

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS
WORD

VOLUME 115

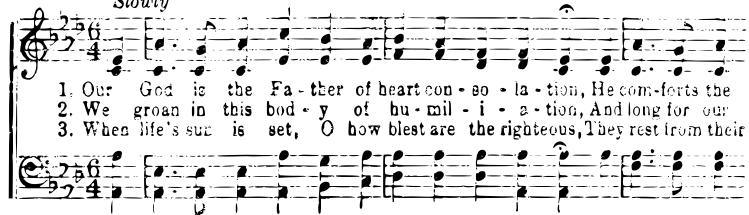
Founding Editors
V. Gelesnoff (1877-1921)
A. E. Knoch (1879-1965)
editor:
Dean H. Hough

CONCORDANT PUBLISHING CONCERN
P.O. Box 449
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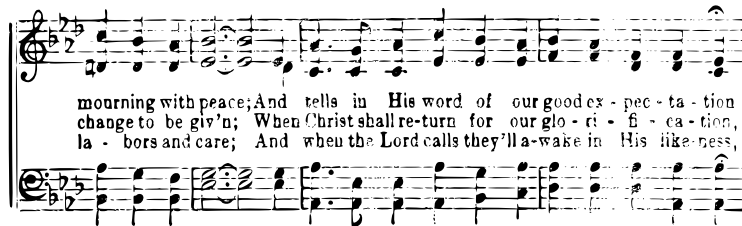
CONSOLATION

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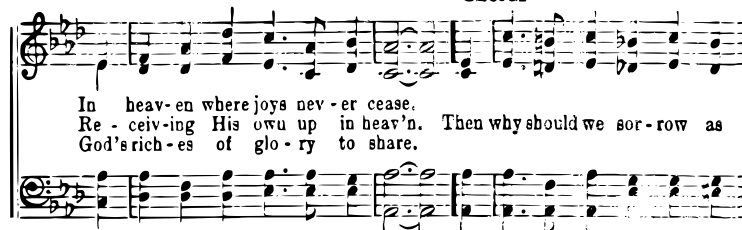
Slowly


1. Our God is the Fa-ther of heart con-so-la-tion, He com-forts the
 2. We groan in this bod-y of hu-mil-i-a-tion, And long for our
 3. When life's sun is set, O how blest are the righteous, They rest from their



mourning with peace; And tells in His word of our good ex-pec-ta-tion
 change to be giv'n; When Christ shall re-turn for our glo-ri-fi-ca-tion,
 la-bors and care; And when the Lord calls they'll a-wake in His like-ness,

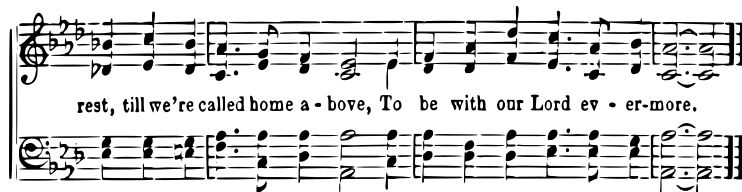
Chorus



In heav-en where joys nev-er cease.
 Re-ceiving His own up in heav'n. Then why should we sor-row as
 God's rich-es of glo-ry to share.



hav-ing no hope, For loved ones whose journey is o'er? They peaceful-ly



rest, till we're called home a-bove, To be with our Lord ev-er-more.

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 115th Year
(1909–2024)

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Netherlands Agent: Andries Van der Wal, E-H Depot, P.O. Box 85111, 3009 MC Rotterdam. Phone 010-420-6260.

United Kingdom Agent: Mr. Malcolm Ferries, Flat 5 Redholme Court, Red Hill, Stourbridge, West Mids DY8 1ND. Phones landline: 01384-379531; cell: 07763-187876

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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES, FIRST QUARTER 2024
BEING THE FIRST NUMBER OF VOLUME ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

EDITORIAL

THE WORD of God does not change, but the translation and understanding of it must continually be adjusted more truly to what the Word actually is saying. From the first issue of *Unsearchable Riches* in October 1909 there has been a call for adjustment in much of the usual and dominant thinking concerning what God is saying in the Scriptures and especially what He is saying directly to us. This has been so even to calls for adjustments to previous adjustments. At first the “Authorized Version” of 1611 (somewhat adjusted itself) was used for the most part. But it soon became apparent that a new translation was needed, based on a Greek text that reflected the original wording as accurately as seemed possible. This was a gigantic challenge and task, involving much drudgery and perseverance. A first edition of the Concordant Version was issued in 1926, joined with a “Lexical Concordance” in 1931. Then a new approach using different typefaces and superior letters to indicate the Greek text more literally in the translation itself was issued in 1942, joined by the Keyword Concordance in 1944. This too was revised in 1966 under the name CONCORDANT LITERAL NEW TESTAMENT, again revised slightly in 1976. Yet now we are struggling to prepare a further (and in some ways a more radical) revision to be called the CONCORDANT VERSION NEW TESTAMENT, designed to accompany the CONCORDANT VERSION OLD TESTAMENT, first issued in 2014 and slightly revised in 2021.

But why all this? It is hardly noticed even by fellow be-

lievers, and when it is noticed there is still much disagreement about what God is saying. Nevertheless God continues to operate all in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11), and if in any way He uses us to testify to this fact and to what He has made known in His Word as to His counseled will, may it be so that He continues to do so in this small effort of a concordant translation and ministry.

Once again we draw attention to some important and happy revelations made known in God's Word: (1) The consoling expectation of always being together with the Lord (pages 5-21); (2) The evangel of Christ's faith unto the death of the cross and God's rousing of Him from among the dead ones (pages 22-40), and (3) Our reliance on God Who is carrying out His purpose within a series of eons beginning with creation and consummating in God being All in all (pages 41-48).

(1) There is sorrow in the death of those near us, family, companions, friends and especially of fellow believers, and there is loss in the death of every human being. Death is the big evil. But that evil of the death of God's Son nearly two thousand years ago produces the greatest of all goods.

(2) The death of Christ in faith and obedience unto the cross gives us joyful and peaceful expectation of the death of death and end of sin. "The night progresses yet the day is near" (Romans 13:12). Thus we read in Romans 4:25:

Jesus our Lord "is given up because of our offenses,
And He is roused because of our justifying."

(3) In this "We *rely* on the living God Who is the Saviour of all human beings" (1 Tim.4:10). "Rely" and "expect" are the same word in Greek. Consequently this issue of *Unsearchable Riches* ends where it began hopefully with a clearer view of the righteousness of God in the justification of all.

D.H.H.

CONSOLATION IN EXPECTATION
(1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18)

BE CONSOLING one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:18). The earliest revelation concerning our future fate was given to saints sorrowing for their loved ones. And to this day there are no more comforting words for the bereaved believer than Paul's message concerning those who were put to repose in Thessalonica. Here we have the balm we need for our wounded feelings when a beloved believer is put to repose. All has to do with our future experience at His presence. It is a solace for our *souls*. In this it differs from Paul's revelations to the Corinthians, for that gives us the glories of our resurrection *bodies*, and ends with an exhortation to abound in the *work* of the Lord (1 Cor.15:58). The expectation of our calling (Eph.1:18; 4:4) with all its glories as the complement of the Head of all future rule, appeals to our *spirits*. We shall consider only the first of these aspects of our expectation at this time—the consolation of our souls.

To fully appreciate Paul's consoling words to the Thessalonians we should seek to transport ourselves into their special circumstances. After Paul's call to Macedonia (Acts 16:9), and his release from the Philippian jail he came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. For three sabbaths he argued with the Jews, with the result that some of them were persuaded. It was a rather discouraging harvest for the great apostle among his brethren according to the flesh. But, in contrast to the few Jews, a *vast multitude* of the reverent Greeks believe, and of the foremost women not a few (Acts 17:4,12). Moreover, the Jews of Thessalonica made up a mob and sought to persecute Paul, and even followed him to Berea.

The attitude of the Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica is characteristic. It is most important that we grasp the situation, if we would fully appreciate the force of Paul's epistle to them. Paul had a number of ministries. In Acts we find him bearing the message of the kingdom to the Jews of the dispersion. Jerusalem and Judea had rejected the testimony of the twelve. Paul then carries the kingdom message to those scattered among the nations. In his early ministries he always acted on the principle, to the Jew first. So it seems that his principal efforts in Thessalonica were directed toward reaching them, although the result was that he reached the nations. It may be this background which leads him to write, "having perceived, brethren beloved *by* God, His choice of you, for the evangel of our God does not come to you in word only, but in power also" (1 Thess. 1:4,5). To the Jews the message came in word only, for God had chosen the Gentiles. It was a small epitome of the present work of God, and needed only the conclusion to make it complete. And this is given us in Paul's epistle.

Paul seems to have spent his time in Thessalonica chiefly in arguing with the Jews, seeking to prove that Jesus is their Messiah (Acts 17:2,3). He was not allowed to stay much more than three weeks, hence he had not many opportunities to teach those among the nations who had believed, what he later wrote to them. Had he done so, his revelations concerning the future would not have been at all agreeable to the Jews who might be present, for this epistle practically involves the repudiation of Israel. Neither could these things find any record in the book of Acts at that time, for they go beyond the theme of that treatise, which closes, once the Jews among the nations finally reject the kingdom message. Most appropriately, this new revelation is made in writing, not to the few *Jews* in Thessalonica, but to the *Gentiles*. To them, in their sorrow, God is pleased to reveal a future coming of our Lord

which was quite unknown to the prophets of old, or to the disciples of our Lord on earth.

Under the circumstances we can readily see why the Thessalonians should be ignorant of what the future had in store for them. They probably were not ignorant of the destiny of Israel. Probably they had heard much of what Paul had said to the Jews, and of the glorious return of the Messiah to set up the kingdom. They had been accurately informed concerning the times and the eras. The day of Yahweh, coming as a thief in the night, was no mystery to them, even though, in the second epistle, it would seem that they were later alarmed by a letter, supposedly from Paul, teaching that the day of the Lord was already present (2 Thess. 2:2). In reading the Thessalonian letters let us always remember that the background is Paul's heralding of the kingdom to the Jews. Then we will not be perplexed by the many allusions to that which concerns them at the time of the end. Of their own expectation they were ignorant, but not of the expectation of Israel.

Perhaps, in their first love and abounding joy, they hardly gave any thought to their own future. But this was forced upon their attention in a most tragic manner, for some of their members died, and the first thought concerning their loved ones was that they would miss the anticipated kingdom. What would become of them? The faithful Jews would be raised to have their portion in the kingdom. Even the proselytes would have some share in that glorious day. But their reposing friends—nothing seemed in store for them, for nothing had been revealed. It was a sorrowful outlook. Paul later reminds the Gentiles of it in his Ephesian letter: "Wherefore, remember that once you, the nations in flesh . . . that you were, in that era, . . . guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation . . ." (Eph. 2:11,12).

It is not easy for us to put ourselves in the position of

such as the Thessalonians at that time. Israel still monopolized all prerogatives. The Thessalonians had gone to Jewish meetings to hear the evangel. They had believed on *Israel's* God, and they no longer had one of their own. They had no political rights in Messiah's kingdom, for they were alienated from its citizenship. As to the covenants they were merely guests. Perhaps no better picture can be given of them than that which our Lord Himself used—they were hardly more than puppies at Israel's board. But what distressed them was not their present state, but the future of their dead. They had no "hope." Of what use were all these future glories to them, if they were to have no part in them?

No marvel that the apostle did not want them to remain in ignorance! They *had* an expectation, a glorious prospect, a hope more marvelous than that of Israel. This he now proceeds to unfold to them (1 Thess.4:13-18). It is the great antidote for hearts sorrowing over those who have died, or rather, according to the expressive figure used by the apostle, who have laid their weary limbs down for sweet repose.

"Those who are put to repose"! What comfort there is even in these words! Some of us have loved ones whose lives, at least in part, were anything but repose. There was toil and anguish, and the daily ordeal was like the torture of the rack, until death mercifully released the groaning frame. How often did we wish that some miracle could be wrought to provide a transient rest! And now comes death. Is it really an end of suffering for the time? That alone is cause for thankfulness. Yet we know what glories lie beyond. And, indeed, our sorrow is not like that of others, who see naught ahead but the black shadows of an unknown night.

The Thessalonians looked for the coming of Messiah and hoped to survive until His presence on the earth, but they

had no definite idea as to their own place in the future. We need not be surprised at this, for thousands today know even less than this and are satisfied with a mere consciousness of salvation. Other thousands consider the Lord's coming too deep a subject for this life. Its intense practical value in this vale of tears is often unheeded until some great sorrow sinks the soul in despair, and loosens its hold on the things of this evil eon.

GIVEN UP AND ROUSED

The foundation on which our every expectation rests is the resurrection of Christ. For our souls, our bodies (1 Cor.15:14), and our spirits, our faith is directed to the empty tomb near Golgotha. "If we are believing that Jesus died, and rose," all else is possible. Then those for whom He died must share in His resurrection. Let us note the names here. It is Jesus, our Lord's personal appellation, which presents Him as Saviour. This reminds us of Paul's amplification of this very point in his epistle to the Romans. There righteousness is reckoned to those who are believing on Him Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones, Who is given up *because of* our offenses, and is roused *because of* our justifying (Rom.4:24,25). He was not roused because of His own justness, but because we had become just. He was made sin for us, and, until expiation of our sin had been made, until we were utterly cleared from its slightest taint, until we were justified, He could not be roused.

To believe "that Jesus died and rose" involves ever so much more than the casual reader apprehends. It is, so to speak, the salvation of our Saviour. And this involves our future welfare. The work which He accomplished for us led to His being roused by God and guarantees our own resurrection. Through this Saviour, God will lead us forth with Him. And this applies to all, even to the far-off

Gentiles like the Thessalonians, who only listened in on Paul's arguments with the Jews, and who only wished a few crumbs from God's redundant provision for themselves.

But this great truth was not enough. It would give rise to questions. The dead will be raised, but When? Where? How? Will it be at some far distant time, the "last day" (John 11:24) of which Martha spoke at the grave of Lazarus? Will the dead miss all the bliss of being with Messiah in the day of Yahweh? Will we be separated from them in that day? How long will the ones who survive until that day precede those who have fallen asleep? And, since the Messiah is the King of Israel, how will it be possible for any of us to be with Him in His exalted and exclusive majesty?

These questions could not be answered by an appeal to the prophets, for the situation is just the reverse of that contemplated by them. "Rejoice, ye nations, with His people," would almost need to be read backward, as, Rejoice, His people, with the nations. Paul was not succeeding in his efforts to reach Israel. The nation, as such, even in the dispersion, was rejecting their Messiah, and their expectation of possessing the kingdom was receding. In contrast with this, multitudes among the nations were believing *notwithstanding Israel's apostasy*. If this goes on (as it did), then Israel will not be blessed at all, hence will not be in a position to dispense blessing to others. It is clear, therefore, that God will need to step in and resolve the dilemma. A new revelation is needed. And this is just what the apostle receives, and what he passes on to the sorrowing Thessalonians.

A FRESH REVELATION

"This we are saying to you by the word of the Lord" This solemn formula is not often used in God's later revelations. It marks a new departure, a fresh unfolding of God's ways. It is useless to seek for this revelation in any

previous portion of God's Word. No prophets mention it. Our Lord said nothing of it. Even the Circumcision apostles, in their later ministries, give no hint of the glorious event which Paul is about to foretell. More than that, this "word of the Lord" concerning our recall from death introduces a wedge between the recipients of Paul's evangel and the Circumcision evangel which eventually split them wide apart, so that, not only in their future expectation, but in all else they constitute a distinct and different work of God, dependent, not on Israel's *acceptance* of the evangel, but on her *rejection* of God's Christ.

As the main motive of the apostle is to console, he first assures the Thessalonians that they would not get ahead of their reposing friends. "We, the living who are surviving, to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those who are put to repose . . ." This alone should have satisfied the Thessalonians, and dried their tears. But this sorrow of theirs, and its consolation, is only a God-made opportunity which must serve a higher and a greater purpose. God's grace has been dammed up so long that it must overflow. The sorrow of the Thessalonians has opened up a crevice for it to flow forth. But the crevice soon widens into a crevasse, and breaks down the dam of legalism and fleshly privilege, bringing floods of blessing to the nations.

God knows the end from the beginning, so it comes that the first real revelation concerning God's present work of grace among the nations deals with the closing scene of this administration, if, indeed, it should not be counted with the next. Then "the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead ones in Christ shall be rising first." Marvelous moment! Ecstatic expectation! Most entrancing sound! Those blessed lips have already given commands to His own, but none to compare with this! When will the voice

of the Chief Messenger bring mankind more bliss, or trumpet blast sound sweeter?

The Lord Himself—and not another! We, sinners of the Gentiles, unworthy of a place at Israel's board, would be highly honored to have Him send the meanest of His servants to call us back to life. How marvelous if He should delegate an archangel for this task! In His unveiling, when He deals with the earth in judgment, much of His work is delegated to mighty messengers, who fulfill His will. Let us charge our hearts to give due heed to the favor which is poured forth upon us in this precious phrase. To be sure, we are last, and least deserving. Yet, in this new dispensation, which has its birth in this very revelation, the last are made first and the least, greatest. Even in the kingdom He will do much through His servants, such as David, and His apostles, who will rule the twelve tribes, but when He bids us to His presence He will come *Himself* to raise our bodies, rouse our souls, and vivify our spirits, to make us fit and welcome in our celestial home.

Three sorts of sounds combine to recall the dead to life and vivify the living. One is an inarticulate sound, the trumpet's stentorian tones, which will raise the bodies of the dead and change the living. The second is the voice, of a *messenger* bringing tidings of great joy. The third is an *order*, a command to be obeyed.

THE VOICE THAT RAISES THE DEAD

The voice of the Chief Messenger is none other than the voice of our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. No so-called "angel" can raise the dead. Not even Michael, or any other archangel, can wake the sleeping saints. The hour is coming when the dead shall be hearing the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live. For even as the Father has life in Himself, thus also He gives to the Son to have life in Himself . . . The hour

is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and those who do good shall go out into a resurrection of life (John 5:25,26,28,29). And this same voice gave a foretaste of its power when, in later days, it clamored loudly at the tomb of His dear friend, "Lazarus! Hither! Out!" (John 11:43). And the dead man heard and obeyed that vivifying voice.

In His dealings with Israel, in heralding and setting up the kingdom, God uses many messengers. John the Baptist was sent before the Lord to prepare His way. Gabriel was sent to announce His birth to Mary. Many mighty messengers will be employed in the judgments which usher in the kingdom. Wherever God needs a courier to carry His messages or carry out His decrees, especially when these are not in direct harmony with the heart of His great Mediator, or of a nature which He cannot perform, He uses other messengers. Our Lord could not announce His own birth, so Gabriel came. Christ could not be His own forerunner, so John the Baptist was sent. Christ's great function is to save, not to destroy, so the destructive judgments of the end time are delegated to other messengers. But when the time comes for the deliverance of our bodies He takes the announcement of this glad message upon Himself, and we will hear the news from His own mouth, as the Chiefest of all God's couriers.

THE TRUMPET OF GOD

Only God can call dead bodies back to life, yet He has delegated this power to His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is pictured most perfectly for us in the phrase "the trumpet of God." By using a trumpet a man may magnify the power of his voice beyond all human proportions. In using the divine trumpet, His voice reverberates with the power of God, which alone can raise the dead.

In the beginning God worked by means of His spoken

word. God said, "Let light come to be!" and light came to be. Resurrection is a much greater work, so is appropriately pictured by a much more forceful sound, by which life is given to the dead, as well as immortality to the living. Though listed last, it would seem that this will be the first of the sounds to be heard, for how can the dead hear a message or hearken to a command unless they have been brought back to life? As Paul told the Corinthians, the work of resurrection will take but an instant to transform the corruptible to incorruption and the mortal to immortality. The trumpet will sound, but nothing will occur until the concluding blast. Then, presto! change! the greatest miracle of the eons!

A SHOUT OF COMMAND

One of the grave difficulties in this passage is our being snatched into the air. How can this be? It is not explained here, but fully expounded later in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Even here, however, we have an indication of this secret of the resurrection, for only *changed* bodies could respond to such a command. Peter had the secret of it in his heart when he said to his Master, Who was walking on the Galilean waves, "Lord, if it is *You*, *order* (*keleuson*, the verb of this word)—*order* me to come to You on the waters." Then came the shout of command, "*Come!*" And descending from the ship, Peter walks on the waters to come to Jesus (Matt.14:28,29). If *He* gives an order, it carries with it the power needed for obedience. Peter, alas! had not been permanently changed, his faith failed, and he began to sink. We need more than Peter's scant faith to obey the command that will call us up into the air to meet Him there. We will have glorious power in spiritual bodies, which will be equal to obeying any command.

The touching scene on Galilee seems to picture Christ's coming to Israel in the days ahead. But be it they or we,

what other order could He give than this one blessed invitation, "*Come!*"? "Depart!" is for those who know Him not. We would not be at all surprised if, in that supreme moment, when the last trump has transformed our feeble and dishonored frames into glorious, powerful, spiritual bodies, the first word that we shall hear will be His order, "*Come!*"

When Peter heard it, he stepped *down* from the ship and walked upon the *water*. But we shall go *up* from the earth and meet Him in the *air*. Every such contrast is intensely significant just at this juncture, when God's grace is being switched off to another track. We, who are accustomed to the thought of heaven as our future home, can have little conception of the astonishment this must have created in Thessalonica. Our Lord returned with Peter into the ship. But there is not a single hint that He will return with us to the earth, but simply the statement that we are to be together with Him always.

All this is full of meaning, and worthy of much meditation. All is symptomatic, and points forward to the grace which was about to be revealed. All is contrastive, and indicates a change in God's dealings with mankind. The most important point is the position of our Lord. He is not on earth, hence the kingdom has not come. He is in the air, which is a higher and more spiritual sphere. He does not descend to the earth, though He undoubtedly does so later. This fact, however, is definitely excluded from this revelation, for it has no bearing upon it. If we did not have any further unfolding of this theme, we might not be able to see the significance of all this, but now that we know that our destiny is not terrestrial but celestial (Eph.1:3), that our bodies will not only be vivified but changed (1 Cor. 15:51), and that our citizenship belongs to the heavens (Phil.3:20), every syllable glows with a celestial light. The

gates are opened to the great grace which is ours in Christ Jesus, and we get a small glimpse of our future glory.

There is a pleasing contrast between the orders given by our Lord and those issued by other characters in the sacred records. His commands bring blessing, theirs usually result in evil and even death. When He, in His compassion, wishes to feed the throng, He orders them to recline on the grass (Matt. 14:19), the better to receive His bounty. At Jericho, when the blind mendicant implores, "Jesus, Son of David, be merciful to me!" He stood and *orders* the blind man to be led to Him (Luke 18:35-40). Here we have a beautiful little foreview of His future coming to Israel, as deep down in the depths of despair as Jericho is sunk on the surface of the earth, when He restores their sight so that they may behold His glories and follow Him. The false rulers gave far different orders. The Idumean, Herod the Great, *orders* the head of John the Baptist to be given to Herodias' daughter (Matt. 14:9). Another Herod orders Peter's guards to be put to death (Acts 12:19). The *orders* of men bring suffering and death. His order, which all of His will hear, betokens life and lasting joy.

THE DEAD RISE FIRST

Once again the apostle reassures the Thessalonians in regard to those who are reposing. We shall by no means outstrip them because they will be rising first, before any of us leave the earth. As there is no consciousness in the death state, it has no practical effect on their expectation. It is just as if they had lain down to slumber, instead of dying. And that is why the apostle persists in speaking of "those who are put to repose," where we would say "the dead." The *fact* is that they died, but the far more truthful *figure* is that they are reposing. When they awake they will not be in His presence. They will first join the living (who will have been changed, as we shall see later), and, as one

company, just as if none had ever died, all together will be snatched away in clouds for meeting the Lord in the air.

Especial emphasis is laid on the simultaneous ascension of the saints. At various times teachers have arisen who claimed that the resurrection does not occur at one time, but that some, more faithful or more privileged than the rest, would be raised earlier. Some have even claimed that Paul himself reversed these words in a later revelation, when he made known an "out-resurrection." But this is an eclectic resurrection, leaving the vast multitude of mankind in their graves. It does not even include those believers who belong to the kingdom. Paul's later characterization *describes this resurrection*, rather than distinguishes another from it. A careful reading will show that the words, *at the same time*, are not necessary for the sense, for the word "together" conveys the same thought. It is emphatic. *Simultaneously*, the dead and the living, if "in Christ," will be snatched away in clouds for meeting the Lord in the air. Whatever lack of unity may have been caused by division and death, all will be one the moment we hear His vitalizing voice.

THE LIVING, WHO ARE SURVIVING

The normal outlook of the believer of this dispensation of God's grace is not death but life. From Paul down to the present day the prospect put before the saint is the vivifying presence of Christ. From the beginning all have been kept in ignorance of the date when this will occur, for an imminent expectation is the most powerful and blessed means of producing a consecrated life. It was no mistake on Paul's part when he said, "we . . . who are surviving." It is a serious error and shortcoming on the part of critics, to condemn it because they hold no such vital hope. Day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, the next event for which we yearn should be the trumpet's joyful note.

And in these last days this should be the case as never before, for the next administration is already in formation, the signs of the next era seem prematurely present, so that we sometimes wonder why we are still here, performing our little part while the stage is already being re-arranged for the final act of earth's tragic misrule. We feel out of place and in the way, for all seems ripe for the day of Yahweh. The storm clouds are gathering, out of which will come the lightning and the thunder of God's wrath. We view its oncoming terrors unafraid, for we know that, before the storm shall burst, we will be above it, safe and serene, in His presence. Surely there is no excuse for us in these closing days not to live in constant and joyful anticipation of this expectation.

SNATCHED AWAY IN CLOUDS

Clouds have their place in the air, hence the first thought which usually comes upon one reading this passage is that we shall be screened from the earth by vapory clouds floating in the sky. It may be so, but the absence of the article—not "*the* clouds," but simply "clouds"—and the close connection with the words "snatched away together with them in" suggests that it may be the saints, living and raised, who may form the clouds here spoken of. That is, the saints will not go separately, but in company with others, in groups of sufficient numbers to form figurative clouds. Like these fleecy formations they will be composed of particles which can float in the air. The Lord will act like the summer sun on the surface of the water. Heavy as that fluid is, it rises at the sunbeams' call into the empyrean.

A would-be scientist might bang all sorts of objections as to the practicability of this event. One might say, "If all *ascend* from all over the earth, they will not meet, but scatter." But nothing is said here of *ascending*. The word *snatched* will allow of any direction. Not so many years

ago some would have said that no sound could possibly be heard all over the earth at the same time. But that idea is now outdated. If men can mount their messages upon the wings of light and send them to every portion of the earth in a small fraction of a second, this will not be impossible to Him Who in the beginning said, "Let light come to be!" None of these things compares with the greatest of all miracles, which precedes our going, the impartation of life and incorruption to millions of reposing saints.

MEETING THE LORD IN THE AIR

For those like the Thessalonians, who had never heard of a heavenly hope, and who had some knowledge of the kingdom on earth as heralded to Israel at the time this was written, the thought of meeting the Lord in the air must have been most marvelous and full of mystery. A little later the Corinthians found it so, and Paul was called upon for further explanations. Now that our celestial destiny has been revealed (Eph.1:3), and the prospect of "heaven" is common to everyone in Christendom, the surprising nature of this revelation is not appreciated. Yet even for us it lacks finality. No one thinks of this as the permanent abode of the saints. It leaves us with a feeling of incompleteness. We know that our Lord will not remain in the air. He will come down to earth a little later. Then, if our destiny is on earth, why should we be given the marvelous power of traversing the air? Israel will not be able to do this. There is something here which suggests that we will go up, and not down, that our abode is the heavens, and not the earth, but it is only intimated, not revealed.

THUS

In this way, after this manner, shall we be together with the Lord. Early was this blessed expectation lost, and ever since some of the saints have sought to intrude

into His presence by another way. They have tried to find Him behind the portals of Death, although He is the Life. They have even altered Paul's own words. When he found no attraction in life or in death, he revealed his heart by saying that he was pressed out of these by his desire of being *with Christ*, which, rather, is much better. Living is not now being with Him. How much less is dying! No one of His will ever be ushered into His presence alone, apart from the rest. First those who are in Him will be gathered. Paul found it necessary to insist that the living shall not precede the dead. Today we must insist that this clearly shows that the dead shall not precede the living! And so, both, *simultaneously* (*hama* in the Greek), at the same time will be snatched away to meet Him in the air.

TOGETHER WITH THE LORD

It might be a difficult matter to tell just "where we will spend eternity," so the Scriptures describe our future sphere in the almost all-embracing terms, "among the celestials." The popular conception of heaven, somewhat like the great festive halls I have seen in the palaces of Europe, in which each one has a place in the orchestra, is grotesque and utterly unscriptural. Leaving out the earth, the heavens, in which our future lies, comprise the whole universe. Now we are confined to an exceedingly narrow stratum near the surface of the earth. Our limitations will not allow us to go very far below its crust, nor ascend very high above its lowlands. Bars, much stronger than iron, cage us in, so that we cannot come forth. But then all limitations will be withdrawn and the boundless universe will be before us, and the object of our ministrations. How impossible to describe our whereabouts in that supernal sphere!

Only one location need be given, for this includes all others and imparts to every place the one thing needed to

make it all that heart can wish. And that is circumscribed by the simple words that allay our fears and soothe our sorrows, and crown the future with a halo which no other phrase can ever impart. Our bliss will not consist in being in a place, but in being *with the Lord!* His presence would make "hell" heaven, and what would heaven itself be without Him? And so, in the midst of life, as well as in the presence of death, let us console one another with these words.

A. E. Knoch

ROMANS 4:25

Everywhere God's vindication and ours depends on Christ's sacrificial work. His being made sin is the ground of our becoming the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor.5:21). Our personal offences sent Jesus Christ to the cross; but if we are to be assured that His offering was satisfactory, if we are to be made one with Him, He must not stay there. He died, as love always will, to save the beloved who are in jeopardy, *and was roused because of our justifying*. This is the only true and consistent translation. Grammatical expedients have been invented to escape the plain meaning of the words. But we were justified in His blood (5:9). The propitiation was for our justification (3:25,26). He was made sin for our justification (2 Cor.5:21). It is the death of Christ, not His resurrection, which is the basis of our justification. The resurrection is the seal of our justification. He was raised because of our accomplished justification, accomplished as far as grace and blood could secure it. Our justifying, like our deliverance, is actual and concrete in Christ Jesus, and becomes ours on believing. Our sin killed Him; our justification permitted His resurrection. It was not a personal resurrection only, but something that concerned all men. As our condemnation brought Him to crucifixion, so our justification releases Him from death. A risen Sin-bearer shows that the sin is removed. A complete resurrection shows that Justice had no claim on Him beyond the realm of death. If His body, or any part of Him, was left in the grip of death, we should never know the sufficiency of His sacrifice.

George L. Rogers

OUR BELIEVING AND CHRIST'S FAITH

IN Romans 3:21 Paul declares that God's righteousness has been made manifest through Jesus Christ's faith "apart from law." In Romans 3:31 the apostle asks "Are we, then, nullifying law through that faith [of Jesus]?" And here he declares "May it not come to that! But indeed we are sustaining law!"

Consequently the apostle turns to the "Law" (Torah) where it is apart from law. He sustains law where it is a *declaration* of the reckoning of righteousness and not *instruction*. He turns to the law section of scripture where it speaks of justification through faith and not out of works of law. He turns to the first book of the "Torah," to Genesis chapter 15, verse 6 which tells of believing God and not of instruction for human doing (such as Genesis 12:1-3 where instruction precedes promise). Paul turns to the law where a passage of promise comes first (Gen.15:5) and then is followed not by instruction but by another declaration of something apparently very simple and minimal which was done by one individual, Abraham, not in response to instruction, but in response to a most joyful promise. Abraham *believes* God.

Thus "law" as "faith's law" is what is sustained, yet apart from human works of law.

4 **^aWhat, then, shall we be declaring that Abraham, our 'forefather according to flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham is justified out of works, he ¹has something to boast in, but not toward God. ³ For ^awhat is the scripture saying?**

⁴**Now Abraham believes 'God,**

And it is reckoned to him ^{io}for righteousness.

⁴**^yNow to the ¹worker^o, the wage is not being reckoned^o ^{ac}as a favor, but ^{ac}as a debt. ⁵ Yet to him ¹who is not working^o, yet is believing on Him ¹Who is justifying the irreverent one,**

his ¹faith is being reckoned^o ^{io}for righteousness.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BEING RECKONED

The citation of Genesis 15:6 moves us from Jesus Christ's faith to the believer's faith, and justification moves from the literal sense of being made righteous (proleptically) to being reckoned righteous. What was seen as the manifestation of God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith in the gratuitous justification of all human beings is now seen as justification as presently placed "*on* all who are believing" (Rom.3:22). What is revealed *out of* the Righteous One's faith is now considered as it is *for* the believer's faith (*cf* Rom.1:16,17). "Faith's law" (Rom.3:27) as it operates in the faith of the humbled Jesus in the justifying of the irreverent one, is placed before us now as what the believer is believing. Our faith is believing that God is justifying the irreverent one through the faith of Jesus Christ, and on believing this evangel of our salvation we are sealed with the holy spirit of promise unto the deliverance of the procured, literal justification to be enjoyed in the future but *achieved in the death of Christ* (*cf* Eph.1:13,14). Now through every day, hour, minute and second this justification is being reckoned to us, being put to our account.

BELIEVING GOD

This pattern of believing God when He speaks to us in words of an evangel of joy and well-being was displayed by Abraham as recorded in the Torah before the law of circumcision was given and long before the law of Sinai was imposed. God speaks of good. Abraham believes. God reckons this for righteousness.

Abraham's faith was described above as something "apparently very simple and minimal." Yet in reality it was something astounding and fully opposed to the reality of Abraham's life and circumstances in the world. Abraham believes what was unbelievable as far as physical evidence is concerned. And this was, in reality, neither simple nor minimal. It was contrary to everything that could be seen or known. It can be explained only as Paul later explains our faith. It was a spiritual endowment from God (1 Cor.12:1; 13:13).

Abraham's faith would falter and only approach perfection when he serves as a type of Christ's faith and of God's giving of His Son in righteousness and love as recorded in Genesis 22. Yet the measure of Abraham's faith is not the issue. It is that he believed God as God endowed him with faith, and reckoned it for righteousness.

Nevertheless the faith graciously granted (*cp* Phil.1:29) was most remarkable and positive apart from doubts.

Now as much as we may profit from dwelling on the blessing of believing God as Paul expounds it in Romans 4, our concern at present is on God's evangel as it concerns His Son and His Son's faith. So for now let us skip ahead beyond David's testimony concerning the happiness of being reckoned righteousness, and beyond this happiness as it relates to the Uncircumcision as well as the Circumcision, and beyond it as a matter of grace rather than law. We will not pause even to consider Paul's use of the word SEED as it refers to Christ in 4:13, except to note that in God's evangel Christ is always kept in view. So also, in passing, we catch a view of Christ's faith in the description of Abraham's faith in 4:16-20. Again we go beyond all this as it relates to our believing and God's reckoning of righteousness to us, returning to the evangel concerning God's Son itself—beyond the theme of our faith to that of

Christ's faith in the purpose and operation of God.

ROMANS 4:23-25

²³ *y*Now it is not written because of him only, that it is reckoned to him, ²⁴ but because of us also, to whom it is 'about to be 'reckoned', who are believing on Him 'Who rouses Jesus our 'Lord 'from among the dead ones,

²⁵ Who is given up because of our 'offenses,
And is roused because of our 'justifying.

It is God "Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones."

And it is Jesus our Lord "Who is given up because of our offenses, and is roused because of our justifying."

The focus turns again from our believing to the message we are believing. Chapter 4 for the most part concerns us who are believing in the pattern set by Abraham, but it ends with God, Who gives up His Son and rouses Him from among the dead ones, and with Jesus our Lord Who is given up and is roused. Paul brings us back to God in the first place, our Lord in second place, replacing the emphasis on us (who are in third place as offenders who are justified).

Consequently in Romans 5:1 Paul speaks (as in 3:21-28) of justification as the result of God's operation in the giving of His Son and His Son's faith (not our faith) in that operation.

God's evangel concerning His Son reveals first of all that His Son is given up because of our offenses. While we are still offensive sinners God commends His love in sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh, sparing Him not but *giving Him up* for us all (Rom.5:8; 8:3,32). It is because of our offenses that Jesus our Lord is given up to crucifixion ("Christ crucified," 1 Cor.1:23,24), coming in sin's flesh, and coming in this state of humiliation *concern-*

ing sin so that sin would be *condemned* (Rom.8:3). Such is the commendation of God's love and the constraining power of Christ's love that He dies for the sake of all and consequently all die (2 Cor.5:14).

It is in the death of Christ that everyone, each and every human sinner and each and every offense of irreverent and unrighteous human beings dies. "One who dies has been justified from sin" (Rom.6:7). It is in the sinner's inclusion in the death of Christ that all are being justified gratuitously in God's grace (Rom.3:23,24).

Consequently God's evangel first tells us that Christ dies for our sakes. It is not because Christ is roused from among the dead that we are justified, delivered and saved from sin and death and shall be constituted righteous. He is roused because of our justifying which is achieved in His death for all so that all sinners and all their offenses and sins are put to death (to be experienced in God's own time).

Christ is roused *because of* our being justified in our inclusion in His death. If He was not roused then His death did not accomplish what it was intended to accomplish, that is our justifying. "Now if Christ has not been roused, vain is [our] faith—[we] are still in [our] sins" (1 Cor.15:17). It is not Christ's resurrection that justifies. It is Christ's death that justifies, and His resurrection is the glorious manifestation of "life's justifying." It is through Jesus Christ's faith in dying for sinners, His righteous response to what His God and Father set before Him, "for all" human beings that brings about life's justifying (Rom.5:18). It is through His obedience unto the death of the cross that the many who are constituted sinners shall be constituted righteous (Rom.5:19).

CONTRARY VIEWS

In his commentary on Romans, C.E.B. Cranfield writes: "It is to be noted that *dia* is used in this verse in two dif-

ferent senses, first in a causal, and then in a final sense."¹ He adds in a footnote: "The suggestion that the first *dia* should be understood as final ('in order to deal with') is not very probable. Still less probable is the suggestion that the second *dia* should be taken as causal (the meaning being that Jesus was raised up because we had been justified through His death) . . ."

Cranfield's claim of two different senses of *dia* in Romans 4:25 is well carried out in the reading offered in the New English Translation (NET): "He was given over because of our transgressions and was raised for the sake of our justification." Here also in a footnote, this rendering of *dia* as "for the sake of" in the second usage is discussed as follows: ". . . in light of the unsatisfactory sense that a causal nuance would here suggest, it has been argued that the second *dia* is prospective rather than retrospective The difficulty of this interpretation is the structural balance that both *dia* phrases provide ('given over because of our transgressions . . . raised because of our justification'). However the poetic structure of this verse strengthens the likelihood that both clauses may bear a different force."²

These two construals of the parallel lines of Romans 4:25, one from a scholarly commentary, the other from an equally scholarly Bible translation, may well represent the majority understanding of teachers and students of Scripture today. It is based on the claim that the two uses of the Greek preposition *dia* have different meanings. The first is "causal" or "retrospective" in the sense of "because" as is usual when *dia* is followed by a noun or

1. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, in The International Critical Commentary Series, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1975, vol.1, p.252.

2. *New English Translation* (www.netbible.com), First Beta Edition, p.2123.

pronoun in the accusative case. The second which is also followed by an accusative, is “prospective” (directing to the “final” purpose). That Paul should use a preposition twice within five words of each other, and in exact parallel, with such opposite senses of relationship is most surprising, if not unbelievable.

But the greater problem is the association of justification with the resurrection as though it were the only factor in this great achievement of righteousness. Consequently those who see two senses of *dia* here assure us that both the giving up of Christ to death and His resurrection bring about justification—the two steps together—even though Paul’s wording does not actually say that. It is explained that Paul adopts the wording of an early Christian hymn, or at least expresses himself in poetic language which was not always precise.

Nevertheless we must insist that, Paul’s wording is exactly what he wishes to say. And he does so in parallel lines.

COMPATIBLE VIEWS

Happily some scholars and translations as well as some ancient writers see Paul’s use of *dia* in the normal sense of “because.” The Swiss German theologian, Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), writes: “it is not advisable to suggest a meaning for the second *dia* different from the first one. Our fall precedes the execution of Jesus; he was condemned because we fell. Likewise our justification precedes his resurrection; he was raised because we were justified through his death.”³

Similarly the American scholar, Randolph O. Yeager, in his multivolume, analytical translation and commen-

3. Adolf Schlatter: ROMANS, The Righteousness of God (English translation by Siegfried S. Schatzmann), Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1995, p.118.

tary entitled The Renaissance New Testament, writes: “Christ was not raised from the dead in order to justify those for whom he died, but because in His death He had actually justified them.” In accord with this he translates Romans 4:25 as follows: “Who was delivered to death because of our moral lapses and was raised up because of our justification.”⁴

These comments accord well with our own understanding, as expressed by A. E. Knoch who wrote in his notes accompanying the first and second editions of the CV (1926,1931) and republished in the CONCORDANT COMMENTARY (1968): “Jesus Christ . . . was roused because the sin He bore was all gone, and we were vindicated.”⁵

GOD’S EVANGEL CONCERNING HIS SON

To see two senses for *dia* in Romans 4:25 is to miss the clarity of Paul’s thought, and to obscure its connection with what has preceded in chapters 1-4 and what follows.

What is missed when *dia* is given two senses is the clarity of contrast between two *causes* and God’s response to them. The first cause is “our offenses” to which God responds by giving up His Son—that is, He “spares not His own Son, but *gives Him up* for us all” (Rom.8:32). The second cause is “our justifying” achieved in Christ’s death, to which God responds by rousing “Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones” (Rom.4:24).

Thus we are prepared for Romans 5 where God’s evangel is explicitly presented. It is a message of God’s love expressed by His Son Who gives Himself up for all humanity.

D.H.H.

4. Randolph O. Yeager: The Renaissance New Testament, vol.11, Pelican Publishing Company, Gretna, Louisiana, 1983, p.413.

5. CONCORDANT COMMENTARY, p.234; see also A. E. Knoch comments on p.9 of this magazine.

GIVEN UP AND ROUSED

THE EVANGEL is a matter of death and life. It proclaims the death of Christ on the cross and in the tomb. *Christ dies for our sins, and He is entombed* (1 Cor.15:3,4). Then it speaks of the life of Christ in resurrection. *Christ has been roused* (1 Cor.15:4; Rom.4:24,25).

Concerning humanity, the evangel faces the deep-seated problem of death, both as a state and (figuratively) a power leading downward to that state, and tells of its defeat and ultimate elimination, and the establishment of life immortal and incorruptible. It is because death as a destructive power in us producing sin and offense has infected the entire human race through the sin of Adam (Rom.5:12-14), culminating in the state of death, that the death of Christ (and our inclusion in His death) is so critical. And it is because His death accomplished what was so desperately needed by humanity that He was roused to life.

The pattern of death followed by life is presented throughout the Sacred Scriptures. In Romans 4, Paul points to this pattern in the experience of Abraham. He and his wife, Sarah, were *deadened* in the ability to have children (Rom.4:19). But in His promise that Abraham would be the father of many nations, God reveals Himself as the One Who is *vivifying* the *dead* (Rom.4:17).

So also for us: In His evangel concerning His Son, God reveals Himself as the One Who will be *vivifying* our *mortal* bodies (Rom.8:11), both now, in spirit, and in the future, in Christ's presence (1 Cor.15:22,23). Hence God tells us of His love to us in giving up His Son for us, "seeing

Righteousness Gained by Death

31

that, while we are still sinners, Christ *dies* for our sakes" (Rom.5:8). We who are believing are identified with Him already in His *death*, as He was in the tomb (Rom.6:3,4). Then God's message to us adds triumphantly: "Christ has been *roused* from among the *dead*, the Firstfruit of those who are *reposing*. For since, in fact, through a human comes *death*, through a Human, also, comes the *resurrection* of the dead *ones*. For even as, in Adam, all are *dying*, thus also, in Christ, shall all be *vivified*" (1 Cor.15:20-22).

RIGHTEOUSNESS

God's evangel, as Paul is presenting it in Romans, focuses on the theme of righteousness. Justification is established through the faith of Jesus Christ, that is His faith-obedience to the death of the cross. It is gained by His death and our inclusion in that death, and it is enjoyed in life, both in the future when we are fully vivified, and at present, in spirit. In Romans 4, the apostle has been especially concerned with the blessing of being reckoned righteous, granted to us when we believe the evangel that Christ dies for our sins and is roused from among the dead ones.

This blessing of being reckoned righteous is also pictured for us by Abraham's experience in Genesis 15:6, who was fully assured that, what God has promised, He is able to do also. *Wherefore, also, it is reckoned to him for righteousness* (Rom.4:21,22).

Now it was not written because of him only, that it is reckoned to him, but because of us also, to whom it is about to be reckoned, who are believing on Him Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones. (Rom.4:23,24)

Abraham did not know that what God did for him in reckoning righteousness to him had us in view as well as himself and his physical descendants. But God knew this. What He did for believing Abraham, He intended to do

for us in a way centered even more fully in His grace and based explicitly on the giving up of His Son. When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 15 and reckoned righteousness to him, He also had us in view, who were “about to be believing.”

BELIEVING ON GOD

In believing God’s promise that he would have descendants numbering as the stars of the heavens, Abraham was believing it *of the God Who is vivifying the dead* (Rom. 4:17). His faith was placed entirely on God Who is able to do what He has promised (Rom. 4:20,21).

Likewise, for us, in believing the evangel that we are justified gratuitously in God’s grace through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus, and in believing also that God reckons us righteous when we are believing this evangel concerning His Son, we are placing our faith wholly on God, Who is vivifying the dead. In our apostle’s words as expressed in Greek, we believe *on* God, even as we rely [*expect*] on the living God (*cf* 1 Tim. 4:10), Who is actively carrying out His operations in dealing with death and sin and bringing forth life and righteousness.

Justification through the death of Jesus our Lord is assured by God rousing Him from among the dead. It is the work of God and the grace of God and the gratuity of God. Therefore, we are not trusting in ourselves or our works but are believing on the God Who vivifies the dead. We are believing on the God “Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead” (Rom. 4:24).

THE EVANGEL

Now in Romans 4:25, the apostle Paul presents the evangel he was evangelizing (*cf* Rom. 1:15), wording it in two parallel clauses in terms that continue to echo in our hearts and resound in our spirits:

[*God*] rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones,
Who is given up because of our offenses,
and is roused because of our justifying.

As in Romans 1:1-7 and 3:21,22, the evangel speaks to us here first of all as it speaks of *God*. God gives up Jesus our Lord and rouses Him from among the dead. Then the evangel directs attention to *God’s Son*, Who is given up (to the death of the cross and of the tomb) and roused (to life from among the dead ones). He is the One in Whom we are created (Col. 1:16), and consequently the only One through Whom we can be saved. Hence we know and honor Him as Saviour and Lord, as ultimately all will do (*cf* Phil. 2:10,11). Finally, therefore, Paul presents the evangel as it affects *us*. and eventually all human beings.

JESUS IS GIVEN UP

It is God Himself Who gives up His Son to suffering and death. The passive fact verb, “is given up,” in Romans 4:25 becomes an active fact verb in Romans 8:32, with God as the One doing the action.

This latter passage culminates with Paul’s jubilant song in praise of the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39), making clear to us that God’s giving up of His Son is an act of love. So also in Romans 4, what the apostle says about Christ being given up by God leads forward to that amazing wording of the evangel that we find in Romans 5:8. The fact that Christ dies for sinners is God’s commendation of *His love*.

GOD’S LOVE

How can we comprehend this? We see Christ’s love here, but can we see God’s love in this giving up of His Son? In Romans 5:7 we are directed to consider the love of a human who might die for the sake of a good person. Yet Christ dies for sinners, who indeed still remain sinners in

themselves. Yet Christ's death is called *God's love* for us! The Father gave up His Son to the sufferings of the cross and the death of the tomb, for us! It was the love of Christ. But in its deepest sense it is the love of God, Who is love.

Let us pause here to consider what the verb "is given up" tells us of God and of His love. Some passages from the Hebrew scriptures may help us see what was in God's heart as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in His giving up of His Son for our sake.

THREE FATHERS

We turn to Genesis 22 where we read of Abraham taking his son Isaac to the mountain where he was instructed to give him up as an ascent offering. Knowing full well that this meant giving up the one in whom all his expectation and joy was centered, Abraham, nevertheless, "took the wood for the ascent offering and placed it on his son Isaac, while he took the fire and the knife in his hand; *and the two of them went along together*" (Gen.22:6). Isaac was the son Abraham loved, in view of the promise his only one (Gen.22:2). But the circumstances, determined by the instructions of God, called for the father to do what he would never do otherwise. Yet, through it all, he never wavered in his love for Isaac, and he never tried to cover it up in order to steel his resolve for the deed ahead. They walked on together, and Abraham replied to Isaac's questions with faith in God, but also with the gentle words of love for his son: "Here I am, my son . . . Elohim, He shall see for Himself as to the flocking for the ascent offering, my son" (Gen.22:7,8).

It was not given to Abraham that the togetherness of himself and his son would be severed by the death of Isaac. But God gives up His Son to the hours of suffering and darkness on the cross, and then to death itself in the silence of the tomb. This is done for sinners, and all are sinners.

As God is greater than Abraham, so His love for His Son is greater beyond all comparison as the Two of Them approach the cross together. God, Who is aware of the suffering and travail of all creation, is keenly aware of the sorrow and pain of His Son. God, Who is keenly conscious of the evil of death, from that of Abel onward, feels the evil of this separation from His Beloved Son beyond all measure. This is to speak now of the Father's heart. And that God would do this is to speak of His love for us.

Jacob also becomes a type of the love of God as Father when he weeps over the apparent death of his son, Joseph. "Jacob tears his raiments and puts sackcloth on his waist and mourns over his son . . . and refuses to be consoled" (Gen.37:34,35).

As the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than the father of Joseph, so God's love for His Son, Whom He gives up to death, is greater and deeper in the loss of His Son in death, than Jacob could ever have felt. This is to speak of the Father's heart, and in doing so it speaks of His love for us, who continually *offend* His heart. In knowing the outcome of great good resulting from this sacrifice, God gives up His Son to death, in happy expectation (*cp* Rom.8:18-21). But there still was the giving up, and all that it meant to the heart of God.

Even David, in his piercing cries over the death of his unworthy son, Absalom, becomes a type of what was in God's heart as the Father, in the giving up of His most worthy Son for us who are so unworthy. "O my son . . . my son! . . . O that I had died instead of you! O . . . my son, my son!" (2 Sam.18:33).

Yet the Father could not die, and He could not die for us. It had to be the Son of His love in Whom we are created (*cf* Col.1:13-20). God's love for us involves His suffering as Father over the suffering of His Beloved Son. This is God's love as it is commended to us.

JESUS OUR LORD

God gives up His Son for us in love. But God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, acts in love Himself. Referring again to Colossians 1:15,16, we note that Christ is the Image of the invisible God, and so, in His love for us, He reflects God's love. But also He loves us because we are created in Him. In dying for us Christ reveals the heart of God, and also exposes His own heart of love for us whom God brings forth in Him. As we (all human beings) are created in Him, so are we (all human beings) included in Him in His death. "For the love of Christ is constraining us, judging this, that, if One dies for the sake of all, consequently all die" (2 Cor.5:14).

The One Who dies for our sake, for the sake of the irreverent, of enemies and offensive sinners, is Jesus, our Lord. He dies so that we might be living a life that recognizes Him as Saviour and Lord.

BECAUSE OF OUR OFFENSES

What God does in the giving up of His Son, and what Christ does in being given up, is *because* of us. This is where we first come into the message called God's evangel. We are unrighteous; we are sinners; we are *offenders* at enmity with God. It is our miserable state under the reign of death as a power that calls for God's astounding act of power in giving up His Beloved Son.

What is called "sin" in Romans 3:9 and 3:23 is called "offense" in Romans 4:25. Offense is that aspect of sin which wounds the feelings, that which degrades and denies the glory of God. Again, what is called the "sin" of Adam in Romans 5:12, and his "disobedience" in Romans 5:19, is referred to as his "offense" in Romans 5:15,18,20. The offensiveness of humanity is especially centered in its *irreverence*, in which we change God's glory to our own level

and avoid Him and His ways. Paul has already defined this offensiveness and its effects most concretely in Romans 1:18-32. In our offensiveness we are vain in our reasonings, and darkened is our unintelligent heart. The human mind is a disqualified mind, distended with envy, murder, strife, guile, depravity; in our flesh we are whisperers, vilifiers, detesters of God. Such offensiveness is the cause of God giving up His Son in order to put it to death, and bring all that is good to life. This is the measure of God's love for us.

"Who will be indicting God's chosen ones? God, the Justifier? Who is the Condemner? Christ Jesus, the One Who dies, yet rather is roused, Who is also at God's right hand, Who is pleading also for our sakes?"

What shall be separating us from the love of God, the love which is in Christ Jesus? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written that: on Your account we are being put to death the whole day, we are reckoned as sheep for slaughter. But indeed, in all these we are more than conquering through Him Who loves us.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor messengers, nor sovereignties, nor the present, nor what is impending, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God, the love which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:33-39).

ROUSED FROM THE DEAD

Jesus was dead and among the dead. The fact that He was entombed proves that He was dead. Consequently, when He was roused on the third day, He was roused from that state of death in which millions upon millions of human beings have entered. As to the condition of being dead there was no difference between Jesus our Lord

and all who have died from Abel unto the present. But as to the significance of His death, and as to its effects, it is singularly, and exultantly unique. It alone makes the righteousness of God manifest and establishes His work of justification. Hence, God rouses Him from among the dead ones (who remain dead ones until He resurrects them, *cp* Rom.1:4). He is roused *because* of our justifying.

BECAUSE

From the standpoint of traditional Christianity, the wording of the evangel here is mystifying. What can it mean that our Lord Jesus is roused *because of* our justifying? If our offenses are the cause of the giving up of Christ to death, can it be that our justifying is to be seen as something prior to Christ's resurrection, somehow already an accomplishment established by the death of Christ which opens the way for God to rouse Him? Does the word "because" carry the same sense in these parallel lines?

How can it not?

We are baptized into Christ's death, entombed together with Him through baptism into death (Rom.6:3,4). Our old humanity is crucified together with Him (Rom. 6:6). It is with this in view that Paul declares, "If Christ has not been roused . . . you are still in your sins" (1 Cor.15:17). He has been roused, and thus the old humanity as an entirety had been put to death in the death of Christ.

This fact as declared in the evangel has not yet become a fact manifested in realization. But because of the obedience of Jesus Christ to the death of the cross, the many who are dying in Adam will ultimately enjoy the benefits of Christ's obedience to the death of the cross, and thus all shall be constituted righteous (Rom.5:19). All are included in the death of Christ, and eventually will enjoy the benefits of life's justifying (Rom.5:18).

Yet in the meantime we are enjoying these benefits in spirit now, and will be enjoying them in every way in the oncoming eons, among the celestials.

OUR JUSTIFYING

What is referred to as the manifestation of God's righteousness in Romans 3:21, and as the blessing of being justified gratuitously in God's grace in Romans 3:24, is called "our justifying" here in Romans 4:25. Our old self has been put to death in the death of Christ; it is done away with. Christ as the Sin Offering was put to death, and when that occurred, sinful humanity, under the sway of Death, was also put to death. The enjoyment of justification by all mankind was thus assured, although it has not yet been realized. But for us who are believing, this which was gained through the death of Jesus Christ for all is reckoned to our account and is becoming a powerful force in our present lives. There can be no doubt that we shall be living together with Christ and living to God in the oncoming eons. But concerning the present, Paul says to us, "Thus you also, be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom.6:11).

ROUSED TO LIFE

The verb "given up" refers to the crucifixion of Jesus our Lord, given up to sufferings and the death which resulted by means of the cursed cross. In this astounding act of God, the old humanity with its sin and offensiveness is done away with. But the evangel does not stop there. The verb "given up" occurs once in our passage, but the verb "rouse" occurs twice. God rouses Jesus from among the dead, and He is roused because of our justifying. We have given much attention here to what the evangel says about death, but the passage itself gives more attention to what the evangel says about life.

The death of the old is necessary, but it is necessary in order that there be life that is new. The verb “rouse” speaks of life that is awake and aware of its condition and surroundings, life as it is felt by the senses and known by the heart. For our Lord, His rousing from among the dead brings an awareness that stands not only in glorious contrast to the sufferings of the cross but also stands in glorious contrast to the entire lack of awareness of the tomb.

LIVING TO GOD

When He was roused, Christ was living to God in a new and expanded way. He is now living to God as the God Who is vivifying the dead. So also, in believing the evangel that we die together with Christ, and in believing that we shall be living together with Him also (Rom.6:8), we find we are putting our faith on God as the Vivifier of the dead. As Christ is living to God, so also, in spirit and in heart, we are living to Him Who gives life out of death.

Thus the fourth chapter of Romans concludes with God’s evangel concerning His Son as it relates to the evil of death and to the exceeding good of life. It announces that God gives up Jesus our Lord to death and rouses Him from among the dead ones. It points to Jesus our Lord as the One Who is given up and roused. The giving up is because of what we are as offenders, and the rousing is *because* of what God accomplished for us in the giving up of His Son, and by our inclusion in Him. That accomplishment is, to start with, our justifying. But that is not all, as our apostle now makes clear:

“Justified, then, out of His faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have the access also, by that faith, into this grace in which we stand, and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God” (Rom.5:1,2).

D.H.H.

WE RELY ON THE LIVING GOD

GOD is the First Cause, Who is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will. This is the testimony of the Scriptures, but, as we have found, the deceptive teachings of “free will” and “chance” drastically and direly undermine this truth of God’s deity.

Another most dangerous error, and one that equally obscures the character of God, is the idea of everlasting punishment. This denies to God the achievement of His will to save all mankind and bring them into a realization of the truth (1 Tim.2:4). In addition, it gnaws away at our own confidence in God and the glorious effects of Christ’s obedience even to the death of the cross.

For we read, “Faithful is the saying and worthy of all welcome (for for this are we toiling and being reproached), that we rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of believers” (1 Tim.4:9,10).

In this article we wish to test one of the principle arguments used in defending the doctrine of unending loss as opposed to the teaching that God is the Saviour of all. This is the claim that the words *aion* and *aionios* have different and even opposite meanings in different passages of Scripture.

THE EONS, WORD MEANING AND COMMUNICATION

There is a likeness between the arguments for “free will” and those for giving *aion* (“eon,” CV) the idea of endlessness. In both cases, the actual issue, that which is most pertinent and important, is unrecognized. It needs to be emphasized that the underlying position which has been

taken here is that some words in Scripture, certainly *aion*, do not have any meaning at all. In themselves, they mean nothing whatever.

Even as it is not realized that those who teach “free will” champion the absence of causality as to human choice (even though this actually gains them nothing), it is also not realized that the position of those who oppose us on the eons affirms the absence of all meaning *in* the word *aion* (and, in a number of other terms as well). It is claimed that the word *aion* has a variety of meanings; it may mean “world,” or it may mean “age,” or it may mean “endless ages,” or perhaps it may even mean “timelessness; eternity”; that which is outside of time (including ages) altogether. Again, it may mean “lifetime” or perhaps “course” (as the AV renders the word in Ephesians 2:2). Yet none of these “meanings” can be taken as intrinsic. This is indeed the traditional position, that there is no actual, singular meaning that can be applied to *aion*. We might call it the doctrine of “the destitution of inherent morphological meaning.”

Now a number of corollaries follow from this position: (1) In all non-definitive passages, of which there are many, it will be impossible even to *assign* any meaning at all to the word with any certainty. For instance, when we read that “God makes the eons” (Heb.1:2), how can we have any idea of what He makes? After all, a wide variety of ideas, even beyond those suggested above, might also be assigned to *aion*, and for these non-definitive passages, it would be impossible to determine which of these is to be understood; most all such “meanings” would make sense. (2) Even when a genuinely definitive passage is discovered (a passage in which only one idea will even conceivably make sense and avoid absurdity), the definition discerned must be confined only to that passage and any other fully parallel ones. That is, the basic idea or meaning discovered in such a passage may not be applied to other types of pas-

sages. (3) This “principle” of the absence of inherent morphological meaning for some terms would actually have to be applied to all words. But it will follow from this that (4) there will not even be a single stable context in which to discover the meaning of any word in question. After all, these contextual terms may themselves mean something quite different in one passage than they do in another! But if this were true, we could not know the meaning of even a single passage of Scripture.

The purpose of language is to communicate, and yet the “orthodox” position, when fairly considered, makes communication impossible. Besides, its advocates are not foolish enough to practice it very often themselves. If they were to employ it continually, they would soon know nothing at all! It is only when one of their pet notions, such as “everlasting life” or “eternal punishment” is challenged that they seem to want to give much heed to it.

Other terms do not take on an altogether new nature “in some contexts,” and they certainly do not become antonyms to themselves. Does the word “dog,” in some places, come to mean “cat”? Does darkness become light, good become evil, and false become true upon occasion? Then neither does eon, a period of time, mean endless “in some contexts.”

THE CONCORDANT PRINCIPLE OF TRANSLATION

Those who oppose the concordant principle of translation, the use of concordances through which definitive passages are discovered for intrinsic word meanings, are actually claiming, whether realized or not, that scriptural words do not *have* any meaning at all. Instead they assign a wide variety of meanings to be applied as fits their pre-determined ideas.

It is not enough for us to produce a variety of New Testament, Septuagint and secular citations which are man-

ifestly speaking of time periods by means of the word *aion*. For it will generally be freely admitted that *aion* has such a sense in these passages. Indeed, most all students acknowledge that in those cases in which the AV translates *aion* as “world” the meaning is actually that of an age or eon. And most will agree that this is its meaning in a number of other passages as well.

Our opponents do not disagree with us here. Nevertheless, after considering these many definitive passages, they remain unconvinced that the basic idea inherent in the word “eon” (that of a period of time) is to be understood in all passages in which some form of the word *aion* is present. They insist that the word *aion* used in those passages which speak of life, redemption and judgment acquires a sense that is the very opposite of “age,” not at all referring to a period of time. It is this practice of arbitrarily assigning quite different senses to the words *aion* and *aionios* from context to context, without recognizing a single, inherent meaning, that is used to defend everlasting punishment and to obscure the fact that God is truly the living God Who is the Saviour of all mankind.

APPEAL TO TRADITION

Good men, intelligent, educated and dedicated, have believed all manner of things. The Arminians and the Calvinists have been unable to agree concerning who it is for whom Christ died (all or some), and whether the work of Christ saves or only makes salvation possible. A number of renowned scholars and famous theologians, due to their findings in the Scriptures, have been constrained to affirm that the dead are not alive, only to have most others, no less erudite than themselves, just as insistently reply that it is in death that glorious life, or terrible pains, truly begin. Similarly, over the centuries, most have confidently believed that God will never actually give the nation of

Israel the glorious terrestrial kingdom which her prophets so explicitly predict, even if Isaiah and all the rest should insist otherwise.

In light of such a history of human controversy, how doubly welcome it is to place reliance on the living God and His Word. He is the Saviour of all mankind and is faithful to this designation.

“EVERLASTING” LIFE AND CONTEMPORARY SELFISHNESS

Perhaps the most common objection we receive concerning the eons is the claim that if “everlasting punishment” should ever come to an end, then “life eternal” would do the same (Matt.25:46, AV). The objector is so selfishly pre-occupied with preserving what he supposes to be blessings for himself in this passage, that he is prepared to assist in stoking the fires of hell forever if this should be necessary in order to protect his own interests.

Instead of the usual “translation,” these words should be rendered “chastening eonian” and “life eonian.” By its ending, *-sis*, *kolasis* (“chastening”) refers not to a state, but to an action continuing on. And it has in view an action performed not as a penal infliction, but one with a view toward amendment or rectification. Since God is love, and wills to save all, His ultimate purpose in even His most severe judgments could never be the “eternal punishment” of anyone. He cannot deny Himself.

Indeed, it is well known that even the secular usage of *kolasis* had in view not some kind of terrible vindictive punishment, but acts done for the sake of betterment or correction.¹ In the Scriptures, in Acts 4:21, the Jews released John and Peter, “finding nothing how they should be *chas-*

1. cf John Wesley Hanson: *Aiōn-Aiōnios*, Northwestern Universalist Publishing House (1875), pp.50-55. cf F. W. Farrar: *ETERNAL HOPE* (1883), pp. 199-201; *MERCY AND JUDGMENT* (1881), pp.407-409.

tening them.” Did they not aim to reform them? Was not their “chastening” with a view toward their returning to the unbelieving Jewish fold? From their standpoint the word was certainly used to convey the idea of reformation.

To show that it had this meaning in Greek usage, we cite Plato: “For if, O Socrates, you will consider what is the design of punishing [kolazein] the wicked, this of itself will show you that men think virtue something that may be acquired; for no one punishes [kolazei] the wicked looking to the past only, simply for the wrong he has done—that is, *no one does this thing who does not act like a wild beast*, desiring only revenge, without thought—hence he who seeks to punish [kolazein] with reason, does not punish for the sake of the past wrong deed, but for the sake of the future, that neither the man himself who is punished, may do wrong again, nor any other who has seen him chastised. And he who entertains this thought, must believe that virtue may be taught, and *he punishes [kolazei] for the purpose of deterring from wickedness.*”²

Besides, the words *kolasin aiōnion* in Matthew 25:46 are in reference to *national judgments* which the Son of Mankind will make in the day of the Lord, “whenever [He] may be coming in His glory” (Matt.25:31). These judgments concern the kingdom of the heavens, and are to be implemented in the coming eon. This judgment of God is prompted by the unworthy way in which many of the living nations will treat the people of Israel in the time of her great affliction, in the conclusion of this present eon.

Concerning the judgments of that day, Isaiah declares, “For as a light Your judgments will be to the earth, the dwellers of the habitation will *learn righteousness*” (Isa. 26:9b). Instead of suffering “the eternal torments of the damned,” the nations will “learn righteousness.”

2. Hanson: op. cit., p.53; quotation from Protag.Sec.38, vol.1, p.252.

Matthew 25:31-46 is not concerned with any of God’s dealings with the members of the ecclesia which is Christ’s body (cf Eph. 1:22). Instead, it has in view the granting of rewards, or chastenings, in response to the *works* of the *nations* of that day. It is not a revelation concerning divine grace, nor of the evangel of our salvation and its transcendent grace. Perhaps the best proof that men do not really believe that our salvation is a matter of gratuitous grace is the fact that this passage concerning the “sheep” and the “goats” is commonly perceived as a summary of the gospel for today.

Though *eonian* life (and certainly, eonian chastening) *will* come to an end, death will one day be abolished, and all will then be made alive, in an era in which it already will have been true for an entire eon that “death will be no *more*” (Rev.21:4; 1 Cor.15:20-28). The promises concerning our future life do involve the thought of endlessness. But this idea is not conveyed through any usage or form of the word *aion*. Therefore we should never speak of the matter of the endlessness of our future life by employing any of the usages of this word.

Instead, we should say that we will *always* be together with the Lord (1 Thess.4:17,18). We will be *immortal* and *incorruptible* (1 Cor.15:53), conformed to the image of God’s Son (Rom.8:29), our mortal bodies having been *vivified* (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor.15:23). We will have already been alive for a thousand years (the coming eon) when the promise goes forth that there will be no more death! We will continue to live during that eon as well (the length of which is not revealed), until the consummation when all will finally be vivified. Death will then be abolished for all mankind.

THE SAVIOUR OF ALL

The entire case for everlasting punishment is built on faulty arguments. Definite, intrinsic meanings are denied

to Scriptural terms. The ideas of certain good and wise men are made decisive when apparently contradictory passages such as Matthew 25:46 and Romans 5:18 are considered. But perhaps most dangerous of all, there is a clear tendency to deny to God the achievements through the work of Christ that He has claimed. He is the reliable, the living, the saving God, Who cannot fail to achieve His purpose.

James R. Coram

DAVID NORDSTROM

Though we sorrow at the loss of David Nordstrom, at the same time we are consoled in expectation that we will meet again, at the same time, in the air, with Christ Jesus our glorious Lord and Saviour.

David and I first met in Baldwin, Michigan at a Bible conference at the Grace and Truth Chapel in 1983 along with his wife and children. We kept in touch all these many years. In fact, he visited with me November 7, 2023. He spoke concerning problems with his heart. He and I always communicated concerning the Scriptures and healthy living. He passed away January 31 of 2024, having had a major stroke as they were trying to fix a blockage in his carotid artery. David was a constant supporter of the work here over all these many years. We look forward to seeing him again in the future!

Tony Nungesser

EDITORIAL NOTE

The scheduled instalment in A. E. Knoch's studies on Ephesians, entitled "Our Relationship to Christ" is postponed until our next issue. This is because it seemed best (and timely) to me to concentrate on Romans 4:25 along with the subject of consolation concerning those who have been put to repose. The failure of many to see clearly that all the good things being presently enjoyed in spirit and lying ahead for us in the future rest on the foundation of the *death* of Christ stirs us to give added attention to God's evangel as presented in Romans. In this we all need to see more truly what is meant by God's righteousness, not only as it affects us but all humanity and indeed all creation.

D.H.H.

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 115th Year
(1909–2024)

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EDITORIAL

THE PLACE of our Lord Jesus Christ in God's operations is so critical and glorious that we must surely give diligent attention to it and uphold it always in our faith and teaching, in our understanding and fellowship. Regarding the headship of the ecclesia which is the body of Christ, A. E. Knoch writes, "Let us take heed that, in seeking to realize our high place, we may not rob Him of His!" (p.66). So also regarding the evangel itself (as well as the glories to come), I urge that "we must ever be wary of putting ourselves in places where the scripture speaks of Jesus Christ, our Lord" (p.94).

Yet as for "the scripture," as James Coram puts it: "... we cannot know what to believe if we do not know what has been said" (p.84). The whole matter of "Jesus Christ's faith" (Rom.3:22) to which I (joining many others) have been giving much attention, needs to be moved out of the realm of debate into the realm of "grace and peace" into which God has brought us—and by "grace" I mean the gift of JOY which is its elementary meaning. That is, our Lord's faith should not be a matter of dispute, but of one for rejoicing and peace. That the salvation-blessings of justification and reconciliation could be based on our faith is incredible. Faith, expectation and love are spiritual endowments which remain as God's gifts for us today, but they are based on Christ's faith and obedience unto the death of the cross.

Yet not these blessings alone, but all the promises of good, whether particular or general, whether temporary or final and permanent, are founded and settled on God's

50 Christ's Faith Manifests God's Righteousness

love (commended to us) in that while we are still sinners, Christ dies for our sakes (Rom.5:8).

Yet the most fundamental and best result of Jesus Christ's faith is the manifestation of God's righteousness. All of God's choosing and blessing, even all His operations must be righteous. Resurrection and kingdom, (celestial as well as terrestrial) are not exclusive ends in themselves, but must ultimately embrace all God creates and does, and this for good. This is covered up in bad translation and wrong teachings which distort the revelations He makes in His word. We are apt to make too much of ourselves. Let us, then, be prepared for every revelation of the honor of our Lord as it leads forward to the glory of God.

In his writings, especially the studies on Ephesians currently being reprinted in this magazine, A. E. Knoch concentrates on our calling in grace as the joint body of Christ. Here there is much that is new and untraceable, and hardly recognized even by those chosen and called. But he gave emphasis to, and never neglected the basis of the "sacrificial suffering" (p.68) of our Lord Jesus Christ as it relates to the reconciliation of all and the justification of all that God does through the eonian times. Thus he writes concerning our calling: "The nations had no sacrifice, and it seemed they had no share in the great Sacrifice, the body, adapted for Christ. That Christ died for all was a truth unknown and repugnant to the ritual of Israel There is one Christ, and His body serves for all Since the same Christ, the same Sacrifice, the one body, sufficed for us as for them, we are both equally at peace with God and with one another" (p.75,76). And we may add: This peace will ultimately embrace all. In all this, the place of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord is essential, critical and worthy of all welcome.

D.H.H.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all believers, in every divine administration, but in each He also sustains some special relation which arises from the particular design of each administration.

As the present economy is intended to reveal the very zenith of God's grace, we are united to Christ more closely than the saints of other eras, and we share His glories in a transcendent measure. What could be of greater interest to us than to explore some of these high honors, and discriminate, not only between what is ours and what is for others, but between the various phases of our own relationship to God's Anointed?

There is a tendency in all of us to go to extremes. Once we thought that all saints, in all times, had the same blessings, especially the same destiny—heaven. I would have shuddered once if I had stopped to consider that David had *not* ascended into the heavens (*cf* Acts 2:34). The Circumcision have their place on earth, together with all others who are blessed with them.

Those who are blessed during their defection, however, have a celestial destiny. They alone “go to heaven.” This is the great dividing line between believers.

Let us not go so far as to say that we have nothing in common with the saints of other economies. We have the same God, the same Christ, the same Lord, the same Saviour. *The same blood avails for both.* In many ways we are one with all who believe God. We share the very name “holy ones,” or *saints*, because we are hallowed by contact with Him. All saints belong to Christ, hence such a phrase

as “who are Christ’s” (1 Cor.15:23) is especially worded so as to include the Circumcision and those connected with them, for they also will be vivified at the presence of Christ.

¹⁹ **Consequently, then, no^t longer ‘are ‘you guests and sojourners, but ‘are fellow-citizens of the saints and belong to ‘God’s family,** ²⁰ **built ^{on} on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the capstone of the corner being Christ Jesus Himself,** ²¹ **in Whom the entire building, being connected^o together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord:** ²² **in Whom ‘you’ also are being built^o together ^{io}for ‘God’s dwelling place, in spirit.** (Eph.2:19-22)

Happily there is a section of the Ephesian epistle which is devoted to this very theme. In a laudable zeal to emphasize the riches of the grace shown to us, this part of Ephesians has usually been misinterpreted. The close of the second chapter (Eph.2:19-22) is intended to record, not the differences between us and other saints, but the points of contact. It sets forth our mutual interests under three figures of speech, a government, a family, and a temple. These we have in common with all saints of all time. God dwells in all, He is the Father of all, and He governs all. We are not given a subordinate place in these relationships, as is the case with the nations who are blessed through Israel. We are *fellow-citizens*, members of God’s family and a part of the great temple of God, because the place of our blessing is not on earth, where Israel is supreme.

Our peculiar blessings are all brought before us in connection with the title “Christ,” or Anointed. He is our Saviour, as His personal name Jesus (Yahweh-Saviour) shows. But we share salvation with all saints. The greatness of our salvation is not associated with His Hebrew name, but with His title. He is our Lord, yet no less the Lord of all others, though they are not so vitally united to Him as we are. The fact that all our special honors are concentrated in the title

“Christ” will help us much in clarifying our thought, and defining our special portion in God’s program.

Let us note first of all that this is an *official title*. Anointing is always an induction into an *office*. It constituted Aaron a priest. It made David a king. It empowered Elijah to be a prophet. It is a strictly spiritual office. Israel is related to Him by physical bonds. They know Him according to the flesh. We have no part in “Jesus” except as He is our Saviour and Lord, and God’s Christ. Others were anointed, hence were christs. We also are christs (2 Cor. 1:21). But He is preeminently *the* Christ, of Whom all christs are but faint and faulty figures. God’s spirit is His in transcendent measure.

Let us look at some of our relationships to Him and their significance. There is a marvelous contrast in the fifth of Romans which is usually overlooked (Rom.5:8-11). There we see that, while we are *sinners*, *Christ* died for our sakes, hence we are *justified*, and saved from indignation by His blood. That is a summary of the teaching of Romans up to this point. In introducing the new subject, the apostle, in blessed contrast to this, asserts that the same One, as God’s *Son*, while we are *enemies*, died so that we may be *conciliated*, hence are saved by His *life*. The sphere of the *feelings* is largely left to the sonship of our Saviour, as the apostle writes to the Galatians. “The Son of God, Who loves me, and gives Himself up for me” (Gal.2:20). Before being called, as *sinners* we need *Christ*, as *enemies* we need His *Son*. We are *justified* by the *blood of Christ*. We are *conciliated* by the *death of God’s Beloved*. In view of God’s coming indignation we are sheltered by Christ’s blood, and shall be saved by the life of God’s Son.

Christ is the Man Who can. He has power and authority by reason of His anointing, to carry out the work of redemption. He is able to accomplish all that humanity is impotent to perform. Priests have failed. In His Melchisedek priesthood He will so effectively fill the office, that no

priests will be needed in the last eon, after the thousand years. Kings have failed. And He will reign to such purpose that, at the consummation, all rule will be abrogated because all God's enemies will be subdued and subject to Him. Prophets, though sent when kings and priests had failed, are also failures. He alone perfectly conveys God's mind to humanity. Failure was made for Him, to form the background of His surpassing success.

In the accounts of our Lord's life the title *Christ* is used in strict accord with its Hebrew usage. He came to Israel as their *mshich*, or Messiah (John 4:25). There is not the slightest intimation that He was to have any connection with the other nations except through His own people, Israel. He never went among them. It is all strictly personal. No one, in those days, is said to be in Christ. When such a close relationship is presented, as in John's account, the disciples are related to the Son (John 17). We should never associate ourselves with Him at that time. For instance, the first occurrence, Matthew 1:1, speaks of the *lineage of Jesus Christ*. In this He is alone. Personally, He has this office, quite apart from His union with some of His saints, as set forth in later revelations.

Let those who have a concordance consider all the occurrences of the title before Paul was sent to the nations. There is not the shadow of a hint that He has shared or will share His anointing with others. The central crisis in the ministry of our Lord was accomplished by the recognition of His own anointing. Peter received a revelation and confessed, saying "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt.16:16). This was the testimony in Acts. God made Him Whom they have crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). They proclaimed that Jesus, the Man of Nazareth and Golgotha, He is the Christ (Acts 17:3; 18:5,28). His relationship to the saints of that era was comparatively loose, because they had a very limited measure

of spirit. Christ is presented as their Saviour (Luke 2:11), their King (Matt.2:2), their Lord (Acts 2:36), and their Possessor (Mark 9:41).

It is only when we enter Paul's epistles, when the saints are *sealed* by the spirit, where the occasional *coming on* of the spirit is replaced by the permanent *homing* of the spirit, where the saints are actually *anointed* (literally *christed*) by the spirit, that they received the place of official nearness and unity. Such was impossible even for them so long as Paul was presenting Israel's Messiah according to the flesh. Our union with Him is by spirit.

OUR POSITION IN CHRIST

In Christ physical distinctions disappear. Those who have been baptized into Christ, being cleansed and united, have put on Christ, in Whom there is no Jew, nor yet Greek, no slave nor free, no male and female. All are one in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:27,28). This was true long before the "mystery" was revealed, and is not a part of it. Let us not, however, push it to extremes. It is limited to *spirit*, being "in *Christ*." We are also "in the *Lord*," as to conduct, and *there all of these distinctions persevere* until we are in His presence. "In Christ" deals with our *position* in grace, not with our *deportment*, which is in the Lord.

As we have seen, the phrase "in Christ" is not limited to us. Peter appropriates it. Eventually it will include all. "In Christ" "shall all be vivified" (1 Cor.15:22). This is quite essential, for there is no life elsewhere. As all were once in Adam, so all shall be in Christ. They cannot be made alive, or justified, or reconciled in any other way. Though they are not in Him when He vivifies "those who are Christ's," they will be in Him at the consummation. The order of identification here must correspond with the facts. Christ *personally* has been vivified. He can die no more. No saint has this yet. It is not actually ours until we are also changed to

immortality and incorruption (1 Cor.15:50-55). The Circumcision saints will also receive it later on in the period of His presence. The time periods are these: In the past, Christ personal. In the near future, "those who are His," which is a special phrase broad enough to include all of His saints. The rest wait until the consummation, when all will be vivified "in Christ."

In Him we are hallowed (1 Cor.1:2). He becomes to us Wisdom from God, besides Righteousness and Holiness, and Deliverance (1 Cor.1:30). We have none of this in ourselves. We glory alone in Him.

It may be well, in passing, to note that there is no such figure in Scripture as the "bride of *Christ*." There is the wife of Yahweh and the Bride of the Lambkin, but never a bride for Christ. They who use such a phrase expose their ignorance of Scripture and of the significance of this title. He is an Officer. As such, He has no physical connections. The Bride of the Lambkin consists only of those faithful saints in Israel who are related to Him by ties of flesh, as well as of spirit. The marriage bond is essentially a physical one. Hence its aptness in the case of the redeemed, or the chosen people, to whom He belongs as to the flesh.

We now approach the heart of the subject: the various special relationships sustained to Christ by us. So seldom are the Circumcision spoken of as being "in Christ" (1 Peter 3:16; 5:14) that we almost have a monopoly of it. At least it is so characteristic of the present grace that we can condense all our blessings into one phrase, "in Christ Jesus." By adding His personal name we fix the title to His present glory and so it is ours in a special sense. All that we have is *in Him*. We have the *deliverance* which is *in Christ Jesus* (Rom.3:24). We have *eonian life in Christ Jesus* our Lord (Rom.6:23). There is no *condemnation* to those who are *in Christ Jesus* (Rom.8:1). Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God *in Christ Jesus* our Lord (Rom.

8:39). These phrases practically summarize the doctrinal divisions of the Roman epistle.

THE ONE BODY

... ¹⁶ **and He should reconcile 'both in one body to 'God through the cross, 'killing the enmity in it. ¹⁷ And 'coming, He brings the 'evangel^p of peace to 'you, 'those afar, and peace to 'those near, ¹⁸ 'for through Him we 'both have had the access, in one spirit, to^d the Father.**

(Eph.2:16-18)

The deportment that should accompany this blessed oneness is presented under a notable figure of speech. We, who are many, are *one body in Christ* (Rom.12:5). Figures of speech are proverbially difficult. Few elements of the education of saints have been so neglected as this branch of literary science. There are over two hundred distinct figures of speech used in Scripture, yet few are able to identify more than a score. Even our Lord's disciples did not understand His figurative reference to falsehood under the figure of leaven (Matt.16:11,12).

The relationship we have already been considering is a figure. We are not *in Christ Jesus* in any literal sense. No disciple could by any stretch of imagination be in the Messiah. It denotes a limited identification. Look at me. In myself I am a sinner, with neither deserts nor dignities. Look again. I have vanished. In spirit I have entered into Christ. He only is seen. I am *in Him*. What He is, I am. What He has is mine. His deliverance, His life, His freedom from condemnation, His deserts from the Father are mine *in Him*. But, like all figures of speech, its scope is limited. I am not all that He is *personally*. I am not Jesus the Saviour. I am not the Lord of all. I am not the Head of all. Let us not ignorantly presume upon His grace. We are in *Christ*.

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

This relationship that we have already considered is not to be taken literally. We are *in Christ* in a figurative sense, but we are *not identical with Him in all His glories*.

So also with the figure of the body. Our Saviour has one incorruptible body of flesh and bones quite apart from us. We also shall have such bodies. To put it literally, the saints of this administration are *like* His body. Not each one of us, but collectively. The aggregate of believers under Paul's ministry forms the body of Christ—not of Jesus. Each one of us is like a member of His actual body. In spirit we are one organism, vivified by His life, having various functions, through which He will operate officially. We are not the body of the *Son of God*. That is a personal appellation. We are *not* the body of the *Lord*. It is only in His official capacity as God's Executive, that we are united with Him. Christ was not anointed with oil, but with the spirit. Our spirits enter into His official place. This is the body of Christ. Misled by the figures used, there has been much confusion as to the relation of the Head to the body. Misunderstanding the figure of headship, the Head is supposed to include all the functions which are in the physical organ, such as sight and smell. As a result some have said that the body in Corinthians has not *Christ* as its Head! It is said that, since the eye is a member, and the nose is another (1 Cor.12:16-23), the head is made up of members! We know that the head itself is represented as a member, which cannot say to the feet "I have no need of you" (1 Cor.12:21). Taken literally, this is utterly incongruous. The head one member! The eye another! The nose another! So that Christ is absolutely absent from His own body!

Such is the confusion into which we fall when we literalize figures of speech! But if we leave each figure in

its place, how enlightening each is! The highest possible member is represented by the head. Such a one cannot dispense with the functions of the lowest. Let us not make this mean more than this. It has no reference to Christ. It is concerned only with His members. Can anyone suppose that the *headship*, the *leadership*, the control of the body in Corinthians was given to one of the members? Surely the Pope would be glad to hear this interpretation! But we know that, in this body, the whole is under the headship of the same Lord (1 Cor.12:5). Christ's headship is not figured by a part of the body.

Occasionally inquiries come to me which speak of "the body, Head and members." This shows that the student has been led astray, and needs to retrace his steps. In this figure *the head is one of the members*. The eye, the ear, the nose—each is a member. The "body" is not a decapitated corpse apart from Christ. He is not represented by the physical head in this figure, neither here nor in later manifestations. As a literal fact, He controls it. If we were to force Him into the figure we would liken Him to the brain. Headship means leadership, not sight, hearing, smell, or taste.

The figure of the body must not be taken literally. It is not composed of bones, cartilage, and muscle, but of certain saints who have a closer union with Christ than Israel ever had. Israel was married to Yahweh, but was divorced, and is now *lo ammi* ("not My people"). Our union is far more vital and intimate. As illustrated by this figure, we cannot hate our own flesh, nor can we cast it off. So also, in our relation to Christ. He loves us as He loves Himself (Eph.5:25-31). Let us remember that our Lord has a literal material body, as well as this spiritual counterpart, and never confuse these two.

In regard to the gender of the body, it is always neuter, for *sōma* is a neuter noun. The idea of sex is foreign to the

figure and can only cause confusion if it is injected. One of the most necessary lessons to be learned by the student is to confine each figure to its point of contact. For instance, if we developed the figure of the lion as far as some go with that of the body, we could easily “prove” that Christ and the Slanderer are one and the same, for both are seen under the figure of the lion! But in one case the figure is confined to the roaring, swallowing lion (1 Peter 5:8). In the other, we have the Lion of the tribe of Judah, strong to control the wild beasts of the earth (Rev.5:5).

MIXING FIGURES

Another cause of confusion is the mingling of this figure with others which are quite distinct. The new humanity (“new man”) is an entirely different idea. It is racial. The new humanity is created by razing the partitioning wall between Jew and Gentile. In it Christ takes the place of Adam as the Head of the new race. We are exhorted to put off the old humanity and put on the new (Eph.4:22-24). This is utterly impossible if referred to the “body.” We cannot put that on. Above all, let no one use this figure to “prove” that the body is masculine. The man in this figure is grammatically masculine, but the term has reference to humankind, whether male or female.

Still another figure must be kept separate from that of the body. It is that of *maturity* (usually translated *perfection*), or *adult stature*, “the measure of the stature” (Eph. 4:13). This is an individual attainment, open to each one of us. Unless we do reach maturity in our spiritual life we will be minors, surging hither and thither, and whirled about by every wind of teaching (Eph.4:14). The point in this figure is *individual* maturity. The body always speaks of *corporate* unity. If it were a question of the members of the body as a unit becoming mature there would be no hope! The most advanced would be dragged down to the

mass of minors. This maturity comes to those only who have discarded the accompaniments of minority (1 Cor. 13:11). Some at that time were not mature (Phil.3:15). The apostle admonished and taught *every man* in all wisdom in order that He might present *every man* (not the body) mature in Christ Jesus (Col.1:28).

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

How is Christ the Head of the ecclesia which is His body? Is the torso with legs and arms to represent the body, and a head to represent the Christ? This seems to be implied in some modern phrases concerning “Christ, Head and body.” That this is not correct is evident from the divine comparison given us in Ephesians. The husband is the head of the wife *even as* Christ is Head of the ecclesia (Eph.5:23). Needless to say, the wife has a head of her own, just as the ecclesia has members who are eyes and ears and nose. The husband and wife are not fragments which need to be combined in order to make one body. The headship of the husband is not figured by the body at all. It is faded metaphor. In some languages this distinction can be expressed. In German we might say that the husband is the *haupt* of the wife, though she has her own *kopf*.

Perhaps this is the key to many confusing ideas which abound relative to the body of Christ. In the Scripture *it is always presented as a complete body*, with the functions of sight, hearing, smell, which belong to the head. The headship of Christ over this body is a further figure, distinct from it, which ought never to be confounded with it.

Some have suggested that the body in Ephesians is a headless one, in contrast to Corinthians. Such is far from true, for headship in Ephesians is never set forth by this figure. Christ is Head over *all to* the ecclesia which is His body (Eph.1:22,23). Here it is impossible to imagine so

grotesque an idea as the head of a body which is composed of all things! He is in control of all with reference to His body, the ecclesia. This body is only one part of the universe of which He is Head.

The same may be said of Colossians. There He is presented as the Head of every sovereignty and authority (Col.2:10). Headship does not necessarily involve the figure of a human body. *It never does in the Scriptures.* We have forced this into it by confusing the two figures. When we read in the same epistle that He is the Head of the body we should remember that the figure demands that many of its members be in the head. It is not a decapitated body. It is, as Ephesians puts it, an “entire body” (Eph. 4:16). This is an especially strong idiom in the Greek—*every the body*—in which the article is put before the noun to express not merely all of the body, but the body in its *entirety*. We repeat, Christ’s headship is never figured by the head of the body. It is an entirely distinct matter, figured by the headship of a husband over his wife, in the Ephesian epistle.

THE BODY IN CORINTHIANS

It is notable that we have the strongest statement of our spiritual unity in Corinthians, not in Ephesians. In the Greek Scriptures no one is anointed but Christ (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb.1:9) and the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:21). Of course, this was true of all to whom Paul wrote, yet it is significant that it is written to the same saints to whom the figure of the body of Christ is expounded at length. Since the spirit of God anointed all of them, and was the element into which they were baptized as well as that which they imbibed (1 Cor.12:13), we are prepared for the statement that they are one, as the human body is one, and constitute “the Christ.”

This figure of speech is a very common one in some lan-

guages. In English we often speak of a person as a “body.” It is tacitly understood that we do not limit the sense to the physical frame. In this sense “the body of Christ” is spoken of as “the Christ.” The danger in our day is that the expression be made the basis of reasoning as though it were literal. For instance, we might argue “we are the Christ. Therefore, we are the head of all things.” But immediately we are reminded that *He* is the Head of all *to us* (Eph.1:22). *We have no headship.* Some have said that, being the Christ, we are the Husband and not the bride. *But Christ has no bride.*

NO ROOM FOR HUMAN PRIDE

Innumerable reasonings and deductions, all outside the proper scope and limits of the figure, are indulged in by the saints who are intoxicated by the wine of God’s grace. The danger is that we are inclined to exalt ourselves even if it lowers Him Who has raised us up. When we find ourselves appropriating the place reserved for Him, let us beware! Let us leave no room for pride. The body of Christ is not going to usurp His place! It must ever be subject to the Christ, even as our bodies are under our control. It must ever bask in a reflected glory. It has no light of its own. It must never infringe on those functions which are outside of its sphere, which are His alone, which He cannot share with His closest companions.

How shall we avoid these mistakes? By giving due place to *all* that has been revealed. Our knowledge of figures of speech may not be sufficient to keep us from getting out of bounds. Then we should have recourse to a well-rounded knowledge of the truth. To cite a very common example: Many reason that a woman should behave just the same as a man because the sexes are done away with in Christ. They may know so little of the import of this title that they cannot see how wrong this reasoning is. But they

can turn to the inspired Word and find that, in the very highest revelation, conduct is regulated by our place in *the Lord*, and husbands and wives, as well as masters and slaves, are not only recognized, but instructed how to act so as to please God.

The remedy for the mishandling of Scripture is the handling of more Scripture. Some suppose that, being ourselves "*the Christ*" we can no longer use this phrase without including the members of the body. There are numerous passages where this is impossible. "*The Christ*" is *Head* of the ecclesia (Eph.5:23). Surely the body is not head of itself! He is the *Saviour* of the body (Eph.5:23). Are we our own saviours? The Christ loves us (Eph.5:2). Does that mean that we love ourselves? He is actually in the heavens. He will descend for us. We will ascend to Him. He will never be a member of the body. Let us never allow this marvelous grace to lead us to rob Him of His place supreme!

THE JOINT BODY

Finally, how does the body in Ephesians differ from the body of Corinthians? Some have gone so far as to say that they are totally distinct, and that we are not members of "*the Christ*" at all, but of another body. Some have said that since the Corinthians were figured as a "chaste virgin," the body in Corinthians was female! Some say that Ephesians speaks of a new man [humanity], so that the body there was male! Such are the vagaries of human inference. We can just as easily "prove" there were none but men in Corinth. Otherwise how could the apostle exhort them to be manly (1 Cor.16:13)? This also "proves" that the body must be male. All this is futile inference. The body is always neuter. *Since it ignores all differences of sex, surely it cannot be either!*

The body of Corinthians was a *figure of speech*, not a frame of flesh and bones. It was composed of those saints

who received Paul's message. The body in Ephesians is identical with it. It unites the same saints and is subject to the same Head. If it were a literal fact it would be difficult to alter its condition. Nothing could be simpler than to transform and glorify the unity which it represents. As a matter of fact it changes to an "unhuman" body, if we may be allowed to use a rare word where the spirit of God has been compelled to coin a new one. Literally, no such organism exists in nature. The grace shown to us is superhuman, hence cannot even be pictured by an ordinary human body.

The change between Corinthians and Ephesians lies in the rank of the members. As the Circumcision were superior to the Uncircumcision in fact, in Paul's early ministry, so some of the body's members were above the rest, in figure. The head was exalted above the feet. The eye looked down upon the hand. Since the "mystery," or secret, was revealed, the feet are level with the head. The hand is as high as the eye. The Circumcision have no pre-eminence over the Uncircumcision. We are still like the human body, but all the members are peers of each other. There is a joint body. Furthermore, there is only *one* body (Eph.4:4). There can be no greater violation of the unity of the spirit than the formation of another, or the teaching that there are several.

We should *not* make a cut between the head and the members, for we have seen that the head is one of the members, and illustrates others by its functions. The "body" is a complete one in the figure. All of it is "*the Christ*" (1 Cor.12:12). Note that this occurs in the same passage which makes the head a *member*. We cannot say that only the head is "*the Christ*." The feet, which may represent us, is also a part of "*the Christ*," just as well as the head. Now that it is a joint body, the feet are *equally* a part of "*the Christ*." But none of them have the head-

ship of the body. That is a distinct figure, which we must not confound with the body member which has the same name. The best way to get the matter clear is to illustrate the headship of Christ by the figure used in Ephesians. Christ is *not* Head of a decapitated human torso, but of a complete body, *even as the husband is head of the wife* (Eph.5:23). This illustration is undoubtedly given us in order that we may not be misled by the fact that the word “head” is used in two different figures. Just as the wife has a complete body with a head, besides her spiritual head (her husband), so the body of Christ has its head, besides having Christ as its Head, *with reference to His lordship and our subjection*. These thoughts have no place in the figure of the “one body,” hence its head cannot represent them.

These facts are certainly applicable to the twelfth of first Corinthians, where the body is called “the Christ,” for in the same context *more members are found in the head than anywhere else*.

TRANSCENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Such are some of our relationships to our Lord Jesus Christ. All are distinctive and transcendent. Grace is connected with His office as Christ. The figure of a complete human body, including its head, sets forth our special blessedness. He is not a member of this body, although He is its “Head.” This is not figured by that member of the body. He is Head of it, even as a husband is head of his wife. The head members of the body—the eyes and the ears—are not in control. They are subject to Him. Our highest grace is figured by the same figure, artificially modified to conform to the truth that all the members of the body are of equal rank. Let us take heed that, in seeking to realize our high place, we may not rob Him of His!

A. E. Knoch

FROM ENMITY TO PEACE

THE PENTECOSTAL ERA was characterized by increasing enmity between the saints of the Circumcision and Uncircumcision. In the present administration of God's grace all antagonism is gone. There is not the slightest ground for further division. The change is based on the prominence accorded flesh or spirit. Then flesh was foremost and led to fighting. Now spirit is supreme, and leads to peace. This is brought before us figuratively by razing the "soreg," the wall that hindered the approach of Gentiles to the sanctuary. This is the religious aspect. It is enforced by the abrogation of the decrees which James had forced on the nations. This is the political aspect. It is accomplished by creating a new humanity, in which there are no such divisions as Circumcision and Uncircumcision. This is the social side (Eph.2:13-18).

The key to the great change is the title Christ Jesus. Had the nation of Israel received their Messiah at the end of the Acts era, then the terrestrial Kingdom would have come and He would have been their Christ on earth, and the nations would have continued in their subordinate place. He was rejected on earth. Here He is simply Jesus Christ, Who is denied His rights and refused allegiance. But He is acclaimed in the heavens. Israel is connected with the rejected Jesus Christ. We are in the elected Christ Jesus, in the heavens. In Him, in spirit, all physical relations disappear. The Circumcision who now believe gain nothing by the rite. The Uncircumcision lose nothing by its lack.

Since sin has severed man from God the only means of approach is blood. Literal blood can have no such won-

drous efficacy, so we must look beneath the figure for the reality. This is found in the fact that the soul of the flesh is in the blood (Lev.17:11). The soul is the seat of sensation. The shedding of blood is a figure of *suffering*. Sin naturally and justly entails suffering, but this is not the passport to the divine presence. It is *sacrificial* suffering which satisfies God's head and heart, and leads to peace. The blood of animals allowed a physical nearness, a picture of the true. The blood of Christ brought actual access of spirit to God, Who is Spirit.

THE ENMITY

As the literary structure will help us to see that the central thought of Ephesians 2:14,15 is the removal of enmity, we present it herewith:

*He is our Peace,
Who makes both one,
and razes the central wall of the barrier
(the enmity in His flesh),
nullifying the law of precepts in the decrees,
that He should create the two, in Himself, into one new humanity,
making peace;*

This arrangement shows, at a glance, that peace has replaced estrangement in relation to the three great departments of human experience: government, worship, and society. The incarnation of Christ did not bridge the gulf between Israel and the nations, as some would have us believe. Rather, it accentuated it. The enmity between the believing Jew and Gentile was not based merely on their own flesh, but on His. The fact that Messiah was of the seed of David gave the Israelites a vast advantage. It gave them authority over the nations. It made them priests and intermediaries between the nations and God. It gave them a social prestige, as blood relatives of the Messiah. All of this will yet be seen in milder form in the millennial reign, when Israel will be a royal priesthood.

The process of making peace is illustrated by three specific acts, two of which were destructive, and one creative. He abrogates the decrees, razes the "soreg," and creates a new humanity. The lordship of James and the twelve apostles over the saints of the Uncircumcision is denied. The ritual of the apostate leaders of the nation is repudiated. The nation itself is practically renounced by the creation of a new humanity in which it has no place.

THE DECREES ABROGATED

The unfortunate and inconsistent rendering "ordinances" in both the Authorized and Revised versions has hid from the saints one of the most enlightening truths connected with this secret economy. The translators had already used the word "ordinance" for several other Greek words. The laws of language are such that it is impossible for the intelligent student to avoid associating this passage with others with which it has no connection. At the same time it prevents him from linking it with that transaction to which it really refers. They had twice rendered *dogma*, "decree," when used of Caesar's act (Luke 2:1; Acts 17:7) as well as of the decrees made for the nations by James (Acts 16:4). Why not render it the same in the remaining passages (Eph.2:15; Col.2:14, see 2:20) which directly refer to the same document?

The decrees were a fourfold prohibitory enactment, relating only to the flesh. The believers among the nations were not to be compelled to be circumcised and keep the law, as most of the Jewish saints insisted, but they were ordered to abstain from eating idol sacrifices, and blood, and what is strangled, and prostitution (Acts 15:29). No doubt, these seemed to be very wise expedients, intended to reduce the friction between Jewish believers, who were still strict ritualists, trying to keep the law, and the believers among the nations who were not under law. Very lit-

the social fellowship would be possible without some such restrictions. The only real purpose which they served was to give concrete expression to the attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles, and later, by their repeal, show the change brought in by the revelation of the mystery.

Without in the least intending to do so, the compilers of these decrees indicted themselves by the terms of their enactment. Physically they kept them, spiritually the nation to which they belonged was guilty of breaking them all. Though they would not allow the nations to eat meat which had been offered to idols, they themselves idolized the outward forms and ceremonies which had displaced the spiritual worship of Yahweh. They not only did not eat blood, but they refused the blood of Christ, which had been shed for their souls. They strangled the spiritual life out of the divine ritual. They will yet, as a nation, be untrue to Yahweh, and form an alliance with His enemies. It were better for James to legislate for his own nation, than to enmesh the Gentiles in man-made restrictions.

In the realm of spirit all of these prohibitions are unnecessary, so they are repealed. They accord with a ritual, a religion, which was only a shadow. We have the substance, in Christ. In Israel the form of worship was of divine appointment, but what profit is there in that if its meaning is not apprehended? God is spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The divine ritual symbolized Christ and His glories. Instead of leading them to Christ, these ceremonies actually barred the way. So also, they reckoned the blood of animals too holy for use, yet counted the blood of Christ a common thing and refused God's estimate of its value. They refuse to eat the flesh of a strangled animal, yet seek to maintain their spirits on the strangled corpse of formalism.

The believers among the nations had already fulfilled the spirit of these prohibitions. They had broken with

idols, they had perfectly acknowledged the peerless power of Christ's precious blood, they did not subsist on lifeless forms, they were intensely true to God. Since, then, they had the reality, why revert to the shadow, as though that were more vital than the substance? This is what Paul warns us against in his Colossian epistle. "If, then, you die together with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as living in the world, are you subject to decrees . . . in accord with the directions and teachings of human beings, which 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" (Col.2:20-23).

The curtain, the doors, and the courts of the temple were all indications of distance from Yahweh. The nearness of the Circumcision was only a comparative one. The high priest was nearest, for he went into the holy of holies once a year. The priests were nearer than the men of Israel, who could not enter the inner courts. Yet all of these were near, compared to the Gentile who was shut out of the sanctuary altogether. In Herod's temple magnificent cloisters were built especially for the nations, but these were not in the divine plan of the holy places. They did not rightly belong to the sanctuary.

We have already described the "soreg," the "middle wall of partition," inside of which a Gentile dare not go. No better sign of the dissolution of the antagonism between Jew and Gentile could be imagined than the demolition of this wall. As a matter of fact, it was still standing when this epistle was penned by Paul. It was gone only *in spirit*. But a few years later witnessed its fulfillment as to fact. Although, at the siege of Jerusalem, both the Jews and Titus used every precaution to keep the temple from harm, an unseen Hand seemed to insist on its destruction. Before the sacred edifice was wholly consumed by the flames, Titus entered the holy of holies, an alien, and a conqueror. After the siege

was over he had all of the walls leveled with the ground.

To most of us this scene is among the saddest in the history of mankind. But the anointed eye can see beneath the heap of ruins the gladdest truth the nations will ever know. Access to the temple site was no longer obstructed by walls or any intervening barrier. So now, Jew or *Goyim* may go direct into the divine Presence, by His spirit. The way is open for men of every race and people and nation! In this economy Paul will have no trouble in bringing Tychicus past the place where the “soreg” was, for it is gone. He was imprisoned for supposedly doing it. In a very different sense he was imprisoned for [in order to be] doing it. He could not bring Trophimus near in flesh, but he can bring Tychicus very near in spirit (*cf* Acts 20:4, 21:29, Eph.6:21).

THE NEW HUMANITY

We are now given the reason for the breaking down of the “soreg,” and the abrogation of the decrees. These were based on schisms in the old, or Adamic, humanity, the old creation, in which there are many divisions, especially Circumcision and Uncircumcision. Now there is a new race, “wherein there is no Greek and Jew, Circumcision and Uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but all and in all is Christ” (Col.3:11). We are no longer in Adam, but in Christ.

The teaching of the new humanity is of paramount importance in this administration, but it has been lost to us in the confusion of translation and interpretation. The new “man” has been generally explained as a new “nature” or else confounded with the “body” of Christ. English lacks a constant equivalent for the Greek *anthrōpos*, human. It is usually rendered “man,” the same as *anêr*, man, not a woman. The best that seems possible at present is to use *mankind* and *humanity* when feasible, and seek to introduce *human* when possible. Meanwhile, let us note that

Christ does not make peace with the Circumcision by giving us a “new nature” or putting us in the body. He does this by creating a new humanity, in which the old animosities are absent.

There is a double sense in which this humanity is *new*. It is *neos*, YOUNG, fresh and vigorous (Col.3:10, *cf* John 21:18). It is *kainos*, NEW, novel, different (Eph.2:15; 4:24). It is in constant contrast to the old humanity, in Adam. The old humanity was created innocent, but soon was corrupted in accord with its seductive desires (Eph.4:22). The new humanity is created in righteousness and benignity of truth (Eph.4:24). Over seven thousand years have shown the incorrigibility of the Adamic race. Peace is impossible between its antagonistic elements. The more it is proposed the less it is practiced. There is no hope of ever uniting its discordant fragments into a united and pacific people.

The old humanity is shattered into many warring fragments. Rationalism and religion, covenant privileges, the place of residence and accident of race, liberty and servitude—these divide it into irreconcilable factions. The new humanity is one. It is not divided. The Greek had his philosophy, the Jew his religion. But Christ is *our* Wisdom. In Him we outstrip the highest ideals of the Greek intellect. And Christ is *our* religion. Every shadow of their ceremonies was cast by Him. We are complete in Him (Col.2:10). The Circumcision had a covenant with Yahweh. *We* have much more *in Christ*. The Uncircumcision were shut out from Him. But now they are the true Circumcision (Phil. 3:3), through His cross. Language and race, the potent sources of prejudice and warfare in the old humanity, lose their baneful influence in Christ. It is only as we fail to put on the new humanity that these divisions disturb our fellowship with other saints.

As we look down the vista of earth’s history, we may note the entrance of these five disrupting features and the

reason for their appearance. Each is the outcome of some form of sin. The curse of Canaan, Noah's son, brought bondage (Gen.9:25). At Babel, languages appeared and mankind was separated and sent into various areas of the earth (Gen.10:25; 11:8). To save the world from sin, Abraham is called and Israel separated (Gen.17:1-14; Exodus 19:5,6). To one was given the sign of circumcision, to the other a divine ritual. Thus, gradually, the "old man" disintegrates. There are continual efforts at racial unity, but they lead only to further division. Not so in Christ. All are one in Him. All of those divisions are founded on the flesh. The new humanity is a spiritual unity which never can be marred.

Lest we should lose the special blessing here unfolded by merging it into that of our relationship to Christ as His spiritual *body*, we wish to emphasize the difference in the two images, the place of their occurrence, and the practical application. In one the figure is of a single human body. In the other it is that of a race of beings, including many individuals. The figure of the body, in Ephesians, is confined to those sections of the epistle which elaborate our special relationship to Christ as His joint body. The new humanity, however, is found only in those sections dealing with our joint participation with the saints. We are members of the body, no matter what our behavior. The conduct becoming the humanities, however, is compared with clothing, which can be put on or off. We are exhorted to divest ourselves of the old humanity and put on the new. This cannot be said of the figure of the body.

In the passage before us we are especially concerned with the old humanity as divided into two factions—Circumcision and Uncircumcision. The other divisions are ignored. It is these *two* which are created into one new humanity. *Both* are reconciled with God through the cross (Eph.2:15,16). *Both* now have the access, in one spirit to

the Father. In this part of the argument there is a return to the sacrificial system suggested by the blood. In the old humanity there was no sacrifice for the Uncircumcision. Israel might have a peace offering, but there was none for the nations. It is also blessedly true that Israel's sacrificial system had no place for the *cross*. There was blood and death, but the deeper suffering of the accursed tree was reserved for the great Antitype.

Who could have supposed that the blessings presaged by the sacrifices in Israel would come to them through the awful murder of their own Messiah? It was the leaders of the Circumcision who were especially guilty of the atrocious crime. Does not this rob them of all rights to its benefits? Does this not lower them beneath the level of the rest of mankind? Not content with His death, they cry "Crucify! Crucify!" well knowing that, according to the law, the curse of God was on the one who hung upon a tree. Morally, this one act nullified every advantage they claimed, every promise they possessed, and gave God a free hand to do as He saw fit.

The nations had no sacrifice, and, it seemed, they had no share in the great Sacrifice, the body adapted for Christ. That Christ died for all was a truth unknown and repugnant to the ritual of Israel. This was one of the disturbing differences between the Circumcision and Uncircumcision. God doubtless could have provided some lesser sacrifice for the aliens, but it pleased Him to reconcile them to Himself through the same body as that which brought the Circumcision nigh. There were not two bodies, one for the nations and one for Israel. There is one Christ, and His body serves for all. (There is no reference here to the figurative body of which we are members. We are not a means of reconciliation.) Since the same Christ, the same Sacrifice, the one body, sufficed for us as for them, we are both equally at peace with God and with one another.

When they killed Christ they also killed the enmity between themselves and the Uncircumcision (Eph.2:16).

The mystery or secret of the evangel is conciliation or peace on God's part toward all mankind. That is the evangel of peace figured by the sandals in the panoply provided in the last part of Ephesians (6:15). Here, however, the context throws a special coloring on the phrase. It is not God's attitude of peace toward the world, but peace between those who have access, in spirit, into God's presence. Once we were afar off and the Circumcision were near. Now both are brought near by the blood of Christ, and, as a result there is an evangel of peace to both, declaring the enmity between them to be at an end. Physically, there is no change, but the flesh is ruled out. In spirit, through Christ, Jew and Gentile may walk, with clasped hands, not merely beyond the "soreg," not only into the court of the priests, but into the temple itself, yea, into the holy of holies, into the very presence of the Father.

BARRIERS BROKEN DOWN

Now that, in spirit, the barriers have been removed which separated the nations, not only from God's presence, but from those privileges which the Circumcision alone could claim, what is our relationship to the saints of other eras and economies? We have been considering an election out of Israel joined with believers out of the nations to form a distinct and hitherto unrevealed company. Yet, as there is but one God, Who has but one Christ, Who is Lord of all, it must follow that the relations of saints to Him will bring about mutual relations to each other. The term "saints," or holy ones, is not confined to any company or administration. It is universal in its scope, including all who are hallowed by relationship with God, all whom He has set apart for Himself. It should never be used in a restrictive sense. All who are holy are saints.

This aspect of the mystery is presented under three figures: a government, a family, and a temple (Eph.2:19). All saints, of all time, no matter what their peculiar blessings are, no matter what their eonian privileges and destiny, stand in some relation to God's kingdom, His family, and His dwelling place. These figures are by no means confined to the administration of the mystery. They are not at all characteristic of it. In fact, the kingdom and the temple are far more prominent in relation to the terrestrial blessings of the Circumcision. Just as the point of the mystery does not lie in the figure of the body, but in the prefixed "joint," so here the figures used are not new, but our changed relation to them is the burden of the passage.

The tendency, in studying the mystery, is to cut loose from all previous revelation and all other saints. But a little reflection will show that we must bear some relation to others, notwithstanding the exalted nature of our own destiny. This treatise would hardly be complete without setting forth the points of contact which we have with others who are the subjects of God's redeeming love. They belong to God's kingdom. So do we. They are in God's family. So are we. They are indwelt by Him. We also are God's temple. In these things we are not severed from them, but associated with them. It is intolerable to imagine the body of Christ isolated in solitary and frigid splendor, too exclusive to acknowledge the hallowed of other times, and denying all relationship to them. One great love embraces us all. One Christ died for all. One spirit animates all.

These are spiritual realities. In Israel they were shadowed by physical facts. Their citizenship, their family, their temple were but parables of the true. They were terrestrial models of celestial realities. God's real temple is in the spirits of His people. His family is limited to His believing saints. His kingdom embraces all who obey Him. We were excluded from association with the physical counterparts

of the true. We are included in the spiritual realities. We were aliens, guests, sojourners. Now we are not only citizens, but *fellow* (or joint) citizens. We had no access to the temple on mount Moriah. Now we are one of the temple buildings. Then the nations could not go into the courts of the sanctuary. Now they cannot get out of the temple. The contrast is between the physical disabilities of the era preceding the present (Eph.2:11,12) and the spiritual privileges brought about by Christ as our Peace.

FELLOW CITIZENS

For brevity's sake the term "kingdom" is often used in a restricted sense of the millennial rule of Christ, or it may also include the succeeding reign in the eon of the eons. But the kingdom of God is really a much wider thought. In the Ephesian epistle Paul does not hesitate to warn certain sinners that such have no allotment "in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph.5:5). The three figures used merely separate God's relationship to His saints into its political, social, and religious aspects. All the saints are subject to God, are His dependents, and worship Him. Even now we are in the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col.1:13). Not all who are subject to a sovereign are citizens. They may be slaves. They may be temporary residents from another realm. This was the case with the nations in the preceding era. They were sojourners.

But the point here is not merely that we have become citizens. These may be of various grades and privileges. A child is a citizen, yet does not function as such, nor does it possess the privileges attached to maturity. In ancient states citizenship was usually graded into various ranks, so that there were no joint citizens. This implies that all privileges are shared alike, that none have rights or horrors above the rest. If, for instance, a nation should be invited to share the citizenship of Israel in the millennium,

it would need to be in some subordinate sense, without the full power of the sacred people. The question is, now that we are one with an election out of Israel in the celestial realms, are we, as Gentiles, to be inferior to them, or of equal rank? The answer is, we are *fellow*-citizens.

In our case alone do Gentiles come into full political privileges in the kingdom of God. A little reflection will show how impossible this would be in the millennium. The nations there are ruled by Israel. To give them the political power of that nation would practically take all government out of Israel's hands and utterly wreck the whole character and purpose of that administration. The saints among the nations in the millennium can never be fellow-citizens. We receive a much higher place than they. No such disability operates in our case. The Israelites in the body of Christ do not rule over the Gentiles. Both rule over the universe, under the headship of Christ. Hence both have equal political privileges. The nations are *fellow*-citizens.

There was a time when the Circumcision attempted to assert their political prestige over the believers among the nations. James, who had obtained the leadership because he was the blood brother of our Lord, formulated a decree, ostensibly to keep the Circumcisionists from imposing circumcision on the nations, yet in reality laying down the law to them as though he had authority over them (Acts 15:1-29). One of the tokens of our present position is the repeal of these decrees. The Circumcision, as a class, has no more right to formulate decrees for us than we have to decide their conduct. We are now fellow-citizens.

MEMBERS OF GOD'S FAMILY

In the ancient language of inspiration the words *guest* and *stranger* were practically synonymous. As there were very few inns, a foreigner was compelled to be the guest of some family almost everywhere he went. Trophimus,

in Jerusalem, was a stranger and a guest. This figured the relation of the nations to the promise covenants and to the family of Israel. Now we are connected with a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit (2 Cor.3:6), and a new family, not physical but spiritual, in which we may claim all the privileges of membership. The Syrophoenician woman was not allowed a seat at the table. She was but a puppy. If she had lived in this economy she would not need to ask for crumbs. Though a Gentile, she could demand all that belongs to the family circle.

God is Spirit. Those who are joined to Him are one spirit. He is the Father of spirits. His family is a spiritual one. When Israel rejected His spirit and the nations attended to His words, did they receive a different or lower spirit than the elect in Israel? They received the same spirit. This brought them into the same spiritual relationship to God as they. Physical hindrances hindered the acknowledgment of this great truth hitherto. Now that physical distinctions are gone, it shines out in all its effulgence. God is our Father just as really as He is theirs!

Eden knew no temple. Adam knew no shrine. God walked and talked with him out in the garden in which he dwelt. So also in the holy city, new Jerusalem. There will be no temple in it (Rev.21:22). But in between, during the sway of sin, God withdraws into a building of His own where the defilement of sin cannot come, and where it is fended by the blood. None of the literal temples were accessible to Gentiles. They were shut out. Now, however, that there is no temple at Jerusalem, God dwells in His saints, both individually and as a class. Once more the question arises, in this figurative temple, have we as close a place as the Circumcision, or are they the temple building and we the outside court? The answer is found in the phrases "connected together" and "built together" (Eph.2:21,22).

The word "together," in these two phrases, is the same

as the word *joint*, or *fellow*, in the statement of the mystery. They are elaborations of its third item, that we are *joint partakers*. They refer particularly to the fact that we rank equally with the election out of Israel who believe during this present secret administration. The place accorded them in this temple is ours, just as the allotment described in the first twelve verses of chapter one, though primarily theirs, is ours. The reason is the same. We have received the same spirit.

Moreover, the Greek word represented by "being connected together" is the same as that used later of the body—"being articulated together" (Eph.4:16). These are the only two occurrences. The figures are very diverse, and should not be confused. A human body is quite different in structure and composition from a temple. In this place the body is used to illustrate our growth as related to the Head, and our unity. The temple presents an entirely different aspect. It sees us as God's abode, yet it also presses the idea of unity. Both body and temple are composed of two hitherto jarring elements, the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision, and these are TOGETHER-CONNECT-LAID, as the Greek has it, or "fitly joined together," as the Authorized Version puts it.

But there is a vast distinction to be observed between these two figures. The body is used only and exclusively of the celestial allotment, while the temple is used of the terrestrial also. Peter assures the dispersion that they are being built a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). God dwells in all His saints, not merely in those who are the body of Christ. The figure here is all-embracing, and includes all saints, just as the figure of the family and the kingdom included all. We have the same Capstone, Christ Jesus, as the Circumcision on the earth. In plain language, God's Spirit indwells us both through Christ. However diverse may be our destiny and our function, this connects us together.

There is a double union here. First, with the elect of the Circumcision who are in the body and also with those who are without. Alone we do not form this temple.

In the laudable endeavor to make everything in the Ephesian epistle something new and unknown before, without reference to the argument or context, it is often claimed that these apostles and prophets must be confined to “new testament prophets” and Pauline apostles, for only these are in the foundation of “the church.” The looseness of our phraseology is costing us much precious truth. This passage does not deal with the church, which, by the way, is by no means a divine title for the present grace. It is not dealing with the “body.” It is dealing with us as *joint partakers* with others. It is illustrating our relation to saints of other times under the figure of a *temple*. This temple, including us, is founded on *all* the apostles and *all* the prophets. *In this aspect*, as part of the dwelling place of God, we may well acknowledge the prophets of old and the apostles of our Lord, as well as those which are associated with our own peculiar grace.

This concludes the discussion of the third item of the secret. That we are joint allottees was first set forth. Then we were made members of the joint body. Now we are joint partakers. After being reminded of the fleshly disabilities of the Uncircumcision, being political, social, and religious inferiors in the divine administration which followed Pentecost, notwithstanding our spiritual blessings, our whole relationship to other saints is revolutionized and raised to full equality by the introduction of a new economy in which *spirit*, and not flesh, is dominant. Christ Jesus breaks down the barriers, abolishes the decrees, creates a new humanity. We become the peers of the Circumcision in the kingdom—fellow-citizens. We are members of God’s family. We are an integral portion of the holy temple in which God dwells. In all these we are *joint partakers*.

A. E. Knoch

THE LIVING GOD AND THE EONS

IN the providence of God, concerning all terms of consequence, the sacred writings provide their own internal evidence which establishes the significance of their vocabulary terms and grammatical forms.

Many important passages, however, are nonetheless not definitive passages. For example, in themselves, those passages which refer to the life which pertains to God's people, or to the duration of certain adversative judgments, simply are not definitive. This is because perfectly conceivable ideas may be represented by both "eonian" and "everlasting." Whether these should be foreign or familiar to our traditions is altogether irrelevant.

In the majority of instances, words are not used definitively. A passage may be vital, but that has nothing to do with whether its key terms are used definitively. For example, the words of Romans 3:24 are of the greatest importance to us, for they lie at the heart of the gospel: "Being justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance, the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus." But what does it mean to be *justified*? What does it mean for something to occur *gratuitously*? What significance is there to the fact that this gratuitous justification (whatever that may be) occurs in God's *grace*? The passage itself will not inform us.

We must learn the force of each of these terms from other places. For example, "justify" appears definitively in passages such as Luke 7:29 and Romans 3:4, "gratuitously" in John 15:25 and 2 Thessalonians 3:8, and "grace" in Romans 4:4 and 11:6.

It is through such passages as these latter ones that we determine the meaning of these key expressions. We then carry the knowledge we have gained concerning the meaning of these words into our considerations of Romans 3:24. Before we read it, we already know what each of these terms mean, and only wish to note their particular usage in the passage at hand. There is no other way to be certain of the meaning of a word whenever it appears (as is often the case) in a passage that is less than definitive. In many texts it is possible to assign any one of several ideas to a term and still express a conceivable thought through the clause in which it is found. But this is only to speculate; it is not to know. We are not to guess; we are to believe. Yet we cannot know what to believe if we do not know what has been said.

It is popularly believed that many words have two or more meanings. Actually, however, this is not the case. In any certain instance, according to its usage, a word may indeed convey a special *connotation*, one which is not present in other passages in which it is found. Yet no such specialized usage—even in the slightest degree—changes a word's essence, its *denotation* or basic meaning.

Within any certain era, those words which come into common use during such a period (or already exist at its beginning) cannot possibly *denote* more than one idea, even if they should soon find themselves being employed in a multiplicity of special applications. Otherwise, communication (much less translation), except for perhaps a few well-placed grunts, would be impossible and vanish from the face of the earth.

A "word," then, is simply a linguistic form which is used to communicate an idea, a form which, by itself, is capable of conveying an unmistakable thought. Strictly speaking, a "*word*" (apart from homonyms) is "a linguistic form

that can meaningfully be spoken *in isolation*."¹

Dictionary definitions of a word's *usage* must be distinguished from a word's own definition, its *meaning*, which distinguishes it from other expressions. Since many *derived usages* necessarily enter into popular speech in reference to new applications or objects, most people hazily and mistakenly refer to such usages (which, in turn, become dictionary "definitions") as "different meanings." Nonetheless, whether we speak of a dining room table, a multiplication table, a desert table (a mesa or plateau) or tabling (postponing) a project, the meaning of "table" (viz., "a flat horizontal surface") *never changes*.

This principle, then, must be true concerning the word *aiōn* as well. Therefore, while all scriptural passages in which some form of *aiōn* is found are either definitive or indefinite, none of them present any essential different meaning than the rest. As we shall see, the idea of an "eon," or of that which is in some way eonian, is always present in any of the definitive usages of this word. None of the definitive occurrences of *aiōn* can sensibly be conceived as signifying "that which has no end."

THE MEANING OF "EON"

We have been asked to give a simple explanation concerning the word "eon." Basically, an eon (or age) is simply a *period* of time; in most cases, it is used of a very long period of time. Being a period, it has a beginning and an end.

The Scriptures make reference to five notable eons—five epochal periods—which are determined, or marked off, by exceptionally extraordinary occurrences, tremendous upheavals in the established order. They run their course, (1) from the beginning of creation to a great cos-

1. FUNK AND WAGNALLS STANDARD COLLEGE DICTIONARY, The Reader's Digest Association (1966), p.1547.

mological *disruption* (evidently of a geological nature though occasioned by moral disruption or sin); (2) from the disruption of the world to the great flood; (3) from the flood to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth (which includes the present era, necessitated by the Pauline evangel which unfolds the untraceable riches of Christ for the nations); (4) from the establishment of the terrestrial kingdom (primarily the thousand years or "millennium") to the destruction of the earth by fire; and (5) from the creation of the new earth to "the consummation" revealed by the apostle Paul.²

After the consummation of vivification and of the eonian times which are revealed in Scripture, the kingdom of the Son of the Most High will continue on, never ceasing, for "of His kingdom there shall be *no* consummation" (Luke 1:33b). The Scriptures do not reveal any certain events during the endlessness which follows the time when God becomes All in all. Long periods of time may well be marked off by notable events and termed eons, but any such things are not revealed to us now.

Christ's literal rule will be so effective as to "rule out" all rule. None will be needed, for all will be subject, vivified, headed up in Christ and reconciled. The term "kingdom" will be retained, not because He is still finding it necessary to rule those who are in subjection, but, by association, in honor of what was accomplished and permanently established as a result of His literal reign until the time when He gave up the kingdom to His God and Father.

"Eonian" simply means "of or pertaining to, the eons [or eon]." In the Scriptures, the "eonian times" are from "the beginning" to "the consummation." The meaning of "eon" and "eonian" never change, even though they are some-

2. cf "Eternal Torment or Universal Reconciliation?" pp.25-28, A. E. Knoch.

times used in different senses and in reference to more than one subject. *Aiōnios* never means "age-lasting," and so should not be translated thus, even though *some* of its occurrences are in accord with this thought (others are not, only making reference to a portion of an eon). In most cases, it is "the oncoming eons" (Eph.2:7) which are in view. Some passages refer directly to the periods of time themselves; others, by association, have in view the *character* or nature of things which will prevail during the periods being discussed. God has various operations (economies or administrations) during the eons for the accomplishment of His goals, all leading to the greatest one of all, becoming All in all at the consummation.

DEFINITIVE EONIAN PASSAGES

The following are a few representative examples of passages in which the Hebrew *olam*, and its Greek equivalents, *aiōn* and *aiōnios*, are definitively used in the Scriptures: "Yahweh, He shall reign for the eon *and further*" (Exodus 15:18); "the earth is standing for the eon" (Ecc. 1:4); a statute "for Aaron and for his sons, . . . it is an eonian statute" (Lev.24:9); "Across the Stream your fathers dwelt from the eon of old" (Joshua 24:2); "I took account of . . . the years of the eons" (Psa.77:5); "before the eons" (1 Cor. 2:7); "before times eonian" (2 Tim.1:9); "a secret hushed in times eonian, yet manifested now" (Rom.16:25, 26); "the present wicked eon" (Gal.1:4); "the current eon" (1 Tim. 6:17); "the eon of this world" (Eph.2:2); "this eon" (Matt. 12:32); "that eon" (Luke 20:35); "the coming eon" (Mark 10:30); "the oncoming eons" (Eph.2:7); "the conclusion of the eon" (Matt.24: 3); "the conclusion of the eons" (Heb. 9:26); and "the consummations of the eons" (1 Cor.10:11).

Thus we can be certain that "eon" means a period of time; it is the longest segment of time known in the Scrip-

tures. It is not used to speak of endless time, or of any foggy philosophical speculations about “eternity.”

HE WHO IS LIVING FOR THE EONS

Likewise, concerning God’s living “for the eons” (Rev.4: 9,10; 10:6; 15:7), it is only because this expression is unfamiliar to us that it seems awkward or difficult. A parallel familiar expression should make this evident. Were we to declare that the living God *is* living *today*, this would be found quite acceptable. It becomes evident, then, that it is just as sensible (even if most are not familiar with the expression) to declare that He *will* be living *tomorrow*, namely, in the glorious scriptural morrow of the oncoming eons. The fact that He Who is living during this current era will also be living “for” (actually, “into,” *eis*) the eons of time ahead, constitutes a further word of assurance concerning His providential care during these future long eras of time.

It is to be regretted that the hazy English “for” can be misused in connection with the eons. The literal rendering “into,” in such cases, however, would unduly strain English idiom. Opposers imprudently couple “for” with their own gratuitous inference “only (for)” in order to “disprove” the meaning of *aiōn* as “eon.” This is done in order to make the meaning *eon* appear to be obviously mistaken with regard to the revelation that God is living *eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn* (“for the eons of the eons,” CV). The Authorized Version rendering, “God, Who *liveth* for ever and ever,” adds to the confusion, and lends support to the popular misunderstanding. For it makes the reference appear to be to the length of God’s life, when it instead is a reference to a *particular* time during which God will be *living* (“God, Who is *living* for the eons of the eons,” CV).

Inasmuch as the word *aiōn* appears in both classes of passages, crude reasonings from the usual mistransla-

tions of those passages which interconnect God, or Christ (Rev.1:18), a form of the word “life,” and the word *aiōn*, are routinely set forth as clear proof in favor of “everlasting (*aiōnion*) punishment” (e.g., Matt.25:46). That is, since God “liveth for ever and ever,” and it is felt that the thought here must be that His life never ends, it is concluded that the punishment of the lost must likewise be endless, since the same Greek word is used concerning these respective revelations.

This conclusion, however, is based on mistaken premises, ones which are derived from false inferences and mistranslation: (1) the injecting of “only (for)” into “for” (in relation to the phrase “for the eons”) while failing to note the literal “into”; (2) the AV mistranslation “liveth” (“lives” in modern English) instead of the correct form “is living”; (3) the gross mistranslation “for ever and ever” instead of the accurate rendering “for the eons of the eons.”

Whenever we read the expression “for the eons,” we should always keep in mind the actual literal idea of *into*. That is, God *will* be living on, *into* those eras of time, in order that He should be living *within* or *during* those time periods as well, even as He *is* living within or during these present hectic times, when we need Him so much.

The fact that I lived during the nineteen seventies is no proof that I now am dead in the nineteen eighties! And if I should say that I *am* living in the *year* 1988, and that, the Lord willing, I *shall* be living on into the *year* 1989, this would give no license to any of those who might translate my words into another language to make a claim, and so translate, to the effect that while in one case where I used the word “year” I actually meant a year, while in another place where I used this same word I did not mean a year at all (even if I did say so!).

Yet this is just the sort of thing that most translators of the Scriptures have done with the words in the Original

for “eon.” Most simply lacked the insight to see the point of many of the passages that spoke of the *eons*. Since they were able, however, to make sense of these passages by translating by “everlasting” or “eternal,” they simply went ahead and did so, any resultant problems notwithstanding. Due to a lack of sensible thinking and an abundance of confidence in the flesh, it is impossible for most to face the fact that the usual translations of this word are quite mistaken and extremely harmful.

We believe that God’s life will never end, not because of any passages in reference to Him which include the word “eon,” but because it is written that His “years shall not come to end” (Psa.102:27). Furthermore, since God is the Source of all life, and since, at the consummation, all will be gloriously made alive so that He may become All in each one, it is evident that He must ever have life Himself in order to impart it to His creatures.

As the Lord declared, “Seeing that I am living, you also will be living” (John 14:19). In light of the fearful nature of the terrible judgments in the Revelation, one might infer that all hope is lost. But this is not the case at all. For the living God, Who is living today, will be *living* on as well into the coming eons! The fact that He is said to be *living*, at any time, is not declared in order merely to inform us that He still exists, but is a lively figure of association designed to testify to His great power and subjectorship. He lives! He is the living God, and so is great and marvelous, strong to save, and “able to do superexcessively above all that we are requesting or apprehending” (Eph. 3:20). “We rely on the *living* God, Who is the *Saviour* of all human beings, especially of believers. These things be charging and teaching” (1 Tim.4:10,11).

THE EONIAN GOD

In light of these things, we may join Paul in saying,

“Wherefore we are not being despondent, but even if our outward human is decaying, nevertheless that within us is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us a transcendently transcendent eonian burden of glory, at our not noting what is being observed, but what is not being observed, for what is being observed is *temporary* [*proskairon*, TOWARD-SEASON], yet what is not being observed is *eonian*” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Paul is not making a contrast between time and eternity, as the Authorized Version’s terms “temporal” (pertaining to time, from the Latin *tempus*) and “eternal” would suggest. Antithetical terms are not the only ones which may be set in contrast to one another. Paul is contrasting this present lifetime, the present brief season in which we are afflicted, with the exceedingly long future *eons* in which we will enjoy a great burden of glory.

Our God and Father is the God of the eons, the eonian times or ages revealed in the Scriptures (this fact is reflected in the well-known hymns, “Rock of Ages,” and, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” which includes the line, “From age to age the same”). The Greek word for “God,” *Theos*, means “Placer” (or, “Subjector”; cf KEYWORD CONCORDANCE entry, p.127; e.g., 1 Cor.12:18,28). It is not His name, nor is it a reference to Him as the Creator of nature or as the heavenly Father. Instead, “God” is a title which represents the Deity as the Disposer, Subjector or Placer of all things (Acts 17:24,25).

It is not improper to accommodate custom and use the English word “God” when speaking of the Supreme. It is not so vital just which word we use as the idea we conceive whenever we use a certain word. God is the great Placer of men, nations, and the entire world during the eonian times. Consequently, He is the *eonian* God (Rom.16:26).

Thoughts along these lines are in view in those passages in which God is identified with the eons.

By the consummation, all will have been placed by Him into such conditions as have been best and for the good of all. Then there will be no more need for authority and government. Rule will be ruled out; all will be ideal, for the living God will be All in all.

James R. Coram

THE MYSTERIOUS MYSTERY

THE marvelous truth of the "mystery" is set forth in Paul's Ephesian epistle. This letter is an orderly discussion of the new revelation and its relation to previously revealed truth. The only safe way to acquire a knowledge of present truth is to follow its arguments and acquiesce in its deductions. But this is not the usual method. It seems to suit us better to do our own reasoning. So we find most expositions about this secret administration a series of inferences based on the nebulous idea that the mystery is an absolutely new teaching with no relation whatever to what has gone before. The third item of the secret distinctly states that Paul's previous evangel is incorporated into it, yet the usual inference from the word "mystery" is that all the past is practically blotted out.

We must first know what the mystery really is before beginning to reason about it. Unfortunately, hardly anyone takes sufficient pains to inform himself accurately, and most of the arguments on the subject are nullified the moment we define the secret itself. As we have given a full definition of its terms in our booklet "To Enlighten all as to The Secret" we will only repeat it briefly here. It is that, *"in spirit, the nations are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which I [Paul] became the dispenser . . ." (Eph.3:4-7).*

At this time we wish to emphasize only one feature, the *channel* through which the mystery comes to us. It is the evangel Paul had preached. Any argument which does away with Paul's previous evangel on the score that it was not "hidden in God," is only a denial of the mystery itself. The only part of the mystery which was secret is found in the thrice repeated "joint." The nations had an allotment before, they were in the body of Christ before, they had been partakers before. Paul's evangel, as set forth in his previous preparatory epistles, is the *channel* through which we receive the blessings of this secret administration.

A. E. Knoch

JUSTIFIED OUT OF CHRIST'S FAITH

WE are believing on God Who rouses Jesus our Lord from among the dead ones—Jesus our Lord Who is given up because of our offenses, and is roused because of our justifying (Rom.4:24,25).

Justified, then, out of His faith, we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ (Rom.5:1).

The revised CV of Romans 5:1 as presented above inserts a lightface “His” before **faith**. Two other changes from the CLNT, the use of the simple passive “Justified” rather than “Being justified,” and the more direct “out” rather than “by” with a superior “o” call for explanation, but the insertion of “His,” indicating that our Lord’s faith is in view rather than the believer’s faith needs special attention.

The usual (and mostly unchallenged) understanding is that Paul refers to the faith of those who are believing God’s evangel concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as in 4:24. However, the more attentive listener to Romans 4:24,25 will see this resurrection as *God’s* rousing of our Lord, and even a few will discern that this rousing is *because* of our justifying which occurs in God’s giving up of Jesus our Lord to death. Furthermore, in God’s grace, some will be enabled to go so far in joy and peace to take God’s giving up of His Son to death as the manifestation of God’s righteousness in the justification of all sinners, and this by means of Christ’s faith and obedience to the death of the cross (Rom.3:21-24; Phil.2:6-8), and not by means of our faith. Hence it is seen that God’s

righteousness is displayed in His giving up of Jesus our Lord to the curse of being hung up on a “tree” as a criminal (Gal.3:13). The giving up of His Son to death is for the display of God’s righteousness in justifying each and every human sinner—and this (we note again) is by means of (fully sourced in) Jesus’s faith!

If we have gone this far in following what Paul is saying as Jesus Christ’s slave and a called apostle, who is severed for this evangel of God—if we see what God’s rousing of His Son from among the billions who are still dead signifies and guarantees, that is, a completed justification of all and all the wrongs we do and evils we suffer—if we see that this victory in the death of Christ is victory over death and sin which is achieved by means of Jesus Christ’s faith (and faithfulness to that faith)—then is it possible for us not to take our apostle as speaking of our faith in the opening line of Romans 5? It does not seem possible. For how much peace toward God can we have if our justification rests on our faith?

Paul speaks here of justification, of righteousification, not of being accounted righteous, but (in view of what happened on Golgotha and in anticipation of its full and certain application and realization in the future) of being constituted righteous, and that is by means of God’s giving up of His Son to the suffering and death of the cross. Our faith is the believing of Christ’s faith. We must ever be wary of putting ourselves in places where the scripture speaks of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

WHY DEATH?

Death is not life. It is the very opposite. Death is not life, but rather separation from life. (We can be sinners in our thoughts and understanding as well as our acts.) The fact that Christ is given up to death is primary and critical to our appreciation of God’s evangel. In that nearly two

thousand years ago, Christ dies (as an act of love) all die (proleptically) in that death (2 Cor.5:14).

But Christ Himself (now roused from among the dead) is no longer dying (Rom.6:9). His emptying of Himself and coming in the likeness of human flesh, able to die, and then actually dying (actually failing to stay alive, actually being made a Sin Offering which is called simply “Sin”) that is in the past. That condition no longer exists, nor can it exist again. What Christ became is annihilated. But that is not all that is now true. All that Christ suffered and all that He endured in expectation and in love, and in faith in His God and Father, is justified. The Sin of it all is made righteous. It is righteousified by its results, for by its means death (and its sting of sin, 1 Cor.15:55) are doomed to extinction, and all will perceive and rejoice in the righteousness of God (along with His wisdom, power and love).

But as for the present we who are endowed with some measure of faith in believing some measure (the more we are given, the better) of the truth of Christ’s death and significance of His resurrection may be enjoying peace toward God.

THE FACT AND ITS ORIGIN

The faith that secures justification has been carried out without shrinking (*cf* Heb.10:38) and without any tinge of doubt (*cf* Rom.4:20). This occurred nearly two thousand years ago. Its glorious results, however, have not been delivered (Eph.1:14) except as they vibrate in spirit (*cf* Gen.1:2) in those who are believing this evangel of the manifestation of God’s righteousness in the vindication of all that He does and the justifying of all He creates in and through the Son (*cf* Co.1:16-20).

Thus now Paul speaks of justification as a settled fact, using an aorist passive participle: *justified*. What Jesus Christ our Lord has procured is reckoned to us even now

before it is delivered. It is not procured by our faith, but by His in being given up because of our offenses. It is because it rests on His faith and not ours that we may be having peace toward God.

The means is expressed here by the preposition *out*. Justification is procured out of faith—that is, originating out of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord's faith. This was promised before (*cf* Rom.1:2) through God's prophet Habakkuk in words which even he did not seem to understand: "Now the Righteous One, out of faith shall He be living." (Hab. 2:4, as cited in Rom.1:17, Gal.3:11 and Heb.10:38).

The source of the revelations of God's righteousness in the justification of sinners is the faith of the Righteous One.

Again this has been brought before us in Romans 3:26 where Paul speaks of the display of God's righteousness in the current era, "For Him to be righteous and a Justifier of the human out of Jesus's faith."

THE CHANNEL OF JUSTIFICATION AND PEACE

As previously noted, Paul uses the preposition "through" instead of "out" in many places to relate justification and other aspects of salvation to the faith of Christ. Heading these passages is Romans 3:21-24 where we read: "Yet now God's righteousness has been made manifest *through Jesus Christ's faith* for all . . . For all sin and are wanting of the glory of God, *being justified* gratuitously in His grace, *through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus*" (*cf* Gal. 2:16). So also the phrase "through" our Lord Jesus Christ" in Romans 5:1 which parallels "out of [His] faith," directs our minds and hearts to the faith of our Lord in being given up and dying for our sake. This is the channel of the enjoyment of peace toward God as it is the source and channel of justification—not our faith, but His faith in dying for our sakes, which is the evangel Paul brings here *for* our faith and peace.

D.H.H.

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 115th Year
(1909–2024)

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Netherlands Agent: Andries Van der Wal, E-H Depot, P.O. Box 85111, 3009 MC Rotterdam. Phone 010-420-6260.

United Kingdom Agent: Mr. Malcolm Ferries, Flat 5 Redholme Court, Red Hill, Stourbridge, West Mids DY8 1ND. Phones landline: 01384-379531; cell: 07763-187876

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES, THIRD QUARTER 2024
BEING THE THIRD NUMBER OF VOLUME ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

EDITORIAL

IN his opening “Meditation” on the third chapter of Ephesians A. E. Knoch observes that “we have two separate secrets in this chapter” (p.100). There is the “Secret of Christ,” which was briefly introduced in the first chapter, that God purposes, in Christ, “to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ—both that in the heavens and that on the earth” (Eph.1: 9,10). And then there is the “Ephesian Secret” which tells of a joint allotment of the chosen out of the nations with those out of Israel, in a joint body as joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph.3:6).

“The channel through which [this latter secret] comes to us is the evangel which Paul had previously dispensed (Eph.3:7). It does not superexceed or displace this evangel [“God’s evangel” as presented in Romans], but includes it. Justification and conciliation are the portals to the higher grace” (p.102).

I would add the word “basis” to the word “portals.” God’s evangel as it is expounded in Romans is not only the door to the “transcendent riches of [God’s] grace” (Eph.2:7), but is the *foundation* of the untraceable riches of Christ being expounded in great length in Ephesians. For unless the righteousness and love of God in not sparing His own Son, but giving Him up for us all is made manifest as settled and true, what Paul says about the two secrets in Ephesians 3 cannot be appreciated and enjoyed with full assurance in joy and peace. Hence we discern two graces in Ephesians 2:7,8, “the transcendent riches of [God’s] grace,” and the grace in which we are “having been saved through [Christ Jesus’s] faith.”

It was A. E. Knoch who first noted in *Unsearchable Riches* that there were “two faiths” in view in Romans 1:17 (vol.7, p.266). This has been my focus for many years, being continued here on pages 129-144. In Romans 5 we see the faith of Jesus Christ clearly in His death for us (not only believers, but all human beings). While we are still infirm and living in accord with the era that begins with Adam, and still sinners, He gives Himself to the death of the cross. And once we see that Romans 3:21-28 tells of Jesus Christ’s faith manifesting God’s righteousness for the good of all, we are brought into a growing realization of God’s evangel of love already before the plain words of Romans 5:8. Yet also once we see that there are two “alls” in Romans 3:22, “for *all* [human beings], and on all who are believing,” we can see how fully and joyfully Romans 3 stands in harmony with Romans 5 and with the secrets of Ephesians.

Such distinguishing between two applications of one word accords with the purpose of this magazine as stated in the opening words of the first issue in August 1909! “It is with a sense of deep gratitude to God that we send forth the first number of this Magazine in the interest of a rightly apportioned Word.” Of course what was in view was a distinguishing between the application of whole sections of Scripture from each other. But this principle certainly is beneficial with regard to the application of words.

It is also of great importance and benefit with regard to distinguishing the application of such major themes as “choice” and “will” as applied to the human and God. We see this in James Coram’s article, “Choice and Deity” (pages 120-128). Hence our brother concludes: “We do not need any help from myths about free will and contrary choice to give us an incentive to obey. Rather, we have *the word of God* which is *operating* in us who are believing (1 Thess.2:13).”

D.H.H.

THE SECRET OF CHRIST
AND
THE DIMENSIONS OF HIS LOVE

PAUL is about to pray. He proposes to indite a petition for power to grasp the *transcendent dimensions of the love of Christ* (Eph.3:18,19). But he cannot proceed with his prayer until he has given, in breathless, hurried style, the ground on which his prayer is based. Twelve verses of the third chapter of Ephesians—from the second to the thirteenth inclusive—are a parenthetical prelude to the apostle's prayer. In them he gives a *summary of the grace* already set forth. This is, for us, one of the most vital and illuminating paragraphs in all the Word of God. It is a brief epitome of the Ephesian secret, and includes also a concise statement of the secret of Christ, which is the subject of our present meditation (Eph.3:3-5,8).

It is impossible to have a clear conception of the present secret administration without a special knowledge of the secret of Christ. This is why, before the apostle defines the subject which is on his heart, he inserts another parenthesis to acquaint us with this distinct, yet related mystery. The secret of Christ is in closest *accord* with the new revelation, but must never be confused with it. Perhaps nothing has done more to hinder the reception of present truth than the application of the phrase "*as it is now revealed*" (3:5) to the present *grace*, which was an absolute *secret* (3:2,9). How many have been on the verge of receiving the truth of the exclusiveness of Paul's ministry and then were turned aside by the little word "*as*," thinking it referred to the secret administration of the grace of

God! Some of the best expositors have never been able to explain its apparent contradiction.

Let us first of all quote that part of this passage which presents the secret of Christ, so as to keep it distinct. In the third verse the apostle says that a secret is made known to him by revelation, (*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*). Here we have a number of facts which show that he is not referring to the main subject, the secret administration. It is *according to* it, hence distinct from it. It had been referred to *briefly* (1:9,10), while the Ephesian secret, as we have seen, had been set forth at length. The secret of Christ is concerned with Christ Himself, not with His people. It was made known to other generations after a fashion, though not as it is now revealed. It was evidently made known to all the apostles and prophets. The Ephesian secret came only through Paul.

Any one of these five points is sufficient to show that we have two separate secrets in this chapter. The harmony between them, expressed by the words "according as" is a proof of their distinctiveness, not their identity. The fact that the secret of Christ had been widened in scope so as to include the heavens as well as the earth, brings it into full accord with the present grace, in which blessing is celestial.

The greater part of the first two chapters of Ephesians is taken up with an elaboration of its secret which is summarized in chapter three, verse 6. In contrast with this the secret of Christ is briefly stated within the compass of two verses, as follows: "*... making known to us the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him) to have an administration of the complement of the*

eras, to head up all in the Christ—both that in the heavens and that on the earth" (1:9,10). Two verses for the secret of Christ: two chapters for the Ephesian secret. Surely Paul did not write briefly of the secret administration, but he did give a most succinct account of the secret of Christ (*... to head up all in the Christ*).

This secret, so briefly set forth, is concerned with the headship of Christ, not with the blessings of His saints. Among the celestials we will be associated with Him in His administrations. But on earth we have no such place. He alone is Head, yea, He is Head over us also. The secret administration raises us to a place of *equality* with an election out of the Circumcision. But this secret raises Christ to a place *above* all others. It is not the secret of the body of Christ, but of our Lord Himself.

Long before there was any body of Christ God began to give glimpses of Messiah's headship over the earth. From the first promise of One Who was to bruise the serpent's head to the glorious visions of the prophets who foresaw the dominion of the King of kings, there was a continued advance in the revelation of this secret. From the mists of early intimations emerges God's promised Messiah, Adam's greater Son, and David's Lord, Who will resume the reins laid down by the father of the race and forfeited by Israel's kings. So was this secret made known to earlier generations. Now God has added the heavens to His realm, and has revealed Christ's heavenly headship to His apostles and prophets, especially to Paul.

Paul is not the exclusive recipient of the celestial side of Messiah's headship. Our Lord did not hide His heavenly character from His earthly disciples. He called them to Olivet to witness His ascension. The Circumcision are informed that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb.1:3), and that messengers and authorities and powers were made subject to Him (1 Peter

3:22). Paul does not claim a monopoly of this knowledge or its dispensation. On the contrary, he is careful to inform us that it was made known to apostles and prophets, of which he was only one.

Following his brief allusion to the secret of Christ, the apostle gives us that short summary of the present secret administration to which we have so often appealed in seeking to clarify our thoughts on the subject. As this has been so fully treated in a previous article¹ we will do little more than quote it again, merely to emphasize the fact that it is *not* the secret of the preceding parenthesis. Condensing the unfoldings of the preceding chapters into one terse statement, it all comes to this, that, *in spirit, the nations are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which Paul became the dispenser (cf 3:6,7).*

Contrast this with the secret of Christ. The point of the Ephesian secret lies in the word *joint*. Blessing for the nations has always been in view, even in choosing Israel to be its channel. But blessing apart from Israel, on an equality with the members of the chosen nation, was absolutely unknown and unknowable. No prophet ever hints at such a possibility. No apostle suggests it. It was not made known to apostles and prophets in any manner. Even Paul's previous ministry to the nations did not give the Gentiles this rank. Hence the Ephesian secret was absolute, not relative. It is made known only through Paul.

The channel through which it comes to us is the evangel which Paul had previously dispensed (*cf 3:7*). It does not supersede or displace this evangel, but includes it. Justification and conciliation are the portals to this higher grace. It is for those only who were made righteous and are reconciled. Paul was called and separated in order to

1. "Both Blessed Together in a Joint Body," vol.59, pages 147-160.

prepare a people for the reception of this secret, when the time should come for its revelation. It could not be received by any except those who had been made ready for it by means of the truth which had come through the apostle of the nations.

Paul calls himself less than the least of all saints (3:8). Let us not reduce this to a mere rhetorical gesture. His active opposition to Christ made him the most undeserving of favor. He brings it in that he may have a suitable background for the grace that he received. No one will dispute that he became the greatest of all, as measured by the favor bestowed upon him. He receives two gratuities which have no parallel in the annals of God's saints. He is to make known the untraceable riches of Christ to the nations. He is to enlighten all as to this secret administration of the grace of God (3:2,8,9).

THE UNTRACEABLE RICHES

The untraceable riches of Christ refer to His celestial headship. His traceable riches are those recorded in the writings of the prophets, concerning the rule of the earth. No trace is found in these of His reign in the heavens. These riches are not "unsearchable" in an absolute sense. They can be traced now. But they were kept *secret* until God should reveal His plans for the celestials, and make known the universal scope of His purpose. Other apostles made this known to the Jews. Paul was honored with the commission to make it known to the Gentiles. This he has done for us in the first chapter of this epistle (1:10-11).

THE SECRET ADMINISTRATION

Paul's statement of his stewardship of the Ephesian secret is weighty with precious truth. He is *to enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God . . .* (3:9). Where

these words are heard and heeded, they revolutionize the life and understanding of the believer. Because they are practically deleted from the bible of christendom, it has gone astray and is lost in a confusing maze of doctrines. The great bulk of religionists are seeking to follow Peter into the Kingdom, or John into his earthly allotment. How few have heeded this plain intimation that *Paul alone can give the light* which illumines present truth!

Let us note each weighty word. Paul is to *enlighten*. The converse of this must be true, so that all who do not know Paul as the means of their illumination are in darkness as to this administration of the grace of God. Does not this account for the dense ignorance which is so prevalent that few are even conscious of its black obscurity? We speak much of enlightenment, but, judged by this standard, we are living in dark ages indeed. Only those are *truly enlightened* who recognize *Paul as the channel of present truth* and dwell in the light he has shed upon God's present operations.

He is to enlighten *all*. Paul does not make known the secret of Christ to all. There he is limited to the nations, for the Jews receive that secret through their own apostles. But the present secret administration is his exclusive revelation. *No other apostle made it known*, unless he had first received it through the apostle of the Gentiles. This is confirmed by the fact that it is entirely absent from the Scriptures except in Paul's epistles written at or after the time of this declaration. *Those who will not be enlightened by Paul will not be enlightened at all!*

We cannot overstress the word *secret*. This is the only administration which is so named. God has made known at least three administrations beyond the present, with varying degrees of detail. The era of His indignation, which follows this, was never hid from humanity. The blessings which follow in the day of the Lord were often the subject

of prophetic unfoldings. Even the succeeding day of God was dimly foreseen. Not so with the present secret administration of the grace of God. It was not merely unknown but unknowable. It was positively withheld.

It is an administration or economy. This is the same word as stewardship, when applied to household affairs. It is often called a "dispensation" in current theological language. This is another aspect of it. When speaking of God's gifts we should call this a *dispensation of grace*. But if we refer to the peculiar characteristics which distinguish it from other administrations it is best to follow the dictation of inspiration and call it a *secret economy* or *administration*, because the internal arrangement of affairs and the object of its operations are not at all such as are predicated in previous scriptures.

Let us note the tautological emphasis in the words *secret* and *concealed* in 3:9. For the sense, the word secret is quite unnecessary. Read it without this word. It adds nothing to the meaning. In view of the fact that almost all saints and scholars fail to get any meaning out of either, or both, we admire the foresight which presses the thought on our attention. It is precisely this point which has eluded almost all expositors, and this it is which is practically denied by almost all theologies. They persist in introducing truth from other administrations, which, by such misplacement, becomes malignant error.

This important point is further enforced by telling us *where* it is hidden and from whom it is concealed. It is popularly supposed that it is contained in the Old Testament, much as a puzzle picture contains hidden characters. There are supposed to be types and shadows of this era throughout the ancient scrolls and almost all of the blessings promised to Israel are said to be diverted to us. But this is all false. The secret was not concealed in the Scriptures, but *in God*. It was concealed *from* the eons, not

revealed to them. It seems impossible to imagine a more emphatic statement to the effect that the present administration of the grace of God was an *absolute secret*.

The secret of Christ, His universal headship, is the purpose of the eons which God makes in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph.3:11, 1:9,10). Our call is in accord with this purpose (Rom.8:28). God is operating the universe in line with this purpose. The present secret administration is in harmony with it, especially its celestial side. Hence we read that God, Who creates the universe, is now making known His multifarious wisdom to the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia of this administration (Eph.3:10). The purpose includes the revelation of God's attributes to all creation.

There are few considerations more delightful than a realization of God's need of us to make Himself known. He not only reveals Himself to us, but through us. When we see this, our salvation ceases to be a selfish concern of our own. Our assurance of "safety, certainty and satisfaction" becomes anchored in God's purpose, which is essential to His glory and that of all His creatures, as well as the basis of our blessing. It is blessed to give rather than to get. Few of His saints realize that, even now, we are teaching celestial beings the lesson of God's wisdom which few of us understand ourselves!

Apart from a mature apprehension of the two secrets which have been set forth, no one can have more than a vague and unsatisfactory idea of the wisdom which is involved in God's present work. He Himself describes it as "multifarious" (3:10), because of its variety. It copes with problems which had never arisen before, which seemed insoluble and unforeseen. The most difficult of all dilemmas was the apostasy of Israel, as seen in Acts. They were the only channel of blessing. God could not give their place to the Gentiles, as the church foolishly has taught, for His

Word cannot be broken by their faithlessness. There seems to be no means or place of blessing for the Gentiles who had turned to God. Then it is that He throws back the curtain and reveals the fact that all was anticipated and provided for before the eons commenced their course. Then also He opens His hidden heavenly purpose and reveals the celestial destiny of Christ's body. What seemed to be an insurmountable problem was transformed into a carefully prepared program. Humanly speaking, Israel's continued rejection of Yahweh, and of the incarnate Christ, and of the testimony of God's spirit, utterly wrecked His revealed plan of blessing, not only for them, but for the other nations also. From the viewpoint of the divine wisdom all of this was a part of His intention, and prepared the scene for the present grace. Indeed, such *depths and heights of grace* as we now know would be impossible to reveal apart from the very failure which seemed to deny it any place.

At present this display of multifarious wisdom seems largely wasted on the saints. Sad as it may seem, the impression appears to prevail among them that God's wisdom has failed Him, that He sorely needs our help to save a few from the wreck of His universe, and that our chief concern should be to aid Him in recovering from the dilemma into which His enemies have brought Him. They do not understand the variety of wisdom that uses temporary evil to produce permanent good. They do not realize that Israel's opposition was necessary to afford a foil for the transcendent grace which has come to us. They are not aware that the heavenly hosts are learning of God's limitless resources of wisdom through us.

The present practical result of this insight into God's wisdom is to keep us from despondency in the midst of affliction and adversity. Throughout this administration the forces of evil have been uppermost. Paul himself was

a prisoner because of Christ. *All Asia turned from him before he died* (2 Tim.1:15). The world has always been against the church. And now the church itself has admitted so much of the world that God is being forced out. Matters have gone from bad to worse in this administration. *Is this failure?* Or is it another exhibition of God's wisdom working out His will through the opposition and apostasy of His creatures? Let us not despond. There is not a single loose thread in God's design. All, evil as well as good, will work out His glory and our good.

Let us remember that these transcendent truths come to us through a *prisoner*. Paul emphasizes his character at *this* supreme crisis of his life. Human wisdom would have made him higher and more powerful than the pope of Rome has ever been. Is not that the way to impress men with the message he bears from the high court of heaven? Give him his liberty. Give him means. Give him influence with the imperial power. That is the way we would have managed the matter. That is the way men are doing today. But no! The circumstances of the new messenger must harmonize with his message. Mankind is at enmity with God. He is at peace with them. What can picture this so well as the imprisonment of His ambassador? The great truth of the conciliation, as set forth in the fifth of Romans, remains the substream of the present grace.

God is revealing His wisdom now, and by its means His weakness is stronger than the might of men. The prisoner Paul, by writing a single letter, accomplishes more for God than anyone of the great theologians after him. *God is working through weakness now* in order to display the wonder of His wisdom. Afflictions like Paul's are our glory. Bonds like his should cause us to exult, as it makes the celestials marvel. It was no mistake. It was no mishap. It was God's deliberate design, to show *His power* in human infirmity and *His mastery* of human might.

A. E. Knoch

LOVE TRANSCENDENT

PAUL, after he had set forth the three sections of the secret (Eph.1:3-2:22) began a prayer for the appreciation of the fathomless favors which he had revealed, but broke off at its very commencement to give a summary of this grace, which is now shown to the nations, He says, “On this behalf, *I* Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you, the nations—” (Eph.3:1) and then introduces the parenthetical digression which we have just been considering. He would have them clear as to the two secrets, the secret of Christ and the Ephesian secret. Otherwise his proposed prayer would be impractical. This knowledge is essential to its fulfillment. Let no one read the prayer, or its exposition, without first drinking the preceding cup of blessings to its dregs. Paul would not have interposed this parenthesis unless it was vital to his petition. Now, however, he resumes, “—On this behalf am I bowing my knees to the Father . . .” (Eph.3:14).

There is a practical lesson to be learned from this parenthetical procedure. A prayer of such intensity as the apostle’s would not easily be diverted into an exposition. If another had interrupted him, it would have seemed most offensive. There must be a very powerful reason why we must have knowledge before strength. We must understand and grasp God’s grace before we can realize His love. It is useless to expatiate in glowing but abstract terms on the transcendent love of God. We need to see that love in exercise. We must view its activities. We must marvel at its achievements. We must wonder at its wisdom. Its scope must astonish us. Its riches must ravish us. If

a celestial messenger were to fly in mid heaven with the proclamation "God is love," it might reach their ears, but it would find no harbor in men's hearts.

Paul's parenthetical interlude in the third of Ephesians is the divine summary of present truth. It is the key to the correct understanding of God's present activities. All the wisdom of the world is not worth it. Much of God's Word cannot be comprehended without it. No other portion of the Scriptures has as much vital value to the believer of this era. Let us, then, give it the place in our hearts and thoughts that it deserves. May it prove as enlightening to every reader of these lines as it is to the writer! May it be the open sesame to the wealth and glory and love which God has in store for all who love Him during this day of Christ's rejection by Israel and the world.

In our preaching, let us not urge men to believe without giving them a message for their faith. The evangel does not consist in the exhortation to believe. Its substance may be indicated by the simple phrase "Believe God!" But the evangel itself consists of God's words concerning Christ. It would be well if many of our prayers that sinners be conciliated to God were interrupted, as Paul's was, in order to explain God's attitude and the basis of our exhortation. So also, in ministering to saints. Love cannot be pumped out of a dry well. First prime the pump with the overflow of God's love, before seeking a response in the hearts of His saints. This meditation is utterly dependent, therefore, on those which have preceded it. It has little force for those who have not grasped the gracious glories which God has granted to the nations in the present secret administration.

Once before Paul had indited a prayer on our behalf. The burden of that petition was that we should receive a *spirit*, a spirit of wisdom and revelation, in order that we may perceive the threefold secret (Eph.1:15-19). Now his petition is for spiritual *power to realize the love* that underlies the

new revelation (Eph.3:14-22). What a contrast with the approved prayers of today! We pray for power, but it is for service. Our god is a little deity who needs our help, not a great God Who wishes our heads and our hearts. Let us not decry diligence in doing His will, but let us never forget the better part chosen by Mary, and the fact that she, though condemned by her sister, was commended by her Lord. And who shall say that Mary did not devote as much strength to her lessons as Martha did to her household duties? Did we devote one tenth as much energy to delving into the depths of revelation as we do into the duties of a livelihood, how great would be our appreciation of God's grace!

It is customary to name those derived from a common stock after the father from whom they sprang. So we find the sons of Israel divided into twelve tribes according to the patriarchs. They are known by the name of their ancestors. In the world of spirit there is but one Father, and all who are His, own Him as such. They may be many families in the flesh, but in spirit they are one. Israel, on earth, will receive her bounties from the same Hand as the saints among the celestials.

STAUNCH WITH POWER, THROUGH HIS SPIRIT,
IN THE MAN WITHIN

The previous prayer was to God: this is to the Father. We rightly connect power with God, and affection with the Father. Why, then, do we pray the *Father* for *power* in this passage? Because the greatest display of power is not connected with God as Creator, or with the reconciliation of the sinner, or even with great supernatural manifestations. Far more is needed to give the saints a grasp of the love which underlies this latest overflow of God's affection, as manifested in the Ephesian secret. If the reader of these lines has been enabled to apprehend the truth of

the epistle to this point and goes on to lay hold on the *love* which it reveals, he may rest assured that it is the fruit of a spiritual force far beyond any other in this administration of God's grace.

On all sides saints are seeking *power*—power for service, power for miracles, power for healing, power for everything except the one thing essential: power to entertain and *respond* to the truth of the Ephesian secret. It is this response for which the apostle is bowing his knees. And why should not the supremest display of God's grace and wisdom lead us into the greatest grasp of His affection? How else could this be revealed? Yet even after we are graced with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to fit our minds to apprehend God's secret grace, we may still be unable to fathom the *love* from which all springs, and for which all operates.

God's glory is the universal goal. From the tiniest insect in its aimless seeming way, to the most sovereign sun star in its parabolic path, all have one common aim, one pure purpose to perform. Men may deem the one a foolish, fruitless wandering; they cannot see the star's objective; but God has harnessed both to His chariot of glory. The earth is His most fruitful field. Mankind is the creature fittest to display His varied excellence. To trace God's footsteps in the earth—that is the true history of humanity. And such a narrative will yet transform this darkling world into the brightest of the heavenly luminaries, whose effulgent rays will reach the utmost borders of the universe, and radiate the deepest recesses of God's love.

God's goal is not gained until He receives the heartfelt adoration of all His creatures. Great as are His efforts on our behalf, they are but the means to make Him known. Ephesians does not find its climax in the secret itself, but in a prayer for its appreciation. A knowledge of the secret is not sufficient or satisfactory to God unless it includes a

heart-hungry occupation and enjoyment of the surpassing love of Christ. Even before the secret was made known the apostle could say, "If I should be perceiving all secrets . . . yet have no love, I am nothing" (1 Cor.13:2). *Nothing has any vital value unless it leads to love.* It is the glory of God's wisdom that all things in the universe, including sin and hate, shall be lured into the livery of love.

At present most of God's creatures are out of harmony with Him. He is either unknown, ignored, or defied. The ideal relationship with God is well expressed by the word "complement." His creatures should combine with Him to make one harmonious whole. All that is in Him should find a response in them. There should be such mutual reciprocation in every relationship of life as will be most delightful to both. He is the Creator and we should take our place as His creatures. He is the Father, we His beloved sons. He the Reconciler, we the reconciled. He the Deliverer, we the delivered. But more than this, we are accorded a place with Christ in His work of revealing Him to the celestial hosts. It is only as we ourselves are filled with His affection that it can overflow to others.

HIS GLORIOUS RICHES

No epistle in the Scriptures is so full of harmonies as Ephesians. There is a continual assurance that each phase of our blessing is in accord with all the rest. Our sonship suits the delight of His will (1:5). The "forgiveness" of our offenses is raised on the scale to harmonize with the riches of His grace (1:7). The secret of His will is consonant with His delight (1:9). Our predestination is in unison with His purpose (1:11). Paul's dispensation agrees with God's grace which, in its turn is attuned to His powerful operation (3:7). The insight of the celestials is in line with the purpose of the eons (3:11). So, now, power is desired such as will harmonize with His glorious riches (3:16).

Paul prays for a power which will accord with the wealth of glory which has become ours through this new revelation.

God's riches are glorious. In these last days riches have increased. There are many men of vast wealth, and fortunes have been amassed which are amazing. Much of our unrighteousness and crime is connected with money. It occasions far more misery than it alleviates. In general, riches are a menace to society. Yet all will acknowledge that wealth has power. It is fast becoming the paramount force in human affairs. It overrides social prestige and political influence. What could we not accomplish with an unlimited command of means! Yet one thing cannot be bought by all the wealth of all the world. That is love. God's wealth alone has the moral glory that influences the affections.

Outwardly we may be as weak as Timothy, with his frequent infirmities. We may be clothed in rags and live in the meanest of shelters. There may be nothing to indicate that we are rolling in the real riches. This wealth is not for the outer man at present. It is spiritual, and for the spirit. It is for the man within. Men behold the external appearance, God looks on the heart. Through His spirit our hearts become the habitation of Christ. This is the ground of our strength. The meanest human heart, indwelt by Christ, has a glory that surpasses the temple of Solomon. All its moral values are living in him.

GROUNDED IN LOVE

Our vitality and stability depend upon the apprehension of God's love. As a plant seeks its sustenance and strength in the soil, so we should search for our sustentation and support in the subsoil of all of God's activities, the fact of His affection. We can flourish in no other ground. Here alone can our roots find nurture and our trunk find strength. Both of these are necessary for fruit. The most beautiful tree in all my garden fell to the ground. It had

ample roots, but was not well grounded. It could not withstand the winds of adversity. How many of us have failed to fasten firmly on the love transcendent? Only in this can we stand and bring forth fruit for God's delectation. Nothing else will delight Him. No substitute should satisfy us. Hence, let us pray this prayer for ourselves. Let us make it a petition for all saints. Only thus can we grasp these immeasurable measurements.

THE TRANSCENDENT DIMENSIONS OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

The transcendent love of Christ and the dimensions of the secret are usually merged into one. However, let us remember that the apostle has interrupted his prayer to explain the secret, and this is the subject on his heart as he proceeds. He expatiates on the vastness of its scope in order to make this a stepping-stone to that which lies beyond. No one can grasp the transcendent dimensions of the love of Christ without an amazed wonder at the moral breadth and length and depth and height involved in this, God's latest and highest revelation.

THE BREADTH

A characteristic feature of the tabernacle in the wilderness was the width of the gate which led into the court. It indicated something of the breadth of the evangel in the era which it typified. Though Israelites could enter, yet all aliens were shut out. So with the proclamation in the early part of Acts. They spoke to the Jews only. Gentiles could not enter without becoming proselytes of Judaism. Now, the evangel is for *all*. In effect, the gate of the tabernacle is only a hindrance, for the whole wall surrounding the tabernacle is now taken down. Access to God is unhindered. The evangel could be no broader. Corresponding to this,

the central wall of the temple has been abolished. In this aspect the present grace is unlimited in breadth.

Not only is the secret evangel all inclusive now, but the future service of the saints is all embracing. Israel will broaden out to evangelize the whole earth in the day of her glory. When we enter our proper allotment, we will reach out to the utmost bounds of the universe. Our parish will include all of the celestial hosts. Tell me the breadth of the universe and I will give you one of the dimensions of this secret. The physical measure is an index of its moral extent. It is an indication of the vastness of Christ's love.

THE LENGTH

In space, we can hardly make a distinction between its length and breadth, for both are beyond our grasp. Perhaps we should think of time, when meditating on its length. It goes back before the eons, long before the entrance of sin. It preceded the disruption in God's purpose. It is the earliest intimation of God's love for His creatures. We were not an afterthought with God. Let us revel in the realization that He thought of us long before He took up His earthly people Israel. His care for us is not due to the rebound arising from Israel's rejection of His favor. We are His first love, the earliest to call forth His affection.

THE DEPTH

The Ephesian secret not only has the greatest sweep of any of God's administrations, but it digs down into the very dregs of human depravity and soars to the highest heavens. Israel had promises and privileges which raised them above the balance of mankind. The Gentiles were below them, far from God, sunk in sin, ignorant and alienated, deserving only death. The grace of God reaches down into the deepest depths of degradation for the trophies of its triumph.

Never in the story of this somber scene, had come a time so dark and dismal as the days that followed Paul's final visit to Jerusalem and his imprisonment in Rome. The Jews will not have Messiah. Neither will they allow the other nations any place. Paul is a prisoner. Every avenue of blessing seems effectually choked. Everything is ripe for judgment. So it seemed. Then, with a spiritual convulsion as great as the material cataclysm which ends Yahweh's day, a place is prepared for a new creation. God creates a new, a spiritual sphere, unheard of and unknown. He reveals this present secret administration, which fills the hosts of heaven with admiring wonder and the hearts of His hallowed with impassioned praise.

THE HEIGHT

Israel will have the highest place on earth. We will have the supreme position in the heavens. What can be higher than that? No celestial creature will be above us. All will be beneath. Had we been raised to a place of blessing under Israel, as will be the portion of the nations in the coming eon, that would have been an undeserved and undreamed exaltation. Had we been put upon a par with them, that would have been an almost unthinkable elevation. To be the humblest in heaven, how far beyond our highest hopes! To be equal to celestials would seem the limit of human anticipation. Truly, it never has entered into the human heart what God has for those who love Him! Highest of the high, we shall be above all the heavenly host.

TRANSCENDENT LOVE

All of these dimensions are love tokens. Each adds to our assurance and appreciation of His affection. Each is a step which raises us to the temple of Christ's love. We cannot now measure these dimensions. We have no means to calculate their immensity. They are beyond our powers. So

is the love to which they lead. It is like the universe itself, which seems to expand as it is explored. The most powerful telescope, with photographic plates that picture millions of stars that human eyes have never seen, cannot find the boundary of God's material world. Its transcendent size is a parable of the immensity of the love that conceived it, which is embodied in His Christ, and which has been revealed in the moral dimensions of the Ephesian secret.

THE EONS OF THE EONS

The coming eon is particularly concerned with God's glory in Israel. It includes the day of Yahweh. The succeeding eon approximates our present status. It will be the day of God. Then God's glory will be publicly displayed in accord with the present spiritual manifestation.

Israel's spiritual supremacy will be past in that concluding eon. Now it is only eclipsed temporarily. Then God will tabernacle with mankind, as such. No temple, no priesthood will bar their approach to Him. It is serenely satisfactory to see that the only occurrence of this phrase, "the eon of the eons," occurs in Ephesians, for this epistle sets forth spiritual blessings for the nations which parallel those of that day. It is true that the Son still rules, and the saints still reign, but their authority will be near its vanishing point for lack of opposition. Those who are near God need few restraints.

But that eon will not only witness the nearness of the nations on the earth. It will be the scene of celestial splendors among the star strewn empyrean. God will be glorified on earth beyond all previous administrations. But His greatest glory will shine forth through the celestial saints, the ecclesia which is Christ's body. Having learned the lesson of Christ's transcendent love, it will be their lot to publish it abroad among the heavenly hosts, from the north star to the Southern Cross. Then we shall have the greatest privilege which can be accorded to any person.

We shall bring glory to God and good to His creatures. Vessels of grace are we, not only to have and to hold, but to give and to gratify. Our bliss will not be based on ourselves, but in blessing God and benefitting His handiwork.

This is the keynote, on which our happiness began. Our salvation, our justification, our reconciliation, our glorification are merely the means of glorifying God. This thought, once it enters into our heart, will give us rest and relief from ourselves, and serene surcease from dread of the future. Our personal destiny is so pitifully unimportant in this great universe, when viewed by itself. But when it is seen to be a part of God's own glory, it ceases to be insignificant. It is no longer inconsequent. It must be safe and sure. It cannot fail or fall. It is not the reward of our merits, for we have none. It is reared on our demerits, of which we have no lack. Let us but see that we are the instruments for revealing God's grace, and essential to His goal, and we have the best basis of eonian bliss which man has ever imagined.

Hence we too are bowing our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, and that we, having been rooted and grounded in love, should be strong to grasp the breadth and length and height—so as to know the transcendent dimensions of the love of Christ.

A. E. Knoch

THROUGH FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

The third of Romans, especially the paragraph from verses 21 to 28, is of the highest importance to the understanding of justification. It is *for* (into) all and *on* all who are believing *through* faith of Jesus Christ . . .

"Jesus" is our Lord's personal Name, so it is difficult to understand anything else than the personal faith of the Man of Sorrows when we read of the "faith of Jesus." Hence it is difficult to see why almost all translators simply change it to *in*.

A. E. Knoch

CHOICE AND DEITY

FREE WILL is a hallmark of orthodoxy. It is believed not only that it is true, but that it is essential, upright and noble. Many even claim that it is the chief capacity distinguishing man from beast. Consequently, its proponents often become filled with “righteous indignation” at the least suggestion of its untenability. They earnestly desire the concept to be true; and, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, it has long been certain that they *will* defer to their own desires, instead of the word of God (2 Tim. 3:1-8; 4:3,4). They seek to discover this idea in the Scriptures, and are confident that they have done so in many places. But their sedulous efforts are in vain, for, as with the Trinity, it is nowhere expressed, frequently disproved, and only falsely inferred.

Like every good thing, the great and foundational truth that *all* is out of, through and for God (Rom.11:36), can be abused. Its liberty can be misused by the foolish as an incentive to the flesh (*cp* Gal.5:13). Yet the wise must learn the truth on this theme so that they might make *good* use of it and be freed from the evil imposed upon them through its denial. God’s truth is not only true; it is also vital and beneficial.

Even those believers whose consciences are generally sensitive as to the need for sound words, seem to have no compunction when it comes to the misuse of volitional terms. They regularly employ words such as “choice,” “decision” or “responsibility,” in quite the same sense as is common in the world. Much of this is the result of peer pressure and the influence of popular ethics.

Good and glorious as it is, like the teaching of even-

tual universal reconciliation, the teaching of God’s deity seems both false and wicked to those who cannot receive it. And even if we should receive it, it may be that we will do so only faintheartedly, and so fail to “herald the word” concerning it or live our lives in accord with it. Yet if this should be the case, this too will be the wisdom of God.

THE NECESSITY OF ACTION

In light of Romans 11:36, I freely agree (in essence if not in semantics) with the renowned physicist Albert Einstein, who said, “I do not at all believe in human freedom in the [popular] philosophical sense. Everybody acts not only from external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity A man’s actions are determined by necessity, external and internal, so that in God’s eyes he cannot be responsible [i.e., able to act otherwise], any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motion it undergoes [This realization] mercifully mitigates the easily paralyzing sense of responsibility [i.e., in the sense of contrary choice] and prevents us from taking ourselves and other people all too seriously; it is conducive to a view of life which, in particular, gives humor its due.”¹

“If men had not this false refuge of human responsibility, many more would be forced to reconsider the fiendish doctrines of human destiny which they hold. As it is, if their hearts are not utterly hard, they will not believe in the damnation of infants, and are led into many non-scriptural notions as to the age of accountability, the appointment of sponsors at baptism, confirmation, and what not, seeing that *eternal* torture or annihilation can never be justified in the case of those who are not fully answerable. If they could only see that God holds none responsible, they

1. Albert Einstein, IDEAS AND OPINIONS, pp.8,39; New York: Crown Publishers, 1954

would find everlasting suffering or death utterly repugnant and impossible. 'Responsibility' is a twin heresy with eternal doom"²

MISUSE OF VOLITIONAL TERMS

At the outset, advocates of free will commandeer the word "choice" (and its synonyms) and boldly incorporate the thought of *avoidability* into the term itself, even though this is actually no part of the meaning of any volitional synonym. Instead it is merely what most believe to be true *concerning* human choice. This extremely common practice is completely unwarranted, and leads to much error. *For a choice is simply that which is chosen or selected*; man's opinion as to whether or not choices are avoidable forms no part of the meaning of the word itself and should not be forced into it.

It is most unwise to impose the idea of "avoidability" onto the word "choice," as if this somehow validated the concept of *freewill* choice. To do so is both linguistically incorrect and logically fallacious. It is also unfair, and exposes its own prejudice. Worse still, it is deceptive, for to those who are unable to think clearly, it seems to give much credence to the idea of free will.

Reading the idea of avoidability into the word choice is the equivalent of reading the word "flat" into the word "earth," or the word "endless" into the word "eons": (1) "The only earth fit to be called such is a flat one." (2) "The only number of eons worthy of the saint's life and the sinner's punishment is an infinite number." (3) "The only choice worthy of the name is an avoidable one."

The problem is only compounded by those who otherwise speak plainly, who may not fully realize that clarity

2. A. E. Knoch, THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD, p.234

of expression is needed on this theme as well. We are not at all suggesting any undue or gratuitous strictness, but only that we avoid being ambiguous or evasive. We must define our terms and speak clearly in order to be clearly understood, so as not to be sadly misunderstood.

Due to common misconception, one might well suppose that only the proponent of free will believes that men do whatever they want, according to their own choice or voluntarily. Yet these are our convictions as well, and are concepts which are fully in accord with our teaching. The fact that we act according to our own choice, and, had we chosen to do so, could have acted differently than we did, is not at issue and is acknowledged by all.

THE VAUNTED "POWER OF CONTRARY CHOICE"

No one can be what he is not, or, at present, act contrary to his present character. "How can Satan be casting out Satan?" (Luke 11:15). Even God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim.2:13). "From their fruits you shall be recognizing *them*. . . . A good tree *can not* bear noxious fruit, neither is a rotten tree producing ideal fruit" (Matt.7:16,18).

Due to influences from within and without, a man may well change in the next moment from what he is in the present moment, but *in* any certain moment his deeds are simply the outflowings of his heart (Prov.4:23b). They reflect what is presently choice *to him*; that is, they constitute his true preferences, however excellent, or awful, they may be.

Though we *do* what we want, according to our own choice, and therefore act voluntarily, we cannot always *want* what we want. That is, we cannot truly want, in a decisive sense, what we want, simply in an abstract sense, so long as there are other things that we want *more*, in a decisive sense, than we want the ideals for which we abstractly long. Even if, abstractly speaking, we love righteousness, often, decisively speaking, we prefer the "temporary *enjoyment*

of sin" (Heb.11:25). This is the very message of Romans 7:15-23, as well as that of all perceptive personal observation. It is vital for us to be clear as to these two distinct senses in which the word "want" (or, "will") is used.

Of course what those who advocate "free will" actually mean to stand for by means of this expression is the notion that men have the power of *contrary* choice: Even though, in fact, we chose as we did, we *could have* chosen otherwise. That is, we could have done so *at that time*. It is not contended (nor is it disputed) that, hypothetically and by itself, we *might* have chosen otherwise. That is not the idea at all. Instead, it is claimed that, notwithstanding the fact that we *did* choose as we chose, we nonetheless *could have* chosen otherwise. *This*, and this alone, is the question to be resolved.

Due to our self-reliance, pride, impatience and anger, as well as our self-assured ethical notions about praise, blame and judgment, this idea of contrary choice is an extremely attractive one. Then there is the matter of our strong desire, whether acknowledged or not, for independent personal glory. Thus the wish becomes the father to the claim, and, consequently, the very foundation of human ethics.

Advocates of this position, which should be called, "the power of contrary choice," prefer to perpetuate it instead under the innocuous and advantageously ambiguous title "free will." At once, this gives it the advantage of a respectable-sounding name, and makes those few who are constrained to reject the actual doctrine appear as strange extremists, inasmuch as they reject such a well-accepted, desirable and seemingly reasonable concept.

The advocate of free will actually stands for the position which asserts that man's choices are uncaused—absolutely devoid of all necessity. And yet he does not realize, or at least he refuses to admit the fact, that the denial of causality will not bring him any closer to what he wants than its advocacy.

Essentially this matter is a simple one: It is impossible to prevent anything that is the product of a cause from coming into existence; *and*, it is also impossible to prevent anything that is *not* the product of a cause from coming into existence. If a truly uncaused event were ever to occur (were such a thing even possible), being the product of nothing, uninfluenced and uninfluenceable, it would simply "show up," appearing "out of nowhere." While it would not be brought in, neither could it be kept out.

Whether "determinism" (i.e., causality), divine or otherwise, is true or false, we cannot possibly be free either way—that is, in a freewill or contrary-choice sense. If we are *caused* to choose as we do, we cannot help choosing as we do. And, if we are *not* caused to choose as we do, we still cannot help choosing as we do.

"Surely we cannot be free agents, in the ordinary, strong, true-responsibility-entailing sense, if determinism is true and we and our actions are ultimately wholly determined by causes which existed anterior to our own personal existence. And surely we can no more be free if determinism is false and it is, ultimately, either wholly or partly a matter of chance or random outcome that we and our actions are as they are."³

Neither *determined* nor *random* will afford any place for free will. Neither determinedness nor randomness (nor any mixture of the two) can give or allow what is wanted, even though between these two the field of possibilities is exhausted. Therefore, contrary choice or "free will" not only does not exist but cannot exist.

OUR NEED OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Perhaps an illustration would be helpful. Whether an

3. Galen Strawson, *FREEDOM AND BELIEF*, p.25; London: Oxford University Press, 1986

object falls to the ground because of the law of gravity or by sheer chance, in either case, it is not responsible for what it does. It could not help falling. The principle is the same concerning man's chosen deeds. For either they are caused to be as they are or they are not. Whether a man behaves as he does due to some cause or entirely apart from any cause at all, in any case, he is not responsible for (able to avoid) what he does.

Therefore, man is never responsible and cannot ever become responsible for any of his actions at any time. The recognition of this fact depends solely upon one's ability to think sensibly and fairly. It does not depend upon a personal conviction that the Scriptures are the Word of God, much less upon any judgment that our exegesis thereof is correct. Indeed, even if both of these were to be rejected, it would still remain true that man is not responsible and that free will is a foolish myth. Unless we have a secret fondness for myths (at least when it comes to this subject), we will be grateful to see them exposed and disproved.

Whether causality should be affirmed or denied, either way, free will is false. Thus we possess conclusive evidence that free will is not only a mistaken position, but is logically impossible, and consequently, inconceivable. The acceptance of this fact, however, requires not only intellectual honesty but genuine *understanding*.

This issue is far from complex, and where understanding is granted, is easy to comprehend. We cannot expect assurance, however, apart from understanding, for true assurance is impossible apart from genuine understanding. May we be growing into maturity (Col.1:28), "into all the riches of the assurance of understanding, unto a realization of the secret of the God and Father, of Christ, in Whom *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *concealed*" (Col.2:2,3).

Otherwise, even where simple and sufficient evidence

is given —perhaps we should say, especially where this is the case—it may not yet be *recognized*. While stubbornness is certainly a cause of the rejection of truth, so is a lack of understanding. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter (Prov.25:2), and, in His greatness, even as He is able to reveal the most complex things imaginable, He is also able to hide the simplest things conceivable.

Samuel Johnson had the perfect answer to the man who has not yet been convinced by sufficient proof: "Sir," he said, "I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding."⁴ If, however, in the case of the reader, the light is beginning to dawn, it is important that you act upon your newfound knowledge, thus being *adjusted* by it while *rejoicing* in it (*cf* 2 Cor.13:11). Indeed, since we are men, and, "men love the darkness rather than the light" (John 3:19), "be *walking* while you have the light, lest the darkness may be overtaking you" (John 12:35).

INVIGORATION BY GRACE

So many, inferring ability from duty, have claimed, "I ought, therefore I can." This simply does not follow, and it is not true. Others have cleverly said, "Though you cannot, Christ can, and He will if you will only let Him." If it were acknowledged that both any "letting" of our own and any action in us by our Lord were themselves entirely the work of God in His own time and way, we would gladly concur. As these are denied, we cannot do so. Apart from the truth of God's deity, any talk of "letting the Lord have His way," degenerates into ill-disguised religious self-help, for it gives the vital glory to man, upon whom all depends.

We are indeed entreated to put on the new humanity and to think and walk ideally in every way, according

4. Samuel Boswell, LIFE OF JOHNSON, 6 vols., 4:313; New York: Oxford University, 1970

to the apostle Paul's wise counsel which he got from the Lord. This includes our implementation of the panoply of God. But what we are not entreated to do is to create those influences which will cause us to heed these very counsels. For this we have a God, *and He will see to all our needs*.

This simple point is of great significance—indeed it is revolutionary—and, as it begins to influence us more, it will remove much of our self-hatred for our failures *while enabling us to obey*. This is so, even though we will have to bear the proud attitudes of others who cannot understand, since they do not rely on God alone for victory but ultimately look to themselves.

Having the spirit of sonship, as those who are loving God and are fond of the Lord Jesus Christ, we long to be well pleasing. We already *have* a new disposition and a new walk. It is too late for us to do our part by attempting to work one up. We are invigorated in the Lord and in the might of *His* strength (Eph. 6:10). We are invigorated by the *grace* which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim.2:1), and so do not need to have any confidence in the flesh (Phil.3:3).

In addition, we are aware that ideal acts are beneficial and that all that are otherwise are destructive, both at present and at the dais of Christ. So as Paul says, “we are ambitious . . . to be well pleasing to Him” (2 Cor.5:9). We do not reason, Since I cannot help it if I should sin, let sin be increasing. Rather, we say, *Even though that is true*, if we should sin, we shall suffer and God will be displeased.

We do not need any help from myths about free will and contrary choice to give us an incentive to obey. Rather, we have *the word of God* which is *operating* in us who are believing (1 Thess.2:13). Therefore, let us pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2 Tim.2:22), recognizing our self-control and faithfulness for what they are, the fruit of the spirit, the spirit of our dear God and Father.

James Coram

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS LOVE

IN COMING to Romans 5 as it is introduced in the closing references to God and Jesus our Lord at the end of chapter 4, we resume the focus on God's evangel concerning His Son which was there in 1:16,17 and 3:21-28. But now there will not be so much playing on words, for Paul speaks plainly and openly of the death of Christ. "For Christ, while we are still infirm, still in accord with the era, for the sake of the irreverent, *dies* . . . God is commending this love of His to us, seeing that, while we are still sinners, Christ *dies* for our sakes" (Rom.5:6,8).

That is the bedrock of God's evangel concerning His Son. The Son of God dies. That is the bedrock of what we are believing. Jesus our Lord *is given up* (to death) because of our offenses (Rom.4:24,25). Christ *dies* for our sakes.

To be sure there is no evangel apart from God's rousing of His Son from among the dead. But He is roused *because* of our justifying which occurs in His death. "Now if Christ has not been roused, vain is [our] faith—[we] are still in [our] sins" (1 Cor.15:17). But it is His death which deals with our sins as sinners. "Judging this, that if one *dies* for the sake of all, consequently all *die* . . ." (2 Cor. 5:14). ". . . for one who dies has been justified from sin" (Rom.6:7). The death does the work, and the resurrection shouts the victory. "Where, Death, is your sting [of sin]?" (1 Cor.15:54,55).

Thus the evangel we have accepted is, first of all, "that Christ *dies* for our sins," and then to secure the fact that He really dies Paul adds "that He is entombed," and then he adds the joy-filled word "that He has been roused" (1 Cor.

15:3,4). Here as in Romans 5, it is the death of Christ that deals with our sins even as it does with the sinner and the whole problem of sin itself. Death and its sting of sin must die, but our death because of Adam does not bring this about. Only the death of the One in Whom we are created (Col.1:16) can do this.

Let us hear it again as summarized in Romans 5:8:

**'God is commending 'this love of ^{sf}His ^{to}to us,
Seeing **that**, while **we** 'are still sinners,
Christ dies ^{or}for our sakes.**

Here there are three (God, His Son, and human beings) as in Romans 1;16,17 and 3:21-28. As *God's righteousness* is revealed (manifested and put on display) in the previous passages, so *God's love* is now commended to our attention. As the source and channel of this revelation is Jesus Christ's *faith* earlier, so also this is now explicitly made known as His *death*. And as we are previously seen as believers who along with everyone else are *sinners*, we are now still seen as *sinners*, and as soon to be repeated here we are *sinners* along with everyone else.

In the center of this there is God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, as He is sent in the likeness of sin's flesh (Rom.8:3), coming in the likeness of human beings (Phil.2:7). "For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and human beings, a Human, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim.2:5). The *faith* of Jesus Christ is His obedience in humiliation unto the *death* of the cross (Phil.2:8).

Through this faith unto death God's righteousness is made known and His love is commended. It is not His righteousness in His righteous judgment of the irreverent and unrighteous human (including the Jew), for in view of our acts, not one of us can be justified, not even one (Rom. 3:10-20), and we all would get what we deserve (Rom. 1:32). That would be the end of it all. No indeed God's righteousness now manifested is one in which Christ's death is

the end of every sinner, (but not the person) and every sin of every sinner, even the death of the old humanity. This will be followed (in due time) by the vivifying (the making alive) of everyone *in Christ* (1 Cor.15:22).

In this way God's righteousness is a righteousness of love, and God's love is righteously expressed. God will have annihilated the old humanity and brought forth as a new humanity all who then will know God, having learned what God's righteousness, power, wisdom, glory and love are.

SIN ENTERS

In Romans 5:2 Paul adds the blessings of peace, and access to that of the joy of justification. Peace and access are the features of conciliation as Paul brings it out with clarity in verses 9-11. So with both justification and conciliation in view we come to Romans 5:12. This takes us back to Genesis 3 and leads us forward to God's evangel concerning His Son in terms that can hardly be mistranslated or misunderstood in verses 18 and 19.

But before that we come to verse 12 (which has been mistranslated and sadly misunderstood):

¹² **Therefore, even as through one human
'sin enters into the world,
And through 'sin 'death,
And thus 'death passes through into all human
beings,
On the basis of which all sin—**

This speaks of one human and his effect on all. This leads up to verses 18 and 19 which speak again of One and His effect on all. It has proved possible to mistranslate 5:12, but 5:18,19 can be translated (honestly) only as it is done in almost every version. The only way to make these two verses mean what they do not say is to introduce a problem that is not there or claim that Paul overstates the mat-

ter and does not really mean what he says.

¹⁸ **Consequently, then, as it is through one offense**

^{io}for all human beings ^{io}for condemnation,

Thus also it is through one righteous response

^{io}for all human beings ^{io}for life's justifying.

¹⁹ **For even as through the disobedience of the one**

human the many are constituted sinners,

Thus also through the obedience of the One

the many shall be 'constituted righteous.

There is no getting around it. The one offensive response of Adam to God's instruction is set in contrast to the one righteous response of Christ to God's will (*cf* Matt.26:39). In both cases what is done affects *all* human beings. The offense brings condemnation which stands in direct contrast to life's justifying which the righteous act of Christ in dying for the sake of sinners brings. The same pattern of contrasts affecting all human beings is repeated in verse 19. What comes about through the disobedience of the one human is that the many human beings are constituted sinners. What shall ultimately come about through the obedience of the other One, Jesus Christ, is that the same many human beings will be constituted righteous.

To say otherwise is not only to deny what is written here in God's Word, but to say that the obedience of Jesus Christ to the death of the cross was not enough for the justification of the sinner, for salvation from sin and death, for life of joy and peace, but requires something from us who are flawed even in our believing. But more than this, to say otherwise is to say that even we who are believing (to the extent than we may be blessed with a measure of the spiritual endowment of faith which God gives us) cannot be saved righteously.

Nevertheless many say otherwise than what Paul says in Romans 5:18,19 much to their loss at least in the present

era of their lives. Perhaps this is best seen in the translation of Romans 3:21-26 in the New International Version (NIV)¹ and comments on Romans 5:18,19 based on that translation.

Clarity is a major goal of the NIV along with *accuracy*. This is certainly commendable. Its translation of Romans 5:18,19 is as follows:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

As far as accuracy is concerned some details in vocabulary and verb form might be improved (in my opinion), but Paul's thought comes through with *clarity*. Commenting on this NIV reading, Everett F. Harrison writes, "One trespass brought condemnation for all humanity and one act of righteousness brought justification for all."² Nevertheless as with many other commentators, Professor Harrison finds the clarity going too far, for he adds: "Does the sweeping language used ('the many' being all men) suggest that all mankind will be brought within the circle of justification, so that none whatever will be lost? Some have felt so. But if the doctrine of universalism were being taught here, Paul would be contradicting himself, for he has already pictured men as perishing because of sin (2:12; *cf.* 1 Cor.1:18). Furthermore, his entire presentation of salva-

1. NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION OF THE HOLY BIBLE: Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1978.

2. Everett F. Harrison, in THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY, Frank. E. Gabelein, General Editor, vol.10, Zondervan (Regency), Grand Rapids, 1976, p.64.

tion has emphasized the fact that justification is granted only on the basis of faith. We must conclude, therefore, that only as 'the many' are found in Christ can they qualify as belonging to the righteous" (p.65).

CONTRADICTIONS

Paul does not contradict himself. What he says in Romans 5:18,19 is not a suggestion but a declaration. The NIV clearly renders the Greek as a statement of truth: "the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men . . . through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." Professor Harrison takes this to say that "one act of righteousness brought justification for all." The translation and its explanation might be improved, but they are definitely worded as true statements, not suggestions. And there is not the slightest hint that some important qualification is left out. The words stand as they are.

However if Paul's "entire presentation of salvation has emphasized that justification is granted only on the basis of faith," and "faith" is understood as the believer's faith there is a contradiction. Romans 1:17 and 3:21,22 as rendered in the NIV as follows:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

. . . a righteousness from God, apart from law has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus . . .

It is certainly a contradiction to say that justification is granted only on the basis of the [believer's] faith" and then

to say that "one act of righteousness [of Jesus Christ] was justification that brings life for all men [i.e. human beings]," and "through the obedience of the one man [Jesus Christ] the many [who were made sinners through Adam] will be made righteous."

How can this contradiction be eliminated? Is it caused by taking Romans 5:18,19 as meaning what it says? Or does the problem lie with the translation and understanding of the meaning of Romans 1:17 and 3:21-24 which has been held by many at least from the sixteenth century? The translation of Romans 5:18,19 is not in dispute; it is only the meaning that is in dispute. But the translation of Romans 1:17 and 3:21-26 (besides many other passages which relate faith to justification or salvation or any other such happy achievement) is very much in dispute.

The contradiction is introduced by the claim that Paul's "entire presentation of salvation has emphasized the fact that justification is granted only on the basis of [the believer's] faith." There is no contradiction with Romans 5:18,19 if Paul's entire presentation of salvation announces the fact that justification is granted only on the basis of [Jesus Christ's] faith, and that the believer's faith is the condition in which God grants a special salvation, including reckoning to the believer already what Christ has gained for all.³

HARMONY

Let us therefore, look again at the revised CV of Romans 1:16,17 and 3:21-22 in which there is no contradiction with the fifth chapter:

¹⁶ **For not 'ashamed' am I of the evangel:**

For it 'is God's power' ¹⁰for salvation to everyone 'who

3. The Scriptures also tell of a special choice and calling pertaining to Israel with the nations in a future period of a thousand years, but that also is based on what Christ has done for all.

is believing it—to the Jew first, and to the Greek as well.
¹⁷ For in it God's righteousness is being revealed^o out of faith, ¹⁸for faith, according as it is written^o: ¹⁹Now the Righteous One, out of faith shall He be living^o

²¹ Yet now, apart from law, God's righteousness has been made manifest^o (being attested^o by the law and the prophets), ²² yet God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith ²³for all (and on all who are believing it), for there is no^t distinction, ²⁴ for all sin and are wanting^o of the glory of God, ²⁵ being justified^o gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance, the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus

As for God, the issue of His own righteousness is prominent and fundamental in the CV translation of Romans 1:16,17; 3:21-24, just as His love is the foundation of the evangel in chapter 5. God takes first place as the Operator of all.

As for God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the revelation, even the manifestation of God's righteousness is secured in and channeled through Christ's faith according to the above translation, just as God's love is commended by means of Christ's death according to chapter 5. Christ takes second place as Mediator of justification and salvation.

As for human beings, all are sinners who can be justified and saved unto joy and peace only by Christ's faith unto death as directed by His God and Father (and our God and Father) Who in every way is righteous and rich in love. In this deliverance the believer is already reckoned righteous with a special salvation. But the end of sin and death and enmity in life's justifying and being constituted righteous is *for* all.

But God's evangel concerning His Son is not completed in Romans, nor does Romans direct our attention to all its connections with God's promises given before through His prophets in holy scripture. There is much for us to

search out. And there is much still to come before the glory of God's righteousness and love is fully realized by all throughout the universe—that we may safely say.

ALL SIN—CHRIST DIES—GOD IS GLORIFIED

Let us reverse the order and look at God's evangel from our standpoint as things are seen to be. Here we are as described in very unpleasant terms in Romans 1:18-3:20 and summed up so directly and simply in Romans 3:23 and 5:12—"all sin."

We are failures. God has created us, and (this is the really hard part many to accept) He is responsible. That is why Christ dies. That is why God spares not His own Son but gives Him up for us all. God, Whose most essential quality is love has brought about a world of chaos, vanity and darkness to which He sends the Son of His love to die in pain and sorrow, shame and forsakenness so that His love may be known, and this as a righteous love. To God be the glory!

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

There are a number of differences in translation between the NIV and CVNT in Romans 1:16,17 and 3:21,22. Most are minor and do not significantly affect Paul's thought. But the following stand out as important and critical matters of faith:

(1.) In both passages the NIV has "a righteousness from God" where the CVNT has simply "God's righteousness."

(2.) The NIV brings over Habakkuk 2:24 as referring to "the righteous" while the CVNT has "the Righteous One."

(3.) Where the NIV has "through faith in Jesus Christ," the CVNT has "through Jesus Christ's faith" in 3:22.

(4.) Following those renderings in verse 22, the NIV has simply "to all who believe," but the CVNT reads "for all (and on all who are believing it)."

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

As true as it may be God's evangel concerning His Son is not a manifestation of righteousness *from* God. All good things come from God (for all is out of God), but this is not what Romans 3:21,22 is saying. The righteousness here is not the justification of the sinner, by means of Christ's faith (which also is true). It is that the justification of every sinner by means of the faith of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of *God's righteousness*. What Christ's death means to us must take second place to what it means to God. And if it does not reveal that God is righteous the evangel comes to us without its most fundamental basis. The manifestation of God's righteousness precedes the commendation of His love, so that, as noted above in this article, we come to see that God's love is a righteous love.

Long we may meditate on and enslave our minds to the fact that God's sparing not of His own Son but giving Him up for all of us sinners manifests God's righteousness as well as commending His love. There is no *manifestation* of God's righteousness in God's righteous judgment, nor in His operations apart from the sending of His Son to die, not even in His heeding of Abel's sacrifice and not heeding that of Cain, nor in the preservation of Noah and Noah's three sons and their wives while everyone else was put to death in the deluge, nor in God's choice of Israel, nor in His choice of us as members of the body of Christ, *except* as all these acts of mercy and kindness *and grace* are connected with the death of Christ and God's rousing of Him out from among the dead. It is only here that we may see God's righteousness.

How important is this revelation that God is righteous? It is absolutely critical. God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). Yet the world is filled with unrighteousness, irreverence, transgression, sin and

offense. So also it is filled with dangers, sufferings and vanity. We may say, in truth, that there is good mixed in it all, and occasions of happiness and peace, but what we see and experience is as a whole hardly a testimony to God's righteousness. It is only as we believe God's evangel concerning His Son that God's righteousness is made manifest, even God's righteousness in all that occurs.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE RIGHTEOUS ONE

It was revolutionary when A. E. Knoch wrote in an article published in *Unsearchable Riches*⁴ in 1916, the following:

"The faith of Christ is brought before us in the otherwise enigmatical statement 'from faith *to* faith.' There are two faiths in view. The latter is our faith; the former is Christ's. Justification is founded on His faith: It is conferred on our faith . . . Just as it was in Abram's case, faith and righteousness are inseparably linked together. Not only that righteousness will be ascribed to us as it was to Abraham when we, too, believe God, but the faith of Jesus Christ is always put as the basis out of which this blessing flows."

Yet it was not seen clearly at that point that Jesus Christ is the "Just [Righteous] One" of Habakkuk 2:4, and so every CV edition to the present has "the just one," indicating that Paul saw the human who believes God being in view in the Habakkuk quotation. Indeed there was no evidence in 1916 that the prophet's words referred to Christ, and Martin Luther's understanding of this text stood supreme in Brother Knoch's mind, despite his insight regarding "out of faith" in the previous line. No coordination was noted between the "*out* of [Christ's] faith" and the "out of faith" by which the **JUST ONE** would be living. Yet now the evidence is very strong that this title refers to

4. vol.7, pages 266, 267.

Christ in Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38 just as it does in Acts 3:14; 7:32 and 22:14 (see also Isaiah 53:11).

How important is it that we see the words **THE RIGHTEOUS** refer to Jesus Christ our Lord? It is extremely important to us who are believing God's evangel *concerning His Son*, that He is explicitly introduced here in Romans 1:17. He must not be left out of this opening preview of the evangel. And certainly we must not take His place as the ones out of whom God's righteousness is revealed and through whom God's righteousness has been made manifest.

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST'S FAITH

That Paul speaks of the Righteous One's faith in Romans 1:17 and similarly of Jesus Christ's faith in Romans 3:22 (as well as making the same association of faith with our Lord in a number of places throughout his epistles) is the theme of this present series of studies. To me it is firmly settled that these passages refer to Christ's faith, not to our faith in Christ. God's evangel concerning His Son speaks of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord's faith in giving Himself unto the death of the cross. To focus on Christ's faith as the channel of the manifestation of God's righteousness and commendation of His love in the justification and salvation of sinners is our joy and our peace as well as the channel of God's power for present salvation. To suppose that Paul speaks of our faith in these passages does not keep out boasting in ourselves or bring in assurance of salvation, let alone lead us forward in the appreciation of God's righteousness and the abundant measure of His love. Nor indeed does it strengthen our awareness of and thankfulness for the spiritual endowment of faith which comes from the righteous God of love.

This, then, is of the highest practical importance to us day by day as we live our lives in infirm and dying flesh

within this present wicked eon. Jesus Christ is the faithful One Who dies for us in pain and rejection, even forsaken by God, so that we may be constituted righteous in living, as He is living, unto God.

TWO PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Despite the omission of the words "and on all" in the earliest extant Greek manuscripts the CV continues to include them. The short reading, "for all the believing (one)s" appears in codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, which are the basis of the Concordant Greek Text, carefully handwritten in the fourth and fifth centuries (as well as a fragment written on papyrus even earlier). That is certainly a strong point in its favor. Yet the long reading with two prepositional phrases, "for all and on all the believing (one)s" is found in the majority of all the preserved handwritten Greek manuscripts up to the introduction of printing. And it also is added to Codex Sinaiticus by its principal editor who claimed to work from a compilation of mostly scriptural writings made in the second century, whose editings are given special attention in our Greek Text. I believe this longer reading accords best with the context and is well defended by the fact that in transcribing from one text to another omissions are more likely than additions.

The current theory of textual scholars is that the short reading, "for all the believing (one)s" was combined with another reading "*on* all the believing (one)s" (which appears in some early manuscripts, mostly Latin, producing the longer reading. But a strict combination would be "for all the believing (one)s, and on all the believing (one)s." This would have settled the question of whether both "for" and "on" had the same object. But the reading we accept (and as used by the AV and all English translations up to present times) was often seen as providing two distinct

thoughts: "for all [human beings], and on all believers." Thus in his commentary on Romans⁵ first published in the nineteenth century, Robert Haldane wrote: "While it [this righteousness] is proclaimed to all men, it is actually *upon* believers . . . placed *upon* them as a robe" (p.141). Thus the Calvinistic idea of a double predestination was preserved. And this is reflected in such Bible translations as Robert Young's Literal Translation (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids) and Darby's *The Holy Scriptures* (Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, Kingston-on-Thames, England) by placing a comma after the first "all." Starting with the 1944 edition, the CV also separates the first prepositional phrase, "for all," from the second, "and on all who are believing," but with the understanding that the revelation of God's righteousness manifested through Jesus Christ's faith is actually for all human beings, and will be actually realized by us all, and furthermore it is already placed *on* (in a sense parallel to "reckoned to") those who are believing it. So that this present distinction not be overlooked, the CVNT puts the second phrase in parentheses. Thus it can be seen that the evangel declared here in Romans 3 speaks of blessing gained by means of Christ's death is for all mankind, while having a special application to believers, just as this is made clear in Romans 4 and 5.

How important is this distinction between "all" and "all who are believing"? It carries forward the coherence of the opening chapters of Romans in the critical matters of God's righteousness in the creation of all and His purpose of good for all. It does so while preserving the revelation of God as the Saviour of all especially of those who are believing. Indeed Paul writes to believers, but not as though they were wholly exclusive from unbelievers. We

5. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1958.

are included in the "for all," that great mass of human beings from Adam forward, all of whom will receive ultimately what God has achieved *for* them in the giving of His Son. But not all are included now in the "on all" (to whom we would make known this evangel that they may join in the blessing of perceiving God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith).

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

Romans 5 ends with that joy-filled phrase, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom.5:21) which recalls the beginning words of the epistle: "Paul . . . having been severed for God's evangel . . . concerning His Son . . . Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom.1:1-4). God's righteousness has been made manifest *through* Jesus Christ's faith for all (and on all who are believing it), for all sin and are wanting of the glory of God, being justified gratuitously in His grace *through* the deliverance, the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom.3:21-24). "Therefore, even as through one human sin enters into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passes through into all human beings, on the basis of which all sin—[Rom.5:12] . . . even as through the disobedience of the one the many are constituted sinners, thus also *through* the obedience of the One the many shall be constituted righteous" (Rom.5:19).

GRACE SUPEREXCEEDS

"Yet law comes in by the way, that the offense would increase. Yet where sin increases, grace superexceeds, that even as sin reigns in death, thus also grace should reign through righteousness for life eonian through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom.5:20,21).

Consequently through Jesus Christ's faith, in that while we are still sinners He dies for our sakes, yet not for believers' sakes alone, but for all. *This is God's evangel of grace*

which is the gratuitous gift of joy through the death of our Lord, yet not for us alone, but for all, while placed on us and reckoned to us in spirit already.

“What, then, shall we be declaring? That we may be persisting in sin that grace would increase? May it not come to that! We who die to sin, how shall we still be living in it?” (Rom.6:1,2).

Here then is the evangelical meaning of Christ's death as it relates to us who are believing that He dies for us (even as He dies for all). We are baptized (in spirit) into Christ Jesus's death! We are entombed together with Him into that death, that even as Christ is roused from among the dead ones, through the glory of the Father, thus we also should walk in newness of life (Rom.6:3,4). This evangel which declares that in that Christ dies, we as we are in the old humanity die (the fact form of the verb “die” does not speak of time, but of simple truth). The explanation of how Christ's death can bring about salvation is that when He dies the old humanity also dies as absolutely and finally as Christ as the One Who was made sin dies. This is what theology calls so poorly “the theory of the atonement,” not that Christ died in our place, but that the sinner died in and with Him. And this is not for ourselves alone but is true of all human beings. “For the love of Christ is constraining us, judging this, that if One dies for the sake of all, consequently all die” (2 Cor.5:14). This evangel “is being God's power to everyone who is believing it” (Rom.1:16). It is not the law which is being God's power every day for salvation from the wretchedness of the war between that law and the law of sin and death which is in our members (Rom.7:18-24). It is rather “God's law” of grace and peace through Jesus Christ, our Lord that rescues us (Rom.7:25).

D.H.H.

Unsearchable Riches

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
FOR GOD AND HIS WORD

Our 115th Year
(1909–2024)

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Malaysian Agent: Jeff Sta Maria, No. 35, Jalan Spektrum, U16/19, Bukit Subang, Shah Alam 40160. Phone 603-78436090.

Netherlands Agent: Andries Van der Wal, E-H Depot, P.O. Box 85111, 3009 MC Rotterdam. Phone 010-420-6260.

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EDITORIAL

It has been extremely difficult for me in these days of my increasing dissolution to put together a further revision of Romans 5:12-6:23 together with comments and explanations. Yet I feel there are important matters here which at least need to be brought out whether or not it is done with clarity. Too often Romans 6 has been taken as a sort of correction of Romans 5 in which it is supposed the case is overstated. May it not come to that. There is complete harmony between the joyous gratuity of God's evangel concerning His Son and what is said about our walk in newness of life and our enslavement.

First of all let me say that the scripture in translation is far more important than my explanations, and this is so even without any revision. But what is being said in this passage and within its near and far context? Using the word "listening" for "obedience" I take it that our job as believers is to listen to what God says to us in this passage—yes, that we listen from the heart to the type of teaching to which we are given over. It is not a teaching of law but rather of grace which is essentially joy. It is a teaching of God's joy which reveals God's righteousness and commends His love. It is a teaching which tells of Jesus Christ's listening unto the death of the cross—or as we learned earlier in Romans, a teaching of Jesus Christ's *faith* which is for our faith.

What our Lord heard with perfect and full submission was *instruction* from His God and Father. And so our present use of the word "obedience" may seem appropriate. But what we hear is *revelation*, and our present usage of the word obedience is not very enlightening in that context and even seems to work mischief. How can one carry out a revelation of God's righteousness? The point of the Greek word [*h*]upakoê (UNDER-HEARING) is to listen, to

pay attention to what is heard. The listening is fundamental. And so it was for our Lord.

So we are to listen to God's message of gratuitous joy in the crushing of His beloved Son! And we are to listen to the message of Christ Jesus's faith in giving Himself up because of our offenses and dying for us while we are still sinners.

Believing and listening are mental activities. We are directed to pay attention in mind and heart to what God has done through His Son (note how often the preposition "through" is used in Romans 5:17-21 in relation to Jesus Christ as the channel of our blessings). The death of the sinner in the death of Christ is God's evangel concerning His Son in Romans 6:2,3. The rousing of Christ is set forth as the pattern of our future walk in newness of life (Rom.6:4). Both our death with Christ in His death and the assurance of living together with Him are brought forward in 6:5-11. There is so much joy in all these passages where God speaks of that which is not as though it were, for it has been accomplished with assurance in the death of Christ and assured in His rousing. It is not a passage of what we must or ought to do in order to secure our blessings, but of what God has done through His Son's death, and of what shall be because of that most glorious and critical event. To such joyous revelations we are to enslave our minds. Thus we are to be reckoning (taking into account) ourselves to be dead to sin and living to the God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I have not drawn attention here to A. E. Knoch's two articles concerning the joint body of Christ and its future place as the complement of Christ in His work of completing all—nor to James Coram's article concerning the One out of Whom and through Whom is all. But such glories rest on the death and rousing of Christ Jesus our Lord, so that all themes of Scripture stand in harmony around His death and resurrection.

D.H.H.

BOTH BLESSED *TOGETHER*
IN A *JOINT* BODY

“Who makes *both* [groups, Uncircumcision and Circumcision] *one* . . . creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace . . . reconciling *both in one body* to God through the cross”
(Eph.2:14-16).

IN THE PRECEDING article of this series, we have shown that there was “an allotment from God” (Rom.8:17) for believers among the nations long before Ephesians was written. Even in those days, long before Paul came to Rome, the same believers were known to be *members* of the body of Christ (Rom.12:5; 1 Cor.12:12-31).

Also that the believers among the nations were joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus through Paul’s evangel, was made known early in his ministry. It is the burden of the latter half of the book of Acts. Writing to the Roman saints (Rom.1:7) speaking of the contribution about to be taken for the Jerusalem saints (15:26), Paul declares: “If the nations *participate* in their spiritual things, they ought to minister to them in fleshly things also” (Rom.15:27).

Since the Ephesian secret evidently did not consist in being an “heir” or allottee, or in membership in the body of Christ, or in participation in the promise, wherein does it lie? Its whole point and force is found in that thrice-repeated word *TOGETHER*, *fellow*, or, as we have rendered it, *joint* (Eph.3:6). The joint body, as we have pointed out before, is the result of vivifying, rousing and seating

together, among the celestials, *both groups* of believers, those from among the nations, and the Pauline Jews (Eph. 2:5,6). The apostle refers to the two groups as “nations” (or “Uncircumcision”) and “Circumcision” respectively (Eph.2:11).

The believers among the nations could not have been *joint* allottees before because the allotment was on the earth and Israel must have the supreme position there. They must always be aliens from the earthly commonwealth. They could only be guests (Eph.2:12). The Jew was first (Rom.1:16; 2:9). The nations were Israel’s debtors (Rom.15:27).

The secret reveals that the believers among the nations as a group have been accorded an allotment, a membership in a body, and a partnership in the promise which Paul had preached, all *in equal measure, in as high degree, and in every way the same* as that given to the group of Pauline Jews to whom they are united. This is the message of the small but emphatic prefix *joint*.

These three distinct items of the secret are each elaborated in the first two chapters of the Ephesian epistle. Ephesians 1:3-14 deals with the first item, the allotment or “inheritance,” and concludes by giving the nations the same seal, the same spirit, hence the same allotment, as Paul and his fellow Israelites. Ephesians 1:20-2:10 deals with the second item, the one body, and shows that the nations are blessed in it equally with the Jews. Ephesians 2:11-22 shows that the physical inferiority of the nations no longer bars them from the fullest participation in the promise of Paul’s evangel, which is the third item.

Each of the three unfoldings of the secret is concerned with a different relationship¹. The *Godward* side is seen in connection with the celestial allotment. It is concerned

1. cf chart in volume 53, page 132.

with our place in His predestination and plan and purpose. The *Christward* side comes before us in dealing with the joint body, of which He is the Head. The *manward* side of the mystery is developed in dealing with our joint participation with all believers.

JOINT ALLOTTEES

The *Godward* aspect of the mystery comes before us first (Eph.1:3-14). It is divided into two sections. In the first (1:3-12) the allotment of Paul and the Israelites associated with him is transferred from earth to heaven. The blessedness of this group is among the celestials. They reign, not on earth, but in the wider sphere of the universe. In the other section (1:13,14) the nations as a group—“*you also*”—are accorded the same allotment because they have received the same spirit, and have the same pledge. Hence they are joint enjoyers of these celestial honors.

THE JOINT BODY

The *Christward* side of the secret is developed next (Eph.1:20-2:10). First He, as the Head of the whole universe, is given His place above all. Then His body is introduced as His complement. Israel will be His instrument in earth’s redemption. The ecclesia which is His body will supply what is needed in the heavens. Thus it is the complement of the One Who is completing the entire universe (cf Eph.1:23). Christ, including the members of His body, will administer the government of the empyrean.

What place will the nations have in this? On earth they must be the subjects of Israel. In the heavens, however, the celestials are the subjects. The body was made up of both Jew and Gentile. In this new sphere, are the Jews to keep their superior place? They are not. First, the apostle addresses the believers among the nations—“*And you*” (2:1). In the third verse he turns to the Israelites—“*among whom we.*” But both groups are included when He

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vivifies us together (2:5),
rouses us together (2:6) and
seats us together (2:6)

among the celestials, in Christ Jesus. Hence the two groups are of equal rank. Both are blessed *together* in a *joint* body.

CREATING ONE NEW HUMANITY

The cross is the end of the old creation in regard to the *flesh* and *circumcision* and *approach to God*. In Galatia the apostle put the Judaizers in their place, who made much of flesh and the religious rites of Judaism. That belongs to the evangel of the Kingdom, which will flower during the millennium. But it has no place today, for, in spirit, we are already beyond that eon. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation (Gal.6:15). The new creation is not a figure confined to Ephesians and applied to the “mystery” or the one body. It is never applied to these directly. It has to do with *mankind*, with the vanishing of the fleshly preeminence of the favored nation in its approach to the Deity, as will be the case in the literal new creation, after the thousand years.

Ephesians simply repeats and reapplies the figure of the new creation to the relation between those who were near and those far from God. Its two main and complementary occurrences (Eph.2:15; 4:24) deal with the *new humanity* (in the third item of the secret), not with the joint body (the second item, Eph.1:20-2:10; 5:21-6:9). Those who confound these two figures will never be able to see the truth of the joint body clearly. In Ephesians 2:13-18 the apostle is dealing with two classes of believers, those among the nations and those in Israel, two distinct groups. Just as it will be in the thousand years, those among the nations were far off even if they were believers. There was a wall between them and God, which was made by their flesh and

deals with Joint Participation

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by the decrees (Acts 15:20) of the apostles. They belonged to a humanity split into two by the rite of circumcision.

In the future the nations who were kept at a distance during the millennium will be brought near in the new creation (Rev.21:1-4). They will not worship a distant God, shut up in a temple to which only the Circumcision have access. God will be with them Himself. There will be a new humanity. Religiously, the cleavage between Jew and Gentile will disappear. Priesthood will vanish. That is the message of Ephesians to believers now. The figure of the new creation which Paul had previously brought in to show God’s relationship to all mankind at present, that is, the conciliation, he now uses afresh to show that the barrier keeping believers out of God’s presence has been abolished and they enjoy the same access to God that Israelites have, not because of a creation confined to saints, but because of one affecting *all humanity*. Only the believers, however, enter this *new humanity* now, for it is a matter of joint *participation* in faith and spirit.

In fullest accord with this revelation concerning a new humanity in the doctrinal section of Ephesians, we find a similar statement in the second half, dealing with deportment. To see the exquisite symmetry of this, study the structure of Ephesians.² These two references to the *new humanity* in the new creation are in the complementary sections dealing with *joint participation* (the third item of the secret), not with the figure of the joint body (the second item). Putting on the new humanity (Eph.4:24) deals with conduct, and is not nearly so limited in its scope as the figure of the new humanity in 2:15. The corruption and seduction of the old humanity go, and the righteousness and benignity of the new are to be put on, just as the millennial conditions, ending in the great apostasy, vanish and give place to a new creation in which righteousness dwells.

2. Volume 59, page 64; cf volume 53, page 138.

INDIVIDUAL CREATION

Twice we have the figure of an individual new creation, once in Paul's earlier epistles (Gal.6:15) and once in his perfection group (Eph.2:10). In both cases the context deals with the same themes as the corporate creations. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a *new creation*. After dealing with the conduct of Jew and Gentile, we read that we are His achievement, being *created* in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them. It is really a picture which will be fulfilled literally by those on the new earth, when religious distinctions will be done away. God has prepared only good works for them, and they are part of a new creation, hence sin will be almost unknown at that time.

ONE BODY AND ONE NEW HUMANITY

The figure of "one body" is also used in a variety of ways, as we shall see. In Ephesians 2:15,16 the one body simply denotes that two groups of believers, those of the Circumcision and those of the Uncircumcision, are now changed into *one* body. Literally this cannot be done. Figuratively such things can be done, and often occur. The body of a *man* and a body of *people* are not subject to the same limitations, nor can they be made the object of the same reasoning. We cannot reason about figures as we do about facts. The creation of one new humanity (Eph.2:15) is connected with the *reconciliation* of the two classes of believers, just as the creation in 2 Corinthians 5:17 was concerned with the *conciliation* of mankind. One is based on the other. The secret of the *evangel* flows from conciliation, and the *third* item of the secret (joint partakers) flows from this reconciliation of two groups of believers.

ONE BODY COMPOSED OF GROUPS

Let us seek to settle clearly in our minds what is literally intended by the figure of a "body." This faded implication is used so freely in English that we apply the term to any aggregation of persons or things, or to the mass of anything. In the passage we have already considered (Eph. 2:16) it is used in this way. Two groups accepted Paul's teaching. The Circumcision were near, the Uncircumcision were far. The flesh separated them. In spirit, in Christ, these two became *one*. That is the *one* body. In this case the adjective *one* is prefixed to express the fact that there are no divisions among believers today, for we all have one spirit. There is only *one* body, *not* many groups, as there seem to be in Christendom today, humanly speaking.

In Ephesians 2:15,16 it seems clear that the one body results from the union of two groups, a thought altogether foreign to the figure as used before in Romans and Corinthians. There there were *many* members and *many functions*. Here it is not a question of functioning, but of *peace* and *reconciliation* between two groups. These two aspects should be kept entirely distinct. It is the special message of Ephesians, which recognizes and adapts the body made of members, but *adds* to it the body made of differing or hostile groups. This is its peculiar and crowning revelation, which culminates in the secret that, in spirit, the nations are not only joint enjoyers and joint partakers, but a *joint body* (Eph.3:6).

THE JOINT BODY

Mature reflection has convinced me that the force of the prefix *sun* (joint) does not refer to the many members of the body so much as to the two unequal *groups* of which it was composed, the Circumcision, who were near, and the Uncircumcision, who were afar off. Now that both

are near, in spirit, the cleft between them is gone, and it has become a joint body, in which both are of equal rank; the two *groups* have been reconciled.

It is this special figure, one body composed of both Circumcision and Uncircumcision (or any other groups), which brings about peace or reconciliation among the believers (Eph.2:16). By the cross all fleshly distinctions, and all attainments, privileges, pride, or other causes of division, are set aside, so that no strife has a right to raise its head. In entreating the believers, therefore, to keep the unity of the spirit with the tie of *peace*, the *first* unity is the *one body* (Eph.4:4). No different or dissenting *groups* are to be in this body, or it will disturb this peace. And has the experience of well nigh two millennia not shown us that, where this unity is not kept, there is strife and contention?

ONE BODY COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUALS

But there is another aspect of this figure used especially in Paul's earlier epistles, which we ourselves have never clearly distinguished. That is, a body composed of *many individual members* (Rom.12:4,5; 1 Cor.12:12-27). This is referred to as the *body of Christ*, for each member is anointed by the Spirit, and all together they form a living organism which is to Christ what our body is to us, the medium through which we operate. This is referred to in Ephesians 1:23: the *ecclesia* which is His body, the complement of the One Who is completing the All in all; 4:12, 13: the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all . . . ; 4:16: the entire body, being articulated together . . . making for the growth . . . for the upbuilding of itself in love; 5:30: we are members of His body.

Even in this aspect we can see vast differences in the figure, according to its application. In Romans and Corinthians the point is *variety in unity*. One body, but many *members* with varying *functions*. In Ephesians 1:23 the

body is the *complement* of Christ in His Headship of all. In 4:12,13,16 the picture is altogether different, for there the vital union serves for *growth*. In 5:30 the scene changes once again to the *nourishing* and *cherishing* which we humans accord the physical frame.³ Almost every occurrence of the figure of the "body" has a setting of its own, and we ought always to regard it in our expositions.

Let us always keep the many aspects of this figure distinct. Let us never confuse the *body of Christ*, and Christ as the Head of the body. The figures are very different, even if the word "body" is used in both. In one, Christ is one of the members of the body, the Head, and the rest is *subject* to Him. In the other *all* the members, including the eyes in the head, are Christ's body, through which He works, and which He cherishes.

THE SEX OF THE BODY

Among the most humiliating aspects of my early effort to clear up the question of the body and the bride was the attempt to fix the sex of the body. I read some most remarkable statements on both sides. I now see how utterly inane it all was. If Paul could be both father and mother of the Thessalonians (1 Thess.2:7,11), then the *ecclesia* could be a bride as well as a body. Reasoning is most illogical here. Yet it may help some if we give the facts of the case, and point out some of the pitfalls into which we fell before we knew how to handle figures of speech.

The word *body*, in Greek as well as in English, has no sex at all. It can be used of the body of Dorcas (Acts 9:40) who was a woman, as well as of a man. Of course, when it is specifically used of Christ, we might infer that it is the

3. While the term "members" occurs 16 times in 1 Corinthians, we find it only twice in Ephesians, in 5:30 (as quoted before), and in 4:25 where "speaking the truth" is the point in view.

body of a male. But this is utterly beside the point, and worse than useless. Much was made, at one time, of the fact that the word *ekklêsia*, in Greek, is *feminine*, and this was used to prove that the body is *female*! From this was deduced that it was the bride of Christ! By similar mental processes we could prove that it has no males but is composed entirely of females!

One of our favorite methods was to bring in some other figure to show that the body is male. We thought that the “one new *man*,” of course, must be identical with the body of Christ, hence this was a favorite proof until we found out that *anthrōpos*, though masculine, simply meant *human*, or *humanity*. The new humanity of the future will not be composed of males only. Neither is the present figurative one. That would exclude the sisters from participation in the grace of Christ!

The latest along this line seems to be based on Ephesians 4:12,13, where we read of “the upbuilding of the body of Christ, unto the end that we should all attain to the unity of the faith and of the realization of the son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ, that we may by no means still be minors” Is it not evident that this passage deals with the *individuals* which compose the body, some of whom are minors and only some mature? The body at that time was evidently composed of both, and the gifts were given to make mature saints out of the minors. So that the phrase “mature *man*” is a *figure*, just as applicable to a woman as a man. It is not descriptive of the body as a whole, and cannot be used to determine its sex.

I understand that some go even further than this, in that they render the Greek word here (*anêr*) *husband*, and this is the status and goal of the church which is the body of Christ. This is so startling that it calls for investigation. But we must note first of all that the Greek of the Scriptures

has no term for “husband.” This word is simply *man*, that is, a man, not a child or a woman. How foolish it would be to translate it *husband* in all of its occurrences is evident from these samples: Jesus of Nazareth, a *husband* (Acts 2:22), I [Paul] am a *husband*, a Jew (Acts 22:3), or even this passage itself, unto a perfect *husband* (Eph.4:13). The Greek usually says *own man* for *husband*. That is why we read of your *own husband* (Eph.5:22). The word *husband* is only an idiomatic idiosyncrasy, and should not be made the basis of a new teaching such as this.

But why stop reasoning, once we have begun? If the body is a husband, it must have a wife. Who can this be? I suppose the bride, believing Israel, is the only one in view. But if our destiny is the heavens and theirs the earth, there is much ground to fear for our future felicity. They would be absent from each other most of the time! They would not be congenial. Their interests would be quite different. More than that, we would come into conflict with the real husband of the restored nation—Yahweh. They are not the bride of *Christ*, but of Yahweh. And we are not Yahweh. Our reasoning will not carry us that far. Into what absurdities do we fall when once we desert faith for fallible, foolish reasoning!

The rendering *husband* reminds us of a remarkable rendering in our Authorized Version, which the Revisers did not change. There we read that Paul had *espoused* the Corinthians to one *husband*! (2 Cor.11:2). This may have been understandable when the Authorized Version was made, but now it would be a crime to betroth a pure virgin to a man who is already a husband. I am inclined to regard the word rendered *espoused* or *betrothed*, not as *married*, but *engaged* to be married, and I find that the best German versions so render it. This is the real figure. Not a marriage, but the condition of a virgin before marriage, calls for singleness and purity in a special way.

Literally, Paul wished the Corinthians to be wholly and altogether for Christ. They could be this without literally becoming Israelites or taking a place in the Kingdom. We, members of the body, should be like this. Even if we should illustrate it by means of the marriage relation, that would not take us out of the body and put us in the bride. Figures are not facts.

The attempt to force the figure of the bride of Yahweh into one of Paul's epistles seems to me to be most unfortunate and reprehensible. A "proof" seems to be needed that the Corinthians were "Jewish," and since none can be found, one must be invented. Would we also lose our membership in the body of Christ and be joined to the bride of Yahweh if we should be *single* and *pure* toward Christ? This is all that the figure conveys.

ALIENS—FELLOW CITIZENS

In the preceding era, in flesh, the believers among the nations were aliens, having no civil rights, as it were, in the Kingdom which is Israel's (Eph.2:12,19), but at the crisis when the epistle was penned they became fellow-citizens, not, indeed, of Israel, but of the Jewish believers. Philip-pians takes up this figure and locates our citizenship above. It does not belong to the earth but to the heavens. Let us not confuse this figure with facts. Paul had a Roman citizenship in Tarsus (Acts 21:39; 22:28). There was no conflict between the two. One was for his body, the other for his spirit. In due course we will enjoy our celestial rights and drop our earthly ones.

GUESTS—MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

In the era before Ephesians, the Uncircumcision had rich *spiritual* possessions, but could not enter the family circle of Israel on account of their *fleshly* disabilities. They could only take the place of a *guest* at Israel's board. This

is a beautiful figure of the place of the nations when they participated in *Israel's* spiritual blessings. Now, however, our status is different. We have become members of God's family. We are not proselytes, or full-fledged Israelites, but, on another basis, not of the flesh, we are *bona fide* members of God's great family. A figure, not a fact. We do not need to desert our families, a wife or children, in order to enter this relationship. We retain both (Eph.2:12,19).

THE WIFE AND THE ECCLESIA

The husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is Head of the ecclesia (Eph.5:23). For years after I had fought myself free from the teaching that the church is the bride, I was very loath to consider any feminine figure for the ecclesia. Now I have no fear. The facts are clear. We must be *subject* to our Head. And why should not a wife learn from this subjection to find her true place in relation to her husband? If we go on and inflate this figure beyond its legitimate bounds, as we did with other figures, then there is cause for fear. Then we will come into conflict with the wife of Yahweh and of the Lambkin. But if we leave it without artificial additions, as it stands, all is well. There is not even any infringement on the fact that the husband is to love his wife as his own body—as Christ loves His ecclesia.

MINORS AND MATURE

Since "perfection" or maturity came with Paul's latest revelations (1 Cor.13:10), it is open to all believers to attain it. This figure has to do chiefly with the *disposition*. The Authorized Version rendering "in understanding be men" (1 Cor.14:20), should read "in disposition become mature." It was possible for some to whom the apostle Paul taught wisdom to be mature, because he divulged to them the secrets about to be revealed (1 Cor.2:6,7), yet the believers as a rule were immature minors, except in relation to

the law. The mere revelation of the present secret administration does not guarantee the *attainment* of maturity, but *makes it possible*. Paul admonished and taught in order to present every man mature in Christ Jesus (Col.1:28). The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were given to adjust the believers to the present era of maturity in order that they should not remain minors, surging hither and thither and being carried about by every wind of teaching . . . (Eph.4:11-14). Judging by this test, few have attained maturity yet. They are disposed to the playthings of childhood, religion, rites, self-righteousness, displays, power, and all that is not found in the cross of Christ. Those who are mature will find their disposition set forth in the Philippian letter (3:1-16).

ROOTED AND GROUNDED

Figures are by no means confined to the realm of which they speak. Some of the most magnificent figures in the Hebrew Scriptures represent the Lord as a wild beast. Here we have the saints pictured by a plant with roots sunk in the ground. The thoughts seem to be *sustenance* and *steadfastness*. A plant well-rooted lives and grows. Properly grounded, it stands sturdy and strong. Love is the soil in which we may thrive and stand. All *flesh* is grass, because it soon fades and vanishes. We are not in flesh but in spirit, and, with love as our garden bed, we will not emulate the grass, but grow and stand firm.

And now we pray that God will graciously grant the reader the spirit of patient and quiet investigation. It may be painful to forsake much that we have held dear, and which may have cost us much to gain and to maintain. But let us weigh these things before God. Let us take years to ponder our position, and to adjust ourselves if necessary to the divine message of the Ephesian epistle.

A. E. Knoch

JOINT PARTAKERS OF THE PROMISE

You were, in that era, apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel, and guests of the promise covenants, having no expectation, and without God in the world. (Eph.2:12)

In spirit the nations are to be joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which *I* became the dispenser. (Eph.3:6,7)

JOINT PARTAKERS

The manward aspect of the secret is the last to be elaborated (Eph.2:11-22). The distinction between Israel and the nations was a matter of flesh, summarized in the rite of circumcision. This left the nations, even after they believed the evangel, ineligible to the citizenship of Israel. Thus believers among the nations were aliens, mere guests of the covenants, with no expectation or God of their own, *as far as flesh is concerned*. But now that they are joint allottees and members of a joint body, and all their blessings are spiritual, the fleshly disabilities vanish. As a result they are *fellow* citizens, and members of God's family and built *together* for God's dwelling place *in spirit* (Eph.2:19-22).

It is of prime importance that we note the channel through which this grace flows. It is not that we are made "partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph.3:6, AV), but "*joint* partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, *through the evangel of which I [Paul] became the dispenser*" (CV). The apostle is not so absurd as to inform the Ephesians, or any other believers to whom this epistle was sent, that he was a minister of the gospel! He is

not telling them that they are joint partakers through the evangel of the Circumcision, which was proclaimed by the twelve, for they never can be blessed on equal terms with Israel in her earthly Kingdom. He is rather telling them that this grace comes to them through *the* evangel which *he* had been preaching to them, which he called "my evangel" (Rom.16:25), including the great truths of justification, conciliation, and glorification (Rom. chapters 3 to 8), which they had received, but which gave them a place subordinate to Israel in the flesh.

Hitherto they had a standing "in flesh," or on the physical plane. They were the Uncircumcision, and as such must take a lower place than the Circumcision. They were bidden to remember that time (Eph.2:11,12). This does not refer (as the translators evidently thought, judging by their rendering) to that time when they were unbelievers or "unsaved." It refers to the time when they were partakers, but not *joint* partakers. Then they were *guests of* (not *strangers to*) the covenants of promise. This they could not be before they believed. *From the physical standpoint* (not from the spiritual) they had no expectation, for Israel monopolized that. They even had to acknowledge the Deity as the God of Israel. If they should be physically present in Jerusalem, all of this would be painfully apparent to them. No matter how great their spiritual attainments, they dared not enter the temple precincts beyond the court allotted to them. They were emphatically not *joint* partakers.

But now that the secret *is* revealed, the Jew is not shut out of the holy places nor is the gentile kept at a distance, but both, *in spirit*, enter into the holiest of all. The fact that a Jew is not of the seed of Aaron cannot keep him out. Though the gentile is not of the seed of Israel, that does not bar his approach. Physical disabilities vanish before spiritual graces.

IN SPIRIT

We must not fail to emphasize the fact that every one of the three items of the mystery is modified by the introductory phrase, *in spirit*. All other translations I have ever seen join this with the preceding verb "revealed." They tell us that it was revealed "by the Spirit." There is little point to this, as that is the ordinary mode of revelation. Standing, as the word does, between two statements (Eph. 3:5,6), either ending one or beginning another, it must be emphatic. Once we see how important it is as applied to the secret, we cannot but connect it with the mystery.

The nations are not joint allottees in flesh; they are not members of a joint body in flesh; they are not joint participants in flesh. It is only *in spirit* that all this is true. Physical preeminence belongs to Israel. Physically the nations can claim no equality. Fleshly blessings have no place in Ephesians. They are not involved in the secret. We are blessed with all *spiritual* blessings among the celestials, hence the threefold divisions of the secret are all dominated by the opening phrase: *in spirit*.

The nations are joint enjoyers of the allotment because they were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, which was its earnest. They had a spiritual pledge of a spiritual portion (Eph.1:13). They are in the joint body because of the purely spiritual grace of being vivified and roused and seated together with a faithful remnant of Israel (Eph. 2:5,6). The believers among the nations, once the Uncircumcision as to flesh, kept at a distance from the material temple at Jerusalem, now have access, together with Pauline Jews, *in one spirit*, to the Father (Eph.2:18).

PAUL'S EVANGEL

Now that we have seen that the secret consists in a change from a subordinate place to a position of equal-

ity we will be able to judge its effect on previous revelation. As the allotment to Israel in the land will not brook any equality with the nations, an *entirely new allotment* is revealed, among the celestials. As the body of Christ was already in existence, a new body was unnecessary, but it was *modified into a joint body*. As the evangel Paul had preached was almost exclusively spiritual in its blessings it merely needed to *drop a few physical phases* to be the channel of the mystery.

As we are distinctly told that joint participation comes through the evangel Paul had been preaching, it is of the utmost importance that we give it a place in the administration of the mystery. *It continues in force*. The promise it brought is *not set aside*, but is definitely incorporated into this secret economy. There are only such minor modifications as the secret itself demands, due to the new destiny and the changed relations of the Jews and gentiles who come into its embrace.

In his itinerant ministry Paul deemed it necessary to speak to the Jews first (Acts 13:46). The priority of the Jew is recognized, even in his previous writings (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; 3:9). It is necessary to insist that this is no longer true, for it is contrary to the very essence of the secret now revealed. His previous teaching is modified by the addition of a celestial allotment and the withdrawal of all physical distinctions and blessings, for this is essential to the administration of the mystery.

Paul's previous proclamations, as presented in his Preparatory and Promise epistles, may be summed up in three words, Justification, Conciliation, and Glory. All three are the subjects of Romans, and its companion epistles, Corinthians and Galatians. The Thessalonian epistles also bring in the future glory in connection with the coming of our Lord. The revelation of the mystery does not involve a reconsideration of these great doctrines, but assumes

them, amplifies them, glorifies them. As they were all given to Paul after his separation from the rest, and in preparation for the secret economy about to be revealed, they are incorporated in it.

JUSTIFICATION

The grand doctrine of justification is not repeated in Ephesians, rather *it is recognized*¹. In the panoply provided for us in our conflict with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials is the cuirass of righteousness (Eph.6:14). True, this is composed of our actual conduct. But apart from the enjoyment of justification such conduct is impossible.

Philippians, the companion epistle of Ephesians, written to correct the conduct of those who come into the light of the mystery, clearly sets forth our connection with justification. There Paul eagerly grasps this grace. He had striven to attain to righteousness under the law. But now, "Things which were gain to me, these I have deemed a forfeit because of Christ. But, to be sure, I am also deeming all to be a forfeit because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, because of Whom I forfeited all, and am deeming it to be refuse, that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which is of law, but that which is *through the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is from God for faith" (Phil.3:7-9). Here we find the aged apostle, who doubtless apprehended the mystery as no one else ever did or could, resting on the firm foundation of justification by faith. It not only fails to conflict with the latest revelation, but is in fullest accord with it. It supplies the only basis on which it can be built.

1. For a more direct connection see "Romans in Ephesians" p.179.

THE CONCILIATION

Romans records the great truth that God's attitude toward the nations has changed since Israel refuses to convey His blessing to them. God is conciliated to all mankind. Those who receive this are reconciled (Rom.5). Second Corinthians deals with the ministry of the *conciliation* (2 Cor.5:18-20). It is our point of contact with the world, for our feet are to be sandaled with the readiness of the evangel of peace (Eph.6:15). It also is a secret, "the Mystery of the Gospel" (Rom.16:25). The Colossians had accepted it and were reconciled (Col.1:21). Eventually it will be enjoyed by the whole universe (Col.1:20).

In Ephesians this truth is amplified to accord with the secret. Those near (the Jews) and those far off (the gentiles) are reconciled with God in one body (2:16). To both He preaches "the evangel of peace" (2:17). Even the Israelite was shut out of the inner courts of the sanctuary and could not enter the temple building. Only the chief priest could enter the holiest of all. So that this evangel of peace, this conciliation, now has a message for them as well as for the nations. Both are brought nigh, in spirit, into the very Presence of the Father (2:18).

FUTURE GLORY

The rendering "who first trusted in Christ" (Eph. 1:12, AV) has practically eliminated all reference to the Lord's coming from the Ephesian epistle. Change "trust" to "expect" or even "hope," as the Revisers have it, and we have an important link which connects the mystery with the advent of our Lord as revealed in the Thessalonian epistles. It was the Circumcision who first trusted in Christ, not the nations. And of these Paul was among the last, not the first. But he and the believers among the nations expected the return of Christ before His coming

to the earth. They had a prior expectancy. This is revealed in Thessalonians.

Peter and James and John show conclusively, by their epistles, that they never received the truth contained in Paul's writings. The advent of our Lord for them was just the same as the prophets had foretold, and our Lord had predicted, and as they themselves had proclaimed in the Acts. It was to be a glorious manifestation to His people Israel, resulting in the millennial Kingdom. Such an expectation leaves no place for a celestial destiny such as Ephesians unfolds.

But those to whom Paul had gone with his evangel did not expect to wait until Messiah should come in glory to the Mount of Olives. Paul had said to them *by the word of the Lord*, that they would be assembled to Him (2 Thess. 2:1) when He shall be present in the air *before* His wrath is visited upon the earth (1 Thess.1:10; 4:15-18; 5:9). That it was "by the word of the Lord" shows that it was one of those truths which enabled him to speak of "my evangel," and so is included in the third item of the mystery. This surely was a "promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel" of which *he* became the dispenser (Eph.3:6,7).

The nations are now joint partakers of this promise (Eph.3:6). But were they not joint partakers when Thessalonians was written? The key lies in the title used. It is the coming of the *Lord* (not Christ). Peter makes this distinction when speaking to Cornelius. "Of the word He dispatches to the sons of Israel, bringing the evangel of peace through Jesus *Christ* (*He is Lord* of all), *you* are aware." Here we find the nations connected with Him as *Lord*, just as in the prophets they are connected with Adonai, and not Yahweh. So we find that *Messiah*, or *Christ*, is connected with Israel. At that time the nations, in flesh, were *apart from Messiah*, or *Christ* (Eph.2:12).

In keeping with this lower plane of blessing, the Thess-

alonians were told of the coming of the *Lord* to the air (not heaven). The fifteenth of first Corinthians adds to our knowledge of this event. It initiates us into the secret of the resurrection. In it we are told that our bodies will not only be *raised*, but *changed*—changed to a celestial body. Why is this? Philippians supplies the answer: Our realm has all along been in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to His body glorious. Resurrection, change, ascension, transfiguration, glory.

In describing his ministry the apostle compares himself with Moses. Moses put a veil on his face that the sons of Israel should not see the *consummation* of that which is vanishing. He did not hide the glory from them, but the fact that it was a fading glory. It changed from glory to gloom. Paul's ministry does not do this. It leads in the opposite direction. It is continually gathering new glory. "Now *we* all, with uncovered face, mirroring the Lord's glory, are being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the spirit." (2 Cor. 3:18).

So it was with our precious expectation. It began in *grace*. All were to be snatched away, whether watching or drowsing (1 Thess. 5:10). It will change our bodies from soilish to celestial at the sound of His trump. But even celestial bodies vary in glory. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star excels star in glory (1 Cor. 15:41). Not content with mere celestial glory, we are to excel the very sun itself, even as the glorified Christ outshone its Syrian noon-day brilliance when Paul first met Him on the Damascus road. We are to be transfigured into the body of His glory.

Some expositors do not believe there is any secret in this epistle at all because Paul assured the Ephesians, on

his last visit to them, that he did not shrink from informing them of anything which is expedient (Acts 20:20). The last word is usually rendered "profitable" in this passage, though the Authorized Version itself often translates it "expedient" (John 11:50; 16:7; 18:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:10; 12:1). This word is the key to the fact that the secret was withheld until after Paul's imprisonment and the setting aside of Israel. So long as God was still dealing with the nation of His choice, he could reveal much of His grace to the nations in preparation for the transcendent revelations which were to follow. But it would have been most confusing and unwise, as well as unfair to Israel, to announce the new administration while the hope of the Kingdom was still held out to them. Paul could not reveal this secret when passing by Ephesus, and it is for this reason that he qualifies his statement by this expression; he did not inform them of everything, but everything *which is expedient*.

A little later, in the same discourse, he almost repeats himself. He did not shrink from informing them of the entire *counsel* of God (Acts 20:27). God's counsel is always distinctly limited to His public revelation. When the Pharisees and those learned in the law repudiated the counsel of God for themselves (Luke 7:30), they were concerned only with what was open to all. They could not reject a divine secret which had not been revealed. So Paul fully expounded so much as was due of God's counsel. The secret was not yet due. It was not yet true. In Acts Paul takes the believers up to it. In Ephesians he takes them through it.

This question resolves itself into a simple matter of faith. Shall we believe both Acts and Ephesians, or shall we pit one against the other and thus destroy both? Ephesians refers to a later time. There Paul says it is a secret. Faith immediately concludes that he did not make it known

before. Faith then examines his words in Acts and finds that he did not claim to divulge the secret then, but was speaking of the truth which was applicable to that era.

In order to prepare the believers among the nations for the secret it was expedient that they be fully informed of God's dealings with Israel and the nations up to the time when the mystery itself could be made known. While Israel was apostatizing they lost their hold on God's counsel. They were being prepared for dismissal. But the believers among the gentiles were taken into God's confidence as far as possible under the circumstances. This is what Paul speaks of on his last journey past Ephesus.

To sum up: The "mystery," or secret, of the present administration is not the revelation of "the one body," sometimes called "the mystical body" of Christ. It is concerned with this in one of its three aspects. It changes it from a body with members of various rank to a joint body with two groups of equal rank. After the revelation of the celestial allotment for those associated with Paul's ministry, the status of the nations, or gentiles, is changed from subordination to the Circumcision to full equality. Together, both groups of believers are raised to the highest place in the universe. "To Him be glory in the ecclesia and in Christ Jesus for all the generations of the eon of the eons! *Amen!*"

A. E. Knoch

REPOSING

We regret to record the deaths of two friends which whom we enjoyed fellowship in years past. **Carl Anderson** of Lakewood, Ohio, was put to repose at age 83 on November 5, 2024. His quiet steadiness will be greatly missed. **Pauline Winter** of Muncy, Pennsylvania who with her husband Elwood gave us much encouragement and support for many years died on January 7, 2025 at age 89. We extend our sympathy especially to her husband who survives.

HIS ACHIEVEMENT ARE WE

For in grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works lest anyone should be boasting. For His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them (Eph.2:8-10).

This passage is a most enlightening one. Its revelations are clearly expressed and are exceptionally glorious. We are overwhelmed by the magnificence of these declarations, and are exceedingly glad that they are true. For they allow us—indeed, they constrain us—to glorify God as God and to take our proper place as His creatures.

Ephesians 2:8 begins with the word “for” (*gar*; SURELY-CONSEQUENTLY): “*For* in grace, through faith, are you saved.” *Gar* is “a causal conjunction, introducing the logical reason” (KEYWORD CONCORDANCE, p.114, entry “for”). Whenever a sentence or clause begins with this word, what follows tells us why that which has gone before is so. It joins one thought to another, forming the causal link between them.

YET GOD

As in any passage in which *gar* appears, in Ephesians 2:8 at the beginning of the verse, we should note the causal relationship between a former and a latter statement, in order to understand why the declarations which have already been set forth are true.

The immediate revelation previous to Ephesians 2:8 is comprised in verses 1 to 7. There we learn that, notwithstanding our former walk, our shameful behavior in the

lusts of our flesh, being, in our nature “children of indignation, even as the rest, *yet God . . .*” (Eph.2:3b,4a).

Yet God! “O what meaning, O what wealth these words impart.” It is true that, having become unnatural through our own inherent disposition with which we were born (Rom.8:7), besides the ravages of mortality and those influences of sin which “accord with the chief of the jurisdiction of the air” (Eph.2:2), we were indeed, “in our nature, children of indignation, even as the rest” (Eph.2:3b). Consequently, we could only anticipate severe divine judgment. This is because, in the day of indignation and revelation of, God’s just judgment, “indignation and fury, affliction and distress” will be upon “every human soul which is effecting evil” (Rom.2:9).

Nonetheless, *Yet God!* It is evident that Paul is speaking here in an ultimate or final sense in accounting for the stupendous change that has occurred with regard to our present standing and future course. He has just rehearsed our awful past and insisted that insofar as anything related either to our acts or nature is concerned, it can only be said that we were, “children of indignation, *even as the rest.*” That is, we had no more claim upon God’s blessing and were no more entitled to exemption from indignation, much less to possession of eonian life, than anyone else.

Now if it were true, as many will say, that man is finally the key to his own welfare—especially to such unspeakable gain as exemption from indignation and deliverance unto glory—this would have been just the place to have made this known. In fact, if such a thing were true, Paul should have made this clear, and would have been terribly remiss in having failed to do so.

But what does our apostle declare? Does he say, “Yet man . . .”? Does he say, “Yet men, those such as ourselves who are saved, at the vital point, their former sinfulness notwithstanding, summoned something from within so as

to make the right decision and thus qualify themselves for divine deliverance”? If this idea is the truth, Paul should have said as much, and he should never have said—especially at this vital juncture— “Yet God . . .”

Yet this is just what he *did* say! He said, setting forth the truth, “Yet God . . .” “*Yet God*, being rich in mercy, *because* of the vast love with which He loves us (we also being dead to the offenses and the lusts [*cp* Rom.6:10]), vivifies us together in Christ (*in grace* are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2:4-7).

THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH

The words of our Lord in Luke 6:32-35 give us an illuminating illustration of true grace: “If you are loving those loving you, what *grace*¹ is it to you? For sinners also are loving those loving them. And if you should be doing good to those doing good to you, what *grace* is it to you? For sinners also are doing the same. And if you should ever be lending to those from whom you are expecting to get back, what *grace* is it to you? For sinners also are lending to sinners, that they may get back the equivalent. Moreover, be loving your enemies, and be doing good, and be lending, expecting nothing from them, and your wages will be vast in the heavens, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.”

Grace is that which is not *out* of works (Rom.11:6), which exists in order to bring joy and blessing to its beneficiaries (*cp charis*, JOY, “*grace*”; *charisma*, JOY-EFFECT, “*grace*”; *chara*, JOY, “*joy*”).

While grace is not partial (sinfully preferential), it is

1. “thanks,” literally, is “grace.”

nonetheless *purposeful*. Any gracious gift, then, that is not intended for all, through its very purposefulness, necessarily excludes those for whom it is not designed, as much so as would be the case if its motivation were that of partiality.

"Grace" refers to God's work or action of grace, the work which He does for us and in us, as a favor or gracious gift. As ordinarily used, the expression "God's grace" is a figure of speech. It is a metonymy (figure of association) for "God's *work of grace*," in reference to whatever gracious gift may be in view. That is, literally, grace is not an action, but the character of an action.

The grace of God is effective, for it, like everything else, only exists according to God's own intention and purpose (Eph.1: 11; Rom.9:19; Isa.46:10,11). Indeed, it is the *saving* grace of the *Almighty* God (Titus 2:11; Rev.11:17).

Consequently, then, since it is effective, grace is a *causal* entity. This entails the necessary and inevitable existence of its achievements. That is, *Grace cannot fail*.

Grace is not a wage or requital in response to service or cooperation (Rom.4:4). Instead, it constitutes a *favor*. Grace acts in order to bless. It does not offer to bless, but actually effects blessing. Therefore, at the deepest level, grace always *initiates*, out of its own intrinsic virtue. Though it responds to need, it is never under extrinsic obligation to do so and can never be put under such obligation.

Our God is in the heavens: He has done whatsoever *He* has pleased (Psa.115:3; *cp* Psa.135:6). Though He loves His creatures and provides for them ideally, He is never beholden to them. "For, who knew the mind of the Lord? or, who became His adviser? or, who gives to Him first, and it will be repaid him? *seeing that* out of Him and through Him and for Him is *all*: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen!" (Rom.11:34-36).

"The word of the truth of the evangel . . . is bearing fruit

and growing . . . [in] you . . .," "from the day on which you hear and realized the grace of God in truth" (Col.1:5,6).

IN GRACE, THROUGH FAITH

In light of these prior and related revelations, Paul declares, "*For in grace . . . are you saved*" (Eph.2:8). We have all that we enjoy in Christ, *because* we are saved *in grace*. It is true, in the nature of things, that we are saved *by* grace, for we are saved by God Who acts in grace in saving us. "Grace," however, is in the dative case, and this idea is most clearly conveyed in English by the word "in" (or "to," or "into"). It speaks of the *sphere* in which salvation occurs, in which we find ourselves, the effectual agency of which having wrought our salvation.

We are about to address the question of the words "through faith," which we omitted (indicated by the elliptical dots) in our citation from Ephesians 2:8 in the previous paragraph. We did so not because we wish to minimize them or pass them by altogether, but because we wish to show that they do not represent the primary revelation here. The emphasis of this passage is upon God's grace, not the means which it employs.

FAITH IS A CHANNEL

It is frequently very helpful to simplify a statement into its most basic form, for apart from the wider thought of its complete expression, the basic expression of a thought in itself remains fully true. For example, if we are told that "thus God loves the world, that He gives His only-begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16a), it must be so, first of all, that "God loves the world." He could not love the world "*thus*" if He did not love the world at all.

Similarly, we could never be saved in grace "through faith," if it were not first of all true that, in any case, "in *grace . . . are you saved*." We have been saved in grace.

The revelation of any further particulars concerning our salvation in grace will not change this fact.

In most considerations of the phrase, “through faith,” “through” is usually ignored altogether, “faith” alone being given any attention. Yet what does it mean for something to come to us “through” something else?² That is, what does “through” mean? “Through” is a preposition which means “by way of.” A synonym for “through” is “by means of.” That which serves as the means *through* which something else is achieved, is merely a *channel*. It is the means which the one who achieves the objective in view uses in order to accomplish his purpose.

The fact that God *uses* the faith that we have²—which He first of all grants us—in order to effect one aspect or another of the salvation which He Himself thus works in us, does not make faith into some type of contributing factor which ultimately owes its existence to the flesh and not to God.

GOD’S APPROACH PRESENT

Similarly, before giving emphasis to our own pursuit of a righteous walk, we would emphasize *God’s* righteousness, and seek to perceive its significance as well as its achievements. God’s righteousness is manifested to us “*through* Jesus Christ’s faith” (Rom.3:22). Even Christ’s faith, His faithful obedience to God even unto the death of the cross, is only the channel of God’s own righteousness. Ultimately, it is the Deity Himself Who alone is our God and Saviour. Our Lord’s sacrifice would have occurred in vain were it not the fulfilling of God’s own counsels (*cp* Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:27,28).

In speaking of our glorious salvation in grace through faith, Paul would have us know that “this is not out of you;

2. More likely “through Jesus Christ’s faith” as in the next paragraph; *cf* Romans in Ephesians, p.179.

it is God’s approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting” (Eph.2:8b,9). We doubt that any are so foolish to suggest that salvation itself is actually man’s creation and that God only makes use of it after it comes to Him “out of us.” This cannot be what the words, “this is not out of you” are denying (Eph.2:8b). Rather, Paul’s point is that it is not due to something from (i.e., “out of”) us that we now find ourselves in Christ and the beneficiaries of God’s saving operations.

Instead, our salvation in grace through faith, is God’s “approach present” (*dōron*, GIVE-GUSH). Our salvation, in its entirety is a present! It is that which God has given us out of His love. *Dōron* is practically the same word as *dōrea* (GIVE-GUSH) and is defined for us by the adjectival form, (*dōrean*) (GIVE-GUSHed), which means “gratuitously” or “freely.”

This clearly shows that it is completely mistaken to conceive of one’s faith as a means of qualification, a practical warrant entitling its bearer to God’s salvation while placing the Deity under obligation to grant it, as if He had promised to do so on such a basis.

In Greek this special form, *doron*, served to represent the Hebrew “corban” (*korban*, Heb. *qrbn*, NEAR, approach; Mark 7:11). In the figure, here in Ephesians 2:8b, instead of the sinner bringing a sacrificial gift unto God, God brings a sacrificial gift on behalf of the sinner in order that he may approach unto God! The gift has already been purchased and its character fully determined before we are even told what it is. Any “rejection” of it by ourselves will not change the fact that it is ours. That is, this will be so if we are indeed among God’s chosen ones, which is evidenced not by our understanding of these mature revelations of Ephesians but by our basic faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

Indeed, if we should reject the salvation encompassed

in the approach present of God of Ephesians 2:8, it can only be because we really do not believe at all, or because while we do believe in Christ and His sacrificial death, we do not yet believe what God actually says as to the nature of His approach present for us which is presented in this passage. This, of course, will not change the character of God's gift; it will only mean that, at present, we cannot *enjoy* what we actually possess, being in the trap of the Adversary, having been caught alive by him, for that one's will (*cf* 2 Tim.2:25,26).

THE DOINGS OF GOD

Our salvation is not out of ourselves. We do not possess it because we have done this or that in order to acquire it. Consequently, boasting is debarred (Rom.3:27). This is because we are *God's* achievement. "*For His achievement are we*" (Eph.2:10a). We are saved because we are God's achievement. It is just that simple and this is fully the truth.

The word "achievement," is *poiêma* (DO-effect). We are the product of God's doings. It is only unbelief that will seek to modify this or to explain it away. This unbelief is due to the deceptive influences of the worldly philosophy known as free will. We do not care for the fact that we ourselves, who effect much evil and some good, are the product of God's own doings.

God, however, is able to operate in us, to will and to work for the sake of His delight (Phil.2:13), so that we think of these matters continually, and in a profitable and uplifting way. As those who are God's achievement, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, ones which God Himself prepared beforehand, there is no possibility but that we should be walking in them. Indeed, since the subjunctive, "should," in this case, points us only to God, the good works to which it refers are just as certain to be accomplished as would be the case had the indicative "shall" been used instead.

May God grant us a foretaste of the superabundant and transcendent good works of the future in a measure of good works even now, even if the best of these should be totally eclipsed when compared to our labors to come, during the oncoming eons, when we are conformed to the image of God's Son and seated together among the celestials (Rom.8:29; Eph.2:6).

"Lest *anyone* should be boasting"—lest we ourselves should artfully contrive some way to look to and lean upon the flesh—we would glory only in God and in His Christ. We are saved in grace through faith, faith being an assumption, based upon God's own word, concerning what is already true prior to and apart from our conviction in it. "For His achievement are we, being created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them" (Eph.2:10).

James Coram

ROMANS IN EPHESIANS

IN an article entitled "Whose Faith?" appearing in Unsearchable Riches, volume 112, p.111-118, I claim that in at least two places what Paul says in Romans is repeated quite closely in Ephesians: "... being justified gratuitously in His [God's] grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus [through Jesus Christ's faith] ... boasting ... is debarred" (Rom.3:22,24,27); "for in that grace are you ones having been saved through [Christ Jesus's] faith, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works lest anyone should boast" (Eph.2:7,8). Then in Romans 5:2 Paul speaks of our access by that faith [of our Lord Jesus Christ] into this grace in which we stand, while in Ephesians 3:12 he says that "in [Christ Jesus our Lord] we are having boldness and access with confidence through His faith."

To be sure the evangel in Ephesians is that of salvation, while in Romans it is justification. And the source and channel of both justification and salvation is out of and through Christ's faith, for our faith (*cf* Rom.1:17; Phil.3:7-9). We might conclude, then, that justification is salvation from unrighteousness unto being constituted righteous, and this is for our believing (and listening).

D.H.H.

ROMANS 5:12-6:23

- ¹² Therefore, even as through one human
the sin enters into the world,
And through that sin the death,
And thus the death passes through into all human
beings,
On the basis of which all sin—
¹³ for until law sin 'was in the world, yet sin is not being
taken into account^o when there 'is no law; ¹⁴ *bt* nevertheless
the death reigns from Adam unto Moses ^{on} over 'those
also who do not sin ^{on} in the likeness of the transgression
of Adam, who 'is a type of Him 'Who is 'about to be.
¹⁵ But not as the offense, thus also the ^{joy}gracious gift.
For if, by the offense of the one, the many die, much
rather the ^{joy}grace of the God and the gratuity in ^{joy}grace,
the gratuity of the One Human, Jesus Christ, ^{io} to the many
superabounds.
¹⁶ And not as through one act of 'sinning is the gratuity.
For indeed the judgment is out of one into condemna-
tion, yet the ^{joy}gracious gift is out of many offenses into a
righteous outcome. ¹⁷ For if, by the offense of the one, the
death reigns through the one, much rather, 'those obtain-
ing the superabundance of the ^{joy}grace and the gratuity
of the righteousness shall be reigning in life through the
One, Jesus Christ.
¹⁸ Consequently, then, as it is through one offense
^{io} for all human beings ^{io} for condemnation,
Thus also it is through one righteous response
^{io} for all human beings ^{io} for life's justifying.

- ¹⁹ For even as through the disregarding of the one
human
the many are constituted sinners,
Thus also through the listening of the One
the many shall be 'constituted righteous.
²⁰ Yet law comes in by the way, that the offense ^{sh} shall
increase. Yet where the sin increases, the ^{joy}grace super-
exceeds, ²¹ that, even as the sin reigns in the death, thus
also the ^{joy}grace ^{sh} shall reign through righteousness ^{io} for
life eonian through Jesus Christ, our 'Lord.
⁶ ^aWhat, then, shall we be declaring? That we may be
persisting in the sin that the grace ^{sh} shall increase?
² May it not ^bcome^o to that! We who^a die to the sin, how
shall we still be living in it?
³ Or are 'you being ignorant that we, whoever are bap-
tized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His 'death? ⁴ We,
then, are entombed together with Him through 'that bap-
tism into 'that death, that even as Christ is roused ^o from
among the dead ones through the glory of the Father thus
we' also ^{sh} shall walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have
become planted together in the likeness of His 'death,
^{bt} nevertheless we shall 'be of the resurrection also,
⁶ knowing this, that our old 'humanity is crucified togeth-
er with Him, that the body of the sin ^{may} shall be nullified,
for us by no means 'to be still slaving for the sin, ⁷ for one
'who dies has been justified^o from the sin.
⁸ ^yNow if we die together with Christ, we are believing
that we shall be living together with Him also, ⁹ having
perceived that Christ, roused ^o from among the dead ones,
is no^t longer dying. Death is lording it over Him no^t
longer,
¹⁰ For in ^w that He dies, He dies to the sin once for
all time,
Yet in ^w that He is living, He is living to the God.

¹¹ Thus =you also be reckoning^o yourselves to 'be
dead indeed to the sin,
Yet living to the God in Christ Jesus, our 'Lord.

¹² Let not the sin, then, be reigning in =your mortal
'body, ^{io}for you 'to be listening to its 'lusts. ¹³ Nor yet be pre-
senting =your 'members as implements of unrighteous-
ness to the sin, but present yourselves to the God as if
'alive ^ofrom among the dead ones, and =your 'members as
implements of righteousness to 'God.

¹⁴ For sin shall not be lording it over =you,
For =you 'are not being under law, but under
^{joy}grace.

¹⁵ ^aWhat, then? ^{sh}Shall we sin, seeing that we 'are not
being under law, but under grace?

May it not ^bcome^o to that! ¹⁶ Are =you not ^oaware that
to whom =you are presenting yourselves as slaves ^{io}for
listening, his slaves =you 'are, to whom =you are listen-
ing, whether of sin ^{io}for death, or of listening ^{io}for right-
eousness? ¹⁷ ^yNow ^{joy}thanks be to the God that =you 'were
slaves of the sin, yet =you listen ^ofrom the heart to the type
of teaching ^{io}to which =you are given over. ¹⁸ ^yNow freed
from the sin, =you are enslaved to the righteousness.

¹⁹ As a human am I saying this because of the infirmity of
=your 'flesh. For even as =you present =your 'members as
slaves to the uncleanness and to the lawlessness ^{io}for the
lawlessness, thus now present =your 'members as slaves
to the righteousness ^{io}for holiness. ²⁰ For when =you 'were
slaves of the sin =you 'were free as to the righteousness.
²¹ ^aWhat fruit, then, were =you having then?—^{on}of which
=you are now being ashamed^o, for indeed the consumma-
tion of those things is death. ²² Yet now, freed from the sin,
yet enslaved to the God, =you are having =your 'fruit ^{io}for
holiness. ^yNow the consummation is life eonian. ²³ For
the =ration of the sin is death, yet the ^{joy}gracious gift of
the God is life eonian in Christ Jesus, our 'Lord.

LISTENING TO GOD'S EVANGEL OF JOY

WHEN Paul first presented God's evangel concerning His Son (of which he was not ashamed) in Romans 1:16,17, he described it as God's power for salvation to everyone who is believing it. "*For* in it God's righteousness is being revealed out of [Jesus Christ's¹] faith, for [everyone who is believing's] faith." So now the apostle will speak of this evangel as the joy of God (Rom.5:15) in "the listening of the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:19) for our listening (Rom.6:16-23).

THEREFORE

"Therefore" in light of what has been said before concerning the death of Jesus Christ for sinners (Rom.5:1-11), this matter of sin and death comes before us in greater detail in Romans 5:12. But it only gets as far as how these two evils relate to human beings. There is an "even as" concerning us, but not yet a "thus also" concerning Jesus Christ.

As for human beings our attention is first directed to one human (Adam, whose name means "Human"). It is through him that *the* sin enters into the world (the system of things).

Through one man only (not through all of us, and even Eve is left out here) the sin enters into the system of things. Paul does not direct attention to sin in general (though that is also true) but to a definite, specific missing of the mark of

1. **Jesus Christ's**: as in Rom.3:22, the same designation given to God's Son in Rom.1:6,8 and 2:16, Who now in 1:17 is called "the Righteous One."

righteousness. He tells us what this particular sin is when he resumes the “even as” in verse 19, and there he supplies the “thus also.” *The sin is the BESIDE-HEARING*², the setting aside of the message of instruction which the one human hears, which is: “From every tree of the garden you may eat, yea eat. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat from it . . .” (Gen.2:16,17a).

Indeed Adam hears this instruction, but he puts what he hears in Genesis 2 aside and listens to Eve who had listened to the serpent and was deceived. We may say that he also *sees* that the fruit is *desirable*, and even that he remembers Yahweh Elohim’s words of Genesis 2:24 about clinging to the woman. In any case he makes his choice and can do no other. He disregards Genesis 2:17a and thus his sin becomes a particular *transgression* of law (Rom.5:14) and a particular *offense* (Rom.5:16) to the God.

It is through this particular sin that a particular *death* enters the world. This death is *the* death described in the warning: “for on the day you eat from it, to die you shall be dying” (Gen.2:17b). We are all familiar with that death, for it passes through from Adam into all human beings. We are dying unto the point of death. This is the death of Romans 5:12. It is not the death of Romans 6:3-7 where we hear of “the death of Him,” that is of Christ Jesus, into which we are baptized in spirit (1 Cor.12:12). The death of Romans 5 is one of great evil. But the death of Romans 6 is one of great goodness, righteousness and glory, for this death puts the evil death to death (to be realized in God’s own time). And this is for all, for in that Christ dies for all, all die (2 Cor.5:14), and “. . . since in fact through a human comes death, through a Human also comes the resurrection of the dead ones. For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified” (1 Cor.15:21,22).

2. The use of this term in Mark 5:36 shows it does not signify “disobey” but rather, “disregard.”

That sin of disregarding God’s words of instruction leads to the death of dying unto the state of death, the death of mortality and its consequence. Then also we are told here that the death described in Genesis 2:17b passes through into all humans beings.

So Paul brings us to the words “on which” in Romans 5:12 concerning which there is a great deal of controversy because of a failure to listen to what they say. The preposition “on” may seem strange here (but it does not mean “for”). But the pronoun “which” most certainly refers to “the death,” grammatically and logically. It is only because this is denied for theological reasons, for predetermined convictions which arise from human reasoning that what is said here is set aside. Nevertheless it is *on* the basis of the death of Genesis 2:17b that “all sin.” The many human sinners are constituted sinners because of the disease of death that is in them which no medicine and no religion can remove.

Only the death of Jesus Christ can rid the world of that which entered through Adam.

THUS ALSO

We, then, come to the “thus also” of Romans 5:19b which carries forward the “even as” of Romans 5:19a and the “even as” of Romans 5:12 as well. This “thus also” is God’s evangel concerning His Son. It has already been presented over and over again, and with striking clarity in the present context in Romans 4:24-5:11 and even more recently in 5:16-18. But now in verse 19 this evangel is put in glorious contrast to what has been said about “the sin” and “the death” and “the disregarding” which relate to the one human, Adam, and drastically affect all of us.

The translation, “through the *obedience*,” as in most English versions including the previous editions of the CV does not represent the Greek thought as well as it prob-

ably did when the AV was translated. The word “obedience” was directly carried over from the Latin word which meant something like “toward hearing,” that is, the action of directing one’s attention to what has been heard. Similarly the Greek word was composed of the elements: UNDER-HEARING, giving a sense of submission to what was heard. In Greek, in Latin, and even in middle English³, a sense of hearing or listening was dominant.

But in modern English that sense has almost disappeared. My American Heritage Dictionary (Second College Edition, 1982) defines “obedience” as “The quality or condition of being obedient” and “obedient” as “Obeying or carrying out a request or command; dutiful,” which is indeed true of our Lord in dying for our sins. But Paul’s word is focusing on the quality or condition of attentive *hearing*,—not the carrying out of an instruction but of listening to it. My dictionary defines “listen” as “1. To make an effort to hear something. 2. To pay attention; give heed.” That reflects the sense of under-hear and toward-hear quite well. While Adam set aside what he heard in Genesis 2:17 Jesus Christ paid attention with intense faithfulness to such passages as Genesis 22 and Isaiah 53 (and Habakkuk 2:3,4).

The evangel tells of our Lord’s hearing submissively, that is, listening to the instructions of His God and Father concerning what He was to observe and do. All that He hears He does despite the opposition from His disciples and the jibes and cruel taunts of the crowd as well as His own will to avoid the cup of suffering and forsakenness He was to drink. We however are to listen attentively to the revelations of joyous justification, conciliation, salvation and

3. John Milton (17th century) wrote: “What obeys Reason, is free” (SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, p.1426 [Milton’s spelling]) where we would say “Whoever *listens to* reason is free.”

deliverance which the evangel declares, and do so without diluting the glory of Christ’s listening by inserting something of ourselves for boasting.

Joy to God for the listening of His Son, Whom He spares not but gives up for us all. And joy to God for the evangel concerning the listening of His Son which is for our listening.

JOY

It needs to be seen, then, that the Greek word, *charis*, which is translated “grace” in most of its occurrences is essentially a matter of JOY. Hence it is first defined in the KEYWORD CONCORDANCE (p.132) as “an act producing happiness,” and in ENGLISHMAN’S GREEK CONCORDANCE as “that which gives joy, pleasure, delight . . .” This fundamental meaning of *charis* is not directly brought out in the widely used work, A GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT prepared by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich⁴, but there it is noted at the beginning that “It seems that *charis* is not always clearly differentiated in meaning from *chara*” which is consistently rendered “joy.”

I would say, judging by its usage, that *charis* always conveys much the same sense as *chara*, and in one way or another all Greek words in the *char*- family (e.g., *chairō*= “rejoice”). It is to be noted that *charis* is sometimes rendered **thanks** as in Romans 6:17 and 2 Corinthians 9:15, but in those cases the word “joy” would serve as well (i.e., to give God *charis* is to give Him joy).

However, a problem has been introduced by giving *charis* a second associated definition which has confused our understanding of its *essential* meaning. That is, after giving *charis* the meaning of happiness (representing the

4. The University of Chicago Press, 1957, p.805.

root sense of JOY), the KEYWORD CONCORDANCE adds that it is “a benefit bestowed on one who deserves the opposite,” and THE ENGLISHMAN’S GREEK CONCORDANCE adds as a “b” definition: “grace, undeserved favor.” Indeed in the contexts of Romans 3:24 and 5:15-21 the *charis* (as well as the *charisma*) is undeserved. This is true of God’s evangel. We do not deserve the joy of justification, of conciliation, of salvation, of reconciliation, whether present in spirit or future in full experience and enjoyment—joy that is based on God’s giving of His Son and His Son’s response in faith and His listening to the will of God. But the undeservedness is not brought out solely by the word *charis*, but by its association with the word “gratuity” (*dōrea*), and by the fact that we are sinners.

When we see how dominantly joy defines grace we may come to see that “the grace of God” as Paul speaks of it in Romans 5:15 is a reflection of Isaiah 53:9,10 where the prophet declares: “Although He does no wrong, And no deceit is in His mouth, Yet Yahweh, He desires to crush Him, And He causes Him to be wounded”! Such a joy and such a desire can be understood only by the results of Christ’s listening unto death, even the death of the cross. “Wherefore God highly exalts Him and graces [rejoices] Him with the Name that is above every name” (Phil.2:9).

How can we listen to such a revelation without exclaiming “Joy be to God!”

SUPEREXCEEDS

In Romans 5:20,21 Paul declares, “. . . where the sin increases, the *joy* grace *superexceeds*, that even as the sin reigns in death, thus also the *joy* grace shall reign through righteousness for life eonian through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Then immediately the questions of Romans 6:1,2 come up: “What, then, shall we be declaring? That we may

be persisting in sin that *joy* grace shall increase?” That idea is decisively dismissed: “May it not come to that!”

The declarations of 5:20,21 are positive and fully in accord with God’s evangel concerning His Son. The declaration of 6:1,2 is rejected and is not to be declared as evangel. To say that the grace which is God’s joy in the giving of His Son to the death of the cross could be something that increases as we persist in sin is sorely to mistake that grace. The joyous grace is the act of God that superexceeds over the entirety of sin introduced through the sin of Adam in ignoring God’s instruction. That grace is the once and for all (Rom.6:10) death of Jesus Christ our Lord in which we *die* to sin. That grace, as it affects us is our inclusion with Christ in His death, being entombed together in His entombment that we shall walk in newness of life when we are vivified in Him. Such a grace cannot be increased—certainly not by anything we do. It *is* superexcessive over all sin, for the doing is that of our Lord in giving Himself for our sins. That has been done. The superexcessiveness of that grace over our sins and the whole problem of sin cannot be increased!

The very idea that something we do makes it necessary for what God has done through His Son to somehow be increased must be rejected. May it not come to that!

Let us then be declaring God’s evangel as it is expressed in Romans 1:17 and 3:21-28 and Romans 5:1-21 and Romans 6:2-7 (not excepting what it says in Romans 4 and 6:8-8:38) and throughout Paul’s letters). Let us be enslaved to listening to the teaching to which we are given over (Rom.6:17,18). This is God’s power for being saved in the present—God’s power as it is being believed (Rom.1:16). And this is ultimately for all (Rom.3:22; 2 Cor.5:14), everyone of whom shall be constituted righteous (Rom.5:19). Yet in that God has graciously (joyfully) endowed us with a message of faith, this evangel is already saving us in many

special ways (1 Tim.4:10) and with full enjoyment in the oncoming eons. Joy be to God for His superexcessive joy to us and His indescribable gratuity!

THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

In Greek the subjunctive verb (indicated in the CV by the words “should” and “may”) is closely allied in its usage with the future indicative (that which “shall” or “will” be). It serves many times to draw our attention to a preceding statement which stands as its basis. We see this in Romans 6:6 where the subjunctive is indicated by the word “may.” The contingency expressed by the verb “may be nullified” rests on whether or not it is certain that our old humanity is crucified, and this is what God has done in including us in Christ. In effect Paul is saying that our old humanity is crucified so that the body of sin *shall* be nullified. He certainly is not saying that the body of sin ought to be nullified. It shall be nullified. That is a certainty.

Yet somehow many take Paul as saying in Romans 6:4, that we ought to be walking in newness of life. Whether or not that is so, it is not what is being said here. Rather, the “should” is clearly to be understood as what *shall be*. “Even as Christ was roused from among the dead ones through the glory of the Father, thus we also shall walk in newness of life” through the glory of the Father. It is not through our efforts but through the glory of the Father in rousing Christ out of death.

This is the evangel of our future walk in newness of life gained for us by means of the glory of the Father. His glory is His giving of life, and we shall walk in newness of life even as Christ “is living,” that is, “living to the God” (Rom.6:10).

This is our expectation. “For if we have become planted together in the likeness of His death, nevertheless we shall be living together with Him also” (Rom.6:5).

As for the present, it is in view of what God’s evangel says concerning the death and rousing of Christ Jesus and us together with Him that Paul urges us to be presenting ourselves as *slaves of listening*.

LISTENING FROM THE HEART

If, however, a sense of carrying out instructions is in view here, it is puzzling how we can carry out the type of teaching to which we are given over. That type of teaching is a *revelation* of salvation and justification and deliverance and joy and peace already carried out in Christ Jesus and most certainly to be enjoyed in the future. How does one obey (in its current sense) a message that is apart from law? How does one carry out a revelation of the righteousness of God in gratuitously justifying sinners in His joyous grace? How does one carry out what has been carried out and is already made certain?

In Romans 6:16-22 Paul sees the primarily essential act of a slave is to listen attentively to what his or her master says. That act is to be carried out indeed, but we mistake it if we think what we hear in the evangel of God concerning His Son involves the carrying out of a type of teaching which was given to Israel, in the law.

The point Paul makes in Romans 6 is, therefore, not that we are obligated to cease sinning and live a new life, but that we are to listen with attention to God’s evangel of joy concerning His Son. This evangel of the death and rousing of Christ and what it means to us is presented as a certainty. Nothing we do or do not do changes what is done and shall be. But there is spiritual power for the present salvation of joy and peace and other qualities of the fruit of the spirit (Gal.5:22) in our continued listening to this teaching of gratuitous joy.

D.H.H.

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