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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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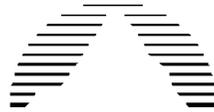
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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LOOK UPWARD

This brief message is designed as the sequel unto the opening one in the January issue, for certain it is that we shall only be able to *go forward* as we steadfastly look upward for all-needed grace. Faith is to the soul what the eye is to the body—namely, that which enables its possessor to look outside of himself and steadfastly fix his gaze on an external object. And hence it is that the exercise and act of faith is so often referred to in the Word under the figure of “lifting up the eyes” and “looking unto the LORD.” Look upward! Was not that the very first thing which the blessed Spirit taught you, dear friend, after He had revealed to you your lost condition and made you realize you were a guilty, polluted, and undone sinner? As the serpent-bitten Israelites were bidden to look up to the brazen serpent upon the pole, so you were taught to look upon the crucified Saviour as the One who was willing and able to meet your dire need. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22).

Now, as you commenced, so you must continue (Col 2:6). Christ enthroned in glory is henceforth to be the grand Object of your contemplation and adoration. Look up to Him daily and view Him by faith as the eternal Lover of your soul, as the Lord of your righteousness, as the Bread of life to feed upon. Contemplate Him as “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14). However cold, dull, and corrupt you feel to be in yourself, let your very consciousness of the same serve to drive you more and more out of yourself, to rest wholly on what He did and suffered for you, and what *He now is to you*. Since He is your Saviour, who loved you and gave Himself for you, make use of Him. Live by faith upon Him, and thereby you will please and honour Him. Look by faith within the veil and take a view of what your great High Priest is there doing for you: He has all your concerns before Him, and is making all things work together for your good (Rom 8:28). Let that encourage you to cast all your care upon Him and entrust all your concerns to Him.

Now, it is Satan’s chief business to hinder Christ’s redeemed from so doing—for not only does he hate Christ, but he knows he cannot prevail with you while you be believingly and lovingly absorbed with Him and drawing strength from Him. Therefore, he will do everything in his power to keep you from this “one thing...needful” (Luk 10:42). He did so when you were under conviction of sin. He sought to get you occupied entirely with your guilt and defilement, telling you your case was hopeless and trying to drive you to despair. When you were half delivered from that snare, he set you to work trying to save yourself by a process of reformation and religious exercises. But you found there was no relief for your lacerated conscience and burdened heart, until you looked away from self and beheld “the Lamb of God” (Joh 1:29, 36)—taking your place, and suffering, the Just for the unjust. Only as you turned the eye of a feeble and flickering faith unto the atoning Redeemer did your burden roll away, and peace surpassing all understanding fill your soul.

But Satan is very persistent. Even though you did find pardon and peace at the Cross, he will not abandon his efforts to entangle you afresh, rob you of peace and joy, and bring you into darkness and bondage. He will now seek to get you absorbed with self, to dwell unduly upon your failings (instead of confessing them to Christ), and push you down into the slough of despond. If that succeeds not, he will endeavour to get you occupied with your graces and attainments, telling you what wonderful progress you have made, and puffing you up with pride. Or he will absorb your mind with your “service for Christ,” your evangelistic zeal and love for souls, and try and persuade you of being an eminent Christian. We are not ignorant of his devices (2Co 2:11), or, at any rate, we ought not to be so with God’s Word in our hands; and therefore, we should “resist the devil” (Jam 4:7) and refuse to be ensnared by him—constantly looking upward to the Lord.

Many of God’s children are ensnared by Satan today by quite a different device from those mentioned above—namely, by getting them unduly concerned with what is happening in the world. He persuades them that it is their duty to be well informed upon current events—that it is necessary for them to “keep up with the times” and take an intelligent interest in what is occurring in different parts of the earth, and particularly with the political and social conditions in their own country. He would fix their minds on the sensational items recorded in the newspapers, devoting much time to reading and listening in to the news of the day. And what good is accomplished thereby? Your concern over the doings of the Kremlin and your dismay at the successes of the Vatican will not affect either of them one iota. No, but it will injuriously affect *you*! It will get you absorbed with carnal things and take the edge off your appetite for spiritual

things. Look upward and contemplate the Divine Throne. *God* is ruling this world, working out His eternal purpose, having “*his way in the whirlwind and in the storm*” (Nah 1:3).

Then emulate the Psalmist: said he, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psa 121:1); and then, turning from poetic language to plain prose, added, “My help cometh from the LORD” (Psa 121:2). For the benefit of young preachers, let us say that were we sermonizing this verse, our divisions would be: 1. A definite decision—“I will.” 2. A right resolve—“I will lift up mine eyes.” 3. An obvious object—“unto the hills” (the Lord). 4. An eager expectation—“from whence cometh [not “possibly may come”] my help.” It was the look of faith and hope; and such a look is never put to confusion. It was the opposite of slothful inertia or fatalistic apathy. He did not say, “I will wait until I feel moved by the Spirit,” but determined upon discharging his own responsibility. He had no right to expect it, unless he *sought* it—sought it definitely, resolutely, earnestly, believingly. “Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa 30:18); and He often waits for our importunate waiting upon Him, for only then do we really value His gracious supplies.

“My *help* cometh from the LORD” (Psa 121:2). That is a very comprehensive word which includes a great variety of blessings. Let us conclude with a short, “Bible reading” which will serve to open the meaning of this “help” and at the same time, set forth the different favours *for which* it is the Christian’s privilege to *look upward*. 1. For a daily supply of grace: “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psa 5:3). 2. For wisdom: “Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2Ch 20:12). 3. For deliverance from temptations: “Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net” (Psa 25:15). 4. For illumination and transformation: “They looked unto him, and were lightened” (Psa 34:5). 5. For directions: “As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, . . . so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God” (Psa 123:2). 6. For comfort: “Mine eyes are unto thee . . . leave not my soul destitute” (Psa 141:8). 7. For the awing of the heart: “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things” (Isa 40:26). 8. For courage: “Not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). 9. For perseverance: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:1-2). 10. For the appearing of Christ, “Looking for that blessed hope” (Ti 2:13).

N.B.¹ We need scarcely point out that the last paragraph contains “seed thoughts” which will furnish suitable material, if he develops them, for the sermonizer.

¹ **N.B.** – Latin *Nota Bene*: a note of special importance.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

38. *Colossians 1:9-12, Part 2*

“That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). This opening petition was for something very much more than a bare notional acquaintance with the Divine will—an increase of their intellectual information; rather was it a request that the saints should be brought into a fuller and more acceptable *obedience*. It is God’s preceptive and authoritative will which is in view; and the “knowledge” thereof is a practical and operative one, which is to be evidenced in a worthy walk. The babe in Christ has the *principle* of obedience in his heart (Divinely communicated grace and holiness), but it needs feeding, strengthening, quickening, illuminating, and directing, so that that principle of obedience may act aright and perform those things which God has appointed—and not those which human tradition has invented, or which natural sentiment or personal inclination may dictate. We saw that *this* came first in the prayer of Ephesians 1: “Give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge [and “acknowledgment”—*margin*] of him” (Eph 1:17). So also was it made the opening petition for the Philippian saints: “That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Phi 1:9). Thus, we see the prime importance of this blessing.

In our last [issue], we pointed out that this petition has respect unto an affectionate and operative knowledge, which is increased as the child of God is favoured with a better understanding of Divine objects. The clearer and fuller be his views of them, the more is his heart drawn out unto them. The more we perceive the ineffable beauty of Divine things, the more is the soul sensibly influenced by them. Those things which are the objects on which the Christian’s love is to be acted, particularly the Divine precepts, must be discerned in their true nature and excellence before there can be spiritual delight in them. While there be no spiritual understanding of spiritual things, there can be no spiritual pleasure in them. We are quite deceived if we suppose our love for God’s commandments is increasing, unless there be a growing realization of their *worth*. There can be no growth of spiritual love without an increase of spiritual knowledge. The more a Christian knows the importance and value of His rule, the more will he be taken with it. Herein lies the defect of much modern religion: either an attempt to stir the emotions by sentimental appeals, or exhorting unto the exercise of love without presenting those things which feed love and spontaneously draw it forth.

Faith is fed by knowledge and works by love; and therefore, the fuller and deeper be the soul’s experimental acquaintance with God, and the more his affections be drawn out unto and centered upon Him, the more will faith and love produce that obedience which is honouring unto Him. As it is a spiritual knowledge of the Lord as He is revealed to the heart that causes us to put our trust in Him (Psa 9:10), as it is a believing sight in Him as our suffering Surety which opens the floodgates of evangelical repentance (Zec 12:10), so it is a sense of our deep indebtedness to Him a spirit of gratitude, which issues in acceptable obedience. The more we apprehend God’s infinite worthiness, the more shall we strive to walk worthily before Him. The more we behold His excellency, the more will our hearts be inflamed toward Him. The more intimate and constant be our communion with Him, the more shall we delight ourselves in Him, and the more tender shall we be of those things which grieve Him. So, too, the more we perceive of the high sovereignty and majesty of God, the more shall we be awed by and be amenable to His authority, and the more diligent shall we be in cleaving to that path in which alone fellowship with Him can be enjoyed.

There are many today who have a most inadequate and defective idea of what fellowship with God consists of. They regard it as an especial luxury which is only enjoyed occasionally, whereas it should be so regularly. They imagine it is experienced only when their souls are ecstatically elevated by some uncommonly powerful sermon, during some season of unusual liberty in prayer, or when meditating on some precious portion of the Word. But *that* is more a time when the soul is sensible of the Lord’s having drawn nigh unto and lifted up the light of His countenance upon him, favouring him with a special love-token. But it is something else we now have in mind. It is one of the great errors of Romanists that intimate that fellowship with God can be enjoyed only in the cloister: it can be had equally by the housewife while engaged in her domestic tasks, and by her husband as he works for his daily bread. God graciously communes with each of His people while they are about their daily callings, if their secular duties be discharged in obedience to Him—thankful to be engaged in making an honest living, thankful also for the health and strength which enables them to do so.

What we particularly have in mind—and what is exactly parallel with the first two petitions of that prayer we are here considering—are those words, “He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isa 2:3). To teach us of His ways is for God to fill us with “the knowledge of his will” (Col 1:9); and for us to walk in His paths is to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10). A well-known hymn expresses this desire: “O for a closer walk with God.” Well, my reader, there is only one way in which that longing can be realised; and that is by cleaving more exactly to the paths which He has marked out for us. God holds communion with us in “His Ways” and in none other—namely, “the paths of righteousness” (Psa 23:3). We cannot walk with God in a way of self-will and self-pleasing, nor in the broad road trodden by the world. Every step we take in the right way—the one of God’s revealed will—is one of obedience, and God accompanies us therein. But the moment we forsake the path of duty, and wander into what Bunyan² styles “By-path meadow,” we turn away from God, and leave the only place wherein fellowship with Him may be had.

“In all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). Those added words not only intimate the sort of “knowledge” for which the Christian is to pray and endeavour, but also what is necessary in order for him to employ such knowledge unto advantage. In this superficial age, knowledge and wisdom are often confounded, yet they are far from being synonymous. There are many learned fools in the world: frequently, the almost illiterate exercise more natural intelligence than does the average university graduate. “Wisdom” is the capacity to make a right and good use of knowledge. Even when we have considerable knowledge of God’s will, much wisdom and spiritual understanding is required in order to go in the path of His commandments. Sometimes it is the Christian’s duty to admonish an erring brother, yet he is likely to do him more harm than good, unless he speaks discreetly. There is a time and a season to every thing (Ecc 3:1), but good judgment and spiritual discernment are requisite in order to recognise the same. Much prudence is called for to rightly distinguish between relative duties: to deliberately neglect secular duties in order to feast upon spiritual things, to deprive my family of things which they urgently need in order to give more liberally to the Lord’s cause, to forsake my wife in the evenings to engage in religious activities, betrays an absence of spiritual understanding.

How the believer needs to pray, “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts” (Psa 119:27), to be taught how to walk in each duty and every detail of conduct! It is not sufficient to have a general and notional knowledge of the Word: it must be translated into practice; and for that, spiritual insight is required, so that we may perceive when and where and how to perform each action. Some are wise in the general who err sadly in particular details. Only that wisdom which cometh from above will enable us to order our lives in every relation and situation according to the revealed will of God. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law” (Psa 119:34 and compare verses 73, 144, 169). See how often David repeated that petition! Many times, God’s children are placed in a dilemma when they have to choose between duties: duty to God, to their family, to their neighbours. Wisdom and spiritual understanding are required to show them when the one is to be dispensed with and the other performed, when the inferior is to yield to the superior. Circumstances have to be observed, as well as actions, that we may know when to “stand still” and when to “go forward.” We are not to act on impulse, but be regulated by principle.

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10). This is the second thing Paul requested for the saints; and there is an inseparable connection between them, for this cannot be realized except the first be actualized. The walk and works of a person are determined both in quality and quantity by his ignorance or knowledge of God’s will, and by the measure of his wisdom and spiritual understanding. Or to state it another way: here we are shown the use to which such knowledge is to be put. As another said in a different connection, “Our aim in getting an understanding of God’s Word is not that we may wrangle about questions, but direct and order our conversation. The Word was not given us to try the acuteness of our wits in disputing, but the readiness of our obedience in performing” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). As we pointed out in our last [issue], that knowledge of God’s will for which the Christian should pray and labour consists not of a prying into God’s secret decrees, speculating about the personal relations between the three Persons in the Trinity, or the eternal destiny of those who are cut off in infancy, nor in theorizing about the future history

² **Bunyan** – John Bunyan (1620-1677): English minister, preacher, and one of the most influential writers of the 17th century. Beloved author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *The Holy War*, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, and numerous others. Born at Elstow near Bedford, England.

of this world under the guise of studying prophecy; but rather, in learning what God requires from us, and how we may be enabled to meet those requirements.

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord” (Col 1:10). That is, of “Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:11), as is always the case, except in two or three passages like Acts 4:29; Revelation 11:15. “Walking” is a term which is applied in Scripture to the conduct or behaviour of persons. It points to the active rather than the passive side of the Christian’s life. It expresses not only motion, but voluntary motion, in contrast with being carried or dragged. It imports progressive motion or going forward, an advancing in holiness. It signifies the fixing and holding of a steady course in our journey heavenward. As “walking” is in contrast with sitting and lying down, so also from an aimless meandering—a keeping to the way which God has marked out for us. But what is meant by “walking *worthily*”—as it should be rendered, and is so in the R.V.? Certainly not meritoriously, as the Papists teach, for it is impossible for the creature to do anything to make God his Debtor, or entitle him to reward as a matter of justice—“When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luk 17:10). But no Christian ever did all that he was commanded; and even if he had, so imperfectly, it would be unacceptable to God were it not for the mediation of the Redeemer.

But it may be rejoined, Are we not told, “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev 5:12), and is not that the same term? Yes, save that it is in its adjectival form. The Lamb is indeed worthy, infinitely worthy, but no mere creature is so; no, not even the holy angels, as this very same passage expressly declares. When the question was asked, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” (Rev 5:2), we are informed, “And no man [Greek—“no one”] in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. . . . And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book” (Rev 5:3-4), which decisively and for ever disposes of the Romish fiction. But there is a worthiness of congruity (fitness), as well as a worthiness of condignity (deservingness); and it is the former which is here in view. To “walk worthy of the Lord” (Col 1:10) signifies to conduct ourselves as becometh saints, to act in accordance with the character of the One whose name we bear and whose followers we profess to be. To walk worthily of the Lord means to comport ourselves suitably and agreeably to our relation and indebtedness unto Him, to carry ourselves meetly as those who are not their own—the same Greek word is rendered “as becometh” in Romans 16:2 and Philippians 1:27.

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]” (1Pe 1:14-15) serves to interpret what has just been before us. Let the livery of your daily lives make manifest your change of masters. Formerly you served your lusts, but that was in the days of your ignorance when you were strangers to God. Now that you have enlisted under the banner of the Lord Jesus and have the “knowledge of his will” (Col 1:9), evince it in a practical way: “Walk worthy [“becomingly”] of the Lord” (Col 1:10). How? “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phi 2:5). And what was that? The mind of self-abnegation—veiling His glory and taking upon Him the form of a servant. The mind of self-abasement—making Himself “of no reputation” (Phi 2:7). The mind of voluntary subjection and unre-served surrender—“he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8) How? By the life of Christ being reproduced in us, so far as our measure and capacity admits—that we “may grow up into him in all things” (Eph 4:15). How? By making Him our Exemplar—“because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). Only in proportion as we do shall we “walk worthy of the Lord” (Col 1:10).

To “walk worthy of the Lord” is the great task which is assigned the Christian; and it is to be attempted with the utmost seriousness as his principal care, and attended to with unwearied diligence as a matter of the utmost importance. To honour that blessed One whose we are and whom we serve, to so conduct myself that fellow saints glorify God in me (Gal 1:24), to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Ti 2:10), should be my supreme quest and business—one which is never to be forgotten or laid aside. The Christian ought to be even more earnest in endeavouring to approve himself unto God than they are who contend so zealously for the honours of this world, and those who devote all their energies unto the acquirement of its riches. We should make it our constant employ to bring no reproach upon the name of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Otherwise, we cannot magnify Him nor His cause here upon earth. It is not our talk, but our walk that most furthers His interests. People soon forget what we say, but they long remember Christ-like conduct. Actions speak louder than words. The Lord has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, so that we should *show forth* His praises or “virtues” (1Pe 2:9).

If we be not walking worthily of the Lord, we lack evidence of our title to heaven. Of Enoch, it is said that “before his translation [to heaven] he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb 11:5). That looks back to Genesis 5:22 and 24, where we are told that “Enoch walked with God.” Therein, he “pleased God”; and that testimony bore witness to his eternal inheritance. Only as holiness is our care do we have a token and an earnest that heaven is our portion—for without holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). It is indeed the merits of Christ which alone give anyone title to the Inheritance, yet personal holiness confirms that title unto us. There is no good hope toward Christ where there is no sincere effort to honour Him: “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1Jo 2:3). Only those are meet to live with Him hereafter who make conscience of walking with Him here: at death, we change our place, but not our company. “They shall walk with me in white: *for* they are worthy” (Rev 3:4)—fitly disposed and prepared to do so. On the other hand, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived” (1Co 6:9-10)—those who gratify the flesh are necessarily excluded.

Unless we give the utmost attention unto our daily walk and the ordering of it by the revealed will of God, we break that covenant which we solemnly entered into with Him at our conversion. It was then that we renounced all other lords, forsook our idols, surrendered ourselves to the righteous claims of the Lord and promised that henceforth, we would love Him with all our hearts and serve Him with all our strength. It was then that we voluntarily and deliberately entered upon a course of obedience to Him, choosing the things that please Him, and thereby taking hold of His covenant (Isa 56:4). Consequently, to return unto the pleasing of self, or to seek the favour of men or the applause of the world, is a denial of the covenant and a throwing off of the yoke of Christ, which formerly we took freely upon us. It is a practical denial that we are not our own, but bought with a price. Such deplorable backsliding will issue in having a conscience which is no longer “void of offence” (Act 24:16), but rather one that accuses and condemns us. The joy of salvation is then lost, the light of God’s countenance is then hid from us, that peace “which passeth all understanding” is no longer our portion (Phi 4:7). Instead, darkness and doubts possess the heart, the rod of Divine chastisement falls heavily upon us, our prayers remain unanswered, relish for the Word is gone.

We cannot enjoy conscious communion with Him, unless we walk worthily of the Lord. We cannot have the comfort of His presence in every company or in all conditions. If we consort with the ungodly, the Lord is grieved and will evince His displeasure. If we turn to the pleasures of this world for satisfaction, His smile will be withheld from us. If we indulge the lusts of the flesh, it will be said to us as it was to His people of old, “your iniquities have *separated* between you and your God” (Isa 59:2). It is the one who hath Christ’s commandments and keepeth them who proves his love to Him, and to whom He says, “and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Joh 14:21). And again, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Joh 14:23). Nor can we otherwise even enjoy the creature or the things of this life: “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; [when?] *for* God now accepteth thy works” (Ecc 9:7). When our walk be right, then our earthly comforts are satisfying, for we taste God’s love in them and can use them as His blessings with thankfulness and cheerfulness. Contrariwise, He sends a curse upon our blessings (Mal 2:2).

But let us strike a higher note, and—rising above necessity, the requirements of duty, and personal expediency—come to *holy privilege*. The Christian has been “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1Co 1:9). What an inestimable favour is that! How highly it should be valued, how tenderly cherished! And “fellowship,” be it remembered, is a joint affair, a mutual thing, and therefore, is that searching question put to each of us who bear His name, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3)—that is, except they be one in disposition, desire and aim. He is the Holy One; and if I forsake the highway of holiness, then I turn from His presence. The root idea of fellowship is partnership—one having in common with another. In His wondrous love and amazing condescension, the Lord Jesus deigned to make the interests of His people His own. That was unspeakable grace on His part; and what does it call for from us? Surely that deepest gratitude should now make His interests ours, that we should exercise the utmost circumspection in avoiding everything which would injure His interests, and that we should now exert ourselves to the utmost in promoting the honour of His name on earth. Love so amazing, so Divine, demands my love, my life, my all. What can I render unto the Lord for all His benefits, but earnestly endeavour to walk worthily of Him.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

18. *The Ark (3:3-4)*

“And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore” (Jos 3:3-4). Keeping in mind the principal things which have already been before us—that this was a new generation of Israel which was about to enter into their heritage; that that heritage prefigured the portion and privileges which should, in this life, be enjoyed by the Christian; that the ark was an outstanding type of the person of Christ; that the particular name by which it is here designated intimates the special character in which Christ is to be viewed and followed by the believer; that Israel’s crossing of the Jordan and entrance into Canaan is fraught with the most important practical instruction for us today—let us proceed.

The ark was the sacred chest in which the two tables of stone were deposited, and thus it pointed to Christ as our Lawgiver (Psa 40:8; Joh 14:15). The ten commandments were the terms of the covenant which was mutually entered into between Jehovah and Israel at Sinai (Exo 34:28); and it was on the basis of their compliance or non-compliance with that solemn pact that the Lord agreed to deal with Israel and make good His promises to Abraham. Hence the name by which the ark is called throughout Joshua 3 and 4. Thus the ark here prefigured Christ as the believer’s *Covenant-head*, the meaning of which, though of the first moment, is alas little understood today. It is in the Gospel that Christ is tendered unto us as such; and it is by our complying with its terms that the soul enters into a covenant with Him. “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” or “the Beloved” (Isa 55:3). That is the Gospel offer or proposal, and our acceptance thereof is a joining ourselves “to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD” and is a taking hold of His covenant (Isa 56:6).

That which will best enable us to grasp the basic truth which we are here concerned with is the *marriage contract*—for marriage is a covenant voluntarily, lovingly, and solemnly entered into between two parties, wherein each gives himself or herself unto the other, disowning all rivals, pledging unending fidelity, vowing to make the interests and welfare of the other his or her own. Nothing less than, is what the Lord requires from man. The evangelist calls upon his hearers to throw down the weapons of their enmity against Him, forsake all illicit lovers, and unite themselves with those who declare, “Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten” (Jer 50:5). Thus it was in that wondrous and blessed foreshadowment in Genesis 24, where Abraham (figure of the father) sent forth his servant Eliezer (figure first of the Holy Spirit, yet principally of the evangelist through whom He works) to seek and woo a wife (emblem of the Church collectively, and of the believer individually) for his son Isaac—Christ; the whole of which sets before us a most instructive picture of the preaching of the Gospel, both from the standpoint of God’s sovereign grace and the enforcing of human responsibility—though, as usual, the latter is ignored by most Calvinistic writers thereon.

As the figure of the evangelist, we may note how Eliezer received most specific instructions from Abraham concerning his mission and how that servant obediently complied therewith (Gen 24:1-10). Then we observe how Eliezer betook himself unto prayer, asking the Lord to grant him “good speed” and success on his errand (Gen 24:12)—an unmistakably plain intimation that Eliezer is not to be regarded solely as a type of the Holy Spirit. When Abraham’s servant encountered the object of his quest, he presented her with tokens of his good will (Gen 24:22), and extolled the excellency of his master (Gen 24:35). Then we behold how she was required to make a personal decision: “Wilt thou go with this man?” (Gen 24:58): she had to choose for herself, freely and deliberately. Such a decision—personal and definite—is required from the sinner as the terms of the Gospel are presented unto him, for they are addressed to him as a moral agent, testing and enforcing his responsibility. “And she said, I will go” (Gen 24:58). She was willing and ready to turn her back upon the old life, and forsake her family to become the wife of Isaac. “And she became his wife” (Gen 24:67), and never regretted her decision. And that is the grand type and picture of a soul entering into an everlasting covenant with the Lord Jesus, the eternal Lover of His people—made willing in the day of His power.

In full accord with the striking type of Genesis 24, we find our Lord Himself speaking of the Gospel-order thus: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a *marriage* for his son" (Mat 22:2), upon which Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly averred, "The Gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and the believer, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here"—by which he meant that the wedding feast and its guests is what is mainly dwelt upon in the sequel. Concerning the force of the "marriage" figure itself, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) aptly said, "The union of the Son of God with man by assuming human nature; the endeared relationship into which He receives His Church and every member of it; the spiritual honours, riches and blessings to which they are advanced by this sacred relation; the comforts they receive from His condescending and faithful love, and from communion with Him; and the reciprocal duties of their relation to Him are all intimated by the metaphor." True, yet, with their accustomed partiality and lack of balance, most preachers have dwelt considerably upon the first four of these analogies, but have been criminally silent upon the "reciprocal duties" which that relation involves, and which we are here insisting upon.

The same lopsidedness is seen again in the explanations given of Matthew 22:11: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." T. Scott is right in saying, "This denotes that some who are not true believers appear as willing and welcome guests at the Gospel feast and intrude into its most sacred ordinances"; but it seems to us he quite missed the point when he added, "It is not material whether we understand the wedding garment to mean the imputed righteousness of Christ, or the sanctification of the Spirit; for both are alike necessary and they always go together." This parable is not treating so much of the Divine side of things, but rather the testing of human *responsibility* and the disclosing of its failures. Matthew 22, verses 3, 5, and 6 exhibit man's obstinacy and enmity, while verse 11 depicts the exposure of any empty profession. "If the Gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart and a course of life agreeable to the Gospel and our profession of it" (M. Henry). Many take up a profession of the Gospel and claim to be united to Christ without any newness of heart and life. They lack a disposition and conduct suited to Christ and his precepts: they are devoid of habitual and practical holiness. They have no marriage "certificate"!

Now none can enter into and enjoy the heritage which God has provided for His people, save those who have personally and experimentally passed from death unto life, who have entered into definite and solemn covenant with Him, and who cleave unto and conduct themselves by the commandments of Christ—the anti-typical Joshua. That is the great and grand truth portrayed here in Joshua 3 and 4; and it is because it is such a momentous one, and yet so little apprehended today, that we are labouring it so much in our comments upon this passage. It is at regeneration that the soul passes from death unto life, when by a sovereign act of God's power—wherein we are entirely passive—we are spiritually quickened, and thereby capacitated to turn unto Him. This miracle of grace is made manifest by the understanding of its subject being enlightened to perceive his awful enmity against God, by his conscience being convicted of his guilty and lost condition, by his affections being turned against sin so that he now loathes it, by his will being inclined Godwards; all of which issues in a genuine conversion or right-about-face—a forsaking of his wicked ways, an abandoning of his idols, a turning away from the world, and a taking of Christ to be his absolute Lord, all-sufficient Saviour, and everlasting Portion.

Such a conversion—and none other is a saving one—is an entering into covenant with God in Christ, and a being married or united unto Him. Hence we find the conversion of the Corinthians described thus: they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2Co 8:5): that is, they willingly yielded and gladly dedicated themselves unto the Lord—acknowledging the just requirements of His proprietorship and authority, and responding to the claims of His redeeming love as the only suitable acknowledgement of that debt which can never be repaid; and gave up themselves unto His servants to be directed by them—which is ratified in baptism, when we *openly* give up ourselves to be His people. Hence, under a slightly varied figure, Paul reminded those who had been thus converted under his preaching, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2Co 11:2). The apostle had been the instrument in forming a connection between them and Christ, like that of the marriage union—the obligations of which are devotedness, fidelity, loving obedience; and unto the preservation and promotion thereof, the apostle laboured with a godly jealousy for them.

At regeneration, the Spirit vitally unites us to Christ; at conversion, we personally and practically give up ourselves unto Him. Conversion is when we accept Christ to be our Husband and Lord, to be cherished and ruled by Him. It is an entering into a covenant-engagement with Him: for Him to be our only God, and

for us to be His faithful people. That the covenant relationship *is* a marriage union is clear from Jeremiah 31:32, Hosea 2:18-19 (and compare Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:60); and that is why Israel's idolatry was commonly spoken of as (spiritual) adultery—unfaithfulness to Jehovah, going after other gods. Since conversion be our entering into covenant with God in Christ, the great business of the Christian life is to “*keep his covenant*” (Psa 25:10); that is, to be regulated at all times by its terms. Or, since conversion be a marriage union with Christ, the whole aim of the Christian life is to be as a loving and dutiful wife should unto her husband. All of which is summed up in that comprehensive word, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6): continue as you began, be actuated by the same motives and principles now as when you first surrendered to Him, let your Christian life be a perpetuation of your conversion, be wholly devoted to Him.

What we have endeavoured to set before the reader above as a definition and description of the true and normal Christian life is that which is typically portrayed in Joshua 3 and 4. The ark was a figure of Christ; “the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God” (Jos 3:3) pointed to Him as our Covenant-head, the One with whom we entered into a solemn compact and engagement at our conversion, to be henceforth and for ever only His. Israel's *following* of that ark pictured our *keeping* of the covenant, our being in practical subjection to Christ as our Lord and Lawgiver, our being faithful to the marriage relationship, ever seeking to please and promote the interests of the eternal Lover of our souls. Just in proportion as we conduct ourselves, *thus* will Israel's experiences become ours. As they submitted unto Joshua's orders, as they obediently followed the ark of the covenant, God put forth His mighty power on their behalf, they entered into a present “rest” (Heb 4:3), He subdued their enemies, and a land flowing with milk and honey became their actual portion. And if *such* experiences be not those of the writer, or the reader, it is just because he is failing to conduct himself as Israel did here.

Having entered so fully into an attempt to explain the fundamental principles underlying this incident and the main lessons to be learned from it, there will be the less need to spend much time on its details. “There shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it” (Jos 3:4). That was parallel with the solemn prohibition given unto Israel when the Lord was about to enter into covenant with their fathers, and make known unto them the terms of that covenant: “the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death” (Exo 19:11-12). The spiritual application of both unto us is set forth in that word, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psa 89:7). Or, to express the same in New Testament language, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:28-29).

The natural and local reason why the ark of the covenant should proceed so far in advance was that it could readily be seen by all the vast multitude: had there been no space between it and them, those who followed closely behind it would obscure the view of the others—only those in the first few ranks had been able to behold it. But being borne by the priests half a mile in the van, the ark would be visible to the whole multitude. But typically and spiritually, the lessons inculcated were: First, we should ever bear in mind that by nature, we are sinners, and as such, far removed from the Holy One. Second, that as sinners, we are to look off unto Christ as our Sin-bearer, of which the mercy seat or propitiatory (which formed the lid of the ark) spoke. As the uplifted serpent on the pole (emblem of Christ bearing the curse for His people) was visible to all the congregation, so the ark in the foreground. Third, that as saints, we need to keep our eyes steadfastly fixed upon Him, “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2)—for it is a life of faith unto which He has called us, strength for which is to be found in Him alone.

Fourth, Christ's leaving His people an example that they should “follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21), for “when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him” (Joh 10:4): our duty is to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4). Fifth, the immeasurable superiority of Christ above His people—“that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col 1:18), He being the Head, we but members of His body. This must ever be borne in mind by them, for though He be their Kinsman-Redeemer and is not ashamed to call them “brethren”; nevertheless, He is their Lord and their God, and to be owned and worshipped as such—“that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Joh 5:23). Sixth, that we must conduct ourselves toward the Lord our God with proper decorum and not with unholy familiarity. Seventh, that He entered the anti-typical Canaan in advance, to take possession of

heaven on our behalf: “Whither the forerunner is *for us* entered” (Heb 6:20)—there is both a present and future, an initial and a perfect occupying of our heritage.

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

2. *The Existence of God, Part 2*

In our last [issue], it was pointed out that the origin of three essential things in nature call for explanation from the attentive observer: matter, motion, and life. Having considered the alternative solutions for the first-mentioned, let us now contemplate the others. Concerning them, we cannot do better than present to the reader a summary of what we deem a singularly able and convincing discussion by Rev. John M. Armour in his unique work (out of print), *Atonement and Law* (1886).

“As we contemplate the wondrous movement of bodies in the solar system, measuring time for us with absolute exactness, and as we rise to the conception of the harmonious motion of all bodies in space, measuring duration for all created beings, we cannot but be actuated with an intense desire to know the cause of this wondrous *motion*. But the question, What is the cause of the motion of the heavenly bodies in space? naturally resolves itself into the more general question: What is the cause of all motion? The ready, the only answer is *force*. But this raises the real question: What is the origin of force? Every investigation of that subject leads to the profound conviction that all force is traceable to *life*.

“In the entire vegetable kingdom, we have perpetual demonstration of the intimate and necessary relations of motion, force, and life. Even the least instructed, who have no conception of the real activity or of the observable motion in all growing plants, cannot but know also that the mighty forests are built up by vital force operating tirelessly century after century; cannot but know that the whole world is covered over with the countless, varied, and marvellous products and proofs of the mysterious, universally recognized, but invisible, vital power. But only those who have patiently and perseveringly gazed into that limitless world into which the microscope is the only door, and who have witnessed the amazing activity of vital force in plant life, can have any idea of the manner in which the entire vegetable kingdom testifies of the intimate relations of motion, force, and life.

“Let anyone spend but a few hours in watching the rapid and incessant motion in a small leaf (such as that of the *Anacharis Alsinastrum*) under one of the best microscopes art has been able to furnish, the field being less than ten thousandths part of an inch. In that small field can be distinctly seen twelve rows of cells with an average of five cells in each row. The current can be seen flowing rapidly along appropriate channels, like rivers with broken ice on the surface, while in each of the sixty oblong cells, the fluids are seen circulating like eddies or whirlpools in a rushing stream. But for the perfection which microscopic art has attained, this amazing activity would never have been suspected or credited. Witnessing this activity in the ten-thousandth part of an inch of the surface of a small leaf, what would be the impression upon the mind could we look upon a single tree, discerning the activity of vital force in *every* part of it with the same degree of clearness? While we cannot do this, imagination can transfer what we have seen in the leaf under the microscope to all the leaves of the forest, to all vegetation on the globe—for in every cell of every living plant, there is substantially the same vital activity.

“Whether we look upon forest or field, the eye of the mind should discern not merely motionless forms of life, but everywhere intensely active vital power. Were we capable of seeing the real activity of the vital force in the living tree, it would be to us scarcely less wonderful than the “great sight” (Exo 3:3) which Moses turned aside to see; nor could it fail to produce in us a sense of the Divine presence not unlike that which he experienced. This vital action—which man and all created intelligences must ever strive to behold, and may ever more and more clearly discover—God Himself alone sees as it is.

“The same line of remark might be followed out at length in regard to force and motion in every department of the animal kingdom. Here also the Life is the force, and force that never ceases to produce activity. In the *ova* vitalized, and from that instant, on and on through all vicissitudes, motion is demonstrably uninterrupted till death—or rather, the cessation of motion is death. The only absolute test of life is vital action. When this has ceased, it is proof that vital force has ceased—that vitality is extinct. Nor is there the slightest ground to believe that this vital action, having ceased for an instant, can start again of itself. Vital activity can no more begin in plant or animal organism in which it has once ceased than in matter in which it never existed. The animal kingdom, then, is a witness; and in all its extent, with myriad voices in perfect unison, it declares, “All motion is from vital force.” The testimony of these two kingdoms is both positive

and negative. Their witness agrees: "In us all, motion is from vital force"; "With us all, motion ceases when vital force ceases."

"When we come, however, to *man*, and consider the motion traceable to him, we have to deal with a very different problem; and unless we give special attention, we shall probably leave out of the estimate the vastly greater part of the evidence in this case. For man—unlike all other living beings on earth, or at least infinitely beyond other beings on earth—has the power to produce motion; and not merely by force of muscle without skill, but he has the power to originate and sustain motion on a grand scale by means of the vital force of brain as well. The savage who should cast a stone a little way into the sea by strength of arm—or from a sling, or shoot an arrow from his bow, or propel his little barque a few miles from the shore in a calm sea—would give proof of the extent of his power. Clearly, in each case—from that of the stone which could be hurled but a few rods, to that of the vessel which might be propelled perhaps as many miles—the motion would be wholly attributable to vital force of muscle and brain, or to skill and strength.

"The civilized man who constructs and launches the ocean steamer that ploughs its furrow through the sea—in calm and storm, for thousands of miles—gives proof of his power to produce motion by skill and strength. The ocean steamer that circumnavigates the globe, displacing the water, and defying the storm, is, as one might truthfully say, hurled around the world; and its motion, in that entire revolution, is as clearly traceable to vital force of hand and brain in the civilized man, as is that of the stone from the hand, or the arrow from the bow of the savage. Let an honest inquirer light upon the ocean steamer at any stage of its long journey. Let him search the vessel from keel to top-mast. Finding no life in hull or rigging, no life in coal or fire, no life in water or steam, no life in engine or propeller, shall he say, "This vessel does not owe its force and motion to life at all." If he so determine he is not a philosopher but a fool. For every part of the vessel, from keel to top-mast, is eloquent in its testimony to the vital force of combined skill and strength of man in its construction. And this, we may recognize with all the confidence with which, on approaching an eight-day clock in the middle of the week, we recognize its onward movement as the vital force of the constructor of the clock, combined with the vital force of the person who wound it up. For not only is the vital force of the hand that wound the clock as truly the cause of its continued motion, as though that hand had never for an instant been withdrawn, but the vital force of the contriver and the actual constructor, though he may have passed away centuries ago, is as clearly prolonged as would be the vital force of the hand that wound the clock—though the very next hour, it were cold and motionless in death. I have ventured to dwell longer on this illustration, because of the argument it furnishes in favour of the recognition of vital force as the cause of other and infinitely grander movements.

"We come now to a stage in our investigations in which, unless we exercise the utmost vigilance, we shall utterly fail to interpret the transcendent scene where there is an aggregate of motion, in comparison with which all we have hitherto considered is but as the small dust of the balance; where, as to rapidity, the swiftest we have as yet contemplated is as that of the snail; where, as to vastness of orbit, even that of the ocean steamer around the globe is but as the "finger ring of a little girl"—as we contemplate motion on a scale so grand, motion of bodies so vast and so numerous, motion in orbits a scarcely perceptible arc of which has been traversed since man appeared on earth, motion which highest created intelligences must regard with never-ending wonder and admiration—shall we begin to *detach*, in our conception, motion from force, or force from that which lives? If we do, how can we any longer pretend that we are consistent, scientific, or philosophical? All motion hitherto considered has been traceable to that which lives. Why at this stage begin to question whether that which moves is moved by force, or whether force proceeds from life? Motion on a small scale, we have found, is from vital force. All the motion that man has ever been able to trace to its source, he has found to proceed from life. There is not a shred of trustworthy evidence that any visible thing on earth has the power to originate motion. And the invisible power that causes all the motion we can at all trace to its source is always vital power.

"We have traced force and motion from that in the smallest seed in plant and that of the *ova* in animal life, and have found force and motion ever proceed from that which lives. Why then, when we stand in the presence of the most wondrous motion—motion that speaks of force beyond all conception—do we, all at once, lapse from the conviction that motion must proceed from force, and that force must proceed from life? Doubt comes in where evidence is most abundant. A stone seen moving through the air, we believe was hurled by some lad, though we see him not; a cannon ball crossing the bay, we do not doubt was sent by persons having skill and power; an ocean steamer driven around the world, we know owes its force and motion to skill and power of living beings. When we see mighty orbs moving in space, why do we raise

any question regarding the origin of motion and force? The only shadow of reason that can be imagined is that we cannot readily conceive of a Being infinite, ever-present, and all-mighty—the Source of all motion, and of all force producing all motion in the universe. In a vastly higher sense than that in which the motion of the steamship in mid-ocean is to be attributed to man, all motion in the universe—including that produced *in* and *by* vital organisms in this world and in all worlds—is to be attributed to the Infinite, the Ever-living, the Almighty. In the presence of the moving universe, may we not exclaim: “*Power belongeth unto God*” (Psa 62:11)?

“Why should we hesitate to accept the conclusions thus reached? The data furnished to all men leave them without excuse. The soundness of the reasoning by which I have undertaken to prove that motion—mere motion, as recognized everywhere in the universe since it assures us of the universality of law—is to us direct proof of the existence of the Ever-living, Ever-present Lawgiver, and is confidently submitted to the judgment of candid and competent reasoners.

“The great timepiece of the universe, in its surpassing grandeur and glory may continue to move with absolute exactness and utmost harmony from age to age and century to century; the multitudes of mankind may continue to look upon it mainly to see what time of day it is, as indicated upon the broad dial-plate that meets their gaze, and never reflect that this grand time-measurer—like every poor imitation of it man has ever constructed—measures time by means of motion, and motion sustained by force; this force, in its turn, necessarily from the living, traceable to the living. Yet there may be those who shall find time, even in this busy age, to look with prolonged and steadfast gaze, with awakened and quickened powers, and with intensest interest upon the ever-present and never-exhausted wonders of that aggregate of motion, before which all effort towards estimate is perfectly powerless; and when favourably situated, therefore, the truly evidential nature of God’s glorious work may flash out even as the noonday itself, so that, before this one surpassing demonstration of the power and presence of God, all doubts shall be driven away, even as night itself is chased around our globe by the glorious king of day; so that thenceforward, even to life’s close, they shall live in the noonday splendour of unquestioning faith—faith, not vision, for God gives everywhere and in all things not merely proof that He is, but that He is and must be for ever more the Invisible.

“But though invisible, God is neither the Incredible nor the Unknowable, for He has set before all men “the invisible things of him” and these “are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). Among the visible things of Him which are clearly seen—that is, clearly and fully recognized by all men—motion, force, and life have place; for by these are made known the universality of law, the presence, power, and glory of the Ever-living, Ever-present Lawgiver.

“Not only does the existence of matter, of motion, and of life, testify that God is, but the magnitude and magnificence of creation announce the same grand truth: the work reveals the Workman. “The massive dome of St. Peter’s fame, rising four hundred feet, and ablaze with the masterpieces of Italian art, declares an architect and artist—someone who planned, builded, and decorated it. This is a thought in stone and tells of a thinker. It did not grow of itself, or come to be by some mysterious ‘evolution’ or ‘development.’ Atoms never could arrange themselves in such harmonious relations, or fall accidentally into such marvellous combination. Blind chance never built that cathedral in Rome. There must have been a controlling intelligence—an intelligent control. Yet some would have us believe that the vaster Dome of Heaven—with its millions of starry lamps, surmounting a grander Temple of Creation—had neither Architect to plan, nor Builder to construct! The author of the epistle to the Hebrews indulged in no mere poetic rhapsody when he wrote: “every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God” (Heb 3:4).

“The thoughtful observer must feel that in the heavens, there is not only a testimony to a Creator, but a partial revelation of His character and attributes. Such a work and workmanship not only reveal a Workman, but hint what sort of workman He is. For example, as no bounds have ever been found in the universe, it is natural to infer an *infinite* Creator. The vast periods discovered by astronomy suggests His eternity. The forces of the universe, displaying stupendous power, bespeak His omnipotence. Waste, everywhere going on and needing perpetual re-supply, demands omnipresence. The exact proportion and wise adaptation of every part to each other, and of all to the great whole, tell of omniscience, which includes both infinite knowledge and wisdom. The Being who survives and guides all the changes of this universe must Himself be immutable; and He who lavishes upon His work such wealth of splendour and variety of beauty must be both infinitely rich in resources and versatile in invention. So also the universal harmony, by which the whole mechanism is regulated, indicates a character of infinite perfection in harmony with itself. Thus,

seen from no higher point of view than the scientific and philosophical, the dome of the sky bears, wrought on its expanse, in starry mosaics, ‘*There is a God*’— Rev. John M. Armour, *The Gordian Knot*, 1886.

Descending from the heavens to the planet on which we reside, here too we are confronted with phenomena—both in the general and the particular, both in nature and number—for which no explanation is adequate, save that of an all-mighty, benevolent, and infinitely wise Creator. Upon the surface of this earth are incalculable hosts of creatures, varying in size from gnats to elephants, each requiring its regular food, the total amount of which, for a single day, defies human computation, if not the imagination. Those creatures are not set down in a dwelling place where the table is bare, but where there is abundance for them all; nor are they furnished merely with a few necessities, but, instead, with a great variety of luxuries and dainties. From whence proceed such ample and unfailing supplies? From Nature, says the materialist. And what or whom endowed Nature to bear so prolifically and ceaselessly?—no intelligent reply is forthcoming. Only one answer satisfactorily meets the case: *from the living God!* “*He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: . . . the earth is full of thy riches. . . . These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. . . . thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good*” (Psa 104:14, 24, 27, 28).

The continuous fertility of the earth after six thousand years of incessant productiveness can only be satisfactorily explained by attributing the same unto the riches and bounty of its Maker. That one generation of creatures is succeeded by another, in endless procession, upon its surface, to find such an illimitable store of food available for them, is nothing but a stupendous miracle—the marvel of which is lost upon us, either through our thoughtlessness, or because of its unfailing and regular repetition. The constant supplies which God causes the earth to yield for such myriads of beings is just as remarkable as the original production of the place in which they were to live, for the annual re-fertilization of the earth is actually a *continuous creation*. To quote again from Psalm 104: as the reverent beholder contemplates the revived countenance of Nature in the springtime, he cannot but turn his eyes unto the living God and exclaim, “*Thou renewest the face of the earth*” (Psa 104:30). Beholding as he does the barren fields, the leafless trees, the frozen ground, and often the sunless skies, during the dreary months of winter, and seeing everything mantelled in white, it appears that the earth has grown old and died, that a pall of snow has fallen to hide its forbidding features. And what could man do, what could all the scientists in the world do, if winter should be prolonged month after month, and year after year? Nothing, but slowly yet surely die of starvation.

But the Creator has declared, “*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest. . . shall not cease*” (Gen 8:22); and therefore, He makes good that promise each year, by causing winter to give place to spring and “*renewing the face of the earth.*” The world is as full of creatures today as though none had ever died, for as soon as one generation passes from it, it is at once replaced by another, coming to a larder already well filled for it. And again, we insist, *that* was made possible and actual only by God’s having “*renewed the face of the earth.*” And what a marvellous thing that is, yea, a series of marvels. That such a variety of food, so perfectly adapted to the greatly varying digestive organs of insects, animals, and men, so replete with nourishment, so attractive in appearance, should be produced by *soil*, than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable. What a pleasing variety of fruits that trees bear: how beautifully coloured, elegantly shaped, and admirably flavoured! Shall we be struck most with agreeable astonishment at the Cause of such effects, or at the manner of bringing them into existence.

THE GREAT CHANGE

Part 2

Continuing our review of the numerous passages wherein the Holy Spirit has described His work of regeneration, and wherein He has used such a great variety of figures and terms the better to enable us to form something more than a one-sided conception thereof, we turn next to Romans 5:5, where we read, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” By nature, no man has any love for God. To those Jews who contended so vehemently for the unity of God and abhorred all forms of idolatry, and who—in their mistaken zeal—sought to kill the Saviour because of “making himself equal with God,” He declared, “I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you” (Joh 5:18, 42). Not only loveless, the natural man is filled with “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). But when a miracle of grace is wrought within him by the Holy Spirit, his heart experiences a great change Godwards, so that the One he formerly dreaded and sought to banish from his thoughts is now the Object of his veneration and joy, the One upon whose glorious perfections he delights to meditate, and for whose honour and pleasure he now seeks to live.

That great change which is wrought within the regenerate does not consist in the annihilation of the evil principle, “the flesh,” but in freeing the mind from its dominion, and in the communication of a holy principle which conveys a new propensity and disposition to the soul: God is no longer hated, but loved. That freeing of the mind from the evil dominion of the flesh is spoken of in Ezekiel 36:26, as God’s taking away “the stony heart”; and that shedding abroad of His love within the heart by His Spirit is termed giving them “an heart of flesh.” Such strong figurative language was used by the prophet to intimate that the change wrought is no superficial or transient one. Through regarding too carnally (“literally”) the terms used by the prophets, dispensationalists and their adherents have created their own difficulty and failed to understand the purport of the passage. It is not that an inward organ or faculty is removed and replaced by a different one, but rather that a radical change for the better had been wrought upon the original faculty—not by changing its essential nature or functions, but by bringing to bear a new and transforming influence upon it.

It ought not to be necessary for us to labour what is quite simple and obvious to the spiritually-minded, but in view of the fearful confusion and general ignorance prevailing, we feel that a further word (for the benefit of the perplexed) is called for. Perhaps a simple illustration will serve to elucidate still further. Suppose that for a long time, I have cherished bitter animosity against a fellow creature and treated him with contempt, but that God has now made me realize I have been grievously wronging that person, and brought me to repent deeply of the injustice I have done him, so that I have humbly confessed my sin to him, and henceforth shall esteem him highly and do all in my power to amend the wrong I did him; surely no one would have any difficulty in understanding what was meant if I said that I had undergone a real “change of heart” toward that person, nor would it be misleading to say that a heart of “bitterness” had been removed from me and a heart of “good will” given to me. Though we do not pretend to explain the *process*, yet something very much like that are the *nature* and *effect* of God’s taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh (Eze 11:19; 36:26), or freeing the mind of enmity against God (Rom 8:7), and shedding abroad His love in the heart (Rom 5:5).

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you [“whereunto ye were delivered”—margin]. Being then made free from [the guilt and dominion of] sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:17-18). In this passage, the Holy Spirit is describing that wondrous transformation whereby the servants of sin become the servants of righteousness. That transformation is effected by their being delivered unto that form of doctrine which requires hearty obedience. To aid our feeble understanding, another similitude is used. “The truth which is after godliness” (Ti 1:1) is called “that form [“type or impress”—Young,³ rendered “fashion, pattern” in other passages] of doctrine” or “teaching”: the figure of a mould or seal being used wherein the hearts of the regenerate (softened and made pliable by the Holy Spirit) are likened to molten metal which receives and retains the exact impress of the mould into which it is poured; or as melted wax is cast into the impress of a seal, answering to it line for line, conformed to the shape and figure of it. The quickened soul is “deli-

³ Young – possibly Robert Young (1822-1888), but not confirmed – *Editor*.

vered unto” (the Greek word signifies “given over to,” as may be seen in Matthew 5:25; 11:27; 20:19) the Truth, so that it is made answerable or conformable unto it.

In their unconverted state, they had been the willing and devoted servants of sin, uniformly heeding its promptings and complying with its behests, gratifying their own inclinations without any regard to the authority and glory of God. But now they cordially yielded submission to the teaching of God’s Word, whereunto they had been delivered or cast into the very fashion of the same. They had been supernaturally renewed into or conformed unto the holy requirements of Law and Gospel alike. Their minds, their affections, their wills had been formed according to the tenor of God’s Standard. Thus, from still another angle, we are informed of what the great change consists: it is God’s bringing of the soul from the love of sin to the love of holiness, a being transformed by the renewing of the mind—such a transformation as produces compliance with the Divine will. It is an inward agreement with the Rule of righteousness, into which the heart is cast and after which the character is framed and modeled; the consequence of which is an obedience from the heart—in contrast with forced or feigned obedience, which proceeds from fear or self-interest.

“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom 7:9). As the last-considered passage describes the positive side of the great change experienced in the child of God, this one treats more of its negative aspect. The commentators are generally agreed that in Romans 7:7-11, the apostle is narrating one of the experiences through which he passed at his conversion. First, he says, there had been a time when he was “without the law” (Rom 7:9)—words which cannot be taken absolutely. In his unregenerate days, he had been a proud Pharisee. Though he had received his training under the renowned rabbi, Gamaliel, where his chief occupation was the study of the Law; yet being totally ignorant of its spirituality, he was, vitally and experimentally speaking, as one “without” it—without a realization of its design, or an inward acquaintance of its power. Supposing that a mere external conformity unto its requirements was all that was necessary, and strictly attending to the same, he was well-pleased with himself, satisfied with his righteousness, and assured of his acceptance with God.

Second, “but when the commandment came” (Rom 7:9): verse seven informs us it was the tenth commandment which the Holy Spirit used as the arrow of conviction. When those words, “thou shalt not covet” (Exo 20:17) were applied to him, when they came in the Spirit’s illuminating and convicting power to his conscience, the bubble of his self-righteousness was pricked and his self-complacency was shattered. Like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, that Divine prohibition, “thou shalt not [even] *desire* that which is forbidden,” brought home to his heart with startling force the strictness and spirituality of the Divine Law. As those words, “thou must have no self-will,” pierced him, he realized the Law demanded inward, as well as outward, conformity to its holy terms. Then it was that “sin revived” (Rom 7:9): he was conscious of his lusts rising up in protest against the holy and extensive requirements of the Divine Rule. The very fact that God has said, “thou shalt not covet [lust]” only served to aggravate and stir into increased activity those corruptions of which previously he was unconscious; and the more he attempted to bring them into subjection, the more painfully aware did he become of his own helplessness.

Third, “and I died”: in his own apprehensions, feelings, and estimate of himself. Before he became acquainted with his inward corruptions and was made to feel something of the plague of his heart, living a morally upright life and being most punctilious in performing the requirements of the ceremonial law, the apostle deemed himself a good man. He was in his own opinion “alive”—uncondemned by the Law, having no dread of punishment and judgment to come. But when the tenth commandment smote his conscience, he perceived the spirituality of the Law and realized that hitherto, he had only a notional knowledge of it. Convicted of his inward depravity, of his sinful desires, thoughts and imaginations, he felt himself to be a condemned criminal, deserving eternal death. *That* is another essential element in the great change—which we should have introduced much earlier had we followed a theological order rather than tracing out the various references to it as recorded in the Scriptures. That essential element consists of a personal conviction of sin, of one’s lost estate, and *such* a conviction that its subject completely despairs of any self-help and dies to his own righteousness.

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1Co 6:11). The “such were some of you” refers to the licentious and vicious characters mentioned in verses nine and ten, of whom Matthew Henry (1662-1714) said they were “very monsters rather than men. Note, some that are eminently good after conversion have been as remarkable for wickedness before.” What a glorious alteration does grace effect in reclaiming per-

sons from sins so debasing and degrading! That grand transformation is here described by three words: “washed...sanctified...justified.” It may appear very strange to some of our readers to hear that quite a number of those who regard themselves as the champions of orthodoxy, if they do not explicitly repudiate the first, yet give it no place at all in their concept of what takes place at regeneration. They so confine their thoughts to that which is newly created and communicated to the Christian, that any change and cleansing of his *original* being is quite lost sight of. God’s children are as truly “washed,” as they are sanctified and justified. Literally so? Yes; in a material sense? No, *morally*.

“But ye are washed” was the fulfilment of that Old Testament promise, “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). Titus 3:5 makes it clear that the new birth consists of something more than the communication of a new nature, namely, “the washing of regeneration”—compare Ephesians 5:26. It is further to be noted that the “ye are washed” is distinct from “justified,” so it cannot refer to the removal of guilt. Moreover, it is effected by the Spirit, and therefore, must consist of something which He does *in us*. The foul leper is purged: by the Spirit’s agency, he is cleansed from his pollutions, and his heart is made “pure” (Mat 5:8). It is a moral cleansing or purification of character from the love and practice of sin. First, “washed”; then “sanctified,” or set apart and consecrated to God, as vessels meet for His use. Thereby, we obtain evidence of our justification—the cancellation of guilt and the imputation of righteousness to us. Justification is here attributed to the Holy Spirit, because He is the Author of that faith which justifies a sinner.

“But we all, with open [it should be “with *unveiled*”] face beholding as in a glass [better, “mirror”] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). In the “open [unveiled] face,” there is a double reference and contrast. First, to the veil over the face of Moses (2Co 3:13), which symbolized the imperfection and transitoriness of Judaism: in contrast, Christians behold God as He is fully and finally revealed in the person and work of His Son. Second, to the veil which is over the hearts of unconverted Jews (2Co 3:15) in contrast with them, those who have turned to the Lord have the blinding effects of error and prejudice removed from them, so that they can view the Gospel without any medium obscuring it. The “glory of the Lord” (2Co 3:18), the sum of His perfections, is revealed and shines forth in the Word, and more particularly, in the Gospel. As His glory is beheld by that faith which is produced and energized by the Spirit, its beholder is changed gradually from one degree to another into the “same image,” becoming more and more conformed unto Him in character and conduct. The verb “changed” (*metamorphoo*) is rendered “transformed” in Romans 12:2, and “transfigured” in Matthew 17:2!

The “mirrors” of the ancients were made of burnished metals; and when a strong light was thrown on them, they not only reflected images with great distinctness, but the rays of light were cast back upon the face of one looking into them, so that if the mirror were of silver or brass, a white or golden glow suffused his or her countenance. The “mirror” is the Scriptures in which the glory of the Lord is discovered; and as the Spirit shines upon the soul and enables him to act faith and love thereon, he is changed into the same image. The glory of the Lord is irradiated by the Gospel; and as it is received into the heart, it is reflected by the beholder through the transforming agency of the Spirit. By the heart’s being occupied with Christ’s perfection, the mind’s meditating thereon, and the will’s subjection to His precepts, we drink into His spirit, become partakers of His holiness, and are conformed to His image. As our view of Christ is imperfect, the transformation is incomplete in this life: only when we “see him” face to face shall we be made perfectly “like him” (1Jo 3:2).

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). Had we been following a strictly logical and theological order, this is another aspect of our subject we should have brought in earlier, for the spiritual illumination of the understanding is one of the first works of God when He begins to restore a fallen creature. By nature, he is in a state of complete spiritual ignorance of God, and therefore, of his own state before Him, sitting in “darkness” and “in the region and shadow of death” (Mat 4:16). That “darkness” is something far more dreadful than a mere intellectual ignorance of spiritual things: it is a positive and energetic “power” (Luk 22:53) and evil principle, which is inveterately opposed to God; and with which the heart of fallen man is in love (Joh 3:19), and which no external means or illumination can dispel (Joh 1:5). Nothing but the sovereign fiat and all-mighty power of God is superior to it, and He alone can bring a soul “out of darkness into his *marvellous* light” (1Pe 2:9).

As God commanded the light to shine out of that darkness which enveloped the old creation (Gen 1:2-3), so He does in the work of new creation within each of His elect. That supernatural enlightenment consists not in dreams and visions, nor in the revelation to the soul of anything which has not been made known in the Scripture of Truth, for it is "the entrance of thy words [which] giveth light" (Psa 119:130). Yes, the *entrance*; but ere that takes place, the blind eyes of the sinner must first be miraculously opened by the Spirit, so that he is made capable of receiving the light: it is only in God's light we "see light" (Psa 36:9). The shining of God's light in our hearts partially and gradually dissipates the awful ignorance, blindness, error, prejudice, and unbelief of our souls, thereby preparing the mind to (in measure) apprehend the Truth and the affections to embrace it. By this supernatural illumination, the soul is enabled to see things as they really are (1Co 2:10-12), perceiving his own depravity, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the spirituality of the Law, the excellency of truth, the beauty of holiness, the loveliness of Christ.

We repeat: the Spirit communicates no light to the quickened soul which is not to be found in the written Word, but removes those obstacles which precluded its entrance, disposes the mind to attend unto the Truth (Act 16:14), and receive it in the *love* of it (2Th 2:10). When the Divine light shines into his heart, the sinner perceives something of his horrible plight, is made conscious of his guilty and lost condition, feels that his sins are more in number than the hairs of his head. He now *knows* that there is "no soundness" (Isa 1:6) in him, that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and that he is utterly unable to help himself. But the Divine light shining in his heart also reveals the all-sufficient remedy. It awakens hope in his breast. It makes known to him "the glory of God" (2Co 4:6) as it shines in the face of the Mediator, and the sun of righteousness now arises upon his benighted soul with healing in His wings, or [light] beams. Such knowledge of sin, of himself, of God, of the Saviour, is not obtained by mental effort, but is communicated by the gracious operations of the Spirit.

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co 10:4-5). The apostle is here alluding to his ministry: its nature, difficulties, and success. He likened it unto a conflict between truth and error. The "weapons" or means he employed were not such as men of the world depended upon. The Grecian philosophers relied upon the arguments of logic, or the attractions of rhetoric. Mohammed conquered by the force of arms. Rome's appeal is to the senses. But the ambassadors of Christ use nought but the Word and prayer, which are "mighty through God" (2Co 10:4). Sinners are converted by the preaching of Christ crucified, and not by human wisdom, eloquence, or debate. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16).

Sinners are here pictured as sheltering in "strongholds." By hardness of heart, stubbornness of will, and strong prejudices, they have fortified themselves against God and betaken themselves to a "refuge of lies" (Isa 28:17). But when the Truth is effectually applied to their hearts by the Spirit, those strongholds are demolished and their haughty imaginations and proud reasonings are cast down. They no longer exclaim, "I cannot believe that a just God will make one a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour," or "I cannot believe a merciful God will consign anyone to eternal torments." All objections are now silenced, rebels are subdued, lofty opinions of self cast down, pride is abased, and reverential fear, contrition, humility, faith, and love take their place. Every thought is now brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2Co 10:5): they are conquered by grace, taken captives by love, and Christ henceforth occupies the throne of their hearts. Every faculty of the soul is now won over to God. Such is the great change wrought in a soul who experiences the miracle of grace: a worker of iniquity is made a loving and loyal child of obedience.

HOLINESS AND PRAYER

“If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee” (Job 8:6). Holy persons are fit for holy duties, and only they. Sin is our separation from God, and holy duties are acts of communion with Him: how then shall sin and duty stand together? Make thy supplication unto God, but be thou pure and upright. What have unholy persons to do about holy things? God cannot like the services of those who are unlike Him. Prayer purifies, yet purifying must be a preparative to prayer. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18). We are commanded to pray, “lifting up holy hands” (1Ti 2:8). “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isa 1:15). As He speaks out the fullness of His grace (“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet”—Isaiah 1:18, etc.), so also the necessity of gracious purity in man: “Wash you, make you clean” (Isa 1:16).

The prayers of the pure and upright are prevailing prayers. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16). Fervency of prayer effects nothing, unless the person praying be righteous. God is not melted into compassion by the heat of our words, but by the holiness of our hearts. In the prayer of a righteous man, there is prevailing strength, such as God Himself yields to. “As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed,” said He to Jacob when He wrestled with him (Gen 32:28).

It is in no way contrary to the doctrine of free grace to say we must be holy if we desire to be heard. Bildad’s doctrine is an excellent piece of divinity. Though he said before, “thou wouldest [must] seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty,” that out of His free grace, He would bestow a blessing, yet he adds, “If thou wert pure and upright” (Job 8:5-7). Though we are not heard because we are pure and upright, yet none can come with a warrantable confidence to be heard in their impurity and hypocrisy: if they do, God will reject their confidences. It is impudence, not confidence, to make supplication to God with a reserve, or a resolve in secret to go on in sin. The greatest sinners in the world—they that are most impure and filthy—may come to God and find favour; yet every man that cometh unto God must come with this desire: to have his impurities removed and his backslidings healed. “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee” (Psa 50:16-17). It no way crosses the doctrine of grace when, in the same breath, we say that God will do us good freely for His own name’s sake, and that we must be pure and upright who come to God. “With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward” (Psa 18:26). But doth the Lord take colour from everyone He meets, or change His temper as the company changes? He cannot do so, being without variableness or shadow of turning (Jam 1:17). God is pure and upright with the unclean and hypocritical, as well as with the pure and upright—and His actions show Him to be so. Though there be nothing in purity and sincerity which deserveth mercy, yet we cannot expect mercy without them. Our comforts are not grounded upon our graces, but our comforts are the fruits of them.—*Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), 1647.*

