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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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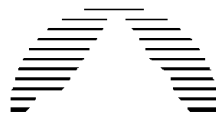
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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THE GOLDEN RULE

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat 7:12). The “therefore” points back to the foregoing section of our Lord’s sermon (Mat 7:7-11), and it intimates three things. First, that privileges and duties must not be separated: blessing from God is designed to enable us the better to discharge our responsibilities unto men. Second, otherwise our future praying will be hindered: “We cannot expect to receive good things from God if we do not fair things and that which is lovely and of good report among men. We must not only be devout, but honest, else our devotion is but hypocrisy” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Third, much divine grace is required by us in order to our performing the duty here enjoined; and such must be sought diligently and daily at the Throne of Grace. In what follows that opening, “therefore,” our Lord has given us a brief but comprehensive rule for the regulating of our conduct unto our fellows, the carrying out of which plays no small part in evidencing the genuineness of our profession and the suitable adorning of the same. That golden rule embodies in an abridged form the teaching of the Law and the Prophets on this subject, and proves that Christianity enforces *their* requirements.

“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Mat 7:12). There is a special need to press this injunction upon God’s people today. This is a generation which is characterized by gross selfishness, when the law of decency has been displaced by the lawlessness of the savage, when good manners are a thing of the past, when human beings conduct themselves more like hogs at the trough or hungry dogs fighting for a bone. There is no regard for the rights of others, and therefore, no concern for the comforts of others. It is every man for himself, whether scrambling into a train or bus, or turning on his radio full blast without any consideration for his neighbours. In the past, it was customary for those who preached or wrote on this text to say, The rule by which too many act is, Do unto others *as they* do unto you. But this generation has sunk lower than that: no matter what consideration be shown them, they exercise none unto their fellows. Courtesy is answered by rudeness; kindness, by meanness. If you treat people decently and generously, they take a despicable advantage of what they regard as weakness.

Now, God’s people are in real danger of being corrupted by the evils to which we have just alluded. Unless they are very much on their guard, they will quickly become infected by the same spirit, the more so as the multitude of empty professors all around them are becoming increasingly conformed to the wicked world. When church members are so boorish and overbearing, walking roughshod over others, indifferent to what annoyance and discomfort they cause their neighbours, the young Christian is apt to think, What is the use of *my* making a stand for that which is right and proper? Better swim with the stream than be regarded as a crank. But that is a temptation from the devil, which must be steadfastly resisted. “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exo 23:2); *their* carelessness and callousness is no reason why *you* should be unconcerned as to what inconvenience and distress your selfish conduct may inflict upon others. “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12); meanwhile, Christ requires His disciples to conform to the standard He has given them, regulate their lives by this golden precept, and be identifiable by their meekness, modesty, gentleness, and righteousness.

This is a rule which is witnessed to in every man’s breast. Each normal person has enough regard for himself that he quickly feels an injury and censures the one who has wronged him. He has, therefore, but to apply this principle to his own actions, and the righteousness of it at once appears. Thus, none can plead ignorance, nor is thoughtlessness any valid excuse. Are you pleased when hearing from old friends? Then fail not to write unto them. Are you inconvenienced when someone fails to return an article you have loaned? Then make conscience of promptly returning anything—be it but a book—which you have borrowed. Are you displeased when others are dilatory in paying what they owe you? Then see to it you settle all your bills promptly. Are you distressed when your nerves are shocked and your rest disturbed by the selfish inconsideration of other tenants in the same house, or by your neighbours? Then cease banging doors yourself; and if you have children or a dog, suffer them not to be a nuisance to others. If someone be ill in the next house, or has to get his sleep during the day, disturb him not.

If spirituality be not practical, it is worthless. Wherever vital godliness is in a healthy state, its possessor will be duly influenced in all his relations; and he will seek faithfully to discharge every duty which he owes, not only unto God, but to his fellow men also. Grace teaches its subjects to “live soberly [selfward], righteously [manward], and godly [Christward] in this present world” (Ti 2:12). The Christian should be as

ready to do good as to receive good. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Mat 7:12). Here is a comprehensive precept which covers the whole of our obligations unto our fellows. Negatively, refrain from injuring any; positively, seek to do good unto all. Be fair and just, honourable and honest, in all your dealings. Though others be not so, perform *your* duty. We must not be forward in standing up for our own rights and backward in considering those of others. If you are hurt when others slight, speak evil of, or oppress you, see that you are innocent of such sins. Treat others with the same consideration, courtesy, and kindness as you wish to receive from them.

Such deportment must be rendered not merely as a "mark of good breeding," but as an act of obedience to God. "Submitting yourselves one to another *in the fear of God*" (Eph 5:21) is the grand principle which should ever move us. Moreover, it is to be steadily borne in mind that this rule is to regulate the inward man, as well as the outward. The whole of God's Law is "spiritual" (Rom 7:14), and requires conformity of heart unto its statutes. This golden rule is no exception: it is to regulate our affections, as well as our actions. It prohibits secret grudgings and enmity against our fellows, and enjoins good will and benevolence. Vain is our profession that we love God, if our actions evince we hate our fellow creatures. It should also be pointed out that this rule includes the right of private judgment. If you maintain you are entitled to have *your own* political views—or, what is far more important, to form your own opinion of what the Bible teaches on any subject of which it treats—then accord unto everyone else the same privilege. Differences of opinion are certain to arise, but they never justify your cherishing a bitter spirit, imputing unworthy motives unto, or acting harshly toward, those who differ from you.

We doubt not that many of our readers have, by divine grace, sincerely endeavoured to regulate their conduct by this rule, yea, have put the interests and welfare of others *before* their own; and in them, Christ is glorified. But we fear there is likely to be quite a number—even of those who receive this magazine—who need to take this message to heart, humbly confess to God their failures thereon, and definitely seek grace to cultivate a more unselfish spirit and a greater concern for the well-being and comfort of those with whom they have to do. This precept is many-sided in its application. If you desire others to sympathize with you while in trouble, then see to it that you "weep with them that weep" (Rom 12:15). If you covet the prayers of your brethren, be diligent in interceding for them.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

41. *Colossians 1:9-12, Part 5*

“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11). It will appear unto some of our readers that we are drawing out these articles to a wearisome length, but others will be thankful to find in them something more profitable than the brief and superficial generalizations which characterize most of the religious literature of this day. Our aim in them is to do something more than furnish bare expositions of the passages before us—namely, foster a spirit of devotion, and provide that which will be of practical use in the daily life of the Christian. Take this present verse as an example. It is indeed important that the reader should obtain a correct idea of the terms used in it, yet he needs much more than that. To supply a full and lucid definition of what patience is—and then exhort one who is in acutely trying circumstances to exercise that grace—will be of little real help. To bid him pray for an increase of it is saying nothing more than he already knows. But to point out how patience is wrought and increased in us, what are the means for the development of it, and the things which hinder—in short, what God requires from us in order to increase its growth—will surely be more to the point.

First, the apostle prays that the saints might be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.” Such language implies that it was no ordinary strength for which he here supplicated, such as in his general deportment does commonly assist the Christian unto holy exercises and acts, but rather that an unusual, yea, “glorious power” was required for the particular task in view. His language argues that he had in mind an exercise of grace more difficult than any other—one from which our constitutions are so naturally remote, that more than ordinary diligence and earnestness must be put forth by us at the Mercy-seat in the obtaining of this urgently needed supply. Every act of grace by us must needs have an act of divine power going before it to draw it forth into exercise. As “the work of faith” is “with power” (2Th 1:11), so the work of patience to bear afflictions requires a divine strengthening of the soul; and to acquit ourselves with “*all* patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” necessitates that we be “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.”

To be “strengthened with all might” signifies to be mightily strengthened, to be given a supply of grace amply sufficient unto the end in view. It means spiritual energy proportioned unto whatever was needed, with all they would have occasion for, to enable them to discharge their duty and carry themselves in a manner pleasing and honouring to God. “According to his glorious power” imports both the excellency and sufficiency of it. The glory of God’s power is most seen when it appears as an *overcoming* power, when victory attends it: as when we read that “Christ was raised up from the dead by the *glory* of the Father” (Rom 6:4). Thus, the apostle sets over against our utter weakness the “all might” of divine grace, and “his glorious power” against our sinful corruption. The special use to which this strength was to be put is “unto all patience”—that is, sufficient for the enduring of all trials; “and longsuffering” would be patience drawn out to its greatest length; “with joyfulness”—not only submitting unto trials without repining, but doing so gladly, rejoicing in the Lord always (Phi 4:4). This third petition, then, was for such a supply of grace as would enable the saints to bear all trials with meek subjection, persevering constancy, and cheerfulness of spirit.

Again, we see what an exalted standard of conduct is the one set before us; yet at the same time, what blessed supplies of help are available. Say not such a standard is utterly unattainable by poor me, when the Lord declares, “my grace is sufficient for thee”—sufficient not only to enable thee to endure “a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet,” but also to make you resolve, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2Co 12:7, 9). Look not in the unbelief upon either the number and might of your enemies, or upon thine own weakness; but in the confidence of a humble, but expectant, faith say: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13). And is not this *glorious* strength indeed, which enables its recipients to persevere in the path of duty notwithstanding much opposition, to bear up manfully under trials, yea, to rejoice in tribulations? What a glorious power is that which is proportioned unto all we are called upon to do and suffer, enabling us to resist the corruptions of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and the temptations of the devil—which keeps us from either sinking into abject despair, or making shipwreck of the faith, and causing us to hold on our way unto the end.

And how is this “all might” secured? Some will answer: By no endeavour of ours; we in our helplessness can do no more in the obtaining of grace for the soul, than the parched ground can cause refreshing showers to descend from heaven; we must submit to God’s sovereign determination, and hope for the best. But that is a denial of the Christian’s responsibility. God indeed asks nothing from the ground, for it is an inanimate and irrational creature, but far different is it with moral agents—the more so when He has regenerated them. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). And much *has* been given unto the one born of God: Christ is his in the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Ghost indwells him, life has been communicated to his soul, faith imparted to his heart; and therefore, much may justly be required of him. Grace is not some mysterious influence which fortuitously descends and enters into the Christian’s heart, irrespective of how he acts. The opening word of our verse intimates the contrary, for “strengthening” implies God’s blessing upon our use of suitable means—whether it be the strengthening of the body, the mind, or the spiritual life. Observe, the first (though not the only) means is an earnest and importunate crying unto God.

It is both our privilege and our duty to “come boldly [or freely] unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy [for past failures], and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Oft-times, we “have not,” because we “ask not,” or because we “ask amiss” (Jam 4:2-3). Grace must be sought believingly, fervently, perseveringly, as Paul himself sought in 2 Corinthians 12. Moreover, there has to be a daily feeding upon “the word of his grace” (Act 20:32), if the soul is to be “nourished up in the words of faith” (1Ti 4:6). If we neglect our daily bread, fail to meditate upon and appropriate a regular supply of manna, we soon become feeble and faint. Further, exercise is essential: we must *use* the grace already given us, if we would obtain more (Luk 8:18). Spiritual strength is not given to release us from the fight of faith, but to furnish and fit us for the same. Grace is not bestowed upon the Christian in order that heaven may be won without engaging in a fierce conflict, as many seem to think, but in order that he may “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might”; thereby, to “put on the whole armour of God”; and thus, “be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:10-11). So in our text: we are strengthened with all might “unto [for this end] all patience.”

We must now inquire into the nature of “patience”—or more specifically, the particular kind of patience which is here in view. It is a steady persisting in duty, which keeps one from being deterred by opposition, or fainting under suffering. Actively, it finds expression in perseverance, or refusing to quit the race because of the difficulties or length of the course. Passively, it appears in a meek and quiet spirit, which endures afflictions without repining. Primarily, though perhaps not exclusively, it is the latter that is spoken of here—namely, that frame of heart which bears submissively whatever trials and tribulations the Lord calls upon one to pass through. It is very much more than a placidity of temper which is not unduly provoked by the common irritations of life, for often, that is more a matter of healthy nerves than a virtuous exercise of the mind and will. Grace is more potent than nature: it can make the timid courageous; cool, the most hot-headed; quieten, the impetuous. Grace works submissiveness in the most impulsive. It is making our hearts calm when outward circumstances are tempestuous; and though God lets loose His winds upon us, He can keep us from being discomposed by them, and lay the same command upon our passions as upon the angry waves: “Peace, be still” (Mar 4:39).

We will now particularize a little—both negatively and positively—in order that it may more clearly appear what this grace of patience is. It is not a stoical apathy under the divine dispensations. It is no narcotic virtue to stupefy us and take away the sense and feeling of afflictions. If it had any such opiate quality, then there would be nothing commendable or praiseworthy in it. That is no suffering which is not felt; and if patience deprived us of the feeling of sorrow, it would cease to be patience. During the past few years, we have witnessed the mass of our fellows stupefied and insensible under the hand of God, taking no notice of Him when His judgments fell heavily upon them, enduring them with stolidity—or rather, moral stupidity; but the senseless boast, “we can take it,” was no more to be accounted patience than is the non-writhing of a block of wood when it is sawn and planed. Patience quickens the sufferings of a saint, for he refers them unto his deserts; consciousness of his sins in provoking God pierces his conscience and brings pain to his inner man also. But the wicked look only upon *what* they suffer, and make no reflection upon their deserts.

Nor does the grace of patience stifle all modest complaints and moderate sorrow. A patient Christian is permitted this vent through which his grief may find relief. Grace does not destroy, but regulates and corrects nature. God allows His children to shed tears, so long as the course of them does not stir up the mud

of their sinful passions and violent affections. It is not wrong to complain of what we suffer, so long as we complain not against God from whom we suffer. We may lawfully, and without any breach of patience, express our grief in all outward and natural signs of it, so long as that agitation exceeds not its due bounds and measures. Holy Job, who is commended to us as the great example of patience, when he received the sad news of the loss of his estate and of his children, “rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground” (Job 1:20); and that we might not regard this as a display of impatience, the Spirit has added, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22). The disciples made “great lamentation” over Stephen (Act 8:2), though by his martyrdom, he had greatly glorified God. It is not grief, but the excess of it which is disallowed.

Nor does patience oblige us to continue under afflictions when we may warrantably free ourselves from them. As an eminent Puritan rightly pointed out: “When God lays sore and heavy afflictions upon us, we are bound, under principles of self-preservation, to endeavour what we may to free ourselves from them; otherwise, we sin against nature and the God of nature. Therefore, if God reduce thee to poverty, by some stroke depriving thee of thy estate, it is not patience, but a lax and sinful carelessness, to sit still with thy hand in thy bosom, neglecting all honest industry to procure a comfortable subsistence, pretending that thou art willing to submit to the will and dispensation of God. If God bring sore and perhaps mortal disease upon thee, it is not patience, but presumption and impiety, to refuse the means which are prepared proper to thy recovery, under the pretence that thou art willing to bear whatever God is pleased to lay on thee. Generally, whatever calamity thou liest under, it is not patience, but obstinacy, to refuse deliverance, when thou mayest obtain it without violating thy duty or dishonouring God” (Ezekiel Hopkins, 1634-1690).

Positively, patience consists of a willing submission to the dispensations of divine providence. When Job said, “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10), that was the language of patience. “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Joh 18:11) was the supreme example of this grace. It is the ready acquiescence of the soul under whatever God sees fit to lay upon it. It is the calm enduring of provocation and persecutions, especially trials which come unexpectedly. It is a steady and thankful bearing of all troubles, how ever grievous and long protracted, mortifying the opposite passions of fear, anger, anxiety, inordinate grief; refusing to be overwhelmed by those troubles, persevering in the discharge of duty unto the end; relieving one’s self by faith in what is to be had in God, and from Him, by communion with Him: resting in His love, leaning on His arms, and encouraging ourself by expectation of that eternal and blessed glory, which awaits us after our appointed race is run.

Patience consists of that due tranquillizing or composing our minds, which issues in the quieting of our unruly passions. Those may be very impatient persons, and fret and fume within, who express but little emotion outwardly. That impatience which finds no external vent is the most injurious and dangerous to character, as those latent fevers which lurk within—and prey upon the animal spirits when there appears but little intemperate heat in the limbs—are the most to be feared. Patience calms those storms and tempests which are apt to arise in the heart when a person is under any sore and heavy affliction. It is indeed but impossible that affections will be stirring, but this grace takes off the vigour and violence of them. All those turbulences and uproars of the passions, all those willful and wild emotions which distract reason and rend the soul, rendering us unfit for the service of God or the employment of our business—these patience ought to quell, and in measure does suppress. He who can rule his body better than his soul, his actions than his passions, lacks the principal part of patience.

All this must be done upon *right grounds*. This requires us to distinguish sharply between natural and Christian patience. There is a natural patience sometimes found in those devoid of true grace, yea, such a strength of character, a fortitude of mind, a tranquility of spirit, which often puts, or should put, the people of God to shame. Yet, that is only a moral virtue proceeding only from natural and moral principles. Ah, says the Christian, and how am I, who naturally am so impulsive, so fiery, so fickle, to ascertain whether *my* patience be of a superior order? By the principles from which it proceeds, the motives actuating it, and the ends for which it is put forth. Moral virtue proceeds only from the principles of reason, and is actuated by such arguments as human prudence furnishes; and it is exercised to promote self-esteem, or the respect of our fellows. Many an unregenerate person, by a process of self-discipline, has hardened himself to bear the evils which befall him, by persuading himself it is folly to rebel against fate and torment himself over the inevitable, telling himself that what cannot be cured must be endured, that to give way to peevishness is childish and will effect no good, and that to yield to a spirit of fury will but lower him in the eyes of others.

But spiritual patience proceeds from a principle of grace is actuated by higher motives, and is induced by greatly superior considerations than those which regulate the most refined and self-controlled unregenerate person. Spiritual patience springs from faith (Jam 1:3), from hope (Rom 8:25), from love (2Th 3:5; Jam 1:12). It is nourished by the Scriptures (Rom 15:4)—that is, by what is taught us and exemplified therein. Patience eyes the sovereignty of God, to which it is our duty to submit. It eyes His benevolence and is assured that the most painful affliction is among the all things which He is making work together for our good. It looks off from the absolute nature of the affliction, considered as it is in itself, to the relative nature of it, as it is dispensed to us by God; and therefore, concludes that though the cup be bitter, yet in our Father's hand, it is salutary. Though the chastisement itself be grievous, patience realizes it will, if we be duly exercised, make us partakers of God's holiness here and of His glory hereafter. Patience eyes the example which Christ has left us and seeks grace to be conformed thereto. The Christian strives to exercise patience not out of self-esteem and because he is mortified when his passions get the better of him, but from a desire to please God and glorify Him.

The careful reader will find in the last three paragraphs several hints upon those *means* which are best suited to promote and strengthen patience—such as looking well to his cardinal graces: faith, hope, love. But one or two others we will here mention, among which we place high the complete resigning of ourselves to God. Since most outburst of impatience are occasioned by a crossing of our wills, then it behoves each Christian to daily ascertain how fully his will is surrendered to God, and to be diligent in cultivating a spirit of submission unto Him. While that yieldedness to God does not include the reducing of ourselves as serfs unto our fellow men, still less the condoning of the wrongs they have done; yet it does require us to be not unduly occupied with the instruments of our afflictions, but rather look beyond them unto Him who has some good reason for using them to stir up our nests.

Meditate frequently upon the *patience of God*. What infinite patience does He exercise toward us! He bears far more from us than we can possibly do from Him. He bears with our sins, whereas we bear only His chastisements; and sin is infinitely more opposite to His nature than suffering is to ours. If He is so longsuffering with our innumerable offences, how ill it becomes us to fret and murmur at the least correction from His hand! Meditating upon the *faithfulness* of God helps us to bear trials with more fortitude. There is no condition which needs more, and there is none which has so many promises attending it as a suffering and persecuted one. God has promised support under it (Psa 55:22), His presence in it (Isa 43:2), deliverance from it (1Co 10:13): He is faithful to His Word. Ponder His wisdom and goodness, and you will find in *them* sufficient reason to acquiesce in His providences. If afflictions came by blind chance, we might indeed bemoan a hard fate; but since they are appointed by an omniscient and loving Father, they must be for our gain.

The absence and the opposites of those things which foster patience are hindrances to it. Space only allows us to specify one particular evil which prevents the exercise and growth of this grace—and that is, a making too much of the creature. The more we set our hearts and hopes upon creature enjoyments, the more bitter is our disappointment when they fail us, or be taken away. Jonah was “exceeding glad” of the gourd which the Lord prepared to shade and shelter him (Jon 4:6), but he was “angry, even unto death” (Jon 4:9) when it withered away. That is recorded for our warning! If you immoderately value any earthly comfort, you will immoderately chafe at its removal. Pride is another enemy to patience. So is effeminate softness.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

21. *The Miracle, Part 2*

As a reward for Joshua's past faithfulness—and in order to equip him more thoroughly for the great task before him—the Lord determined to put signal honour upon His servant, so that Israel might assuredly know that as the mighty God had been with Moses, so He would be with his successor (Jos 3:7). That at once turns our thoughts back to Exodus 14, and it is both interesting and instructive to trace out the many points of contrast and comparison between what occurred at the Red Sea and here at Jordan. Let us consider first those respects in which they differed.

First, the one terminated Israel's exodus from the house of bondage, while the other initiated their entrance into the land of promise. Second, the former miracle was wrought in order that Israel might escape from the Egyptians, the latter to enable them to approach and conquer the Canaanites. Third, in connection with that, the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind (Exo 14:21); but with reference to this, no means whatever were employed—to demonstrate that He is not tied unto such, but employs or dispenses with them as He pleases. Fourth, the earlier miracle was performed at night time (Exo 14:21); the latter, in broad daylight. Fifth, at the Red Sea, multitudes were slain, for the Lord made the waters to return, "and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (Exo 14:28); whereas at the Jordan, not a single soul perished. Sixth, the one was wrought for a people who just previously had been full of unbelief and murmuring, saying unto Moses: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" (Exo 14:11); the other, for a people who were believing and obedient (Jos 2:24; 3:1).

Seventh, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua, all the adults who benefited by the former miracle perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief; while not a single one of those who were favoured to share in the latter failed to "possess" their possessions. Eighth, at the Red Sea, "the waters were divided" (Exo 14:21); but here at the Jordan, they were not so—rather, they were made to "stand upon an heap" (Jos 3:13). Ninth, in the former, the believer's judicial death unto sin was typed out; in the latter, his legal oneness with Christ in His resurrection, to be followed by a practical entrance into his inheritance. Tenth, consequently, whereas there was no "sanctify yourselves" before the former, such a call was an imperative requirement for the latter (Jos 3:5). Eleventh, the response made by Israel's enemies to the Lord's intervention for Israel at the Red Sea was, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them" (Exo 15:9); but in the latter, "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites...heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan...that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more" (Jos 5:1). Twelfth, after the working of the former, "Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" (Exo 14:31); after the latter, a cairn of twelve stones memorialized the event (Jos 4:20-24).

It is surely remarkable that there are as many analogies between the two miracles as dissimilarities. Yet that illustrates a principle which the attentive observer will find exemplified all through Scripture, and which the young student is advised to make careful note of. "Two" is the number of *witness*—as the Lord sent forth the apostles in pairs to testify of Him. It was the minimum number for such under the Law (Joh 8:17), for if the sworn testimony of two different men agreed, this was considered conclusive. Thus, two is also the number of comparison and contrast. Hence, it will be found that when there are *only two* of a kind, such as the miracles of the Red Sea and the Jordan, there is always a number of marked resemblances and divergencies between them. Some may like to work out for themselves the parallels and oppositions between the Old and New Testaments, Sinai and Sion, the first and second advents of Christ, the respective careers of Moses and Joshua, the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and so on. The same principle is exemplified where a Greek word occurs but twice: as "*apognigo*" (Luk 8:7, 33), "*apokueo*" (Jam 1:15, 18), "*panoplia*" (Luk 11:22; Eph 6:11). So too when two parables, miracles, incidents are placed in juxtaposition.

The following are some of the points of resemblance between these two: (1) In each case, the miracle was connected with water. (2) Neither was done in a corner or beheld by only a few, but was witnessed by the whole nation of Israel. (3) Each was preceded by an act required of God's servant, Moses, in the stretching forth of his hand (Exo 14:21); Joshua, in giving command to the people. (4) Each was the removal of

a formidable barrier in Israel's path. (5) Each had the design of authenticating Israel's leader (Exo 14:31; Jos 4:14). (6) Each presented a severe test unto Israel's faith and obedience (Exo 14:15; Josh 3:3). (7) In each case, they passed over dry-shod. (8) Both miracles were wrought in silence: neither was accompanied by shouts of triumph, nor was there any sounding of the rams' horns—as, later, in the case of the miraculous fall of Jericho's walls (Jos 6:9, 20). (9) Afterward, both the Red Sea and the waters of the Jordan returned again to their normal state. (10) Each inaugurated a new period in Israel's history. (11) In both, there was a prodigious display of Jehovah's power to the consternation of His enemies. (12) Both miracles were celebrated by songs of praise.

Some of our readers may think that we made a slip in the last point: they will recall the songs of Israel in Exodus 15, and ask, But where is there any song of praise celebrating what occurred at the Jordan? Separate celebration there is none, but the two miracles are conjoined and made the special subject of sacred ode—namely in Psalm 114—to which we would now direct attention. Many of those who are best qualified to express a considered opinion on the merits of poetry have freely testified that in this psalm, the art of sacred minstrelsy has reached its climax: that no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of its contents. In it, we have most vividly depicted the greatest of inanimate things rendering obeisance unto their Maker. As one beautifully summarized it, “The God of Jacob is exalted as having command over river, sea, and mountain, and causing all nature to pay homage and tribute before His majesty.”

Psalm 114 is a remarkable one in several respects. First, it is written without any preface. It is as though the soul of its author was so elevated and filled with a sense of the divine glory that he could not pause to compose an introduction, but rather burst forth at once into the midst of his theme—namely, the wondrous works which were wrought for Israel of old, of which they were the actual eye-witnesses and beneficiaries. Second, in it, the rules of grammar are ignored, for in verse two, we find the possessive pronoun used without a preceding substantive. The presence of God is concealed in the first verse, for, as Isaac Watts (1674-1748) pointed out: “If God had appeared before, there could be no wonder when the mountains should leap and the sea retire—therefore, that these convulsions of nature may be brought in with due surprise, His name is not mentioned till afterwards.” Third, this psalm was fittingly made a part of “the Hallelujah,” which the Jews of all later generations were wont to sing at their Passover supper. Fourth, all that is portrayed in this psalm was typical of the still greater wonders wrought by the redemptive work of Christ.

The psalm celebrates the marvels performed by Jehovah on behalf of His people of old, particularly their exodus from Egypt and His conducting them through the Red Sea and the Jordan. Such glorious acts of God's power and grace must never be forgotten, but owned in gladsome praise: “When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion” (Psa 114:1-2). The Lord delivered His people from the house of bondage that they might serve Him and show forth His praises, in the duties of worship, and in obedience to His Law. In order thereto, He set up His “sanctuary” among them—first in the tabernacle, then in the temple, finally, in Christ His incarnate Son—in which He gave special tokens of His presence. Further, He set up His “dominion” or throne among them, being Himself their Lord, King, and Judge. Observe well how that here, as everywhere, privilege and duty, divine favour and human responsibility, are *united*. God acted graciously. God maintained the rights of His righteousness. As His “sanctuary,” Israel was separated unto God as a peculiar people, a nation of priests, holy unto the Lord. As His “dominion,” they were a theocracy, governed directly by Him. So *we* have been redeemed that we should “*serve him...In holiness and righteousness...all the days of our life*” (Luk 1:74-75). If we enjoy the favours of His “sanctuary,” we must also submit to His “dominion.”

“The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs” (Psa 114:4-5). In those words, the inspired poet depicts inanimate creation trembling before its Maker. It was because Jehovah was Israel's “sanctuary” and “dominion” that the Red Sea fled before them. Sinai quivered and the waters of Jordan were effectually dammed. The Almighty was at the head of His people, and nothing could stand before Him, or withstand them. “The sea saw”: it now beheld what it never had previously, namely, “the pillar of the cloud” (Exo 14:19)—symbol of Jehovah's presence; and, unable to endure such a sight, fled to the right and to the left, opening a clear passage for the Hebrews. Jordan, too, as the ark of the covenant entered its brim, was driven back, so that its rapid torrent was stayed, yea, fled uphill. Graphic figures were those of that invincible operation of divine grace in the hearts of God's elect, when the mighty power of God is so put forth that turbulent rebels are tamed, fierce lusts subdued, proud

imaginings cast down, and self-sufficient wisecracks are brought to enter the Kingdom of Christ as “little children”!

“What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?” (Psa 114:5-6). That is the language of holy irony, the Spirit of God pouring contempt upon the unbelieving thoughts of men who foolishly imagine that the Almighty can be withstood, yea, thwarted by the creatures of His own hands. “What ailed thee, O thou sea...?”: the poet apostrophizes it in the terms of mockery. “Wast thou so terribly afraid? Did thy proud strength then utterly fail thee? Did thy very heart dry up, so that no resistance was left in thee?” Such an interrogation also teaches us that it behoves us to inquire after the reason of things when we behold the marvels of nature, and not merely gaze upon them as senseless spectators. We have here also a foreshadowing and sure prophecy of the utter impotency of the wicked in the last great Day: if the granite cliffs of Sinai were shaken to their base when Jehovah descended upon it, what consternation and trembling will seize the stoutest hearts when they stand before their awful Judge! See Psalm 114:7.

Psalm 114 is by no means the only place where we find celebration made of the miracles witnessed at the Red Sea, and Jordan and the other marvels wrought about the same time. The prophet Habakkuk also links together those two wonders, and in language which serves to cast further light upon the Lord’s design therein—teaching us the importance and necessity of carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, if we would obtain a full view of any event or subject, for each passage makes its own distinct contribution unto the whole. In Joshua, we behold the Lord acting more in His sovereign grace and covenant faithfulness on behalf of the seed of Abraham, but Habakkuk informs us He was exercising *righteous indignation* against His enemies, who had devoted themselves unto the most horrible idolatry and unspeakable immorality. It was in holy wrath against both the Egyptians and the Canaanites that God put forth His mighty power, when “the iniquity of the Amorites” had come to the “full” (Gen 15:16). The whole of Habakkuk 3 is exceedingly graphic and solemn, though we must do no more here than make a bare quotation of portions of it.

The Holy One is vividly pictured as manifesting Himself in the whole of that district which lay to the south of Judah, including Sinai, when “His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise” (Hab 3:3). “He stood, and measured the earth” (Hab 3:6) or “caused the earth to tremble,” as the Jewish Targum¹ renders it; and as appears to be required by the parallelism of the next clause: “He beheld [merely “looked upon”!], and drove asunder the nations.” That sixth verse may be regarded as the “text” which is illustrated by God’s control over the forces of nature. “Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? [when He made the lower waters of the Jordan to flee away, and the higher ones to “stand on a heap”] was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? (Hab 3:8), when, as an invincible Conqueror, Thou didst carry all before Thee! “The mountains [of Sinai] saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water [Jos 3:15] passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high” (Hab 3:10)—see Joshua 3:16—as though in token of submission to and adoration of their Maker. “The sun and moon stood still in their habitation” (Hab 3:11)—see Joshua 10:12-13. “Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen *in anger*” (Hab 3:12).

Returning to Joshua 3: “Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan...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). “He who is your covenant God with you, has both the right and power to command, control, use, and dispose of all nations and all creatures. He is ‘the Lord of all the earth,’ and therefore, He needs not you, nor can He be benefited by you. Therefore, it is your honour and happiness to have Him in covenant with you; all the creatures are at your service, when He pleases, all shall be employed for you. When we are praising and worshipping God as Israel’s God, and ours through Christ, we must remember that He is the Lord of the whole earth, and reverence and trust in Him accordingly...While we make God’s precepts our rule, His promises our stay, and His providence our guide, we need not dread the greatest difficulties we may meet with in the way of duty” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714).

¹ **Targum** – the writings of the Old Testament as recorded in Aramaic, the common language of the Jews at the time of Jesus.

Here we may see yet another reason—beyond those we have previously pointed out—why the sacred ark was carried so far in advance of the people (Jos 3:4), namely, that the whole congregation might have a better and clearer view of the miracle which God was about to perform for them. The host of Israel standing so far in the rear would have a much plainer opportunity of witnessing and adoring the glorious power of their God.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

5. *The Existence of God, Part 5*

Second, *as revealed in man*. Creation makes manifest the Creator, and having considered some of the mighty products of Omnipotence therein, we turn now to that which comes closer home unto each of us. We are not obliged to go far afield and turn our attention to objects in the heavens or the depths of the ocean in order to find evidences of God's existence—we may discover them in ourselves. Man himself exhibits a divine Maker; yea, he is the chief of His mundane works. Accordingly, we find that in Genesis 1—after giving a brief but vivid account of how the heavens and earth were called into existence by a divine fiat, and both of them furnished for the benefit of the human race—God made man last, as though to indicate *he* is the climax of His works. In each other instance, we are told “God said,” “God called,” “God created,” etc., but in our case, there is a marked difference: “And God said, Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen 1:26), as if to signify (speaking after the manner of men) there was a special conference of the divine Trinity in connection with the formation of that creature who should be made in the divine image. All the works of God bear the impress of His wisdom, but man alone has stamped upon him the divine likeness.

The fact that man was made by the Triune God and “in...our image” plainly indicates that he was constituted a tripartite being, consisting of spirit and soul and body—the first being capable of God-consciousness, the second, of self-consciousness, and the third, of sense-consciousness. The dual expression “in our image, after our likeness” imports a twofold resemblance between God and man in his original condition: the former referring to the holiness of his nature, the latter to the character of his soul—which competent theologians have rightly distinguished as “the moral image” and the “natural image” of God in man. That is a real and necessary distinction; and unless it be observed, we inevitably fall into error when contemplating the effects of man's defection from God. To the question, Did man *lose* the image of God by the Fall? The orthodox rightly answer in the affirmative; yet many of them are quite at a loss to understand such verses as Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9, which teach that fallen man *retains* the image of God. It was the moral image which was destroyed when he apostatized, and which is restored to him again at regeneration (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). Fallen man is made in the image of his fallen parent, as Genesis 5:3 and Psalm 51:5 solemnly attest. But fallen man still has plainly stamped upon him the natural image of God, evidencing his divine origin. What that “natural image” consists in, we will now consider.

In our last issue, we called attention to some of the wonders observable in the human body; and if God bestowed such exquisite workmanship upon the casket, what must be the nature of the gem within it! That “gem” is the spirit and soul of man, which was made in the natural image of God—we shall not here distinguish between them, but treat of them together under the generic term, “soul.” If the human body bears upon it the impress of the divine hand, much more so does the soul with its truly remarkable faculties and capabilities. The soul is endowed with understanding, will, moral perception, memory, imagination, affections. Man is comprised and possessed of something more than matter, being essentially a spiritual and rational being, capable of communion with his Maker. There was given unto man a nature nobler than of any other creature's on earth. Man is an intelligent being, capable of thinking and reasoning, which as much excels the instinct of animals as the finished product of the artist's brush does the involuntary raising of his hand to protect his face, or the shutting of his eyes without thought when wind blows dust into them. From whence, then, has man derived his intelligence?

The soul is certainly something distinct from the body. Our very consciousness informs us that we possess an understanding—yea, an intelligent entity which, though we cannot see, yet is known by its operations of thinking, reasoning, remembering. But matter possesses no such properties as those; no, not in any combination of its elements. If matter *could* think, then it would still be able to do so after the soul was absent from the body. Again, if matter had the power of thought, then it would be able to think only of those things which are tangible and material, for no cause can ever produce effects superior to itself. Intelligence can no more issue from non-intelligence than the animate from the non-animate. A stone cannot think, nor a log of wood understand a syllogism. But the human soul is not only capable of thinking, it can also commune with itself, rejoice in itself. Nor are its ratiocinations restricted to itself: it is so constituted that it can apprehend and discourse of things superior to itself. So far from being tied down to the material realm, it can soar into the heavens, cognise the angels, and commune with the Father of spirits.

Consider the vastness of the soul's capacity! What cannot it encompass? It can form a concept of the whole world, and visualize scenes thousands of miles away. As one has pointed out, "It is suited to all objects, as the eye to all colours, or the ear to all sounds." How capacious is the memory to retain so much, and such variety! Consider the quickness of the soul's motions: nothing is so swift in the whole course of nature. Thought is far more rapid in its action than the light-waves of ether: in a single moment, fancy may visit the Antipodes. With equal facility and agility, it can transport itself into the far away past or the distant future. As the desires of the soul are not bounded by material objects, so neither are its motions restrained by them. Consider also its power of volition. The will is the servant of the soul, carrying out its behests, yet it knows not how its commissions are received. Now, *matter* has no power of choice; and what it is devoid of, it certainly cannot convey. As man's intelligence must have its source in the supreme Mind, so his power of volition must proceed from the supreme Will.

The nature of man also bears witness to the existence of God in the operations and reflections of his *conscience*. If the external marvels of creation exhibit the wisdom and power of the Creator, this mysterious faculty of the soul as clearly exemplifies His holiness and justice. Whatever be its nature or howsoever we define it, its forceful presence within presents us with a unique phenomenon. This moral sense in man challenges investigation and demands an explanation—an investigation which the infidel is most reluctant to seriously make, and for which he is quite unable to furnish a satisfactory explanation. "Conscience is a court always in session and imperative in its summons. No man can evade it or silence its accusations. It is a complete assize. It has a judge on its bench, and that judge will not be bribed into a lax decision. It has its witness-stand, and can bring witnesses from the whole territory of the past life. It has its jury, ready to give a verdict—"guilty" or "not guilty"—in strict accordance with the evidence; and it has its sheriff, Remorse, with his whip of scorpions, ready to lash the convicted soul. The nearest thing in the world to the bar of God is the court of conscience. And though it be for a time drugged into a partial apathy or intoxicated with worldly pleasure, the time comes when in all the majesty of its imperial authority, this court calls to its bar every transgressor and holds him to a strict account" (A. T. Pierson, 1837-1911).

Conscience is that which conveys to the soul a realization of right and wrong. It is that inward faculty which passes judgment upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our desires and deeds. It is an ethical instinct, a faculty of moral sensibility, which both informs and impresses its possessor, being that which basically constitutes us responsible creatures. It is an inward faculty which is not only of a vastly superior order, but is far keener in perception than any of the bodily senses: it both sees, hears, and feels. Its office is twofold: to warn us against sin and to prompt us unto the performance of duty; and this, it does according to the light shining into it—from natural reason and divine revelation. Though the heathen be without the Bible, yet their conscience passes judgment on natural duties and unnatural sins. Hence, the more spiritual light a person has, the greater his responsibility; and it is according to that principle, and on that basis, he will be dealt with at the grand Assize. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luk 12:47-48). Punishment will be proportioned to light received and privileges enjoyed.

To this moral sensibility of man as the basis of his accountability, the apostle refers in Romans 2:14: "For when the Gentiles [heathen], which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves." The "nature" of anything is the peculiarity of its being, that in virtue of which it is what it is: it is that which belongs to its original constitution, in contradistinction from all that is taught or acquired. This ethical sense is an original part of our being, and is not the product of education—a power of discrimination by which he distinguishes between right and wrong is created in man. The natural light of reason enables the uncivilized to distinguish between virtue and vice. All—save infants and idiots—recognize the eternal difference between good and evil: they instinctively, or rather intuitively, feel this or that course is commendable or censurable. They have a sense of duty: the natural light of reason conveys the same. Even the most benighted and degraded give evidence that they are not without a sense of obligation: however primitive and savage be their mode of life, yet the very fact that they frame some form of law and order for the community proves beyond any doubt they have a definite notion of justice and rectitude.

The very nature of the heathen, their sense of right and wrong, leads to the performing of moral actions. In confirmation thereof, the apostle went on to say, "Which shew the work of the law written in their

hearts, their conscience also bearing witness [to the existence of God and their accountability to Him], and their thoughts the mean while [or “between themselves,” margin] accusing or else excusing [the conduct of themselves and of] one another” (Rom 2:15). The “work of the law” is not to be understood as a power of righteousness operating within them, still less as their actual doing of what the Law requires; but rather the function or design of the Law, which is to direct action. The natural light of reason informs them of the distinction between right and wrong. “Their conscience *also* bearing witness”—that is, in addition to the dictates of reason, for they are by no means the same thing. Knowledge of duty and the actions of conscience are quite distinct: the one reveals what is right, the other approves of it and condemns the contrary. They have sufficient light to judge between what is honest and dishonest, and their moral sense makes this distinction before commission of sin, in the commission, and afterward—as clearly appears in their acquitting or condemning one another.

Those who have given Romans 2:14 any serious thought must have been puzzled, if not stumbled, by the statement that those in Heathendom “do by nature the things contained in the law,” since they neither love the Lord God with all their hearts, nor their neighbours as themselves—the sum of what it requires. The American Revised Version is much to be preferred: “Do by nature the things of the law,” which describes not the yielding of obedience to the law, but the performing of its functions. The proper business of the Law is to say, This is right, that is wrong; you will be rewarded for the one, and punished for the other. To command, to forbid, to promise, to threaten—these are “the *things* of the law,” the “work” of it (Rom 2:15). The apostle’s assertion is this—an assertion exactly accordant with truth, and directly bearing on his argument:

“The Gentiles who have no written divine Law, perform by nature from their very constitution, to themselves and each other, the functions of such a law. They make a distinction between right and wrong, just as they do between truth and falsehood. They cannot help doing so. They often go wrong by mistaking what is right and what is wrong, as they often go wrong by mistaking what is true and what is false. But they approve themselves and one another when doing what they think right; they disapprove themselves and one another when they do what they think to be wrong, so that—though they have no written law—they act the part of a law to themselves. This capacity, this necessity of their nature, distinguishes them from brutes, and makes them the subjects of divine moral government. In this way, they show that ‘the work of the law’—the work which the Law *does*—is ‘written in their hearts,’ enwoven in their constitution, by the actings of the power we call conscience. It is just, then, that they should be punished for doing what they know to be wrong, or might have known to be wrong” (Professor Brown).

Man is the only earthly creature endowed with conscience. The beasts have consciousness and a limited power to acquire knowledge, but that is something very different. Certain animals can be made to obey their masters. With the aid of a stick, even a cow may be taught to refrain from plucking the green leaves over the garden fence, which her mouth craves: the memory of the beatings she has received for disobedience incline her to forgo her inclinations. Much more intelligent is a *domesticated* dog: he can be trained to understand that certain actions will meet with reward, while others will receive punishment. But memory is a very different thing from that ethical monitor within the human breast, which weighs whatever is presented to the mind and passes judgment either for or against all our actions, secretly acquainting the soul with the right and wrong of things. Wherever we go, this sentinel accompanies us: whatever we think or do, it records a verdict. Much of our peace of mind is the fruit of a non-accusing conscience, while not a little of our disquietude is occasioned by the charges of wrong-doing which conscience brings against us.

Conscience is an integral part of that light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (see John 1:9). Forceful testimony is borne to its potency by the rites of the heathen and their self-imposed penances, which are so many attempts to appease the ones they feel they have offended. There is in every man that which reproves him for his sins—yea, for those to which none other is privy; and therefore, “the wicked flee when no man pursueth” (Pro 28:1). At times, the stoutest are made to quail. The most hardened have their seasons of alarm. The spectre of past sins haunts them in the night watches. Boast loudly as they may that they fear nothing, yet “there were they in great fear, where no fear was” (Psa 53:5)—an inward horror where there was no outward occasion for uneasiness. When there is no reason for fright, the wicked are suddenly seized with panic and made to tremble like an aspen leaf, so that they are afraid of their own shadows.

The fearful reality of conscience is plainly manifested by the fact that men who are naturally inclined to evil nevertheless disapprove of that which is evil, and approve of the very good which they practise not.

Even though they do not so audibly, the vicious secretly admire the pure, and while some be sunk so low, they will scarcely acknowledge it to themselves; nevertheless, they wish they could be like the morally upright. The most blameworthy will condemn certain forms of evil in others, thus evincing they distinguish between good and evil. Whence does that arise? By what rule do they measure moral actions, but by an innate principle? But how comes man to possess that principle? It is not an attribute of reason, for at times reason will inform its possessor that a certain course of conduct would result in gain to him, but conscience moves him to act in a way which he knows will issue in temporal loss. Nor is it a product of the will, for conscience often acts in opposition to the will, and no effort of the will can still it. It is a separate faculty, which, in various degrees of enlightenment and sensitiveness, is found in civilized and uncivilized.

Now even common sense tells us that someone other than ourselves originated this faculty. No law can be without a lawgiver. From whence, then, this law? Not from man, for he would fain annihilate it if he could. It must have been imparted by some higher hand, which hand alone can maintain it against all the violences of its owner, who—were it not for this restraining monitor—would quickly reduce the world to a charnel house.² If, then, we reason rationally, we are forced to argue thus: I find myself naturally obliged to do this and shun that, therefore, there must be a Superior who obliges me. If there were no Superior, I should myself be the sole judge of good and evil, yea, I should be regulated only by expediency and recognize no moral distinctions. Were I the lord of that principle or law which commands me, I should find no conflict within myself between reason and appetite. The indubitable fact is that conscience has an authority for man that cannot be accounted for, except by its being the voice of God within him. If conscience were entirely isolated from God, and were independent of Him, it could not make the solemn, and sometimes the terrible, impressions it does. No man would be afraid of himself, if self were not connected with a higher being than himself.

As God has not left Himself without witness among the lower creatures (Act 14:17), neither has He left Himself without witness within man's own breast. There is not a rational member of the human race who has not at some time more or less smarted under the lashings of conscience. The hearts of princes, in the midst of their pleasures, have been stricken with anguish while their favourites were flattering them. Those inward torments are not ignorant frights experienced only by children, which reason throws off later on—for the stronger reason grows, the sharper the stings of conscience, and not the least so in maturity and old age. It often operates when wickedness is most secret. Numerous cases are on record of an overwhelming terror overtaking wrongdoers when their crimes were known to none, and they have condemned themselves and given themselves up to justice. Could that self-accuser originate from man's own self? He who loves himself would, were it possible, destroy that which disturbs him. Certainly conscience has received no authority from its possessor to lash himself, to spoil the pleasures of sin, to make him "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isa 57:20).

The very fact there is that in man which condemns him for sins committed in secret argues there is a God, and that he is accountable unto Him. He has an instinctive dread of a divine Judge who will yet arraign him. They *know* "the judgment of God" (Rom 1:32) by an inward witness. It is a just provision of the Lord that those who will not reverently fear Him have a tormenting fear of the future. Why is it that, despite all their efforts to escape from the conclusion that God is, they dread a retribution beyond death?—often demonstrated by the most callous wretches in their last hours by asking for the chaplain or "priest." If there be no God, why do men strive to silence conscience and dispel its terrors? And why are their efforts so unavailing? Since they cannot still its accusations, some Higher Power must maintain it within the soul. That the most enlightened nations recognize men have no right to *force* the conscience is a tacit acknowledgement that it is *above* human jurisdiction, answerable only to its Author. Conscience is the vicegerent of God in the soul, and will torment the damned for all eternity.

² **charnel house** – a building where corpses are piled up.

THE GREAT CHANGE

Part 5

“Search the Scriptures” (Joh 5:39), “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1Co 2:13). *That* is what we sought to heed in the preceding articles. Therein twenty-five different passages were collated—all of which we are persuaded treat of some aspect or other of “the miracle of grace” or the great change—and in varying measure, engaged our attention. It will be observed that in some of them, it is the illumination of the understanding which is in view (Act 26:18); in others, the searching and convicting of the conscience (Rom 7:9); and in others, the renovation of the heart (Eze 36:26). In some, it is the subduing of the will (Psa 110:3) which is emphasized; in others, casting down reasonings and bringing our thoughts into subjection (2Co 10:5); and in others, the writing of God’s laws in our minds and hearts. In some, the miracle of grace appears to be a completed thing (1Co 6:11); in others, the great change is seen as a gradual process (2Co 3:18; Phi 1:6). In one, something is removed from its subject (Deu 30:6); while in another, something is communicated (Rom 5:5). In different passages, the figures of creation (Eph 2:10), of renewing (Ti 3:5), and of resurrection (1Jo 3:14) are employed.

If it be asked, Why has it pleased the Holy Spirit to describe His work so diversely and use such a variety of terms and figures? several answers may be suggested. First, because the work itself, though one, is so many-sided. Its subject is a complex creature, and the process of salvation radically affects every part of his composite being. Just as sin has marred each part of our constitution and has corrupted every faculty the Creator gave us, so grace renews and transforms every part of our constitution and purifies every faculty we possess. When the apostle prayed, “And the very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th 5:23), he was asking that God would graciously preserve and perfect that which He had already wrought in His people, and the terms he there used intimated the comprehensiveness and entirety of the grand miracle of grace. This is a gem possessing many facets, and our estimate of it is certain to be most faulty if we confine our view to only one of them.

Second, because God would thereby warn us from supposing that He acts according to a stereotyped plan or method in His saving of sinners. Variety rather than uniformity marks all the ways and workings of God, in creation, providence, and grace. No two seasons are alike—no field or tree yields the same crop in any two years. Every book in the Bible is equally the inspired Word of God, yet how different in character and content is Leviticus from the Psalms, Ruth from Ezekiel, Romans from the Revelation! How varied the manner in which the Lord Jesus gave sight to different ones who were blind: different in the means used and the effect produced—one, at first, only seeing men as though they were trees walking (Mark 8:24)! How differently He dealt with religious Nicodemus in John 3 and the adulterous woman of John 4, pressing on the one his imperative need of being born again; convicting the other of her sins and telling her of “the gift of God” (Joh 4:10)! The great God is not confined to any rule, and we must not restrict His operations in our thoughts: if we do, we are certain to err.

Third, because God would thereby teach us that, though the work of grace be essentially and substantially the same in all its favoured subjects, yet in no two of them does it appear identical in all its circumstantials—neither in its operations, nor manifestations. Not only does endless variety mark all the ways and workings of God, but it does so equally in His *workmanship*. This is generally recognized and acknowledged in connection with the material world, where no two blades of grass or two grains of sand are alike. But in the spiritual realm, it is very far from being perceived and owned: rather is it commonly supposed that all truly regenerate persons conform strictly unto one particular pattern, and those who differ from it are at once suspected of being counterfeits. This should not be. The twelve foundations of the new and holy Jerusalem—in which are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb—are all composed of “precious” stones, but how diverse is each! The first jasper, the second sapphire, the third a chalcedony, the fourth emerald, etc. (Rev 21)—different in colour, size, and brilliancy. Each Christian has his own measure of faith and grace “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7).

Fourth, because God would thereby make it easier for His children to recognize themselves in the mirror of the Word. Possessed of honest hearts and fearful of being deceived, some find it no simple matter to be thoroughly convinced that they have truly experienced the great change. So far from sneering at their trepidation, we admire their caution: where the eternal interests of the soul are concerned, only a fool will

give himself the benefit of the doubt. But if a miracle of grace has been wrought in the reader, there is no good reason why he should long be in uncertainty about it. As in water, face answers to face, so the character of the renewed soul corresponds to the description of such furnished by the Word of Truth. That description, as we have seen, is given with considerable variety—sometimes one feature or aspect being made prominent, sometimes another. It is like a photographer taking a number of different pictures of the same person: one with his countenance in repose, another with him smiling; one a full-face view, another of his profile. One may appear to do him “more justice” than another, or be more easily “recognized,” yet all are likenesses of himself.

Let then the exercised reader impartially scrutinize himself in the mirror of the Word, and see if he can discern in himself some of the marks of the regenerate, as those marks are there delineated. Observe well, we say “some of” those marks, and not all of them. Though you may not be sure that Ezekiel 36:26 has taken place in you, perhaps you know something of what is recorded in Acts 16:14 and Romans 5:5. Because your first conscious “experience” was not like that of Romans 7:9, perhaps it closely resembled that of Zaccheus who came down from the tree and “received him *joyfully*” (Luk 19:6). Commenting on the quickness of his conversion, George Whitefield (1714-1770) aptly said to those who queried whether any were genuine Christians who had not undergone some “terrible experience” of conviction or terror of the wrath to come, “You may as well say to your neighbour you have not had a child, for you were not in labour all night. The question is, whether a real child is born, not how long was the preceding pain”!

There is nothing in the sacred record to show that either Lydia or Zaccheus felt anything of the terrors of the Law before their conversion, yet from what is said of them in the sequel, we cannot doubt the reality of their conversion. Though you may not be sure whether God has put His laws into your mind and written them on your heart, yet you should have no difficulty in perceiving whether or no you “love the brethren” as such; and if you *do*, then you may be fully assured on the Word of Him that cannot lie, you have “passed from death unto life” (1Jo 3:14). The fact that you are afraid to aver that God has renewed you after His image and created you “in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24) does not of itself warrant you inferring you are still in a state of nature. Test yourself by *other* passages, and see if you can discern in your soul some of *their* marks of regeneration—such as a grieving over sin, a hungering after righteousness, a panting for communion with God, a praying for fuller conformity unto Christ. Has the world lost its charm, are you out of love with yourself, is the Lamb of God a desirable Object in your eyes? If so, you possess at least some of the distinctive marks of the regenerate.

Since we are seeking to write these articles for the benefit of young preachers, as well as the rank and file of God’s people, let us point out that the nature of this great change may also be determined by contemplating it as *the begun reversal of the Fall*: “begun reversal,” for what is commenced at regeneration is continued throughout our sanctification and completed only at our glorification. While it be true that those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit gain *more* than Adam lost by the Fall, yet we have clear Scripture warrant for affirming that the workmanship of the new creation is God’s *answer* to man’s ruination of his original creation. Great care needs to be taken in cleaving closely to the Scriptures in developing this point, particularly in ascertaining exactly what was the moral and spiritual condition of man originally, and precisely what happened to him when he fell. We trust that a patient perusal of what follows will convince the reader of both the importance and value of our discussion of these details at this stage—the more so since the children have sadly departed from the teaching of the fathers thereon.

Even those sections of Christendom which boast the most of their soundness in the faith are defective here. Mr. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and his followers hold that Adam was merely created innocent (a negative state), and not in (positive) holiness. Mr. Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869) said: “I do not believe that Adam was a spiritual man, that is, that he possessed those spiritual gifts and graces which are bestowed upon the elect of God, for they are new covenant blessings in which he had no share” (*Gospel Standard*, 1861, page 155). One error ever involves another. Those who deny that fallen man possesses any responsibility to perform spiritual acts (love God, savingly believe in Christ) must, to be consistent, deny that unfallen man was a spiritual creature. Far different was the teaching of the Reformers and Puritans: “And where Paul treats of the restoration of this image (2Co 3:18), we may readily infer from his words that man was conformed to God not by an influx of His substance, but by the grace and power of His Spirit.” And again, “As the *spiritual life* of Adam consisted in a union to his Maker, so an alienation from Him was the death of his soul” (John Calvin, 1509-1564, *Institutes*).

“Adam had the Spirit as well as we: the Holy Spirit was at the making of him and wrote the image of God upon his heart, for where holiness was, we may be sure the Spirit of God was too...the same Spirit was in Adam’s heart to assist *his graces* and cause them to flow and bring forth, and to move him to live according to those principles of life given him” (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680, 6/54). And again, commenting on Adam’s being made in the image and likeness of God, and pointing out that such an “image” imports a thing “permanent and inherent,” he asked, “what could this be but habitual inclinations and dispositions unto whatsoever was holy and good, insomuch as *all holiness* radically *dwelt in him*” (page 202). So too Stephen Charnock (1628-1680): “The righteousness of the first man evidenced not only a sovereign power, as the Donor of his being, but a holy power, as the pattern of His work...The law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally writ upon his nature. All the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer His Law and imitate God in His purity” (vol. 2, page 205).

In his *Discourse on the Holy Spirit* (chapter 4, His “Peculiar works in the first creation”)—when treating of “the image of God” after which Adam was created (namely, “an ability to discern the mind and will of God,” an “unentangled disposition to every duty,” and “a readiness of compliance in his affections”)—John Owen (1616-1683) said: “For in the *restoration* of these abilities unto our minds in our renovation unto the image of God in the Gospel, it is plainly asserted that the Holy Spirit is the imparter of them, and He doth thereby restore His own work. For in the new creation, the Father, in the way of authority, designs it and brings all things unto a head in Christ (Eph 1:10), which *retrieves* His original work. And thus, Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocency: he had Him in those peculiar effects of His power and goodness, and he had Him according to the tenor of that covenant whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose Him, as accordingly it came to pass.” The superiority of the new covenant lies in its gifts being unforfeitable, because secured in and by Christ.

“God hath made man *upright*” (Ecc 7:29)—the same Hebrew word as in Job 1:8 and Psalm 25:8: “This presupposes a law to which he was conformed in his creation, as when anything is made regular or according to rule, of necessity the rule itself is presupposed. Whence we may gather that this law was no other than the eternal indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam...In a word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up in the Ten Commandments...called by us the Moral Law, and man’s righteousness consisted in conformity to this law or rule” (Thomas Boston, 1676-1732, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*). “When God created man at first, He gave him not an outward law, written in letters or delivered in words, but an inward law put into his heart and concreated with him, and wrought in the frame of his soul...*spiritual* dispositions and inclinations, in his will and affections, carrying him on to pray, love God and fear Him, to seek His glory in a spiritual and holy manner” (T. Goodwin). The external command of Genesis 2:17, was designed as the *test* of his responsibility, and at the same time, it served to make manifest that his “uprightness” was mutable.

When Adam left the Creator’s hand, the law of God was in his heart—for he was endowed with holy instincts and inclinations, which tended unto his doing that which was pleasing unto God, and an antipathy against whatever was displeasing to Him. That “law of God” within him was his original *character* or constitution of his soul and spirit—as it is the “law” or character of beasts to care for their young, and of birds to build nests for theirs. Should it be asked, Is there any other Scripture which teaches that God placed His law in the heart of unfallen Adam?—we answer, Yes, by clear and necessary implication. Christ declared, “thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8), and Romans 5:14 tells us that Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.” Again, just as we may ascertain what grain a certain field bore from the stubble in it, so we may discover what was in unfallen man by the ruins of what is still discernible in fallen humanity: “The Gentiles, which have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law” (Rom 2:14)—their consciences informing them that immorality and murder are crimes: there is still a shadow in his descendants of the character originally possessed by Adam.

But Adam did not continue as God created him. He fell, and terrible were the consequences. But it is only by adhering closely to the terms used in the Word that we can rightly apprehend the nature of those consequences; yea, unless we allow Scripture itself to interpret those terms for us, we are certain to err in our understanding of them. Possibly, the reader is ready to exclaim, There is no need to make any mystery out of it: the matter is quite simple—those “consequences” may all be summed up in one word—“death.” Even so, we must carefully inquire what is meant there by “death.” “Spiritual death,” you answer. True, and observe well that presupposes spiritual life; and that, in turn, implies a spiritual person, for surely one

endowed with spiritual life must be so designated. However, our inquiry must be pressed back a stage farther, and the question put, Exactly what is connoted by “spiritual death”? It is at this point so many have gone wrong and, departing from the teaching of Holy Writ, have landed in serious error.

It is to be most carefully noted that God did not say to Adam, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thy spirit or thy soul shall surely die,” but rather “*thou shalt surely die*” (Gen 2:17). It was not some *thing* in or some part of Adam which died, but Adam himself! That is very, very far from being a distinction without any difference: it is a real and radical difference, and if we tamper with Scripture and change what it says, we depart from the truth. Nor is “death” an extinction or annihilation; instead, it is a *separation*. Physical death is the severance or separation of the soul from the body, and spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. The prodigal son was “dead,” so long as he remained in “a far country” (Luk 15:24), because he was away from his Father. 1 Timothy 5:6 tells us, “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”—that is, she is spiritually dead, dead godwards, while alive and active in sin. For the same reason, “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” is called “the second death” (Rev 21:8), because those cast into it are “punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord*” (2Th 1:9).

Man was created a tripartite being, composed of “spirit and soul and body” (1Th 5:23). That is unmistakably implied in the divine account of his creation: “And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (Gen 1:26); the Triune God made man a trinity in unity! And when man fell, he *continued to be* a tripartite being: no part of his being was extinguished; no faculty was lost when he apostatized from God. It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that no essential element of man’s original constitution was forfeited; no component part of his complex make-up was annihilated at the Fall—for multitudes are seeking to hide behind a misconception at this very point. They would fain believe that man lost some vital part of his nature when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and that it is the absence of this part in his descendants which explains (and excuses!) all their failures. They console themselves that they are more to be pitied than blamed: the blame rests on their first parents; and they, forsooth, are to be pitied, because he deprived them of the faculty of working righteousness. Much preaching encourages that very delusion.

The truth is that fallen man today possesses identically the same faculties as those with which Adam was originally created: his accountability lies in his making a good use of those faculties, and his criminality consists in the evil employment of them. Others seek to evade the onus of man by affirming that he *received a nature* which he did not possess before the Fall, and all the blame for his lawless actions is thrown upon that evil nature: equally erroneous, and equally vain is such a subterfuge. No material addition was made to man’s being at the Fall, any more than some intrinsic part was taken from it. That which man lost at the Fall was his primitive *holiness*, and that which then entered into his being was *sin*; and thus, sin has defiled every part of his person—but for that, we are to be blamed and not pitied. Nor has fallen man become so helplessly the victim of sin that his accountability is cancelled; rather does God hold him responsible to resist and reject every inclination unto evil, and will justly punish him because he fails to do so. Every attempt to negative human responsibility and undermine the sinner’s accountability, no matter by whom made, must be steadfastly resisted by us.

It is by persuading men that the spirit died at the Fall—or that some concrete but evil thing was then communicated to the human constitution—that Satan succeeds in deceiving so many of his victims: and it is the bounden duty of the Christian minister to expose his sophistries, drive the ungodly out of their refuge of lies, and press continually upon them the solemn fact that they are without the vestige of an excuse for their own rebellion against God. In the day of his disobedience, Adam himself died—died spiritually—and so did all his posterity in him. But that spiritual death consisted not of the extinction of anything in them, but of their separation from God: no part of Adam’s being was annihilated, but every part of him was *vitiating*.³ It was not the essence, but the rectitude⁴ of man’s soul and spirit which sin destroyed. By the Fall, man relinquished his honour and glory, lost his holiness, forfeited the favour of God, and was severed from all communion with Him; but he still retained *his human nature*. All desire godwards, all love for his Maker, all real knowledge of Him was gone. Sin now possessed him; and to the love and exercise of it, he devoted himself. Such too is *our* natural condition.

³ **vitiating** – corrupted; made imperfect.

⁴ **rectitude** – uprightness of character.

RESTRICTED FORGIVENESS

Writing upon “A *Persisting* Sinner being an *unpardoned* sinner,” the Puritan, Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), said: “There is abundant mercy for returning sinners, but I know of none for those who resolve to go on in sin. There is a promise *of* repentance, and a promise *to* repentance, but there is no promise that doth not either offer or require repentance. ‘Repent...and thou shalt be saved’ is the tenor of the Gospel, as well as ‘Believe...and thou shalt be saved.’ Though many who are going on in their sins are overtaken by grace, yet there is no grace promised to those who go on in their sins. The holiest are threatened with wrath if they do; surely then, none are put into an expectation of mercy if they do. The promises either find us repenting, or they cause us to repent. No sinner is pardoned *for* repentance, nor *without* it. Job speaks that language more clearly in the words that follow: ‘If I be wicked, woe unto me’ (Job 10:15).”

