

David's recognition in Psalm 51:5 -- "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" -- appears to be closer to the truth.

Incidentally, Jesus' statement in Matthew 18:2-4 could mean that unless we become humble and acceptant and trusting (not sinless) as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. And Paul's statement in I Corinthians 14:20 could mean that with respect to evil we should be as babes who are inexperienced (not sinless), but with respect to thought and judgment we should be mature, experienced persons.

(c) A third interpretation proposes that this passage refers to the human situation prior to and following the Fall, when at first all mankind in Adam knew God, but then turned away from God, lost the knowledge of God, became guilty, depraved, and corrupt, became sin-blinded and sin-deafened to God's truth, and were given over to their own sinful religious and moral devices.

This view is attractive because it relates the results mentioned in the passage to the Fall, and thus includes all mankind in its condemnation. It is also attractive because of its simplicity and neatness.

Nevertheless, it faces the difficulty encountered by the first interpretation -- it accounts for the past tenses in the passage, and the before and after aspects of the Fall, but not for the present tense. If mankind once and for all lost the knowledge of God and became blind and deaf to God's truth, it is difficult to see how human beings can presently be suppressing the truth that they are presently perceiving.

(d) A fourth interpretation proposes that this passage refers to the experience of each sinful human being at each moment of his earthly life. It suggests that each sinful human being is presently experiencing external general revelation of God's power and divinity, is presently perceiving and understanding it in terms of the truth it conveys, and is presently suppressing, distorting, and perverting it; and that this process is continuously operating in each unrighteous person in a succession of moments from present to past.

This view stresses both the present and the past tenses in the passage as it reveals the manner in which the unrighteous man interacts with the general revelation that is pouring in upon his senses from every side at each moment of time. It proposes that at one moment the unrighteous man is perceiving the "createdness" of the made things of the universe, is understanding their implications with respect to the eternal power and divinity of God, is suppressing these truths, and is distorting and perverting them into idols created out of his own imagination. It also proposes that the next