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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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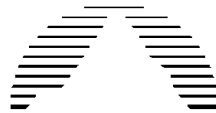
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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IGNORANCE ENJOINED

No, we have not suddenly turned Papist, nor are we about to inflict upon our readers a piece in support of Rome's favourite dictum, namely, that "Ignorance is the mother of devotion"—in accord with which is their idea that it is dangerous to place the Scriptures in the hands of the laity, and therefore, they should be withheld from them. We are very, very far from subscribing to anything so puerile and impious. The way of the wicked is as darkness, but the way of the righteous is as light—open and above-board. Truth courts investigation and challenges the closest scrutiny. Spiritists may prefer the darkened room, and the poor dupes of the Pope admire the secret confessional, but "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse" (Pro 1:20-21). Nevertheless, there is an ignorance which is desirable and which serves as a protection to those who maintain it. There is an ignorance of which no Christian needs be ashamed, yea, one which the Holy Spirit has enjoined, and therefore is praiseworthy. "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom 16:19).

In the context, the apostle had warned the saints to be on their guard against false teachers, and to "avoid" those who propagated that which is "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned": men who deceive the hearts of the simple (or unwary) "by good words and fair speeches," but who "serve not our Lord" (Rom 16:17-18). It was not that Paul deemed them unestablished in the Faith, or unstable therein; rather, did he affirm "for your obedience [faith and practical response to the will of God, as it was made known to them by His messengers] is come abroad unto all men," which commendation he supplemented with, "I am glad therefore on your behalf." Yet being solicitous of their welfare with a godly jealousy, he added, "But yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom 16:19). Your reception of the Gospel and responsiveness unto the truth is well known, and evil men are likely to take advantage of this: see to it then that your docility is coupled with prudence, and be watchful of those who would corrupt you.

"I would have you wise unto that which is *good*." Let that be your all-absorbing quest: be intelligent—both in knowledge and practice—in the Word and ways of God, so that you are fitted to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21). "And simple concerning evil": "simple" is here opposed to "wise," and so must signify unknowing and unpractised in the ways of sin. In the light of the preceding verses, the primary reference is to the evil doctrine of false teachers—be content to remain uninformed, unacquainted with anything that would pollute your faith; but in view of what immediately follows—"and the God of peace shall bruise *Satan* under your feet shortly" (Rom 16:20)—it obviously has a wider meaning: remain ignorant of *everything* which would defile your pure minds. Handley Carr Glyn Moule (aka H. C. G. Moule, 1841-1920) renders it "uncontaminated" [by defiling knowledge] as to what is evil." To appeal to your curiosity, to occupy your minds with what is foul, to get your hearts absorbed with evil rather than good, is one of the principal stratagems of the great Enemy. This divine warning is much needed today. Let us point out a threefold application of "I would have you... simple concerning evil."

First, of *doctrinal evil*. There is a great deal of false teaching, often in a novel and attractive dress, now being disseminated both orally and by the printed page. Some of its leading promulgators have acquired a considerable reputation for their learning, originality, oratory, and pleasing personality. They draw big crowds, and some of God's people—though they have been warned against their errors—determine to give these men a hearing; and often, the consequences are most injurious—in no case are they harmless. It is to that spirit of inquisitiveness the devil applies his temptation, as it is against the exercise thereof we are expressly commanded "from such *turn away*" (2Ti 3:5). Not to do so is to parley with what is deadly for the soul. If you have begun to yield, then the divine Word is "*Cease*, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Pro 19:27); if you do not, disastrous will be the outcome. If unfallen Eve could be beguiled by lies, how much easier for *you* to be deceived if you deliberately expose yourself unto error.

"*Cease*, my son, to *hear* the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge": by parity of reason that also signifies *read them not*. There are those who would be ashamed to be seen attending meetings where known error was taught, who nevertheless do not hesitate to peruse a book written by an errorist. Priding themselves that they are too well grounded in the Faith to be shaken, yet curious and desirous of ascertaining just what this man or this sect teaches, not a few purchase their pernicious literature; and to make it easier for them to do so, Satan often sends the purveyors of such to their door. We have per-

sonally met more than one who was reared in orthodoxy, who bought or borrowed a “Christadelphian,” “Russellite,” or “Seventh-day Adventist” book, and later became an ardent supporter of their lies. The devil ensnares many in this way. Parents need to be most careful what literature enters their home! Stifle your inquisitiveness and be content to remain ignorant of what is being taught in the “synagogues of Satan” (Rev 2:9).

Second, “I would have you . . . simple concerning [carnal] *evil*.” We want the reader to bear in mind that this simple dehortation¹ from an acquaintance with anything which would defile the soul is followed immediately with “*And* the God of peace shall bruise *Satan* under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20), which plainly intimates it is against *his* efforts to corrupt, and thus we must ever be on the alert. The devil is most persevering, and if he cannot poison our minds with one sort of evil, he will seek to befoul them with another. Now there is a class of people—by no means confined to the female sex—who are ultra-curious about the affairs of others, “busybodies” (1Ti 5:13), and such are very prone to give ear unto an “evil report”; and unless they steadfastly resist him, the devil will see to it they are kept fully supplied. Since “to speak . . . evil one of another” is forbidden (Jam 4:11), giving ear unto such is equally so. The next time some gossipier wants to acquaint you with the latest falls of So-and-so, recall this injunction, “simple concerning evil,” and say, Excuse me, I do not wish to hear about it! Unless you do so, “evil communications [will] corrupt good manners” (1Co 15:33).

Third, *worldly evil*. If Satan fails to absorb us with the treasures and pleasures of the world, then he will seek to occupy and weigh us down with its affairs. In the parable of the Sower, Christ showed that the seed which fell on the third kind of ground was rendered useless by the thorns which “grew up and choked it” (Mar 4:7). Among other things, those “thorns” symbolized “the *cares* of this world” (Mar 4:19). In different individuals, those “cares” assume a variety of forms: in some, it is anxiety to obtain the necessities of life; in others, concern over wayward children. But there are many of God’s children whose temporal needs are provided for and who have no relatives to occasion them distress, and yet, who are heavily burdened with “the cares of this world.” Many a foolish soul is allowing himself or herself to become an “Atlas”—carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders. If they were individually responsible for the *governing* of the world, they could scarcely take matters more seriously or lose more peace on its account.

Posing as an “angel of light” (2Co 11:14), Satan is occupying many with the affairs of earth under the pretext of their being so many heralds of the nearness of Christ’s return. The alarming international situation, distressing conditions in the political and social realms, the decadence of “Protestantism,” and the advances of Romanism are appealed to (just as they were a century ago!) as “proofs” that the Lord is at the very door. There is nothing in such teaching that edifies the soul or promotes a closer walking with God. On the contrary, an absorption with such matters—instead of drawing the affections unto things above and purifying the mind—drags down the one and defiles the other. If such speakers and writers would give the “antichrist” a long rest and preach *Christ*, it would be far better. All this emotional and sensational claptrap on “the signs of the times” (Mat 16:3) will neither hasten nor retard Christ’s return by a single moment! But for the believer to read secular literature and listen to the radio—in order to be better informed on current events—turns his attention away from what is profitable, defiles his mind, and disturbs his peace. “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth” (Isa 45:9), but be thou “*wise* unto that which is GOOD and *simple* concerning [all forms of] EVIL” (Rom 16:19).

¹ **dehortation** – advice or counsel against something.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

43. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, Part 1

“Now God himself and [or ‘even’] our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men [saints], even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” There are five things in connection with this prayer which call for our consideration. First, its *occasion*: it is necessary to ponder what is said in the foregoing verses in order to appreciate the request in verse eleven. Second, its *intensity*, which is intimated in the “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face” (1Th 3:10). Third, its *objects*: God the Father and His Son in His mediatorial character (1Th 3:11). Fourth, its *petitions*, which are two in number (1Th 3:11-12). Fifth, its *design*: that their hearts might be established “unblameable in holiness before God” (1Th 3:13). May the Holy Spirit condescend to act as our Guide while we endeavour to fill in that outline.

It was at an early date of his ministerial labours that Paul, accompanied by Silas and the youthful Timothy, visited Thessalonica—now called Salonica. Originally, he had purposed to preach the Gospel in Asia, but had been forbidden by the Spirit; then he sought to enter Bithynia, but again, God suffered him not (Act 16:6). Arriving at Troas, the divine will was made known to the apostle by means of a vision in the night (something which no one should now expect), wherein there appeared to him “a man of Macedonia” who besought them, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Act 16:9). First, Paul and his companion made a very brief stay at Philippi, where, after being made a blessing to Lydia and her household, the Enemy stirred up fierce opposition, which resulted in the beating of Paul and Silas and their being cast into prison; only for God to intervene by a miracle of grace, which eventuated in their release. From Philippi, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews, which Paul entered, and for three Sabbath days, reasoned with them out of the Scriptures; yet from a comparison of 1 Thessalonians 1:9, with Acts 17:1-10, it seems clear that the majority of those saved during his short sojourn in that city were *Gentiles*.

The enmity of the Serpent was manifested at Thessalonica almost as bitterly as at Philippi, so that after a short stay there, the brethren “sent away Paul and Silas by night” (Act 17:10). Nevertheless, brief as had been their visit, the Seed had been sown, the blessing of God had rested upon the preached Word, and an effectual testimony was there raised up to the glory of His great name. So much so, that His servant declared of that infant church, “So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad” (1Th 1:7-8). What a sore grief it must have been to leave these young and unestablished converts, and how deeply Paul yearned to be with them again, appears in his statement, “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1Th 2:17-18).

Paul was no stoical fatalist who reasoned that there was not any need for him to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of those babes in Christ, that since God had begun a good work in them, He would assuredly carry it forward to completion. No, very far from it. He was *fearful* that they might be stumbled at the opposition which had been evoked, puzzled why God did not put forth His power and subdue that opposition, and be dismayed by the flight of His ambassador. Paul was uneasy whether their young faith could withstand such rude shocks. Therefore, he sent one of his companions to inquire of their condition and to help them: “For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be *in vain*” (1Th 3:5). Let those of our readers who may have imbibed some hyper-Calvinist poison carefully ponder those words of the apostle and honestly ask themselves the question what place such a statement could possibly have in their *own* theology.

It is blessed to behold how God sets a balance to the trials and comforts of His people. The apostle was sorely exercised over the situation of those young believers, when God graciously afforded his heart relief. “But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith” (1Th 3:6-7).

How graciously God times His mercies! The good news brought by Timothy was just the cordial which the burdened soul of Paul now needed. But note the order in which he mentions the two things of verse six. He does not place first their kindly remembrance of himself and their longing to see *him* again. No, rather does he give precedence to the favourable report supplied of their "faith and charity [love]"—*that* was for him the grand and principal item in the "good tidings" of his messenger! How characteristic was that of this self-effacing herald of Christ! Those words, "your faith and charity [love]" were a brief but comprehensive expression of their spiritual case: if *those* graces were in healthy exercise, Paul knew there could be nothing seriously wrong with them.

"For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God" (1Th 3:8-9). How those words reveal again the spirit of the apostle! No mother's heart beats with more tender affection unto her offspring than does that of the genuine evangelist or pastor unto his own children in the Faith. His delight lies in their spiritual progress: "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and *crown*" (Phi 4:1) was how Paul regarded his converts. Said another of the apostles, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3Jo 1:4). Contrariwise, no mother suffers severer pangs of grief over the illness of her babes or their waywardness when they be grown up, than does a true servant of God as he witnesses the backsliding or apostasy of those who made a credible profession of faith under his ministry. So much, then, for the setting of our present passage, or the occasion of this prayer.

"Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1Th 3:10). Their "desiring greatly to see us" (1Th 3:6) found an answering response in the hearts of Paul and his companions. The language which he here used indicates the vehemence of his desire and the earnestness of his supplication. No cold and mechanical praying was his, but earnest and persistent. The word here rendered "praying" means "beseeching"—being the one employed in connection with the leper, who, in his dire need and deep longing, "besought" the Lord to heal him (Luk 5:12). It is not the perfunctory, nor the flowery petition which brings down answers from above; but "the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man" which "availeth much" (Jam 5:16). Some are more occupied with their eloquence and the correctness of their grammar than they are with the frame of their spirit and the state of their heart—at which God ever looks. When the soul truly longs for a certain favour from God, the sincerity and intensity of that longing will be evinced not only by earnest crying to Him, but by importunity—asking, seeking, knocking, "night and day" until the request is granted.

It may be inquired, Why is so much exertion and pains called for, seeing that God is fully acquainted with all our need and has promised to supply the same? First and foremost, for the exercise of our graces. God is pleased to try our faith and patience, for nothing more honours and pleases Him than to behold His people continuing to supplicate for that which he appears to deny them—as in the case of the Syrophenician woman (Mat 15:28). Real praying is no child's play. Ponder that exhortation of the apostle's to the Roman saints: "*Strive* together with me in your prayers" (Rom 15:30). It is a word taken from the gymnastic contests, in which the combatants put forth their utmost strength. If we are to prevail with God, then we have to put forth all that is within us; we must "stirreth up" ourselves (Isa 64:7) to "take hold" of God. So again, it is recorded of Epaphras on behalf of the Colossians, "always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). Such praying cost him something! Yes, and such praying resulted in something!

Is it not at this very point that *our praying* is so sadly defective? It is too mechanical and formal. There is the absence of an ardent spirit, of soul exertion, of reality. Does someone rejoin, But it lies not within *my* prerogative to exercise faith or supplicate acceptably and effectually when I will? I have no spiritual power of my own. We sometimes wonder exactly what is meant by such language, and fear that in most cases, it proceeds from a serious error, or else it is an idle excuse behind which dilatory souls seek to shelter. It is quite wrong for the Christian to suppose that he has *less spiritual* ability and strength than he has natural. The fact is that man, be he regenerate or unregenerate, is a dependent creature, wholly dependent upon his Maker for every breath he draws, every thought he thinks, every act he performs, spiritual *or* natural: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Act 17:28). Man may pride himself in his self-sufficiency, boast of his free will, and imagine he is lord of himself, but he only deceives himself, and denies his creaturehood in so doing.

When Pilate vaunted himself to Christ, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (Joh 19:10), He answered: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except

it were given thee from above” (Joh 19:11). Roman official though thou art, and invested with Caesar’s authority, yet thou art utterly impotent, with no more inherent and self-sufficient power to perform a natural act than has a lump of inanimate clay, *until* God vouchsafes it unto thee. The clear teaching of Holy Writ is that man has not a particle more of natural power in and of himself than he has spiritual power. “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God [thy relation to Him, and thy complete dependency upon Him]: for it is *he* that *giveth thee power* to get wealth” (Deu 8:18)—i.e. who supplies thee with health, strength, and wisdom to perform natural acts, and who alone determines the measure of thy success therein. “For she did not know [nevertheless, it was a fact!] that *I gave her* corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which [yes, even when] they prepared [the same] for Baal” (Hos 2:8). Ah, says the hyper-Calvinist, *that* is exactly what I believe, that man is utterly helpless in himself.

May we ask you, What effect does such a belief have upon you? What fruit in your daily life does it issue in? Does it merely result in Mahommedan apathy or fatalistic inertia, or does it cast you back upon God, so that you *seek His enabling* for everything? Scripture not only reveals the dependency of the creature upon its Maker, his inherent helplessness, but it also teaches that man is a responsible creature, a rational and moral agent, accountable unto God for all his thoughts, words, and deeds. Do you “believe” *that* too? If not, your creed is radically defective. You are *responsible* to glorify your Maker, to be subject unto His authority, to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. But, you reply, I am *unable* to do so. True, and you are equally unable to dig your garden unless God grant you strength, or to attend unto your financial matters, unless He gives you wisdom. Do you therefore lie in bed and do nothing? The only difference between our power and powerlessness to perform natural and spiritual acts is this: that our hearts are *averse* from the latter. The natural man hates God, and the things of the Spirit are foolishness unto him. Material things he loves, and therefore, he pursues them eagerly.

Let us bring this matter down to a very simple and homely level. Here is a housewife who desires to make a cake. Suppose for the sake of our illustration, that God has, in His grace, already supplied her with all the necessary ingredients. In such a case, if she does not ask God for wisdom to perform her task successfully, if she does not concentrate her mind on what she is engaged in, if she becomes careless while the pan is in the oven, and the cake is a complete failure, whose fault is it? If then God has endowed you with reason, given you His Word to instruct, promised His Spirit to all who ask for Him (Luk 11:13), and bidden you call upon Him for the supply of every temporal and spiritual need, who is to blame if you receive not? While without Christ, we can do nothing (Joh 15:5), yet strengthened by Him, we “*can* do all things” (Phi 4:13). It is therefore an idle excuse, a piece of wicked hypocrisy, if we plead our helplessness as an extenuation of our coldness and formality in prayer, and are not earnest and fervent in supplicating the Throne of Grace.

Having enlarged upon the *intensity* of the apostle’s prayer rather more than we intended, let us return unto the desire which prompted the same, namely, “that we might...perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1Th 3:10). First, those words reveal the exalted standard which this servant of the Lord kept before him and the high ministerial level at which he aimed. Notwithstanding the fact that Timothy had just brought to him “good tidings” of their “faith and charity [love]” (1Th 3:6), still that did not content him, for he knew “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). Let the pastor be thankful when he beholds his sheep in a healthy condition, but let him also labour for their *further* growth. Second, we behold here the faithfulness of Paul. He did not feed their vanity by complimenting them upon their attainments, but gives them to understand that, so far from having cause to be complacent, there was still room for much improvement, and that they needed to continue pressing forward unto those things which are yet before. Let the minister give credit to whom credit is due, but sedulously avoid fulsome praise, knowing that “a flattering mouth worketh ruin” (Pro 26:28).

That we “might perfect that which is lacking [‘the things lacking,’ for it is the plural number in the Greek] in your faith” (1Th 3:10). How many professing Christians would resent such a statement as that! Yea, in such a sickly condition are some of God’s own people in this hyper-sensitive age, that their poor feelings would be hurt if such an imputation was made against them—little wonder that politicians are so quick to resent lawful criticism when those who are supposed to love *the truth* are so effeminate and touchy: the one is but the reflection of the other! Yet it is a fact that the most spiritual and mature Christian *has* various things “lacking in...[his] faith.” First, in its scope: how many portions of the Word he has not yet apprehended, how many of its precepts and promises are still unappropriated. Second, in its operations: there is not the fruit from it which there should be in our daily lives. Third, take “faith” here as a *grace* also,

and how much darkness and doubting still mars the best of us. So it was with these Thessalonians, and just as Paul longed to visit the saints at Rome so that he might “impart unto...[them] some spiritual gift” (Rom 1:11), in like manner, he desired to see again these young converts of his that he might be of further help to them.

That we “might perfect...[the things] which...[are] lacking in your faith.” It is egotism which lies behind that touchiness which resents an imputation of our ignorance. O when shall we learn that *pride*—even more so than unbelief—is the chief adversary to our making progress in the things of God. The more truly wise any man is, the more conscious is he of his ignorance, of the paucity of his knowledge. It is only the conceited tyro, the one who has a mere smattering of his subject, who vainly imagines he is a master of it, and refuses to receive further instruction from his fellows. “If any man think that he *knoweth* any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1Co 8:2). As we have said so often in these pages, the grand secret of success in the Christian life is *to continue* as we began. And, among other things, that means to be emptied of our self-sufficiency, to maintain before God the attitude of a little child, to preserve a teachable spirit—and that, to the very *end* of our lives. If that be ours, then we shall daily be aware of how much there is still “lacking” in *our* faith, and shall welcome every available help, no matter how weak may be the instrument.

Since he was providentially detained from immediately carrying out his desire, Paul prayed for and wrote to them: “Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you” (1Th 3:11). Thus this prayer—like the “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” found at the beginning of most of his epistles—was addressed conjointly to the Father and the Son in His mediatorial character. Therein we behold the Saviour’s absolute Deity, for it was an act of worship which was here being rendered to Him, and the divine Law is explicit: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *him only* shalt thou serve” (Mat 4:10). We are expressly forbidden to accord divine homage to any creature. When the awestruck John fell down to worship an angel, he promptly said, “See thou do it not” (Rev 22:9). Instead of the angels being fit objects of worship, as Rome blasphemously teaches, the divine edict is: “Let all the angels of God worship *him*” (Heb 1:6), which, as the context shows, is the incarnate Son. Being co-essential and co-eternal with the Father, the command is “that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (Joh 5:23).

Prayer is not only to be offered unto God in the name of Christ, but it is also to be offered directly *unto Him* as our Lord and Saviour. When a successor unto Judas was to be chosen for the apostolate, prayer was made unto the “Lord” (Act 1:24-25); apart from the fact that “the Lord” always has reference to *Christ* (unless there be something in the passage which clearly distinguishes the Father from Him), John 6:70 and 15:16 oblige us to regard that allusion as being unto the Son. The dying Stephen specifically addressed his petitions unto the Lord Jesus (Act 7:59-60). From Acts 9:14 and 21, it is clear that it was customary for the early Christians to “call upon his name”—i.e. supplicate Him. Upon his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was bidden to call “on the name of the Lord” (Act 22:16). So prominent a feature was this in the lives of the primitive saints that they received their characteristic designation from the same: “All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:2)—while Timothy was directly bidden to “call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2Ti 2:22).

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

23. *The Priesthood*

Before we turn to consider the contents of Joshua 4 and contemplate the *memorials* that God ordered to mark the Jordan miracle, we should look more definitely at a prominent detail in chapter three which did not receive due attention in the preceding articles, and which supplies an important link between the two chapters, namely, the prominent part played by *the priests* in bearing the ark of the covenant, “the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth” before which the lower waters of the Jordan fled and the upper water stood “upon an heap” (Jos 3:13). Therein, we behold the nation of Israel in its primary relations to God. In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, we are shown the establishment of God’s way with them and the declaration of His will and purpose through Moses, who was both their divinely appointed commander and mediator, while Aaron was their great high priest. That relationship was reaffirmed in the opening verses of Joshua: “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Jos 1:5). Besides that assurance to Joshua personally, as the successor of Moses, there was the necessary continuation of the high priest and the Levitical priesthood in Israel’s midst.

The priesthood in their service had charge of the ark and the order of the tabernacle which was erected at Shiloh (Jos 18:1)—neither of which Joshua nor his armed men were suffered to touch. Each of those great functionaries held their respective appointments directly from the Lord, and the two in their *combined action*—whether in the sanctuary of God or in the camp of Israel—executed the will of Jehovah concerning both His majesty and holiness, which was thus the glory of His people. The priesthood and the tabernacle were indispensable as their way of approach unto God as worshippers, while outwardly, the relations of God with Israel, by the ark of the covenant, were manifested in the sight of all their enemies. That was equally true during the ministration of Aaron in the wilderness, or the Levites with Joshua when the waters of Jordan fled, or while marching around the city of Jericho and its walls fell down flat. Just as Moses and Aaron were inseparable in their varied ministrations from the exodus of Egypt and onward, so were the priest and the captain of Israel’s host at the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh when the land was divided among Israel’s tribes (Jos 18:10).

Not only were those two distinctive orders and services established by God at the beginning (adumbrated as early as Exodus 4:14-15!), but when Aaron died on mount Hor, we are told that “Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son,” and this he did “as the LORD commanded: . . . in the sight of all the congregation” (Num 20:27-28). In like manner, when the death of Moses drew nigh on mount Abarim (the “mountain” is ever the symbol of *government*), he besought the Lord to “set a man over the congregation” (Num 27:16), and the Lord bade him, “Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him [the figure of *identification*]; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight” (Num 27:18-19). The connection, and yet the contrast between them, was intimated thus: “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his [Joshua’s] word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him” (Num 27:21).

What has just been pointed out serves to explain the fact that in the book which bears his name, Joshua (though the commander-in-chief of Israel) is seen to be subservient unto Eleazar the priest—four times the two are mentioned together, and in each instance, Eleazar is given the precedence. This order and those divine appointments were the basis of the history of Israel under Joshua and the anointed priesthood, with “the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God” (Jos 3:3), which they bore along—for that ark (as was pointed out in an earlier article) was not only the witness of Joshua’s *presence* in the midst of His people, but also the symbol of His *relations* with them. God ever takes care of His own glory, and yet at the same time promotes the full blessing of His people according to His eternal purpose. He never allows those two things to be separated, or to pass from His own immediate control, but works them out together, for He has made their felicity an integral part of His glory. How fitting, then, that the ark of the covenant should be in advance of the twelve tribes as they went forward into their inheritance and unto the mount (Zion) of God’s holiness.

But let us pause for a moment and point out the practical bearing of this upon ourselves. It is indeed a most wonderful and blessed thing that the great God has inseparably connected His own manifestative

glory and the good of His own people, yet it is one which should have a moving and melting effect upon our hearts, and cause us to see diligently to it that our lives are duly ordered and made suitable thereto. Without entering into details, let us summarize in two brief statements the obligations which that grand truth devolve upon us. First, we should ever be on our guard against separating our present communion with God from the revealed pathway of His glory. Communion with God can only be had and maintained while we treat “the way of holiness” (Isa 35:10), for we cannot glorify Him unless we walk in obedience to Him. Second, Christ Himself must be the Object of our eye (Heb 12:2) and heart (Song 8:6): upon Him our affections are to be set (Col 3:1-2), to Him we are to live (Phi 1:21), for it is *in Him* the glory of God and the present and eternal blessedness of His people meet.

In Psalm 78:61, the ark is designated “his glory,” and when (in token of His displeasure with Israel and of the severance of their communion with Him) God suffered the ark to be captured by the Philistines, the daughter-in-law of the high priest cried, “The glory is departed from Israel” (1Sa 4:22). But here in Joshua 3, that “glory” advanced at the head of Israel and opened a way for them into Canaan. But every eye was to be upon “the ark of the covenant of the LORD *your* God” (Jos 3:3), who went before them to find a “resting place” worthy of Himself, in which to keep His appointed service and share His delights with His people. Accordingly we find, in the heyday of Israel’s prosperity, that Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple on Mount Zion, “Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness” (2Ch 6:41)—which will receive its final and complete fulfilment when the prayer of Christ in John 17:24 receives its answer.

Now it was “the priests the Levites” who were appointed to bear the ark, which, when Israel saw in motion, was their signal for advance—“then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it” (Jos 3:3). As the congregation did so, the first thing which they beheld was the manner in which God gets glory to Himself, namely, by driving back that which intercepted their way, putting forth His mighty power on their behalf as “the LORD your God.” That which we are particularly concerned with now is the fact that it was when “the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water... That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho” (Jos 3:15-16). Thereby the priesthood are given a distinguished position on this occasion, and are placed in the forefront in this book because of their consecration and appointment to the service of the sanctuary. Yet their prominence did not derogate from the honour of Joshua as the leader of the people, for *he* is the one who gave direction unto the priests (Jos 3:6)!

That is very remarkable, and should be duly pondered. When 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,” the very next thing was, “And thou shalt *command* the priests that bear the ark of the covenant” (Jos 3:7-8). Even when Eleazar, the high priest, comes more distinctively into the forefront in connection with the assigning of the inheritance of the tribes, he does not interfere with the place which God had given Joshua. One of the principal values of these inspired records is the *conjoint action* of Eleazar and Joshua when they could act together. The same feature of the honourable and prominent place accorded the priesthood; and yet, Joshua’s authority over them is seen again in chapter six, in connection with the taking of Jericho, for not only did the ark of the covenant go before all the men of war, but that, in turn, was preceded by “seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams’ horns” before whose blast the walls fell down—yet it was Joshua who issued orders to these priests (Jos 6:6, 8).

We have dwelt the longer upon this prominent feature of the book of Joshua (about which we shall have more to say, D.V., as we pass on to the later chapters) not only because it has been largely ignored by those who have written thereon, but also and chiefly, because of the deep importance of the same when considered, first, in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ; and, second, in connection with His people. It has indeed been widely recognized that Joshua is one of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament who foreshadowed our Saviour; and if we are spared to complete this series, we hope to show that he did so in no less than fifty details. But it has been perceived by very few indeed that *Eleazar* was equally a type of Christ, and that the two must be viewed in conjunction in order to behold the completeness of their joint adumbrations. That should be apparent at once from their immediate predecessors, for we need to join together Moses *and* Aaron in order to obtain the divinely designed prefiguration of the One who was both

“the Apostle *and* High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb 3:1). Thus it was also with Joshua and Eleazar.

That the history of the children of Israel was a typical one, and that it adumbrated the experiences, the provisions made for, and the salvation of the whole election of grace, is too plain for any anointed eye to miss. Their oppression by Pharaoh and their groaning amid the brick kilns of Egypt present an unmistakable picture of our servitude to Satan and bondage under sin—our condition by nature as the consequence of our fall in Adam. Their utter inability to free themselves from the cruel yoke of the Egyptians forcibly portrayed our own native impotency to better our condition. The sovereign grace of God in raising up a deliverer in the person of Moses was a prophecy in action of the future coming forth of the divine Deliverer to emancipate His people. The provision of the lamb and the efficacy of its blood to provide shelter from the angel of death on the night of the Passover yet more clearly revealed what is now fully proclaimed by the Gospel, while the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea and Israel’s sight of the “Egyptians dead upon the sea shore” (Exo 14:30) told of the completeness of our redemption and the putting away of our sins from before the face of God.

The subsequent history of Israel in the wilderness, their testings and trials there, their failures and successes, the gracious and full provision which the Lord made for them, have rightly been contemplated as shadowing forth the varied experiences of the saints as they journey unto their eternal Inheritance. But the typical value of the second half of Exodus and much of the book of Leviticus has been far less generally discerned. The delivering of His people from their enemies was but a means to a far grander end, namely, that they should be brought into a place of favour and nearness unto God; and Exodus 25-40 and most of Leviticus make known the provisions which God has made for the maintenance of their communion with Him—and this in such a way that the requirements of His ineffable holiness were duly maintained, and the obligations of their moral agency and their duties as a redeemed people should be fitly discharged. The relations with Jehovah were maintained on the one hand, through the divinely appointed priesthood; and on the other, by their obedience to the divine commandments. Only thereby could they draw nigh unto the Holy One as acceptable worshippers, and only thereby could they receive from Him the necessary instruction for their guidance.

The typical significance of the book of Joshua, while maintaining and enforcing the truth made known in the foregoing books, supplements and complements the earlier history. Here it is Israel, under God, possessing their possessions, brought into that rest which had been promised their fathers. In regard to this, we prefer to speak in the language of one whom we consider was better qualified to treat upon this subject.

“The earthly Canaan was neither designed by God, nor from the first was it understood by His people to be the ultimate and proper inheritance which they were to occupy; things having been spoken and hoped for concerning it which plainly could not be realized within the bounds of Canaan. The inheritance was one which could be enjoyed only by those who had become the children of the resurrection, themselves fully redeemed in soul and body from all the effects and consequences of sin—made more glorious and blessed, indeed, than if they had never sinned, because constituted after the image of the heavenly Adam. And as the inheritance must correspond with the inheritor, it can only be man’s original possession restored—the earth redeemed from the curse which sin brought on it, and, like man himself, be the fit abode of a Church made like, in all its members, to the Son of God.

“The occupation of the earthly Canaan by the natural seed of Abraham was a type, and no more than a type, of this occupation by a redeemed Church of her destined inheritance of glory; and consequently everything concerning the entrance of the former on their temporary possession was ordered so as to represent and foreshadow the things which belong to the Church’s establishment in her permanent possession. Hence, between the giving of the promise, which, though it did not terminate in the land of Canaan, yet included that; and through it, prospectively exhibited the better inheritance, a series of important events intervened, which are capable of being fully and properly examined in no other way than by means of their typical bearing of the things hereafter to be disclosed respecting that better inheritance.

“If we ask, why did the heirs of promise wander about so long as pilgrims, and withdraw to a foreign region before they were allowed to possess the land; and not rather, like a modern colony, quietly spread, without strife or bloodshed, over its surface, till the whole was possessed? Or, why were they suffered to fall under the dominion of a foreign power from whose cruel oppression they needed to be redeemed, with terrible executions of judgment on the oppressor, before the possession could be theirs? Or why, before that event, also, should they have been put under the discipline of law, having the covenant of Sinai, with its

strict requirements and manifold obligations of service, superadded to the covenant of grace and promise? Or why, again, should their right to the inheritance itself have to be vindicated from a race of occupants who had been allowed for a time to keep possession of it, and whose multiplied abominations had so polluted it that nothing short of their extermination could render it a fitting abode for the heirs of promise? The full and satisfactory answer to all such questions can only be given by viewing the whole in connection with the better things of a higher dispensation—as the first part of a plan which was to have its counterpart and issue in the glories of a redeemed creation, and for the final results of which the Church needed to be prepared, by standing in similar relations and passing through like experiences in regard to an earthly inheritance.

“The whole series of transactions which took place between the confirmation of the covenant of promise with Jacob, and the actual possession of the land promised—and especially, of course, the things which concerned that greatest of all the transactions, the revelation of the Law from Sinai—is to be regarded as a delineation in the type of the way and manner in which the heirs of God are to obtain the inheritance of the purchased possession. Meanwhile, there are two important lessons which the Church may clearly gather and which she ought never to lose sight of: First, that the inheritance—come when and how it may—is the free gift of God, bestowed by Him as sovereign Lord and Proprietor on those whom He calls to the fellowship of His grace. Second, that the hope of the inheritance must exist as an animating principle in their hearts, influencing all their procedure. Their spirit and character must be such as become those who are the expectants as well as heirs of that better country, which is an heavenly; nor can Christ ever be truly formed in the heart, until He be formed as ‘the hope of glory’” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874, Vol. I of his *The Typology of Scripture*, 1865).

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

7. *The Existence of God, Part 7*

In our last, we called attention to the revelation which God has made of Himself in *human history*—that is, to the cumulative evidence which the affairs of individuals and of nations furnish that a divine Person has full control over those affairs, and orders and directs them all unto the accomplishment of His own eternal purpose. The Ruler of this world makes use of the opinions and motives, the resolves and actions of men; yea, overruling their very crimes to further His design and promote His own glory. Every occurrence upon the stage of human events is not only to be traced back to the divine counsels, but should be viewed as the outworking of a part of His vast plan. We should behold *God* in all the intrigues of courts and governments, in all the caprices of monarchs, in all the changes of kingdoms and empires; yea, in all the persecutions of the righteous, as really and as truly as in the progress of the Gospel: though in the former, it is more the secret workings of His justice, as it is the more open manifestations of His grace in the latter. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Pro 16:33)—whether or no we perceive it.

The One who rules the planets is equally master of every human despot. In our last, we supplied proof of that in connection with Ahasuerus. Consider now another example. As a judgment upon their long-continued sinfulness, God delivered the Jews into the hands of an invading power, and suffered the flower of their nation to be carried captive into Babylon. Yet His judgment was tempered with mercy, for He assured His covenant that—though wayward people—after seventy years, they should return to Palestine. That promise was definite and sure: but how was it to receive its fulfilment? They were utterly incapable of delivering themselves from the midst of the mightiest empire on earth, and there was no friendly and powerful nation demanding their emancipation. How then was “the word of the LORD” to be made good? God had indeed delivered their forefathers from Egypt by a series of great marvels, but from Babylon, He freed them without a single miracle. The manner in which He did so supplies a striking example of His providential workings and an illustrious illustration of *how* He shapes the history of nations.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem” (Ezr 1:1-4).

This is the famous Cyrus whose name occupies a prominent place upon the scroll of secular history. He was the ordained conqueror of Babylon; and when the empire of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius fell before his sword, instead of keeping the Jews in bondage, he decreed their liberation. But why should he do so? Was he a worshipper of Jehovah and a lover of His people? Far from it: he was a heathen idolater! The prophecy of Jeremiah had evidently been read by him, though it effected not his conversion, for he continued a devotee of his own gods. But God so impressed his mind by that prophecy and secretly wrought in him a desire and determination to free the Jews, that he made an authoritative proclamation to that effect. God gave His people favour in the eyes of the Persian king, and wrought in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure; yet in the forming and carrying out of his decision, Cyrus acted quite freely. Thus, with the greatest of ease, God can effect His own purpose, and without the use of force, remove any obstacle standing in the way.

If (as so many students of prophecy believe) God has predestined that the Jews—after centuries of weary wandering among the Gentiles—shall once more occupy the land of Palestine; and if His time be now ripe for the fulfillment of that decree, then neither the Arabs nor anyone else can prevent their doing so. Whatever method or means God uses will in no wise alter the fact that there will be spread before the eyes of the world a demonstration that One immeasurably superior to man is ordering its affairs. Time will show: but up to now, it looks as though God is repeating what He did in and through Cyrus. First, He moved the British Government to take over the mandatory control of Palestine—which has been adminis-

tered for a quarter of a century at great inconvenience and at heavy cost of life and money—without a “thank you” from any one. Now He has “stirred up the spirit” of the U.S. Government to insist on the entry of more and more Jews into that land. God has “his way in the whirlwind” (Nah 1:3).

Let us now carefully consider the objection of the sceptic. If an infinitely wise and benevolent Being be in full control of all the affairs of earth, then why is there so much evil, so much suffering and sorrow? Justice is a rare commodity between individuals or nations—the ruthless and powerful seize the prey, while the conscientious and honest are bespoiled. Mercy appears to be mainly a consideration of prudence, for who acts generously or leniently when another is thwarting his own interests?—witness, for example, the toll of the road. If a God of love presides over the scene, then why has He permitted the horrible holocaust of the past few years, with such widespread havoc and misery? The first answer is, Because the earth is inhabited by a *rebellious race*, which has revolted from its Maker, and is now being made to feel that “the way of transgressors is hard” (Pro 13:15). When man himself was the one who deliberately dashed into pieces the cup of felicity which was originally placed in his hands, he has no legitimate ground for complaint if he now finds that the potion which he has brewed for himself is as bitter as gall and wormwood.

The infidel may reject with scorn the contents of the first three chapters of Genesis, but in so doing, he casts away the only key which unlocks to us the *meaning* of human history, the only explanation which *rationality* accounts for the course of human affairs. If it be true that man was made by a holy and gracious God and was under moral obligations to serve and glorify Him; and if instead of so doing, he cast off allegiance to Him and apostatized, what would we expect the consequences to be? Why, that man should be made to feel His displeasure and reap what he had sown. If this world lies under the righteous curse of its Creator because of man’s sin, and its Ruler be displaying His justice in punishing offenders and vindicating His broken Law, in what other ink than that of blood and tears may we expect human history to be written? Does the alternative hypothesis of evolution offer a more satisfactory solution? Very far from it. If man started at the bottom of the ladder and during the course of the ages has gradually ascended, if the human race be slowly but surely improving, how comes it that this twentieth century has witnessed such an unprecedented display of savagery and degradation!

If an omniscient and beneficent God be governing this world, why is there so much wickedness and wretchedness in it? We answer, in the second place, to demonstrate *the truth of His own Word*. The accounts, which that Word gives of the corruptions of human nature, have been widely refused as being too gloomy a diagnosis of the same. The descriptions furnished by Scripture of man’s depravity have been haughtily despised by the wise of this world. Nevertheless, the annals of human history furnish abundant verification of the same. It may not be palatable to read, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5), that “man be born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12), that “the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa 58:3), yet universal observation discovers clear proof of the verity of the same. Children do not have to be taught to be intractable, to lie and steal. Remove restraints, leave them to themselves, and it quickly appears what is born and bred in them. The widespread juvenile delinquency of our own day is very far from exemplifying any *progress* of the human race!

It certainly is not flattering to proud human nature to be told in the unerring Word of truth that, as the result of the Fall, man’s heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), yet every newspaper we open contains illustrations of the teaching of Christ that “out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come *from within*, and defile the man” (Mar 7:21-23). Thousands of years ago, God described mankind thus: “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known.” And why is this? The closing words of the same passage tell us: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:13-18). Who that has any acquaintance with the chronicles of history can deny that indictment? Who with the present state of society before his eyes can gainsay it? The very Word of God which men will not receive by faith is being verified to their very sight!

Why does God permit so much human misery? We answer, in the third place, to manifest the glory of *His own perfections*. The frightful calamity of *war* causes many to deny or seriously doubt the reality of divine providence, for when that fearful scourge falls upon the nations, it appears to them that Satan—rather than the Lord—has charge of things and is the author of their troubles. At such a time, God’s

own people may find it difficult to stay their minds on Him and rest implicitly in His wisdom and goodness. Yet the Word reveals that God is no mere distant Spectator of the bloody conflicts of men, but that His righteous and retributive agency is immediately involved therein, though that neither mitigates the guilt of the human instigators, nor destroys their free agency. Their consuming egotism, insatiable greed, horrible barbarities, proceed entirely from themselves and are of their own volition; nevertheless, the Most High *directs* their lusts to the execution of His own designs and renders them subservient to His own honour.

The affairs of nations are ordered by a divine hand. Their rise, development, and progress are “of the Lord”; so also are their decline, adversities, and destruction. God’s dealing with Israel of old was not exceptional, but illustrative of His ways with the Gentiles throughout the last nineteen centuries. While Israel’s ways pleased the Lord, He made their enemies to be at peace with them; but when they gave themselves up to idolatry and lasciviousness, war was one of His sore scourges upon them. Whenever divine judgment falls upon either an individual or a nation, it is because *sin* has called loudly for Him to vindicate His honour and enforce the penalty of His Law. Yet warning is always given before He strikes: “space to repent” (Rev 2:21) is provided, the call to forsake that which displeases Him, opportunity to avert His wrath; and if this warning be disregarded and the opportunity to escape His vengeance be not improved, then is His judgment doubly righteous. Ordinarily, God makes use of *men*—a Nebuchadnezzar, a Caesar, a Hitler—as the instruments by which His judgment is inflicted, thereby demonstrating His sovereignty over all, who can do nothing without Him, yet who must play the part which He has ordained.

In various ways does the Ruler of this world manifest the glory of His attributes. By the display of His infinite patience in bearing with so much longsuffering those who defy Him to His face and continue in their obduracy. By exhibiting the exceeding riches of His mercy in sometimes calling the most outrageous rebels out of darkness into His marvellous light, bringing them to repentance and granting them pardon: thus it was with King Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus. By manifesting the strictness of His untempered justice in hardening others in sin to their own destruction: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom 11:22). By showing forth His wondrous power, both in directing and curbing human passions: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee [as that of Pharaoh’s was made to do]: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psa 76:10), for He holds in check the fiercest, as much as He sets bounds to the turbulent seas.

The depravity of human nature, the potency and prevalency of evil, and the power and malice of the Wicked one in whom the whole world lieth, only makes more evident and wonderful the providence of God. Since holiness be so universally hated, and the saints of the Lord so detested and persecuted by the great majority of their fellow men, had not God so signally interposed for their preservation, the last of His people had long since perished amid the enmity and fury of their implacable enemies. Were there no other evidence that the living God governs this world, this one should suffice: that though His servants and sons have been so strenuously opposed in this scene, yet they have never been totally rooted out of it; that though the most powerful governments have sought their complete destruction, and though they were weak and possessed of no material weapons, yet a remnant always survived!—as real a marvel that as the preservation of the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace of Babylon.

What has just been pointed out has not received the attention which it justly claims, for it is a conspicuous feature of history and one that has been frequently repeated. The saints of God in Old Testament times, in the early centuries of this Christian era, and throughout the Dark Ages—when both pagan and papal Rome made the most determined efforts to completely annihilate them—had good reason to confess: “If it had not been *the LORD* who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth” (Psa 124:2-6). It is quite possible, perhaps likely, that before this present century has run its course, the restraining hand of God will again be wholly removed from their foes and His people subjected to martyrdom. Should such prove the case, He will, unto the end, maintain to Himself a witness in the earth.

Why is there so much suffering and sorrow in this world? Fourth, for *the good and gain* of God’s own people. As there is not a little in the realm of creation which sorely puzzles both the naturalist and the scientist, as there is much in God’s written Word that is opposed to proud reason, so many of His governmental works often appear profoundly mysterious. That the wicked should prosper so much and flourish as

the green bay tree, while the righteous are often in sore straits and at their wit's end to make ends meet; that the most unscrupulous attain unto positions of prestige and power, while the most virtuous and pious have been counted as "the offscouring of all things" (1Co 4:13), and ended their days in a dungeon or by suffering a cruel martyrdom; that when God's judgments fall upon a nation, they are no respecter of persons, the relatively innocent suffering from them as severely as the most guilty; these and similar cases which might be instanced present real problems to those who reflect upon the same.

True, but the more thoughtfully they be examined, especially in view of *the hereafter*, the less difficulty they present. The thoughts of the materialist and sceptic extend no farther than the narrow bounds of this life, and consequently, he sees these things in a false perspective. Because of their misuse of them, the temporal mercies enjoyed by the wicked become a curse, hardening them in their sins and fattening them for the slaughter. On the other hand, afflictions often prove a blessing in disguise unto believers, weaning their affections from the things of earth and causing them to seek their joy in things above. God often thwarts their carnal plans, because He would have their hearts occupied with better objects. The more they are dissatisfied in the creature and discover that everything under the sun yields only vanity and vexation of spirit, the more inducement have they to cultivate a closer communion with the One who can fully satisfy their souls.

It is not meet that the righteous should always be in a prosperous and happy case in their temporal estate, for then they would be most apt to seek their rest therein. On the other hand, if their portion were that of unrelieved affliction and misery, while the lot of the wicked was uniformly one of plenty and ease, that would be too severe a trial of faith. Therefore, God wisely *mixes* His dispensations with each class respectively. God so orders His providences that His people shall live by faith, and not by sight or sense. That is not only for their weal, but for God's honour. He frequently regulates things so that it may appear that the saints trust Him in the dark, as well as in the light. An outstanding example of that is seen in the case of Job, who was afflicted as few have ever been, yet in his blackest hour, he averred "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). How greatly is He glorified by such conduct! Tribulations are needful for the testing of profession, that the difference between the wheat and the chaff may appear. Heresies are necessary that lovers of truth may be made manifest (1Co 11:19). Trials are indispensable, that patience may have her perfect work.

If in every instance the righteous were rewarded and the wicked punished in this life, the Day of Judgment would be fully anticipated: but by furnishing some present instances of both the one and the other, the great Assize is presaged, and the government of God vindicated. If temporal mercies and spiritual blessings were not evenly distributed, no demonstration would be made of the absolute sovereignty of Him who dispenses His favours as He pleases, and bestows upon or withholds from each individual that which seems good unto Himself. There are not more inequalities in the dispensations of Providence than in the realm of creation. In its widest aspect, there is a noticeable and striking *balance* observable in the apportionment of mercies. As in Old Testament times, divine favours were largely confined to the seed of Abraham, so in the New Testament era unto the Gentiles. Something analogous thereto is seen in God's conduct toward the eastern and western parts of the earth. For two thousand years after the Flood, learning, government, and piety were largely confined to the east, while our forefathers in the west were a horde of savages. For the last two thousand years, the Gospel, with all its beneficent by-products, has traveled westward. Perhaps in the next two thousand years, it will again move eastward.

That the living God controls all circumstances, commands all events, rules every creature, makes all their energies and actions fulfil His will, provides a sure and comfortable resting place for the heart. The present outlook may be dismal, but God reigns and is making all things work together for the glory of His name and the good of His people. If the human race is to occupy this earth for several more generations, or perhaps many centuries, then certain it is that out of the throes through which it is now passing shall issue the furtherance of the Gospel and the promotion of Christ's kingdom. The annals of human affairs can only be read intelligently and interpreted aright as we perceive that history is *His-story*. In the final Day of Manifestation, it will be plain to all that "he hath done all things well" (Mar 7:37); meanwhile, faith now knows that it is so.

THE GREAT CHANGE

Part 7

We will now endeavour to summarize all that has been set before the reader concerning the great change which takes place in one who is born again, renewed spiritually, resurrected, by the operations of the Spirit of God. Perhaps this can best be accomplished by making some epitomized statements, and then offering some further remarks on those against which certain of our readers may be most inclined to take issue. *Negatively*, that great change does not consist of any constitutional alteration in the make-up of our being, no essential addition being made to our persons. We regard it as a serious mistake to consider the natural man as possessed of but soul and body, and as only having a "spirit" communicated to him when he is regenerated. Again, it is a still worse error to suppose that indwelling sin is eradicated from the being of a born-again person: not only does Scripture contain no warrant to countenance such an idea, but the uniform experience of God's children repudiates it. Nor does the great change effect any improvement in the evil principle. The "flesh"—with its vile properties and lust, its deceiving and debasing inclinations, its power to promote hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, opposition unto God—remains unchanged unto the end of our earthly course.

Yet it would be utterly wrong for us to conclude from those negatives that regeneration is not entitled to be designated a "miracle of grace," or that the change effected in its subject is far from being a *great* one. A real, a radical, a stupendous, a glorious change *is* wrought, yet the precise nature of it can only be discovered in the light of Holy Writ. While it is indeed an experimental change, yet the subject of it must interpret the same by the teaching of Scripture, and not by either his own reason or feelings. Nor should that statement be either surprising or disappointing. The miracle of grace effects a great change godwards in the one who experiences it; and God is not an Object of sense, nor can He be known by any process of reasoning. We may then summarize by saying the great change, positively considered, consists first of a radical *change of heart godwards*. God discovers Himself unto the soul, makes Himself a living reality unto it, reveals Himself both as holy and gracious, clothed with authority, and yet full of mercy. That personal and powerful revelation of God unto the soul produces an altered disposition and attitude toward Him: the one alienated is reconciled. The one who shrank from and was filled with enmity against Him, now desires His presence and longs for communion with Him.

Such a vital and radical change in the disposition and attitude of a soul godwards is indeed a miracle of grace, and cannot be described as anything less than a great change. It is as real and great as was the change when man apostatized from his Maker; as vivid and blessed a change spiritually as the resurrection will effect physically: when that which was sown in corruption, in dishonour, in weakness, shall be raised in incorruption, glory, and power; when our vile body shall be changed, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phi 3:21). For one who was a total stranger to the ineffably glorious God to now become experimentally and savingly acquainted with Him, for one who sought to banish Him from his thoughts to now find his greatest delight in meditating upon His perfections, for one who lived in total disregard of His righteous claims upon him to be made a loyal and loving subject, is a transformation which human language—with all its adjectives and superlatives—cannot possibly do justice unto. In the words of divine inspiration, it is a passing "from death unto life" (1Jo 3:14), a being "called...out of darkness into his [God's] marvellous light" (1Pe 2:9), a being "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10).

Second, that great change consists in a *moral purification of the inner man*. Though this be the most difficult aspect of it for us to understand, yet the teaching of the Word thereon is too clear and full to leave us in any uncertainty as to the same. Such expressions as, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Eze 36:25), "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified" (1Co 6:11), "ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1Pe 1:22) would be meaningless if there had been no internal transformation. Our characters are formed by the truth we receive: our thoughts are more or less moulded, our affections directed, and our wills regulated by what we heartily believe. Truth has a vital, effectual, elevating influence. Any man who professes to take the Word of God for his Guide and Rule and is not altered by it, both internally and externally, is deceiving himself. "The truth shall make you free" (Joh 8:32): from the dominion of sin, from the snares of Satan, from the deceits of the world. The tastes, the aims, the ways of a Christian are assimilated to and fashioned by the Word.

A radical change godwards, which is accompanied by a moral purification within, necessarily consists, in the third place, of a thoroughly altered attitude toward the *divine Law*. It cannot be otherwise. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom 8:7): it is completely dominated by ill will unto Him. The evidence adduced by the Spirit in demonstration of that fearful indictment is this, "for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be": the one is the certain outcome of the other—hatred for the Lawgiver expresses itself in contempt for and defiance of His Law. Before there can be any genuine respect for and subjection to the divine Law, the heart's attitude towards its Governor and Administrator must be completely changed. Conversely, when the heart of anyone has been won unto God, His authority will be owned, His government honoured, and his sincere language will be, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"—i.e. the soul as renewed by the Spirit (Rom 7:22). Thus, while the unregenerate are denominated "the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2), the regenerate are called "obedient children" (1Pe 1:14), for obedience is one of their characteristic marks, evidencing as it does the general tenor and course of their lives.

After all that has been said in previous articles, it ought not to be necessary for us to interrupt our train of thought at this point and consider a question which can only prove wearisome unto the well-taught reader; but others who have drunk so deeply from the foul pools of error need a word thereon. Are there not two "minds" in a born-again person: the one carnal and the other spiritual? Certainly not, or he would have a dual personality, and a divided responsibility. By nature, his mind was, spiritually speaking, *deranged*—how else can a mind which is "enmity against God" (Rom 8:7) be described? But by grace, his mind has been restored to sanity: illustrated by the demoniac healed by Christ, "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind" (Mar 5:15); or as 2 Timothy 1:7 expresses it, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a *sound mind*." It is true his original carnality ("the flesh") still remains, ever seeking to regain complete control of his mind; but divine grace suffers it not to *so* succeed that his mind ever becomes "enmity against God." There will be risings of rebellion against His providences, but a renewed person will nevermore hate God.

A real and radical change of heart godwards will, in the fourth place, be marked by a thoroughly altered attitude *towards sin*. And again, we say, it cannot be otherwise. Sin is that "abominable thing" which God hates (Jer 44:4); and therefore, that heart in which the love of God is shed abroad (Rom 5:5) will hate it too. Sin is "the transgression of the law" (1Jo 3:4); and therefore, each one who has been brought to "delight in the law" (Rom 7:22) will detest sin and earnestly seek to resist its solicitations. That which formerly was his native element has become repugnant to his spiritual inclinations. Sin is now his heaviest burden and acutest grief. Whereas the giddy worldling craves after its pleasures, and the covetous seek after its riches, the deepest longing of the renewed soul is to be completely rid of the horrible activities of indwelling sin. He has already been delivered from its reigning power, for God has dethroned it from its former dominion over the heart; but it still rages within him, frequently gets the better of him, causes him many a groan, and makes him look forward with eager longing to the time when he shall be delivered from its polluting presence.

Another important and integral part of the great change consists in the soul's deliverance from the toils of *Satan*. Where the heart has really undergone a radical change of disposition and attitude toward God, toward His Law, and toward sin, the great Enemy has lost his hold on that person. The devil's power over mankind lies in his keeping them in ignorance of the true God, in the scorning of His Law, in holding them in love with sin; and hence, it is that he "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them" (2Co 4:4). While God permits him to succeed therein, men are his captives, his slaves, his prisoners, held fast by the cords of their lusts. But it was announced of the coming Saviour that He would "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa 61:1). Accordingly, when He appeared, we are told that He not only healed the sick, but also "all that were oppressed of the devil" (Act 10:38). The regenerate have been delivered "from the power of Satan" (Act 26:18; Col 1:13) and each made "the Lord's freeman" (1Co 7:22). True, he is still suffered to harass and tempt them from without, but cannot succeed without their consent; and if they steadfastly resist him, he flees from them.

In those five aspects of the great change, we may perceive the *begun reversal* of what took place at man's apostasy from God. What were the leading elements in the Fall? No doubt they can be expressed in a variety of ways, but do they not consist, essentially, of these? First, in giving ear unto Satan and heed to the senses of the body, instead of to the Word of God. It was in parleying with the Serpent that Eve came under his power. Second, in preferring the pleasures of sin (the forbidden fruit which now made such a powerful

appeal to her affection—Genesis 3:6) rather than communion with her holy Maker. Third, in transgressing God's Law by an act of deliberate disobedience (Rom 5:19). Fourth, in the loss of their primitive purity: "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen 3:7). Their physical eyes were open previously (!), but now they had a discovery of the consequences of their sin: a guilty sense of shame crept over their souls, their innocence was gone, they perceived what a miserable plight they were now in—stripped of their original righteousness, condemned by their own conscience.

Fifth, in becoming alienated from God: "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen 3:8). And what was their response? Did they rejoice at His gracious condescension in thus paying them a visit? Did they welcome their opportunity to cast themselves upon His mercy? Or did they even fall down before Him in brokenhearted confession of their excuseless offence? Far otherwise. When the Serpent spoke, Eve promptly gave ear to and conferred with him; but now that the voice of the Lord God was audible, she and her guilty partner fled from Him. "And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God" (Gen 3:8). A guilty conscience warned them that it was the approach of that Judge whose Law they had broken; and they were terror-stricken at the prospect of having a face-to-face meeting with the One against whom they had rebelled. They dared not look upon Holiness incarnate, and therefore, sought to escape from His presence. Thereby, they evidenced they had *died spiritually*—their hearts being separated and alienated from Him! Their understanding was "darkened" and their hearts in a condition of "blindness" (Eph 4:18); a spirit of madness now possessed them, as appears in their vain attempt to hide among the trees from the eyes of Omniscience.

Those then were the essential elements in the Fall, or the several steps in man's departure from God. A parleying with and coming under the power of the devil, sin's being made attractive in their sight, inclining unto the act of disobedience, resulting in the loss of their primitive purity and their consequent alienation from God. The attentive reader will observe those things are in the inverse order of those mentioned above as constituting the five leading characteristics of the great change wrought in those who are the favoured subjects of the miracle of grace. Nor is the reason for that far to seek: *conversion* is a turning around, a right-about face, a being restored to a proper relation and attitude toward God. Let us employ a simple illustration. If I journey five miles from a place and then determine to return to it, must I not re-traverse the fifth mile before coming to the fourth, and tread again the fourth before I arrive at the third, and so on, until I reach the original point from which I departed? Was it not thus with the ragged and famished prodigal who had journeyed into the far country: he must return unto the Father's House if he would obtain food and clothing.

If the great change be the *reversing* of what occurred at the Fall, then the order of its constituents should necessarily be viewed *inversely*. First, being restored to our original relation unto God, which was one of spiritual union and communion with Him. That is made possible and actual by renewing us after His image, which consists of "righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), a saving and experimental knowledge of His ineffable perfections; or in other words, by the renovation and moral purification of our souls, for it is only the "pure in heart" (Mat 5:8) who see God as He actually is—our rightful Lord, our everlasting Portion. Only then does the divine Law have its due and true place in our hearts: its authority being owned, its spirituality esteemed, the fulfilling of its holy and just requirements being our sincere and resolute aim. Obviously, it cannot be until we have a right attitude toward God, until our hearts truly love him, until after His Law becomes the rule and director of our lives, that we can perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and consequently loathe, resist, and mourn over it. And just so far as *that* be the case with us, are we morally delivered from the power of Satan: while the heart beats true to God, the solicitations of His enemy will be repellent to us, rather than attractive.

But let us point out once more that this great change is not completed by a single act of the Spirit upon or within the soul, but occurs in distinct *stages*: it is commenced at regeneration, continues throughout the whole process of our experimental sanctification, and is only consummated at our glorification. Thus, regeneration is only the *beginning* reversing of what occurred at the Fall. The very fact that regeneration is spoken of as a divine begetting and birth at once intimates there is then only the beginning of the spiritual life in the soul, and that there is need for the growth and development of the same. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform [finish] it" (Phi 1:6) is the plain declaration and blessed assurance of what is implied by the "birth"; and such statements as "the inward man is renewed day by day" (2Co 4:16) and our being "changed into the same image *from glory to glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Co 3:18) tell

us something of the divine operations within the souls of the regenerate, while the great change is continued and brought, little by little, unto completion. That miracle of grace which was begun at regeneration is gradually carried forward in us by the process of sanctification, which appears in our growth in grace or the development of our graces.

If the reader desires a more detailed analysis and description of what that process consists of, how the great change is carried forward in us by sanctification, we may delineate it thus. First, by the illumination of the understanding which enables the believer to grow “in the knowledge of our Lord” (2Pe 3:18), and gives him a clearer and fuller perception of His will. Second, by the elevation and refining of the affections, the Spirit drawing them forth unto things above, fixing them on holy objects, assimilating the heart thereto. Third, by the emancipation of the will, God working in the soul “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13), giving us both the desire and the power to concur with Him, for He deals with us not as mere automatons, but ever as moral agents. Thus, it is our responsibility to *seek* illumination, to prayerfully study His Word for the same, to occupy our minds (by constant meditation) and exercise our hearts with spiritual objects, and to diligently seek His enablement to avoid everything which would hinder (and use all the means appointed for) the promotion of our spiritual growth. As we do so, that process will issue and appear, fourth, in the rectification of our life.

From what has just been pointed out, it plainly appears that they err greatly who suppose that regeneration consists of nothing more than the communication of a new nature or principle to an individual, leaving everything else in him just as it was before. It is the person himself who is regenerated, his whole soul which is renewed, so that all its faculties and powers are renovated and enriched thereby. How can everything else in him be unchanged, how otherwise can we designate the blessed transformation which the miracle of grace has wrought in him, than by styling it “a great change”—a real, radical, and thorough one; since his understanding (which was previously darkened by ignorance, error, and prejudice) is now spiritually enlightened, since his affections (which formerly were fixed only on the things of time and sense) are now set upon heavenly and eternal objects, since his will (which hitherto was enslaved by sin, being “free from righteousness”—Rom 6:20) is now emancipated from its bondage, being “free from sin” (Rom 6:18). That glorious transformation, that supernatural change, is what we chiefly have in mind when we speak of “the moral purification” of the soul.

Just as the Fall introduced the principle of sin into man’s being, which resulted in the death of his soul godwards—for death is ever the wages of sin—so in the reversing of the Fall, a principle of holiness is conveyed to man’s soul, which results in his again being spiritually alive unto God. Just as the introduction of sin vitiated and corrupted all the faculties of the soul, so the planting of a principle of holiness within vitalizes and purifies all its faculties. We say again that man lost no portion of his original tri-partite nature by the Fall, nor was he deprived of any of his faculties, but he did lose all *power* to use them godwards and for His glory, because they came completely under the dominion of sin and were defiled by it. And again, we say that man receives no addition to his original constitution by regeneration, nor is any new faculty then bestowed upon him, but he *is* now empowered (to a considerable degree) to use his faculties godwards and employ them in His service, because so long as he maintains communion with God, they are under the dominion of grace and are ennobled, elevated, and empowered by the renewing of the Spirit.

