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Showcasing all humanity finished in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28
There is still much light to break forth from the Scriptures. A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
Volume 46
Issue 1143

An Almost Surreal Realization

Peeling Away the Onion that Is God

by — Mark D. Vogt

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The word "surreal" means that which is a mixture of fact and fantasy. Reading Ephesians 1:1-12 the other day gave me a feeling that I have experienced numerous times while reading this same portion of Scripture.

Sometimes, like a lot of people do when reading the Bible, I tend to read the words and not really thinking about nor comprehending the words read. After finishing we say to ourselves, "what did I just read?"

The comprehension is not there, since we have read it so many times – it becomes like reading your grocery list. You know the words are there and you know what the words mean, but what do they really say?

This portion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is so awe inspiring that it is, at times, difficult to comprehend fully what Paul is saying. It seems to be surreal. How could God be saying these things? How could He be taking a bunch of nobodies and giving them all of these things enumerated here.

In I Corinthians 1:26-30 Paul says that,

> *For you are observing your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh; not many powerful, not many noble, but the stupidity of the world God chooses, that He may be disgracing the wise, and the weakness of the world God chooses, that He may be disgracing the strong, and the ignoble and contemptible things of the world God chooses, and that which is not, that He should be discarding that which is, so that no flesh at all should be boasting in God's sight.*

This should be a sobering thought to those of us who still cling to some form of self-reliance and autonomy. Has Father lost His mind? Who is this God? This is a God that nobody could have imagined even in their wildest dreams. Surely, we can contribute something to these bountiful blessings because, why would He choose us to be part of *"the church which is His Body."* Oh, but wait a second: we are the contemptible and the weak and the ignoble of the world!

How does that make you feel?

In I Corinthians 1 Father is not saying that we are stupid, but that we are stupid in the sight of the world, and this then makes us unwise and ignoble in their view.

How many of you, when given the opportunity to

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Bible Student's Notebook™
Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal
ISSN: 1936-9360
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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:
- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding joy (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- 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);
  - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
  - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

We're just presenters, not persuaders. – Steve Martin
We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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proclaim the truths in Ephesians 1 to Christian friends and family, were looked upon as if you had just landed from Mars and were some kind of alien? People will look at you and shake their heads wondering where you had heard of these outlandish ideas that, to them, are completely contrary to Christianity. And yet, praise be to God, there are a few others out there who have these ideas also. Not many, but there are a few. But how did so few people come to hold these ideas?

As I Corinthians 1 says, not many are called. If one takes even a cursory look at the Scriptures, one would see that, throughout history, God has always called out just a few to participate in the execution of His will directly. The greatest example of this is seen in the choosing of Israel. Deuteronomy 7:7-8 says,

> *The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of the bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt* (*KJV*).

This is the pattern throughout the Scriptures. God always uses a small band of people through which He accomplishes His purposes. See also Judges chapter 7 concerning Gideon and the battle with the Midianites.

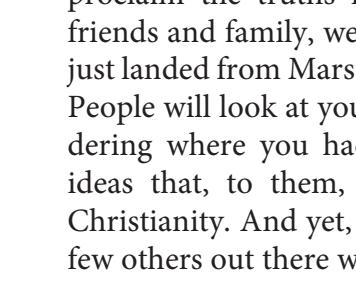
God kept telling Gideon to pare down the number of warriors because there were too many. The purpose for this is so that no one except the Lord can take credit for the victory. This pattern is repeated over and over in Scripture. It is God Who is doing the work, and it is God Who is to get the glory and praise because He is the One doing the battle.

We can see this principle in Ephesians 2:10 which says,

> *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* (*CV*).

Even the things that we do as members of *"the church which is His body"* were prepared by God Himself long before any of us came on the scene. We are all in this play that God has written, produced and directed and which is done to accomplish His will.

So, this should be the mindset when reading Ephesians 1:1-12. To begin with, verses three through



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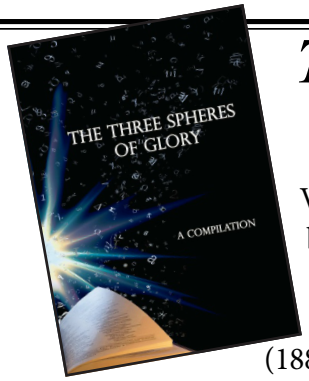

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twelve is one sentence. If you are old enough to remember diagraming sentences in English class, you might look at this and wonder where to begin. Contained in this one sentence is the most advanced and glorious revelation in all of Scripture.

The issue, relatively speaking, is the overwhelming number of believers who are completely unaware of this awe-inspiring portion of God's Word. At best it is glossed over as an extension of Paul's Acts ministry (most don't even realize that Paul had a separate ministry during the time period which the book of Acts covers). At worst it is completely ignored.

True to the pattern established throughout Scripture only a small number of believers receive the realization of what Paul is saying here. This is done on purpose by God. Father gives faith or realization of Himself. We don't work up the belief on our own. Philippians 1:29, Romans 12:3 and Ephesians 2:8-9 will attest to that. Not everyone is to "get it" in this lifetime. At the Consummation all will "get it" and all will understand these glorious truths. But for now, only a few are given this insight.

So, what is this realization? What great revelations are made known in this tiny portion of Scripture, which are subsequently expanded upon in the rest of Ephesians and the letter of Colossians? What is the secret that has been made known, yet hardly anyone knows it?

As stated before, this truth is so outlandish that the religious world considers those who believe these things to be so out on the fringe, and dangerous to some, that nobody should take them seriously. Yet, this truth is there for everyone to see if only they had the eyes of understanding. It is not a secret anymore. It was concealed in the past. God kept it hidden in Himself so that not even the Old Testament Scriptures give a hint of these things. These truths are hidden in plain sight, yet most cannot see them.

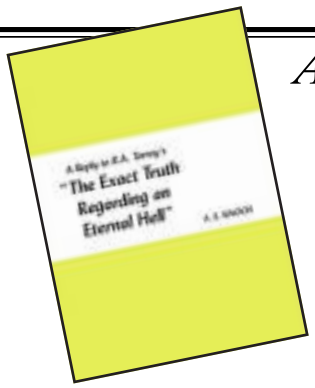
It gives Father great joy to make Himself fully known during this Secret Administration. In these two epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, and in particular Ephesians 1:3-12, we have the revelation of the happy God Who delights in giving of Himself to humanity and specifically to the church which is Christ's body. Yet here it is. How hard is it to comprehend the fact that Father chose us in Christ before the disruption of the world (Genesis 1:1-2)?

What does it mean to you, dear believer, that God had you in His mind, however many "millions of years" ago, and that He was and is blessing you with all spiritual blessings in those celestial places? Can we even begin to grasp what that means?

That God would bless this group of believers with the privilege of being the instrumentality of His plan to reconcile the celestial beings in the Universe is beyond human belief. No one could ever, on their own, come up with a plan so marvelous and as wonderful, and yes, so outlandish, as this plan of God (*cf.* Romans 11:33-35).

Not only that, but we are also being placed as a son to inherit our place in the celestials. Not a portion on the Earth, but *in the Universe,* outer space if you will. Humanly speaking, it sounds like this is science fiction.

The underlying truth is that Father is doing this,



A Reply to R.A. Torrey's "The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell"

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

A scriptural response to Torrey's attempt to defend the traditional doctrine of Hell. 49 pages, paperback.

not begrudgingly, but out of the pure joy that is in His heart. He delights in doing these things. He delights in reckoning us as holy and, get this, *flawless* in His sight. Flawless means unspotted and blameless. Oh, what a Dad we have!

How different is this than the God of Christianity who is seen as this harsh taskmaster that requires His devotees to perform for Him in order to gain His approval. That was required in the program of the Old Testament, under the old covenants of Israel, but not now. God did require that type of response then, but it was used to teach humanity a lesson. That lesson was that, even if you are a privileged group of people (the nation Israel) and that God promised you all sorts of blessings if you obeyed Him, you still fell short of the mark (remember the definition of sin – missing the mark).

This long lesson (seems long to humanity) is to demonstrate to mankind that it is best just to let God do His thing and for us to sit back and just enjoy being in His care, not performing to gain His approval. We already have it without one ounce of effort on our part. This brings joy and glory to Dad.

As I said, this sounds like science fiction to the religious, let alone to any non-believer. Paul uses the words that have been translated as "lavish" and "delight" to convey these truths of Dad's attitude toward us who are in the body.

Can you imagine the Puritan preacher Johnathan Edwards preaching about the love of God – His delight in giving us these things, or the fact that God lavishes these things on us, which in turn gives Him great joy? I don't think so.

What a skewed image the world, and worse, the religious world has of our Father.

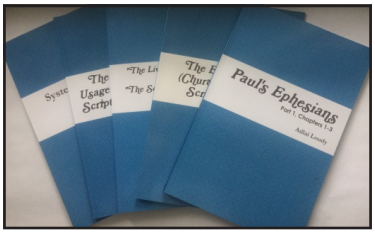
Over all of these truths is the one great truth, and that is, we, *"the church which is His body,"* are the complement of Christ Jesus. That means that we make Christ Jesus complete. We fill up that which is lacking in Him. This means that Christ needs a body (not a physical body) to carry out the work that Father has for Him to do – and we are that body. This is so real that in Ephesians 1:10 we and Christ Jesus are called *"THE Christ,"* which is the union of our Head and His complement, which is His body.

Christ needs this body, for Father has determined that *"The Christ"* is to have an *Administration of the Complement of the Eras* that would head up all in The Christ of all in the Universe, both in the Heavens and the Earth (Ephesians 1:9-19).

(see ONION, last page)

Smaller Works of Adlai Loudy

(1893-1984)



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The Myth of Human Free Will

Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 8: The Logos / Lesson 5: The Myth of Human Free Will (Part 2)

by — Mark D. Vogt

All is out of Him (Romans 11:36).

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God in His wisdom has worked out things so that human beings believe (except those whom He has enlightened) that they are making decisions in their lives from a free-will perspective. This is a necessary component in Father's "classroom."



When Christ Jesus judges (Father has given all judgement to Him) it is not to render retribution or to exact a penalty, as in a payment for sin, but to provide the backdrop for His correction and it is therefore His task to "make things right."

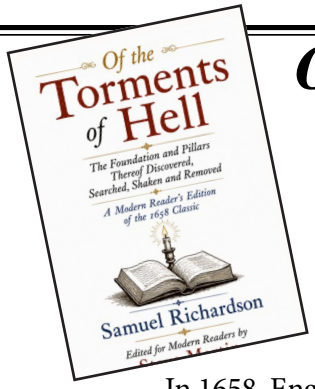
Mankind must think that they have free will in order for God to demonstrate, in that day, that He knows best and that His way is superior to any of man's thinking and, in fact, He is orchestrating all in our lives.

Humanity needs this humbling experience of life before they can realize the grace, love and wisdom of God, and then they can truly rejoice in Him.

One may wonder how it can be said that we don't have free will and that God directs everything in our lives down to the minutest detail. To start with, the reader needs to go back to Romans 11:36 and review that verse again.

> *… seeing that out of Him and through Him and to Him is all …*

That word *"all"* means just that – *all.* The immediate



Of the Torments of Hell – The Foundation and Pillars Thereof Discovered, Searched, Shaken and Removed

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context of this verse is found in Romans 11:28-36. Paul is extolling the wisdom and knowledge of God and acknowledging the incredible depth of that same wisdom and knowledge. Verse 36 simply is the summary of what verses 28 through 35 are saying. In fact, there is no other conclusion one can reach other than *"all"* is from Him, through Him and to Him. This leaves nothing to the conjecture of people about their supposed free will or their ability to run their lives apart from Him.

Proverbs 16:9 is a wonderful verse which encapsulates how things really work.

> *A man's heart, it devises his way, Yet Yahweh, He establishes his steps* (*CV*).

Mankind can plan and plan all they want too, yet nothing comes about unless God intends for it to happen. There is no chance, no slip-ups, no catching God by surprise, and nothing to make God change His mind.

So much for the concept of the traditional view of prayer in which the supplicant prays for God to change His mind about some concern that the individual has, and thinking that with much prayer he can persuade God to do what the prayer wishes to happen.

What is wrong with this idea, and the danger if it were true, is that the person praying doesn't know all of the details, and in fact, probably doesn't know most of the details of any particular situation, so that they really don't know what they ought to be praying for.

> *Now, similarly, the spirit is aiding our infirmity, for what we should be praying for, to accord with what must be, we are not aware, but the spirit itself is pleading for us with inarticulate groanings. Now He Who is searching the hearts is aware what is the disposition of the spirit, for in accord with God is it pleading for the saints* (Romans 8:26-27: *CV*).

That there can be no free will in God's creation can be seen in another verse in the book of Proverbs.

> *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the* Lord (Proverbs 16:33).

No plan of God can be short circuited by any being's so called free will, celestial or terrestrial, in any way. Satan himself had to ask permission of God before he could do anything to Job, and eventually Job came to this realization in his own life.

> *Then Job answered Yahweh, saying: "I know that You are able in all things, and no plan of Yours can be thwarted" (*Job 42:1-2, *CV).*

As the saying goes "God is large and in charge," and we are thankful for that realization. BSN

Topics:
Major: *Logos*; Sovereignty; Will
Minor: Realization



ONION (continued from page 9571)

Not only that, but *"The Christ"* is in turn to be the complement of Father Himself. Think about that for a minute.

God is lacking something? The God of the Universe needs something?

What God needs is that which came out of Him in creation, and His plan and purpose is to bring all of that back to Him, and *"The Christ"* (Head and Body) is designated as the agent by which to accomplish this task.

Have you thought about that? God, Creator of all, is going to use you and I as agents to accomplish this task. This reality is far from the usual drivel coming from the pulpits and seminaries. Their job is to keep people under bondage by the use of guilt. Without guilt, they can't control them. Religion, including and maybe especially, Christianity, is all about control. There is nothing about freedom in Christ, for that is dangerous to the control they desire.

The Adversary works in the religious area. His desire is that people come under never ending guilt, and the only relief from this guilt is to perform for God, which usually takes place in the local assembly.

The problem is that any relief from such guilt is only temporary, and the guilt returns almost immediately, because of death working in us, rendering us helpless to hit the mark. Freedom in Christ is the only answer to this situation – and freedom there is in Christ!

God leaves nothing to chance. Ephesians 1:11-12 boldly states that Father is operating ALL in accord with the counsel of His will. Nothing will be lost, nothing will be misplaced, and all that God desires will be done and on His timetable. Nothing will be done too soon or too late. All will be done in His good time.

If this doesn't excite you, as a believer, then you need to check your pulse to see if you are still a functioning adult.

This truth found in Ephesians and Colossians is the pinnacle of God's revelation to humanity, and we are the fortunate ones to be the recipients of Father's grace (joy). As a children's song says "count your blessings, name them one by one."

This reality is the ultimate onion peel that can be taken away. There is no higher truth that we can know, so peel that onion layer away to get to the sweet spot (we are using a Vidalia onion in our illustration) and luxuriate in what God has done for us and who He has made us in Christ. BSN

TOPICS:
Major: Called; Complement; Mystery; One Body; Realization; Sovereignty
Minor: Christianity; Religion

> WE MUST NOT FORCE WORDS BEYOND THEIR BIBLICAL USAGE.
> — F.H. ROBISON (1885–1932)



The Steps I Have Taken

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

A short autobiographical work.
Many times over the years Clyde has been asked how he got from an Independent Baptist pastor to where he is now: from a hell-fire and brimstone street preacher to a herald of the good news of "the happy God." This work is a short chronicle of his journey: leaving the confines of religious bondage to enjoy the life of God in the wide open spaces of His grace. 65 pages.