

# Time and What to Do With It

by Robert W. Graves

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What I personally find appealing in Charles Finney was his ability to develop a philosophy that was free to go in a direction other than that of the majority view. He carefully thought things through and became aware of the assumptions that he made. He was also in the habit of clarifying exactly what assumptions he made, and what statements required argument.

Although I am not as well versed in philosophy as my good friend Dr. Michael McKimmy (professor of philosophy at a local State University), I have found his comments on cultural philosophical trends interesting.

Dr. McKimmy tells me the idea that God lives outside of time was foreign to the pre-Christian Hebrew culture and that time as something for God to be outside of was introduced into Judeo-Christian thought by theologians influenced by Greek philosophy. It is also a concept that many non-westerners find difficult to grasp.

We who are of a European descent are the only ones who find this concept agreeable without argument. Most Christians I know who truly believe God is outside of time do so out of assumption, they never gave it any serious thought. They heard it once and it made sense to them, so they continue on. Or as Calvinists they accept it as merely part of the Calvinistic package. People from non-European cultures, on the other hand, usually require some sort of philosophical proof before the idea is acceptable to them.

Although God introduced perspectives through New Testament Writers that were not previously entertained (The unity of the body and other similar ideas), this issue of time was not one of them.

My point is this: we should imitate Finney's example and require that theological perspectives should have their root in the biblical texts and not in our cultural philosophical assumptions. I have learned to require of myself further consideration of any issue that seems to be so easily assumed by my culture, yet is not specifically stated in the scripture.

Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega." What he meant by that is subject to a great deal of interpretation. However to give that phrase meaning from a philosophical perspective that was Greek (pagan at the time) is a dangerous step that should not be made without something a great deal more explicit from the scripture or at least requiring it to be philosophically consistent with other explicitly made assumptions in the bible.

Another example of this kind of philosophical jump to conclusions is the idea that God has a specific detailed plan for my life. This too had its start in Greek ideas and was later more highly developed in Calvinistic circles. Finney's works have persuaded me that the

will of God for my life is a moral will. That is: God is more concerned with the right Vs wrong decisions I make more so than with the right or left decisions.

In scripture God commissioned SOME people to perform and accomplish certain specific tasks, but this was the exception rather than the rule. For all of us, without any exception, the moral will of God always applies. Although the scripture explicitly states that the moral will of God applies to all, the scripture nowhere states that God has specific detailed pragmatic choices individually tailored for each individual. (example: God called David to be King and Samuel to be a prophet, but we have no idea if David's horse keepers were called of God to be horse keepers or simply chose that task because it was an excellent opportunity at the time.

God might call you to be a missionary, or you might in obedience to the moral law, assess the need, grasp the required abilities and go out on behalf of love for Jesus and your neighbor. It appears to me that many of the right vs. left decisions we make are subject to the free will and dominion of the earth that God has already released into our responsibility.

I am free to choose to be a computer programmer or a Guitar repairman, unless God specifically commissions me to do some other specific task. However, what ever I choose to do, I am not morally free to decide to do it well or poorly. If I program computers then I should do it as unto the Lord, if I repair guitars, then I should do it as unto the Lord. And if I choose one direction over the other, the difference can be personal preference unless the moral law of love is in some way violated by choosing a personal preference over some other choice that would better serve God and my neighbor.

In either case, it would be a violation of the moral law to choose a direction in life in any manner that neglected the obligation to love God with one's whole heart and to love one's neighbor as an equal. I would want to argue that the Christian has given up the right to choose anything for any reason other than that the choice fits in well to the best of their honest evaluation with the moral law. That requirement having been met is sufficient justification to proceed without ever receiving from God a specific commission to do it. To neglect to do it would be sin. God in scripture reserves specific commissions for tasks that no individual should take upon themselves without revelation.

I might see the need for people to hear the voice of God, but I can not choose to become a prophet -- God must commission me first. However, I need no further word from God to decide to do my best in providing for my family, in supporting the gospel, and in doing my part to make my world a great place from which to love God. The moral law is fully sufficient to counsel me. If I take additional time to divine the specific will of God, then I am procrastinating my moral obligation.

I resolve this issue of God's will for my life as follows: I am morally obligated to do what ever is morally right before me and to refuse whatever is morally wrong. All other choices are the free blessing of God and my responsibility. The only exception to this

would be a specific calling of God that might interrupt me while I am already busily working in the direction of what I understand to be my moral obligation.

Allow me to tie these two ideas together. The idea that God is outside of time causes me to feel down deep within myself, that time is fixed. There is nothing I can do about it. Tomorrow will merely be revealed but never changed. The idea that I can not make a choice until God specifically reveals what His choice for me is, causes me deep down inside myself, to wait for the revelation. Both of these ideas evolved from Greek thought and both of these ideas cause regrettable procrastination within the body of Christ.

If and when God has something specific for me to do, better for Him and all of us that God should need to interrupt me from my course of action than find me sitting doing nothing but waiting for Him to tell me what is next on His divine to-do-list. We should all be so busy doing the moral will of God that specific choices commissioned by God would require revelation from the Holy Spirit that alters our previous course.

I may be comforting a parent whose child died as an act of compassion and empathy. I strive to be the presence of God's comfort. I do this all without waiting for God to say, "Yes go do that." My perception of that person's need, my availability, and abilities already require the action. However, if when I am comforting this person, the Holy Spirit nudges me and says, "This person is upset because they have unconfessed sins against this child." Then and only then do I realize that God wants me to do more than what would simply meet the eye. I may or may not receive further specific guidance. It matters not, my course of action is clear.

The effects of evil in this world are relentless and devastating. We who are of the body of Christ need to stop being so passive. We have devised so many theological concepts that slow us down from doing what ought to be done that the Kingdom of God will suffer.

Our commission is to see to it that the gospel is preached to every person. We can either do it personally or work hard to support an economy that can afford to send others. Either way, our job is to change the future. Do not wait for the future -- make choices that change the future into that which more resembles the Kingdom of God.

Our commission is to love our neighbor as ourselves. This one purpose can keep us busier than we know how to handle. Do not wait for God to tell you who to speak to, where to go, what job to take, who to marry, etc. When considering these choices, do that which is morally agreeable and should those choices interfere with the good of God, then He will make it clear when the time comes. Our job is not to pass the time but to change the times. Our job is not to seek the will of God but to do the will of God.