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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures" John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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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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PRAYER SINS

We hope that this unusual title will startle some of our readers and shake them out of their complacency. The fact that it *is* unusual is a sad commentary upon the religious conditions of this age. Much has been written during our lifetime on the privileges and potency of prayer—considerably less on prayer as a duty and the conditions which must be met in order to be ensured of an answer—but scarcely anything on the sacredness and solemnity of prayer, particularly along the line of warning God's children against the sins they commit when asking "amiss" (Jam 4:3). And yet, a little reflection should convince the young Christian that here, too, the flesh needs to be mortified, the heart quickened, and the understanding enlightened, if he is to pray *acceptably* unto God. The very fact that it is the Holy One he is to approach calls for the exercise of the utmost circumspection, lest he insult and offend Him.

In Psalm 141:3, we find David praying, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." We wonder how many of our readers could—without looking it up—describe the context. Probably many of them suppose it is a petition asking God to curb our unruly tongues when in the presence of our fellows: that we may be restrained from the angry retort when provoked, kept from the evil of idle gossip, and tale-bearing, etc. Instead, the preceding verses are in no wise treating of our converse with men and women: something far more weighty and solemn is there in view, namely, the use of our tongues when engaged *in prayer*—see verses 1 and 2, and then connect verse 3. It is indeed permissible to make a wider application and use of verse 3, but its first and immediate reference is to our praying. Who had thought it necessary to make *this* request in *such* a connection: that after asking, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense," David should at once add, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth" (Psa 141:2-3)? Ah, dear reader, if the setting of that request comes as a surprise to us, does it not indicate what urgent need there is for us to *test* OUR ideas of "prayer" by the Scriptures? to re-examine the subject and have our thoughts thereon formed by the Word? If our tongues be so unruly when in the presence of our equals, is there no danger of them trespassing when we open our lips before the Most High? If our hearts need to be warmed, our faith strengthened, our minds informed, in order to pray aright, does not our speech also need to be directed and *curbed*? Let us now point out some of the more common sins. "Keep the door of my lips" from:

1. *The surgings of pride*. The case of the Pharisee in Luke 18 is a lasting warning against self-gratulation in prayer. But there are other forms of phariseeism besides prating of our good works. One is, "for a shew make long prayers" (Luk 20:47). That, of course, has reference to praying in public; and it is *there* we most need to be on our guard against the workings of pride. To be called upon to pray in the assembly presents a very real test of character and a powerful temptation to sin. Unless such an one is exceedingly careful, he will find himself praying to the congregation rather than to the Lord. It is natural he should wish to make a good impression and convince his fellows of his piety, but nature must be bridled when we are engaged in holy exercises. It is a horrible mocking of God when under the guise of pouring out our hearts before Him, we are really seeking to further our reputation before men; as it is also to weary the brethren when he makes "long prayers." It takes grace and courage to pray briefly when called upon to pray in public.

2. *The making of ill-considered pledges unto God*. How many a one upon a bed of sickness or in severe straits has promised God certain things if He would deliver him, but only to fail in the actual performance. Even in our dealings with men, we should think well before we speak, and be very slow in engaging ourselves for the future; much more should we be cautious in making commitments with God. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecc 5:5). "Holy resolutions to do the will and work of God should be taken up in the strength of divine grace; but to vow this or that or the other thing, had best be left alone" (John Gill, 1697-1771). Scripture supplies a number of warnings—especially so the New Testament—against making rash promises and vows to God: Jephthah (Jdg 11:30-31), Herod (Mat 14:7-8), Ananias and Saphira (Act 5), the band of Jews (Act 23:12). Make no hasty promises or pledges unto God.

3. *The language of insincerity*. Not only should we think before we speak, but make sure that our words express the real desires of our souls. The great Searcher of hearts cannot be imposed upon by pretences of piety. Of old, He complained, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Mat 15:8). To ask God for something we do

not feel the lack of, to simulate fervour by raising our voices, to multiply words in order to fill in the time, is to mock Him. To mechanically repeat some form of prayer, or to coldly utter stated petitions, is a species of hypocrisy and a grave affront unto the Omniscient One. Against such sins, we need to earnestly beg God to "keep the door of [our] lips."

4. *The spirit of irreverence*. There is indeed a very real difference between holy intimacy with God and freedom of utterance before Him, and unholy familiarity; nevertheless, it is sadly easy for the former to quickly degenerate into the latter. God is clothed with infinite majesty and is ineffably holy, and it ill becomes a worm of the earth to approach and address Him as though it was His equal. "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11) is the injunction He has laid upon us. It is not only indecorous, but impious, to rush unto the Throne of Grace without due realization of the August One occupying it, and there, gabble off the first things which enter our minds. If the seraphim veil their faces when standing before the LORD of hosts, what reason have we fallen creatures to exercise humility, godly fear, and spiritual propriety when supplicating Him!

5. *The preferring of carnal requests*. Some affirm that the promise of Christ in John 14:13-14 is a "blank cheque" which He has placed in the hands of believers, that "they may fill it in for what they please, and that God stands pledged to honour the same." But that is a horrible perversion of a sacred ordinance. God has not appointed prayer as a means by which we may satisfy our corrupt affections: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jam 4:3). To pray for long life that we may enjoy the world, for prosperity in business that we may improve our social status, for wealth that we may gratify our vanity, is to "ask amiss." We may pray for spiritual things from carnal motives and with fleshly ends: as to request more light from the Word that our personal reputation may be advanced, or for more grace that we may cut a better figure before fellow Christians. Unless we have the glory of God in view, our motives and designs are carnal.

6. *The exercise of self-will*. The chief design of prayer is to bring our hearts into conformity to God: "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1Jo 5:14). The bending of the knee before God imports the attitude of soul which He requires from us, namely, that of humble dependence and acknowledged subserviency. The Throne of Grace is available to suppliants and not dictators. To ask God for something which His Word nowhere warrants, or to insist that He regulate His providences according to my behests, is rank self-will. Much of the so-called praying of this degenerate age is nothing but blatant impudence and presumption. It is not only impious, but dangerous, to insist that God should grant our selfish requests. Remember the case of Israel: "And he gave them their request; *but* sent leanness into their soul" (Psa 106:15).

7. *The utterances of unbelief*. There is a little need for us to say much upon this point: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (Jam 1:6-7). To "ask in faith" is to exercise confidence in God, to be assured of the lawfulness of the thing requested, to plead and rely upon the merits of Christ, to believe that God will assuredly give that which will be most for His glory and our real good. To "waver" is to give way to doubting, to question God's goodness and faithfulness; and certainly He will not place a premium on that. What need has both writer and reader to beg God "keep the door of my lips" that I commit not any of the prayer-sins mentioned above!

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

45. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

"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. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Five things claim our consideration when pondering this prayer. First, its *connection*: the opening "And" of verse 23 links it to that which precedes; and that, in turn, supplies help to an understanding of the petition here. Second, its *Addressee*, namely, "the God of peace," the precise force of which requires to be ascertained and then appropriated by faith. Third, its *request*: that these saints might be "sanctified wholly," concerning the meaning of which there has been much needless difference of opinion. Fourth, its *design*: that the saints should be so sanctified that they might "be preserved *blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—an expression which, admittedly, calls for particularly careful and prayerful examination. Fifth, its *assurance*: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," which imports the apostle had no doubt but that God would grant his request and accomplish his design—a proof he had not asked for something which is unrealizable in this life by any of God's children. May the spirit of prayer be granted unto our readers as they seek to weigh what we have written in the balances of the Sanctuary.

First, *its connection*. One of the ablest of the Puritans said verse 23 "has no coherence or dependence with the foregoing, for the conclusion of the epistle doth begin here." With all due respect for the renowned expositor, we think his judgment was faulty on this occasion, failing to give sufficient consideration unto its opening "And." In this instance, we much prefer the remark of another of the Puritans: "All the duties and graces enjoined in the foregoing verses belonged unto their sanctification, which—though their duty—was not absolutely in their own power, but was a work of God in them and upon them. Therefore, that they might be able thereto and might comply with his commands, the apostle prayed that God would thus sanctify them throughout" (John Owen, 1616-1683). The order followed by the apostle is significant: exhortation unto saints, supplication unto God—calling upon them to the performance of their several duties, and then entreating God to further quicken them thereunto. Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for diligence in keeping God's precepts, but is a means whereby we obtain grace for obedient conduct. Diligent endeavour and fervent prayer are never to be separated.

As the apostle approached the end of this epistle, he issued a series of short but weighty exhortations, the last of which was "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Th 5:22). In the light of the verse immediately preceding that signifies, first, shun whatever savours of error. False doctrine is most dishonouring unto God and highly injurious to the souls of His people; and therefore, is to be feared and avoided as the plague. God has warned us concerning those men who teach anything contrary to His eternal truth, "their word will eat as doth a canker" (2Ti 2:17). But second, evil practice, as well as evil doctrine, is to be refrained from—and that in the least degree, yea, the very semblance of it. He who would avoid great sins must make conscience of little ones; and he who would avoid both great and little ones must consequently shun also the very appearance of sin. Such things as vanity of apparel and a display of jewellry, bobbed hair, and painted lips—still, more immodest attire—betray an absence of that spirit which hates even "the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude :23).

There is a real and close moral connection between "Abstain from all appearance of evil" and the exhortation immediately preceding: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Th 5:21). The word for "prove" signifies "examine, weigh, try" all things. Whatever you hear and read, whatever counsel you receive even from Christians, whatever course of conduct others follow and which you may be doubtful about, bring to the test of God's Word; and whatever survives that test, "hold fast," and let not the sneers or frowns of men cause you to relinquish it. The more you make it a practice of measuring "all things" by *that* standard, the keener will be your discernment to detect whatever is opposed thereto: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psa 119:104). The latter cannot be said without the former: "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psa 119:128). Thus, it is only as we form the habit of proving "all things" and then holding "fast that which is good," that we are morally enabled to "abstain from all appearance of evil."

On the other hand, our obedience unto "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" does not render superfluous or needless our also heeding, "Abstain from all appearance of evil"—for no matter how well

informed we may be from the Word, nor how strong may be our hatred of evil, there is still an enemy within ready to betray us. Therefore, we need to spurn even the borders of evil and turn away our eyes from the very sight of it. If we do not, our souls will soon become receptive to the devil's lies. "Corrupt affections indulged in the heart and evil practices allowed in the life will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind; whereas purity of heart and integrity of life will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should, therefore, abstain from all appearance of evil, from that which looks like sin or leads to it. He who is not shy of the appearances of sin, who shuns not the occasions of sin, who avoids not the approaches of sin, will not long abstain from the actual commission of sin" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). So much, then, for the connection or immediate context of this prayer.

Second, *its Addressee*. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly," or more literally, "And Himself the God of peace may sanctify you wholly." This appellation of God was expounded by us in considerable detail when treating of Romans 15:33 (in the June 1944 issue), so that there is the less occasion for us now to write upon it at length. Yet since few of our new readers have access to that article, we will repeat in substance what is most relevant to our present passage. There it was pointed out that the names accorded to God in the Scriptures make known to us His glorious being and character; and that it is by meditating upon each of them singly, by mixing faith with them, and by giving *all* of them due place in our minds, that we are enabled to form a better and fuller conception of what He is in Himself, and of the varied relations which He sustains unto us. We not only do Him a great injustice, but we are largely the losers ourselves if we habitually think and speak of God according to *only one* of His names. We need to ponder and make use of all the divine titles if we are to form a well-rounded and duly balanced apprehension of His perfections and realize what a God is ours.

This particular title, "the God of peace" (1Th 5:23), has at least a fivefold reference. First, it tells us what God is essentially, namely, the Fountain of peace. Second, it announces what He is economically or dispensationally, namely, the Ordainer or Covenantor of peace. Third, it reveals what He is judicially the Provider of peace—a reconciled God. Fourth, it declares what He is paternally, the Giver of peace unto His children. Fifth, it proclaims what He is governmentally, namely, the Orderer of peace in the churches and in the world. It is with the last three our present passage has most to do. First, it respects God in His judicial relationship with His people. When they sinned in Adam, a breach was made, so that God was legally alienated from them, and they were morally alienated from Him. Though there was no change in His everlasting *love* for them, yet because of their apostacy from Him in the Adam Fall, and because of their own multiplied transgressions against Him, God, as the moral Governor of the universe, could not ignore that awful breach; and as the Judge of all the earth, His condemnation and curse rested upon them. The elect equally with the non-elect are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph 2:3); and as long as they remain in unbelief, they are under the wrath of God (Joh 3:36), the objects of His penal hatred (Psa 5:5), repulsive to the Holy One. But His wisdom devised a way whereby He could be reconciled to His alienated people.

That "way" consists of what Christ did for them, what His Spirit works in them, and what they are themselves made willing to do. Christ obeyed the precept of the Law on their behalf and suffered its penalty in their stead. Thereby the great Surety of the Church made complete satisfaction to God's justice, placated His wrath and established an equitable and stable peace. When Christ endured the curse of the broken Law, He "made peace [between God and His people] through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20), healing the fearful breach, reconciling the divine Judge to them, establishing perfect and abiding amity and concord. In that way were *the divine* interests secured. But more: He procured for His people the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:13-14), and thereby adequate provision was made to meet *their* dire needs. Desperate indeed is their case by nature and by practice: dead spiritually, rebels against God, their minds enmity against Him, wedded to idols, in love with sin. But by the quickening and illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, they are convicted of their wickedness, made willing to throw down the weapons of their revolt, flee to Christ for refuge and take His yoke upon them. Thereby do they respond to the divine call, "be ye reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20), and thus, do they have "peace with God" (Rom 5:1).

Thus we see the appropriateness of this divine title when the apostle was making request for the further sanctifying of the saints: the "God of peace" is the One who was pacified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to them when they turned from being lawless rebels and became loyal subjects of His government: the sanctifying Spirit being the surest evidence of their reconciliation to God. Proof of being brought into His favour objectively is our enjoyment of His peace subjectively. The intolerable burden of guilt is removed from the conscience, and we find "rest unto [our] souls" (Mat 11:29). But if that rest is to be *preserved* in

our souls, we have to take the most diligent heed to our ways. If we are to enjoy communion with "the God of peace," then all details of our lives must be regulated by His Word. That calls for diligent watchfulness over our hearts, for sin—the arch-enemy of God—still indwells us. Sin it was which first turned the creature into a rebel against the Creator; and unless we daily mortify it in our affections, it will soon be said of us, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" your prayers (Isa 59:2).

Our enjoyment of the *paternal* peace of God is conditioned upon our obedience to Him: "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river" (Isa 48:18)—full and unbroken. Our enjoyment of God's paternal peace is conditioned upon our thoughts being filled with and our faith being exercised upon Him: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa 26:3). Our enjoyment of God's paternal peace is conditioned upon our making it a practice to cast all our care upon Him: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi 4:6-7). The enjoyment of God's *governmental* peace in the local church is the fruit of an unquenched Spirit in its midst, by the exercise of love among its members, and by the maintaining a Scriptural discipline over it corporately. It is sin which produces strife and dissension among saints: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (Jam 4:1); and then communion with the God of peace is at an end.

Third, *its petition*. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." For what did the apostle make request? Were not the Thessalonians already sanctified? Certainly they were, both as to their standing before God in Christ, and as to their state in themselves as indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Then precisely what was it that Paul sought on their behalf? Sanctification is many-sided, and unless we distinguish between its several aspects, not only shall we have but a vague and blurred concept of the whole, but we shall entertain erroneous ideas of the same and bring our hearts into bondage. As it is more than ten years since we devoted any articles to this most blessed, deeply important, and yet little-understood subject, we will now indicate its chief branches. First, believers were sanctified by *the Father* from all eternity. "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude :1). Note well the order: they were "sanctified" before their preservation (i.e. from death in their unregeneracy) and effectual call. The reference there is to their eternal election, when in His decree, the Father set apart His elect from the non-elect for His delight and glory, choosing them in Christ and blessing them with all spiritual blessings in Him before the foundation of the world. On that initial aspect of sanctification, we will not dwell.

Second, all believers have been sanctified by *God the Son*. As that is little apprehended, we will enter into more detail. Our sanctification by the Son, like that of the Father's, is not subjective but objective; not something we experience within, but something entirely outside of ourselves. By the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, the entire Church has been set apart, consecrated unto, and accepted by God in all the excellency of the infinitely meritorious work of His incarnate Son: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all…For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that *are sanctified*" (Heb 10:10, 14). Those blessed statements have no reference whatever to anything which the Spirit does in the Christian, but relate exclusively to what Christ has secured for him. They speak of that which results from our federal oneness with Christ. They tell us that by virtue of the Sacrifice of Calvary, every believer is not only accounted righteous in the courts of God's justice, but is perfectly hallowed for the courts of His holiness. The blood of the Lamb not only delivers from hell, but it fits us for heaven. It is the believer's relation to Christ, and that alone, which entitles him to enter the Father's House; and it is his relation to Christ, and that alone, which now gives him the right to draw nigh to God within the veil (Heb 10:19).

The grand fact is that the feeblest and least-instructed believer was as completely sanctified before God the first moment he trusted in Christ, as he will be in heaven in his glorified state. Said the Saviour on the eve of His death, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (Joh 17:19 margin)—that is, that they might be really and actually sanctified, in contrast from the merely typical and ceremonial sanctification which obtained under the Mosaic dispensation. Christ was on the point of dedicating Himself to the final execution of the work of making Himself a sacrifice for sin; as the Surety of His people, He was about to present Himself to the Father and place Himself on the altar as a vicarious propitiation for His Church. As the consequence of Christ's devoting Himself as a whole burnt-offering unto God, His people are perfectly sanctified. Their sins are forever put away, their persons are

cleansed from all defilement; but not only so, the excellency of His work is imputed to them, so that they are rendered perfectly acceptable unto God, suited to His presence, fitted for His worship. Priestly nearness to God is their blessed portion, as the consequence of Christ's priestly offering of Himself for them. They have the right of access to God as purged worshippers.

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30). Observe well that this verse is not stating what we are made by Christ, but what God hath made Christ to be unto His believing people: the distinction is real and fundamental, and to ignore it is to deprive ourselves of the most precious half of the Gospel. Christ is here said to be made four things unto us; or as the Greek more nicely discriminates, one thing [Wisdom], which is defined under three heads: the whole speaking of the Church's completeness in her Head (Col 2:10). It is what God has made Christ to be unto us objectively and imputatively. Christ is not only our righteousness, but our sanctification, by the purity of His person and the excellency of His sacrifice being reckoned to our account. If Israel became a holy people [ceremonially] when sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats, so that they were admitted and re-admitted to Jehovah's worship, how much more shall the meritorious blood of Christ sanctify us actually, so that we may draw nigh unto God with confidence as acceptable worshippers? My ignorance does not alter the fact, neither does the weakness of my faith to firmly grasp the same impair it. My feelings and experience have nothing to do with it. God has done it, and nothing can alter it.

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, *HOLINESS TO THE LORD*…And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the LORD" (Exo 28:36-38). That presents to us one of the most precious typical pictures to be found in all the Old Testament. Aaron, the high priest, was dedicated and devoted exclusively to the LORD. He served in that office on behalf of others, as their mediator. He stood before God as the representative of the nation, bearing the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulder and on his heart (Exo 28:12, 29). Israel, the people of God, were both represented by and *accepted in* Aaron. That was not a type of "the way of salvation" (Act 16:17), but respected the approach to God of a failing and sinning people whose very prayers and praises were defiled, but whose service and worship were rendered acceptable unto the Holy One through their high priest. That inscription, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Exo 28:36) on Aaron's forehead, was a solemn appointment, by which Israel were impressively taught that holiness became the House of God, and that none who are unholy can possibly draw nigh to Him.

Now Aaron foreshadowed Christ as the great High Priest who is "over the house of God" (Heb 10:21). Believers are both represented by and accepted in Him. The "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," which was "*always*" upon Aaron's forehead, pointed to the mediatorial holiness of the One who "*ever* liveth to make intercession for [us]" (Heb 7:25). Because of our federal and vital union with Christ, *His* holiness is *ours*: the perfection of the great High Priest is the measure of our acceptance with God. Christ has also borne "the iniquity of the holy things" (Exo 28:38)—that is, He not only atoned for our sins, but made satisfaction for the defects of our worship. Not only can nothing be laid to our charge, but the sweet incense of His merits (Rev 8:3) renders our worship "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Phi 4:18). Thus are Christians enabled to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1Pe 2:5). Christ is the One who meets our every need—both as sinners and as saints. In, through, and by Christ, every believer has a flawless sanctification. The Holy One could not look upon us with the least favour, nor could we draw near unto Him at all—unless He viewed us as perfectly holy; and this, He *does* in the person of our Mediator.

A perfect holiness is as indispensable as a perfect righteousness in order for us to have access to, and communion with, the thrice holy God; and in Christ, we have the one as truly as we have the other. The glorious Gospel reveals to us a *perfect* Saviour, One who has completely met every need of His people; yet it is absolutely necessary that we mix faith with that good news if we are to live in the power and comfort of the same. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb 13:12): The precious blood of Christ has not only made expiation for the sins of His people, but it has hallowed and consecrated them unto God, so that He views them not only as guiltless and unreprovable, but also as spotless and holy. The blood of Christ not only covers every stain of sin's defilement, but in the very place of what it covers and cleanses, it leaves its own excellency and virtue. God sees us in

the face of His Anointed, as perfect as Christ Himself, and therefore, as both justified and sanctified. His oblation has restored us to the full favour and fellowship of God.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

25. The Memorials, Part 2

The spiritual application unto Christians in New Testament times of what is narrated in Joshua 3 and 4 is of great importance and value, both doctrinally and practically; yet to derive the good of the same, faith has to be exercised and the conscience searched. The entrance of the ark of the covenant into the Jordan was a type of the believer's Surety submitting Himself to judgment and death. The stoppage of its waters as the feet of the priests stepped therein was a figure of the wrath of God against the sins of His people having spent itself upon the person of their Substitute and great High Priest. Israel's passing over dryshod shadowed forth the wondrous fact that all who put their trust in Christ *and follow Him* are exempted from future judgment: that "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1)—it is by our changed walk that we evidence ourselves to be "in Christ" (i.e. that we are federally and vitally one with Him), as it is our "following" the Shepherd (Joh 10:4, 27) which proves ourselves to be His "sheep." Israel's emergence from the Jordan spoke of the Church's legal and spiritual resurrection. There is no reason to believe that the nation as such understood the typical import of these things, though probably, the regenerate ones in it did so.

It is in the Epistles that we find the clearest and fullest explanations of the redemptive work of Christ and of the Church's interest therein. It is there we are told God ordained Him to be "propitiation [appeasing sacrifice] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness…that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:25-26). It is there we read that He was "delivered for our [believers'] offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Those are statements of fact and are addressed to faith. They have nothing whatever to do with our feelings; though, when the renewed soul receives them on the authority of God, his mind is filled with wonderment and awe, his conscience is quietened, and his heart rejoices. That Christ died in the room and stead of all who shall believe on Him is a truth apprehended more or less distinctly by all who have fled to Him for refuge; but that *they died* in and with Him is grasped by few of them. Yet that must be so: in the sight of the law, the surety and those he answers for *are one*—when the substitute dies, the one in whose place he suffered is legally dead. One had supposed this was so obvious as to need no labouring.

When Paul declared, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20), he was not referring to an experience of soul or to indwelling sin having received its death-wound, but was stating the inseparable corollary of Christ's vicarious crucifixion. This is abundantly clear from the verse immediately preceding: "For I through the law am dead to the law [literally, 'died to the law'], that I might live unto God" (Gal 2:19)—the Law can no longer condemn me and clamour for my death, for its claims have already been met, its curse been executed upon me, in the person of my Substitute. In Christ, I suffered *penal* death—which is what *crucifixion* is—as the same epistle states, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). Thus, "I am crucified with Christ" is a declaration which *every* Christian is entitled to make, for it is just as true of the feeblest believer in the family of God as it is of the strongest. All real babes in Christ—whatever be the amount of their knowledge, the degree of their faith, the measure of their attainments—are equally crucified with Christ, so far as their standing before God is concerned. There is no truth revealed in the Word more important, more comforting, more assuring for us than that.

"He that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom 6:7); or as the Greek reads, "he who has died is justified from sin." The word rendered "freed" ("*dikaioo*") occurs forty times in the New Testament, and is translated "justify" or "justified" 37 times, "justifier" once, "be righteous" (passive) once, and "freed" once. Justification is a forensic term, the sentence pronounced by God (as the Judge of all) upon the believer in Christ: negatively, it signifies absolution from the guilt of every breach of the Law; positively, declaring of him righteous or entitled to the award of the Law. Justification admits of no degrees and is the irreversible sentence of God. It pertains equally to every one who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: "By him *all* that believe *are* justified [not 'will yet be'] from all things" (Act 13:39). Oh, what peace fills the soul when that divine Word is received with childlike simplicity! It is because the believer has died legally, died in the death of his Substitute, that he is acquitted from all guilt and condemnation—for death cancels everything. It is not that the believer ought to die to sin which is here in view, but that his death is an accomplished fact in the death of his Surety (see Rom 6:2). In the crucifixion of Christ, he is, by faith, to see himself crucified too.

Not only did the Christian die legally in the death of Christ, but he was legally resurrected when his Saviour emerged triumphant from the tomb. It was as the covenant Head of His people that Christ transacted throughout. It was as the Representative of His Church [that] Christ both died and rose again; and therefore, its members have a federal interest in the one as much as in the other. But if only a few of the saints have scarcely any apprehension of their judicial crucifixion with Christ, a far less number of them have any realization of their legal identification with the risen Christ. That His life is imparted to them at regeneration they understand, but that all the worth and worthiness of the Magnifier of the Law, the Vanquisher of sin and Satan, is even now imputed unto them, so that they are as acceptable unto the Judge of all as is Christ Himself, seems too good to be true—yet it is plainly revealed and announced in the Gospel. "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom 6:8): that is, in a law-sense, i.e. a life of *justification*, joint-partakers of the Victor's reward—the consequence of which will be our future glorification.

What has just been stated above is the grandest part of the Gospel, but since it is so little grasped today, we must dwell upon it a while longer. The first half of Romans 6 is to be regarded as a continuation and amplification of the second half of chapter five, where the apostle had set forth the basic truth of the *federal headships* of the first and the last Adam's: the one representing the many; the many participating in and sharing the consequences of the act of the one—true alike of what was done by both the first and "the second man" (1Co 15:47). As Adam's sin and guilt is justly reckoned ours, so Christ's death for sin and unto sin is also legally regarded as that of His people's. But more: the perfect obedience of Christ and His meritorious righteousness is also imputed to us, and in consequence, Christ's reward is also ours. Of those who receive "the gift of righteousness," it is averred they "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" and "the righteousness of one the free gift came *upon* [not 'unto'!] all men [represented by Him] unto justification of life" (Rom 5:17-18). Those are the verses which explain, "we shall also *live with him*" of Romans 6:8—it is neither a subjective experience, nor a future blessing, but an objective reality which obtains now for all believers, that is there in view.

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom 6:8). The opening "Now" is not an adverb of time, nor is the "if" one of uncertainty, but the two conjoined (as in the Greek) are the drawing of an inference from the preceding statement, and have the force of "since" or "seeing that." Because we "be dead with Christ," and are therefore "freed [justified] from sin" (Rom 6:7), "we believe"—not "we hope" for something yet future, but by faith in the previous fact *conclude*—that "justification of life" (Rom 5:18) necessarily follows. The ground of faith's confidence is further amplified in the next verse: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom 6:9). Christ's resurrection not only attested the validity of His atonement, but *our title* to the inheritance. His resurrection to die no more demonstrated the sufficiency of His obedience, for those who died in His death receive "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," which entitles them to "reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:17, 19). Christ's resurrection in the full complacency of God—crowned with immortal life—was the merited reward of His atoning death, and His people are "joint-heirs" (Rom 8:17) with Him!

Alas, fundamentally important and incalculably precious as is the truth we have just presented, it is likely to be quite "above the heads" of many of God's little ones. For their own sakes, we entreat [each of] them to pause for a moment and cry unto God for enlightenment, and then make a special effort to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1Pe 1:13) as we endeavour to pursue the subject further. What did God mean when He said unto Adam, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*" (Gen 2:17) and "the wages of sin is *death*" (Rom 6:23)? If we are to give anything like a complete answer, must we not say, first, Adam died *legally*: that is, he fell under the condemnation and curse of that law which he had broken? Second, that he died *spiritually*: that is, his soul was alienated from God, and holiness was displaced by corruption. And third, that he exposed himself unto *eternal* death: that is, he would suffer for ever and ever in the lake of fire and brimstone, unless a miracle of grace intervened and plucked him as a brand from the burning. Surely, the simplest Christian is able to grasp that definition and see the need for that threefold differentiation.

That is precisely the threefold status and condition of every one of Adam's descendants: the second and third is uniformly acknowledged by all orthodox Christians, but the first has little or no place in their thoughts. That each of us enters this world a fallen and depraved creature, "shapen in iniquity" and conceived "in sin" (Psa 51:5), and that each of us will spend eternity in hell, unless he be made the subject of a miracle of grace, is generally acknowledged; but upon the *why* this is so and upon the *how* a just God can

thus order it, most Christians have a very hazy and inadequate idea. That we have all inherited our defiled and depraved natures from our first parents they know, but as to the divine justice in their so doing, they know not. To be born with a sinful nature is not only a terrible handicap, but it is also a penal infliction. It is not innocent creatures who are thus handicapped, but guilty ones who are so penalized. It is because we legally shared in Adam's offence—he being our federal head and representative—that we share his punishment. *We* sinned in Adam, and we legally died in Adam; and therefore, we enter this world under the curse of God, and thus, with a depraved nature.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23). As that "death" is threefold, so also is that "life." As death there first imports a death of guilt and condemnation, so the life we receive in Christ is a life of *justification from* guilt and condemnation—a life-in-Law, our sins put away, righteousness placed to our account. Second, as the former or legal death issues in a spiritual and experimental one, that is, the soul is polluted by sin and its faculties enslaved—so our life of justification is accompanied by a life of *regeneration* and sanctification, whereby the soul is (in measure) renovated, cleansed, and its faculties freed. Third, as sin exposes its subject unto eternal death, one of indescribable woe and suffering—so the life we receive in, through, and from Christ will be consummated in everlasting glory and bliss. And again we say, surely, the least-instructed saint with spiritual discernment is able to perceive the meaning of that threefold definition of "life" and recognize the needs-be for distinguishing between the life of justification (legal), the life of regeneration (experimental), and the life of glorification (eternal) which will be life indeed.

The all-important thing to recognize is that the life we have *in* Christ and then *from* Him is the counterpart of that death we have in and from Adam, by virtue of the federal relations which Christ and Adam sustained to those they represented; and that since death came by *sin*, life came by *righteousness*. Unless we connect the life received from Christ at the new birth with His meritorious obedience, we not only rob Him of part of the glory and thanks which are His due, but we fail to recognize that the gift and operations of the Holy Spirit are the direct consequence of the Atonement—merited and obtained by Christ for His people. *Life* was explicitly announced in the Law as the promised reward held out to those who complied with its terms (Lev 18:5), and such was proclaimed by Christ (Luk 10:28), and was twice appealed to by Paul (Rom 10:5, Gal 3:11). So, too, life—the very "life" promised by the Law to those who kept it—is offered in the Gospel to those who believe in Christ. Under the Law, life was unattainable by fallen men; in the Gospel, it is proffered as a free gift, yet the Gospel reveals that "life" is the product of "righteousness." (See Rom 1:16-17; Gal 3:21; Rom 5:21.)

As that "death" which is the penalty of the broken Law consists of *its curse*—the enmity and wrath of a sin-hating God; so that "life" which is the reward of the fulfilled Law consists of blessedness—the favour and approbation of a righteous-loving God. Now that "life" of the Law's award, that blessing, was promised and pledged to Immanuel in the covenant as the reward for His perfect obedience (Psa 110:4; Isa 9:6-7); and it was in anticipation of the same that He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Psa 16:8-11; Heb 12:2). Upon the completion of His work, Christ put in His claim for the reward, and God bestowed the same upon Him (Psa 2:8; 21:4-6)! And that "life" of the Law, that reward, belongs equally to Christ and those on whose behalf He transacted. It was not as a private person, but as the covenant Head of His people, as the "last Adam" (1Co 15:45), as the Head of His Church, that Christ rose again, ascended on high, and was "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb 2:9). It was as the Representative of His redeemed that Christ entered heaven: "Whither the forerunner is for us entered" (Heb 6:20).

The same wondrous truth is set forth again in Ephesians 2: "God…Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). "Dead in sins" refers to a judicial state and not an experimental: it is not the absence of spiritual life, but our law-condition, dead *in guilt*, under sentence of death—condemned and cursed. Neither does the "quickening" refer to anything subjective or internal. It is *not* "quickened *by* Christ," for it is not our individual regeneration which is in view; but "quickened us together *with* Christ" (Eph 2:5)—the corporate vivification of the whole Church when Christ was "quickened" (1Pe 3:18). It is our legal or justifying "quickening"—compare Colossians 2:13, where "quickened together with him" is immediately defined as "having forgiven you all trespasses." But more: "And hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit *together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6)—the Church was resurrected and exalted in Christ as the Head of His people. Observe well the repeated "together"—the Head *and* His members. This was all true in the sight of God *before* our conversion,

though, of course, we knew it not and derived no comfort from the same. The whole of Ephesians 2:5-6 relates to our standing before God, and not anything within ourselves.

What we have been setting forth is something more than a theological tenet, or even an exposition of little-understood passages. It is the fundamental, most blessed, yet most neglected part of the Gospel. The response which is to be made unto the same is stated in Romans 6:10-11: "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God [in His acceptance and favour]. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves *to be* dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Christ's death removed the entire guilt and exhausted the full penalty of sin when God "made him to be sin for us (2Co 5:21). *Now* "he liveth unto God" (Rom 6:10), as the Conqueror of sin, death, and Satan, as being "freed [justified] from sin" (Rom 6:7), as enjoying the unclouded approbation of God. He lives to make good all God's pleasure concerning His people, to secure the fulfilment of the whole of His purpose of grace regarding them. His death and resurrection have obtained a present title to and the future possession of eternal glory for all His redeemed. And believers are so related to Christ—so federally and legally one with Him—that His death was their death, His life is their life.

Believers are not here bidden *to die* unto sin (by mortification), nor *to live* unto God (by sanctification)—*that* is found in Romans 6, verses 12 and 13; but are first called upon to "reckon" themselves "*to be* dead indeed unto sin" and "alive unto God" in Christ their Head (Rom 6:11). "Reckon" does not mean "suppose" or fancy, for God would occupy us with realities and not fictions; nor does "reckon" signify work yourselves up into a frenzied persuasion of the same. No, it means, regard yourselves as God describes you. Let your thoughts of yourselves concerning your standing before God's Throne be according to the truth testified of you. Since the Gospel declares that every Christian has, in Christ, died unto the guilt and penalty of sin, and has in Christ received the reward of the Law, let him "set to his seal that God is true" (Joh 3:33). "Reckon ye also yourselves" (Rom 6:11) to be so. The same Greek work for "reckon" is rendered "to account" in Romans 2:26; "conclude" in Rom 3:28; and "impute" in Rom 4:8. The same word is found again in Luke 22:37, "He [Christ] was reckoned [legally accounted] among the transgressors."

It is an unspeakable mercy that in the reckoning of God, every believer is "dead to sin" (Rom 6:2); and it is of the incalculable comfort when the Christian so regards himself. It is ineffably blessed that in the reckoning of God, every believer is "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6) and is received into His everlasting favour, which is "life" indeed (Psa 30:5); and it is to his indescribable joy when the Christian so regards himself. This "reckoning" is not to be based on any feelings or experience, but on the bare Word of God, for we are to walk by faith and not by sense. Romans 6:11 means: maintain in your consciousness a firm conviction of your union with Christ, yea, your participation in all that He did and is now enjoying. Realize by faith your *identification with* the crucified and glorified Saviour. Do so at all times, and under all circumstances. God so regards you, and it is no presumption for you to do the same; yea, it is highly presumptuous, infidelity, not to do so. Unless you *do*, you cannot serve Him as you should—with freedom, confidence, joy, and gratitude. Unless you so "reckon" or regard yourself, there can be no solid peace of conscience and abiding joy of heart. Credit God's Word, and He will honour your faith.

In our last, we sought to point out the typical significance of the two "memorials" which Jehovah erected to mark Israel's supernatural and triumphant passage through the river of death and judgment. In this, we have endeavoured to indicate the spiritual application of those types unto the Christian; or rather, have considered some of those passages in the Epistles where the antitypical truth of them is presented in doctrinal form. It is because that wondrous and glorious doctrine is so little apprehended today by the rank and file of God's people that we have devoted a whole article to the same. In our next, we purpose considering the practical teaching contained in Joshua 4.

N.B.—Those possessing the previous volumes of this magazine will find in the September, October, and November 1942 issues, three articles (entitled "Christian Resurrection") that treat of the same blessed subject dealt with in this one.

DIVORCE

One of the most unmistakable and tragic evidences of the moral decadence of our generation is the enormous increase in the number of divorces. During the last few decades, they have literally multiplied. They are common to every strata of society, rich and poor, educated and illiterate alike. They are not confined to the young and immature, the more-experienced and middle-aged, or the elderly; nor is this pernicious phenomenon peculiar to the British Isles, but obtains just as extensively—and in the U.S.A., even more alarmingly—throughout the whole of Christendom. Such a widespread epidemic is proof of the ethical laxity and emotional instability which is now so rife, and it augurs ill for the near future. It is nothing less than a dishonest evasion, a refusal to face facts, which attributes this social scourge unto the last two wars—for any one who examines statistics knows that this malady was eating away at the roots of the nation long before 1914, though like many other diseases, it has continued to spread through the body politic and is now "coming to a head."

Like many another social and physical evil which the world is now plagued with, this one is but the shadowing forth of what first obtained in the *religious* sphere. It is not sufficiently recognized that conditions in the ecclesiastical realm are quickly reflected in the secular and social, that what marks the latter, first characterized the former. Those bearing the name of Christ are "the salt of the earth," but when the salt has lost its savour, not only is it "thenceforth good for nothing" (Mat 5:13), but there is no longer anything left to stay the unregenerate carcass from complete putrefaction. When the churches keep to the divine Rule, and its members walk in the path of God's precepts, a powerful influence for good—for morality and respectability, for law and order—is engendered by them; but when the divine Law is flouted, then lawlessness prevails in the community. When the churches degenerate into social clubs, and their members are naught but empty professors—preferring the movies, the dance, and the card-party above the prayer-meeting—then they are "germ carriers" which spread disease.

Genuine conversion is entering into a marriage covenant with God in Christ. It is the soul expressing its love for Him, giving up itself to Him (2Co 8:5), and solemnly vowing to be henceforth ruled only by Him (Isa 26:13). It is a deliberate and hearty choice of the Lord to be his supreme Delight, his alone Lord, his grand End, his everlasting Portion, and a promising to be faithful unto Him and His interests. That is why the Gospel proclamation and offer is likened unto an invitation to a marriage feast (Mat 22:1-3, 11-12). Hence, the saints are said to be "married to another" (Rom 7:4). The apostle used the same figure when expressing his tender solicitude and holy jealousy for the Corinthian believers: "I have [ministerially] espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2Co 11:2): he laboured to keep them faithful to their vows, with the unchilled first-love of their betrothal unto the Bridegroom. For the same reason, the grand consummation of redemption—when the Church enters corporately upon its glory-union with the Lord—is designated "the marriage of the Lamb," and She is spoken of as "his wife hath made herself ready" (Rev 19:7).

When those who profess to have "turned unto the Lord" forsake Him, and go back again into the world, and give their hearts unto idols—God charges them with having "transgressed his covenant" (2Ki 18:12), to have "dealt falsely in [His] covenant" (Psa 44:17), and to have "broken [His] covenant" (Jer 11:10). Consequently, we find that the Lord frequently brought against Israel the charge of marital infidelity: "O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled" (Hos 5:3); "Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms" (Eze 23:35). The same solemn indictment is brought against a New Testament company which bore the name of the Lord: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will [is determined to] be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam 4:4), which shows it is a *spiritual* adultery which is in view—a giving unto the world that love and devotion, time and strength, which the Lord alone is entitled unto.

As natural marriage is a solemn and sacred engagement which is not to be entered into lightly, constituting as it does a lifelong compact, much more should there be the most serious and self-searching deliberation before any one openly professes to be united to the Lord. Hence, we are bidden to "sitteth…down first, and counteth the cost" (Luk 14:28). Christ is more grievously dishonoured and "put…to an open shame" (Heb 6:6) by those who may have taken upon them His holy name and avowed themselves "Christians," and later cast off His yoke, repudiate His scepter, and return unto their "wallowing in the

mire" (2Pe 2:22). Yet for generations past, Christendom has swarmed with such cases individually, while corporately, the majority of the "churches" have walked arm-in-arm with the world; but Christ no longer owned them, regarding them as harlots. And the rot spread swiftly from the "religious" to the non-religious elements of society. The "churches" sowed the wind, and now the nations are reaping the whirlwind in an orgy of marital infidelity and immorality—a recent letter in *The Times* states, "the number of illegitimate births today exceeds a thousand a *week*"!

We do not propose to generalize or moralize any further upon the subject, but rather turn to the Holy Scriptures for information and illumination thereon; for many of the Lord's own people today are far from being clear as to exactly what are its real teachings upon the matter, nor are their ministers and instructors by any means agreed—some teaching one thing, others something quite different. Our design will be to supply answers unto the following questions: First, does the teaching of the New Testament differ from that of the Old Testament on this subject? Second, what are the Scriptural grounds for a divorce?—or is there but a single one? Third, when the marriage bond is broken by the infidelity of one party, is the innocent one free—in the sight of God, we mean—to marry again?—or is he or she henceforth shut up to a life of celibacy?

"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:23-24). Here we have the ordination of the marriage institution in Eden before the Fall, and the Law concerning it divinely fixed. "*Divinely* fixed," we say, for the Lord Jesus plainly averred that God Himself was the Author of that statement, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife"; for when replying to the Pharisees, He said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife" (Mat 19:4-5). The Speaker in Genesis 2:24 was the Creator, whether the instrument was Adam himself, or Moses at the time he wrote the book of Genesis; if the former, Adam spake by divine inspiration, and prophetically, for at that time, there were no "fathers and mothers."

It is clear, then, that Genesis 2:24 was a divine statute, and, being founded upon nature, an unalterable one. Originally, Adam and Eve were one, for Eve was taken out of Adam; and therefore, it is said at their first creation, "in the image of God created he *him*; male and female created he *them*" (Gen 1:27). Later, by the formation of the woman (Gen 2:21-22), the original one became two. But by marriage, the twain became "one flesh," the nearest and dearest union there is in all nature—a divinely ordained, a legally constituted, and an affectionately formed one. Marriage is a permanent and exclusive union between one man and one woman, and therefore, can only be innocently dissolved by death. If ever there was any pretence for the necessity of a man's having more than one wife, it must have been in the days of Adam, when the earth was unpeopled, but the revealed will of God expressly forbade that. First, by His making only a single woman for Adam—creation itself teaches monogamy! Second, by this authoritative statement: "A man…shall *cleave unto* his wife."

The expression "cleave unto" is a very emphatic and decisive one, as appears from the fact of its being used of the duty involved in our covenant relationship to God: "But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day" (Jos 23:8)—they were to love Him with all their hearts, to be devoted exclusively unto Him (having no other "gods"), to seek His honour and promote His interests. In like manner is a man to cleave unto his wife. The Hebrews verb is "*debaq*" and is rendered "are joined together" in Job 41:23; "abide…fast" in Ruth 2:8; "stick" in Ezekiel 29:4; "kept fast" in Ruth 2:23. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" shows that the bonds of this divine institution are stronger than those of nature, and intimates not only the nearness of the marital relationship, but its perpetuity. They are "one flesh" definitely prohibits polygamy. Thus was the divine will concerning the regulation of the sexes and the manner in which the human race was to be propagated clearly made known at the dawn of human history.

In His comment upon that divine statute in Genesis 2:24, the Lord Jesus solemnly and authoritatively declared, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mat 19:6), which proves that a valid marriage is not only of divine institution, but of God's own making: *He* joining the two together, to ever after have the same interests, and to share each other's comforts or sorrows, even as the members of the same body do. God Himself having yoked them together, each is to have the most conscientious regard to *His* act. In view of the divine nature of this insti-

tution and act, no man—be he whom he may—has any warrant from God to separate man and wife, save only for the one reason specified by Christ, namely, adultery. "No man, or set of men, have any authority from God to dissolve this union, except in the case of fornication. Neither crowned heads, bishops, judges, peers, nor commons, jointly or separately, have any right to violate the laws of God. Jehovah has said the man and his wife are one, and whoever separates them insults God" (1851—William Gadsby, 1773-1844).

"Marriage is not a temporary contract, like that between master and servant, but a union of a man and a woman for life. They cannot separate at their pleasure, or at the expiration of a definite period. They are bound to adhere to each other during the term of their natural lives, and neither of them is at liberty to enter into a new engagement without an offence against the law both of God and man. There is one cause, however, which may terminate the relation during their lifetime, namely, the sin forbidden in the seventh commandment. Adultery, whether committed by the husband or the wife, is a just ground for divorce. It is a direct violation of the marriage vow, giving the aggrieved party a right to demand the dissolution of an engagement which the other has broken, by retracting the pledge solemnly given at its commencement. You will observe, however, that adultery does not *ipso facto* dissolve the conjugal relation: it only invests the sufferer with a right to demand the dissolution of it from the competent authority; if the wife or the husband does not choose to exercise the right, things remain as they were" (Professor John Dick, 1764-1833).

Polygamy was divinely reprobated from the beginning: by God's creation of but one woman for Adam, and by His command for the husband to "cleave unto his wife"—therein He intimated His will for the regulation of the sexes and under what divine sanction the human family should be propagated. But it was not long after sin had entered this world that men began to defy God's prohibition, for as early as Genesis 4:19, we read, "And Lamech took unto him *two* wives." It should be carefully noted that Lamech was one of the degenerate offspring of *Cain*, and that he was the *sixth* (not the seventh) generation from Adam! That evil example of his ensnared good men at a later date. Some have sought to excuse their sin, arguing that polygamy was virtually a necessity in the early generations of the race, when the earth was so thinly populated. But that is carnal reasoning and a presumptuous and impious inference, for the fact remains that God never authorized either Lamech or any of the patriarchs to take unto him a second wife. Moreover, it is to be carefully noted that whereas God gave orders for "sevens" of the clean beasts to be taken into the ark, He restricted Noah and his sons to their own sole wives!

Going back a little, a word needs to be said upon the matter of the propagation of the human race before the Fall, and whether the sons of Adam procured their wives (their own sisters) without the sin of incest. The only writer we are acquainted with who has boldly and honestly faced this problem, and who has, in our humble judgment, dealt with it faithfully and truly, is the late Professor Robert Lewis Dabney (1820-1898), of the Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. He rightly pointed out that, "The command to replenish the earth was given to Adam and Eve in their pure estate: which, had it continued, incest, like every other sin, would have been impossible. Who can deny, but that the marriages contracted between the sons and daughters of our first parents, after the Fall, were sinful in God's eyes? It is not unreasonable to suppose that, thus, the very propagation of the human race, to which its present earthly existence under the mercy of God is due, began in sin and shame; that its very perpetuation is the tolerated consequence of a flagrant crime!" To which we will add only one remark: in view of *this*, how could the course of human history be different from what it has been? From such a foul spring, nothing but polluted and bitter waters *could* issue.

It is ever a delicate matter—and should be a painful one—for any of God's children to make reference to the failings of their brethren, the more so when they be far more eminent than ourselves in piety and fruitfulness. Though the Holy Spirit has recorded both the virtues and the vices of the patriarchs, yet the latter are to be regarded by us as a warning and not for our imitation. We should remember, too, that the best of men are but men at the best. Only One has walked this earth who remained "without blemish and without spot" (1Pe 1:19). That such men as Abraham and Jacob took unto themselves a plurality of wives or concubines may be accounted for perhaps—though certainly not excused—by their heredity and environment. Abraham, we know, was reared amid idolatry, and in all probability spent the first half of his life among those who practised polygamy; and thus, he learned "the way of the heathen" (Jer 10:2). Nor were moral conditions in Canaan any better than in Chaldea, and Jacob and others were no doubt guilty of following "a multitude to do evil" (Exo 23:2). But the cases of Gideon, Elkanah, David, and Solomon, after the giving of the Decalogue, are harder to account for.

It has been pointed out by some writers who sought to extenuate this sin of the patriarchs that Scripture contains no record of God's reproving them for the same; and therefore, it is very reprehensible for us to do so. But that is nothing to the point, for the argument from *silence* is much too precarious to build anything upon it: what *is* recorded in Holy Writ, and not drawing inferences from what is omitted, is our sole rule. Yet, while we do not read what God expressly admonished them for this offence, nevertheless, His Word makes it clear that His providential frowns fell upon them for the same. Two things should be duly noted. First, that in the earlier instances, some sin or other is specifically mentioned as being the occasion thereof. Thus, Abraham's taking Hagar was because of Sarah's unbelief (Gen 16:1-2). And Jacob's taking Rachel to wife after Leah, and his own discontent arising from it, was occasioned by Laban's unjust dealings with him. His cohabiting with Bilhah was due to Rachel's inordinate desire for children; and his taking of Zilpah by Leah's ambitious desire of having the pre-eminence over Rachel and the number of her children (Gen 29 and 30).

Second, the displeasure of God upon this sin was almost always intimated by a breach of that peace, which is so desirable a blessing in the family. Accordingly, we read of an irreconcilable quarrel between Sarah and Hagar, and of Ishmael's hatred of Isaac, which the apostle calls being "persecuted" (Gal 4:29). The repeated contentions that existed in Jacob's family, the envy expressed by the children of one of his wives against those of another, are well known. We must, therefore, conclude that Isaac's example is rather to be followed in this matter, who had but one wife and who loved her better than the other patriarchs did theirs—whose love was divided among several. The opposition which one wife expressed to another appears in the case of Peninnah against Hannah—the wives of Elkanah (1Sa 1). In our articles upon the life of David, we showed how heavily the chastening rod of the Lord came upon him and his household each time he took unto him an additional wife. The sorrows which Solomon brought down upon himself by his folly need no particularizing. Thus, the sad disorder in the households of those who kept a plurality of wives is obviously a beacon to those whose eyes are not blinded by prejudice.

Polygamy was clearly contrary to the divine institution of marriage; and the jealousies and dissensions which it introduced into those families, where we have mention of it, imports that such cases are recorded for our caution and not for our approval. In Leviticus 18:18, (see marginal rendering), Moses, in the code which regulated marriage, expressly prohibited the marriage of a second wife in the lifetime of the first, thus enjoining monogamy in terms as clear as those of Christ's. Throughout their ministrations, the Prophets frequently gave instructions how a man was to treat his wife, but never his "wives"! But it is objected that polygamy was practised by men too spiritual and too much blessed and owned by God to be capable of continuing to disobey an express precept. But was not even "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2Sa 23:1) guilty of murder?—and clearly the Decalogue forbid *that*! As one has truly said, "The history of good men, alas, shows us too plainly the power of general evil example, custom, temptation, and self-love, blinding the honest conscience" (Professor R. L. Dabney).

Finally, attention must be called to Malachi 2:14-15. There, the prophet was rebuking the sins of the Jews, and particularly those among them who were guilty of dealing "treacherously against the wife of his youth." There he points out, first, that marriage is a "covenant" (Mal 2:14). Second, that the Lord had been "witness between" the guilty husband and the innocent wife. Third, he takes him back to Genesis 2, reminding him that God made but "one" man for "one" woman at the beginning (Mal 2:15). Fourth, he points out that God had "the residue of the spirit," and therefore, could have made Adam a dozen wives, had He so pleased; but instead, He has appointed man but "one" wife, in order that "he might seek a *godly seed*" (Mal 2:15)—i.e., that his children might be maritally pure and not of different bloods, which polygamy prevents. Rightly did Thomas Ridgley (1667-1734) (the best of all the commentators on the Westminster Confession) point out that the "godly seed" has reference to the "practice of their fathers, and *not* that the character of *godly* refers to the children, for they could not be said to be either godly or ungodly as the consequence of their parents having one or more wives."

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

9. The Holy Bible

In the preceding articles, we have called attention to some of the evidences which demonstrate the existence of God: as seen in the revelation which He has made of Himself in creation, in man himself, in His shaping of human history, and in the person of His incarnate Son. We turn now to that written communication which He has vouchsafed us, namely, the Scriptures, commonly designated "the Bible," which means "The Book," or more reverently, "The Holy Bible"—the Book which is separated from and exalted above all others, the Sacred Book. Concerning it, the Psalmist averred, "for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psa 138:2): that is, beyond all previous manifestations of the divine Being. In the Holy Scriptures, God has made a full discovery of Himself and a complete disclosure of His will. There, His glories are set forth in their meridian clarity and splendour. The Word is a glass in which the character and perfections of God may be seen, and in order to become better acquainted with Him, we need to more diligently peruse the same. Alas, that so very few of this generation do so. Alas, that so many preachers discourage such a duty.

Nearly forty years ago, in one of our earliest publications, we wrote: "To all who are acquainted with the spiritual conditions of our day, it is apparent that there is being made at this time a determined attempt to set aside the authority of the Bible. In the press, the pulpit, and the pew, its divine Authorship is being questioned and denied. The Serpent's words to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen 3:1) are being heard in every quarter of Christendom. The ancient "landmarks" of our fathers are being abandoned, the foundations of our religion undermined, and for the most part, the Bible is no longer regarded as the Word of God.

"In every age, the Bible has been the object of attack and assault: every available weapon in the devil's arsenal has been used in the effort to destroy the temple of God's truth. In the first days of the Christian era, the attack of the enemy was made openly—the bonfire being the chief instrument of destruction. But in these 'last days,' the assault is made in a more subtle manner, and comes from a more unexpected quarter. The divine origin of the Scriptures is now disputed in the name of 'Scholarship' and 'Science'—and that, too, by those who profess to be the friends and champions of the Bible. Much of the learning and theological activities of the hour are concentrated in the attempt to discredit and destroy the accuracy and authority of God's Word, the result being that thousands of nominal Christians are plunged into a sea of doubt and tossed about by every wind of the destructive 'Higher Criticism.' Many of those who are paid to stand in our pulpits and defend the truth of God are now the very ones engaged in sowing the seeds of unbelief and destroying the faith of those to whom they minister."

Today, we behold some of the fearful crops which have resulted from that evil sowing: "some of," we say, for it is greatly to be feared that the *full* harvest does not yet appear. Shocking and appalling is the situation which is already spread before us. It has become increasingly evident—even to many who make no pretensions unto spirituality—that the restraining hand of God has been more and more removed from the world, till a spirit of utter lawlessness and recklessness now possesses a large proportion of mankind. But only those with an anointed eye can perceive *why* this is so, namely, because the influence formerly exerted by God's Word was suppressed. The majority of church-goers of the preceding generations had instilled into them doubts upon the authenticity of Holy Writ: theological professors and "up-to-date" preachers only denied its supernatural character. Once the awe-inspiring authority of God's Word was removed, the most potent bridle upon the lusts and passions of the masses was gone. Where there is no longer any fear of divine judgment after death, what is left to curb the activities of sin?

The present state of society is due to the infidelity of "the churches" during the past century, and the apostasy of Christendom began by losing its grip upon the basic truth of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures; and there is no hope whatever of Christendom being recovered from its present corrupt condition and woeful plight, until it regains that grip, until it recognizes and avows that the Bible is a messenger from heaven, a direct communication from God, imperiously demanding complete subjection of conscience to its authority and total subjugation of the mind and will to its requirements. It has, therefore, become the imperative duty of God's servants to put first things first: to affirm with clarion voice the divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Bible, to present to their hearers some of the many "infallible proofs" (Act 1:3) by which it is authenticated, that they may "know the certainty of those things" (Luk 1:4) wherein they are instructed. Thereby, God Himself will be honoured—a sure foundation laid for faith to rest upon, the only

specific provided for the disease of materialism and infidelity, and the alone barrier against the inroads of Romanism.

There is not a shadow of doubt in our mind that Rome was behind the "Higher Criticism" movement of last century, just as she was of the introduction and spread of Arminianism in England (through Archbishop William Laud, 1573-1645) shortly after the Reformation. The Papacy was shrewd enough to recognize that the authority of God's Word must be undermined, and its influence upon the nation weakened, before she had any hope of bringing it within her deadly toils. There is nothing she hates and dreads so much as the Bible, especially when it is circulated among the common people in their own tongue, as was clearly shown in the days of Queen Mary I (1516-1558), of infamous memory. The organization of the Bible Societies, with their enormous output, was a rude shock to Rome, but she promptly countered it through "Modernism," by discrediting the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The promulgation of the so-called, "Higher Criticism" has done far more for the spread of infidelity among the masses than did the coarse blasphemies of Thomas Paine (1737-1809); and it is among those who have no settled convictions that Rome wins most of her converts!

Now the most effective way to oppose error is to preach the truth, as the way to dispel darkness from a room is to let in or turn on the light. Satan is well pleased if he can induce those whom God has called to expound His Law and proclaim His Gospel to turn aside and seek to expose the fallacies of the various cults and isms. When the disciples of Christ informed Him that the Pharisees were offended at His teaching, He bade them, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind" (Mat 15:14)—waste no time upon them. When the servants of the Householder asked permission to remove the tares which His enemy had sown in His field, He *forbade* them (Mat 13:29). The business of Christ's ministers is to sow—and continue sowing—the good Seed, and not to root up tares! Their work is to be a positive and constructive one, and not merely a negative and destructive thing. Their task is to "preach the word" (2Ti 4:2), faithfully and diligently, in dependency upon the Spirit, looking to God for His blessing upon the same. And what is so urgently needed today is that they proclaim with earnest conviction, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2Ti 3:16).

That claim is no empty one, but rather one that is attested by unimpeachable witnesses and verified by incontrovertible evidence. It bears in it and upon it the infallible tokens of its divine origin; and it is the bounden duty and holy privilege of God's servants to present—simply and convincingly—some of the various and conclusive evidence which demonstrates the uniqueness of the Bible. They cannot possibly engage in a more important and needed task than in seeking to establish their hearers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, for it is of the greatest possible moment they should be thoroughly settled in that truth. The human mind cannot engage itself with any inquiry more momentous than this: "Has the Bible come from God? Is it a divine revelation and communication addressed unto us personally from our Maker?" If it is, then it has claims upon us such as are possessed by no other writings. If it is not, then it is a wicked imposture, utterly unworthy of our serious consideration. Those are the sole alternatives. Hence, this is "the doctrine of doctrines: the doctrine that teaches us all others, and in virtue of which alone they are doctrines" (François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen, 1790-1863).

Before we call attention to some of the abundant and varied evidence which manifest the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, perhaps we should meet an objection which a few may be inclined to raise: Is it not largely a waste of time for you to furnish demonstration of a truth which no genuine Christian doubts? We do not think so. All of God's people are not equally well established; and in any case, faith cannot have too firm a foothold, especially in a day when the tide of infidelity is seeking to sweep everything away into the sea of scepticism. It is good for Christians themselves to be more fully assured that they have not followed "cunningly devised fables" (2Pe 1:16), but have an unmistakable, "Thus saith the LORD" as the foundation of all their hopes. Moreover, as another has pointed out, "Faith needs food as well as foothold, and it is upon these divine verities, so plainly revealed and so clearly established in the Word of truth, that faith finds its choicest provision."

Further, these evidences are of value to the Christian in that they enable him to give an intelligent and rational answer to those who inquire after knowledge. God requires His people to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1Pe 3:15). Thus, we must be able to reply to any who seriously ask us, Wherefore do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God? But our chief desire and design will be to furnish young preachers with material to use in sermons, aimed at resolving the perplexities and removing the doubts which perturb not a few of

their hearers, and so counter and nullify the infidelities of modern "education." Yet, here again, we must anticipate an objection: Since the regenerate alone are capable of discerning spiritual things, why attempt to convince the unregenerate that the Bible is a divine book? If faith be the sole ear competent to hear the voice of God, why try to reason with unbelievers?

While it be true that no arguments—however convincing in themselves—can remove the veil of prejudice from the understanding of the unregenerate, or convert the heart unto God, yet that is far from allowing that such means possess no value. It has often been said by good men that the Scriptures are addressed to *faith*. That is true, yet only a part of the truth, for if it were taken absolutely, it must follow they are not addressed to any devoid of faith—which is palpable error. Our Lord bade the skeptical Jews "search the Scriptures" (Joh 5:39), and declared, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Joh 12:48); thereby showing plainly the natural man is under binding obligations to heed and be subject unto the Word! The fact is that the Word is addressed to man as a rational creature, as a moral agent, as a responsible being; and it carries its own evidence—evidence which is addressed both to the reason and conscience.

"These arguments are such as are able of themselves to beget in the minds of men—sober, humble, intelligent, and unprejudiced—a firm opinion, judgment, and persuasion that the Scripture doth proceed from God" (John Owen, 1616-1683). They are evidences which show the irrationality of infidelity, and render those faced with them without excuse for rejecting the same. They are such as nothing but perverse prejudice can restrain men from assenting thereto. It is a fact that of those who have written against the Bible, not one has soberly and seriously undertaken to refute the evidence which they knew had been adduced for the veracity of its history, the fulfilment of its prophecies, the reality of its miracles, and the purity and consistency of its doctrine. They close the mouths of gainsayers. Such arguments afford relief to the mind from the objections of sceptics, for if weighed impartially, they must produce a moral assurance of the truth of Scripture. Thus, they dispose the mind to approach the Bible with confidence and pave the way for receiving it as God's Word.

Such arguments go to show that Christians are not a company of credulous simpletons, but have good reason for their faith. They are a means of strengthening and establishing those who have accepted the Bible on less satisfactory grounds. Few look farther than human authority and public countenance. The majority believe the Scriptures in the same way as Mohammedans do the Koran: because it is the tradition of their fathers. But wisdom is to be justified of her children, so that they walk in her ways by a rational choice. When the Spouse is asked, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" (Song 5:9), she is not backward in making reply; and when the worldling asks, "What is your Bible above what the heathen appeal to in support of their superstitions," we should be able to give an intelligent answer.

Nevertheless, some are still apt to conclude it is useless to enter into such a discussion, insisting that the Bible is to be believed and not argued about, that arguments at best will only produce a human faith. But it is not a thing to be despised if we can prepare the young to *respect* God's Word, and then seek the Spirit's confirmation. Sometimes a human faith makes way for a divine. The testimony borne by the woman from the well issued in that very sequel: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (Joh 4:39, 42). It is much to be thankful for when we can persuade people upon good grounds that the Bible is the Word of God, so that they are induced to make trial of it for themselves, for often that leads to their obtaining an experimental verification from the Holy Spirit. The revelation which God has made of Himself unto mankind through His wondrous works—both in creation and in providence—are addressed unto their reasoning faculty, and render them without excuse for their unbelief of His existence (Rom 1:19-20). Equally so is the more complete discovery of Himself which God has given to the world in His written Word, addressed to the intelligence and conscience of those favoured with it; and therefore, will it in the Day to come condemn all who refused to conform unto the divine will, as it is there made known to them. Hence, it behoves preachers to press the inerrancy and divine authority of the Holy Bible.