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**STUDIES**  
**IN THE**  
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*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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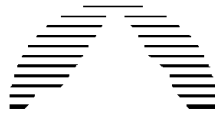
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*Studies in the Scriptures* appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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## SPIRITUAL SINGING

Does not one have to be in the right mood for singing, either to engage in it personally or to enjoy that of others? Such is the idea which prevails generally among professing Christians. From one standpoint, it is of course true, but from another, it is not so. But surely no one sings when he is thoroughly miserable—unless he forces himself to do so. Ah, is not that exactly what the worldlyling would say? It is; and, sad to say, the great majority of church members hold the same view, which only evidences the carnality of their conceptions. Are the children of God in no better case than the children of the devil? Are they too “creatures of circumstances,” swayed by the situation in which they find themselves, a prey to their feelings? But must not one be in a cheerful frame in order to really sing? Yes, to sing naturally. But does not the saint require to be on the mountain ere he can break forth into spiritual song? Such questions indicate how unscriptural are the thoughts of most people on this subject: they reduce singing to a mere physical exercise, an outburst of their *natural* emotions.

Christians are bidden to delight themselves in the LORD (Psa 37:4); and if they really do so, songs of praise are bound to spring up in their hearts. That it is not God’s will His children should be miserable is clear from the fact that the service of song is an ordinance of worship—both under the old covenant (1Ch 6:31) and the new (Eph 5:19). It is an act by which the soul renders homage, and the heart adores the glorious One: “Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery” (Psa 33:2). Singing is expressive of contentment and joy: “My heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him” (Psa 28:7). “Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (Jam 5:13). Such expressions of spiritual gladness are both honouring and pleasing to Him: “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD *better than an ox*” (Psa 69:30-31)—the most costly of the oblations appointed by Him under the Mosaic economy.

“The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). The reference there is to the angelic hosts celebrating the creation of this world. For the next twenty-five centuries, Scripture records no further singing! Why? Because sin had come in and defiled the fair handiwork of God; and sin and crying—rather than sin and singing—more fitly accompany one another. It is salvation from sin which constitutes both the suitable occasion and the appropriate theme for song. Hence, it is as we read in Exodus 15:1: “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD.” That was in most blessed contrast from what had characterized them while they toiled amid the brick kilns of Egypt. There were no joyful strains upon the lips of the Hebrews while they laboured under the taskmasters of Pharaoh; instead, we read that “the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried...And God heard their groaning” (Exo 2:23-24).

“*Then* sang Moses and the children of Israel” (Exo 15:1). When? The closing verses of Exodus 14 tell us: “Thus the LORD *saved* Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did...and *believed* the LORD.” Ah, it is faith, and not unbelief, which evokes the spiritual song: a faith which perceived, “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast *redeemed*” (Exo 15:13). It was the song of redemption which issued from the hearts of an emancipated people. Conscious of being freed from their bondage, they fervently praised their Deliverer. And *what* did they sing about? Entirely of Jehovah: “I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously” (Exo 15:1). There was nothing about themselves: it was wholly concerning Him. The word “LORD” occurs no less than twelve times in eighteen verses, while the pronouns of “He, Him, Thy, Thee, Thou” are found no less than thirty-three times! “I will exalt *him*” (Exo 15:2) expressed their design, as it must that of ever truly spiritual song. If the Lord engages our hearts and minds, there will be less groaning and more singing!

“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved” (Isa 5:1). Not only is He the object of that song, but its Theme too. How different is this from modern hymnology! The majority of the hymns (if such they are entitled to be called) of the past fifty years are full of maudlin sentimentality, instead of divine adoration. They announce *our* love to God, instead of *His* to us. They recount our experiences instead of His excellencies. They describe human attainments far more than they do Christ’s atonement—a sad index to the lack of spirituality in the churches—while the jingling tunes to which they are set, and the irreverent speed at which they are sung, witness only too plainly unto the low state of present-day religion. Christian singing has been *carIALIZED* both in its conception and its execution. Singing—like anything else which is

acceptable unto the Father—must be “in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24), and not a musical performance of the flesh.

The singing which the Scriptures inculcate is not a thing of the senses, but of faith. It is not an outburst of emotional exuberance, but an expression of the heart’s adoration. God is the Object of faith; and when that grace be in exercise, the soul is absorbed with His perfections, and melodious praise fills it. “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit [not merely the throat], and I will sing with the understanding [not the emotions] also” (1Co 14:15)—how that lifts those holy exercises above the plane of our natural feelings! Unless the Christian’s singing proceeds from the “spirit” or new nature, it is but lip service. Faith rises above nature and triumphs over all circumstances. No matter how distressing our situation, how low we may be in our feelings, if faith be engaged with its Beloved and ravished with His perfections, it will evoke song unto Him, about Himself, as it did from the bleeding and manacled apostles in the Philippian dungeon (Act 16)!

“Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Psa 30:4). The divine holiness is indeed an attribute which inspires deepest awe, yet it also evokes praise from those enabled to discern its supernatural beauty. “Holy, holy, holy”! (Isa 6:3) is the song of the seraphim; and in it, the saints should join, as Israel did at the Red Sea when they adored Jehovah for being “glorious in holiness” (Exo 15:1): “My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness” (Psa 51:14)—can it be otherwise when the soul is assured His righteousness is imputed unto Himself! “I will sing of thy power” (Psa 59:16): we must do so if we realize that power is not against, but is “to us-ward” (Eph 1:19). “I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever” (Psa 89:1): it was not merely that the Psalmist was then in “a happy frame,” but that his faith was exercised on its Object! “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Psa 119:54): “Happy is the heart which finds its joy in God’s commands and makes obedience its recreation” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Observe well, my reader, that one thing is most conspicuous by its absence from the above passages: there is nothing whatever in those songs about man’s experiences—not a word about *his* peace, *his* joy, *his* assurance, *his* progress. Again we say, what a contrast from the sickly rubbish which now passes as “hymns.” The theme of Israel’s song at the Red Sea, of Isaiah’s, of the Psalmist’s, were the perfections of *the LORD*: His holiness, righteousness, power, mercy, statutes. And when *that* be the theme, the song needs neither musical instruments as an “accompaniment,” nor a trained choir to “render” it! The only song acceptable unto God is that which issues from a renewed soul, which is prompted by faith, and is directed by love. You may, dear friend, be cut off from other saints, unable to mingle your voice with theirs in public worship, yet in the privacy of your own room, you can be engaged in “singing and making melody *in your heart* to the Lord” (Eph 5:19), and thereby anticipate heaven.

## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 40. *Colossians 1:9-12, Part 4*

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10). To walk worthy means to conduct ourselves becomingly, to act agreeably to the Name we bear, to live as those who are not their own (1Co 6:19). To walk “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” is for our obedience to be uniform and universal, taking no step without the warrant of God’s Word, seeking His approbation and honour in every department and aspect of our lives. “Being fruitful in every good work” is a further extension of the same thought, evincing again how high and holy is the Standard at which we should continually aim. Grace is no enemy unto good works, but is the promoter and enabler of them. It is utterly vain for us to speak and sing of the wonders of divine grace if we are not plainly exhibiting its lovely fruits. Grace is a principle of operation, a spiritual energizer which causes its possessor to be active in good works and makes him a fruitful branch of the Vine. It is the empty professor who is viewed as a barren tree, a cumberer of the ground. By the miracle of regeneration, God makes His people “good trees” and they bear “good fruit” (Mat 7:17). It is their privilege and duty to be “fruitful in every good work”; and in order thereto, they must constantly endeavour to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10).

Saints are “trees of righteousness” (Isa 61:3); the planting of the Lord, and their graces and good works are their fruit. There is some confusion in the minds of hyper-Calvinists on this subject, for in their zeal to ascribe all glory unto the heavenly Husbandman, they virtually reduce the Christian to an automation. We must distinguish between the fruit-Producer and the fruit-bearer. We are first made trees of the Lord, and then we receive grace from Him; and then by grace, we ourselves really do bring forth fruit. We must indeed thankfully own the truth of our Lord’s words, “From me is thy fruit found” (Hos 14:8); but while freely acknowledging that all is of His ordination and gracious enablement, yet it must not be overlooked that even here, God Himself terms it “thy fruit”—because it is of His origination that alters not the fact that it is also of our co-operation. While there be many who make far too much of man, there are others who make too little of him—less than Scripture does, and repudiating his moral agency. We must be careful lest we press too far the figure of the “branch”: the branch of a tree has neither rationality, spirituality, nor responsibility—the Christian has all three. God does not produce the fruit independently of us. We are more than pipes through which His energy flows.

The very fact that Paul here prays that the saints *might be* “fruitful” clearly imports these two things: they could not be so without God’s enabling—it was their privilege and duty to be such. We do but mock God, unless we ourselves diligently strive after those spiritual enlargements for which we supplicate Him; as we dishonour Him if we suppose we can attain unto them in our own strength. When God has renewed a person, He does not henceforth treat with him as though he were merely a mechanical entity; rather does He communicate to him a gracious willingness to act, stirs him into action, and then *he* actually performs the good works. In fruit-bearing, we are not passive, but active. It is not fruit tied on to us, but fruit growing out of us, which makes manifest that we have been engrafted into Christ. If the believer’s personal and practical holiness were not the outflowing of his renewed heart, then it would be no evidence (as it *is*) that spiritual life has been imparted to his soul. Perhaps the surest evidence that, in one sense, the fruits and good works which I bear are *mine*, is that I am *dissatisfied* with and grieve over them—that my love is fickle, my zeal unstable, my best performances defective; whereas, if they were God’s fruits and works, independent of me, they would be *perfect*!

When God in His sovereign benignity communicates grace unto a person, it is for the purpose of equipping him to the better discharge of his responsibility: that is to say, it is given to animate and actuate all the faculties of his soul—and what *He* works in, *we* are to work out (Phi 2:12-13). Having imparted life to His people, they are required to walk in newness of life. Having bestowed faith upon them, theirs is for that faith to be active in producing good works. Or, following the order of this prayer, if we have been “filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” it is in order “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:9-10). Those last words express both variety and abundance. It is not fruitfulness of one kind only, but of every sort. The Christian is to be like unto that “tree” in the Paradise of God which bears “twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month” (Rev 22:2). Said the Lord Jesus, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit*” (Joh 15:8). Alas, that any of His children should be content if they can but be persuaded they

bear a little fruit and thereby be convinced they belong to His family—setting more store on their own peace than upon their glorifying of Him. Little wonder their assurance is so feeble.

That word of Christ's, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," supplies further confirmation of what we have pointed out above: in a very real sense, it is their fruit—"ye bear." Though it is indeed by divine energizing, notwithstanding, it is by their own activity. But observe too and admire the strict accuracy of Scripture: not that "ye *produce* much fruit" for God is both the original and efficient Cause of it. Mark too the beautiful harmony of the two verses: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all *pleasing*, being fruitful in every good work" and "Herein is my Father *glorified*, that ye bear much fruit"—by so doing, you exhibit the power and reality of His transforming grace, display the lineaments of His image, reflect the beauty of His holiness. That "much fruit" involves and includes the exercise of all holy affections—not merely some acts of holiness, but the putting forth of every grace in all the variety of their actings; not only inwardly, but outwardly as well, labouring to abound in the same; and this not spasmodically and only for a season, but steadfastly as long as we be left on earth, bringing "forth fruit with patience" (Luk 8:15), persevering in the same.

"Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Observe that those two things are not separated by a semi-colon, but are linked together by an "and"—the latter being closely connected with and dependent upon the former. "Increasing in the knowledge of God" is the *reward* of walking "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." Or, if some of our readers prefer the expression, it is the *effect* thereof, though they should not object against the former when Scripture itself declares that "in keeping of them [the divine statutes] there is great reward" (Psa 19:11)—a considerable part of which consists in a growing acquaintance with and a deeper delight in the Lord. Said our Saviour, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Joh 8:12); and what is to *follow* Christ but to yield to His authority, practice His precepts, and keep before us His example. The one who does so shall be no loser, but the gainer: he shall be delivered from the power and misery of sin, and made the recipient of spiritual wisdom, discernment, holiness, and happiness: or, in a word, he shall enjoy the light of God's countenance. So the consequence of a sincere endeavour to please the Lord and glorify Him by bearing much fruit will be an increase in our experimental knowledge of God.

Note well, dear reader, it is not simply an increase in "knowledge" which is here spoken of, but "increasing in the knowledge *of God*," which is a vastly different thing. This is a kind of knowledge for which the wise of this world have no relish, and it is one unto which the empty professor is a total stranger. There are many who are keen "Bible students" and eager readers of a certain class of expository and theological works—which explain types, prophecies, doctrine, but contain little or nothing that searches the heart and reproves carnality—and they become quite learned in the letter of Scripture and in the intellectual apprehension of its contents, yet have no personal, saving, and transforming knowledge of God. A merely theoretical knowledge of God has no effectual influence upon the soul, nor does it exert any beneficial power upon one's daily walk. Nothing but a vital knowledge of God will produce the former, and only a practical knowledge of Him secures the latter. A vital and saving knowledge of God is His personal revelation of Himself to a soul in quickening power, whereby He becomes an awe-inspiring but blessed reality: all uncertainty as to *whether* He is, or as to *what* He is, is now at an end. That revelation of God creates in the soul a panting after Him, a longing to know more of Him, a yearning to be more fully conformed unto Him.

It is not so much an increasing in the vital, or even the devotional, knowledge of God of which our text speaks, but rather of what that issues in—which, for want of a better term, we designate the *practical knowledge* of God. What is here before us in Colossians 1:10 is very similar to that word of Christ's, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (Joh 7:17); or, as the Interlinear so much more lucidly renders it, "If any one desires His will to practice, he shall know the teaching whether from God it is." As the Christian makes conscience of walking becomingly of the Lord, and as he is diligent in performing good works, he discovers by practical experience the wisdom and kindness of God in framing such a Rule for him to walk by: he obtains personal proof of "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2), he is brought into a closer and more steady communion with Him, and procures a deeper appreciation of His excellency. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD" (Hos 6:3). This is both the appointed way and means for such attainment: if we perform the prescribed duty, we shall receive the

promised blessing; if we tread the path of obedience, we shall be rewarded by an increasing and soul-satisfying knowledge of the excellency of our Master.

This is not a knowledge which can be acquired by art or taught us by men: no, not even by the ablest "Bible teachers." It can be learned nowhere but in the school of Christ, by practising His precepts and being fruitful in every good work. Yet let it be pointed out that this increase in the knowledge of God does not follow automatically upon our performing of good works, but only as God Himself be sought unto in them—a matter of the first moment, though frequently overlooked. As there were those who followed Christ during the days of His flesh for the loaves and fishes, or because they were eager to witness His miracles—and not because their hearts were set upon Him—so there are some in the religious world today who are (relatively speaking) active in various forms of good works, yet are they not performed out of love for or gratitude unto Christ. The good works of the Christian must not only be wrought by a faith which worketh by love, but his aim in them must be the seeking unto *God* in the doing of them. That should be our chief design and end in all duties and ordinances—in the reading of the Word, or in hearing it preached, in prayer, and in every act of obedience—not to rest in the good works, but to learn more of God in them, through them, and from them.

As it is his greatest need, so it is the genuine longing of every regenerate soul to increase in the knowledge of God; yet most of them are slow in discovering the way in which their longing may be realized. Too many turn from the simple and practical to bewilder themselves by that which is mystical and mysterious. It should be obvious to even the babe in Christ that if he forsakes the paths of righteousness, he is forsaking God Himself. To know God better, we must cleave more to Him, walk closer with Him. Communion with God can only be had in the highway of holiness. The previous clauses of Colossians 1:10 reveal what is required from us in order to an increasing knowledge of God. If we be diligent and earnest in seeking to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work," the outcome will be a more intimate fellowship with Him, a better acquaintance with His character, an experimental realization that "his commandments are not grievous" (1Jo 5:3), daily proofs of His tender patience with our infirmities, and fuller discoveries of Himself unto us. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...and I will love him, and will *manifest myself* to him" (Joh 14:21). God manifests His delight towards those who delight in Him.

This increasing in the practical knowledge of God is more an intensive thing than an extensive one: that is to say, it is not an adding to our store of information about Him, but the soul becoming more experimentally acquainted and being more powerfully affected with what is already known of Him. It consists not in further discoveries of God's perfections, as in a livelier appreciation of them. As the Christian earnestly seeks to walk with Him in His ways, he obtains a growing acquaintance with God's grace in inspiring him, His power in supporting, His faithfulness in renewing, His mercy in restoring, His wisdom in devising, and His love in appointing a course wherein such pleasure is found and whose paths all are peace. This is indeed a practical and profitable knowledge. The more we know of God in *this* way, the more shall we love Him, trust in Him, pray to Him, depend upon Him. But such knowledge is not acquired in a day, nor fully attained unto in a few short years. We grow into it gradually, little by little, as we make use of both the divine precepts and promises, and from a desire to please and glorify Him, and with the design of having communion with Him therein.

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col 1:11). This is the third petition of the prayer, and we will begin our remarks upon it by pointing out *its relation* to those preceding it. In their brief comments, neither Matthew Henry (1662-1714), John Gill (1697-1771), nor Thomas Scott (1747-1821) makes any attempt to show the connection between this request and the two foregoing. In the short exposition supplied by Charles John Ellicott (1819-1905), only this general analysis is given: "This is a prayer for our full knowledge of God's will, and it is emphatically connected with a practical walking in that will. Manifested first by fruitfulness in every good work; second, by enduring afflictions; third, by the thankful acceptance of God's call to the inheritance (Col 1:12). Thus, this 'knowledge of His will' is *tried* by the three tests of obedience, patience or endurance, and thankful humility." That is good so far as it goes; and as a broad tracing out of the order of the thought of this prayer, it probably cannot be improved upon.

While Ellicott has indicated the general relation of verse 11 to verse 9, let us now consider its closer connection with verse 10. First, it seems to us that whereas verse 10 treats more of the *active* side of the Christian life, verse 11 has more definitely in view its *passive* side. Or, to express it in another way, whe-

reas the former intimates the use we should make of communicated grace in a way of *doing*, this teaches us how to improve grace in a way of *suffering*. And is not this usually the order in which divine providence affords the saint occasion to discharge each of those responsibilities? While the Christian is young and vigorous, those graces which are expressed in the performing of good works are afforded their fullest opportunity. But as natural strength and youthful zeal abate as trials and infirmities increase, there is a call for another set of graces to be exercised—namely, patience and longsuffering. Even in old age—yea, while lying upon a bed of sickness and helplessness—the Christian walks “worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” if he meekly bears his appointed lot and murmurs not. And certainly, he is bearing fruit to the glory of God if he endures his trials cheerfully and is “longsuffering with joyfulness.”

But may we not trace a yet closer relation between the two verses. If by grace, the child of God be enabled to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,” what is certain to be the consequence? Why this: not only will he increase in the practical knowledge of God, but he will also incur the hatred of his fellows. The closer he cleaves to the Standard set before him, the more conscience he makes of wholly following the Lord, the more will he stir up the enmity of the flesh, the world, and the devil. The more he endeavours to deny self and be out and out for Christ, the more opposition will he encounter, especially from empty professors, who detest none so much as those whose uncompromising strictness exposes and condemns their vain pretensions. Yes, young Christian, you must be fully prepared for this and expect nothing else. The closer you walk with Christ, the more will you be persecuted. And what does such opposition, such hatred, such persecution, and affliction call for from us? What will enable us to stand our ground and keep us from lowering the banner? What, but being “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

Finally, a still closer link of connection may be seen in the closing clause of verse 10 and what follows in verse 11: “Increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” This will be the more apparent as we bear in mind the particular kind of “knowledge of God” which is there spoken of: not one that is obtained by theological study and reasoning, nor even by meditative devotions, but rather one which is acquired *through obedience* unto His precepts. The order of the Greek—“increasing in the knowledge of God: with all might being strengthened”—makes this yet clearer: the latter follows upon the former. Those who have habituated themselves to heed God’s commandments will find it far easier than others do to submit themselves, are the ones least likely to be stumbled by afflictions, and are the last to sink into despair under them. Those who are zealous of good works will possess their souls with patience in adversity, and cheerfully endure when the enemy rages against them.

We are greatly the losers if we do not pay the closest attention to the *order* of the petitions in the prayers of the apostles (equally so with the Family prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, and the High Priestly one of Christ in John 17) and the *relation* of one petition to the other—for not only do we fail to perceive their real import, but we miss valuable lessons for our spiritual lives. Those who cursorily scan them, instead of giving the same prolonged meditation, rob their own souls. How many Christians bemoan their lack of “patience” under affliction, and must be startled—if not staggered—by a weighing of this expression, “longsuffering with joyfulness”; yet how very few of them are aware of the cause *why* they are strangers to such an experience! Yet that cause is here plainly revealed: it is due to the fact that they have been so little “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power” And that, in turn, is because they have increased so little “in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10)—i.e. that personal *proving* of the goodness, the acceptableness, and the perfection of the “will of God” (Rom 12:1-2), which is obtained through an obedient walking with Him, making conscience of “pleasing” Him in all things, and being “fruitful in every good work.” It is failure in the *practical* side of our Christian lives which explains why our “experience” is so unsatisfactory.



## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 20. *The Miracle, Part 1*

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan” (Jos 3:7-8). Before his death, it had been revealed to Moses by the Lord that Joshua should be his successor as the leader of his people, and unto that office he had been solemnly set apart (Num 27:18-23). Moses had also announced unto Israel that Joshua “shall cause them to inherit the land” (Deu 3:28), and “the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses” (Deu 34:9). After the death of Moses, the people had avowed their willingness to do whatever Joshua commanded them and to go whither he should send them, and expressed the desire that divine assistance would be granted him: “The LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses” (Jos 1:16-17). In the interval, the two spies had reconnoitered Jericho at his orders, the people had followed him from Shittim to the Jordan (Jos 3:1), and had remained there three days. Now the time had come for the Lord to more fully authenticate His servant.

Joshua had duly discharged his duty, and now he was to be rewarded. He had set before the people a noble example by acting faith on God’s Word, had confidently expressed his assurance that God would make good His promise (Jos 1:11, 15), and now the Lord would honour the one who had honoured Him. Joshua had been faithful in a few things, and he should be made ruler over many. Devotedness unto God never passes unrecognized by Him. The Lord would now put signal honour upon Joshua in the sight of Israel as He had done upon Moses at the Red Sea and at Sinai. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come *unto thee* in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and *believe thee* for ever” (Exo 19:9): thus did He honour and authenticate Moses. And here at the Jordan, he magnified Joshua by the authority which He conferred upon him, and attested him as His appointed leader of Israel. The result of this is stated in Joshua 4:14: “On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared [revered and obeyed] him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his [Joshua’s] life.”

But we must be careful lest we overlook something far more glorious than what has just been pointed out. Surely those words, “This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel” (Jos 3:7), should at once turn our thoughts to One infinitely superior to Joshua—that what God did here for His servant was a foreshadowment of what later He did to His Son at this same Jordan. No sooner was our blessed Lord baptized in that river than, “Lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:16-17). Then was *He* “made manifest to Israel” (Joh 1:31). Then was He authenticated for His great mission. Then did God begin to magnify Him. Still more wonderful is the type when we observe at what part of the Jordan this occurred: “These things were done in Bethabara” (Joh 1:28)—which signified “the place of passage”—so that Christ was attested by the Father at the very place where Israel passed through the river and where Joshua was magnified!

Solemn indeed was the contrast. By what took place at the Jordan, Israel knew that Joshua was their divinely appointed leader and governor; and therefore, they “feared him...all the days of his life” (Jos 4:14), rendering implicit and undeviating obedience unto his orders: “And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua” (Jos 24:31). But after the anti-typical Joshua had been far more illustriously magnified at the Jordan, identified as the Son of God incarnate, and owned by the Father as the One in whom He delighted, what was Israel’s response? Did they love and worship Him? Did they fear and obey Him? Very far otherwise: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11). Their hearts were alienated and their ears closed against Him. Though He spake as never man spake, though He went about doing good, though He wrought miracles of power and mercy, they “despised and rejected” Him (Isa 53:3); and after a brief season, cried, “Away with him, crucify him” (Joh 19:15). Marvel, dear Christian reader, that the Lord of glory endured such humiliation for us men and our salvation. Wonder and adore that He so loved us as not only to be willing to be hated of men, but smitten of God that our sins might be put away.

“And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan” (Jos 3:8). What anointed eye can fail to see here again a shadowing forth of a greater than Joshua! Next, after this mention of God’s beginning to mag-

nify Joshua in the sight of the people, we find him exercising high authority and giving orders to the priests; and almost the first public act of Christ's after the Father had attested and honoured Him at the Jordan is what is recorded in Matthew 5 to 7. In that Sermon on the Mount, we behold our Saviour doing the very same thing: exercising high authority, as He evinced by His frequently repeated, "I say unto you," and issuing orders to His disciples, who, under the new covenant, correspond to the priests under the old—and it is very striking to see how the twofold application of that term and the type appear in that sermon. As we pointed out in our last, the "priests"—when bearing the ark of the covenant—were figures of the ministers of the Gospel in their official character, but looked at as those privileged to draw near unto God. The "priests" were types of all the redeemed of Christ (1Pe 2:5, 9).

Now, in the opening verses of Matthew 5, it was His servants whom Christ "taught" (verses 1, 2, 13-16), and to whom He issued commandments—for "his disciples" there are to be understood as "apostles," as in Matthew 10:1-2 and 28:16-20. Yet, as we continue reading that wondrous discourse, we soon perceive that it cannot be restricted unto ministers of the Gospel, but is addressed to the whole company of His people. Therein we learn what is required from the redeemed by the One who is their Lord, possessed of divine authority—namely, entire subjection unto Him and unreserved conformity to His revealed will. As the priests of Israel must order their actions by the instructions which they received from Joshua, so must the ministers of the Gospel take their orders from their divine Master; and so also must the whole company of His redeemed be regulated wholly by the injunctions of the Captain of their salvation. Nothing less is due unto Him who endured such shame and suffering on their behalf; nothing else becomes those who owe their all unto Him who died for them. It is in *this* way that their gratitude and devotion is to be manifested: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Joh 14:13).

"And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan" (Jos 3:8). What a testing of their faith and obedience was that! The swollen and unfordable river before them, and they ordered to advance unto the very edge thereof, yea, to stand still in it! How senseless such a procedure unto carnal reason! Such, too, appears the policy and means appointed by God in the Gospel: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1Co 1:21). And the preaching of Christ crucified, my ministerial friends, is entirely a matter of faith and obedience—for to our natural intellect and perceptions, it appears to be utterly inadequate to produce eternal fruits. And even when we *have* preached Christ to the best of our poor powers, it often seems that our efforts are unavailing, and we are perhaps sorely tempted to act contrary unto that word, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but spiritual (2Co 10:4). Seek grace, then, to heed the lesson pointed by the above verse: discharge your responsibility to the utmost extent and trustfully leave the issue with God, as did the priests.

But there is not only a much-needed message contained in verse 8 for the discouraged servants of Christ, but there is one too for the rank and file of God's people, especially those of them who may be sorely tried by present circumstances. Their faith and obedience must be tested, so that its reality may appear. Some of the Lord's commandments present less difficulty, for they are embodied in the laws of our land and respected by all decent people. But there are others of His precepts which are most trying to flesh and blood, and which are scoffed at by the unregenerate. Nevertheless, our course is clear: there can be no picking and choosing—"whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (Joh 2:5). Yes, but when I *have* sought to obey to the best of my ability, I find circumstances all against me, a situation beyond my powers to cope with, a "Jordan" too deep and wide for me to pass through. Very well, here is the word exactly suited to your case: come to "the brink of the water" and then "stand still in" it (Jos 3:8): proceed to your utmost limits in the path of duty, and then count upon the omnipotent One to undertake for you.

"And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God" (Jos 3:9). Once more our minds are carried beyond the type of Antitype, who said unto Israel, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (Joh 7:16); and again, "the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (Joh 12:49). And therefore, the most diligent heed is to be given, and the most unquestioning obedience be rendered unto Him: "And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites" (Jos 3:10). That title, "the living God," is used in the Scriptures to point a contrast with the inanimate idols of the heathen (2Ki 19:4; 1Th 1:9); and doubtless was employed by Joshua on this occasion

for the purpose of accentuating the impotency and worthlessness of all false gods who were utterly incapable of rendering aid, still less of performing prodigies for their deluded votaries; a warning also to Israel against the sin of idolatry to which they ever were so prone. As Joshua owned Jehovah as “the living God,” so also Christ acknowledged the One who had sent Him as the “living Father” (Joh 6:57).

“And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you” (Jos 3:10). Note carefully the statement which immediately follows: “And that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites,” etc. We had naturally expected Joshua to say in this connection, “God will open a way for you to pass through this Jordan”; but instead, he gives assurance of the conquest of the “seven nations in the land of Chanaan” (Act 13:19). And why? To assure Israel that the miracle of the Jordan was a divine earnest, a certain guarantee, that the Lord *would continue* to show Himself strong in their behalf. And similarly, He assures His people today: “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it” (Phi 1:6). Israel’s supernatural journey through Jordan was a figure of our regeneration, when we pass from death unto life; and that experience ensures that the living God “will *perfect* that which concerneth” us (Psa 138:8). In a word, regeneration is an infallible earnest of our ultimate glorification. But as Israel concurred with God, and were themselves active in driving out the Canaanites, *so we* have to mortify our lusts and overcome the world in order to possess our inheritance.

Yes, replies the reader, but that is much easier said than done. True, yet, not only is it indispensable that we should do so, but if due attention be paid to the passage before us and its spiritual application unto ourselves, valuable instruction will be found herein as to the secrets of success. Not to anticipate too much what yet remains to be considered in detail, let us summarize the leading points so far as they bear upon what was just said above. First, Israel was required to act with implicit confidence in God: so must we, if we are to be successful in our warfare—for it is “the good fight *of faith*” (1Ti 6:12) which we are called upon to wage. Second, Israel must render the most exact obedience to God’s revealed will: so we can only prevail over our lusts and possess our possessions by walking in the path of His precepts. Third, Israel had to fix their eyes upon “the ark of the covenant”: so we are to be subject unto Christ in all things, and make daily use of His cleansing blood—the propitiatory which formed the lid of the ark. Fourth, “The Lord of all the earth”—God in His unlimited dominion—was the particular character in which Israel here viewed God: so we must rely upon His all-mighty power and count upon Him making us more than conquerors.

“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap” (Jos 3:11-13). In those words, Joshua now specifically announced and described one of the most remarkable of the miracles recorded in Holy Writ. The priests were to proceed unto the edge of the water and then stop—that it might be the more evident that the Jordan was driven back at the presence of the Lord. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wrote, “God could have divided the river without the priests, but they could not without Him. The priests must herein set a good example and teach the people to do their utmost in the service of God, and trust Him for help in time of need.” Note how the opening word of verse 11 emphasized yet again that attention was to be concentrated upon *the ark*, which, as we have previously pointed out, was made for the Law, and not the Law for it—typifying Christ, “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), magnifying, and making it honourable (Isa 42:21).

Remember too that the propitiatory formed the lid of the ark: it was not only a cover for the sacred coffer, but a *shield* between the Law and the people of God. The central thing within it was the Law (1Ki 8:9); and between the cherubim on its mercy seat, Jehovah had His throne (Psa 99:1). That is why all through Joshua 3 and 4, it is termed “the ark of the covenant”—for when Moses went up upon Sinai the second time, we are told that “he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments” (Exo 34:28). It should be carefully borne in mind that even under the old covenant, the *promise* preceded the giving the Law (Exo 3:17; 12:25); yet the fulfilment thereof was not to be without the enforcing of their accountability. In like manner, the Ten Commandments themselves were prefaced by “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt,” manifesting His “goodness” to them, and His “severity” upon their enemies—that was the testimony of His character who entered into covenant with them.

It is to be duly noted that the particular designation given to Jehovah in connection with the ark of the covenant in verse 11 is repeated in verse 13, which at once intimates it is one of special weight and significance. This title, “the Lord of all the earth,” is not found in the Pentateuch, but is occurring here in Joshua

3 for the first time, with its force being more or less indicated by what is said in verse 10 and the nature and time of the miracle then wrought. The reference here is unto God the Father, and signifies His absolute sovereignty and universal dominion—the Proprietor and Governor of the earth which He created, the One whom none can successfully resist. This title occurs in the Scriptures seven times! Twice in Joshua 3; then, in Psalm 97:5, Micah 4:13, Zechariah 6:5. In Zechariah 4:14, we behold the three Persons of the Godhead in their covenant characters: “These are the two anointed ones [Christ and the Holy Spirit] that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” But in Isaiah 54:5, we see the incarnate Son, “the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called”—a prophetic intimation of the taking down of the “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14), when Jew and Gentile alike should own Him as their *God*.

## THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

### 4. *The Existence of God, Part 4*

“*The sea* is his, and he made it” (Psa 95:5). The ocean and its inhabitants present to our consideration as many as varied, and as unmistakable evidences of the handiwork of God, as do the stellar and atmospheric heavens. If we give serious thought to the subject, it must fill us with astonishment that it is possible for any creatures to live in such a suffocating element as the sea, and that in waters so salty, they should be preserved in their freshness; and still more so, that they should find themselves provided with abundant food and be able to propagate their species from one generation to another. If *we* were immersed in that element for a few minutes only, we should inevitably perish. Were it not for our actual observation and experience, and had we but read or heard that the briny deep was peopled with innumerable denizens, we should have deemed it an invention of the imagination, as something utterly impracticable and impossible. Yet, by the wisdom and power of God, not only are myriads of fishes sustained there, but the greatest of all living creatures—the whale—is found there. In number countless, in bulk matchless, yet having their being and health in an element in which *we* could not breathe!

As it is with us in the surrounding air, so it is with the fish in their liquid element: the principle of the equal transmission of pressure enables their frail structures to bear a much greater pressure and weight than their own without being crushed—the air and the fluids within them pressing outward *with a force as great* as the surrounding water presses inward! Moreover, “They are clothed and accoutred in exact conformity to their clime. Not in swelling wool or buoyant feathers, nor in flowing robe or full-trimmed suit, but with as much compactness and with as little superfluity as possible. They are clad, or rather sheathed, in *scales*, which adhere closely to their bodies, and are always laid in a kind of natural oil than which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the same time, so solid, and nothing so smooth. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh, it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood, and enables them to make their way through the waters with the greatest possible facility. If, in their rapid progress, they strike against any hard substance, this, their scaly doublet, breaks the force of it and secures them from harm” (James Hervey, 1714-1758).

Being slender and tapering the shape of fishes fits them to cleave the waters and to move with the utmost ease through so resisting a medium. Their tails, as is well known, are extremely flexible, consisting largely of powerful muscles, and act with uncommon agility. By its alternate impulsion, the tail produces a progressive motion, and by repeated strokes, propels the whole body forward. Still more remarkable is that wonderful apparatus or contrivance, the air-bladder, with which they are furnished, for it enables them to increase or diminish their specific gravity, to sink like lead or float like a cork, to rise to whatever height or sink to whatever depths they please. As these creatures probably have no occasion for the sense of hearing, for the impressions of sound have very little, if any, existence in their sphere of life, to have provided them with ears would have been an encumbrance rather than a benefit. Is that noticeable and benignant distinction to be ascribed to blind chance? Is it merely an accident that fishes, that need them not, are devoid of ears which *are* found in all the animas and birds? The cold logic of reason forbids such a conclusion.

A spiritually-minded naturalist has pointed out that almost all flat fish—such as soles and flounders—are white on their underside but tintured with darkish brown on the upper, so that to their enemies, they resemble the colour of mud and are therefore more easily concealed. What is still more remarkable, Providence, which has given to other fishes an eye on either side of the head, has placed both eyes on the same side in *their* species, which is exactly suited unto the peculiarity of their condition. Swimming as they do but little, and always with their white side downward, an eye on the lower part of their bodies would be of little benefit, whereas on the higher, they have need of the quickest sight for their preservation. Admirable arrangement is that! Where nothing is to be feared, the usual guard is withdrawn; where danger threatens, their guard is not only placed, but doubled! Now we confidently submit that such remarkable adaptations as all of these argue design; and that, in turn, a designer—and a Designer, too, Who is endowed with more than human wisdom, power, and benignity.

“One circumstance relating to the natives of the deep is very peculiar, and no less astonishing. As they neither sow nor reap, have neither the produce of the hedges nor the gleanings of the field, they are obliged to plunder and devour one another for necessary subsistence. They are a kind of licensed banditti that make violence and murder their professed trade. By this means, prodigious devastations ensue, and without prop-

er—without *very extraordinary*—recruits, the whole race would continually dwindle, and at length, become totally extinct. Were they to bring forth, like the most prolific of our terrestrial animals, a dozen only or a score, at each birth, the increase would be unspeakably too small for consumption. The weaker species would be destroyed by the stronger; and in time, the stronger must perish, even by their successful endeavours to maintain themselves. Therefore, to supply millions of assassins with their prey and millions of tables with their food—yet not to depopulate the watery realms—the issue produced by every breeder is almost incredible. They spawn not by scores or hundreds, but by thousands and tens of thousands. A single mother is pregnant with a nation. By which, amazing but most needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made proportionable to the immense havoc” (J. Harvey).

“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee” (Job 12:8). Mute though the fishes be, yet they are full of instruction for the thoughtful inquirer. Study them intelligently, and thy mind shall be improved and thy knowledge increased. And *what is it* that the dumb fishes declare unto us? Surely this: that there is a living God, who is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa 28:29); that the creature is entirely dependent on the Creator, who fails not to supply all its needs; that ready obedience to the divine will becometh the creature, and is rendered by all, save rebellious man. In exemplification of that last fact, let us call attention to that amazing phenomenon of countless multitudes of finny visitors crowding upon our shores at the appointed season of the year, and in an orderly succession of one species after another. What is equally remarkable, though less known, is the fact that as they approach, the larger and fiercer ones—who would endanger the lives of the fishermen and drive away the ones which provide us with food—are restrained by an invisible hand and impelled to retire into the depths of the ocean. As the wild beasts of the earth are directed by the same over-ruling Power to hide themselves in their dens, so the monsters of the deep are laid under a providential interdiction!

If we survey with any degree of attention the innumerable objects which the inhabitants of this *earth* present to our view, we cannot but perceive unmistakable marks of design, clear evidences of means suited to accomplish specific ends; and these also necessarily presuppose a Being who had those ends in view and devised the fitness of those means. Order and harmony in the combined operation of many separate forces and elements point to a superintending Mind. Wise contrivances and logical arrangements involve forethought and planning. Suitable accommodations and the appropriate and accurate fitting of one joint to another unquestionably evinces intelligence. The mutual adjustment of one member to another, especially when their functions and properties are correlated, can no more be fortuitous than particles of matter could arrange themselves into the wheels of a watch. The particular suitability of each organ of the body for its appointed office comes not by accident. Benevolent provision and the unfailing operation of law logically imply a provider and a lawgiver. The fitting together of parts and the adoption of means to the accomplishment of a definite purpose can only be accounted for by reference to a designing Will. Thus, the argument from design may be fairly extended so as to include the whole range of creation and the testimony it bears in all its parts to the existence of the Creator.

Forcibly did Professor John Dick (1764-1833) argue, “If we lighted upon a book containing a well-digested narrative of facts, or a train of accurate reasoning, we should never think of calling it a work of chance, but would immediately pronounce it to be the production of a cultivated mind. If we saw in a wilderness a building well-proportioned and commodiously arranged and furnished with taste, we should conclude, without hesitation and without the slightest suspicion of mistake, that human will and human labour had been employed in planning and erecting it. In cases of this kind, an atheist would reason precisely as other men do. Why, then, does he not draw the same inference from the proofs of design which are discovered in the works of creation? While the premises are the same, why is the conclusion different? Upon what pretext of reason does he deny that a work—in all the parts of which wisdom appear—is the production of an intelligent author? And attribute the universe to chance, to nature, to necessity, to anything, although it should be a word without meaning, rather than to God?”

“He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?” (Psa 94:9). The manifest adaptedness of the ear to receive and register sounds, and of the eye for vision, argues an intelligent Designer of them. The infidel will not allow that conclusion, but what alternative explanation does he offer? This: there may be adaptation without design, as there may be sequence without causation. Certain things, he tells us, are adapted to certain uses, but not made *for* certain uses: the eye is capable of vision, but had no designing author. When he be asked, How is this striking adaptation to be accounted for apart from design, he answers, Either by the operation of law, or by chance. But the former explanation is really

the acknowledgement of a designer, or it is mere tautology, for that law itself must be accounted for, as much as the phenomena which come under it. The explanation of "chance" is refuted by the mathematical doctrine of probability. The chance of matter acting in a certain way is not one in a million, and in a combination of ways, not one in a trillion. According to that theory, natural adaptation would be more infrequent than a miracle, whereas the fact is that adaptation to an end is one of the most common features of nature, occurring in innumerable instances.

When the Psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa 139:14), he gave expression to a sentiment which every thoughtful person must readily endorse. Whether that statement be taken in its widest latitude as contemplating man as a composite creature—considering him as a material, rational, and moral being—or whether it is restricted to his physical frame, yet it will be heartily confirmed by all who are qualified to express an opinion thereon. Regarding it in its narrower scope, the composition and construction of the human body is a thing of amazing workmanship. To what extent David was acquainted with the science of anatomy we know not, but in view of the pyramids and the Egyptians' skill in embalming the body (and "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians"—Acts 7:22—and doubtless passed on much of the same unto his descendants) and the repeated statement of Holy Writ that "there is nothing new under the sun," we certainly do not believe the ancients were nearly so ignorant as many of our inflated moderns wish to think. But be that as it may, the outward structure of the body, the ordering of its joints and muscles for the service of its tenant, the proportion of all its parts, the symmetry and beauty of the whole, cannot but strike with wonderment the attentive student of the human frame.

This living temple has aptly been termed "the masterpiece of creation." Its sinews and muscles, veins and blood, glands and bones, all so perfectly fitted for their several functions, are a production which for wisdom and design, the adaptation of means to ends, not only far surpasses the most skilful and complicated piece of machinery ever produced by human art, but altogether excels whatever the human imagination could conceive. That the nutritive power of the body should be working perpetually and without intermission replacing waste tissue, that there should be a constant flowing of the blood and beating of the pulses, that the lungs and arteries (comprised of such frail and delicate substances) should move without cessation for seventy or ninety years—for nine hundred years before the Flood!—presents a combined marvel which should fill us with astonishment and awe, for they are so many miracles of omniscience and omnipotence. But turning to the more obvious and commonplace—the human hand and eye—let us conclude this article with a rather longer quotation than usual from *The Gordian Knot*, for it calls attention to features, which, though equally remarkable, the most untrained are able to appreciate:

"The human *hand* was obviously meant to be the servant of the entire body. It is put at the extremity of the arm; and the arm is about half the length of the body, and, as the body can bend almost double, the hand can reach any part of it. The hand is at the end of an arm having three joints, one at the shoulder, one at the elbow, one at the wrist; and each joint made on a different pattern, so as to secure together every conceivable motion—up and down, sidewise, backward and forward, and rotary. The hand is made with four fingers and an opposing thumb, which secures a double leverage, without which no implement or instrument could be securely grasped, held, or wielded; and so strangely are the fingers moulded of unequal lengths that they exactly touch tips over a spherical surface, such as a ball or the round handle of a tool.

"There are two hands—opposite and apposite to each other in position and construction, so that they exactly fit each other and work together without interference, making possible by joint action what neither could accomplish alone. Michel de Eyquem Montaigne (1533-1592), referring to one only of the hand's many capacities—gesture—says: 'With the hand we demand, promise, call, dismiss, intreat, deny, encourage, accuse, acquit, defy, flatter, and indicate silence; and with a variety and multiplication that almost keep pace with the tongue.' The hand is so strikingly capable of being used to express conceptions and execute designs that it has been called 'the intellectual member.'

"The human *eye* is perfect in structure and equally perfect in adaptation. It is placed in the head like a window just under the dome, to enable us to see farthest; placed in front, because we habitually move forward; shielded in a socket of bone, for protection to its delicate structure, yet protection from that socket by a soft cushion; provided with six sets of muscles, to turn it in every direction; with lids and lashes, to moisten, shut it in, protect it, and soothe it; with tear duct, to conduct away excess of moisture; and having that exact shape—the only one of all that might have been given—to secure distinct vision by refracting all rays of light to a single surface, which is known in science as the ellipsoid of revolution.

“By a wonderful arrangement of iris and pupil, it at once adapts itself to near and far objects of vision and to mild or intense rays of light; and, most wonderful of all, the human eye is ‘provided in some inscrutable manner with the means of expressing the mind itself, so that one may look into its crystal depths and see intellectuality, scorn, and wrath, and love, and almost every spiritual state and action’ (Dr. Enoch Fitch Burr, 1818-1907).

“The eye of man has taught us the whole science of optics. It is a camera obscura, with a convex lens in front, an adjustable circular blind behind it; a lining of black to prevent double and confusing reflections; humors, aqueous and vitreous, to distend it; a retina or expansion of the optic nerve, to receive the images of external objects; with minute provision for motion in every direction; and, most wonderful of all, perhaps, perfect provision against the spherical and chromatic aberration which would produce images and impressions ill defined and false coloured. Yet the microscope shows these lenses themselves to be made up of separate folds, in number countless, the folds themselves composed of fibers equally countless, and toothed so as to interlock. And with all this, perfect transparency is preserved!

“It is in the *minutiae* of creation, perhaps, that the most surprising marvels, mysteries, and miracles of creative workmanship are often found. It is here also that the works of God so singularly differ from the works of man. However elaborate man’s work, it does not bear minute microscopic investigation. For instance, the finest cambric needle becomes coarse, rough, and blunt under the magnifying lens; whereas it is only when looked at with the highest power of the microscopic eye that Nature’s handiwork really begins to reveal its exquisite and indescribable perfection. Where the perfection of man’s work ends, the perfection of God’s work only begins.

“The proofs of this perfection in *minutiae* are lavishly abundant. When a piece of chalk is drawn over a blackboard, in the white mark on the board, or in the powder that falls on the floor, are millions of tiny white shells, once the home of life. The dust from the moth’s wing is made up of scales or feathers, each as perfect as the ostrich plume. The pores of the human skin are so closely crowded together that seventy-five thousand of them might be covered by a grain of sand. The insect’s organ of vision is a little world of wonders in itself. In the eye of a butterfly, thirty-four thousand lenses have been found, each perfect as a means of vision. The minute cells in which all life, vegetable and animal, reside present as true an evidence of the mysterious perfection of individual workmanship and mutual adaptation as the constellations that adorn the sky, and equally with them, declare the glory of God! How it speaks of a *Creator* who can lavish beauty even on the stones, and who carries the perfection of His work into the realm of the least, as well as the greatest!”



## THE GREAT CHANGE

### Part 4

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pe 1:3-4). That is more of a general description of experiential salvation than a delineation of any particular part thereof, yet since there be in it one or two expressions not found elsewhere, it calls for a separate consideration. The opening, “According as” should be rendered “Forasmuch as” or “Seeing that” (Revised Version)—for it indicates not so much a standard of comparison, as that verses 3 and 4 form the ground of the exhortation of verses 5 to 7. First, we have their spiritual enduement. This was by “divine power,” or as Ephesians 1:19 expresses it, “the exceeding greatness of his power to us—ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power”—for nothing less could quicken souls dead in trespasses and sins, or free the slaves of sin and Satan.

That divine power “hath given unto us [not merely offered them in the Gospel, but hath graciously bestowed, actually communicated] all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2Pe 1:3): that is, whatever is needful for the production, preservation, and perfecting of spirituality in the souls of God’s elect. Yet, though the recipients be completely passive—yea, unconscious—of this initial operation of divine grace, they do not continue so—for second, their enduement is accompanied by and accomplished “through the knowledge of him that hath [effectually] called us to glory and virtue” or “energy.” That “knowledge of him” consists of such a personal revelation of Himself to the soul as imparts a true, spiritual, affecting, transforming perception of, and acquaintance with, His excellency. It is such a knowledge as enables its favoured recipient in adoring and filial recognition to say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5). God has now become an awe-producing, yet a living and blessed, reality to the renewed soul.

Third, through that spiritual “knowledge” which God has imparted to the soul, all the gracious benefits and gifts of His love are received: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers” (2Pe 1:4), etc. The “whereby” has reference to His “glory and virtue”—or better, His “glory and energy” or “might.” The “promises” are “given unto us” not simply in words, but in their actual fulfilment: just as the by His “glory and virtue [or might]” is the same thing as “his divine power” in the previous verse, so “are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature” corresponds with “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness”—the one amplifying the other. The “exceeding great and precious promises” were those made in the Old Testament—the original (Gen 3:15), fundamental, central, and all-pervading one being that of a personal Saviour; and those made by Christ, which chiefly respected the gift and coming of the Holy Spirit, which He expressly designated as “*the promise of the Father*” (Act 1:4).

Now those two promises—that of a divine Saviour and that of a divine Spirit—were the things that the prophets of old ministered “not unto themselves, but unto us” (1Pe 1:12); and they may indeed most fitly be termed, “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4)—for they who are given this Saviour and this Spirit do in effect receive “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2Pe 1:3)—for Christ becomes their Life; and the Spirit, their Sanctifier. Or, as the following verse expresses it, the end for which this knowledge (as well as its accompanying blessings) are bestowed is first “that by these [i.e. the promises as fulfilled and fulfilling in your experience] ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” Here we need to be on our guard against forming a wrong conclusion from the bare sound of those words: “Not the essence of God, but His communicable excellencies, such moral properties as may be imparted to the creature, and those not considered in their absolute perfection, but as they are agreeable to our present state and capacity” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677).

That “divine nature”—or “moral properties”—is sometimes called “the life of God” (Eph 4:18), because it is a vital principle of action; sometimes “the “image of him” (Col 3:10), because they bear a likeness to Him—consisting essentially of “righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24); or in 2 Peter 1:3, “life and godliness”—spiritual life, spiritual graces, abilities to perform good works. It is here called “the divine nature,” because it is the communication of a vital principle of operation which God transmits unto His children. The second end for which this saving knowledge of God is given is expressed in the closing

words: "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4). Personally, we see no need for taking up this expression *before* "partakers of the divine nature," as that eminent expositor T. Manton did, and as did the most able John Lillie (1812-1867)—to whom we are indebted for part of the above—for the apostle is not here enforcing the human-responsibility side of things (as he *was* in Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22-24), but treats of the divine operations and their effects.

It is quite true that *we* must put off the old man before we can put on the new man in a practical way, that we must first attend to the work of mortification ere we can make progress in our sanctification, but this is not the aspect of truth which the apostle is *here* unfolding. When the Gospel call is addressed unto our moral agency, the promise is "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, *but have* eternal life" (Joh 3:15-16). But where spiritual things are concerned, the unregenerate man never discharges his moral agency. A miracle of grace must take place before he does that; and therefore, God in a sovereign manner (unsought by us) imparts life, that he may and will believe (Joh 1:12-13; 1Jo 5:1)—the "sanctification of the Spirit" precedes the saving "and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13)! In like manner, our becoming "partakers of the divine nature" precedes (not in time, but in order of nature and of actual experience, though not of consciousness) our escaping "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4).

Let not the young preacher be confused by what has been pointed out in the last paragraph. His marching orders are plain: when addressing the unsaved, he is to enforce their responsibility, press upon them the discharging of their duties, bidding them forsake their "way" and "thoughts" *in order to* pardon (Isa 55:7), calling upon them to "repent" and "believe" if they would be saved (Mar 1:15; Act 16:31; Rom 10:9). But if God be pleased to own his preaching of the Word and pluck some brands from the burning, it is quite another matter (or aspect of truth) for the preacher (and, later on, his saved hearer, by means of doctrinal instruction) to understand something of the nature of that miracle of grace which God wrought in the hearer, which caused him to savingly receive the Gospel. It is *that* which we have endeavoured to deal with in the above paragraphs—namely, explain something of the operations of divine grace in a renewed soul, so far as those operations are described in 2 Peter 1:3-4.

"Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4). First, by the divine operation, and then by our own agency—for it is ever "God which worketh in you both *to* will and *to* do of his good pleasure" (Phi 2:13). Indwelling sin (depravity) is here termed, "corruption," because it blighted our primitive purity, degenerated our original state, and because it continues both in its nature and effects to pollute and waste. That "corruption" has its source in, or is seated in, our "lusts"—depraved affections and appetites. This "corruption" is what another apostle designated as "evil concupiscence" (Col 3:5)—for it occupies in the heart that place which is due alone unto the love of God as the Supreme Good. "Lust" always follows the "nature": as is the nature, so are its desires—if corrupt, then evil; if holy, then pure. All the corruption that is in the world is "through lust," i.e. through inordinate desire—lust lies at the bottom of every unlawful thought, every evil imagination.

The world could harm no man were it not for "lust" in his heart—some inordinate desire in the understanding or fancy, a craving for something which sets him a-work after it. The fault is not in the gold, but in the spirit of covetousness which possesses men; not in the wine, but in their craving to excess. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of *his own* lust" (Jam 1:14)—the blame lies on us, rather than Satan! It is remarkable that when the apostle explained his expression, "all that is in the world," he defined it as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1Jo 2:16). Now of Christians, our passage says, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4)—and that, by the interposition of the divine hand, as Lot escaped from Sodom; yet not through a simple act of omnipotence, but by the gracious bestowments which that hand brings, by that holiness which He works in the heart, or, as a passage already reviewed expresses it: "By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Ti 3:5). We escape from the dominion of inward corruption by "the divine nature" in us, causing us to hate and resist our evil lusts.

Thus it is by adhering closely to the divine order of this passage that we are enabled to understand the meaning of its final clause. When we become "partakers of the divine nature"—that is, when we are renewed after the image of God—a principle of grace and holiness is communicated to the soul, which is called "spirit," because "born of the Spirit" (Joh 3:6) and that principle of holiness (termed by many "the new nature") is a vital and operating one which offers opposition to the workings of "corruption" or indwelling sin—for not only does the flesh lust against the spirit, but "the Spirit [lusteth] against the flesh" (Gal 5:17). The "divine nature" has wrought "godliness" in us, drawing off the heart of its recipient from

the world to heaven, making him to long after holiness and pant for communion with God. Herein lies the radical difference between those described in 2 Peter 1:3-4, and the ones in 2 Peter 2:20—nothing is said of the latter being “partakers of the divine nature”! Their escaping from “the pollutions of the world” was merely a temporary reformation from *outward* defilements and gross sins, as their *turning again* to the same makes clear (2Pe 2:22).

“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). Here is set before us still another criterion by which the Christian may determine whether the great change has been wrought in him. First, let us point out that it seems to be clearly implied here (as in other places in this epistle—e.g. 1Jo 2:3; 4:13) that the miracle of grace is *not* perceptible to our senses at the moment it occurs, but is cognizable by us afterward from its effects and fruits. We cannot recall a single statement in Scripture which expressly declares, or even plainly implies, that the saint is conscious of regeneration during the moment of quickening. There are indeed numbers (the writer among them) who can recall and specify the very hour when they were first convicted of sin, realized their lost condition, trusted in the atoning blood, and felt the burden of their hearts roll away. Nevertheless, they knew not when life was imparted unto their spiritually dead souls—life which prompted them *to* breathe, feel, see, hear and act in a way they never had previously. Life must be present before there can be any of the functions and exercises of life. One dead in sin cannot savingly repent and believe.

Now is one of the designs for which the first epistle of John was written that the regenerate may have assurance that eternal life has been imparted to them (1Jo 5:13), several different evidences and manifestations of that life being described in the course of the apostle’s letter. The one specified in 1 John 3:14 is “love [for] the brethren.” By nature, we were inclined to hate the children of God. It could not be otherwise: since we hated God—and that because He is holy and righteous—we despised those in whom the image of His moral perfections appeared. Contrariwise, when “the love of God” was “shed abroad in our hearts” (Rom 5:5), and we were brought to delight ourselves in Him, His people became highly esteemed by us; and the more evidently they were conformed unto His likeness, the more we loved them. That “love” is of a vastly superior nature from any natural sentiment, being a holy principle. Consequently, it is something very different from mere zeal for a certain group or party spirit, or even an affection for those whose sentiments and temperaments are like our own. It is a divine, spiritual, and holy love, which goes out unto the whole family of God—not respect to this or that brother, but which embraces “the brethren” at large.

That of which 1 John 3:14 treats is a peculiar love for those saved by Christ. To love the Redeemer and His redeemed is congenial to the spiritual life which has been communicated to their renewed souls. It is a fruit of that holy disposition which the Spirit has wrought in them. It must be distinguished from what is so often mis-termed “love” in the natural realm, which consists only of sentimentality and amiability. The regenerate “love the brethren” not because they are affable and genial, or because they give them a warm welcome to their circle. They “love the brethren” not because they deem them wise and orthodox, but because of their *godliness*; and the more their godliness is evidenced, the more will they love them; and hence, they love *all* the godly—no matter what be their denominational connections. They love those whom Christ loves; they love them for His sake—because they belong to Him. Their love is a spiritual, disinterested, and faithful one which seeks the good of its objects, which sympathizes with them in their spiritual trials and conflicts, which bears them up in their prayers before the Throne of Grace, which unselfishly shows kindness unto them, which admonishes and rebukes when that be necessary.

But that to which we would here direct particular attention is the language employed by the Spirit in describing the great change, namely, “passed from death unto life” (1Jo 3:14). The same expression was used by our Lord in John 5:24, though there, its force is rather different: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth [with an inward or spiritual ear] my word, and [savingly] believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life* [the very fact he so heareth and believeth is proof he has it], and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” The “shall not come into condemnation” brings in the forensic side of things; and therefore, the “passed from death unto life” (which, be it duly noted, is in addition to “hath everlasting life” in the preceding clause) is *judicial*. The one who has had “everlasting life” sovereignly imparted to him—and who, in consequence thereof, “hears” or heeds the Gospel of Christ and savingly believes—has for ever emerged from the place of condemnation, being no longer under the curse of the Law, but now entitled to its award of “life,” by virtue of the personal obedience or meritorious righteousness of Christ being imputed unto him; for which reason, he is exhorted, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through [in] Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11).

But 1 John 3:14 is not treating of the forensic or legal side of things, but the experimental, that of which God's elect are made the subjects of in their own persons. Here it is not a relative change (one in relation to the Law), but an actual one that is spoken of. They have "passed from" that fearful state in which they were born—"alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18): a state of unregeneracy. They have been supernaturally and effectually called forth from the grave of sin and death. They have entered "into life," which speaks of the state which they are now in before God as the consequence of His quickening them. They have for ever left that sepulchre of spiritual death—in which by nature they lay—and have been brought into the spiritual sphere to 'walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:4). And "love [for] the brethren" is one of the effects and evidences of the miracle of space of which they have been the favoured subjects. They evince their spiritual resurrection by this mark: they love the beloved of Christ; their hearts are spontaneously drawn out unto—and they earnestly seek the good of—all who wear Christ's yoke, bear His image, and seek to promote His glory. 1 John 3:14 is not an exhortation, but a factual statement of Christian experience.

Now let the reader most diligently note that in 1 John 3:14, the Holy Spirit has employed the figure of *resurrection* to set forth the great change, and that *it* also must be given due place in our thoughts as we endeavour to form something approaching an adequate conception of what the miracle of grace consists. Due consideration of this figure should check us in pressing too far that of the new birth. The similitude of resurrection brings before us something distinct, and in some respects, quite different from that which is connoted by "new creation," "begetting" (Jam 1:18), or "being born again" (1Pe 1:23). Each of the latter denotes the bringing into existence of something which previously existed not; whereas "resurrection" is the quickening of what is there already. The miracle of grace consists of far more than the communication of a new life or nature: it also includes the renovation and purification of the original soul. Because it is a "miracle," an act of omnipotence, accomplished by the mere fiat of God, it is appropriately likened unto "creation"; yet it needs to be carefully borne in mind that it is not some *thing* which is created in us: for "we [ourselves] are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:10). It is the person himself, and not merely a nature, which is born again.

We have now reviewed not less than twenty-five passages from God's Word, wherein a considerable variety of terms and figures are used to set forth the *different aspects* of the great change which takes place in a person when the miracle of grace is wrought within him; all of which passages, in our judgment, treating of the same. We have not sought to expound or comment upon them at equal length, but, following our usual custom, have rather devoted the most space in an attempt to explain those which are least understood, which present the most difficulty to the average reader, and upon which the commentators often supply the least help. A comparison of those passages will at once show that what theologians generally speak of as "regeneration" or "the effectual call" is very far from being expressed by the Holy Spirit in uniform language; and therefore, that those who restrict their ideas to what is connoted by being born again—or even on the other hand, "a change of heart"—are almost certain to form a very one-sided, inadequate, and faulty conception of what experimental salvation consists. Regeneration is indeed a new birth, or the beginning of a new life; but that is not *all* it is—there is also something resurrected and renewed, and something washed and transformed!

The Bible is not designed for lazy people. Truth has to be *bought* (Pro 23:23), but the slothful and worldly-minded are not willing to pay the price required. That "price" is intimated in Proverbs 2:1-5: there must be a diligent applying of the heart, a crying after knowledge, a seeking for an apprehension of spiritual things with that ardour and determination as men employ when seeking for silver; and a searching for a deeper and fuller knowledge of the truth as men put forth when searching for hid treasures—persevering until their quest is successful—if we would really understand the things of God. Those who complain that these articles are "too difficult" or "too deep" for them, do but betray the sad state of their souls and reveal how little they really value the truth; otherwise, they would ask God to enable them to concentrate, and re-read these pages perseveringly until they made its contents their own. People are willing to work and study hard and long to master one of the arts or sciences, but where spiritual and eternal things are concerned, it is usually otherwise.

