



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Issue 133

### *God in Creation*

by – A.E. Saxby

(1873-1960)

**T**he character, as well as the ability of the maker, is visible in the thing that He makes. If a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, then it is certain that the great Creator of all, Who is holy in all His ways and righteous in all His works, Who is good and only doeth good and whose tenderness is over all His works, can design nothing the end of which is not pure happiness and usefulness. Whatever catastrophes may have intervened, and however mysterious are the processes by which His goal will be reached, it follows, from the fact of His unimpeachable character, that the consummation of His work will justify all His methods.

#### **THE FAITHFUL CREATOR**

So wide is His care, and so minute, that a falling sparrow is noted and remembered. Peter gives Him the title of “*faithful Creator*” (I Peter 1:19), meaning thereby that His responsibilities are fully met in a manner only possible to infinite power and love. If His creatorship yearns over a fallen broken bird, how much more will it reckon with all the forces that have combined to mar the image of Himself in the man He has made? If He employs the discipline of a father, the sacrificial love of a mother, the stern justice of a judge and the passionate affection of a husband – and all these are figures chosen by Himself to set forth His attitude towards men and His work for and in them – it is to the end that His great designs of love may ultimately triumph.

If He turns men to destruction, it is that He may

say, “*Return, ye children of men*” (Psalms 90:3). If the vessel is “*marred in the hand of the Potter,*” it is that He may make it again another vessel (Jeremiah 18:4). If His work is marred, then His own Son’s face will be “*marred more than any man’s*” (Isaiah 52:14), that He may buy back those who have sold themselves for nought. Creation is full of mysteries, but the revealed character of the Creator suffices to assure us of a triumphant solution to them all. Only a traitor to His person and character would deny such a God this certainty.

#### **THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY**

The greatest of all the mysteries in His fair creation is the presence of sin. Thank God, how it can be dealt with and expelled is clearer than how it entered, and why it was allowed to enter the universe. It is not necessary to understand the genesis of evil to realize its departure.

The presence of sin is so immediate upon the initial act of bringing man into existence, that its presence is evidently deliberate and with design. This makes the problem more acute, but it should help us all the more to trust the faithfulness of the Divine Architect of all things. It was anticipated; for, in His Divine purpose, the Lamb was “*slain from the*

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truth? (If so, which Baptists?) The Methodists' truth? The truths of Roman Catholicism? Which "version" of God's truth are you to follow?

The answer is that you are only obligated to keep the truth that God gives to you, to live according to the light that God has placed before you ... We will never have the peace of God until we quit trying to get other people to live up to our ideas of truth or trying to live up to the "truths" that God has given to another.

Peter M. Lord  
*Soul Care* (1990), page 241

### CHALLENGING TRADITIONS

*"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread"* (Matthew 15:2).

Challenge the assumptions with which you are asked to work. If a careful study [of Scripture] convinces you they are correct, follow them faithfully. If, however, you are convinced they are wrong, try either to revise them, or abandon them. Do not repeat proven errors!

John R. Mott  
(1865-1955)

### NIBBLING AT THE TRUTH

*"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Galatians 1:10).

This is one of the marks of our modern time – that many are guilty of merely "nibbling" at the truth ...

I wonder if you realize that in many ways the ... Word of God is being pulled down to the level of the ignorant and spiritually obtuse; that we must tell stories and jokes and entertain and amuse in order to have a few people in the audience? We do these things that we may have some reputation and that there may be money in the treasury to meet the "church" bills. ...

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963)  
*I Talk Back to the Devil*, pages 30-31



## **Bible Student's Notebook**

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization" or "mission."

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*foundation of the world.*” Being anticipated, sin, was, therefore, a definite part of the Divine plan.

The presence of sin, and the part it plays, cannot be understood, however, unless the Creator’s own declared consummation of His work be accepted as truth. Because men have not believed His own goal to which He is professedly moving, therefore, they have not understood the part that sin plays. While they believe that sin has come to stay as eternally as God is alive, and that its effects will be as endless as His own being, it is little wonder that its genesis is a mystery. The end must justify the means as well as the beginning. Who would venture to say that the end does this, if sin has intruded to remain as long as God Himself will live? There must be in the Word of God a solution to this mystery which is glorifying to God and beneficial finally to His creation.

Sin is here in the world with all its dreadful fruit. If God could not help its coming into His creation, then we are face-to-face with the hopelessness of its final expulsion from the universe. If He could not help its appearance, then there is a rival power that is spontaneously evil as He is fundamentally good. In such case the effort to deal with sin at Calvary is but the strategic movement of God in the hope of overcoming His adversary.

The tragic failure of such effort, in the prospect of myriads of His creatures being either hopelessly tormented for ever or obliterated from existence as so much waste substance in the universe, is unspeakably pathetic, presenting as it does in the foreground, the picture of a God who has made the supreme sacrifice of His Son as an expedient, and has fallen short of His cherished hope.

## **THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR**

It is suggested, on the other hand, that He did deliberately allow it to come into the world, in full view of the dire results accruing to its appearance in the shape of the endless misery of men. This view preserves that which is essential to God’s existence as Creator and Governor of the Universe – His omnipotence.

To suggest that He may have been taken by surprise, and has been ever since doing what He can to remedy the harm which sin has brought about, is only to question His omnipotence in another way, and to leave Him pitifully inadequate to control the situation. These considerations have driven theologians to claim that He did allow sin to enter the universe, and to admit that it must have been in full cognizance of the awful issues. In view, however, of the belief that the unhappy finish to His work in creation in one direction, will be the hopeless committal of myriads of beings into the flames of an endless hell of unmitigated conscious suffering, it has to be admitted also, by such theologians, that God must have created man with His express understanding and consent to this, and therefore must have had that certainty in view in His original plan.

One reason for this which is advanced by the advocates of this theory, is, that this may be intended to serve as a warning to the rest of His creation of the terrible consequences of rebellion. In a revolt under human government such an object would be achieved by the execution of a few of the ringleaders, but God is represented as executing, or rather putting on an endless rack, all the rank and file of rebels, numbering perhaps far more than those who by His grace have been rescued from such a fate.

His omnipotence is certainly salved by this admission, but His character as Creator suffers. If it is argued that He blots them out of existence rather than put them to endless misery, then the problem of a creation useless for all intents and purposes and displaying nothing but suffering and misery as the outcome of His handiwork, equally confronts us, giving rise to queries as to His wisdom. If it be suggested that all this complexity of human life, with its sin and sorrow, was necessary to produce the elect of God and to educate them, it would seem that an overwhelming regret must possess each member of the elect race at the thought of such ruin and misery being the background necessary for their perfection.

What solution is offered to meet these terrific

problems that threaten to undermine faith in both the wisdom and love of God? The onus of failure is placed by some upon the stubborn will of man, and this is supposed to meet all the difficulties. It really brings into prominence another omnipotence which, because it baffles the omnipotence and love of God, is by far the greater. Man will not and God cannot. This sums up the situation created by this view. It appears on the surface to be fair until a few questions are asked. Where did man get this terrific ability to defy God? It was the bestowment originally of God Himself, Who thereby has created and allowed a rival force which He knew when He created it, would prove in its rebellion impervious to all the overtures of His love, and the activities of His omnipotence.

Another query that rises to the lips is whether this will of man in every case has been perfectly free and unbiased in its choice. We reply that in the plan of God it was allowed to be fixed in its bias away from God in the rebellion of the first human pair, and that, in all those mighty potentialities which influence thought and life, man is the victim of heredity and circumstances over which he had no control whatever. When we ask if the Creator, Who planned all this, meets every man with the fullest possible facility to turn from evil and choose the good, we discover that vast multitudes in the past have been left in ignorance and darkness, and even today, with Calvary a fact, by far the larger section of the present existing human race on the earth is in circumstances the reverse of helpful to its acquirement of the knowledge of God.

If these problems are expressed as above, we are in danger of being branded as infidel-makers, in that we suggest trains of thought that may cause doubt of God in minds that think. Yet minds were made to think, and this is a thinking age, and men are thinking and along these very lines. Indeed, it is this very inadequate and illogical theology that has made many of the best to think. If the Bible could offer no other solution then we might be wrong in stating these problems, but we have discovered that there are other explanations that do not demand the scrapping of any of the Divine attributes, but rather make them shine in fullest

radiance in the conception and accomplishment of the purposes connected with the creation of man. We therefore cast all blame for making infidels upon a false theology and set about the task of presenting truth that will unmake such infidels and show them the true God.

The true solution is one that lies clear upon the pages of the written Word of God. It gives us the Divine reason for creation and its goal. God expresses His satisfaction at the sight of His first activities in this sphere.

*“And God saw every thing that He had made and behold, it was **very good**”* (Genesis 1:31)

Since He knew the end from the beginning, and in His view at the moment all the issues of His act were unveiled before Him, then His verdict included the issue, as well as the initiation of creation. To make Him approve of the findings of accredited theology in this survey of creation would be to make Him satisfied with endless sin and rebellion, for, according to generally accepted ideas, these features, so abhorrent to God (Habakkuk 1:13), are to be as endless as He Himself will be.

Of the final outcome of His creation God Himself declares that He will be *“All in All,”* that when the vast drama of human destiny reaches the culminating point of divine government even His enemies will be subjected; death, the fruit of sin, will be abolished as having done its work; Christ will be the Head of a redeemed race, and God will be, as Bengel put it, *“everything to everybody.”* Such a climax is worthy of such a God, and justifies the creation of man with all its complex problems.

Foremost amongst the difficulties of the subject, and preeminently essential to be understood, is the question of:

## **THE GENESIS OF SIN**

The mystery of mysteries centers in the appearance of sin almost at the same moment as the inception

of human responsibility. Who is responsible for its presence? In a striking phrase the Word of God tells us that God Himself is responsible for the appearance of sin. He is responsible for its presence, as He is equally responsible with the opposite quality of good.

*“I am the Lord . . . I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil, I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).*

The Persian King Cyrus is addressed in this chapter as the chosen instrument for the deliverance of God’s people. The Persian creed, though singularly pure and noble, had one grave defect. They believed in one God, indeed, and thought of Him so nobly that their symbol for Him was a circle with wings – the circle to denote the completeness, the perfection, the eternity of God; and the wings to denote His all-pervading presence. Yet while they believed in only one God, the Maker of all that was good, they also, and out of reverence for One to whom they dared not attribute any wrong, believed in an anti-god whom they made responsible for all that was evil. Ahriman, as they called this evil spirit, was not perhaps the equal of Ahuramazda, the good creative spirit, but he was independent of Him, and His perpetual rival. He was not made by God, nor was he subordinate to Him; and it was he, not God, to whom all that was evil in nature and in human life was to be attributed.

In short, they sacrificed the omnipotence of the God of heaven to His righteousness, and to save His goodness curtailed His power. This mistaken conception of the situation called forth the striking protest from God seven times in the 45<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah, that there was no God beside Him, together with the admission that evil has its accorded place in the designs of infinite goodness.

Sin, therefore, was a possibility in the survey of the Creator, but only a possibility as He permitted it. His character, so plentifully portrayed in Scripture and proven in personal experience, should have been enough to assure us that the permission of sin would never have been granted without

adequate, nay without overwhelming justification in His mind as to the glorious outcome of allowing its ravages in His fair handiwork.

Still the problem remains that, granting all this, it is difficult to see how sin could evolve without God’s express action. To Bible readers it is hardly necessary to say that Satan appears to have been the first to tread this path of sin. Scripture makes it clear that it was he who tempted that first human pair, and the form of the temptation was the same as that which had originally ensnared him, *“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:5). The same reasoning, in his own case, led to his effort to usurp the throne of God, and to his expulsion from the high place of responsibility given him by God.

God has unveiled the assumption of Satan which led to his fall. He aimed at being God – *“I will be like the most High”* (Isaiah 14:14). He desired to become as God – the very suggestion that he put to Adam and Eve. He aspired to the worship of himself by others. Was it not this very blasphemous proposition that he even sought to inject into the mind of the Son of God? *“All these things will I give thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me”* (Matthew 4:9).

That which led on to this presumptuous attitude was preoccupation with that perfection which was the gift of God. *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty: thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.”* (Ezekiel 28:17). Here was the genesis of sin. The difficulty still remains how any creature made in the purpose of God and held by His power, could thus deliberately purpose a path of action so antagonistic to the God from whose hand he had come.

It goes without saying that God could have kept both Satan and Adam from falling, and that there was no inherent tendency in them to stray from the path of rectitude, when they came from His hand in creation. Nor can we conceive that, of themselves and apart from God’s purpose, such a thing as the turning of their gaze from their Creator could have occurred. It must have been

an action on God's part that precipitated the fall. That is to say, not some initial action of His which gave an impetus to their movement away from Him and to themselves, but some passive consent of His to their trial under certain conditions, which sprang from his volition and could not be without His permission. What was there that He could do, what is there that He is actually recorded as having done in other cases, which would provide just that test necessary to ascertain how they would act when left to themselves?

Does not this last sentence clear up the mystery? Were they not left to themselves, isolated for the moment in their own God-given capabilities and responsibilities, that it might be seen whether, under such conditions, they would abide in Him, or move out to a self-chosen destiny? It is recorded of Hezekiah that "*in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart*" (II Chronicles 32:31). Do we not see in this incident the principle that God employed at the first to discover how unaided creatures would act? In some such way God acted with Job, withdrawing His hedge through which the enemy could not break, in order that Satan might try this perfect man, though only as far as he had Divine permission. We have often felt that the story of Job might well be the story of creation in miniature.

Job was a perfect man untried, just the condition in which creation was, while maintained in its pristine perfection by the power of God. The satisfaction that the Creator would have gotten out of a creation which continued perfect in every part would doubtless have been very real. It would, however, have always been open to the taunt that Satan flung at God when he hinted at the possibility accruing from God's withdrawn support. Moreover, it would have lacked that absolutely voluntary choice of God's will, which would have resulted from a deliberate rejection by the creature's own will, as well as a definite choice of the Divine will in preference. God longed for this kind of obedience from His creation.

The only way open to God, to secure such a full

voluntary submission to His will, was to permit evil. In other words to permit the will of His creatures to act unrestrained by the constraint of His own will, so that their own ways were chosen in preference to His.

There was only one way to secure such a deliberate intelligent choice of His will. It was by allowing the creature full liberty to choose for himself an opposite path and to follow it to the bitter end. The faithfulness of the Creator to His work would have been impugned had He not provided that such a choice would ultimately be overruled to produce a result that would not only justify the process by which the end was reached, but would be preeminently satisfying to the creature himself as well as to the Creator. There is in Isaiah 45:7 an illustration in the physical sphere illustrative of the method used in the spiritual. Darkness is the withdrawal of light. So, evil results from the withdrawal of good.

For God made man what he is; God ordained the circumstances in which man is placed: God knew that such circumstances, operating on such a creature, would inevitably involve him in sin and misery through all eternity. With this clear foresight, to alter nothing in the nature of the creature, to alter nothing in the arrangement of the circumstances, but to persist in giving him that very nature, and in placing him in those very circumstances, the inevitable result of which He knew would secure the production of this endless sin and misery – is malignant in the highest possible degree; and, were the Deity malignity itself, He could not act worse.

By revelation we know that the nature and the name of God is Love. This is enough to prove to us that, unless He had foreseen an ultimate issue to His work which would be worthy of such a terrific process as the destruction of His handiwork by sin, He could never have planned such a road to the consummation of His desire. What was that desire? It was to have a race of beings whose experience of their own will being gratified would once and for all rid them of all further longing to be independent of Himself in their activities. It

was to demonstrate through the sufferings of sin to what that pathway of independent self from God will lead, and thus to provide an experience which would create a loathing for lawlessness in the redeemed race, and instead implant a love for holiness within them.

It was, further, to furnish the race that He had brought into existence with such a marvelous evidence of His oneness with them in the sacrifice of His Son, that His creatures would be overwhelmed at the vast expenditure of the Divine nature and resources on behalf of His offspring. (Acts 17:24-28).

### THE HISTORY OF THE AGES

In the redeemed race there will be two things which will spring out of the history of the ages which will satisfy God for all His costly work. One is the utter repudiation of the creature's own will, at which every man will arrive as the result of his experience of the gratifying of his own wishes. The other is the complete and voluntary choice of God's will to which every man will come as the highest and supreme good. Man's will has been allowed to be free in its choice of evil, that ultimately it may be free in its choice of God.

After an exhibition of the inability of man without law and then under law, to recover from his fall, or even to desire to lift himself from the mire of his own folly and sin, God sent forth His Son at the ripe moment of His purpose that He might redeem them that were under the law. In the Person of His Son there was wrought out, as the Head of the redeemed race, a voluntary obedience in the face of every kind of incitement to rebellion and self will, which became the spring and pattern of the obedience into which the Son will conduct the race to the closing scene of I Corinthians 15:22-28.

The next act in this great drama of creation and redemption is the gathering of a company out of this present age, in whom God's will shall have become their supreme choice in the face of all the antagonism and fascination of this present evil age. That "God may be all in all" is the far-off goal

toward which He is moving. To the principle that He shall be "ALL In ALL" and His will supreme, Calvary was the great "Amen" of the Son. He is the "Amen" echoing only the Father's purpose. With Him, out of this age, will come the company who, through the severest test, in the power of Calvary, will say "Amen" also. To do God's will is here and now in this realm of sin and sorrow their undying and burning ambition. In them God is tasting the first fruit of His purpose in creation. The drama is not yet complete. Through the ministry of the Christ – the Head and the body perfected – in the ages yet to come, the fulfillment of the words of Christ will take place,

*"I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto ME" (John 12:32).*

Inasmuch as God Himself alone is the only and absolute first cause, it follows that in the last analysis He is inevitably responsible for the ultimate consummation. The consummation is revealed in I Corinthians 15:22-28 as that of the happy, holy, intelligent, freewill subjection of the race to their Creator that He may be "ALL in ALL." Sin with all its suffering stands revealed as part of the process by which this is brought about.

Nowhere did sin strike more terribly than in the slaying of God's Son at Calvary. Creation discovered the way to His original purpose. Thus, to the One whom he slew, man becomes, through the power of that very deed which was the supreme self sacrifice of God, subjected at last in the completest voluntariness to his Creator and Redeemer.

What though none on earth assist Him!  
God requires not help from man;  
What though all the world resist Him!  
God will realize His own plan.

*God in Creation, Redemption, Judgment and Consummation*  
Derby Hall, London, England



# *Approved Workmen*

## Select Readings on the *Study of the Scriptures*

(Part 1)

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15).*

### **HONEST BIBLE STUDY**

The student of the Bible must study the Bible honestly. This is to say, he must go to the Bible to find and to seek the truth, and not to prove a case about which he has already made up his mind. It is common – it is almost usual – for people to use the Bible as an arsenal of proof texts to prove things about which they have already made up their minds. A man can use the Bible to find in it what he wants to find. He can use it to hear the echo of his own voice rather than the sound of the voice of God.

Tyndale once said that the students who were taught by the priests and the monks came to the Bible "armed with false principles, with which they are clean shut out of the understanding of Scripture." Arminius once said: "Nothing is more obstructive to the investigation of the truth than prior commitments to partial truths." This is simply to say that not even God can teach a man who comes to the Bible with his mind made up.

William Barclay (1907-1978)  
*Introducing the Bible* (1972), page 93

### **NOSE-LED IN HEATHEN LEARNING**

Tyndale expressed his dissatisfaction with the teaching of theology at universities:

"In the universities they have ordained that no man shall look on the Scripture until he be nose-led in heathen learning eight or nine years, and armed with false principles with which he is clean shut out of the understanding of the Scripture."

A.N.S. Lane  
*Great Leaders of the Christian Church:*  
William Tyndale and the English Bible, page 202

### **THE SPIRIT OF PREJUDICE**

The spirit of prejudice stands in the way of all new views of truth. "Prejudice" has been defined as "a judgment or opinion formed without due examination of the facts or reasons that are essential to a just and impartial determination." It is prejudice that blinds the eye, stops the ear, misunderstands and misinterprets everything that comes its way. Its state of mind is not founded on facts but on some feeling of dislike or something of self-interest. There are those who will not accept any truth unless it is ministered in a certain conventional manner or supported by certain great names.

Charles Pridgeon  
*The Glory of God and the Honor of Kings*  
Introduction

### **SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

The Bible is not a textbook in systematic theology. It rarely, if ever, addresses our theological questions in a systematic way. Not even ... Paul does this with any degree of persistence. In any (traditional) systematic theology, you will find a systematic discussion of such Christian doctrines as the Incarnation, the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Final Judgment, but you will not find anything like that in the Bible, not even in the New Testament; and Christians now sometimes fail to appreciate, it seems to me, how easy it is simply to read the traditional formulation of these doctrines *back into* the New Testament.

Thomas Talbott  
*The Inescapable Love of God*, page 53

### **RECOGNIZING GOD'S TRUTH**

How does one recognize God's truth? Is it the Baptists'  
*(continued on page 1386)*