith and love. In Ephesians the faith was revealed to him apart from any particular group of saints, and leads to petitions which apply to all the saints of this administration.

It remains to add a few words as to the Greek text in this passage. We do not, as a rule, countenance the many omissions in the text used by the Revisers, merely because a word is not found in Vaticanus. Here most manuscripts add the words “the love” in the following sentence thus: “your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints” (AV). But the most ancient, the three used in compiling the CONCORDANT VERSION, did not have these words. They

were added by a later editor in Sinaiticus. On many occasions the additions of this editor are of great value. But in Ephesians he seems to be recording the attempts of early expositors to make this epistle understandable after its message was lost. So that his addition of “the love” in this place lacks the weight which his notations usually have.

The thought that we have a special faith is so foreign to theology that this passage has caused much perplexity to translators. The Revisers have added the words *ye shew*, thus: “the faith which is among you, and which [ye shew] toward all the saints.” But how can we show faith to the saints? If this is the individual faith of the believer rather than that which they believe, then this should be rendered *into* or *in*. But how could they have faith *in* the saints? The passage can hardly be understood or translated so long as the faith exercised by each one is in view. But once we see that this rare and peculiar expression is used to indicate the things to be believed by them alone, as the law was to be obeyed by Israel alone, and in each case was in accord with their peculiar place in God’s purpose, all is clear.

With this beginning of Paul’s prayer the following petitions, for a spirit of wisdom and revelation, possess much more point. He prays, in fact, that they may be enabled to comprehend what he writes to them in this epistle. That this is most appropriate is evidenced by the fact that, even if it was understood by its first recipients, there is very little to show that it has ever been apprehended since by any considerable number of saints. It has seldom been accorded its proper place by teachers of the Word. The apostasy from Paul started in his lifetime and has continued ever since.

When the true import of this phrase first dawned upon me it seemed to me that I had discovered a key to the epistle, and I was greatly concerned to give it a clear expression in the version. Hence the rendering “the faith which

relates to you," which still seems to me better than any other I have since seen. But my zeal led me too far in the following petitions, where I made the indefinite pronoun *auton* (OF-it or -Him) refer to this faith. Logically and indirectly I am still convinced of this, but grammatically the word *faith* is feminine in Greek and would be referred to as *her* (*autês*). It would be *her* realization, *her* calling, *her* allotment, *her* power (Eph.1:17-19).

There is a problem in Greek grammar which deserves further study. The so-called *neuter* forms are not confined to *things*, so the CONCORDANT VERSION has changed the name to *indefinite*. For instance, the article *ta*, indefinite plural, is responsible for the word *things* ten times in the Revised Version of Colossians 1:16-20. And yet it seems clear that impersonal *things* are not at all in view, especially as regards reconciliation. So also, in such expressions as *the stupid*, *the weak* (foolish *things*, weak *things*, RV, 1 Cor.1:27) it is certainly evident that *things* are not meant, for they are not stupid. It is clear that, in these passages, the indefinite *includes* the other genders. At one time I considered this sufficient ground for the rendering *its* in place of *His* in Ephesians 1:17-19, but now I freely confess that it is inadequate, and so have changed the version to *His* in these verses.

This correction, however, does not affect the rendering of "according-to you," in the beginning of the prayer. Whether the apostle prays that the *faith* may be realized, or *God*, Who gives the faith, comes to much the same result. Whether it is the expectation of *its* call or *His* in it, is not vital. Whether it is the riches of the glory of *its* or *His* allotment, is the same, for in either case it is *His*. And, even if not expressly limited to the faith by the grammar, all of this which we have from God is nevertheless within the boundaries of the faith to which the apostle refers before commencing his petitions. The call is not God's call to Israel,

but to us, and the expectation and allotment and power is *in accord with* (*kata*), celestial glory unknown before.

THE LITERARY STRUCTURE

A grasp of the controlling theme of an epistle greatly aids in its apprehension. The same is true of its parts. When we are sure of the subject of any section its interpretation is safer and more satisfactory. And when we can get a view of the whole epistle at a glance, showing the symmetrical relation of its parts, our dull minds are relieved, and our eyes are opened to the special subject of each section, and its relation to the whole, or, perhaps, a similar section in the corresponding member, and its contrasts as well as its likenesses. A casual reading of Colossians will hardly discover the symmetry of its structure or the exquisite relation of its parts, so we reprint the structure for those who may not have seen it before (*cf* p.2).

Within the salutations, and the mutual reports, one at each end, we find the body of the epistle, which deals with the *secret of Christ*, that great revelation concerning Him which had been hitherto withheld or only partially made known, but is now necessary, since the saints have a place among the celestials. Twice is this secret the subject, once in reference to its realization by us, and, near the end, in connection with its expression to others. Between these two come correction in doctrine and in deportment. Perhaps we might come closer to the facts if we further characterized these as *warning* in reference to teaching, and *exhortation* as to walk.

THE SECRET OF CHRIST IN EPHESIANS

It will be seen from this that the controlling theme is the secret of Christ, just as the framework of Ephesians shows that it is concerned with the secret of this administration. Before entering upon our studies in Colossians

it may be well to see what Ephesians has already revealed on this theme, for it is there that we read of the secret of Christ for the first time, and there we have clear indications, not only of its contents, but also of its relation to the present administration of God's grace. It were well if we had these two secrets distinct in our minds before we enter into Colossians.

The first intimation of the secret of Christ in the Ephesian epistle is found in that marvelous opening effusion in which God's blessedness is the keynote of a symphony of blessings for us, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavishes on us, in all wisdom and prudence, making known to us the *secret of His will* . . . to head up *all* in the Christ—in the heavens as well as on the earth. Hitherto the headship of Christ had been confined to the earth. His heavenly headship had been kept secret. But now that an election out of the earth is to share His celestial glories, these must be made known. This, then, is the essence of the secret of Christ—*His universal headship*. Not only is He to have the throne of David, and be King of kings upon the earth, but He will reign throughout the starry spheres, including all creation.

Once more, at the end of the first chapter of Ephesians, when praying that we may perceive the transcendent greatness of the power which operates on our behalf, we are reminded of the mighty strength which roused Christ from among the dead and seated Him at God's right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is future: and subjects *all* under His feet. This is the Ephesian aspect.

Here we have still further light. The throne of David is still vacant. The Son of Mankind has not yet taken His seat as earth's Suzerain. He was rejected on earth, but He was acclaimed in the heavens. There He already has the highest

place, at the right hand of the throne of God, though all may not yet respond (1 Peter 3:22). All varieties of heavenly government are subordinate to His sway. There is no name above that of the despised Nazarene. From the accursed cross, beneath the lowest dregs of earth, He has ascended to the highest heights of heaven. Even now He has this place in heaven, and in the eons to come He will include the earth in His universal sway. That Messiah should be Head in heaven even before He took earth's sovereignty was part of the secret hitherto unknown.

Such is the side of the secret of Christ which is set forth in Ephesians. As we shall see, much more is revealed in Colossians, because Ephesians treats of it only insofar as it makes contact with the main theme, which is another secret. This is why, when the apostle comes to make a categorical statement of the three items which characterize the present administration, he prefaces it with a brief allusion to the secret of Christ (Eph.3:3,4). Referring to the passages we have just been considering, he says, "(according as I write before, in brief, by which you who are reading are able to apprehend my understanding in the secret of the Christ, which, in other generations, is not made known to the sons of humanity as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets)."

That these words refer to the secret of Christ, in contrast to the secret administration which is defined in the following words, is clear from the phrase "in brief." The secret administration had been set forth *at length*. Almost all of the preceding chapters was devoted to its details. Hence it was by no means brief. But the two allusions to the secret of Christ (Col.1:10,20-22) were very short, and gave only that side of this secret which was in point. So, likewise, "as it is now revealed" fits the secret of Christ, for the prophets had spoken of His earthly headship. But

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it cannot apply to the secret administration, as that was absolutely unknown. No apostle or prophet could have had any inkling of it.

Such is the sum of our knowledge of this secret before we come to Colossians. It was concerned almost wholly with the future. It was limited largely to His relations to the ecclesia which is His body. He will be Head of all. The holy nation will rule the earth in His name. The ecclesia which is His body will be His administrator in celestial spheres. Thus the whole universe will find their Head in Him.

Colossians reveals the secret of Christ in all its fullness. It is not briefly set forth, in relation to the special faith which is ours in Christ, but fully revealed, in relation to all creation, on earth as well as among the celestials, including the nations, as well as Israel, the celestial hosts as well as the members of His body. He is not only Israel's Messiah, and the Saviour of the nations, but the Head of the entire universe and the Reconciler of all.

In Him dwells the Complement of the Deity. At the beginning all is created through Him and at the Consummation all is reconciled through the blood of His cross. And in the eons of the eons He will be the supreme and only Head of all.

O that God would enlarge the hearts of His holy ones to make room for the Christ of Colossians! Some of our hearts, alas, are so shrunk, that we welcome Him only as our own personal Saviour. Even this overflows its narrow confines. May His spirit expand it, by His grace, to give Him His place as Israel's Redeemer, as the Saviour of all mankind, as the Head of all creation, and the Reconciler of all who are stranged from God! Only such a Christ can satisfy the heart of God. Only such a Christ should satisfy our own hungry hearts.

A. E. Knoch

INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION

Colossians 1:1-2; 4:10-18

PAUL—what a wealth of grace and overwhelming glory fills our hearts at the very mention of his name! He was the erstwhile enemy of Christ and rabid persecutor of His people, who hunted them down even in distant Damascus. In an instant the glory of Christ stops him in his mad career, and wins his heart, henceforth to worship and work for Him alone. Can grace ever gain a more splendid trophy than Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, yet supreme among the saints? But how much greater was the grace that still awaited him! From glory to glory God led him on, until he reaches the highest honor ever accorded a mortal, for he is the vessel chosen to fill up God's Word and to reveal God's latest secrets, the fruit of His highest thoughts and His deepest love.

Paul presents himself in this epistle as an apostle, for he has been commissioned, and has authority to write and set forth the truths and reveal the secrets which it contains. Apostles are in the foundation (Eph.2:20). These were needed to form a solid substratum for God's operations among mankind. Paul appears alone as apostle in his salutations, especially in those in which his authority is necessary to certify to his words. Yet he sometimes associates others with him, in other capacities. In Colossians, as in second Corinthians, "brother" Timothy joins in the salutation. He is not seen as an apostle, but simply as a brother in the faith.

CHRIST JESUS and Jesus Christ—what a vast difference

between these two titles, though one is merely a transposition of the other! Jesus Christ is the humble, despised, rejected, crucified Messiah. His glories wait until the future, at the time of His return to earth. At present He has no place down here. But Christ Jesus! Already He is highest in the heavens. Seated at the right hand of God, there is no dignity to equal His. All might and power, all sovereignty and authority among the celestials is centered in Him. There He is not humbled, but honored! There He is not despised, but praised! There He is not rejected, but acclaimed! There He is not crucified, but glorified! We hail Him, not only as the coming King upon the earth, but as the present Head of all celestial might and majesty! Hail! Christ Jesus!

THROUGH THE WILL OF GOD

The will of God is the positive pole of the divine intention. God is carrying out His great purpose of revealing His heart by means of two contrary currents during the eons. The mutual reaction of these upon each other accomplish His purpose. One current coincides with His will. The other goes counter to it. One movement is headed by Christ. The other is led on by Satan. Saul of Tarsus, before he met the Lord, was fulfilling the divine intention, for he was preparing the black background on which alone the highlights of God's grace could be displayed. But he was going counter to God's will. After his call, Ananias said to him, "the God of our fathers selects you to know His will" (Acts 22:14).

A true apostle must come through the will of God and conform to that will in his words and works. Thus all is traced back to the divine volition. The source of all is found in God's love and its determination to win a response through its activity on our behalf. God wants our love, hence wishes us to know His will. The apostle's first prayer

opens with this petition: That you may be filled with the realization of His will (1:9). This is a root which bears much fruit. Without it our walk will lack those qualities which are dear to God's heart. Wisdom and understanding, as well as a fruitful walk, must grow out of an apprehension of God's will.

TO THE BRETHREN IN COLOSSE

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

The recipients of this epistle are distinguished by two tokens—holiness and faith. On God's side they were saints, hallowed by contact with Him. On the human side they had believed in Christ. The title here may be Christ Jesus, as in Alexandrinus, to accord with Ephesians. As the apostle has connected his apostleship with this title, this must be the same in shortened form. This epistle was not sent to all saints without discrimination. In those days there were still some of the Circumcision, as we shall see, to whom Paul was not sent, whose faith did not lay hold of Christ as at present, exalted, but who looked forward to His future rule upon the earth. The faith of the Colossians is expressly said to be in Christ Jesus (1:4).

Faithfulness and trust are the accompaniments of belief.

In the original there are no distinct terms for them. By the figure of association the Greek uses *believing* for *faithful* throughout. Thus, in this very epistle, Paul refers to Tychicus as “a beloved brother and *believing* servant” (4:7). Because belief produces fidelity it is used for it in a figure. English itself has this figure, though it is faded. What is *faithful* if not full of faith, or belief? Yet it has come to mean *trustworthy, dependable*, and the word *believing* is reserved for its literal sense. As we have seen, we must use *faithful* with service, yet when this is not clearly in view it may be better to use *believing*. In connection with *brethren*, believing is probably better, inasmuch as this epistle is not especially devoted to service.

THE INVOCATION

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

We should make more of His grace. Not only should it warm our own hearts at all times, but it should pervade our walk and our service. Oh, how great a transformation would it work in the heralding of the evangel, if it were presented in its purity and power! Grace that Saul encountered on the Damascus road. Grace that Paul received to serve the

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

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

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

THE CONCLUSION

The conclusion of Colossians (4:10-18) consists of greetings whose range corresponds to that of the epistle, as well as Paul’s special greetings and directions. The greetings of the group from the Circumcision come first. Christ’s head-

ship over the earth is a part of the secret of Christ, and was first revealed, hence it is in keeping with this epistle to bring in three who are associated with Him in this phase of the kingdom. The transition from the heralding of His earthly kingdom to the present is an interesting yet intricate subject. Perhaps there are a few indications here which may help us to understand the place of the believing Circumcisionists when the nation becomes caloused (Rom.11:25) and the heart of the people is made stout (Acts 28:27).

At first glance there seems to be no particular reason for bringing in the characters here presented. Yet one cannot help being struck with their diversity. First we have Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus, who are definitely said to be of the Circumcision. Then there is Epaphras, fully of the nations. Then there is Luke, who supposedly was closely associated with the Circumcision before the secret of Christ's heavenly headship was made known. May not these be representative of the classes to which they belong? What is said of them is worth the closest attention. And what is *not* said of them, but of the others, is equally striking.

THE CIRCUMCISIONISTS

Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus are said to be *ek peritomês* OUT OF-Circumcision. Does this mean that they had come out from the Circumcision, as Paul had, or were *still of* the Circumcision? The English might easily suggest the former. This can best be settled by studying the same expression elsewhere. The following passages will show that it clearly denotes those who are *still of* the Circumcision. This is very striking in view of the injunction of the apostle in this very epistle to strip off the old humanity and to put on the young, wherein there is no circumcision (3:9-11). It seems that we must take these Circumcisionists as such.

ek peritomês, OUT OF-Circumcision

Acts	10:45	the believers <i>of</i> the <i>Circumcision</i> . . . with Peter
	11: 2	those <i>of</i> the <i>Circumcision</i> doubted [Peter]
Rom.	4:12	not to those <i>of</i> the <i>Circumcision</i> only
Gal.	2:12	fearing those <i>of</i> the <i>Circumcision</i>
Titus.	1:10	especially those <i>of</i> the <i>Circumcision</i>

The Circumcisionists connected with Peter had certainly not come *out* of the Circumcision, but were insistent on the rite, not only for themselves, but for the nations also. Their charge against Peter was, "You enter to men having uncircumcision, and you eat together with them!" (Acts 11:3). So that there is a strong presumption that here, in this universal epistle, we have a group of men representative of the kingdom. And, indeed, does not the apostle actually connect them with the kingdom, using the very terms with which the book of Acts describes this ministry (Acts 28:31)?

The more we consider these three Circumcisionists, who are honored with a place in this epistle, the more we are impressed with the fact that they were not taken at random, but specially chosen to represent the Circumcision as a whole, that is, the believers among them, for whom the epistle to the Hebrews was especially written. The mention of Barnabas suggests the gradual introduction and exemplification of the truth through him and Paul and Timothy and Titus and Onesimus, as has already been set forth in the study "From the Levite to the Slave." May not these men be chosen to set forth the opposite, the declension of the Circumcision, and their state, now that the nation is callous?

ARISTARCHUS

Aristarchus, if, indeed, it is the same man, was a Macedonian of Thessalonica (Acts 27:2; 20:4; 19:29). But, as this is mentioned expressly elsewhere, and not brought in here,

we should leave it out of consideration. There could easily be several men of the same name. The point to press is his Greek name and its meaning. He must have belonged to the dispersion. His name signifies "best-chief," a title well suited to the Circumcision among the nations, for, in the kingdom, they will rule among them. But, alas, he is in prison! He is a captive! Politically, he has no authority whatever. Is not this a realistic picture of the kingdom at present, politically?

MARK

Mark brings before us quite a different picture. His name is not Greek, but Roman. He is especially related to Barnabas, the Levite. He does not represent the place of the Circumcision *over* the nations, but as *serv*ing the nations. In this they failed utterly. They opposed Peter as well as Paul in every attempt to bring salvation to the aliens. Mark, indeed, was not so bad as that. He left Jerusalem and went with Barnabas and Saul to Antioch, and started with them on their first missionary journey. Yet "John," as Mark is called, left them at Perga, Pamphylia, and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Paul and Barnabas had been chosen by the *spirit* (Acts 13:2), while Mark had been chosen because he was related to Barnabas in the *flesh*. He is representative of the Circumcision in their failure to *serve* the nations.

It would appear that he was not very welcome in Colosse, and would not have been received by them without special directions from the apostle. Surely we can understand this sentiment among the ecclesias which had received the truth of the present secret administration through Paul. Mark would have much to give concerning the life of Christ in the past and His glories in the future, but evidently did not go along with Paul, either literally or figuratively, while they had gone on to maturity. There is a strong inclination,

in such a case, to break off all fellowship, just as there is a tendency to cut all connection between this administration and the past on the part of those who first begin to grasp its glories. But let us remember that, in the secret of Christ, the terrestrial as well as the celestial is needed, and they have Him as their common Head.

Let us then, in spirit, receive Mark, that is accept his ministry, as, indeed, we may by using his account of our Lord's life, if, indeed, the tradition is correct that he wrote it. But let us note, at the same time, that the Circumcision, who should have been the teachers of the nations, were not welcome in the early ecclesias, and almost lost their place of service.

At the present time, it would probably be quite otherwise. Mark would be received with open arms. Was he not an inspired penman? No need to write ahead lest he be not received. Cloudy conceptions of Circumcision truth, with a dash of heaven to flavor it, is the staple diet of most of Christendom.

In Mark we see the Circumcision serving us. Although they belong to a different administration and have another destiny, we cannot get along without their help. Paul's epistles need all the other writings as a background. Do they not give us the details of God's dealings with the earth and Israel? Without these even the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus could not be fully apprehended. This aspect corresponds closely to the figure of the olive tree, in which the wild boughs are partakers of the root and fatness of the tree. As a light producer, Israel continues to function, through the oracles committed to them, although it comes through the nations who temporarily displace them in the olive tree.

JESUS, TERMED JUSTUS

The third in the group of the Circumcisionists has a purely Jewish name; indeed, it is the name above every name,

the personal name of their Messiah. Probably “Jesus” was deemed too sacred to be commonly used, so he was given another, and called Justus. The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, Yahweh the Saviour. This is the name by which Israel will be saved, for Yahweh alone can save them. But, alas! even believers in Israel did not trust wholly in Him, but in the law and their physical rights as members of the chosen nation. And what better name for this than the Latin Justus, from *jus*, law, right, justice? Therefore salvation was taken from the nation and is heralded to the nations (Acts 28:28). They must learn God’s righteousness now, before they experience His salvation.

These only of Paul’s fellow workers for the kingdom of God became a solace to Paul. Many others of Paul’s fellow workers were far more than a comfort to him, so we must restrict this to the Circumcision and the kingdom. No doubt there were many of the Circumcision who had heralded the kingdom, but nearly all seemed to oppose Paul and his ministry, and were a menace to the ecclesias among the nations, with their insistence on law-keeping and religious rites. How much there may lie behind that word “solace!” The Jews had done much to distort the evangel of Christ, and caused Paul much misery. But these three seem to have been of a different spirit, so that he could cooperate with them in those things which they had in common.

I take this as a little foretaste of the time to come, when the terrestrial and celestial will be in fullest harmony under their mutual Head. For the present, however, I take it that this delightful miniature portrays to us the fortunes of the Circumcision in the present administration. Politically they are captives, not rulers. The kingdom cannot be heralded. In service their testimony is to be received. But they have lost their salvation. And is not this the exact counterpart of what we have at the close of Acts?

There seems to be a general impression that any gospel may be preached at any time. Not so! Even the present evangel of God’s grace would work havoc if heralded among the nations in the thousand years. Nor can the evangel of the kingdom be heralded today. First of all it must go to the people of the covenant first, apart from whom there can be no kingdom. And the last words to this people put them into a condition where they can neither hear nor see, lest God be healing them. God has given them a spirit of stupor. For nearly two thousand years they have been this way, and they are even more callous than they were. Herald the kingdom to them, and there would be no response. No one has any commission to herald it until this ban is removed.

Of course the church talks about “the kingdom” and appropriates quite a little of its setting in order to produce the grotesque caricatures which parade as churches in the world today. But few, if any, really herald the political side of the kingdom, and seek to open the eyes of the sons of Israel, so that they may accept its message, and so that the nations also may rejoice with His people. This would be the real kingdom evangel. Repentance and baptism are preached for the remission of sins, but how many consider this a passport into the millennium? Tatters are taken from the gospel of the kingdom and patched on to a self-made story, of many kinds and differing qualities, but nearly all land their devotees in heaven, not on earth. The gospel of the kingdom is not heralded today and no one believes it, hence, no one is won for the kingdom in this era of God’s grace.

But this does not cut us off from *everything* connected with the kingdom. Politically—and in this lies the essence of a kingdom—it is futile and false to herald the kingdom evangel. The Circumcision cannot hear, and there can be no blessing except as they are the channel of it. Now there

can be blessing apart from them, yet not in their kingdom. But, in other spheres, we have much in common. The One Who will be Head in the kingdom is already the Head in the empyrean. He Who will save Israel is already our Saviour.

A genuine kingdom evangel to the nations would insist on our subjection to the holy nation. It would promise no blessing except through and with them. So few have such an evangel that we may be sure that the kingdom evangel is as little preached today as the true one for this era. And if the destiny of the saints were dependent on the gospel they hear, almost all of them would need to be divided into several parts to match the fragments of evangels they have patched together. Since even the Ephesians needed Paul's prayer that they might perceive the prospect of their calling, so it is quite possible to have a calling and yet be in ignorance concerning its riches.

The evangel of the kingdom is not the fact that Christ will take over the rule of the earth with Israel as the leading nation, but that this is *near*. John the Baptist did not repeat what is written in the prophets, but prefixed his heralding with the *time* of its appearance. As it is in the Greek this has the emphasis: "*Near* has come the kingdom of the heavens!" (Matt.3:2). Our Lord repeated this with the same stress on the word *near* (Matt.4:17). The apostles had the same message at the beginning of Acts. "Repent, then, and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that the seasons of refreshing should be coming . . ." (Acts 3:19). This nearness recedes throughout the book, until, at the end, it is gone. Meanwhile Paul reveals a new secret, that it is *not* near, but must wait until the complement of the nations may enter (Rom.11:25).

EPAPHRAS

Epaphras is in striking contrast to the Circumcision. He was a Colossian, hence of the Uncircumcision, and is called

a *slave* of Christ Jesus. Though without any physical advantages, how high is his spiritual stature! He is called a faithful dispenser of Christ (1:7). Through him it was that the Colossians had heard the evangel, and now that he cannot serve them by his presence, he agonizes in prayer during his absence. Note the subject matter of his petitions. This shows how fully he was in line with God's thoughts and desires at the time. He wished them to stand *mature* and *fully assured* in *all* the will of God (4:12). It is for this that the gifts are given (Eph.4:11-14). Evangelists, pastors, and teachers should lead the saints from minority to maturity. Paul himself had prayed that they be filled with a realization of God's will (1:9).

Epaphras is a model for those whose hearts have been turned to the service of the saints. He did not *say* his prayers. How much of our praying is mere talk! Possibly he could not even put his petitions into words. To him it was a struggle, a contending. And he was in misery concerning those on whom his heart was set. It seems strange, at first, that he should be miserable. But those who have been in a similar position will not fail to understand and sympathize with him, especially in these days of declension and apostasy. It is heartbreaking to hear that those who once reveled in God's grace have been led aside and give place to human merit. It is bitter to hear of pride, dissension, division, where once the peace of God presided. Perhaps Epaphras had no such experiences, yet even in those days it meant much misery to bear a company of saints upon one's heart.

LUKE AND DEMAS

We are so accustomed to the idea that Luke is the writer of the account which bears his name, as well as the Acts, that we are tempted to connect these with him at all times. But it is a fact that the Scriptures themselves do not men-

tion his name in that connection. Hence we will not bring this in here. He was the most constant of all Paul's friends, for he remained when all others had left (2 Tim.4:11). No doubt, as a physician, he was helpful to Paul and others, for he seems to have been beloved as such. This is in contrast to the Circumcision evangel, and shows that it is no longer in force. It includes miraculous healing for the body, so that there was no place for a physician.

Demas is in direct contrast to Luke, for he abandoned Paul out of love for the current eon (2 Tim.4:11). Perhaps his name means *popular*, as *dêmos* is *populace*. May he not represent that vast company of believers who are so concerned not to go contrary to the good opinion of this eon that they cannot remain with Paul's teaching, if, indeed, they have ever known it? All Asia seems to have turned away from him during his imprisonment. Conformity to the times will surely separate from Paul. The whole history of Christendom shows that this became chronic, and only occasionally has there been a return to some of his teaching. And when a little is recovered it is soon abandoned once again. Let us all take this to heart. The danger of abandoning Paul is always present, and is usually popular, and we should guard against it.

LAODICEA

Because of the character of the message sent to the ecclesia in Laodicea (Rev.3:14) in the day of the Lord, the name has become a synonym for apostasy. But this should not be applied to the ecclesia of Paul's day. Nothing is said to indicate a low spiritual condition at that time. It seems to be brought in here in order to show the general character of this epistle. It could be read to them as well as to the Colossians.

Of the Laodicean letter from Paul we have no hint elsewhere in the Scriptures, so that some have supposed that

it was lost. But there are good grounds for the opinion that the epistle to the Ephesians is in view, for that, according to the best readings, has no definite address, and must have been put before *all* the saints in Christ Jesus, either by sending a copy direct, as to Laodicea, or by loaning, as in Colosse. As we have already seen, the epistles are complementary, and both are needed in order to bring the saints to maturity.

ARCHIPPUS

Paul calls Archippus a fellow soldier when writing to Philemon (2). But here he appears in the character of servant. He seems to have undertaken some special service, but was lax in carrying it out. Hence the gentle admonition of the apostle, which many of us may well take to ourselves. Has the Lord laid any special task on our heart? Sometimes it comes with irresistible force. There is an unshakable conviction that a certain work must be done and we must do it. It may be accompanied with a painful and humiliating consciousness of our own unfitness and inadequacy, and a foreboding of suffering and scorn, but it is evidently of the Lord, and such things characterize His service. But they dishearten and discourage. There is a continual temptation to leave the task undone, and escape the consequences. Nothing that we do is as well done as we would wish, so the only relief seems to be to drop it all. Perhaps it was so with Archippus. May the Lord give each one of us grace to fulfill the service which He has assigned to us!

THE SELF-WRITTEN SALUTATION

To this day much of the writing in the orient is done by professional scribes. While waiting in the post office of Smyrna, not so very far from Colosse, I saw a scribe write a letter for a woman, which she dictated. There is no doubt that Paul could write, for he makes a point of doing so at

the close of some of his epistles, in order to certify to their genuineness (2 Thess.3:17,18), for it seems that some had produced forgeries. Possibly he penned the whole of Galatians (Gal.6:11). It has been suggested that an eye infirmity made it difficult for him to write small enough. Be that as it may, Colossians has Paul's sign manual to show that it is genuine.

But he does not close with his signature. His heart is too full to refrain from a few more outbursts. And so he unburdens himself by adding "Remember my bonds! Grace be with you!" Great was his desire for sympathy in his sufferings, and that these should be understood in their relation to the truth. Paul's bonds are not merely an incident in his personal career. They became the standing symbol of God's relation to the world and of the place of the flesh in God's present work of grace, in contrast to the kingdom that is to come. Spiritual blessings among the celestials are ours, coupled with *no* special physical blessings among the terrestrials. And, as we thankfully accept Paul's wish that grace be with us, let us remember that it was with him in a superlative degree even in his imprisonment. Grace now, but glory in the future!

A. E. Knoch

GERTRUDE VENLET

My cousin Gertrude was to me much as I assume his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice were to young Timothy in acquainting him with the sacred scriptures (2 Tim.1:5; 3:15). Yet in accord with this era of the completed word (Col.1:25), the emphasis was always on the epistles of Paul. She, in turn, learned much from good teachers including her father, Howard Hough and husband, D. W. Venlet, and especially from the writings of A. E. Knoch. She passed along much spiritual grace through mailings, most significantly the small periodical entitled, *Faith Fellowship*. She died January 13, 2020 at age 95, in expectation of the "glorious appearing" of her Saviour "through the gloom," as she often expressed it in song.

D.H.H.

MUTUAL REPORTS

Colossians 1:3-8-4:7-9

NO PHYSICAL contact united Paul with the Colossians. They had never seen him, nor he them. Nevertheless, there was a deep mutual concern, so that each was informed of the other through intermediaries. Paul learned about the Colossians through Epaphras, who had them on his heart (1:7). The Colossians were informed of Paul's affairs through Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9), who were with Paul in Rome. This is in delightful harmony with the truth of this era, in which the physical has no place, yet there should be mutual concern and loving consideration.

Ephesians ascribes blessedness to God for His blessings. Philippians opens with thanksgiving for their contribution to the evangel. Colossians begins with thankfulness to God for their faith and love. In the first the blessedness lies in God alone, and depends only upon His own gracious operations, apart from their effect in the recipients, for, at the time, these wonderful revelations were unknown, so could not have borne fruit. Philippians goes back to their service under a former administration. So also in Colossians. That which they had heard *before* had produced faith in Christ Jesus and love toward all others who were hallowed by the same belief.

Thanksgiving and prayer go together (Phil.4:6). Especially at this juncture in the apostle's ministry we can understand how great would be his desire that these unknown believers, whose faith had been exemplified by their love to their fellow saints, should share "the expectation which

is reserved” for them “in the heavens” (Col.1:5), of which they had indeed heard, yet which was just then being fully revealed. Does not the same spirit of prayer well up within us when we hear of a company of believers? Do we not wish that we could share with them these glorious gratuities of grace? Do not our hearts yearn to bring them these blessings? No words may form on our lips, but, in spirit, we pray as Paul prayed for the Colossians.

Now are remaining, faith, expectation, love (1 Cor.13:13). These three graces greet us at the very threshold of Colossians (1:4,5): faith in Christ Jesus, love for all the saints, a heavenly expectation. Though one of the supreme triad of epistles, there are no wonder-working gifts, no “tongues,” no healing for the body. These are left behind in the era of minority. From the very first we are in the atmosphere of maturity. The three abiding graces form the only fit entrance into the present administration. Where they are found there are open hearts ready for the highest and best that God has to bestow.

Their faith was fixed on Christ Jesus, our ascended and glorified Lord, in His celestial exaltation. The importance of this can be realized only in the light of the subsequent revelation of their celestial destiny. The heralding of “Jesus Christ,” the rejected and returning Messiah, has glories all its own, but it is not a fit basis for a celestial allotment. Moreover our faith is of a more exalted, a more blessed kind. The Circumcision have a vast amount of tangible evidence to build upon. The powers and signs wrought by Christ and His apostles produced a faith which too often did not stand the test. How do we know that our allotment is in heaven? We have no evidence at all outside the bare Word of God. To such faith alone comes God’s highest revelation.

The love of the Colossians was true to its noble nature in that it included *all* of the saints. It was not called forth

by their good qualities or worthiness, but rested solely on a mutual relationship to God. We may well be fond of those of the saints whom we know and whose virtues call forth our appreciation. But it is our privilege to imitate God in that deeper and finer affection which flows out to those also who do not deserve to be loved in themselves, who, indeed, sometimes repel rather than attract. God finds the springs of love in His own heart, so that it flows forth to all His saints, in Christ. If He lavishes His love upon them, why should not we follow His example?

Paul prays for the Colossians because of the expectation which is reserved for them in the heavens. In a similar strain he had prayed in Ephesians for a spirit of wisdom and revelation that they might perceive the expectation of His calling (Eph.1:17,18). Like Ephesians, also, the scene of blessing is not left on earth but is immediately transferred to heaven (Eph.1:3). Philippians puts us in a heavenly realm (Phil.3:20). So these three ranking epistles unite in raising us above the terrestrial to our place supreme among the celestials. They are alone in this, although hints were not lacking in Paul’s previous epistles.

As a notable example of the many vital contrasts between Colossians and Ephesians, note the way in which their common expectation is put before us. In Colossians the matter is very simply presented: “the expectation . . . which you hear before” (YE-BEFORE-HEAR, *proêkousate*). In Ephesians, however, it is not *hearing before*, but *expecting*. Were this all, then we would have simply “you expect before” (YE-BEFORE-EXPECT). Instead it is the plural form of HAVING-BEFORE-EXPECTED, not a *verb*, but a *participle*, not a *fact*, but a *state*.

Years of investigation and experience has confirmed us in our classification of the Greek verb into three grand functions: *act*, *fact*, and *state* (it is writing, it writes, it has been, or is written). The lack of these distinctions

in current grammars is unscientific, and leads to confusion, which obscures vital differences in the text. Much clarity is attained and many differences vanish if we note whether a verb speaks of an action under way at a given time or a fact apart from time. So, also, it is a vast advantage to distinguish between these two and a verb which brings before us the *state* resulting from an action, and the *act* or mere *fact*. *It is written* is not the same as *it is writing* or *it writes*. So important do we deem these distinctions that they will be specially indicated throughout in the Keyword edition when the form is not standard. A vertical line will indicate an *'act*, a horizontal a *fact*, and a tiny circle the *state*.

The *state* resulting from an action, called the *complete* or *perfect*, indicated by HAVE in the sublinear of the CONCORDANT VERSION, has been made the subject of special investigations. While the STANDARD with HAVE seems to be the best for the sublinear, idiomatic English seems best served, as a rule, by forms like *it is written*, rather than *it has been written*. That is, the verb *is* or *are*, with an *adjective* describing the *state* is the clearest and most concise idiomatic equivalent for the so-called Greek "perfect." The Authorized Version has often used it most happily in the formula "it is written," and we have adopted this throughout (Matt.2:5). It often helps us in determining the best rendering if we turn it into this idiomatic form.

THE *ones-HAVING-BEFORE-EXPECTED* of Ephesians (1:12) may be resolved into *who are preexpectant*. The early editions of the CONCORDANT VERSION had *who are in a state of prior expectancy*, which amounts to the same thing. Though somewhat more explicit, it adds too many words which really belong in a grammar rather than in a version. So we are thinking of coining *preexpectant*. As the Greek is not a verb, the BEFORE does not tell us *when* the expecting occurs. Being a verbal *adjective*, it tells us

what *kind* of expecting it is. The thought in the mind of the writer of Ephesians is most uncommon, hence it has found expression in a word and form very seldom found. The *time* is *present*, a state in which those who received the epistle were when they received it. A past action is only implied and is not in point.

This is practically settled for us when we see that this state is *in Christ*. It refers to the future coming of *Christ* before He is expected by Israel as inducing a present state. We are now preexpectant, since we wait for Christ to come *before* His advent to Israel.

Ephesians is concerned with all the saints who had received Paul's special ministry, and he coins this term in order to describe them, for it most accurately summarizes what he had taught the Thessalonians (1 Thess.4:15) and Corinthians (1 Cor.15). It is to these that he submits his latest revelations.

THE WORD OF TRUTH OF THE EVANGEL

The so-called "genitive" case in Greek is one of the trials of the translator and interpreter, especially when it is doubled, as in "the word of truth of the evangel." As the English possessive covers part of the ground it is often possible to use it, especially when the article is lacking. For example, we may say "the word of God" or "God's Word" without any appreciable difference in sense. In fact it usually amounts to little more than an emphatic adjective, as in the eleventh verse of this chapter, "the might of His glory," which denotes that might which is associated with His glory, so, at the same time, is His glorious might.

Some phrases do not create any serious difficulty in English, as, for instance, "the word of truth," because we have become accustomed to them. Yet it is a question whether many really grasp their significance. What is "the word of truth?" If we change to the possessive, "truth's

word” it may be somewhat clearer. If we use an adjective, “the true word” the sense is much more definite, yet it insists that the word *is* true, while “the word of truth” refers to the word *as* truth.

Perhaps this can be seen better in the phrase “the truth of the evangel.” This means the same as “the evangel’s truth.” Here we have not that part of the evangel which is true (while other parts may be false), but the evangel *as* truth. Hence it must be the true evangel. A special case which has received much consideration is the phrase “the administration of the secret” (Eph.3:9). Even if we substitute the possessive, and read “secret’s administration” the English still persists in suggesting the *action* of administering the secret, while the Greek refers to the administration (not *of*) but pertaining to or characterized by the secret. We have sought to avoid this by rendering “secret administration,” but it may be wiser to translate as usual, and leave the explanation to the interpretation.

It is when there are *two* genitives that the question arises, how to make them intelligible to the English reader. The connective “of” is far too vague to give any definite idea of the relationship of the words to each other. If we could say “the word *dealing with* the truth *pertaining to* the evangel,” this might help, yet it would involve much interpretation on the part of the translator. “The true expression of the evangel” seems to be the nearest clear cut idiomatic rendering we can find, yet it may be wiser to follow the Greek idiom and leave the explanation to the interpreters.

In Ephesians we read that the saints of the Uncircumcision, on hearing “the word of truth, the evangel of your salvation” were sealed with the holy spirit (Eph.1:13). Colossians is corrective, so there is a special emphasis on the *truth*, in contrast to what is false. Not only did they hear “the word of *truth* of the evangel,” but through it they realized the grace of God in *truth* (1:7). As we will see when

we come to the doctrinal portion of the epistle, philosophy and tradition threatened to rob them of the truth. But they had heard the true evangel and received the true grace of God from Epaphras. They had commenced well.

As a dear old brother expressed it many years ago, most of the Lord’s saints are born in a fog. They listen to a “gospel,” consisting of some truth mixed with much error. The mere fact that God graciously saved them under it, gives this gospel a strong hold on them, and sanctifies its false elements along with the true. From the very beginning they are under a handicap, so that any great degree of truth is unattainable. How thankful should we be if, in our case, God has called us through an evangel which approximates the word of truth! How grateful should all those be who were brought to the knowledge of God where grace was dispensed in truth!

None of us may have listened to an Epaphras, or anyone who could compare with him as a faithful dispenser of Christ. That was a vital and a vigorous evangel! In the entire world it was growing and bearing fruit, not only in Colosse. In Christendom today it has degenerated into a religion or a philosophy, so that its vitality is largely gone, and its grace has vanished. But in those days it came to the nations with a freshness and pristine power which has seldom, if ever, been equaled since. Alas, how few of the most advanced saints have “realized the grace of God in truth!”

As Epaphras is related to Paul in service, he calls him his beloved *fellow slave*. In reference to the Colossians he is not their slave, but their *servant*, and so a *dispenser* of Christ to them. Perhaps his special characteristic lies in the fact that he was not satisfied to merely bring Christ to men for salvation, but he struggled in prayer that they might stand *mature* and *fully assured* in all the will of God (4:12). He it is who reports to Paul, and who makes evident to him their love in spirit. Doubtless this epistle is based

on his report, and is also an answer to Epaphras' prayers for the Colossians.

TYCHICUS REPORTS TO THE COLOSSIANS

In the complementary part of the epistle (4:7-9), a report goes from Paul to the Colossians, borne by two who are with him. Not much is said of these concerns in this epistle, as they belong in the sphere of service, and so are found in Philippians. However necessary it may have been for Paul to know about the Colossians, it was far more needful that they should know and understand the significance of the events which have befallen him as the prisoner of the Lord. Can we imagine with what tension the ecclesias established by Paul or on his teaching would watch the course of events which threatened to put an end to his career and, perhaps, utterly wipe out his testimony in the earth?

To the human eye the course of the apostle seemed to indicate the end of his career. It would leave the believers among the nations in a position of great perplexity. The contrary was the result. Paul's imprisonment led to the spread of the evangel, both by himself among the guard, and by others who were emboldened by his example. The status of the believers among the nations was fully cleared up by the revelation of the two secrets—that of Christ in Colossians, and of the new administration in Ephesians. The apostle explains much of this himself to the Philippians. He leaves it to others to do this to the Colossians and those who received the Ephesian epistle (Eph.6:21,22).

Tychicus, the fortunate, seems to have been the principal agent of the apostle in this matter. If Ephesians was a circular letter, he may have gone among the ecclesias in order to assure the saints that God was using the apparent evil in order to promote the evangel, and, at the same time was using the occasion in order to divulge His latest

and highest revelation, the supernal destiny of the nations, together with the lavish grace which characterizes the new administration which follows on the setting aside of Israel until the complement of the nations has come in.

In Ephesians Tychicus seems to be commissioned for the one purpose of making known *Paul's* concerns to others (6:21,22), but in Colossians he not only makes known all of Paul's affairs, but also that they may know what concerns *them* (4:8). The word *you* (the things which concern *you*) is found in Vaticanus and in Sinaiticus. Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus corrected read *us*, but Sinaiticus was changed back again by the latest editor. The tendency, we submit, would be to make Colossians and Ephesians the same, hence *us* is not as probable as *you*. In fact, until we take into account the contents of the two epistles the reading we have used seems out of line with the context.

In Ephesians we have a full account of "the things which concern *you*" (the saints), hence Tychicus had no need to make these known to those who received that epistle. But Colossians does not contain the things that concern them so much as the things that concern Christ. The Colossians, as well as all saints of this secret administration, need to know what concerns *them*, especially what had been made known just at this juncture. This revelation was soon lost, and is almost unknown today. Hence it seems trite, if not foolish, for Tychicus to inform the Colossians of their own affairs. Only as we realize the great change which had taken place in their status, can we see how vital it was for him to tell them of these things, as well as to explain the career of Paul.

What a consolation it must have been to the Colossians to get the report of Tychicus! From dark forebodings their hearts are filled with joy unutterable and full of glory. Behind the dismal clouds of distressing circumstance God's brightest sun is shining with beams of almost unbearable

brilliance. Paul's imprisonment, though the end of earth's physical expectations for a time, is but the beginning of a celestial, spiritual administration which will far excel all that God has previously revealed. And *they*, they are chosen to fill the highest place in God's purpose of love.

With Tychicus goes Onesimus, a typical specimen of the grace now being disclosed to the nations. Just as he was an unprofitable, runaway slave who was returned to his master by Paul during his imprisonment, so the nations are fleeing far from God, yet are being brought back to Him through Paul's gracious evangel. We would recommend the reading of Paul's letter to Philemon in this connection. How clearly does grace shine in every line! From the lowest in the social scale on earth, Onesimus is graced with the highest honors in the heavens. He shares with Tychicus the privilege of conveying to Colosse, his own home, the report which will bring so much joy and blessing.

Would that the saints today were more concerned about Paul and his imprisonment, with all that is involved! So important does he deem it that he cannot close the epistle until he has written with his own hand, *Remember my bonds!* Yet let us not only recall his chains but the whole crisis through which he passed, for it was all symptomatic and expressive of the grandest truths and greatest revelations ever made to mortal man. Let us take the report as sent to ourselves, and let us seek to enter into their joy, and return thanks to our God for the grandeur of His grace.

A. E. Knoch

Who is This Who Came from Glory?

He is God's Anointed One!
 He is His Beloved Son!
 His Effulgence, Pledge of love —
 Laud His Name, all names above!

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FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 111th Year
(1909–2020)

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SECOND QUARTER, 2020

Volume 111

Number 2

Concordant Version of the Old Testament

Over a century has passed since a “concordant version” of the Scriptures was first proposed by A. E. Knoch and Vladimir Gelesnoff. When the translation of the Greek Scriptures, or “New Testament,” was then published in 1926, an announcement was made that work had begun on the Hebrew Scriptures (“Old Testament”). Now after all these years, with thanksgiving to God, we announce that the entire CONCORDANT VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT is now in print and available to order.

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Boldface type was used for words (or even parts of words) having exact counterparts in the Hebrew. And lightface type was used for words (or parts of words) which were added to clarify the meaning of the respective word in the Hebrew text. In addition small symbols and abbreviations were inserted between or attached to words to represent omitted terms, to indicate grammatical features and the sources of emendations to the Hebrew text.

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EDITORIAL

“THE *secret of Christ*,” which is “the secret of [God’s] will” (Eph.1:9), is “to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up *all* in the Christ—both those in the heavens and those on the earth—in Him in Whom our lot was cast also” (Eph.1:10,11a). And, “through [Christ] 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.1:20, *cp* 1:19).

In its essence, “the *secret of the evangel*” (Eph.6:19), the conciliation, is that “God . . . conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation” (2 Cor.5:18,19).

In this current issue, however, we are concerned specifically not with the secret of the evangel but with the secret of *Christ*.

The first of the articles herein concerns the secret of Christ in “Its *Realization*.” A. E. Knoch writes: “Creation and reconciliation are the scenes of the supremacy of God’s Son. The secret of Christ comprises the *creation* of all *in* Him at the commencement, and the *reconciliation* of all *through* Him at the consummation (p.51) May God become All in us in increasing measure as we contemplate the secret of Christ, and see His hand and head and heart engaged in drawing His creatures to Himself through sin and salvation” (p.53).

As stated on page 73 of this same article, “In its realization the secret of Christ varies according to the adminis-

tration in which it operates. In this economy it anticipates in spirit, what will take physical form on the earth in the last two eons. We already have the kingdom and the new creation, for which the world still waits. By a similar figure of speech, we already have the presence of Christ, which will make those future eras so glorious. But all is in spirit, and in expectation. Yet the conciliation may be received and enjoyed by all who believe.”

The second article in this issue concerns the secret of Christ in “*Its Manifestation.*” On this theme Brother Knoch writes: “As we have seen, the secret of Christ is best set forth today by the expression ‘Christ among *you*, the expectation of glory—[that concerns you]’ (1:27; *cp* 4:8). Christ did not leave the land of Israel when He came in flesh. He was never among the nations. His presence in Israel was the assurance of future glory for all who received Him, which will be fulfilled in the thousand years, on the earth. His figurative presence now, among the nations, is also the assurance of future glory, for all who believe, among the celestials. At the same time it involves the setting aside of the enmity which existed in the days of His presence, and this is the conciliation. It is *God* Who is conciliated, yet it is Christ Who acts accordingly, and Who visits the nations, in spirit, just as He had come to Israel in the days of old” (p.89).

“Through many dangers, toils, and snares we have already come.” Like Paul himself so many years ago who was once “the young man called Saul” (Acts 7:58) yet who later became “Paul, the aged” (Philemon 9), those of us still participating in the Concordant ministry who once were young must acknowledge that we too are now among the aged. We are grateful to our many friends in faith with whom we have had the privilege of fellowship over the years, now decades. May God empower us all, for “all endurance and patience with joy” (Col.1:11). J.R.C.

THE SECRET OF CHRIST

ITS REALIZATION

COLOSSIANS 1:9-2:7

FIRSTBORN OF CREATION

CREATION and reconciliation are the scenes of the supremacy of God's Son. The secret of Christ comprises the *creation* of all *in* Him at the commencement, and the *reconciliation* of all *through* Him at the consummation. We will leave the latter for a later meditation. But let us approach the theme as the apostle does, through a prayer that the saints will realize what it involves for them, and that they give thanks for their part in His preëminence.

This prayer of the apostle is far more needed today than ever before. In the midst of billions of sermons, and millions of books and magazines devoted to theology, how little insight is there into the will of God as revealed in His latest revelation! How small is the appreciation of His wisdom, how feeble the understanding of His purpose! And, as a result, the conduct of believers is lacking in fruit and power and there is a want of endurance and joy and thanksgiving for the blessings which are not realized or appreciated. Therefore it is our privilege to emulate the apostle and pray for ourselves and for our fellow saints that the eyes of our hearts may be opened to see, and that it may lead to pleasing and thanking, God.

THE REALIZATION OF HIS WILL

In the first of Ephesians we read of the *delight* of His will, the *secret* of His will, and the *counsel* of His will (Eph.1:5,9,11). It is His delight to make us sons through

Christ. Love has given us the highest and nearest place. It is the secret of His will to head up all in the heavens as well as upon earth in Christ. The counsel of His will is that we should be for the laud of His glory. Let us not degrade the apostle's petition to a mere request for individual guidance in each step of our career. If we know His will concerning Christ and ourselves, that will shine upon our path and remove the need of being led like a blind man, every step of our way.

Guidance should not be a matter dependent on external circumstances or inward impulses, but of wisdom and spiritual understanding. The lack of these has left the saints to the mercy of the forces of evil. Many who imagine that the holy spirit has given them a special and definite revelation are the dupes of evil spirits. They do that which is contrary to the will of God because they are not acquainted with it. They imagine that the Scriptures are not sufficient and need to be supplemented by direct revelations of His will as occasion arises, forgetting that, *in the Scriptures* the man of God is fitted out for every good act (2 Tim.3:17).

Let us pray, then, that the saints may be *filled* with a realization of His will in *all* wisdom and spiritual understanding, for only thus can we walk worthily of the Lord for *all* pleasing, and bear fruit in *every* good work. Here it is not merely a matter of pleasing God or of doing good—we all may do that in some measure even in our ignorance—but of putting quality and flavor into our actions such as will delight God's heart. May our actions never appear to help Him in His infirmity! Let them rather reveal Him and His power. Too much of Christian activity seems to be lending God a hand as if He needed it, and is thus offensive to the Deity. Only a realization of His will can save us from this false attitude toward God and enable us to walk worthily, so as to please Him in all.

THE REALIZATION OF GOD

That God may be All in all is the universal goal. All of His operations during the eons are directed to this end. The latest revelations of His will are especially adapted to display the excellences of the divine wisdom and love, so that all who realize His will will appreciate Him in the measure in which they understand it. As this is unfolded to our hearts we should grow in our appreciation of God, and thus approach the final goal ahead of others of His creatures. May God become All in us in increasing measure as we contemplate the secret of Christ, and see His hand and head and heart engaged in drawing His creatures to Himself through sin and salvation.

ENDUED WITH ALL POWER

Power we associate with great physical manifestations, such as the powers of the coming eon (Heb.6:5), which will bring health, strength, and blessing to the earth and its inhabitants. But we are endued with power for a different purpose. Although it is in accord with the power of His glory, it is not evident in a lightning-like appearance, or irresistible strength. It is not manifest in the conquest and removal of evil, but in *endurance and patience with joy*. The weakness about us is in accord with God's purpose, so it is not to be removed but endured. Let us do it with joy. Though the time seems protracted, there is power, not only for patience, but for joyful expectation.

THE SAINTS' ALLOTMENT

Along with the joy which His power imparts in the midst of trial and distress, our hearts should overflow with thanksgiving for the lot which has fallen to us. From dupes of darkness we have become saints in light. We were deceived by the Adversary like all the rest, groping

in the gloom of this world's illumination. Out of the darkness we came, in it we existed, and into it we expected to go. Death to us was a leap in the dark. But now all is light! All is out of, and through, and to God. We know whence we came, and whither we are bound. We know that every moment of our lives is in His loving care. Light has come into our lives! God does not leave His saints in the dark. Their allotment is in the light. They are sons of the light and sons of the day. They are not of the night nor of the darkness (1 Thess.5:5).

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

God is light. The powers opposed to him are darkness (Eph.6:12). We all were once under the authority of darkness, that great spiritual dominion which holds sway over the whole world. Mankind at large is groping in the dark. Men know not whence they come nor whither they go, nor why they are so busy running around in circles. But it will not be thus always. When this wicked eon ends, and the Adversary who is deceiving the nations is in the abyss, the sun will rise, and darkness, and its forces, will not again hold sway over mankind. For this world darkness is at an end when the kingdom comes. Then the knowledge of God's glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the the sea.

In our individual experience we have already passed out of this dark eon into the next. We have already been rescued out of the authority of darkness and transported into the kingdom. Not, indeed, in fact, but in figure. The earthly kingdom has not yet come. The Adversary is not yet bound. But, thanks be to our Father, we are no longer subject to his will, nor are we victims of his deception. Our allegiance has been transferred to Another Who is our spiritual Suzerain. So that, in the spirit sphere, the kingdom has already come for us, minus all its physical manifestations. We are in a spiritual kingdom whose Sov-

ereign is the same as the Messiah Who will one day reign over the nations of the earth. But in this kingdom He bears another title, to comport with its spiritual character. He is the Son—the Son of God's love.

Every title of our Lord reflects a glory all its own. As Christ, He will be the King, the Priest, and the Prophet of the coming eon. Yet even there, as the Son of David, He will have a special glory, confined to the chosen nation. As Son of Mankind, He will rule over the whole race which sprang from Adam. In all of these capacities He will be over the political powers on the earth. Not so the present spiritual kingdom. It does not conflict with man's rule. Indeed, we are obliged to be subject to the authorities, as well as to pray for them. Therefore His title in the present kingdom is not Christ. Neither is He the Son of any man, as David or Adam, but of God. God is a Spirit, and His Son is such in spirit, not in flesh.

In anticipation of the coming kingdom of God upon the earth, when the race shall be freed from the thrall of its spiritual despotism, the saints, and they alone, are rescued from the realm of darkness, and transported to a different allegiance, that of God's Son. To complete the picture, our sins are pardoned, and we have deliverance, as will be the case in the new earth. Let us not confuse this with other figures, such as justification, or acquittal. That belongs in the court room, and has to do with our relationship to the judgment, which will take place before the new creation. Now it is a question of entrance into a kingdom, and, as it is a figurative kingdom, we can enter it only by means of a figurative pardon.

Much has been made of the figurative terms in Paul's epistles, such as the covenants and the festivals, in order to show that he was writing only for Jews. Yet there is probably no passage so surely and conclusively "Jewish" as this reference to the kingdom and the pardon of sins,

both of which, taken literally, are entirely foreign to Pauline teaching. According to this method of interpretation, this passage should prove clearly that Colossians is a Jewish epistle, not intended for the present administration of God's grace. Yet, as a matter of fact, it, and Ephesians, are utterly devoted to the exposition of the present interval of God's grace. May this example help to show how unwarranted it is to make any of Paul's writings "Jewish" because of his figurative use of "Jewish" things.

Once we realize that much of the blessing which is predicted on the page of prophecy comes to us, in spirit, long before it is fulfilled in fact, such allusions should rather prove the opposite. For example, there is now a new creation. Is it not a marvelous method of transferring to our minds great spiritual realities which otherwise would be most difficult to express? I suppose no one takes this literally, so why take the kingdom, or the covenants so? In *figure*, we have these things now. In no way could we be led to understand our own blessings better than by illustrating them from Israel's history, by drawing pictures from the pages of prophecy.

So little are the saints familiar with figures of speech that this passage has been the cause of embarrassment to those who saw clearly the vast difference between justification and pardon. No doubt many have been hindered from enjoying the grand grace of justification simply because, in this passage, we are said to have the pardon of sins. Again, the present is so often called "the kingdom," in a vague way confusing it with the future literal reign of Messiah, that one is tempted to avoid further confusion by saying little or nothing about it. But it is a glorious truth, and worthy of our most earnest consideration, that, in spirit, the saints already partake of some of the blessings of the future kingdoms, even though its physical wonders are by no means with us yet.

THE SON OF HIS LOVE

Yes, we are in the kingdom—the kingdom of the Son of His *love*. Quite a different matter from being a gentile under the iron club of Messiah's rule in the thousand years. Then righteousness will reign, and the nations will be kept at a distance from the God of Israel. They will not even be sons of the kingdom, but subjects, and subordinate. The Sovereign in our kingdom has a title of surpassing dignity and preciousness. "Christ" is official, and fits the functions which He fills during the eons, but not after they have passed away. The "Son" is personal, and describes His dignity in relation to God, even after the eons have come to an end. And the Son of God's love sets Him forth in the supremacy of His nearness and dearness to the Deity, the Peerless One, the Beloved Son. We are in the new creation.

IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

God wishes to be known and loved. This is the motive behind creation and reconciliation. Being invisible and unapproachable, He has made an Image of Himself, and a Complement through Whom He can come into contact with His creation. These mediatorial glories belong to His Beloved Son, and make Him preëminent in all things, for they reach from the very beginning to the consummation, and make Him first in both creation and reconciliation.

To be known, God must be seen. He must be brought within the range of creature sensation. As this is impossible with essential Deity, Who is Spirit, it can only be accomplished by means of a Mediator, an Image which portrays in visible form the invisible essence of the Supreme. This was God's "Creative Original," the beginning, or origin, of all creation, for all else was included in Him. This makes Him the "firstborn" of all creation, not only first in time,

but first in dignity and honor, and of itself entitles Him, not only to be the Sovereign of the saints in this administration, but to head up all things, both in the heavens and on the earth, as He will, in the complement of the eras, before the close of the eons.

Earthly rulers base their right to rule either on hereditary claims, or on their own accomplishments. Our Sovereign has a double right to reign. His is the oldest title in the universe, long antedating Adam, and He has entered the lists against the powers of evil and won the fight on Golgotha. Both diadem and wreath are His. His ancient rights entitle Him to universal sovereignty, and He will yet subject all beneath His feet. And, when all was lost, He brought it back to God, and thus has earned its heartfelt homage. In this universal reign of the Son of God we have the blessed privilege of being among the first to own His sway, and will be among the highest in His world-embracing sovereignty.

CREATION IN THE SON OF HIS LOVE

The wonders of these words are well worthy of our admiring contemplation. Creation and love! How seldom are they brought together! We often hear of God's love in connection with redemption, but creation is usually associated with His power or His wisdom, but never with His affection. Few passages of Scripture delve as deeply as this into the origin of things, yet it is in thorough harmony with those basic truths that all is out of God (Rom.11:36) and God is love (1 John 4:8). The philosopher seeks in vain for the *why* of all things. Why is there a creation at all? Here is the answer. *God's love demands response*. Creation is not an end in itself. Although it displays God's wisdom and power, its underlying purpose goes far deeper, for it was created in love.

Had this simple yet profound truth ever penetrated into the hearts of the teachers of God's people, how revolutionary would have been its effect! True, with their lips they have preached the glad message "God so loved the *world*," yet they have been even more zealous to confine His love to those who believe, since they could hardly reconcile eternal torment or annihilation with the operations of love. May He broaden our hearts and widen our understanding! All that God does is done in love. Creation as well as redemption and reconciliation have their roots in the divine affection. And for this very reason it is that all are lost and all will be saved, some indeed by faith, during the eons, yet others by sight, through judgment, all through the deliverance wrought by Him in Whom they were originally created.

We may well suppose that creatures of another sphere, who know little of humanity, would not find it easy to understand that all mankind was once in Adam. To us it is so commonplace that we fail to realize the marvel of it. Science has made futile endeavors to prove that man, as well as other creatures, gradually evolves into forms quite different from their progenitors, but without any practical success. They have not succeeded in robbing us of the wonder that in each single seed are almost infinite potentialities. These examples should aid us to understand, or at least to believe where we cannot apprehend, that simple yet sublime statement that all was created in the Son of God's love.

The secret of Christ is not confined to earth, and the scope of this epistle is by no means limited to the ecclesia which is His body. We alone were *chosen* in Christ before the disruption, yet even before that, *all* was *created* in the Son (Col.1:16), not only that on earth, but in the heavens as well. The august grandeur of this thought will overwhelm all those who have given some attention to

the celestial spheres, or even gazed upon the starry host. Here are marvels, and magnitudes, and measures which make the mind faint with solemn awe. Creation on earth, with all its many marvels, sinks into insignificance, when compared with the celestial realms. Had it not been hallowed by His presence and His sacrifice, we would think it mean beside the mighty majesty of the heavenly hosts. Yet all the creatures in the heavens were created in Him.

We should not think of creation here as so much material, or dead matter. Life itself and living creatures—those which can refuse or respond to the love of God—are before us in this connection. As they are viewed here as beneath His sway, we read of their various governmental forms, thrones or dominions, sovereignties or authorities. The very fact that, in the heavens as well as on earth, in the invisible as well as the visible creation such rule exists, is proof positive of the presence of sin. Government is a restraint which will not be needed when the eons are past. It will become inoperative at the consummation. Now it speaks of insubjection and the need of reconciliation. The presence of rule in the invisible, celestial realms shows that the creatures which were created in Him will also be reconciled through Him and thus fulfill the object of their creation.

ALL THROUGH AND FOR

Since all ruling powers were once in Him, it is not at all strange that all rule should return to Him in the last eon. This is in line with the further truth that all is through Him and for Him. Creation was not an independent act, without any relation to subsequent developments. On the contrary, it was logically the result of God's purpose, which could not be fulfilled until the far future. Creation is, indeed, the prelude to reconciliation. The Son, in Whom it was effected, had far more in view, and it was only a prepara-

tion for the tragedy of the eons, and these, in turn, only the means for effecting the glorious consummation—God All in every one of His creatures.

So, not only was all *in* Him, but, at the same time it was also *through* Him and *for* Him. Without it He could not have accomplished His further work. Due to this relation of all parts of creation to Him it is held together by Him. Whatever differences and distances there may be between the various parts, such as between earth and the heavens, in Him they are welded into one, and, as we shall see, will be united under His headship in the last eon.

Such is the preëminence of the Image of God as the Firstborn of creation. From the beginning all rule is His and all owe Him subjection. The authority of darkness is a usurper, and deserves no subjection at our hands. In being transported into the kingdom of the Son of His love we return to the only rightful Suzerain. His realm will one day spread to every corner of the universe and bring every creature to His feet. All shall be subject to Him. We have the privilege of being among the first to yield to His beneficent sway.

FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD

Creation alone cannot reveal the heart of God. It must be supplemented by reconciliation. He Who is the Image of God must become His Complement. The Firstborn of creation must become the Firstborn from among the dead. As such our relation to Him is nearer and dearer. We are not only subjects in a spiritual kingdom, but we also belong to a spiritual body of which He is the Head. God's grace and love must be revealed against the dark background of human hate.

The Head of the body is this Sovereign, in Whom all rule had its origin, and into Whose kingdom we have been transported. Our relation to Him as saints is not based on

His power in creation, but on His victory over death. He is the First to emerge a Conqueror from its dark shades, and thus He heads a new creation, a new race of mankind, which is not only given life, but immortality and incorruptibility, beyond the reach of death. This death-defying vitality will be granted to all in Adam in due course, but at present He alone possesses it. This gives Him the exalted dignity of Firstborn from among the dead. Some of this high honor He will share with us at His presence, for then His saints also will be vivified, while the balance of mankind must wait until the consummation.

UNIVERSAL DIGNITIES

The supremacy of God's Son depends on the *universality* or *totality* of His many dignities. How extraordinary is the emphasis laid on this vital fact in this short passage! Within the compass of five verses we read no less than *eight* times that the given glory is all-inclusive. He is the firstborn of *every* creature. *All* is created in Him, and *all* is created through and for Him. He is before *all*. *All* has its cohesion in Him. In *all* He is becoming first. The *entire* complement dwells in Him. He reconciles *all* through the blood of His cross (Col.1:15-20). And on two occasions this is amplified and defined as all that is in the heavens or on the earth. It is said to include both visible and invisible. What more could be said to impress us with the universal scope of the Son's activities?

THAT IN ALL HE MAY BE BECOMING FIRST

These precious words, as shown herewith, in large blue letters in a golden frame, are the chief ornament of the room in which I write. Long years ago I chose them as my

motto, and decided to display them in a prominent place in my abode. When erecting a new house I evolved a plan so that they would become a permanent part of the building. Above the broad entrance into the drawing room was a board with a beautiful grain. On this I outlined these words in old English lettering and varnished them before the wood was stained, so that they stood out plainly when all was done. But, alas! When the home was sold, almost the first act of the new owner was to remove all traces of my cherished motto!

Here we have a gem of purest ray serene, fit for the diadem of universal majesty! He was first in time and He must become first in all else. How many of mankind have striven for supremacy! Some have drenched the ground with blood in order to attain the highest place for themselves among the rulers of the earth. Many more in other walks of life have sought to reach the top, above their less fortunate fellows. These all exalted themselves, finding a futile and a fleeting eminence. How marvelous the contrast! He Who never sought His own advancement but only God's glory, Who abased Himself beneath all, He will become first in all.

Let us be very jealous for His glory, and allow no one else to filch it from Him. Let us be very zealous for His supremacy, and accord it to no other name but His. And let us guard each glory as we would a treasure trove. And, since His crowning glories as Complement of the Deity and Reconciler of all are so often denied to Him, let us make these the special theme of our meditation, and, if need be, let us maintain them and defend them to the last. In Him, the Firstborn from the dead, through the blood of His cross, God is completely equipped to consummate the purpose of love, and bring every enemy back to His bosom, not only saved, but reconciled.

THE ENTIRE COMPLEMENT

It is quite possible to imagine that God would delegate the honor of creation to one mediator and that of reconciliation to another. God needs both to carry out His purpose, so that each, in his measure, would contribute to the fulfillment of His plans. Then the honor of being God's complement would be shared by them. To put it figuratively, one would receive a place at His right hand, the other at His left. Indeed, some have taught that God's complement consisted of a whole series of beings, independent of His Son, to whom He delegated creation. Not so! The *entire* complement, *all* that is needed by God in order to fulfill His will in connection with His creatures, finds its fit residence in His Son.

In Him the complement *delights* to dwell. It is not alone that He has the ability, the fitness, the competence to cope with all that is involved in this most marvelous function in the universe. All this He has, and far more. At His baptism, when the heavens were opened to Him, the voice declared, "This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I *delight*" (Matt.3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). So again, when He was transformed on the high mountain, a voice came out of the cloud and testified to the delight of the Father in His Beloved (Matt.17:5; Mark 9:7). Peter reminds us of this in his epistle, and tells us that it brought Him honor and glory from God the Father (2 Peter 1:17). Long before, Isaiah records the same fact (Matt.12:18; Isa.42:1): "My Beloved, in Whom My soul delights."

Is it not striking that this recognition of the Son is one of the very few statements directly spoken by the Deity in the later Scriptures? This should give it the prominence which is its due in our hearts. What a contrast to His testimony concerning the rest of mankind! When the Lord stooped down to see how they are, He found nothing in

which to *delight*. Not one was even just or kind (Rom.3:10-18; LXX Psa.14:2,3). Certainly there has never been one among Adam's descendants, apart from His grace, in whom He could find pleasure. In none of them could the complement find any place whatever.

The complement (*plêrōma*) is here personified (Col. 1:19). It is represented as seeking a suitable dwelling place from which to carry out the purposes of God. In Him it has found a delightful abode, for He is not merely a means of bringing back creation to what it was, but of bringing it on to fulfill its purpose. All too many of us imagine that we would be satisfied with a universe brought back to its pristine perfection, a world without sin, a sorrow-free existence. No such result would satisfy the heart of God. That would never justify the travail of the eons. That would never win the admiring approval of the universe. That would be vanity, a feeding on wind, a reaping of less than was sown, a losing venture.

And such would creation be, had it not been begun in the Son of His *love*, and should it not be finished by the same One through the blood of His cross. Love cannot be revealed without a background. Every blessing imaginable poured into the lap of a sinless creature is merely a matter of course, which evokes no thankful feelings, and provokes no response of love. I feel certain that Adam never thought of thanking his Maker for his superb health and strength. Yet I am profoundly grateful for the very little vigor needed to pen these lines. And when we, who have suffered much from illness and weakness, once attain our body of glory, how deep and lasting will be our thankful love to Him for all His superabundant grace!

In this passage nothing is said directly of the entrance and course of evil and sin, because this is no part of the work of the Son. But the introduction of estrangement is clearly implied by His death and His cross and the neces-

sity of the reconciliation of all. It is no glory or honor to destroy God's work. This must, indeed, be done, but woe to him who does it! His course must be down and not up. The glory of the Son lies in this, that He undoes the work of the Adversary. Great as were His glories in creation, now that all have been estranged by sin He gains far greater glory by His suffering for all, so that all will be saved and reconciled, and so attain the original object of their creation.

God pity us if we see our salvation from our own side only! The object of all is God, rather than His creatures. And the glory of God demands the exaltation of His Son. These are the chief considerations in the reconciliation of all. If a single one of those whom He created in love should fail to find the final goal which His love has set, then it is His wisdom and power which are brought into question, and *His* love which is open to doubt. Likewise, if one who was created in the Son of God's love should fail to be reconciled by the blood of His cross, would that not drag the Son down from the high place which God has given Him? Let us not darken the splendor of His achievement by our own dismal unbelief.

WHAT ARE "THINGS"?

The neuter gender, in English, is used only for *things* as a rule, not for persons. In Greek, however, the so-called "neuter" seems to be much wider in its scope, and to include, rather than to exclude, the genders, so it is called "indefinite" in the Concordant grammar. In this passage (Col.1: 16-20) it is of considerable importance to be clear on this point. The Revised Version introduces the word "things" ten times, not because it is in the Greek, but to show that the gender is neuter. They speak of all *things* created, *things* visible and things invisible, things created, before all *things*, all things consist, in all *things* . . . preëminence, reconcile all *things*, *things* on earth, *things* in the heavens.

I feel sure that anyone who reads the passage with this in view, and especially if the word *things* is emphasized, will feel that something is amiss. The more the passage is studied the more it seems evident that *not things*, but persons are intended. These "things" are *in* the heavens and *on* the earth, hence they cannot refer to the material creation as a whole. They are detailed as thrones or dominions or sovereignties or authorities, which, indeed, are forms of government, and so "things," but very evidently stand for those who are subject to them. And how can *things* be reconciled? Were the Colossians (1:21) among these *things*? The introduction of this word, it seems to us, though warranted by the grammars, has thrown a veil over the whole passage and made it unintelligible to some extent.

One cannot help but admire the consistency of the Revisers in this particular, when, in Galatians 3:22, they translate: "Howbeit the scripture hath shut up all *things* under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." In John 6:37 they yielded to the context. Instead of following their usual rule and translating, "Everything (*pan*) . . ." they compromise with, "All *that which* the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." These two passages should suffice to show that *things* is an unfortunate rendering of this Greek form in some cases, and that it may be used of both genders, or without reference to any gender.

PEACE THROUGH THE CROSS

Enmity has come in through the entrance of death and sin. All of mankind, without exception, are estranged from God. It is more than likely that this discord has affected the whole creation, in varying degrees. To make peace between God and His unfriendly creatures is the greatest of all achievements. In this world of strife and conten-

tion the role of peacemaker is a difficult and discouraging one. For the most trivial causes enmity arises between man and man, section and section, country and country. Not long since a large part of the world was involved in a bloody war, and no stable peace has resulted from all of the strenuous endeavors to put an end to war. We talk of peace, yet there is unrest and misunderstanding almost everywhere, and the din of arms has never fully ceased.

By pride comes contention. Notwithstanding the shameful record of mankind since the dawn of history, men are proud of what they are and what they have accomplished and what they possess. Evil has been given them to humble them, they fail often and suffer much, the world is getting worse in almost every way, except material comfort, man's inhumanity to man cries to high heaven for redress, and man's offensive attitude to the Deity is unpardonable, and yet man is haughty and stubborn and implacable. He refuses the overtures of peace which come to him in the evangel and is hastening on to the era of God's indignation, when his doings will be destroyed, his power broken, and his pride leveled with the dust.

But even after a thousand years of peace his heart remains the same. Satan, loosed out of his jail, will find the same enmity, the same readiness to rise against God and His people as before. The experience of good does not bring permanent peace. It is through evil that peace must come. Though Christ Himself, the Prince of Peace, has ruled man for a millennium, that has not tuned his heart in unison with God. He does not make peace by His power or by His glorious government. Peace comes to the nations in this way in the eons of the eons, but heart peace with God comes only through His sufferings and shameful, ignominious death.

The cross, the inglorious, the disgraceful, the infamous, the opprobrious, the outrageous stake, the most disreputa-

ble death that man can devise, where weakness and shame combine to dishonor the High and Holy Son of God—here is where peace was made for all who are estranged, where the world was conciliated to God. With this as a basis, the Son will reconcile all God's enemies with Him when the eons have run their course. In the cross we see the utter worthlessness of man as well as the supreme exhibition of the love of God. Reconciliation is effected by the revelation of God's love in the deepest display of human hate.

The cross, like a lightning flash, reveals the heart of man. He Who hung upon it was the Touchstone by which all things may be tested. When He appeared among His people humanity manifested itself as it really is. He should have been welcomed and honored and adored. By the condemnation of the only One Who deserved to live, mankind has condemned itself, and sealed its own death warrant. By the shameful crucifixion of the Lord of glory men made it manifest that they, not He, deserve the death detestable. O that we all may learn what we really are in the light of the cross! This will burn out all our pride and prepare the way for peace. And thus it is that reconciliation comes. The cross will abase all into the dust, and humble their hearts before the Deity, and prepare them for the revelation of His love.

But if the cross only revealed what is in man it could not reconcile the race but would rather destroy it. Thanks be to God that it also reveals what is in God! It is the fullest revelation of His love. In it He seemed to side with man. Instead of rescuing His Beloved from their hate, He sends fire from above into His bones. He makes Him to be sin, Who knew no sin. He forsakes Him instead of the ones who deserved His displeasure.

The divine alchemy which transformed the Victim of human hate into the Sacrifice for their sins is almost too wonderful for human apprehension.

THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS

The cross was the supreme crisis in universal history, an event unique, unparalleled in the annals of time. Nothing has ever occurred which has such a profound effect upon the world. It will transform an alienated universe into adoring worshipers. It is a permanent, an abiding power which will never lose its potency. Today the cross avails to conciliate the world, and to reconcile those who receive the conciliation. But this will by no means exhaust its power. It will be the basis of all blessing in the eons to come, and will bring immortality and peace to all at the consummation. Death cannot stop its course, for Christ arose, the Firstborn, and all for whom He died (and He died for all!) will share His life when death is finally abolished.

The blood of *Christ* is a most expressive figure of the permanent power of His sufferings. The soul, sensation, feeling (not the life) of the flesh is in the blood. In the days of old this was sprinkled in the holy of holies once a year on the day of propitiation, and for a twelve-month preserved the potency of the sacrifice. So it is with the suffering of Christ. Thank God it is past, but its potency is permanent. It avails today, and will never lose its power. The blood remains, as it were, within the holiest in heaven, to witness to His offering.

But the blood of His *cross*—this goes far deeper still. Only here do we have this notable expression. It is not a mere literary variant, but a deliberate endeavor to distinguish between the death of God's Son and the *manner* of it. This is done because here we have not merely the salvation or the justification of all, but the *reconciliation* of the universe. It is not a question of sin so much as of offense and enmity. In fact this passage is concerned with salvation only insofar as it is included in reconciliation. *Peace* is made by the blood of His cross. The blood is a reminder of its permanence.

This blood does not merely remind us of His death and suffering, but of the *shame* and *enmity* of man, and the *darkness* and *distance* from God endured by Him because of the *crucifixion*. Stoning would have brought death, but would have avoided much of the suffering and the curse of the Deity which rested upon the One Who was hanged upon a tree. The marvelous truth that all will be reconciled to God is based, not only on the suffering and death of Christ, but especially on the abject abasement involved in the manner of His death, coupled with the curse which it drew down from above.

The cry of the august Sufferer, "My God, My God, why didst *Thou* forsake Me?" finds its answer in the *cross*. With any other form of death God would not have forsaken Him. He would rather have turned against His murderers. It would have increased the distance and estrangement between God and His creatures. It would have made enmity, not peace. But because He voluntarily placed Himself beneath the curse of God for the sake of His enemies, the result was reconciliation.

But let us note that the cross is brought in here parenthetically. It is the basis of reconciliation, indeed, but by no means includes all that He will do in order to bring back the universe to God. On this basis He will carry on all of His future work of ruling and judging, of rousing and vivifying the dead. All of His coming acts will have this grand goal in view, and we will have our share in His work of reconciling God's creatures among the celestials, for we are His complement. As living exemplifications of the power of the cross, we will have our part in the final and effectual peace propaganda. For this reason we read here of the *blood* of the cross, for its abiding power will be the means at our disposal in bringing about perpetual peace.

One of the most helpful contrasts between Ephesians and Colossians is on the subject of peace. In Colossians, as

we have seen, it is universal in its scope, including not only earth's sinners, but His enemies in the heavens as well. But in Ephesians it is limited to believers, and has to do with the enmity between the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision (Eph.2:11-18). This estrangement inhered in their flesh, and in the physical relation of Christ to the Circumcision. It found expression in the central wall in the sanctuary, which kept the Uncircumcision at a distance from God's dwelling place, and in the decrees issued by the apostles from Jerusalem. That fruit of peace was a new humanity, so that both the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision have access, in one spirit, to the Father. Though based upon the cross, there is nothing there for those outside the household of faith.

The peace of Ephesians, in accord with the secret of the epistle, will continue during this administration of grace, but will retire in the following economies, when Israel once more comes to the front on the basis of physical preëminence. But the peace in Colossians, in accord with the secret of Christ, will not only continue throughout the eons, but will embrace all at the consummation. In Ephesians it is limited in both time and scope. It applies only to the Circumcision and Uncircumcision in this present era. But in Colossians it is extended to include those in the heavens as well as those on the earth. All are embraced by it, so that no enmity remains in God's universe.

To even list all of the passages which have been brought forward to blot out the great truth of the reconciliation of all would lead us too far afield at this time. They have been fully considered and discussed in separate essays. Correct concordant renderings automatically dispose of them, and, at the same time, confirm the great truth that God will become All in all at the consummation (1 Cor.15:28).

May God graciously give us faith to believe it! May our

love for His Beloved constrain us to receive it! May mistaken translations of other passages not bar our way into this holy of holies, beyond the veil of His eonian dealings with His creatures! May not the false philosophical terms "everlasting" and "eternal," or "eternity," blind our eyes to the eons, the scene of the Son's glories, their commencement in love, and their consummation in reconciliation! Here we stand on the summit of divine revelation. Here we can see all else below us, and see its place in God's purpose. May we not take some lower stand and deny this glorious consummation because it is hid from our gaze by the fogs of lower levels!

CHRIST AMONG THE NATIONS

In its realization the secret of Christ varies according to the administration in which it operates. In this economy it anticipates in spirit, what will take physical form on the earth in the last two eons. We already have the kingdom and the new creation, for which the world still waits. By a similar figure of speech, we already have the presence of Christ, which will make those future eras so glorious. But all is in spirit, and in expectation. Yet the conciliation may be received and enjoyed by all who believe.

Having given the broad outlines of the secret of Christ in its timeless, universal aspect, we now have a paragraph devoted to this secret as it especially applies to us in this present administration. The Colossians had not only been lost, and were now saved; they had not only been sinners, and were now justified; but they had been *estranged* and *enemies*, and were now *reconciled*. Here we can see the close relation of the secret of the evangel to that of Christ. Both go deeper than sin and deal with offense. They go beneath the outward act to the inward motive. They deal not merely with failure, but with enmity.

ENEMIES IN COMPREHENSION

Even one whose outward behavior and treatment of his fellows is beyond reproach may be a bitter enemy of God in his heart. Indeed, it is quite possible to be charitable and philanthropic with a mind that defies and decries the Deity. The attitude of the heart is far more vital than external conduct in our relationship to God, especially with reference to ultimate reconciliation. That is why the Colossians are first characterized as estranged and enemies in their comprehension. Thinking precedes and prepares for conduct, and our thoughts concerning God must be corrected before our walk can be brought into harmony with Him.

Wicked acts arise from this spiritual friction with the Deity just as sinful deeds do from the lack of vital connection with Him. Men may not be conscious that the enmity in their comprehension is against God, for they have no personal acquaintance with Him. Rather it expresses itself in their dissatisfaction with their fate, or with the providence of God. For their good they are not thankful, and for their evil they blame Him, Who, they feel, might have hindered it. Is it not striking that an "act of God" in legal parlance, is a calamity for which He alone can be made responsible? His daily goodness, His continual kindness, are matters of course. Man, out of tune with His Creator, does not only fail or fall short, his mind becomes actively opposed to Him, and his acts wicked.

I have not the impression that the Colossians were especially wicked in the usual sense of that word, as, for instance, the Corinthians, but that their state was rather that of the average one who is reconciled to God. The consummation will not only consist in all of God's creatures being at peace with *each other*. That is only one result of their reconciliation to God. Sin, offense, and wickedness should not be judged and measured by the relations

between man and man, but between man and God. It will be found in the judging that many who entirely escaped the condemnation of a human judge because they never seriously infringed upon the laws of society will be found among the most wicked in God's sight because they were at enmity with Him.

Justification is by blood, yet reconciliation is through death (Rom.5:9,10). The first has to do with acts, and calls for suffering. The second has to do with a condition and demands the death state. We deserve both. To put it popularly (but imperfectly) mankind deserves both torment and annihilation, and Christ endured them on our behalf. Sinners will suffer affliction and distress in the judgment for what they *do*, and enemies enter the second death for what they *are*. The judging is concerned only with their acts, hence is followed by the second death, which deals with the deeper aspect. Their vivification at the consummation, being the nullification of *death*, deals with what they are, and so reconciles them to God.

HOLY AND FLAWLESS AND UNIMPEACHABLE

When we, like the Colossians, are reconciled to God, it reverses our relationship to Him, to man, and to our acts. We were unholy, not fit to come near God's dwelling place, shut out from His presence and blessing. Now we are holy, fit to approach into the very light of the shekinah, loaded with spiritual blessings. We were full of flaws, sinful, lacking in everything, weak, worthless and withering away. Now we are flawless in Him, without defect or imperfection, waiting for the glory. Once we dreaded the very thought of a judgment, but now we are unimpeachable, beyond the imputation of aught to which objection could be made. All of this is implied and included in our reconciliation. All of this is necessary to perfect peace.

GROUNDED AND SETTLED

But few of those who believe ever become grounded and settled in the vital verities of our faith. How seldom do we see a saint get beyond the forgiveness of sins to actual justification, as set forth in the early chapters of Romans! Yet far rarer are those who enjoy the peace of the fifth chapter, and accept the conciliation offered to God's enemies! Many of the saints still lack the peace which is theirs, and fail to fully enter into the conciliation. Such will find it difficult to go on into the great secrets of the later epistles. Paul takes it for granted that the Colossians are grounded and settled in the evangel they have heard.

THE EXPECTATION OF THE EVANGEL

The complete restoration of peace to which the evangel gives rise is not confined to the breasts of believers. It embraces all, the creatures above as well as below mankind. When man became the enemy of God he dragged down the lower creation with him. It has become subject to vanity in expectation of being freed from the slavery of corruption when the sons of God are unveiled (Rom.8: 19-22). The creation on earth will have its part in the glorious future! What a relief from the narrow outlook of a "personal" salvation, with a few favored companions, while all the rest of creation is left to its fate, is this grand and glorious reconciliation which embraces all that is now out of harmony with God!

But this is a future expectation. We are far from its realization yet. The task for the present is to make it known, to herald it abroad. It is to this that Paul applied himself. It is quite possible that he and others completed the heralding to the creation according to the closing words of Mark's account. It will be our special privilege to herald this evangel to the hosts of heaven when we are glorified.

But now our special task is to dispense it on earth, among men, especially among the saints. Our future ministry will be carried out in power and glory. Our present work is often associated with infirmity and suffering. That will be crowned with ultimate success. Now we may count on comparative failure. So it was with our Lord and so will it be with us. This is not our day. That is still to come.

THE DEFICIENCIES OF HIS AFFLICTIONS

When Christ was on earth He suffered much from the very ones who should have been His most loyal supporters in establishing the kingdom. Not only the chief priests and the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but even His own disciples and apostles were the cause of much real distress. And this was particularly true in regard to those revelations which go beyond the confines of their narrow hearts. After He had ascended Peter also had difficulties with his Jewish colleagues, who sought to monopolize God's favor and shut out the despised gentiles. But Paul had far more to bear in this direction than Peter, for he widened the area of blessing to reach all mankind.

Now that the evangel of the reconciliation of all is being heralded, it is accompanied by the same sufferings and further afflictions. The time is coming when we will herald this blessed evangel among the celestials, but then there will be no suffering. Its dispensing among men, in Christendom, especially among zealous adherents of narrow-hearted orthodoxy, has been and always will be followed by persecution and affliction. And it is most fitting that it should be so, for this will be a vast advantage in its future heralding, as it contrasts God's heart with that of His creatures, even when they have tasted of His grace. Let us, like Paul, rejoice in any sufferings we may be privileged to enjoy in dispensing this grace.

Strange as the thought may be to some of us, there can

be little doubt that, if Christ were now among us, as He was among His own in Israel, He would suffer at the hands of His own saints. These the apostle calls the deficiencies of His afflictions, which He would bear for the sake of His body, the ecclesia, were He actually in their midst. These fell to the lot of Paul, and fall upon all who occupy a similar position. Let us not think of Paul's imprisonment as his only suffering at this time. There were those who sought to rouse affliction for his bonds (Phil.1:17). He had a great struggle for the sake of the Colossians themselves (2:1). It must have pained him much to hear of the ritual and philosophy which was threatening to despoil them of the truth of their completeness in Him (2:8-10).

TO COMPLETE THE WORD OF GOD

The secret of Christ is the capstone of divine revelation. Until it was made known the Word was fragmentary. It was confined mostly to one nation or to one race upon the earth. The rest of the universe seemed to be outside the range of Christ's sacrifice and activities. It is only when He receives His place as the Head of all and the Reconciler of all, and especially as the Head of the body, through which the celestial realms will be administered and reconciled, that the plan and purpose of God is seen in its completeness. The record in the Scriptures concerning man and the earth, as administered through the holy nation, though it occupies the bulk of God's Book, deals with only a small segment of creation. But Paul embraces all within the scope of his unfoldings. Hence he rounds out or completes the Word of God.

CHRIST IN OR AMONG

The blessed truths that we are *in* Christ, and that Christ is *in* us were freely made known by the apostle Paul in his early epistles, especially in the eighth chapter of Romans,

which deals with those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1) and who have Christ in them (10). In Paul's vigorous and vital expostulation against the Judaizers he emphasizes the presence of the living Christ within him. He cries, "With Christ have I been crucified, yet I am living—no longer I, but living in me is Christ" (Gal.2:20). It is the vital power of the indwelling Christ that enables us to walk worthily. But this is never presented as a secret. This cannot be the truth brought before us in Colossians.

The connective *en* in Greek denotes *in* with the singular, but may also stand for *among* with the plural. It has been so rendered over a hundred times in the Authorized Version. In this passage it is of the highest importance that we decide whether the secret is "Christ *in* you" (individually) or "Christ *among* you" (the nations). Seeing that "Christ *in* you" was well known before, and deals with the individual believer's experience rather than the secret of Christ, it is not likely that it is brought up here as a secret. Christ *among* the nations, however, is a new thought, a secret hitherto, and fully in line with the figure of the kingdom in the preceding context, and a vital part of the secret of Christ, which is the subject of this part of the epistle.

CHRIST AMONG THE NATIONS

Christ in flesh, when on earth, confined Himself to one nation, Israel. His presence brought with it the glorious prospect of the kingdom as promised in the prophets. Those who received Him and acknowledged Him as their Messiah were filled with high hopes. Some of them wished to secure for themselves the best places in the coming glory. The question in their hearts was, *When?* "Art Thou at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). From His very infancy the saints, like Simeon, looked upon Him, not only as the Salvation of the nation, but as "the Glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). He was,

indeed, Christ *among* them, the expectation of glory.

In considering this secret we must keep in mind the scope of Christ's kingdom as set forth in the earlier part of this chapter. It is universal, and embraces all thrones and dominions and sovereignties and authorities, invisible as well as visible, celestial as well as terrestrial (16). This is the secret "as it was now revealed" (Eph.3:5). To administer the kingdom on earth Messiah will use the nation to which He is united by physical ties. The hundred forty-four thousand will rule among the peoples. The apostles will adjudicate the tribes. But in the heavens Christ will use His spiritual relatives, the saints who are joined to Him among the nations. They have the glorious expectation of having an even more exalted position in His celestial realms.

Before His ascension He never went among the other nations. In a very real sense, His presence in Israel demanded the degradation of Rome from her place as the leading nation on the earth. Even if He had gone among the various nations of that day, it could not have been a token of their glory in the future, but of their subjugation to the favored people. They can only be subordinate in the coming kingdom, on the earth. In flesh, Christ is of the seed of David, and the nations have no part in Him. It is only in spirit, in His celestial domains, that there is any prospect for the saints in the nations. They cannot have a seat at His right or His left in Jerusalem, but far higher honors are open to them in the empyrean.

"Christ among you, a glorious expectation" is that aspect of the secret of Christ which is the counterpart of the secret in Ephesians. It is the secret of Christ as far as it applies to the present administration and to the nations. It gives believers among the nations the same relation to the celestial kingdom as believers in Israel had to the earthly rule. It gives them an expectation comparable to the kingdom,

the longed-for millennium, for which every faithful heart in Israel yearned, yet with a grace and glory as far above it as heaven is high above the earth, and with a kingdom so much greater and grander that our earthborn faculties and expressions fail to function in view of their appalling immensity and majesty.

PRESENT EVERY MAN MATURE

Is not Christ, as proclaimed among the more faithful in Christendom, far smaller than He is here revealed? With commendable zeal He is set forth as their personal Saviour, and the end of all things seems to have been reached in delivering them from the effects of their sins. We can only be thankful for this much, for even this is lacking in the formal churches of Christendom. But such selfish happiness is not permanently satisfying, especially when associated with the realization that millions, if not most of God's creatures, are suffering, or as orthodoxy insists, always will suffer. There is something repulsive about happiness which is not affected by the woes around it, which is callous to the agonies of others.

Many have wondered how the saints could be happy in glory when a glance over the parapets of heaven would reveal the tormented in hell. But this sound instinct has been stifled by an appeal to credulity. We are assured that the Scriptures so teach and God will make our hearts impervious to the pains of others. How horrible is this thought! What a spurious heaven is that which consists of self-gratification and a lack of all feeling for the fate of fellow mortals! To be delivered from such false notions of God's salvation is itself a cause for much thankfulness. Our choice by God is not an end in itself. We were selected, not to be blessed so much as to be blessers. And in making others happy is the only true and abiding happiness.

How blessed is the place of Abraham and his seed!

For in them shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And such is the secret of our future bliss. As members of Christ's body we will bring blessing to all the creatures of the empyrean. Through us He will rule the celestial hosts, and through us they will be brought into living contact with the grace and love of God. Our happiness will not be enjoyed in spite of contact with the hopeless horrors of a medieval hell, but because we will be the channel of blessing to the countless creatures who come within the scope of Christ's celestial rule. Therein is true and abiding happiness, in bringing to the creatures of God's hand the precious gifts of His heart.

So long as we are cramped and confined by a selfish longing for mere physical well-being in the future—and most of us would be unutterably thankful for that—our hearts will be closed to the sublimity of the glory which awaits us. It is not a question of restoring a single soul to happiness, or even of saving a multitude of sinners from their fate, but of reconciling a whole universe to God, of bringing bliss not only to innumerable creatures throughout the infinitudes of stellar space, but of satisfying the heart of God by means of a universal response to His love, so that He may take His true place in every heart He has created.

Christ among the nations as the pledge of our future glory, leading to the exaltation of Christ as the Head of all in the heavens as well as on the earth, and to the ultimate reconciliation of all at the consummation because the entire complement delights to dwell in Him—such is the supreme revelation brought by Paul, which leads us out of the partial and immature conceptions of His plans into a mature and complete grasp of His full purpose. In Ephesians maturity consists in finding *our* all in Christ, but, in Colossians it demands that we see in Christ all that *God* needs to carry out His eonian purpose.

Here is perhaps the highest sphere of service today—

admonishing and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we should present every man mature in Christ Jesus (1:28). This Paul does in the body of the epistle as we shall see. Even in his day it was not an easy task, for he speaks of it as *toiling* and *struggling*, as though progress were not only laborious but against heavy opposition. If this was so in his day, how much more now! Maturity has been branded as a crime by Christendom, and even zealous defenders of the Bible toil and struggle *against* the truths for which Paul once contended.

Few, indeed, are there among the saints who do not need to be *admonished* because of teaching or practice which conflicts with maturity. And all of us need to be *taught* the great truths concerning Christ which are unfolded in this epistle. Because these are unknown or denied, maturity has practically vanished. Is it not worth severe toil and a tremendous struggle to recover these treasures of wisdom and knowledge and to set them before the saints? O that God, in these last days, would raise up men like Paul, mature themselves, and powerfully impressed with their privilege of proclaiming the secret of Christ, the complement of God!

True riches, untold wealth, lie in the assurance which comes from an understanding which leads to a realization of this secret, which His God and Father has revealed concerning Christ, in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed (2:2,3). It consoles the heart as well as satisfies the head. It is the end of all philosophy, and the apex of all love. The whence, the why and the whither of all things is unfolded to us in this all-embracing "mystery."

But the saints have been beguiled and despoiled of this vast spiritual treasure by the persuasive words of men. The rites of religion and the reasonings of philosophy have effectually robbed them of this wonderful wealth. Though

the words still stare at us in the Bible, faith fails to see them, because it is blinded by false flares of human tradition. There is need, not only of a positive setting forth of the truth, as has already been done, but of a negative admonition, such as follows. This was called for in Paul's day, and was more needed and less heeded as the apostasy from Paul proceeded.

The same Christ Who met us at the beginning of our new life should accompany us all the way. He is all we needed for salvation, and He is more than sufficient for our walk. We should be rooted in Him alone, and not seek sustenance or support in aught else. We should be built up in Him only, and not seek edification in any other "means of grace." And may it be the lot of every reader of these lines to find a firm foundation for his faith in the secret now at length revealed, while his heart overflows with thankfulness for all that Christ is to him, and to the saints, to the whole creation, and to God.

A. E. Knoch

How restful it is to look upon a task all finished! And such a task! And so well done! How we should charge our hearts to enter and enjoy this solid satisfying portion.

Whatever joys and glories the future may have in store, even though our bodies be changed at His coming, nothing can add to our completeness in the Anointed. No ordinances upon the flesh, no prayer, no worship, no service, nothing can make us more acceptable; nothing can remove defilement or any other barrier to approach, for now we are perfectly equipped for His presence. The spirit of our God has cleansed us to His perfect satisfaction. Nothing can bring us nearer, nothing can make us dearer.

A. E. Knoch

THE SECRET OF CHRIST

ITS MANIFESTATION

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

TWO CLOSELY RELATED SECRETS filled the heart of the apostle in his imprisonment, besides the secret concerning this administration. The secret of the *evangel* (Eph. 6:19) and the secret of *Christ* (Col.4:3) were both pressing for utterance, so he especially urges the saints to pray for him that he may be able to make them known. He is not merely bound with metal chains. He is also “bound” to act by spiritual forces. As the literal Greek has it, he speaks, “as it is *binding*” for him to speak.

O that there were men today who knew these secrets, and not only could but would reveal them to the saints! O that all saints would unite in these prayers, no longer for the apostle Paul, but for pastors and teachers and evangelists everywhere! Is it not all too true that these secrets have been lost? Where are they made known? And do we not see the wisdom of God in this, that Paul, in urging the saints to pray for him, has left a permanent exhortation, a prayer which we all should pray, and which should awaken in our hearts a desire to enjoy these precious secrets ourselves and to make them known to others? What other truths in God’s Word are so burdened with prayer for their utterance? Does this not intimate that these truths are as desirable as rare?

The bulk of Paul’s epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is largely composed of *his* prayers for the saints, that

they may realize the grace and truth which he reveals to them. But at the close of each epistle we have these two gems, each perfect in its own setting, in which the *saints* are exhorted to pray for *him* that he may be able to make this message known. It is a delight to study these brief requests and especially to compare them with each other. Their messages are very similar. The chief difference lies in the secret to be expressed or manifested. In Ephesians it is the secret of the *evangel*, which is barely mentioned in the body of the epistle. In Colossians, however, it is the message of the epistle itself which is pressing for expression.

PERSEVERING IN PRAYER

It is the precious privilege of all who are His to be concerned with everything which pertains to God and His purpose in both creation and reconciliation. And this includes everything, since all is serving His grand design. Our prayers may include all, in heaven as well as on earth, but, of course, may concentrate on the world about us, and especially on the saints, and on those who are actively engaged in carrying out God's purpose in making Him known, particularly those to whom His secrets have been confided, and who, like Paul, are held and hindered from heralding what is on their heart. For now, far more than then, these secrets find little utterance or entrance among the people of God.

Most of us have heard many prayers concerning many things. We ourselves, perhaps, have prayed much and often. But, as we look back upon them, are we not reminded of the words of the apostle, that "we are not aware what we should pray for" (Rom.8:26)? Have not the most of our petitions been out of line with God's will? Do we not feel more and more that we desire to leave all details in God's hands because of our own ignorance of what should be? Yet, on the other hand, the definite instructions and

exhortations which are given us, especially in the perfection epistles, as to the scope and subject of our prayers, are almost totally ignored. Should we hear them in public they would appear strange and mark the petitioner as peculiar, as, indeed, he would be.

WATCHING WITH THANKSGIVING

Perhaps most of us are inclined to wait until our prayers are answered to our satisfaction before we add our thanks. But that is because we have not yet fully found our All in God. We should learn to be especially thankful when matters do *not* turn out according to our wishes, for this is evidence enough that we were in the wrong, and harm would have resulted if our will had been carried out. We should thank as we watch. It is not our duty, in prayer, to instruct God what to do, or how or when to do it, but to recognize our utter incapacity to dictate these details, and to rejoice that they are in His skillful hands, so that we may thankfully acquiesce in every particular, even if it is contrary to our own will.

A practical instance is at hand. It is now many, many years since our own heart was overflowing in prayer and petition that expression might be granted to us to make known the secret of the *evangel*. Indeed, it seemed at the time that this should be our life work. There was much liberty in prayer, for there was no question of the Lord's will, seeing that He Himself had put the petition into our mouths. Yet it is clear from this secret itself that it has a temporary term, and that the faith is fading from the earth, so that great things could not be expected, especially as the close of this administration seemed so very near. Nevertheless there has been much watching to see if some would not accept and appreciate the marvelous message of God's special grace, and much thanksgiving,

not only for those who received it, but also for those who did not, for both fulfill God's purpose.

Of course it is a special joy to hear of those who not only receive this precious truth, but strive to make it known. And God has graciously stirred some hearts, who have given written or oral testimony to the truth, at various times and in various countries. May our prayers result in a blessed awakening to this great truth! And, at the same time, may He open hearts to explore and enjoy the secret of Christ, the subject of our present meditation. These two secrets, that of the evangel, which involves the conciliation of the nations during the period of Israel's callousness, and that of Christ, which results in the reconciliation of all at the consummation, are very closely related in their present expression. Peace is the keynote of both. Even as conciliation is a precursor of reconciliation, so Christ's present attitude toward the nations may be looked upon as an anticipation of His attitude toward all in the last eon, when the secret of Christ will be fully unfolded. The secret of the evangel is, in part, but one aspect of the secret of Christ in its present expression. Therefore, in Ephesians, the apostle wishes us to pray for one, yet, in Colossians, for the other.

As we have seen, the secret of Christ is best set forth today by the expression "Christ among you, *the expectation of glory*" (1:27). *Christ did not leave the land of Israel when He came in flesh. He was never among the nations. His presence in Israel was the assurance of future glory for all who received Him, which will be fulfilled in the thousand years, on the earth. His figurative presence now, among the nations, is also the assurance of future glory, for all who believe, among the celestials. At the same time it involves the setting aside of the enmity which existed in the days of His presence, and this is the conciliation. It is God Who is conciliated, yet it is Christ Who acts accord-*

ingly, and Who visits the nations, in spirit, just as He had come to Israel in the days of old.

MAKING IT MANIFEST

The secret of Christ must be manifested. Why not simply tell it out to eager crowds and herald it forth in overflowing halls? Why not let the daily press put it on the front page, with gigantic headlines, in colored ink? Or at least the religious press should give it the publicity it deserves. Pamphlets and books could be written and exhibited everywhere. It seems quite simple. But Paul did not urge the saints in his day to use every avenue of publicity, but to pray to God to *open a door*. The fact is that all doors are shut and locked against the entrance of this truth. No human effort is able to open them. We are entirely cast upon God for the manifestation of the secret of Christ.

Indeed, among the saints themselves there are few hearts that are open to these grand verities. And here we find not merely closed doors but open opposition. These transcendent truths, which complete the Word of God, which round out revelation, which draw aside the enigmatic veil which hangs before God's previous unfoldings—these are rejected as heretical and false, although their simple terms cannot be misunderstood. It is a question of giving Christ the highest place, and the opposing powers will not accord Him this. So doors are closed, and arguments are brought forth to show that these words cannot mean what they say. It may be well to consider a few of these.

"THINGS"

Strange as it may seem, one of the first reasons given for rejecting the reconciliation of all when we began to make it known was that the word "all" in this passage refers to *things*, not to persons; to creation, not to creatures. So it is in the popular versions, especially in the Revised, which is

exceptionally particular on such points. Yet stranger still is the fact that this is according to current scholarship, which confounds the indefinite forms of the Greek with the English neuter gender. To what this leads may be seen in Galatians 3:22, where the Revisers changed the Authorized Version "the scripture hath concluded *all* under sin" to "the scripture hath shut up *all things* under sin." And this is "that the promise . . . might be given them that believe."

The mere fact that there is no estrangement between "things" and God, and therefore there can be no reconciliation, should suffice to show how groundless it is. In fact, the argument from "things" has little weight with intelligent searchers for truth, for, if we confine the preëminence of God's Son to His relation to the insensate matter of the universe, as, indeed, we must if *pan* is limited to *things*, the whole passage becomes absurd and intolerable. When it becomes evident, in the next paragraph, that the Colossians themselves were among these "things," few will care to limit the glories of the Son to the physical material of the universe, no matter how much Greek scholarship may stand back of the assertion. But the indefinite includes all genders as well as things.

Indeed, what other form than the indefinite could be used in this passage? Creation and reconciliation in Him were not confined to males or females, for, at his creation, even Adam was both, and this distinction would not apply to the creatures in the heavens. The universality of this passage cannot be confined to earthly conditions. In order to include all it *must* be expressed in terms that apply to all. To one who revels in this marvelous galaxy of glories, which exalts our beloved Lord as no other in God's precious Word, the continuous addition of the misleading word "things" in our popular versions seems as deplorable as it is unnecessary. It brings discord into this highest of harmonies. It seeks to dull His dignities,

by making Him the Creator of lifeless substance, and not of living creatures.

You who use versions with "things" in Colossians 1:15-20, cross them out! Only by so doing may you be initiated into the secret of Christ. He is not merely the Creator of the dust beneath your feet, but He is *your* Creator! He is not the Reconciler of the soulless stone on which you stand, but He is *your* Reconciler! The simple fact that He appears here as the *Son* should show that He has to do with *spirit* and with *life*. He is not the Firstborn of dead substance but of living creatures.

SCOPE

Another bolt which has been used in order to keep the door from opening to allow the secret of Christ to enter is the plea that Colossians is concerned only with the church which is Christ's body, hence reconciliation can refer only to them. It is well to keep each statement in God's Word well within the scope of its context. But where, in all the sacred scrolls, is the range of the context any greater than in this passage? "Every creature" cannot be confined to the church which is Christ's body. "All in the heavens and on the earth" is as wide a scope as can well be imagined. With such a context, reconciliation *cannot* be limited to any body of God's creatures. It applies to all, sinners as well as saints, high and low, without any limitation whatever except previous estrangement.

UNIVERSALITY

Any attempt to subtract in the smallest degree from any one of the eight asseverations of universality in the first of Colossians I cannot help but feel is nothing less than *treason*! If He is the Firstborn of every creature *but one*, then He is not first in all! If a single creature was not created in Him, then His glory has suffered a severe eclipse! If

another is before Him, then He is not first! If He is second in all, why not tell us of the one who is first? If only a part of the complement dwells in Him, then, of course, only a part will be reconciled through Him. Again I say, *Treason!*

The fact that almost all doors are closed to the secret of Christ today, especially among instructed saints, is a most illuminating commentary on this request for prayer. If Christendom had gone on in the truth, and the light had increased, then we might expect to find open doors. But the contrary has occurred. Apostasy from Paul is not confined to one province, as of old, but is well-nigh universal. And, as a consequence, the secret of Christ is not only unknown but shut out, debarred, yes, in some cases, detested. There is more need for prayer now than ever before that God will open doors for its manifestation.

WALKING IN WISDOM

“Be walking in wisdom toward those outside” (Col.4:5). These words follow immediately upon the reference to the secret of Christ. In Ephesians (5:15) we have a similar exhortation, but nothing is said of those outside. This is another of those delicate touches which distinguish the two epistles, for the secret of Christ brings us into much closer relation to unbelievers, by creation and reconciliation, in which they share, than the secret of Ephesians, in which they have no part. And how is it possible to walk in wisdom toward our fellow saints or toward the world without a grasp of the great secrets which affect each so vitally? These alone will revolutionize the attitude of our hearts toward them and enable us to act in accord with God's purpose for them.

It is wisdom to deal with men in accord with God's will and purpose concerning them. If we imagine that those outside are doomed to destruction or eternal torment, it is practically impossible to avoid a hardening of the heart

in regard to them, which will lead us to think and act contrary to the basic truths of their creation and reconciliation in love. Thinking of them as so much waste in God's operations in turn reflects upon His wisdom and love. These false conceptions of God's creation and goal, outside the Son of His love, make a wise walk toward those outside well-nigh impossible. But when we see the place of everyone in God's plans, it will soften our hearts and steady our heads, and we will be enabled to recognize His handiwork in the most worthless and most antagonistic of His creatures.

Looked at apart from God's purpose, the present era, like those before it, is vanity, and a feeding on wind. There is much talk of evolution and there is much real revolution, but the world as a whole seems to be slipping down into an abyss instead of climbing up into a paradise. Of what use is all the work and woe with which we are surrounded? We know that God will yet make excellent use of it. Man's day will reveal man's failure and futility. This is of no value in itself, but of surpassing worth in humbling man and in bringing him to accept and appreciate God's grace. In this way this wicked era will be reclaimed in due time. Yet wisdom will anticipate, and use the background of human incapacity and hate in order to display the fullness of God's competency and love.

Not only are we to deal graciously among ourselves (Eph.4:32), but our conduct with those outside should also be governed by this precious quality. Once we know that even they were created in love and will be reconciled by the blood of Christ's cross, we will recognize in their present state only a temporary estrangement from God, in which evil and sin play a painful yet salutary part. Far from harsh condemnation, we will sympathize with them in their condition, and speak and act in faith, knowing that they will yet fulfill the object of their creation, when God

becomes All in them. What if they are the vessels of God's indignation now? In due time He will use them for His glory. *We*, the vessels of His grace, have no more right to His favor than those without. May this thought humble us before them.

Our Lord called His disciples the salt of the earth (Matt.5:13). They alone could stay its corruption. Perhaps nowhere is the rottenness of the world more evident than in its utterances. Not only should our speech with them be gracious, but free from the decadent foulness which characterizes much of human intercourse. More than that, it should be a seasoning and a preservative, counteracting the decay all around us. And what is more effective for this than an exultant knowledge of God's grand goal, when all that is corruptible will have given place to that which is incorruptible and glorious?

A heart overflowing with expectation in the future which is in store for all of God's creatures is the best preparation for meeting and answering the questions of those outside. Apart from this knowledge the world has many queries to which even the saint cannot give a satisfactory reply. "Why does God allow such terrible things to occur?" Such questions come from the lips of those who know nothing about God. And how few are able to show that God does not "allow" them to happen, but brings them about for His glory and our blessing? As a result the deity of most real believers is only a second or third rate god, who needs to be excused for his dereliction of duty and defended for His impotence.

We should never be at a loss to answer the questions of the godless in regard to God's present operations and His prospective goal. This is seen fully only in the secret of Christ, which it is our privilege and duty to manifest. So that, unlike Ephesian truth, which is only for the saints and can only be grasped by these under circumstances which

are all too rare in these days, the secret of Christ should have a powerful influence on our walk and talk with those outside the family of faith. In measure it should be manifested by our conduct in the world as well as by our witness to the saints. May each one of us pray this prayer and seek to fulfill it in our own words and work!

A. E. Knoch

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST'S CROSS

THE WILL of God, and His love for His Son, envisioned the blood of Christ's cross (Col.1:20). Reconciliation cannot be achieved without the blood, which speaks of suffering. In Leviticus 17:11 we read (CV): "For the soul of the flesh, it is in the blood." The soul is a matter of our feelings and senses. Christ laid down His soul (John 10:17) which became sorrow-stricken to death (Matt.26:38).

These sufferings were necessary for the work of reconciliation, which in turn makes it possible for Christ to receive a kingdom of the reconciled. These sufferings were so severe and vast in their extent that they will lead to a reconciliation no less vast. The reconciliation is to be universal.

In this we can see how it was that God's love for Christ as His Son prompted Him to prepare the sufferings of the cross. We can begin to grasp the significance of Isaiah 53:10, where we read, "Yet Yahweh desires to crush Him, and He causes Him to be wounded."

As the blood speaks of pain and agony, so the cross speaks of humiliation and shame. The death on the cross was a sacrifice, but it was an extremely ignominious one. It was a curse to be hung on a tree (Deut.21:22,23). This was a nailing to a stake, as was done to the lowest of criminals and outcasts. As such it demanded estrangement between

God and His Son (Matt.27:46), yet this was an estrangement which ends all estrangement.

How amazing it is that this humiliation becomes the background for the display of God's love for His Son! It prepared the way for the exaltation of Christ above every throne and lordship and sovereignty and authority, and every name which is named.

Even as the shame of the cross was necessary for the glorious reign of Christ as the beloved Son, so also was His humiliation necessary in order for us to be glorified with Him. "For the One not knowing sin, [God] makes to be sin for our sakes that we may be becoming God's righteousness in Him" (2 Cor.5:21). But even here, the glory which arises from the humiliation of Christ does not end. Through the enmity of the cross the enmity between God and His creation is removed. It was God's love for His Son which prepared the cross so that He might achieve reconciliation.

In conciliation the barriers are removed between God and humanity (2 Cor.5:18,19). In reconciliation there is a full appreciation and enjoyment of the peace and access which this removal of enmity has produced. The cross assures this establishment of peace in the hearts of all of God's creatures (Col.1:20), but it is only believers who enjoy it "now" (Col.1:22) as we persist in the faith and are grounded and settled and are not removed from the expectation of the evangel of grace (Col.1:23).

However, every point of this evangel demands that the reconciliation be universal and eventually apply to all who are estranged. The blood, the Son's sufferings, demands that all enmity be removed from the universe. The cross, the Son's humiliation, demands that full value be given for the price paid. God's love for His Son demands that He receive a kingdom of fully reconciled creatures, and that none be denied to Him.

D.H.H.

Unsearchable Riches

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FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 111th Year
(1909–2020)

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THIRD QUARTER, 2020

Volume 111

Number 3

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BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

COLOSSIANS 2:8-23

CHRIST, with His secret glories, is the determining factor in doctrine and deportment for today. When we give Him His high place in our heads and hearts we cannot go far astray. Now that Paul has set forth the secret of Christ, he deals with departures from it in doctrine (2:8-23), and discusses its bearing on our conduct (3:1-4:1). Doctrinal departure may be grouped under two distinct heads, that which comes from men, and that which comes from God. Reasoning and ritual are the two dangers against which we are warned.

If we realize our completeness in Christ and His glory as the complement of the Deity, we are immensely wealthy. We possess riches beyond the power of figures to express. We cannot consider the millionaires or billionaires of these last days in our class, for their riches are loaned to them only for a few brief years, and even then they bring with them more care than contentment, more unpleasantness than joy. Ours is sure to us for all time. On one point, however, we are like them. We may lose the enjoyment of it for a season. This may be taken from us if we do not beware.

Philosophy and religion have robbed us of more vital values than any other foes. One denies Christ His place as the Complement of God. The other refuses to accept Him as the Completeness of the saints. In these days the extreme of these two movements may be seen in Modernism on the one hand and Romanism on the other. A vain philosophy is seeking to eliminate God and His Christ from the universe. An empty ritual is seeking to displace the work

of Christ. We may not go to either of these extremes, yet in all of us lies the tendency to put reason and religion in the place of God's Anointed. Hence the apostle's warning,

BEWARE

In Ephesians we are warned to beware how we *walk* (Eph.5:15). In Philippians we have a threefold warning as to our *service* (Phil.3:2), but in Colossians it is applied to departure from the great *doctrine* of Christ as the Complement of all. The saints are almost all being robbed, yet, as it were, in a legal way, so that they are not aware of the great loss which they have sustained. Indeed, most of them cling to the substitutes, and would feel themselves robbed rather if these were taken away from them. Thus, not being even aware of their vast loss, they cannot beware lest it be taken from them. In these days the situation has been reversed. The saints have lost these precious possessions and now need rather to *recover* their property.

The saints as a whole *have* been despoiled through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world. What is needed is that we recognize this in our own case and seek to remedy it insofar as we are able. Two things are necessary in order to accomplish this. First, we must seek to absorb into our whole being the great companion truths of Christ as the Complement for God and man. Then we should examine the Scriptures so that we may recognize the enemies of these vital verities, rationalism and religion. Both pervade Christendom today to an extent that would astonish the saints if they only realized it. Christendom is poor today, beggared by these two robbers, who have taken our Christ from us.

PHILOSOPHY OR HUMAN TRADITION

Men allege themselves to be wise, yet are stupid. Their

heart is darkened. They are vain in their reasonings. Yet even many of the leaders in Christendom laud man's "God-given reason," and encourage us to make use of it, especially in the search for truth. To be sure, such reason as man has left was given him by God, but, knowing God, they did not glorify or thank Him as God, hence *they were made vain in their reasonings* (Rom.1:21). As many, if not most, of the saints are partakers in this sin of not glorifying God *as God*, they also manifest the futility of reasoning, especially in the things of God.

Perhaps no better example can be given of the vanity of human ratiocination where God's glory is denied than the imbecility of the evolutionary hypothesis. I consider the mere fact that this silly theory could be entertained by the scientific world for so long a time as ample evidence of the intellectual decadence of this era. There has never yet been found a single fact on which to form a logical syllogism on which to base the theory of evolution, yet the great majority of western scientists swallowed it whole, and sneer at all who do not share their infatuation. The real basis of the theory lies in its irrational commencement without a creation, and its continuance without a Creator. It robs God of His glory, gives Him no thanks, so, morally and rationally, *must be* a vacuous vanity.

But even we, though saints, are not exempt from this law. Few, indeed, glorify God *as God* in these days, and, as a result, their mental processes are clouded and confused, and lead to error, rather than to truth. I have ceased to expect full clarity of thought from anyone who does not bow to the absolute deity of God, without reservation or restriction. The nearer there is an approach to this the more will reason be rational. Yet the nearer we come to the acknowledgment of God's deity, the more we will discard reason for faith, and philosophy for revelation, and the less will we be guilty of injecting philosophy into God's Word.

This has been a sore evil in these latter days, especially among those who seek to be Bible students. With many of them the Scriptures have been transformed into a bog of proof texts instead of a full-fledged faith to be believed. Philosophies are propounded and supported by texts from Genesis to Revelation, with little regard to their contexts or actual contents. Figurative statements have been treated as if literal and used to prove that which is not true. Philosophy is then installed in the place of Holy Writ, and demands implicit faith, such as should be given to the Word alone.

The only true philosophy must be based upon the great truth that, in Christ, the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily. Even those who recognize God, such as Solomon, find unsolved problems in the world as it is. If he, with all his wisdom, as well as a measure of revelation, could not finish his philosophy, what can other men do? Many have tried it, and have only led mankind further from God and the truth. A great scientist and believer once expressed his conviction that, if we only knew all, we would conclude that this world is the very wisest and best that could be. But the accepted philosophers have taken the opposite stand, and have sown distrust and hatred and despair in the hearts of mankind. A close student of Schopenhauer has said, "He seems to have the key for a few doors of our life, but he has none for its exit."

The world, as it is, is abnormal, and presents no proper premises for reason to build upon. Things are wrong, and the wrongs are not righted. It is only as we bring in God, and His activities in Christ, in the past and in the future, that all becomes rational and understandable and glorious. In His Beloved, and through Him, He will fulfill all the beneficent designs which move His heart. And all that God needs or will use in accomplishing His purpose, is in Him. If, indeed, we also have a part in this glorious

work, it is only because we are in Him. In ourselves we contribute only to the negative, the destructive, the preparatory phase of God's plan. The positive, the constructive, the conclusive work is all done by Christ, or through those who are His.

We are not philosophers, indeed, and have no philosophy in fact, but we have the reality, the substance, of which philosophy is only the shadow, the elusive phantom. The philosophers nearly all disagree. Were they good reasoners, they would deduce from this fact alone that philosophy is mostly a bad dream. And not one of these philosophies is complete or satisfactory since they deal with a transitory phase of God's dealings with man as if it were the whole. They have no light beyond the tomb and know nothing of judgment and reconciliation. We have what the philosopher is seeking, and find all included in Christ, Who is the Wisdom of God.

Christendom, and even the vast majority of the saints within it, do not know Christ thus. The title "Complement" is His because He brings all to a satisfactory *Completion*. But the final phase of God's purpose has been hid from Christendom, so that the creation which it commences in chaos, manages to bring millions of sentient beings into existence, not for their own happiness or the glory of God, but for their unending torment and the eternal disgrace of the Deity. Any philosophy based on the creeds of Christendom must lead to desperation and insanity. Even when death is made to end all, oblivion is no jewel in God's crown, and is no rational apology for creation. Reason and revelation demand that God be glorified, that suffering receive a satisfactory explanation, and that a *completed*, not a shattered universe crown the efforts of Deity and the intervention of His Anointed.

Perhaps the greatest treasure of which the saints have been despoiled is the reconciliation of all. Almost pre-

cisely the same words are used to introduce this glorious truth. Let us refer to it again (1:18-20): “that in all He may be becoming first, seeing that the entire complement delights to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all to Him . . .” It is because He is God’s Complement that all will be reconciled. If He does not reconcile all, that all will not be complete and He is not God’s Complement. The full force of “complement” or “fullness” is denied by nearly every saint who bears His name. Only a tiny remnant dares to acknowledge Him as God’s Complement. All the rest have been robbed of a jewel of far more value than any gem in any diadem of any potentate of earth.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE WORLD

One of the worst robbers in Christendom is ritual. Nor should we confine this term to those vast communions which use it in their form of worship. Ritual is not merely a recalling of the Jewish service and sacrifices in such things as the celebration of the mass among those whose Christianity is no more than a name, but includes the rite of baptism among those who are alive, and intelligent, and active in the service of our Lord. For the spiritual believer there is more danger in ritual than in rationalism, for ritual is divine in its origin, and seems to be God’s will, when the Word of truth is not correctly cut.

Ritual can only be countered by the precious truth of completeness in Christ. Religion implies incompleteness and demands that something be done to fill our lack. Circumcision, baptism, the keeping of decrees, of festivals, and all religious ritual are intended to make us more acceptable to God in ourselves, though none of them is more than a mere shadow. Christ is the Reality which they portray, and, in Him, we have the substance, hence do not need the shadow. Indeed, if we seek to make ourselves complete by means of these shadows, the reality will be

lost to us. Few things are more needed in these days than a knowledge of our completeness in Christ.

REAL CIRCUMCISION

A considerable portion of mankind is distinguished by the sign of circumcision, because they are descendants of Abraham, and should shadow forth the fact that blessing comes through faith, not through flesh. It signifies that the flesh is cut off. It foreshadowed the cross of Christ, where He was cut off, and all further hope of anything through His flesh was at an end. In Him we also were cut off, and our flesh has no place before God. If then, our flesh is cut off, why act as if it were not so? The Circumcisionists of Paul’s day lacked the reality. In fact they fought against it. With them the flesh was vitally important. They were not the circumcision, but the *maim*cision (Phil.3:2). The rite itself kept them from the reality. And so it will rob all who submit to it now that we are complete in Christ.

GENUINE BAPTISM

Circumcision was needed to enter into the community of God’s people. Baptism speaks of a much nearer approach. It was for the priests when they came near to worship in the tabernacle and the temple. Symbolically it cleansed the flesh whenever it sought the divine presence. The reality is found in the entombment of Christ. The body that bore the sin of the world was laid away in the tomb. Thus has God dealt graciously with all of our offenses. All the water in the world could not have removed a single one of them. It can only indicate the actual cleansing. To repeat the rite, now that we have the reality, is to deny the great truth that we have all of which it speaks, in Christ our Complement.

The great proof that we have had the real baptism is that we are roused and *vivified* jointly with Him (Col.

2:12,13). One who is vivified cannot offend again, but is wholly without sin. Why should such a one be baptized? Should Christ once more return to the tomb because of our offenses? Or is He alive beyond the reach of sin and death? As He is, so are we, in spirit. Already, in God's sight, we are as we shall be in the future, when in the presence of our Lord, immortal, incorruptible. His burial is our baptism, and His vivification is our life.

ERASING THE DECREES

Not only did the Jews of Paul's day seek to insist on the circumcision and baptism of converts, but they sought to put them under law. Their attempt to enslave them under the law of Moses did not succeed, due to Paul's energetic remonstrance, as we see in his Galatian letter, but this did not hinder them from making rules of their own for them, which, while they seem to free them from the observance of the Mosaic ritual, nevertheless brought them under the authority of the apostles just as if they were subjects in the millennial kingdom, instead of having a celestial allotment of their own.

THE DECREES OF JAMES

So far as the relation of the nations to God is concerned they will be under the sovereignty and authority of the chosen nation in the future on the earth. Nevertheless that nation, by crucifying their Messiah, has forfeited all right to such a place, and will exercise it only when once again restored to divine favor. In the book of Acts, where Israel is continually becoming more and more apostate, and James, who was not an apostle, gets the upper hand, it seems utterly unwarranted on their part to assume to dictate to the converts among the nations, except as we view this as a foretaste of the kingdom.

Although Christendom has not given much heed to the

decrees, issued by James, the same thing has been repeated thousands of times in its many organizations. Men have arisen and taken upon themselves to rule and regulate the conduct of the saints by means of "disciplines" and "manuals" and other substitutes for the law, usually incorporating a portion of the Mosaic code in their own. All such attempts to bring us into bondage to human "sovereignities and authorities" are destructive of our completeness in Christ. He has nailed them to His cross. They are not *for* us, but *against* us. They are hostile to us. They bring us into bondage, after Christ has made us free. In Him we need no regulations from the hands of men.

Israel had a *divine* law, which was holy and just and good. But did it make them complete for God's presence? Far from it! Rather it revealed their incompleteness. How then shall human enactments help to make men acceptable to Him? They do not! They have the opposite effect. Let us strip them off! Such human additions to God's requirements were given the greatest weight in Israel, but it did not help them to recognize their Messiah, but rather to crucify Him. His crucifixion was a public spectacle showing how weak and worthless such things were, and at the same time a repudiation of them, and a triumph over them. No human enactment, unless it be the decree that caused Christ to be crucified, furnishes us fully for the future.

For us the figure of the body takes the place of the shadows of the law. Instead of ceasing work on a Saturday we look above and see Christ *seated* at God's right hand, His work on our behalf completed. The difference is vast. Not our work, or even our cessation from work, makes us meet for glory, but our position in Christ has already placed us there in spirit. Knowing this, we will allow no one to judge us, should we work on the seventh day of the week, or should we eat that which has been offered to idols, or fail to keep a festival found in the law.

LET NO ONE JUDGE YOU

The decrees issued from Jerusalem were partly concerned with food. The nations were not to be allowed to eat anything which had been strangled, or blood (Acts 15:20). Now the apostle puts an end to such prohibitions. The law of Moses dealt with such matters as food and drink, the details of a festival, the new moons, and the sabbaths, not that it might make those who kept it perfect thereby, but, partly at least, in order to foreshadow the true perfection of the future in connection with Christ. He is the true Food and Drink. The festivals point to His work and the sabbath to the cessation of all work for salvation, in Him. All of these have a future fulfillment on the earth, hence have their place with the people of the earth, but not with us, whose destiny is different.

LET NO ONE ARBITRATE AGAINST YOU

Israel had a divine ritual. It would have been high-handed presumption for anyone of the people to enter the holy places. Such a one would send his representative or messenger, the priest, in his place, and not without due regard to the formalities prescribed by the Mosaic ritual. It seems like real humility today to take a far-off stand, and allow another to take our place in approach to God, by means of elaborate rites and splendid ceremonies, which appeal to the eye, but it is a sham. The mind of the flesh can actually pride itself on this humility, and turn against those who consider themselves fit for God's presence for no other reason than their confidence in Christ.

HOLDING THE HEAD

Ritual calls for the intervention of intermediate messengers, such as priests or clergy, and these take the place which belongs to Christ as the Head of the body. Ritual

demands an organization rather than a living organism, in which each member is in living connection with the Head. We should hold fast the Head and reject all interfering substitutes. Ritual demands stagnation, faith brings growth. Occupation with the shadows and symbols is not to be compared with vital union with Him to Whom they point. Let us not be subject to these but to our living Head, and grow into the assurance of our completeness in Him, where no rites or ceremonies are needed to finish our perfection.

DEATH TO THE ELEMENTS OF THE WORLD

In Christ we have died to everything which is against us. In Him we died to sin (Rom.6:2). Those under the law died to it (Gal.2:19). We have been crucified to the world (Gal.6:14). The "elements" of the world had their proper place in the past, in Israel. During their minority they were enslaved to these elements (Gal.4:3). When the Galatians went back to these things they scrutinized days and months and seasons and years (Gal.4:9,10). The elements are poor and infirm, yet there is a continual tendency on the part of the saints to fall back to them. Religion is practically composed of them. But we have died to them.

Were we living in the world, as Israel was under the law, then we would have part in the "Christian religion," with rules and regulations and a ritual to be observed—just as most of the saints are! Then, indeed, all would be negative—you shall *not* touch this or taste that, nor make contact with the other. These regulations are made by men and seem to be wise measures for the conduct of religious worship. How much better that all churches go through the same ritual each Sunday! And what an advantage that all observe the same calendar and the same festivals each year! From the standpoint of the world this all seems excellent, but it is fit for infants, not for full-fledged saints.

Willful humility has no value in God's sight. In one of the great confessions in a foreign country, every time the Lord's supper is observed, the whole congregation must repeat together something like the following: "I, poor, miserable, sinful creature, confess herewith all my sins . . ." Yet, after reiterating this for a lifetime, most of them never realize that they are anything of the kind. In other places they fast and castigate themselves. But all of this is powerless to effect its purpose. All of it is directed toward the improvement of the flesh, yet it only serves to make it worse. We have died to the elements of the world, and are mature in Christ, hence pay no heed to human decrees.

SOUL OR SPIRIT

Philosophy is dependent on human experience, which is abnormal at present, hence it cannot reason to any satisfactory conclusion. Religion seeks to deal with the sensations rather than the spirit, hence lacks permanent power. Both utterly fail to settle the problems with which they deal. They are essentially soulish, not spiritual. Christ and His cross and His crown are the only satisfactory solution to the riddle of the universe. He exemplifies God's Wisdom and God's Righteousness. He is all that God needs to effect the purpose of His love with creation. He is all that we need in order to fully fit us for that perfection. He is our Philosophy and our Religion.

A. E. Knoch

With the preceding article and that which follows we complete the reprint of Brother A. E. Knoch's series of studies on Colossians. Originally published in 1940,41, they direct our attention to that epistle which especially centers on Christ and His relationship to God and to us. This epistle is much needed for our continuing meditation.

D.H.H.

THAT WHICH IS ABOVE

Colossians 3:1–4:1

OUR BODIES have not yet been *raised* to celestial spheres, but, in spirit, we have been *vivified* together with Christ (Eph.2:5) and *roused* with Him (Col.3:1). Hence come the great conflicts in our conduct, for while we are on earth in flesh, our spirit and our soul belong *above*, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. The body apart from the spirit is dead. As our life is hid together with Christ in God, we are dead to the things of this nether sphere. We have no future on the earth. Any moment may call us away to our celestial home.

This includes far more than death to *sin*, as set before us in the sixth of Romans. This exhortation is not based on Christ's *descent* for us, but on His *exaltation* among the celestials. It does not appeal to His past suffering for our sakes, but to His future glory and our public manifestation with Him in it. The power of that glory is already operating in our spirits and attracts our souls as a magnet to the empyrean. Our life is an invisible one, even as Christ is hid from mortal gaze. We belong to the celestials.

Correct conduct consists in conformity to truth. All our acts should fit the facts. So long as we belonged to this earth and the decadent humanity which inhabits it, we deported ourselves accordingly. Now that our vital interests have been transferred to a higher and nobler sphere we should comport ourselves as becomes its dignity and glory. We no longer belong down here. The earth with the human beings upon it is no connection to be proud of. We should be glad to be rid of our relationship to such a race,

and to enter into practical possession of our new dignities by conducting ourselves as those of a higher, nobler, and yet humbler company.

PUT TO DEATH

God's indignation is coming on the sons of stubbornness because of their sins and transgressions and offenses. True, this does not meet them, as a rule, in this life, but it will surely visit them in the judgment and in the days of vengeance, when God deals with the race as a whole. Not only the baser sins will endure His indignation, but some which almost parade as virtues will call down His wrath. Greed is the worship of things, the reliance on the creature, and will be dealt with as idolatry, for it puts possessions in the place of Him Who must possess the undivided loyalty of every heart. Reliance on riches is idolatry, for One alone is reliable.

Once we lived in these things, but now we should gladly put them in the place of death, so that they have no more attraction, no further power, no longer any part in our lives. Death to the indulgences of the flesh! Death to all evil desires that drag us down!

THE OLD AND THE YOUNG HUMANITY

The race of mankind is hopelessly decrepit and depraved. In a fine figure its conduct is compared with the clothes with which it covers its nakedness. But its outward behavior is by no means ideal. Its conduct is no fit covering for us. Hence we are exhorted to strip it off and put on a different dress, more suited to our new relations. We are to leave off anger, fury, malice, calumny, obscenity, and falsehood. These are no fitting garment for the young humanity which has Christ as its Image. Such should put on the very opposite. Anger, fury, malice, should be replaced by compassion and kindness, calumny and obscenity out of your mouth by humility, meekness, patience, gracious forbearance.

The cause of much misconduct in the old humanity is its shattered condition. It is split up into conflicting factions. In it the Greek is set against the Jew, the Circumcision against the Uncircumcision, the slave against the freeman. Its unity is destroyed, its parts are antagonistic. There is mutual distrust and jealousy and hatred between its sections. All this is done away in the young humanity, in which Christ is everything to each one. It is, and always will remain, an indivisible unity, with no friction or faction. In Christ we recognize no distinctions, such as man, humanity. Race, religion, ritual and social standing all disappear. These are the hindrances to unity which must be discarded.

GRACE OUR GUIDING STAR

How has the Lord dealt with us? He has not merely been kind and forgiving, but, above all, *gracious*. Grace does not get, but gives. Grace does not condemn, but condones. Grace does not hinder, but helps. Grace does not find fault, but freely bestows its favors. No matter what we are or what we have done, we can always be sure of sufficient grace from our adorable Lord. O that we could count upon the same consideration from those who are His! O that we would show the same grace to all who are the recipients of His favor!

LOVE, THE TIE OF MATURITY

With whatever else the young humanity may be clothed, it should always wear, over all, the magic mantle of love. The ties that bound together the sections of the old humanity also divided these from one another. Descent from Abraham united some, yet severed them from the rest. But love makes no divisions, no separations. Hence it is the bond that binds abidingly, and abolishes all dividing barriers. It is God's love expressed in terms of grace which has

united us to Him, and it is the same love which will unite us to one another.

THE ARBITRATION OF PEACE

Christ has made peace. In Him and through Him all cause for strife and dissension has been done away. He has made peace between us and God when we were enemies. He has made peace between the Circumcision, who were near, and the Uncircumcision, who were far from Him. In the days to come He will be the Prince of Peace. During His reign upon the earth there will be no wars upon the earth, no armies, no soldiers on land or sea or in the air. So even now, in Him, all cause for contention is unknown. Dissension among the saints should always be settled by an appeal to this peace. Love should weld all who are Christ's into one, and peace should preserve the unity of love.

BE THANKFUL

One of the most elementary demands upon the creature is thankfulness. It is because men were not thankful that God has given them over, that their heart is darkened (Rom.1:1). Not, indeed, as a punishment for their ingratitude, but rather to introduce a process by means of which mankind will learn by their lack to appreciate the gifts of God. It is difficult to see how anyone who has even a dim apprehension of his place in Christ should not overflow in gratitude. Yet it is well for us to continually remind our hearts to bring their adoring response and lay it at the feet of Him Who hungers for the homage of all the hearts He has created.

TEACHING, ADMONISHING, SINGING

All conduct depends upon a knowledge of God and His Christ, as found in His Word. Therefore the one who desires to walk acceptably should make his heart a home for the

word of Christ in such a redundant measure that philosophy will be replaced by real wisdom, and ritual by genuine, heartfelt homage and worship. The secret of Christ is the sum of all philosophy, and the goal of all wisdom. It should be the basis of our teaching and admonition, along with all the rich grace which accompanies it, and then it will overflow in affectionate response to God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

DO ALL IN THE NAME

The secret of Christ unfolds to us the great truth that God will fulfill all His will through His Anointed. He was the medium of creation and will be the means of reconciliation. All is *through* Him even as all is *out of* God. All the divine activities during the eons are under His control. Hence all that we do or say should be in His name. It is the incense which makes all acceptable. Even our thanks should not ascend to God without its savor.

SUBJECTION

Subjection is one of the great lessons of the eons. The future does not consist in the self-assertion and independence of God's creatures, but in their subjection to Him (1 Cor.15:28). Even the Son Himself, the great King and Head of the whole universe, will resign all rule and take the place of subjection. It is the only normal and natural condition for a creature. There can be no ultimate perfection so long as all are not in delightful and loving subjection to the Creator. Hence it is one of the chief lessons of the eons to learn to be subject, each in his own sphere. Even masters are reminded that they have a master above them.

In these degenerate days there is a strong tendency to throw off all yokes, and to demand a spurious liberty and independence. This generally accompanies the repudiation of God and the rejection of the lordship of Christ.

Where men will not bow in subjection to God, it follows that the authority of the husband is weakened, that children will not obey their parents, and that workers will not take their proper place beneath their superiors. Among the saints subjection to God should be emphasized, as well as to one another, for it, rather than a theoretical liberty, brings blessing and happiness.

The eons are a training school for the future, and are intended to teach, not merely the creature's dependence upon God, but that insubordination leads to suffering and even death. Herein we see the reason for our social institutions, and the various ranks of mankind. Theoretically, we imagine that mankind would be happier if all were on a level, and there were no subordination. So they would, *if all were subject to God*. So it will be after the eons are past. But, until then, subjection is God's means of preparing for that blessed ultimate. In the various relations of life we must learn to be subject, each in our sphere.

There is no call upon us to rule, even though this is implied in the subjection of others. The husband is not told to lay down the law, but to love. Parents are not told to be strict with their children, but to refrain from vexing them. Masters are not exhorted to domineer over their slaves, but to be just and equitable in dealing with them. The grace we have received will help us to bow in acquiescent subjection, and also greatly soften the severity and harshness usually associated with human authority. Man's inhumanity to man has become a proverb. It has its place in God's purpose, as a contrast to God's loving rule. It is our privilege to reflect this in our earthly relationships, as well as our own affectionate subjection to Him in the consummation.

CONCLUSION

Colossians is colossal in its scope. Written, indeed, by the apostle of the nations to them, yet it deals with the

secret of Christ, which is not confined to us or to this present administration, but reaches back to creation and on to the ultimate reconciliation of all. The Son of God's love, and His activities, from the commencement to the consummation, filling the earth and the heavens, bringing all back to God's heart—such is the background of this epistle. From these transcendent verities follow the truth for us and for today. His high heavenly honors He shares with us, having made us complete in Him. Hence we turn our gaze from the earth to that above.

O that God would open hearts to receive and revel in these revelations! How these would deliver them from their bonds! How these would illumine their darkness! How they would outgrow the immature conceptions of Christianity which stunt and dwarf their spirits! Here we have the fullest knowledge, the highest wisdom, the greatest glory, the very pinnacle of God's revelation. O that God would open the eyes of His saints! Alas! As a whole they reject His glories in place of receiving them. Most of them oppose His blessings in place of believing them. But, thanks be to God, the time is coming when all will find in Him their All. The day is approaching when all will see in Him God's Complement, One competent to reconcile to God all that is now estranged.

A. E. Knoch

Bob Thompson, of Brantford, Ontario, Canada, passed away on May 18, 2020. Bob was a pillar in the Kitchener Concordant Group which began in the 1970's. His favorite topic was concerning the full control of God in our lives. Bob is survived by his loving wife, Jean. We look forward to seeing him in the snatching away to meet our Lord in the air.

Kitty Land, of Benton, Arkansas, was put to repose on August 22, 2020. She greatly rejoiced in God saving all mankind. I, Tony Nungesser, remember with great fondness fellowshiping with her husband Garland as well as with Kitty at the Bible conferences. She is survived by Garland, her two children, as well as by grandchildren.

EXCEPT WHAT IS HUMAN

“NO TRIAL has taken you except what is human. Now, faithful is God, Who will not be leaving you to be tried above what you are able, but, together with the trial, will be making the sequel also, to enable you to undergo it” (1 Cor.10:13).

There is no escape for a human being from being human. It is especially unfortunate that the AV uses the word “escape” in this passage to describe God’s faithful provision for us in the face of human trials. Most modern translations follow the same pattern with renderings such as “a way out.” But in using the Greek term signifying *out-stepping*, Paul does not refer to an escaping from human trials but the “sequel” (CV) or “issue” (Darby) of the trials. It is what God is bringing out of the trial that is in view, not our removal from the trial or a provision of a way of escape.

Trials, in the literal sense of the Greek word, are *probings*. They are not matters of judgment against wrong actions, but may often truly seem unaccountable to us, as it was with Job. They are common to all humanity. But the difference for believers lies in their acquaintance with the God of purpose, power, wisdom and grace, the God of righteousness and love and deliverance. Our attention is focused on God. In the experience of trial, in prayer and petition, with reliance and assurance, we give recognition to God and are strengthened in all endurance and patience, even “with joy” (*cf* Col.1:11).

This does not necessarily mean that the probing is taken away. And even if it is, this does not mean that another one

will not take its place. In this present life, there is no way out of the human experience of probing trials. But *God is faithful, and He is making the sequel “together with the trial.”*

THE ENDURANCE OF JOB

In encouraging patience and endurance under trial, James writes to Israelites in dispersion: “You hear of the endurance of Job, and you perceive the consummation of the Lord, for very compassionate and pitiful is the Lord” (James 5:11; *cp* 1:1,12). Here the association of human *endurance* in trial and the Lord’s *consummation* is somewhat different from that of God’s *sequel* and the human *undergoing* of trial. The corresponding terms, endurance/undergoing and consummation/sequel, are reversed in the two passages. Thus we infer from James that the Lord’s consummation is based on human endurance, while in Paul’s letter the human endurance in undergoing trial is settled on our appreciation of the divine sequel which is being prepared whether we appreciate it or not.

These are not contradictory thoughts, but they do represent different stages of divine disclosure. For Israel the promises of blessing are predominantly presented as dependent on human obedience. Under law they were to obey so that Yahweh would bless. But even with Israel, the principle is to be adjusted when God puts His law within them and writes it on their heart (Jer.31:33). Then it will be seen that the blessing ultimately does not come from human obedience (for Israel proves disobedient) but comes as God’s own accomplishment (*cf* Ezek.36:22-32). The consummation the Lord prepared for Job will also be finally seen as fully out of God Who granted Job that measure of endurance he displayed.

Under Paul’s evangel, the mature position of beginning with the revelation of divine grace and leading from that to its powerful effects in our lives is clearly set forth from

start to finish. There is no suggestion of uncertainty concerning the end results. And it is because of that outlook that the divine sequel becomes an influence of grace rather than something seen as dependent on human action.

However, although James does not look as deeply into the significance of human trials as Paul does, James's reference to the example of Job is relevant to all who are undergoing trial, whatever our calling may be. Job is an excellent example for us all, even under the evangel of grace.

“THERE WAS A MAN”

We may well wonder at first how James could have seen Job as a pattern of endurance. Yet in consideration of the intensity of his afflictions and sorrows, so that he would prefer death to life, we begin to understand something of what James had in view. It was not a matter of stoicism with Job. There was no attempt to overcome passion or subdue pain and grief. It was an endurance that recognized the realities of the trial and searched persistently for an understanding of it. It was a very human endurance, not one of giving in to the suffering nor of seeking to rise above the suffering, but of longing to see that it truly came from God Who acts in accord with His purpose.

The book begins, “There was a man . . .” Job, however, was not an ordinary man, but one who “was flawless and upright, fearing Elohim and keeping away from evil” (Job 1:1). He was a wealthy man with seven sons and three daughters whom he valued very much (1:2-5). But for all his uprightness, Job was probed with a trial that was altogether human, though uniquely concentrated and severe. It is the superexcellence of Job's goodness and the intensity of his trial that makes his example so striking and helpful to us in our (relatively) lesser afflictions.

Indeed, Job *remains under* the trial; that is the meaning of endurance. He endures with human anguish, but always

looking to God for an answer to the incessant *Why?* of his heart. “Why is [God] giving light to the miserable, and life to the bitter of soul?” (Job 3:20). Addressing God as the Preserver of mankind, he asks, “Why have You established me as Your target mark, that I should become a load to You?” (7:20). In seeing himself as already condemned he pleads, “Why is this that I should be wearied in vain?” (9:29).

In this we find the pattern of Job's endurance. It was a matter of hope for understanding, and it was a hope that looked to God. While he was undergoing the trial Job did not perceive the “consummation of the Lord.” But he felt with every ounce of his being that the Lord must have a reason for the probing and a consummation in view. Job longed to be assured he was not really “wearied in vain.”

Job's endurance is shown in the unrelenting focusing of his thoughts on God. “As for me, I would speak to Him Who-Suffices, and to plead with El is what I desire” (13:3). “My eye weeps forth to Eloah” (16:20).

If only Job could know that God was making an outstepping for the trial, not simply an escape from it, but a resulting issue that was of value and benefit. Indeed, in a well-known passage Job hints at such a sequel: “Yet as for me, I know that my Redeemer is living, and after this He shall arise on the soil; and behind my skin I will stand erect, and from my flesh I shall perceive Eloah” (19:25,26).

That Job longed for a message from God which gave meaning to his trial is clear. The very longing helped him endure. And in the end, when Yahweh Himself does speak to Job (chapters 38-41), such a sequel of good is grasped by this troubled man, who now declares, “With the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, but now my eye sees You” (42:5).

SALVATION

All along Job had pleaded for a word from God. When it came it was not what we might have expected. But this

was long before Christ came and died for the sake of sinners, and long before the evangel of salvation in Christ could have been made known. Nevertheless, it was a powerful and effective message to Job and quieted all his cries.

In His answer, Yahweh turned the tables on Job and asked him a number of questions. "Where were you when I founded the earth?" (Job 38:4). "In all your days have you ever instructed the morning?" (38:12). "Do you give the horse its mastery?" (39:19). Perhaps the most telling of these appeared after Job was completely silenced in the early part of chapter 40. We might condense this final series of questions as follows: "Do you have an arm like El's? . . . Then even I Myself shall acclaim you, because your right hand has brought salvation to you" (40:9,14).

The forceful irony of this question sums up the divine revelation. Job could not save himself, but the One Who has that arm of power which Job lacked, He can and does bring salvation.

James saw the consummation of Job's trial as coming from the Lord, but also, apparently, in response to Job's endurance. Yet James did not see, or at least did not draw attention to the hidden operation of God in and with the trial. 1 Corinthians 10:13, however, shows that the endurance of Job was in itself a gift given by God. Under grace, we may see Job's endurance as sustained by the faithfulness of God as He made Himself known to Job. This endurance in hope was vindicated by Yahweh's revelation of Himself as Cause and Provider of everything in the universe, from climatic conditions to the stars of the heavens, from the weakest and most ignorant of beasts to the most powerful. All that exists must be traced to God. Consequently it all lies under the disposition of His intention. There is reason and purpose for everything because there is God Who is over it all.

Yet while Job had a fervent hope that God was operating behind the scenes for a divinely perceived goal, and this hope aided Job in keeping him from despair, we are given assurance of *expectation*. We are told directly and without reservation that God is operating all together for our good (Rom.8:28), and the operating of His purpose is centered in Christ (Eph.1:9-11). In every trial we may be assured that God is making the sequel together with the trial.

Consequently, we rejoice with Paul that we stand in grace and "may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God. Yet not only so, 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 given to us" (Rom.5:2-5).

Here we realize that the sequel that sustains us in trial is more than a hope for a consummation God has in view. It also consists of the expectation of that consummation and the assurance that God is able to bring us into that consummation, and not only able but will do so also (*cf* 1 Thess. 5:24). God is making the sequel to all that is troubling and disturbing in the current eon. Together with every probing that comes from the hand of God, He is making the outstepping, the sequel that will prove to make it all worthwhile, and not only worthwhile but of such value that we would not have had it otherwise.

NOW FAITHFUL IS GOD

Hence the spotlight shines on God. When we experience troubles, especially those inexplicable probings of human beings which, like Job's trials, cannot be easily traced to our own failings, as many as they may be, we do well to turn our full attention upon God. In this we find strength for undergoing the trial: "Faithful is God." Faith-

ful is God Who will not leave us to be tried above what we are able to undergo. Faithful is God Who is *making* the sequel, the God Who is doing that which is for good. “Faithful is God, through Whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1 Cor.1:9). “Faithful is He Who is calling you, Who will be doing it also” (1 Thess.5:24).

We may not ever see the sequel of a trial during our lifetime, but that is not the point Paul is making in 1 Corinthians. The undergoing of trials is not a matter of experiencing the sequel but of appreciating the fact that God is already making the sequel while the probing goes on. God is *faithful* in all that He undertakes.

But there is one aspect of God’s sequel that we probably all experience even while the trial continues. That is the knowledge of our *inability*, and a deeper appreciation of God, Who Himself enables us to undergo the probing. Now thanks be to God, Who is making the sequel to every human trial, granting us endurance in expectation, through our Lord Jesus Christ. D.H.H.

EDITORIAL NOTES

In times of unusual stress and uncertainty, such as the present, we need all the more to be growing in the realization of God, for that is the channel of spiritual power “for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col.1:10,11). We are reminded of this again when our brother, A. E. Knoch writes: “I have ceased to expect full clarity of thought from anyone who does not bow to the absolute deity of God, without reservation or restriction” (p.99). Then again he observes concerning the present: “Things are wrong, and the wrongs are not being righted. It is only as we bring in God, and His activities in Christ, in the past and in the future, that all becomes rational and understandable and glorious. In His Beloved and through Him, He will fulfill all the beneficent designs which move His heart” (p.100).

D.H.H.

GOD'S WILL AND INTENTION

IN translating the ninth of Romans, verse nineteen, I felt almost as if the text before me was faulty. It should surely read, "who hath resisted His will?" Yet the word is not *will*, but *intention*. There seemed so little difference, at the time, that I did not appreciate the concordant rendering myself. Since then I have been most thankful for it. It helps to solve one of the deepest difficulties and contradictions connected with the place and problem of evil. To the question, Who hath resisted His will? we may answer, *Many*, if not all. But to the query, Has anyone withstood His intention? the reply is the opposite, for *no one* can thwart Him. Even when withstanding His will we are fulfilling His intention.

ROMANS NINE

There are not many passages in God's Word like the ninth of Romans. Seldom are we taken behind the scenes into the realm of the absolute. Much in this chapter *seems* to contradict other portions of the Scriptures, because they deal with processes, as seen by man, while this is concerned with causes, known only to God. God has a goal. In order to reach it He must have had absolute control from the beginning. All the intervening process, no matter what it may appear to be to men, must be the working out of His original intention. He is the great Potter. His creatures are clay. This is true only in regard to God's intention. Viewed in relation to His will they are not at all the passive material suggested by the clay. "You will *not*" (*cf*

Matt.23:37) describes man's antagonistic attitude toward God's revealed will.

The case of Pharaoh is the classic example of the chasm between God's revealed will and His hidden intention. His revealed will was very plain. "Let My people go!" It seemed to be fulfilled in the liberation of Israel. But no one who reads the account and believes it can escape the conviction that God's intention included more than His revealed will, and that it involved opposition to that will. This much might be easily inferred if Pharaoh had been hard-hearted enough to play his part. It is put beyond doubt by the action of God in hardening his heart.

God's revealed will was limited to the release of Israel. His intention was to display His own power and glorify His name in all the earth. This is given us as a specimen of His complete purpose and of the process by which He will attain it. Mankind does not comply with His will; His saints do not comprehend His intention. Yet He uses both the opposition and the ignorance to effect His object. No doubt many in Israel were fervently praying that Pharaoh's heart would soon soften, and he would let them go. God's answer to their prayer was to harden his heart. They sighed for salvation. He wrought with a view to His own glory.

It takes little imagination to picture this scene. Its continuous repetition during the first three eons makes it most important to our spiritual welfare. The same conflicting forces are at work today. It is quite conceivable how the saints would have managed the affair. They would have implored Yahweh to compel Pharaoh to let them go. Perhaps they would call a grand prayer meeting for this purpose. Perhaps they would set aside a week of intercession. "We know not what to pray for" was as true of them as of us. Perhaps they would be "definite" in their petitions, and insist that He melt the heart of the king, and so remove his opposition.

How much there is of this today! Many brethren unite in great "world movements," seeking to soften the heart of mankind, trying to do away with sin, seeking to abolish the many evils that harass us, uniting against war and vice and corruption, for all of these are against the revealed will of God. These efforts, we are told, are *practical*. They are not mere theory, words without works. Of what use is such an article as this, for example, to stem the tide of iniquity? Using the same figure, I would advise all that the tide will become the highest in all history, and that no human effort will be able to stop it, for it is necessary to fulfill God's intention.

The Israelites hoped Yahweh would soften Pharaoh's heart. What they wished was to quietly slip out of Goshen into the promised land. They wanted none of the terrible signs. They did not ask for the passover. Surely they would not have entered the trap which threatened to destroy them. They did not ask for the miraculous passage through the Sea. The forty years in the wilderness was not of their choosing. The most illustrious epoch in their history was forced upon them. It was a continuous exhibition of disobedience to God's will. Yet who doubts for a moment that it was in line with His purpose?

GOD'S WISDOM AND POWER

Now that all is past and we can get a true perspective of these events, who would prefer to have Israel's prayer answered? It was not necessary to soften Pharaoh's heart. It was too soft already. If it had not been hardened the exodus would have been a flat, uninteresting story, with no outward manifestations of Yahweh's power of love. Its glory would be gone. Its God would be unknown. The wisdom and power of Egypt must be exposed by conflict with the wisdom and power of God. His attributes must be revealed by contrast with the mightiest and wisest of humankind.

The antitype of this marvelous period of Israel's history lies just before us, only the miraculous manifestations will be far more wonderful than of old. God is today hardening the world's heart in preparation for that epoch. Men are approaching the wisdom of ancient Egypt in their knowledge of nature, and are far surpassing it in power. Shall Yahweh weaken them before using them as a foil to display His might? Rather it is His wisdom to harden their hearts, so that, in opposing His will, they may fulfill His ultimate intention.

MAN'S WILL, AND GOD'S

Too often we are told that, if man has no free will, he is a mere automaton. This is a mistake. The so-called "freedom" consists merely in the lack of *conscious* coercion. Being ignorant of the constraining or restraining influences which determine his conduct, and altogether unaware of ulterior forces, he subconsciously *yields* at the very time that he imagines he is most independent. His freedom of will is simply ignorant unconsciousness or submission to environment or heredity.

In relation to the will of God, men are consciously independent. They can accept it or reject it, and imagine that no other force but the divinity enthroned within them has anything to do with their decision. But when we find the niche assigned them in God's intention they are (thank God!) the most utterly dependent slaves of circumstance it is possible to imagine. It will be found that, throughout their lives, they were not more masters of their fate than they were of the date and details of their birth.

The doctrine of man's free will peoples the earth with a race of puny gods. We object to the dual gods of Persia or the many deities of the Greek and Roman pantheon, yet these ancient pagans never rose to the absurdity of making every man a god. The possession of a free, untrammelled,

unconquerable will is the exclusive attribute of deity. Only One God can possess it. Our blessed Lord Himself did not claim it. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him Who had sent Him.

ILLUMINATION OF DEITY

The failure to recognize both the divine will and the divine intention has led to incalculable confusion and misunderstanding. Those who reject God's intention rob Him of His godhood and deify man. Those who confuse His intention with His revealed will make of Him a love-lacking tyrant, a hard-hearted monster. Others, who wish to believe all the Scriptures have to say, are not clear how to harmonize His character, with the presence of sin, especially when it becomes evident that sin has a place in the attainment of His ultimate purpose.

All evil and every sin reverses its character completely when we take it from the limited light of God's revealed will to the universal illumination of His intention. This is the reason that we do not hesitate to believe the Scriptures that all is of God. No sin remains such when completely illumined by His intention. It is a failure, a sin, and subject to dire penalties when man commits it, but it is no longer a mistake when it finds its place in God's purpose. The same act which brings shame and dishonor on the creature, when subjected to the divine alchemy, is transmuted into a source of glory and peace to God.

Such general observations are apt to be dismissed as bordering on blasphemy. But let anyone take the great sins in the Scriptures and ponder all their aspects. Each one is essential to God's plan. But it is better to be specific. Pharaoh is the great sinner in this scene. He is the one who opposes God's expressed desire. Make him willing or compliant with God's command, and what is left? In that case God would have failed in His object. To avoid this He

finds it necessary to stiffen the opposition. *Yahweh hardens Pharaoh's heart in order that he may sin against Him!* Some insist that God cannot have such a close connection with sin. They would prefer to fix the blame on Pharaoh, or on Satan. But, while Yahweh directly causes Pharaoh to sin, *by doing so He Himself avoids failure of sin.*

NEED FOR CAREFUL DISCRIMINATION

Any lack of discrimination when speaking on these themes is likely to cause confusion. The same statement may be both true and false. Two directly contradictory assertions may both be true or both be false, according as they are related to God's will or to His intention. A beloved brother, who had been meditating on these things, made the statement that Adam's "fall" was really a fall upward. I would strenuously object to such a suggestion, apart from explanation. Adam's sin and transgression and offense were very bad and degrading when viewed as disobedience to God's will. When associated with the work of Christ and God's ultimate purpose it was the very best he could have done. Even its immediate effects were not all evil, for he obtained a knowledge of good, impossible in his previous condition.

So with sin as a whole. We almost dread to speak of it in relation to God's ultimate, for few, even of His beloved saints, have seen behind the scenes, and almost any assertion would be false if related to His revealed will. Is sin good? *No!* It is the worst thing in the world. No words can express our horror and detestation of it. Is sin good? *Yes!* Not, indeed, in itself, but its effect will be beneficent beyond anything else this world can give, when combined with the mediatorial work of Christ and the reconciliation of which it is the occasion.

Perhaps this is why some beloved brethren insist that I teach that God sins, or is the Author of sin. I have never

said this or even thought it, so far as I am aware. If I have unwittingly done so, I humbly retract and recant. But I am informed that various passages in my writings on this subject imply it, though they do not express it in so many words. When I review these passages, I do not see the implication. I did not intend such a thought. I did not express it. To my own consciousness, I did not even imply it. Some inferred from the apostle Paul's teaching that they should do evil that good may come. If *he* could be misunderstood, I count it an honor to be in the same condemnation.

But what is an implication? Is it not the result of combining what we think with another's statement? It is reasoning from two premises, one our own and one supplied by another. In its crudest form the argument may be stated thus: I believe that all is of God. My inquisitors insist that sin is part of the "all." Therefore, I believe that God sins. It seems very logical *to them*. I may object and say that I do not concur in their conclusions. I may even say that my premise is not mine, but God's. But no. My scheme is simply an attempt to exonerate Satan and prepare people for the homage which he will demand at the time of the end! Away with such a fellow from the earth!

This places me in a strange position. I cannot but consider their deduction a mistake in logic, a transgression of morals, and even an offense. In short, it is a full-orbed sin. I am eager to acknowledge, however, that it is of God. But even my small mind, weakened by overwork, and dulled by distress, has not the slightest difficulty in discriminating between the human and the divine aspect of these acts. God is making no mistakes. His servants are. He will justify their injustice, not because they are in line with His will, but because they are carrying out His intention. I have no hesitation in thanking God for this distressing antagonism, for I know that in His hands it is no error. Truth as this needs opposition for its development and dissemination. It takes friction to rub off the rust of centuries.

The difficulty seems to be that we cannot easily view an act from its moral character. We do not readily see that no act is sinful in itself, but in its relations. The act of plucking and eating fruit is not necessarily a sin. Yet it was humanity's primal error. The mistake lay in its relation to the God Who had forbidden it. If He had commanded it, it would have been commendable. Now that we know that it was essential to His intention, that He had provided for it before it occurred, that He arranged everything so that it should occur, we see that, though it was a sin in relation to His will, it was no mistake in view of His benevolent intention.

THE LAW

Perhaps the greatest example of the distinction between God's will and His intention is found in the law promulgated from Sinai. Yahweh made known His will in a complete code of laws, besides the condensed commandments which were carved in stone. The Jew, who was resting on law, is said to "know the will" (Rom.2:18). But if it was God's intention that the nation should keep the law, it certainly was a dismal failure on His part. They broke its greatest precept before it reached them.

But, though the failure of the law seems to be contrary to the will of God, it actually was a fulfillment of His intention. It was really given that "every mouth may be barred, and the entire world may become subject to God's righteous verdict, because, by law works, no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight" (Rom.3:19,20). The law which, ostensibly, was to deter from sinning, actually was given for the detection of sin. It was given to prove that no one could keep it. Beneath the revelation of God's will in it was His intention that it should not be kept, but should accomplish its object through its infraction.

"law comes in by the way, that the offense should in-

crease" (Rom.5:20). How differently did Israel, at Sinai, feel about it! They were quite sure that they would greatly lessen the distance between themselves and Yahweh by their obedience to His precepts. Why had He told them what He wanted them to do and to avoid unless it was His will to carry out His instructions? The *will* of Yahweh was clear. But His *intention* was quite concealed. He could not make known His intention at that time without frustrating it.

SIN

This should help us in considering the larger question of sin. Sin is always against the revealed will of God. No one can possibly find any excuse for sinning so far as His expressed precepts are concerned. Both conscience and nature add their voice to restrain us from wrong. But we do sin. How can we be *justified* unless the sin is, in some sense, justifiable? We know that it is God's intention to draw His creatures into loving intimacy with Himself through sin and a Saviour. We know that the temporary term of sin will leave the world infinitely richer in the knowledge and appreciation of God. It will bring God immeasurable treasures of love and adoration. As a whole, its results vindicate its presence for a time. What is true of all sin must be true of every sin.

This truth is the foundation of the doctrine of justification. Because it has been lost, justification has also disappeared, or has been degraded to a pardon or an "imputed" fiction. Few believe that God actually justifies believers. They imagine He only alters the court records, so that no one can legally prove their guilt. It is of the utmost comfort and satisfaction to know that all that we have done is vindicated by the part it plays in carrying out His intention. Do not let anyone sell you an imitation justification! God's is the actual, the genuine, the precious reality.

THE CONSUMMATION

All that the usual theology has to offer us at the consummation, even in the saved, is a partial, patched, repaired and repainted universe. The song of the saints will be in a minor key, "I was a *guilty* sinner." Their joy will be clouded by eternal regret and shame for their part in the tragedy of the eons. The eonian times will be the eyesore of eternity. Oh! if they only had not been! And so will God's wisdom and power be questioned, and His glory dimmed, for He Himself must be the chief culprit in the collapse of His creation.

But away with such unworthy thoughts! The consummation will not reveal a patched, but a perfected universe. We will not be worrying about our past sins, but overwhelmed with God's wisdom and love in their vindication. Much as they distress us now, much as we fear them and avoid them and dread the very possibility of further sin, God will see to it that they will leave no stain, no blot to mar the bliss eternal, but will blend into His benign designs, and discover to a delighted universe the delicious depths of love which could not be displayed by any others device, or appreciated by any other plan.

This teaching is also the substructure for a mature experience in the things of God. It gives stability, a calm confidence in the face of the chaotic conditions which surround and engulf us. We are not worried, as once we were, by the awful opposition to God's will, nor do we fear for the fulfillment of His purpose. The flood tide of evil and sin, however contrary to His will it may be at present, is essential and indispensable to His intention and the ultimate realization of His will.

He is the great Alchemist Who will transmute everything into glorious gold by contact with the accursed tree.

A. E. Knoch

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS
*
CHRIST, IN JUDGMENT AND SALVATION

Question:

Can you inform me as to the meaning of the word “cross” as well as concerning the meaning of the phrase “the death of the cross”? I have been told, since the common symbol of the cross is pagan and the Greek word translated cross does not actually mean *cross* but simply “stake” (without any crosspiece), that symbols of the cross should not be used and that even the word “cross” itself should not be used in reference to the death of Christ.

Answer:

THE Greek word translated “cross” is *stauros*, to which we have assigned the standard STANDER.¹ *Stauros* is apparently derived from *stau*, which was the name of an ancient Greek letter which “stood between” “E” (*epsilon*) and “Z” (*zayta*) and was retained as a numeral = 6.

The noun *stauros* (“cross,” CV) is used simply of an upright *pale* or *stake* in the ancient Greek epic poem *Odyssey* (traditionally attributed to the ninth century B.C. poet Homer).²

1. That is, an upright device (see entry “cross,” Keyword Concordance, p.63); *cp* the term “stanchion,” in the sense of a *standing* support.

2. On *stau* and *stauros*: LIDDELL & SCOTT’S GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1850, p.1378; ref. *Odyssey*, 14, 11; *cf Iliad*, 24, 453).

While the verb *stauroō* (“crucify,” CV), similarly, is used in early antiquity in the sense of “to fence with pales,” the later use, as an instrument of death as in the New Testament and as corresponds to the modern “crucify,” may be seen as early as the second-century B.C. in the works of the historian Polybius.³

It is evident, then, that by our first century A.D., the use of *stauros* for the Roman instrument of death by affixation to a wooden device, was well established. It spoke of a vertical-standing, fearful instrument of death, by affixation thereunto and hanging thereupon; but it said nothing as to the particular form of any particular *stauros*-instrument.

Under Moses’ law, death was by stoning (e.g., Deut. 21:20,21; 22:20-24). Afterward, the corpse was sometimes hung upon a tree (Deut.21:22,23). This served at once as a warning to others (*cp* Joshua 10:26) as well as an especial mark of God’s malediction (“one being hung is under a malediction of Elohim”; Deut.21:23).

This explains Galatians 3:13: “Christ reclaims us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for our sakes, for it is written, Accursed is everyone hanging on a pole . . .”⁴

The cross (*stauros*) is often called a “pole” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24). The Greek word here, *xulon* (WOOD), however, unlike the English “pole” which speaks of shape, refers not to the shape of the object, but to the material from which it is made. Thus, by means of the word *xulon* (WOOD), the cross (*stauros*) is connected with the Hebrew

3. THE VOCABULARY OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, James Moulton and George Milligan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Limited, 1949, pp.586,587; ref. Polybius i. 86. 4).

4. “Pole” is one of the idiomatic variants used in the Concordant Version for the Greek *xulon*, for which we have assigned the standard WOOD. *Xulon* is “the solid fiber of the trunk and branches of a tree, after cutting, hence [is used] of many things made of wood” (Key-word Concordance, p.331).

Scripture concept of deepest humiliation and shame (*cf* Heb.12:2; *cp* Deut.22:23).

In the Hebrew Scriptures, we discover the awful associations connected with one who was hanged upon a tree. And, in the Greek Scriptures, we perceive something of the horror of the ignominious pain and shame of “the death of the cross” (Phil.2:8). Through a familiarity with these considerations, we begin to understand one of the reasons why the heralding of “Christ crucified” so thoroughly *scandalized* the Jews (*skandalizō*, SNARE; 1 Cor. 1:23), thus entrapping them in their snare of unbelief.

Crucifixion was originally an Oriental punishment. That is, it was practiced in the countries east of the Mediterranean or the ancient Roman empire. It was practiced by the Persians, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and the Egyptians. Later, it was practiced by the Greeks, probably in imitation of the Persians, and by the Romans who likely learned it from their enemies the Carthaginians. Being mindful of its horror and tortuous nature, the Romans reserved it for slaves, for especially egregious criminals, and for provincials, deeming it too deep a disrespect to impose it on a Roman citizen.

“There were two kinds of cross [*stauros*]:

“(1) The *crux simplex*, which was a single stake. Sometimes the victim was fastened to it by his hands and feet, the former being extended above his head. Usually, however, it was a sharpened stake, and the victim was impaled upon it. It passed through the length of his body, issuing from his mouth.

“(2) The *crux compacta* [i.e., joined together], which was composed of two pieces. It had three forms: (1) The *crux decussata* [i.e., in the shape of an “X”] . . . (2) The *crux commissa* [i.e., set together, at the start of the beam] . . . resembling the letter ‘T’ . . . (3) The *crux immissa* [i.e., growing out, in the sense of ‘above’], which had the top

of the upright protruding above the transom, ‘t.’ From the middle of the upright there projected a peg . . . on which to support its weight, the body rested as on a saddle.”⁵

Since it is evident from the Scripture account that our Lord was not impaled upon a sharpened stake, and it seems unlikely that the less common practice of attachment by the hands and feet to a post was employed, it has generally been assumed that Christ was executed upon a two-piece device according to the most common prevailing custom, upon which the hands would be outstretched upwardly and then nailed to a crossbar or *patibulum*. Whether the terrible tool of death were in the shape of a ‘T’ or a ‘t,’ there would have been room in either case for the attachment of the board inscribed with His name and accusation put up over His head (Matt.27:37).

Thus, by *stauros*, all that can be known is that it was a vertical-standing device composed of wood, which served as the means of execution. Since these fearful contrivances were fashioned in various shapes, and we possess neither declarative nor corollarial evidence of the shape of the particular *stauros* upon which Jesus was put to death, we therefore do not know its shape. We do know, however, that the word *stauros* does not speak of any certain shape, and therefore that it provides us with no evidence concerning this minor question.

Instead of giving undue attention to minutiae, we would instead center our thoughts on things of consequence, namely, upon the purpose and achievements of God as a result of the death of Christ and our justification “in His blood” (Rom.3:25; 5:9).

As to the historical issue of certain cross-shaped pagan images, let me say in reply that what pagans may have

5. DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS, David Smith, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917, p.397).

done with cross-like symbols before the death of Christ has nothing to do with how the Romans crucified people.

It is well to become acquainted with the fact that various popular traditions such as the religious observance of Christmas or Easter are not to be found in the Scriptures. Indeed it is true that certain of the accouterments attending such traditional observances have been adapted from their earlier “heathen” connections and pressed into “Christian service.” As is our own practice, if one considers such things unfitting, one may simply decline to incorporate them into one’s own customs. We need not become preoccupied with such things and their perceived evils, nor should we make overmuch of our knowledge concerning them while diminishing much that is excellent in the faith and lives of many of those devoted to such enshrined traditions.

We have nothing to do with the customs of ancient pagans nor with any more or less t-shaped objects of veneration which some among them evidently possessed.

We would say, however, that a common symbol need not have a common identification. Further, the *appropriateness* or *tastefulness* of the use of any such “logo” is manifestly a subjective question. Certainly, in a particular culture, some might well and with a clean heart see fit to exhibit such an emblem of their faith, while others, equally sincere, might deem it inappropriate to do so.

Let us not confound the issue here, by confusing those who “venerate” or worship a cross with those who consider the cross as a symbol of faith in Christ, and so view it as a symbol of their own faith in Him accordingly. While it is not our custom to employ such a symbol personally or as a part of our ministry, we realize that many see fit to do so, and we see no reason to think less of them because of this.

Even though the meaning of the word *stauros* does not include the notion of “cross member,” *neither does it exclude it*. The question is not, What was its import in the

most ancient usage of this word, but, What is its essential meaning and what was its referential meaning in first century Palestine under Roman rule.

Of the latter there can be no question. There, the term *stauros* was used of the awful wooden instrument of death—whatever its shape—which served as the means of execution of convicted persons in the Roman world.

The learned definition of “cross” found in Webster’s New International Dictionary is as follows: “A structure, *typically* an upright supporting a horizontal beam, anciently used in the execution of malefactors.”⁶

Since this accords fully with both the New Testament usage of *stauros* as well as with the best historical records concerning crucifixion practices, it follows that the modern word “cross,” rather than being a supposedly improper term that we should somehow repudiate, is instead the ideal word to use when translating the Greek *stauros*. Therefore, in speaking of the instrument of Christ’s death, not only *may* we use the word “cross,” but we may do so freely, without reservation.



Question:

I was always taught that Jesus suffered for our sins on the cross, bearing our sins away, so that we who believe would be saved. But if all will eventually be saved, why is there still a future day of judgment, a “day of indignation and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”? Concerning the judgment of that day, Paul says that “indignation and fury, affliction and distress,” will come upon those “persuaded to

6. WEBSTER’S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY, second edition, unabridged (Springfield, Mass.: G & C Merriam Company, Publishers, 1957, p.630).

unrighteousness,” even “on every human soul which is effecting evil” (Rom.2:5-9). In a word, if Jesus suffered once for all, taking away the sin of the world, why should there be a day of judging and a second death?

I am struggling with the teachings in the last three chapters of the book of Revelation. It is difficult to square these chapters with a belief in universal salvation.

Also, if it is true that Jesus died for everyone and that everyone will be saved in the end, why, then, are only certain ones to receive an eonian salvation?

Answer:

IN replying to your questions, I would like to begin by making a general comment regarding the last three chapters of Revelation, chapters 20–22. In fact, concerning salvation, it is no more difficult to square these chapters with a universalist belief than with a partialist belief.

Let me explain what I mean. You are correct that (a) there is nothing in Revelation 20–22 that teaches the eventual salvation of all. But I wonder if you have also noted that (b) neither is there anything within this section of Scripture which precludes the eventual salvation of all. Statement (a) and Statement (b) are *both* fully true.

Revelation 20–22 neither affirms nor denies the eventual salvation of all. It simply does not address the question. In fact, if this portion of Scripture were all that had been provided us concerning distant future events, we could neither say that all will or will not be saved. In that case, we could only say that we have no testimony either affirming or denying either proposition.

As far as the apostle John is concerned, he simply speaks of the second death; he does not address the question of whether there is any life beyond the second death for those having been committed to it.

But it does not follow since John does not address this question here, that neither does any other writer inform us concerning it elsewhere. Much less does it follow because *John* is not granted a vision of a day when those who had entered the second death will finally be delivered from it, that there simply is no deliverance from the second death.

Paul necessarily sees farther into the future than John; and, unlike John, Paul alone—to whom it was given to *complete* the word of God (Col.1:25)—deals with ultimate issues:

“For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified” (1 Cor.15:22). The vivification of all, however, will occur in “classes”: the *Firstfruit* of vivification is Christ Himself; *thereupon*, in due course, those who are Christ’s will be vivified; and, *thereafter*, the consummation of the vivification of all will finally occur.

This will be whenever Christ may be giving up the kingdom (lit., the “reign”) to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power. He *will* achieve this, since He must be reigning *until* He should be placing all His enemies under His feet. *The last enemy is being abolished: death*. And, this *will* occur, since He subjects *all* under His feet. Finally, “the Son Himself” also shall be subjected to God, “Who subjects all to Him, that God may be All in all” (*cf* 1 Cor.15:22-28).

It follows, then, that at the consummation, every person who entered the second death will be fully returned to life, but this time to unspeakably glorious life, in immortality and incorruption, no longer subjected to vanity but instead truly constituted righteous—vivified—fit for the indwelling of God Himself in such a way that He may be All in all.

From these considerations it follows as well that the apostle John’s vision is one of an epochal period, not of endless duration. We know this simply because while John, in Revelation 21 and 22, speaks of the reign of Christ, of saints, and

of kings of the earth, while affirming the presence of the second death, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, speaks of Christ reigning until He gives up the reign (the kingdom); indeed, of the time when all sovereignty and authority is nullified (which therefore includes that of both the saints and the kings of the earth), and even of the time when death itself is abolished, the glorious day when all will finally have that life of which Christ is the Firstfruit, all unto the end that God may be All in all (1 Cor.15:28).

SET FOR LIFE EONIAN;
SIN, OFFENSES, AND ACTS

You also asked, “If it is true that Jesus died for everyone and that everyone will be saved in the end, why, then, are only certain ones to receive an eonian salvation?”

In reply, I would simply say that while the living God, on Whom we rely, is the Saviour of all mankind, He is *especially* the Saviour of believers (1 Tim.4:10). Eonian salvation is the “special” salvation granted to God’s chosen ones, who are also graciously granted faith.

That is, to a very *special* extent or degree, the One Who is the Saviour of all mankind is also the Saviour of believers *in particular*, to whom alone, eonian life is given.

Here it is important to keep in mind that faith is *the consequent gracious blessing* given to those who are, first of all, chosen, foreknown, designated beforehand, and then, in due time, called and granted faith (*cp* Eph.1:4; Rom. 8:29,30,33; Acts 13:48; 1 Cor.1:24; Phil.1:29).

We are not told why we are chosen and others are not, with respect to membership in the ecclesia and the blessing of eonian life. We simply know—as concerns untold other things as well concerning which we are likewise not informed as to the particular “why” of things—that God has actually *chosen* (i.e., “willed”) that things be as they are, not otherwise, to accord with His purpose (Eph.1:11).

We stand in awe of it all, relying on Him as the Almighty, trusting in His wisdom, goodness, and love.

Now, finally, let me address your primary concern, which you yourself summed up as follows: “In a word, if Jesus suffered once for all, taking away the sin of the world, why should there be a day of judging and a second death?”

I would first of all stress, since the Lamb of God did indeed take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), not only do we who are God’s chosen one’s not suffer for our *sins*, but neither does any one else suffer for his or her *sins*.

This, however, in no way denies the consideration—which is another matter—that in this life, “God’s indignation *is being revealed* from heaven on all the irreverence and unrighteousness of men who are retaining the truth [i.e., whatever truth they do know] in unrighteousness.” This is, “the retribution of their deception which must be” (Rom.1:18,19,27b). That is, God’s “indignation” here is upon the irreverence and unrighteousness itself; a consequence of this, it is true, is that the effects thereof are experienced by those engaged therein.

This consequence, however, is not in the form of “maledictions” along the lines of the “curses” of the law. Instead, though often dreadful deeds do indeed result in present-day suffering, this is by no means always the case.

It seems evident that “the retribution of their deception” has both a subjective and an objective aspect. That is, we human beings are deceived and led astray both in and as a result of our deeds of irreverence and unrighteousness. If we were not already corrupted, we would never do these things; and, as those who have done them, we must also experience something of what God thinks of them, even if the penalty here consists in continuing on in our darkness (which is by no means a trivial judgment in itself), whether or not it also includes consequent, corresponding suffering.

There are three terms to consider: (1) “sins” (which

refers to one’s *failures*; lit., “missings” of the mark); (2) “offenses” (which speaks of that which wounds the feelings); and (3) “acts” (i.e., actions, or “works,” which speaks simply of deeds themselves, without, at least as such, noting their “missing” or “offending” aspects).

As the Lamb of God, the Sin Offering, Jesus takes away the *sin* of the world (John 1:29); and, God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself (i.e., uniting them unto Him; *cp* 1 Cor.7:11), which entails His not reckoning their *offenses* to them (2 Cor.5:19).

Therefore, men’s ongoing practices in which they continue to miss the mark of God’s ideals, and continue as well to be offensive therein, do not stand in the way of their salvation. In Christ, God has made provision for their needs concerning both their failings and the offensiveness thereof. Therefore, neither men’s sin’s nor their offenses inhibit their salvation: God has formed the decision (1 Tim.2:4) that all mankind be saved; and, in Christ, all *shall* be vivified (1 Cor.15:22).

These considerations, however, glorious and significant as they are, do not change the fact that God will bring every *act* into judgment (Ecc.12:14; God’s “judgment,” simply speaks of that which God decides to do or bring to pass). Now, in judgment, there are two grand classes of humanity: (1) vessels of mercy, and (2) vessels of indignation (Rom.9:22,23; it should be kept in mind that even the vessels of indignation will subsequently enjoy mercy themselves; *cf* Rom.11:32).

All God’s judgments (i.e., everything that He decides to accomplish) are ultimately salutary and corrective. In judgment, in His judging of a part of mankind, God will display His mercy therein, according to His grace (“mercy” is the mitigation, or diminution, of the severity of judgment). And, in His judging of the remainder of mankind, God, Who is love (1 John 4:8; *cp* 1 Cor.13:5), in the person of

His Son, will *assume* the role (*cf* Heb.1:3) of One Who is indignant, thus *manifesting* a corresponding severity, with a view toward displaying His indignation and making His powerful doings known (Rom.9:22).

This is what God has determined to do, and He will do it. He has a purpose in it all, and that purpose is to glorify Himself and bless His creatures—to the degree and in the way that He intends.

In consideration of the second death, we need only note that it is not according to God's purpose for all to live during the eon of the eons, which is the final duration, prior to the consummation (it is this eon which is the object of John's vision of Revelation 21, 22). It was not God's purpose for us to have lived in times of old. For such a long expanse of time, there was no life for us to be found. Similarly, then, even as we ourselves were not afforded life in millennia past, neither will the majority of mankind be endowed therewith during the eon of the eons.

But it is according to God's purpose for the day of judging to transpire subsequent to the thousand years, and yet prior to the eon of the eons. And, in that "day" (we do not know its duration, but take it that even if comparatively brief it will not be an insignificant period; *cf* Matt.12:42), the *acts* of the *vessels* of indignation will be judged; where appropriate, in severity. Following the day of judging, those brought forth for judging (*cf* John 5:29b) will be returned to death, being *cast* into the lake of fire: "This is the second *death*—the lake of fire" (Rev.20:14b).

We who are God's chosen ones, who are vessels of mercy, will enjoy eonian life until the consummation when we *together with all mankind* will enter upon the field of endless life which follows.

In closing, I would only declare, "Now thanks be to God, Who is giving us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor.15:57).

J.R.C.