



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume 40  
Issue 998

### Universal Reconciliation Questions and Answers

[UniversalReconciliationQA.wordpress.com](http://UniversalReconciliationQA.wordpress.com)

## URQA #1

### Matthew 3:10-12

*And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (KJV).*

**Q:** “Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit” will be cast into what “fire”? Why is there a distinction between “wheat” and “chaff”? If the fire is “unquenchable fire,” doesn’t that speak of eternal torment?

**A:** Jesus was sent only to “*the lost sheep of the House of Israel*” (Matthew 15:24) and Matthew was therefore written to the Circumcision, not to anyone else. The “wheat” and “chaff” are simply figures used to differentiate the true Jewish believers in Christ, from their falsely Jewish counterparts. Chapters 2 and 3 in the Book of the Revelation speak of these counterfeits.

*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9).*

*Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but*

*do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee (Revelation 3:9).*

The “unquenchable fire” referred to in Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 is the fire of the city of Jerusalem’s rubbish dump. The fires of this dump are known in the Greek as *geenna* or *Gehenna*. This is where all of those condemned to death were cast, not deserving of a decent burial after their execution. The fire is referred to as “unquenchable” only because it is maintained in a constant state of combustion. It is not a figurative reference to eternal torment.

(see **URQA**, last page)

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### Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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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 grace (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 "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- 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 unpropheesied, 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 (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men 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).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

*We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar*

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# Why Is the World Full of Misery and Disappointment if God Loves Us?

## Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 3: The Love of God / Lesson 6: Why Is the World Full of Misery and Disappointment if God Loves Us?

by — Mark D. Vogt

*I have come to a reasoned conclusion that the sufferings of the present season are of no weight in comparison to the glory which is about to be revealed upon us (Romans 8:18, WET).*

### Key Points:

Life's current sufferings are negligible compared to the eternal glory that awaits in the afterlife..... 8405  
Questioning God's wisdom is futile as He is sovereign and all-knowing, with humanity in no position to challenge His will.....8406

God created evil to provide a necessary contrast, allowing us to appreciate good through the experience of its opposite.....8406  
Suffering is a divine tool for personal growth, teaching us to depend on God and strengthening our character.....8406

**I**n attempting to answer the question before us, we would do well to contemplate a couple of realities first in order to give a better perspective on this subject.

First, life is very short, by any standard. James 4:14 states,

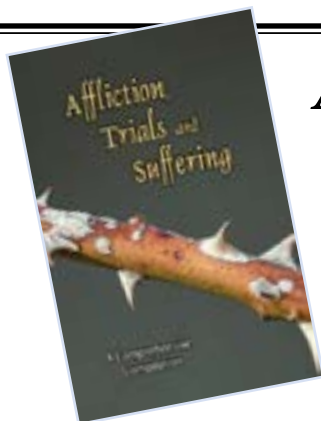
*For a vapor are you, which is appearing briefly and thereupon disappearing ... (CV).*

In terms of time throughout the ages, we are but a vapor, a blip in time if you will. Yet most people seem to

believe, at least in practice, that this life they are living is really the only life that they have. Not much thought is given to “the sequel” to this life (I Corinthians 10:13, CV) which will be found in resurrection (I Corinthians 15), nor to the fact that it is there where the vast endlessness of our life awaits.

The difficulties of this “vapor” life are miniscule in comparison with the vast glory that lies ahead: it is but a grain of sand contrasted to a mountain. So much so, that Paul wrote,

*the sufferings of the present time are not worthy*



## Affliction, Trials and Suffering

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286 pages

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Second, who are we to question the all-loving, all-wise, absolutely sovereign God and His precise workings? In Romans 9:14-26 Paul the apostle declares that God will have mercy on whomever He will, and pitying on whomever He will. He also declares that God is the Potter and we, all humanity, are His clay. We don't even have the right or wisdom to question Him about this.

In light of these realities, and the truth that they contain, the question remains: Why is the world full of misery and disappointment?

Isaiah 45:6-7 tells us without any equivocation that God created evil. No “beating around the bush,” no soft selling, no trying to mollify anybody's thinking. God created evil and therefore, since He did, it was for a specific purpose, and He is responsible for it. God does not do anything haphazardly and for no reason at all. So, the next question then is: Why did He do this?

The answer to that question is simple: Contrast. Yes, as in hot and cold, high and low, fast and slow.

*Former of light and Creator of darkness, Maker of good and Creator of evil. I, Yahweh Elohim,*



### ***The Problem of Evil and The Judgments of God***

by — A.E. Knoch

346 pages (See [order form](#) under “Knoch.”)

This book traces the divine function of evil from its inception to its consummation, by presenting scriptural solutions to the various long-debated questions concerning God and His sovereignty. Here is what one of our readers has written about *The Problem of Evil*:

“The litmus test for motive in any writer is whether or not the power of the ‘Cross’ is being diminished or supplanted in any way; Knoch unfolds each point with the loving simplicity of someone who has faced and answered the critics with the overarching victory of Calvary. One comes away from each chapter of this work once again realizing that the offense of the ‘Cross’ has driven so many wonderful and freeing truths out of what is traditionally taught and practiced.”

In this verse it says that God is the “Maker of good” and the “Creator of evil.” How can one know “good” unless they have experienced “evil”? If one has never experienced evil, the concept of good could never enter their mind.

If you live in Maine and you are out shoveling snow for a couple of hours in mid-winter and become bone cold, as you enter the house and feel the radiating warmth of a blazing fire you begin to realize the contrast. You appreciate that fire much more than if you lived in Florida and came in from the outside to a fire in the fireplace. It may be nice and pretty and it may even take the chill out of the air, but it is not a great contrast.

God uses contrast in our lives to teach us, and to make us appreciate, Who He is and what He has done, and what He will do in the future. Disappointments, tragedy, despondency and affliction teach us to rely continually on Him Who has our best interests at the core of His heart.

*Yet not only so, but we may be glorying also in afflictions, having perceived that affliction is producing endurance, yet endurance testedness, yet testedness expectation. Now expectation is not mortifying, seeing that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the holy spirit which is being given to us (Romans 5:3-5, CV).*

When we are weak, then we are strong through Christ Jesus our Lord (II Corinthians 12:10). Our strength does not lie within ourselves, in our abilities, or in our accomplishments. Therefore, God brings evil into our lives to humble us, for, when we are humbled, then He can mold us into the vessel He wants us to be.

All are His handiwork, whether believers or unbelievers. All are His servants, and all do His bidding whether they realize it or not; and no one, nor anything, will cause God to deviate from His intentions to carry out His Logos (plan). Be glad for the suffering in your life (Philippians 1:29, CV), for where suffering is, there will be growth and blessing. God knows what He is doing. **BSN**

#### **TOPICS:**

**Major:** Contrast; Evil; God; Love; Sovereignty; Suffering  
**Minor:** Sequel; Suffering



## My Story

# *“We also believe, and therefore speak.”*

## Testimonies of Believers #10

**Steve Martin**

### *Twists, Turns and Truth*

I was brought up in a very strict, conservative Mennonite home. While my parents provided for me and loved me deeply, our lives were governed by an extensive list of “dos and don’ts” dictated by our church’s stringent rules. From obeying strict dress codes to driving only black cars, the regulations seeped into every aspect of our daily existence. We even had to avoid radios, televisions and musical instruments. So sheltered were we from the outside world that we were not allowed to mingle with kids who weren’t from our religious community. Behavior was closely monitored, and standing up in church to make public confessions was a routine part of our spiritual life. Obedience to church leaders was considered absolute, and our reading material was confined to church-approved literature.

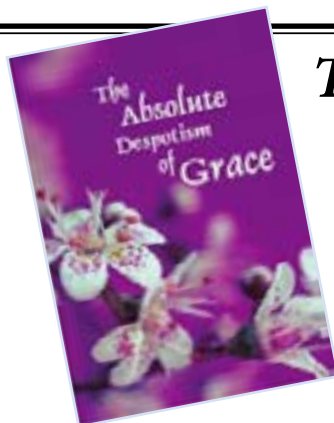
Growing up, the stakes felt unimaginably high. I was told that even the smallest of infractions could result in eternal damnation. This fearful theology had the unfortunate consequence of straining my relationship with my father, who remained unwavering in his commitment to this religious system until his death.

As I grew older, I got married and had three children. Despite the good fortune and blessings that seemed to mark our family life, I lived somewhat of a double life. On Sundays, I would dress up, teach Sun-

day School, and play the part of a devout Mennonite. However, during the weekdays I tried to avoid the religious rituals and obligations as much as I could manage.

In my early 40s, a renewed desire to seek God became the driving force in my life. Initially, this led me to become even more deeply entrenched in the religious system I had known all my life. I helped initiate outreach programs like a bus ministry and a town-wide Vacation Bible School. I even became a part of the ministry team at my church. But my fervor was a double-edged sword. While it made me more active in my community, it also turned me into something of a Pharisee – judgmental, and constantly chastising my children for minor things.

During those years of fervent seeking, a few moments stand out as turning points in my spiritual journey. I remember being introduced to the concept of “eternal security” during my days as a Baptist street preacher. This was groundbreaking for me because I had always lived under the belief that salvation could be lost through sin. I also recall sharing the idea that perhaps God might decide to save everyone after all. While we dismissed the thought at the time, it planted a seed in my mind.



## *The Absolute Despotism of Grace*

*A Compilation*

A Compilation of 25 chapters, by 16 authors, spanning over 135 years, expounding on the marvelous, powerful reign of God’s grace in our day.

146 pages

See [order form](#) under “Compilations.”

My involvement in prison ministry was another significant chapter in my journey. Listening to inmates talk about their lives opened my eyes to the cyclical nature of poor choices and systemic failures. It led me to question why God would allow this vicious cycle to continue, seemingly letting Satan win, generation after generation.

Around 2010, my belief system underwent a seismic shift. I was given a book that questioned the very existence of hell, arguing that it was inconsistent with the character of a loving God. At first, I rejected the notion outright, but it started a chain reaction of thought. After reading Rob Bell's *Love Wins*, I couldn't turn back. I dived into the Scriptures, read numerous books, researched online resources like tentmaker.com and became acquainted with the ministries of people like Clyde Pilkington and Martin Zender.

By the end of six months, I was convinced that God's love was not just unconditional but also universally inclusive. This conviction had its costs: I faced push-back from my community and even lost my job at a ministry – but the rewards were immeasurable. My newfound understanding of God's unconditional love dramatically improved my relationships with my family. I apologized to each of my children for my previously judgmental and condemning ways, and their gracious responses have helped our relationships grow stronger in the subsequent years.

I am profoundly grateful for the grace that God has shown me, leading me to these truths and giving me the faith to embrace them. This journey wasn't something I initiated; it was a divine realization that God graciously bestowed upon me.

Subsequently, additional subjects began to crystallize in my understanding. I gained divine insight into the sovereignty of God, the misconception surrounding the concept of the Trinity, the true nature of death, the teachings of Paul, the various ages discussed in Scripture, and much more.

Today, my understanding of God's love and divine sovereignty continues to deepen. I walk this path of faith alongside my wife, filled with a peace and love I've never known before. I view everyone, regardless

of their life circumstances, with love and without judgment. I've come to realize that I don't have to fix the world; I can simply live my life in peace, knowing that ultimately, all will be well for all of creation.

My faith in God's boundless love and supreme authority parallels my trust in the force of gravity. It's not always at the forefront of my thoughts, yet it shapes my entire existence.

Just like how gravity is always there: when I need to get something up high, I naturally look for a strong stool or ladder to stand on, and I do this more as I get older. I go through life always keeping in mind that gravity is there.

In a similar vein, the concept of God's unconditional love and sovereignty steers my life. It influences my self-perception, my interactions with others, my approach to circumstances, and my decision-making processes. While it's not a constant conscious thought, it's a fundamental and directing force within me.

I find solace in God's unwavering love. I am comforted by the belief that salvation is universal and eternal damnation is not our fate. The certainty that God reigns with complete control brings tranquility to my heart. I take comfort in knowing that gravity anchors me to the earth. The knowledge that my wife and children hold me dear brings me rest. These truths don't require my constant contemplation because their reality is ingrained in my being.

Looking back, I see that every stage of my life has been a chapter in a story written by divine grace. I'm filled with gratitude for the realization that God has given to me, knowing that each struggle and moment of enlightenment has been a steppingstone leading me closer to a deeper understanding of His immeasurable love.

BSN

#### TOPICS:

**Major:** Believer's Walk; Martin, Steve; My Story; Testimonies  
**Minor:** Faith; Grace; Love; Peace; Sovereignty



## Tidbits of Truth #60

"Tidbits" is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

### Saints of the Acts Period

[To J.F.:] Up until Acts 28:28, and Paul's epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, the emphasis was on the Jewish and Proselyte (Gentile) believers. Indeed, they were one group of saints, gathering in many different synagogues. These bodies of Christ were made up of believing Israel as well as those Gentiles who were "grafted into" the olive tree of Israel. These "bodies" were baptized in the spirit which gave them the spiritual gifts of tongues, healing, etc. They all were recipients of promises made to Abraham. After Israel's national rejection of their Messiah and His Kingdom a second time, the Secret Administration believers (those natural and those grafted in) were removed from Israel's tree and became the only out-calling that God is dealing with now.

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

### Artificial Ministry

[Edited excerpt:] The modern-day concept of "the pastor"<sup>1</sup> has no scriptural grounds. "The pastor" is living in non-reality. We are dealing with an unscriptural process: one which you cannot make scriptural no matter how hard you try. The artificiality creates a horrendous lifestyle.

History will tell you that the modern-day pastor began with the Reformation. Further, its roots before the Reformation are a high compound of paganism and Roman Catholic practices such as a priest.

What is amazing is that no one has ever written a book about the biblical nature of the pastor! We have so many books written on the pastoral ministry, yet

in all of those thousands of books, no one ever traces the pastor's historical beginnings or its scriptural justification. A "pastor" is just there!

If you cannot stay within traditional walls, then it is obvious that the first thing you should do is leave the pastorate. Some of us had no choice. We had to do this for conscience's sake. In leaving, we move to another plane of our call.

— Gene Edwards

*Why You Should Consider Leaving the Pastorate*  
(2007), pp. 3, 7, 8, 14, 18

### Evil Eventuates in Father's Dwelling Place

Suffering – a result of evil – is "graciously granted" (CV), or has "been given as a favor" (Philippians 1:29, REB). The idioms "in behalf of" (for the benefit of) and "on behalf of" (as the agent of)<sup>2</sup> and the phrase "for His [Christ's] sake" (sake = purpose of/advantage of) in the above verses, explain why Paul "gloried" and "delighted" in infirmities, i.e., on the behalf of/ for the purpose and advantage of, Christ Jesus our Lord! He, "for our sakes," "in our behalf" (Romans 5:8, CV, Rotherham) DIED! We, in return "glory" and "delight" in infirmities. Thus Paul, by Divine inspiration, wrote,

*I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and am filling up – in my flesh – the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ, for His Body* (Colossians 1:24).

This allows us to "all grow into Him, Who is the Head ... making for the growth of the Body, for the upbuilding [edification] of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16, CV), that we all "may be completed for the entire complement [pleroma] of God" (Ephesians 3:19, CV), "being built together for God's dwelling place in

1. [Editor:] For more on this see:

– "Pastors" – [The Ascension Gifts, the Higher Powers of Romans 13, and the Secret Administration](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington").

2. *American Heritage Dictionary*.

spirit” (Ephesians 2:22, CV). That is who we are being transformed to be!

“The glory that shall be revealed in<sup>3</sup> us” (Romans 8:18) is GOD HIMSELF!

— Mark Peters

## We Are Anyway

There is an interesting line by Paul McCartney in the popular song, Penny Lane.

The pretty nurse is selling poppies from a tray  
And though she feels as if she’s in a play,

3. CV “for” = superscript: io = into.

**URQA** (continued from front page)

During the stages of Israel’s coming Kingdom there will be a purging out of that which is unfruitful. This speaks of that which belongs to the ages leading up to the consummate age, not the Consummation itself. It is important to recognize the difference between God’s ultimate goal for all of His creation and process leading toward that glorious end.

The idea of eternal torment is an invention which came about due to mistranslating the Greek word *aiōn* as “for ever” (or *aiōn aiōn* as “for ever and ever”). An *aiōn* (age) is a period of time, but the various *aiōns* all have both a beginning and an end. Some *aiōns* are longer than others. Therefore, the word *aiōn*, mistranslated “for ever,” does not mean unend-

She is anyway.

Understanding God’s Hand and His sovereignty in all things, we are in a play – God’s majestic and perfectly choreographed play. Like the nurse on Penny Lane, sometimes we feel like we’re in a play, and we are anyway. **BSN**

— Mike Owens<sup>4</sup>

### TOPICS:

**Major:** [Saints of the Acts Period:] Acts Period [Artificial Ministry:] Pastor [Evil Eventuates in Father’s Dwelling Place:] Evil; Suffering [We Are Anyway:] Sovereignty; Stage of Human History

4. [Editor:] Mike Owens is the author of [The Fallacy of Post Mortem Punishment in Light of a Successful Savior](#), on the [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”

ing.

The Scripture states that “God [shall] be All in all” (I Corinthians 15:28), and God cannot be “All in all” if either annihilation or eternal torment are true. It would make Him “All in some.” “All” truly means all, not just some; and this understanding is but one of the many which points unmistakably to the glorious truth of universal reconciliation.

**BSN**

### TOPICS:

**Major:** *Aiōn*; Forever; Hell; Matthew 10:3-12; Q&A; Salvation of All  
**Minor:** Consummation; *Gehenna*; Pre-Millennial Kingdom; Translation



2<sup>nd</sup> edition  
91 pages

See [order form](#) under  
“Clyde Pilkington.”

## “Pastors” – The Ascension Gifts, the Higher Powers of Romans 13, and the Secret Administration

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The modern role of “pastor” is not founded on Scripture, but instead is an institutional fabrication of Protestantism. The Ascension Gifts of Ephesians 4 were prophetically a part of Israel’s Old Testament promises. The “higher powers” of Romans 13 were not a reference to civil authorities, but rather the spiritual rulers over the Acts-period churches. Since Acts 28 (the dispensational boundary line) the “powers that be” have been withdrawn. Under the current Secret Administration, all of these “gifts” are inoperative. The One Body has no flesh-and-blood rulers. We are to be submissive only to our Head: the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him alone do we owe our allegiance.