



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Volume XIII
Issue 304

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

God's Works and Man's Creeds

by – A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

When thoughts *cannot be expressed in the language of inspiration*, it should open our eyes to the fact that we are out of line with God.

God has nowhere spoken of a “trinity” or used any expression, such as “triune,” or “three-in-one,” which might authorize it.

The numeral *three* is never used of the Deity in the Word of God. The numeral *one* is not merely used, but stressed when the question of the number of deities is discussed. We are definitely informed that, “*there is no other God except one.*” Though “*there are many gods and many lords,*” for “*us there is one God, the Father ... AND one Lord, Jesus Christ*” (I Corinthians 8:4-6). The unity of the spirit demands that there be “*one Lord*” and “*one God and Father*” (Ephesians 4:5-6).

Webster's dictionary says that “Godhead” is the theological term for the threefold divinity of God; but it is never so used in the Scriptures. I object to it because it seems to give the idea of the trinity a scriptural basis. “Godhead” occurs three times in our *Authorized Version*, but in each case it is the translation of a slightly different Greek word. *Theos* is the adjective of *God*, which the translators themselves have elsewhere translated “*divine*” (II Peter 1:3-4). It should be *divine* rather than *godhead* in Acts 17:29 also. *Theotēs* (Colossians 2:9) corresponds to our word *Deity*. *Theotēs* is best represented by our word “divinity,” for it is an attribute, like power (Romans 1:20). In Colossians 2:9 only *one* is intended by the word “Godhead,” for Christ is expressly excluded. Not one of these passages has the theological thought of numeric constituency.



THE DEITY OF CHRIST

I cannot justly object to the word “Deity,” even if it is not used in the *Authorized Version*. It is the exact equivalent of *theotēs* in Colossians 2:9. I believe that “*in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,*” or, as concordantly rendered, “*in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily.*” This, however, is in direct conflict with most creeds. Colossians is not so inane as to tell us that the fullness or complement of the Deity dwells in the Deity. It makes a clear, sharp distinction between the Deity *and* Christ. It uses the term “Deity” of *God* to DISTINGUISH Him from Christ.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The true intent of this expression is the *distinct* or *separate* personality of the holy Spirit, to accord with the teaching of the “Trinity.” The phrase does not occur in any translation of the Scriptures that I have ever seen, so that, if we believe it, we must believe men, and not God. In the Scriptures God's holy Spirit is *never dissociated from Himself*. Can anyone explain to me how Christ can have two different “personalities” for His Father? Because the holy Spirit came on the mother of our Lord, the Holy One Who was gen-
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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XIII, No. 304 – August 2, 2011

This free weekly electronic 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 law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (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 freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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GOD (continued from front page)

erated was called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Is Christ the Son of the Spirit of God, and not of the Father?

The usual arguments to “prove the *personality* of the Spirit” would apply with far more force to “wisdom.” “Wisdom” in both Hebrew and Greek is itself *feminine*, and must always be referred to as *she*; but *spirit* is always *neuter* and must be spoken of as *it*. Wisdom is personified, “*Doth not Wisdom cry?*” (Proverbs 8:1). The fact that the Spirit of God is represented as a dove (Matthew 3:16) does not make it an animal. Because the word “dove” is *feminine* does not prove that the holy Spirit should always be referred to as *she*. Even doves are not all females. The fact that the holy Spirit is called a *paraclete* does not prove that it is a person. The fact that this word is masculine does not prove that the Spirit is of that gender (John 14:16-17). The literal explanation which immediately follows speaks of the spirit of truth as *it*. The creed’s phrase is the echo of false reasoning. But the solution is not to reason better, but to discard the result of all human reasoning, good or bad, and cleave to God’s written Word.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

This expression is an instructive example of the necessity and great value of the course which I am pressing, that is, to use only scriptural phrases in any statement of faith. There was a time when I would have heartily endorsed this expression, because, belonging to the Brethren, it was a part of “the truth,” which, we supposed, was our monopoly. I was startled when I first found that the phrase was not in the Scriptures, but I did not allow that to disturb me. It was only after I learned that Christ was an *official title*, not a *name*, that it began to dawn on me that it was not only absent from the Scriptures, but quite contrary to them. I do not ask the reader to agree with me that the saints in Israel are the bride of the Lamb, for I desire to keep entirely clear of all interpretation in this appeal. I ask that we not use the phrase (Bride of Christ) *because it is not God’s Word*, not because I know that it is contrary to the Scriptures.

SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Again, let us avoid this phrase, not because it is false doctrine, but because it is not inspired by God. The word “substitute” or its derivatives is not found a

single time in the *Authorized Version* of the Bible or in any translation of which I have any knowledge. I know that, in connection with salvation, it has no equivalent in the Hebrew, Chaldee or Greek Scriptures, for I have carefully canvassed the whole vocabulary to find one.

“Atonement,” also, is strangely discordant. All who look into the matter are agreed that its single occurrence in the “New Testament” is a mistake. C.I. Scofield boldly says that it should be “reconciliation.” The references he gives are not correct, for Colossians 1:21 is a strengthened form which really does mean reconciliation. Romans 5:11 should read *conciliation*, a one-sided amity. The only references to the “atone-ment” or *propitiation* of the Hebrew Scriptures are in Luke 18:13 (merciful); Hebrews 2:17 (reconciliation); I John 2:2, 4:10, Romans 3:25 (propitiation); and Hebrews 9:5 (mercy-seat). In no case is this word applicable to the present grace. God speaks to us of *justification* and *reconciliation*. Why not use these terms rather than one which no longer is recognized as fit to have a place in God’s later revelation?

THE NEW BIRTH

The Bible says “*ye must be born again*” (John 3:7). I believe that *those to whom our Lord spoke* must be begotten anew. What right have I or anyone else to say that all must be born again? John was a minister of the Circumcision. He was never sent to the Uncircumcision. If I was asked to name the principal causes of incorrect doctrine in Fundamentalists’ creeds I should surely include their almost complete apostasy from Paul, to whom alone the present secret administration was entrusted (Ephesians 3:8-9). They, like “*all they which are in Asia*,” have turned away from him (II Timothy 1:15). They do not believe that Paul was entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, as Peter and John *of the Circumcision* (Galatians 2:9).

The “new birth” is displaced by a much deeper truth in Paul’s epistles. He introduces a “*new creation*” (II Corinthians 5:17), the spiritual counterpart of the period which comes after the regeneration of Israel in the day of the Lord. I do not ask that a creed be changed to “the necessity of a new creation.” I only ask that believers not shut the door in the face of those who desire to enter into the truth.

(see *GOD*, page 2787)

The Secret Lives of Christians

A Hidden Crisis

by – Jeff Bowman

The church today faces a hidden crisis: The Secret Lives of Christians. Let me see if I can summarize my observation. For example, Bob and Mary are deeply involved in their church, he is on various committees, and she is part of the worship team. They have great kids and as a family they all love God very much. Their church is a typical conservative Bible church. Each Sunday the pastor teaches lessons from the Bible and encourages his congregation to “live for the Lord.” That is fine, except that the church has also taken a “stand” against social drinking, *i.e.*, having a glass of wine or a beer. The pastor readily admits that the Bible does not condemn a glass of wine. Yet, “because we don’t want people to stumble,” the pastor reasons, “we must abstain from social drinking.”

The dilemma is that Bob and Mary really enjoy a glass of wine with dinner. So because they don’t want to offend their church, they must tell no one. On the surface this seems to be what they must do and, after all, it is their personal life. Yet there is a problem – they can’t be honest, they can’t share their lives, they must “hide” their enjoyment of a glass of wine. This starts building a wall of secrecy between them and their church and it also affects their children. The kids see them have an occasional drink and that the way to do so is to be very secret about it. The kids grow up thinking it is normal to live one way in front of family and another way in front of fellow church members.

This problem of the secret lives of Christians has always been around, but I have observed that it has grown to major proportions. This impacts how we view all of life. We create a sacred vs. secular dichotomy in our living. On one hand the church promotes a “separation” from the world, and yet on the other the Christian knows that much of the “separation” is over cultural issues, not things that are truly wrong.

Pastors and church leaders themselves are involved in this crisis. They, too, have “secret” lives hidden from their flock. It might not be a social drink, but cable TV or the music that they enjoy. There is no way that they can tell their congregations that they listen to Led Zeppelin or



Pink Floyd (can you guess my age? *grin*) while they are working on their sermons.

I think this “secret” crisis springs from a misdirected desire not to cause people to stumble. We don’t want to let anyone know about our secret (yet non-sinful) lives because they might be “offended.” This results in a stagnation of growth within the church, an unhealthy spiritual life, and prevents a true dialog involving our engagement with culture as Christians.

Another cause for this crisis is the fear of being “judged” by fellow Christians, with the conclusion being that you are somehow less spiritual because you enjoy a freedom.

In my opinion there is also a difference between a secret life and a private life. In our private lives we do things that we typically (because of culture) do not talk about. It might be our hesitancy to talk about the great sex we had with our spouse the night before or the argument that preceded it! These things are private to our lives, *but* they are not “secrets” that we feel compelled to keep from others.

What would happen if we lived without a secret life? I think it would be spiritually healthy. We’d have to grapple with cultural issues that we fear to discuss but intrinsically know are NOT sinful. We’d be forced to communicate with those who hold differing opinions about topics. We’d actually learn that two people can disagree agreeably. Perhaps we’d also learn that in such a context our love for each fellow believer would grow, and we’d learn to love those who name the name of Christ yet hold a different cultural value than us. I think we’d also see that we’d force people to a deeper spirituality – one where they are personally accountable to God for their lives, not simply following the rules of a church. People would learn that it is OK to “live and let live” in life when it comes to non-sinful activities. I think this is what Paul was getting at in Romans 14.

How is your life? Do you hide any “secrets?” Why?

Wayside Ministries

by – J.R. Miller (1840-1912)

I expect to pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there is any kindness I can do to any fellow-being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for *I shall not pass this way again.*



There are two ways in which all of us work, and two classes of results which flow from our lives. There are things we do *purposely* – that we deliberately plan to do. We take pains to do them. We spend long years oftentimes in fitting ourselves to do them. They cost us thought and care. We travel many miles, perchance, to perform them. They are the things we live to do.

Then there are other things we do that have formed no part of our plan. We did not set out in the morning to accomplish them. They are *unplanned*, unpurposed things, not premeditated or prearranged. They are *wayside ministries*. They are the *little* things we do between the *greater* things. They are the seeds we drop by chance from our hand in the path, as we go out to the broad field to sow. They are the minor kindnesses and courtesies that fill up the spaces of our busy days. They are the little flowers and lowly plants that grow in the shade of the majestic trees – or hidden away like violets under the taller plants and shrubs. They are the smaller opportunities of usefulness which open to us as we carry our great responsibilities. They are the things of which we take no note, and perhaps retain no memory – mere *touches* given as we hasten by, words dropped as we pass along.

We pride ourselves on our *great masterpieces*. We point to them as the things which fitly represent us, the things in which we hope to live. Yet oftentimes these *unpurposed things* are the holiest and most beautiful things we do – far outshining those which we ourselves prize so highly.

No doubt there is a wondrous amount of good done unconsciously, of which the doers shall never be aware until it is disclosed in the future life. Many

shall be surprised in the judgment, to hear of noble deeds wrought by them of which they have no knowledge or recollection.

It is said that when *Thorwaldsen*, the Danish sculptor, returned to his native land with those rare works of art which have made his name immortal, chiseled in *Italy* with patient toil and glowing inspiration; that the servants who unpacked his statues scattered upon the ground the *straw* which was wrapped around them. The next summer, flowers from the gardens of Rome were blooming in the streets of Copenhagen, from the seeds thus borne and planted by accident! While pursuing his glorious purpose and leaving magnificent results in breathing marble, he was at the same time, and unconsciously, scattering other beautiful things in his path to give cheer and gladness.

So in all *true living*, while men execute their greater plans they are ever unintentionally performing a series of secondary acts which often yield most beneficent and far-reaching results. There is a *wayside ministry*, for instance, made up of countless little courtesies, gentle words, mere passing touches on the lives of those we meet casually – impulses given by our greetings, influences flowing indirectly from the things we do and the words we speak – a ministry undesigned, unplanned, unnoted, merely incidental – and yet it is impossible to measure the results of these *unintentional kindnesses*.

We go out in the morning to our round of duties and perform them with more or less faithfulness and effectiveness; but during the busy hours of the day we find opportunity for doing many *minor kindnesses*. We meet a friend on the street whose heart is heavy, and we stop to speak a word of thoughtful cheer and hope, which sings in his ear like a bar of angels' song all day long. We ring a neighbor's door-bell to inquire for his sick child, and there is a little more brightness in that sad home all of the afternoon because of this thoughtfulness.

All sorts of people come to us on all sorts of errands during the day. We cannot talk much to each, and yet we may drop into each heart a *word of kindness* that will prove a *seed of beauty*. We meet people in business relations. To talk to them on Christian themes may be neither practicable nor expedient, and yet there is not one of them to whom we may not minister in some way.

One man has had sorrow in his home. His face carries the marks of sore struggle and inward pain. By a gentler bearing, a mellowed speech, a heartier hand-grasp or longer pressure, and a thoughtful expression of the sympathy and interest we feel, we send him away strangely comforted.

Another is staggering under financial burdens, and a hopeful word gives him courage to stand more bravely under his load. We are writing business letters, and we put in a personal sentence or a kindly inquiry, revealing a human heart even amid the great clashing, grinding wheels of business, and it carries a pulse of better feeling into some dingy office and some dreary treadmill life far away.

Not one of these things have we done with any clear thought, or even consciousness, of doing good, and yet, like the flower-seeds that the sculptor bore back amid the wrappings of his statues, they yield loveliness and fragrance to brighten many a bare and toilsome path.

Social life presents also countless opportunities for these *wayside ministries*. It would be hard to imagine anything more icy and cold, more devoid of the sweet charities of life, than much of the formal fellowship of society, especially in circles of wealth and fashion. It is regulated by arbitrary rules which leave no room for tender heart-play. It is oftentimes *insincere*. The staple of its conversation is the *emptiest of idle gossip* or the most *merciless dissection of character*.

Yet what opportunities does this very social fellowship afford for the most beautiful wayside ministries! What words of kindness can be spoken! How often, too, where they are most sorely needed and craved! There are hearts starving under these *icy formalities*. There are gentle spirits amid all of this mad whirl that long for something true and real. There are sorrows

under all of this glitter. The doors are shut to those who come professedly to bring blessing. Even Christ stands outside, perchance, knocking in vain. There is no open entrance to any who would come with avowed intent to do good. Yet the Christian woman who enters the doors, even in the most formal way, may carry with her Heaven's sweetest blessings.

Many earnest Christians in early, primitive days voluntarily became slaves to gain access to the homes of the noble, that they might at least live out the holy religion of Jesus in the heart of their households, and perchance win souls for heaven. Missionaries study medicine that they may be admitted into the homes of the people as physicians, and while there in that capacity they cannot but scatter some of the holy fragrance of the love of Christ. To those whose hearts are full of the spirit of grace, there are large opportunities for quiet and unpurposed usefulness opened in the formalities of social life.

There needs to be done nothing ostentatiously; indeed, ostentation shuts the door at once. What is needed is a deep and sincere piety that breathes out unconsciously in *face* and *word* and *act* and manner, like the fragrance of a flower, like the shining of a star, like the irresistible charm of rare beauty, or tender music. Indeed, its *unconsciousness* is its greatest power! She who goes intending to say certain things or carry certain blessings or leave certain influences may fail. Yet, going from house to house with a *soul* full of goodness, purity and love, with a *heart* sincerely longing to leave blessing everywhere, with a *speech* seasoned with grace and breathing kindness and peace – it is impossible not to leave *heavenly influences* in every drawing-room. *Impulses* are given to better life. *Strength* is imparted to struggling weakness. *Comfort* is breathed softly into hearts that are sore with grief. Flowers from heaven's gardens are planted in earthly soil. Glimpses into a new and richer life are given.

Although unnoted on earth and unprized, the results of such ministry may outshine in splendor, in the great disclosure, the things to which most toil and thought have been given.

In every life there are these opportunities for *wayside ministry*. Indeed, the *voluntary* activities of any

life do not by any means measure its influence. The things we do with deliberate intention make but a small part of the sum-total of our life-results. Our influence is as continuous as life itself. We are leaving impressions all of the time on other lives. There is a ministry in our handshaking, in our greeting, in the most casual conversation, in the very expression we wear on our faces, in the gentle sympathy that adds such a thrill of strength to fainting weariness.

To meet some people on the sidewalk and have their cheery “*Good-morning!*” makes one happier all day. To encounter others is as dispiriting as meeting a funeral-procession. There is always potency in a sunny face. There is a holy aroma always about unselfish love. A joyful person scatters gladness like song-

notes. Such a life sheds a tender warmth wherever it moves. What a wondrous sphere of usefulness is thus opened to every one of us!

It is purity, truth, helpfulness and love that sanctify the influence. Full of Christ, wherever we move, we leave brightness and joy. Amid the busiest scenes, when engaged in the most momentous labors, we carry on at the same time a quiet, *unintentional* ministry whose results shall spring up in our pathway like lovely flowers, or echo again in the hearts of others in notes of holy song, or glow in human lives in touches of radiant beauty!

(1880)

God (continued from page 2783)

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

This is pure pagan philosophy. If Fundamentalist creed-makers follow my plea and use nothing but scriptural phraseology, they will not only be unable to express it, but, if they insist on dealing with immortality, they will be obliged to state the opposite. Immortality, in Scripture, is never limited to the soul, or the spirit, or the body. The point of the above phrase is repudiated in two passages. It intimates that the soul is now immortal; but, *at the last trump*, that which now is *not* immortal will put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:53-54). If I was writing this item of a creed I would word it thus, using the only remaining occurrence of the word: “*Our Lord Jesus Christ ... the King of kings and Lord of lords ... alone has immortality ...*” (I Timothy 6:15-16).

LIFE EVERLASTING

I also believe in the “life everlasting” of the believer; but I do not believe *God* as to this, because the expression does not occur in His Word. It is only an inference from what He has said. When our Lord comes we shall be changed to *immortality* and *incorruption* (I Corinthians 15:52-55). I reason that, if we become incorruptible and deathless, we can never die, hence we have “everlasting” life. Again, *God* has said that the last enemy, death, shall be abolished (I Corinthians 15:26), in order that all shall be made alive. Believers receive *eonian life*, which lasts until the consummation. Hence, since we live until there is no death, we

have “everlasting” life. Yet everlasting life can be reasoned in for unbelievers as well as believers. Believers have *eonian life*, the life of the ages. Unbelievers do not have this. Yet, when death, the last enemy, is abolished, and all who died in Adam are vivified in Christ, then, *all* will receive “everlasting life.”

THE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT

The phrase “endless punishment” is unknown to the Word of God. The word “impenitent,” the negative of the word “repentant,” and concordantly rendered “*unrepentant*,” occurs but once, in Romans 2:5. There the judgment of the unrepentant is set forth in inspired phraseology. *Not a word is said of “endless punishment”!* Those of faction and stubborn as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice, will be judged. “*Indignation and fury, affliction and distress*” will come on “*every human soul which is effecting evil ...*” (Romans 2:5-9). Yet all of this is merely God’s justice, without reference to His salvation in Christ, which is not set forth until the third chapter.

TO ALL BELIEVERS

I adjure you, choose now *whom* you will believe – *man* or *God*. *You cannot believe God and such creeds at the same time.* May God’s rich grace and the transcendent love of Christ constrain you to hear Him and Him alone!

Believe God, and not men!

The Downward Course of Christianity

Christianity began as a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When it went to Athens, it became a philosophy. When it went to Rome, it became an organization. When it spread throughout Europe, it became a culture. When it came to America, it became a business.

Dan Sheridan
Cross and Throne Ministries

Our Attitude Toward Those Who Oppose

Israel's warfare is with flesh and blood on the earth. Ours is with wicked spirits in the celestial realms. We should always remember that those who oppose us are merely the intermediaries used by the spiritual forces and treat them accordingly. It is not our place to wrestle with flesh and blood but to look beyond the human instrument to the real adversary in the spirit world. Material weapons are worse than useless. Our attitude toward men should be one of purest conciliation, not strife.

A.E. Knoch
Concordant Commentary on the New Testament (Ephesians 6:10), page 294



I Am! Who and What God Says I Am!

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