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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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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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FAITH AS A MASTICATOR – Part 2

What we said in our last month's issue under this title was designed chiefly for "seekers"—or awakened sinners—longing for peace of soul. For this occasion, it is to the young Christian we would more especially address our remarks—and to him, we would say, 'The secret of success in the Christian life is to *continue* as you began. As you obtained the pardon of your sin in the first case by mixing faith (Heb 4:2) with the Gospel, so you will only grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by mixing faith with the Word of God. Only by so doing, will you become a fruitful branch of the Vine; only thus will you obtain strength for the production of good works; only thus will you glorify God in your spirit and body which are His, adorn your profession, and be a real help to your fellows.

While we may not be able to fully analyse and understand the whole process of physical nutrition, yet there is no mystery about it—for it is regulated by certain laws of dietetics appointed by our Maker. The growth and development, the health and strength of the body is determined, in the first instance, by our regular partaking of food—wholesome food properly masticated. The analogy holds good spiritually. The food which God has provided for our souls is His own Word, the heavenly manna; and that Word does not act upon us magically, but according to fixed principles instituted by God—the first of which is that it must be received *by faith*. For that reason, it is called "the word of faith" (Rom 10:8)—it is the Word to which faith is due, the Word which profits us not until received by faith. For the same reason, we read of being "nourished up in the word of faith" (1Ti 4:6)—that is, the Word broken up into words and "mixed with faith."

Seed which is cast into the earth brings forth no fruit, unless it incorporates the fructifying virtues of the soil. And the Word of God, as it falls on our ears, or beneath our eyes, will produce no fruit—unless it be mixed with faith. It is faith which admits the Word into our hearts and gives it a subsistence in the soul. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). That is not a definition of what faith is, but a description of what faith produces. The Divine, spiritual heavenly and supernatural objects, which are presented to us in the Word, appear intangible and nebulous to the unbeliever—but *faith* gives them substance and reality. Though the things hoped for be invisible; yet future, faith makes them sure and solid and gives them a real subsistence in the soul. Faith does for us spiritually what fancy does for us naturally. Faith gives the things promised by God a present actuality in the heart, and makes Christ and Heaven more certain than if seen by the physical eye.

The material food that we eat only advantages us as it is duly mixed with our saliva, swallowed, and then digested by the juices of the stomach. When that food *is* masticated and assimilated, it becomes a means of strength within us, being made a part of our bodies. In like manner, when the Word is properly meditated upon, "mixed with faith" and assimilated, it is a means of spiritual energy within us and becomes a part of our lives. When Truth is really believed, it becomes so united to the faith which receives it, that it is incorporated with it, is realised in the soul, and is taken up into that new nature whereby we live unto God. Only as the words of God are personally appropriated and spiritually digested do they become a living principle within us, energizing unto obedience. Faith is not a mere assent to the truth of the things presented, but is such a reception thereof, as gives them a real inbeing in the soul so that they produce their proper effects.

We are bidden to "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the *engrafted* word" (Jam 1:21). As a "graft" draws all the sap of the stock unto itself, so when the Word is "engrafted" into us, it causes the faculties of the soul—our thoughts, affections, energies and wills—to serve God. When Christ spoke of His disciples as branches of the Vine, He said, "the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine." To which, He added, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you" (Joh 15:4, 7)—not only do our persons need to be engrafted into Christ, but in order to fruitfulness, His words must be engrafted into us. By receiving the Word in faith and meekness, it becomes incorporated with the soul; and as the nature of the stock and graft become one common principle of fruitbearing, so the Word received by faith into the soul becomes one common principle of obedience.

We are also exhorted to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col 3:16), and that can only be done by "mixing faith" with it. One great aid to that is to *ruminate* frequently upon some portion of Scripture. The word "ruminate" signifies to "chew the cud," as all clean animals do—that is, those that were "clean" under the Mosaic law. But the counterpart in us is to muse upon what we have heard or read, which

is the best aid there is for a weak memory. Meditation stands to reading, as mastication does to eating. If we are to “mix faith” with the words of God, we must fix the mind on them. That is the force of the contrast presented in James 1:23-25—the ideal and profitless hearer of the Word is likened “unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass,” but “straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” “But whoso looketh [bows down and inquires] into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth* therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

As we meditate upon the Word and mix faith therewith (appropriate it to ourselves), it sets *love* a-work: “While I was musing the fire burned” (Psa 39:3)! As the Truth is believed, and its purity, its sweetness, its value, its suitability unto our case is realised in the soul—under such a consideration of it, love is drawn forth unto its Author, and obedience becomes easy. In this way, a delight for the things of God is increased within us, and we perceive them to be excellent and precious. Faith makes the soul in love with spiritual things, and love fills us with the desires after them. By the Word being incorporated into the soul, its natural operations are changed and moved to the production of spiritual effects; unto which, previously, it had no virtue, no desire, no strength. Finally, as faith is mixed with the Word of God, it transmutes it into earnest prayer.

What has been pointed out above of the Word in general, pertains to each part of it in particular. Take its doctrinal parts: They will profit you nothing, unless faith be mixed with them; that is, until carnal reasoning on them is completely set aside, and I receive them unhesitatingly as a part of Divine revelation unto me personally. So it is with its precepts. Said the Psalmist, “I have believed thy *commandments*” (Psa 119:66); that is, he regarded them as addressed to himself personally, as Divine laws which must regulate his life, and he applied them to his own walk. So with the promises: Where they are given in the plural number, faith puts in its claim and individualizes them; and for the personal pronouns, substitutes my own name. Equally so with the Divine warnings and threatenings: Not until I view them as meaning what they say, and as addressed to myself individually, do they have any effect upon me; but when I mix faith with them, I tremble at God’s Word (Isa 66:2).

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

20. *Ephesians 1:15-23 – Part 6*

“That ye may know...what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:18-19). In our last, we suggested several reasons why it is necessary that such a request should be made. It is of no small importance—both for our own good and for the glory of God—that we should obtain a better understanding and clearer apprehension of *how* the wondrous change within us has been brought about, for our ignorance concerning the same is very great. Nevertheless, the workings of omnipotence to us-ward must, by no means, be restricted unto the initial miracle of regeneration—amazing and blessed though that be—for it was but the forerunner, the sure earnest, of further marvels of grace. None but God can save a sinner, and He alone can *preserve* him in such a world as this. If the exceedingly great power of God is required to deliver a soul from spiritual death, the continued exercise of it is equally essential in bringing him safe home to Heaven. If nothing short of the infinite strength of the Almighty was sufficient to free one of Satan’s captives, anything less would be quite inadequate to prevent the arch-enemy of man recovering his former victim.

“Who are kept by the *power of God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pe 1:5). “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper” (Psa 121:4-5). Of His vineyard, it is said, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (Isa 27:3). Such blessed assurances are not given to encourage carnal confidence and presumptuous carelessness, but are recorded for the comfort and heartening of those who have been brought to realise they have “no might” of their own and would certainly make shipwreck of the faith were they left to themselves and their own resources. But thank God, the same mighty power, which was put forth at first to make them new creatures in Christ, is engaged to carry forward the work of grace within them, to defend from all enemies, to supply their every need while left in this “howling wilderness” (Deu 32:10). Thus, their eternal security is infallibly guaranteed, and the Lord of Hosts is their sole, but all-sufficient, confidence, the might of His omnipotence, their ever-available resource.

The exceeding greatness of God’s power *to us-ward* not only includes the operations of His grace upon and within His people, but also comprehends His wondrous providences unto them in meeting every need, and making things work together for their good (Rom 8:28). There is also one other exercise of Divine omnipotence unto the saints, which we must at least mention—and that is, their *glorification*, when, in spirit and soul and body, they shall be perfect and permanently conformed to the image of God’s Son. Their very bodies, which were sown in dishonour, will be raised in glory; and what before was natural will then be made spiritual. Whatever difficulties carnal reason and unbelief may advance about the supposed change of the particles—which comprise our present bodies and the alleged impossibility of the same bodies coming forth on the resurrection morning—faith disposes of them all by confident appeal to “The Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby *he is able* even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phi 3:20-21). The resurrection of the body is as great a miracle as the regeneration of the soul, and the same mighty power which effected the one, will accomplish the other.

We turn now to a technical detail, yet it is not devoid of interest and importance. Careful readers will have observed that in our quoting of Ephesians 1:19a, we stopped at the word “us-ward,” rather than “believe”—as in the A.V. [Authorized Version]. Two things require to be determined—namely, the precise point at which the petitionary part of the prayer ends, and the punctuation of verse 19; really, the two things are one, for as soon as the former be settled, the latter is at once determined. In our March article, we outlined the prayer thus: First, its occasion (Eph 1:15); second, its nature (Eph 1:15-16); third, its object (Eph 1:17); fourth, its request (Eph 1:17-19); fifth, its revelation (Eph 1:19-23)—our reason for so designating this last section, we give below. Now, it is our impression that we have already reached the conclusion of the petitionary portion of this prayer at the word “us-ward,” and that a colon should follow it; and therefore, that the “who believe” are to be connected and considered with what immediately follows.

It is quite clear that the requests made, begin at the words “may give unto you” etc. (Eph 1:17); whether they end at the word “us-ward” or “believe” is a point on which the commentators differ—the great majority favouring the latter, as our translators did. Yet personally, we much prefer the former; and that, for the following reasons. First, the added words, “who believe” are not necessary for the purpose of

defining the “us-ward”—the subjects or beneficiary of God’s power—for they are manifestly the “saints” of the preceding clause. Second, to say that God’s power is “to us-ward who believe” unwarrantably *restricts* the idea—for God’s omnipotence wrought in the saints *previously*; and had it not done so, they never had believed! Third, if the “who believe” is linked to the preceding clause, then the final section of the prayer begins as abruptly—“according to.” Fourth, if the “who believe” commences a noun clause, they present a most important truth, which our passage would otherwise omit—namely, that our believing is itself the immediate result of the Divine operations.

“Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). Before attempting to open up the meaning of those words, let us seek to point out their wider scope, or the relation which they bear to what follows. True prayer is something more than the making known of our requests unto God, even with thanksgiving; it is something more than an act of adoration, wherein the believer praises and adores Deity. It is also a *communing* with God, and communing or fellowship is *mutual*. When the redeemed soul is favoured to have an audience with the Divine Majesty, not only does He hearken to his petitions, but He graciously condescends to speak with him. A beautiful illustration of that is found in Numbers 7:89: “When Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat” (compare Exo 33:11)! This was the case here in Ephesians 1: While the apostle was making known his requests unto the Father of glory, he received a revelation from Him, which is recorded in the closing verses of our chapter.

Wondrous things were here made known, things which had not been disclosed heretofore. In the closing verses of Ephesians 1, certain aspects of truth are revealed, which are nowhere else set forth again in the Scriptures. In Psalm 110:3, it was plainly intimated that there must be a putting forth of Divine power, before the people of God are made willing to abandon their prejudices and idols. Once and again, Christ affirmed the natural man to be incapable of exercising faith (Joh 5:44; 8:43; 10:26), but here alone do we learn that God puts forth the *same* power in working faith in us, as He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that God had raised the crucified Jesus and made Him “both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:36); but here alone, is it formally stated that the Redeemer has been exalted “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion” (Eph 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 15:27, it is said that God has “put all things under” Christ; but here alone, do we discover that God “gave him to be the head over all things *to the church*” (Eph 1:22). In 1 Corinthians 12:27, the Church is designated “the body of Christ;” but here alone, is she called *His* “fulness” (Eph 1:23).

Wondrous indeed are those things to which we have just called attention above; things which it should be our joy to carefully contemplate, and not carelessly dismiss with a passing glance. Some readers may chafe at the slowness of our progress, but why should we hurry over such a passage as this? Is there anything more sublime or precious in the prayers yet to follow, that we should get through with this one as quickly as possible? If the writer followed his own inclinations, he would write another twelve articles on these closing verses of Ephesians 1; but he realises that would unduly tax the patience of many. On the other hand, not a few welcome a detailed exposition and sermonizing of such a passage, desiring something more instructive and edifying than the superficial generalizations, which characterize most of the productions of our day. May the Spirit of Truth graciously shine upon our understanding and enable us to so “open” these verses, that faith may be instructed, souls fed, God glorified, and His Son endeared to His redeemed.

“Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” To savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ lies not within the ability of the natural man’s will, for his will—like every other faculty of his being—has been depraved and ruined by the Fall. The will follows the dictates of the mind, and the inclinations of the affections: In other words, we will or choose that which is most agreeable to us. We do not choose that to which we are averted. Now, the heart of the natural man is averse to the thrice holy God and the carnal mind is enmity against Him—how then can he voluntarily and gladly choose Him for his Lord and Portion? The bent of his desires must be changed, before his will embraces God as his absolute End. No man, by a mere act of his will, can make himself love any person or thing that he hates. If there I have been brought to esteem and receive as my Lord the One whom I formerly despised and rejected, a radical change must have been wrought within me. Hence, we read of “the operation of *God*” (Col 2:12).

“Who *believe*”—that word must be understood here in its widest scope, as including repentance, and as issuing in conversion. Such believing is the outcome of “the working of his [God’s] *mighty power*.” Not a single word of His Writ is superfluous; and there is good reason why the power of God is here called a

“mighty” one. Speaking after the manner of men, we may say that God *proportions* His power, according to the work before Him, exercising more in one particular operation than another—as we only put forth the utmost of our strength, when faced with a more than ordinary occasion. This is clearly borne out by the language of Scripture, wherein its Author is pleased to accommodate His terms to our feeble intelligence. Thus, where physical miracles were wrought, it was by “the *finger* of God” (Exo 8:19; Luk 11:20)—but it was by “strength of *hand*” He brought forth His people from Egypt (Exo 13:14, 16) and “upholdeth” His saints (Psa 37:24). And in yet other passages, we read that God has a “mighty *arm*” (Psa 89:13), “He hath shewed strength with his arm” (Luk 1:51).

Had such distinctions as the above—and particularly their import and purport—been more closely attended to, it had been much easier to bring to a decisive conclusion the age-long controversy between Arminians and Calvinists, concerning the invincibility of God’s power upon the unconverted. The great majority of Calvinists erred when they denied the contention of their opponents that there is a power of God which works in the hearts of men that can be and so *resisted*—as they have failed to fairly interpret many of the verses advanced by Arminians. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (Act 7:51) must not be “explained away,” but honestly expounded in harmony with the Analogy of Faith. There are “differences of administrations” and “diversities of operations...of the Spirit” (1Co 12:5-7), according to His several designs. The Spirit puts forth different proportions of power, according to the various ends before Him. Those spoken of in Hebrews 6:4, 5 and 2 Peter 2:20 were the subjects of His inferior or lesser operations, but not of His regenerating power. Many are enlightened by the Spirit (as Balaam), their corruptions are restrained, their consciences pricked—yet without His making them new creatures in Christ Jesus (Gal 6:15).

The writer has no hesitation in declaring he is convinced that thousands of people have been drawn by God to sit under a faithful preaching of His Word, been convicted by the Spirit of their sinful and lost condition, found something in their souls of “the powers of the world to come” (Heb 6:5)—but were not brought from death unto life. Yet while we believe many are the subjects of God’s power working upon and within them—which power they resist and quench—yet, we emphatically deny that a single soul ever did or will defeat or defy “the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). That such a distinction is a necessary and valid one is surely indicated in the verse now before us—for why else should the Holy Spirit here declare that God’s work in bringing us to believe holds proportion with that stupendous wonder when He “raised him [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places”! (Eph 1:20). Such power He does not put forth in His lesser and lower works. This “working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19) is effectual, prevailing, invincible, and cannot be withstood.

The force of the Greek is conveyed more vividly by the marginal rendering of the A.V.: “According to the working of the might of his power.” One word was not sufficient to express the power that works so mightily, so the apostle doubled it, as was the manner of the Hebrews—as “holy of holies” signifies the most holy; and thus, “the might of his power,” His utmost strength. When Scripture would express the greatness of God’s might and the certainty of bringing a thing to pass, it adds one term to another or doubles the expression: Thus, He is “mighty in strength” (Job 9:4). And again, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa 40:26)—there can be no failure when He putteth forth the might of His strength. Despite what they are by nature, and notwithstanding the might of Satan and his determination to retain all his subjects, the mighty power of God works efficaciously and infallibly in all them that believe. The combined efforts of all creatures in the universe could not have prevented God from raising Christ from the dead; neither can they hinder Him from working faith in His elect.

There has been much disputing among theologians concerning the power put forth by God in the converting of sinners, yet there is no real occasion for it. As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out, “If you would know what power is put forth in any work, ask the agent himself.” Well, here the Converter of souls is the Indicter of this very verse, and He tells us it is by “the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19). In view of those words, every preacher of the Gospel ought to be bowed before God, conscious of his own impotency, begging Him to graciously exercise His omnipotence among his spiritually-dead hearers. It is true that in connection with the sudden conversion of a sinner, beholders perceive not that a miracle of Divine power has been performed. When the woman was healed by a touch of the hem of Christ’s garment, those that stood by discerned no such thing. But what did He say? This: “Virtue is gone

out of me" (Luk 8:46)—His life-giving power had effected the cure instantaneously. Nor was the subject of that miracle unaware of the grand change wrought—for she knew "what was done in her" (Mar 5:33).

Should the reader ask, "Why is the working of God's 'mighty power' necessary in order to the converting of a soul?" The answer is, Because of the nature of the work performed. As in the case of one who is physically ill, the more desperate his case, the more skill is required from the physician if he is to be healed. So it is, only as we learn from Scripture and actual experience, the hopeless condition that fallen man is in, can we see the needs-be of Omnipotence itself intervening if ever he is to be saved. The converting of a sinner is a greater miracle and calls for the putting forth of more power than the creating of man did. How so? Because creation is simply the bringing of a creature into existence; but conversion is the transforming of one who is opposed to it—in the one, there is no impediment; in the other, there is every possible resistance. Though there is nothing to help, yet in the old creation, there was nothing to oppose; but in connection with the new creation, there is: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be*" (Rom 8:7). Water is not more opposite to fire than sin is to holiness, the natural man to God. Only omnipotence can subdue that enmity and impart a love for His Law.

"(For the weapons of our [ministerial] warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth" (2Co 10:4-5). In those words, the apostle intimates something of the difficulties which face the preachers of the Gospel. He likens the reasonings of the carnal mind and the prejudices of the depraved heart—behind which the natural man seeks shelter against the demands of the Gospel, to a company in a powerful fort who refuse to surrender. No matter how winsomely the invitations, or how authoritatively the requirements of the Gospel be pressed, the natural man has a score of objections which yield not thereto. It is only as the Truth is made "*mighty* through God" that the sinner's pride is subdued, and he is brought to yield to the claims of Christ's Lordship. So wedded is man to his lusts, so in love with his idols, that unless the "mighty power" of God work within him, all the persuasions of the whole apostolate and the endeavours of all the angels could not induce him to forsake them.

"Who believe according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph 1:19)—was not the truth of those words most strikingly and blessedly exemplified by the one who first penned them?! Behold, Saul of Tarsus "was consenting unto" the death of Stephen and making "havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Act 8:1, 3). See him "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Act 9:1), going to the high priest and requesting letters of authority, that if he found any such in the synagogues of Damascus "whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem" (Act 9:2). Why was it that less than a week later, "he preached Christ in the synagogues" of Damascus (Act 9:20)? What had wrought such an amazing transformation? What was it that made this rebel cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Act 9:6). What was it transformed the persecuting Saul into the evangelizing Paul? Nothing less than the mighty power of God, and he declared *his* was a "pattern" case (1Ti 1:16). True, there was something extraordinary in the manner of it, but the *power* is the same in every instance.

In conclusion, let us carefully observe that this working of God's mighty power is not restricted to the past: It is not "who believed," but "who believe, according to" (Eph 1:19). The reference is not to be limited unto God's working faith in us at the first, but takes in His *maintaining* of it. The Christian can no more exercise faith of himself, still less increase it, than he could originate it. This is clear from another prayer of our apostle's, wherein he requested God to "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2Th 1:11)—faith could only continue working by the Divine power. This point is jealously guarded: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" is immediately preceded by "whatsoever is *born of God* overcometh the world" (1Jo 5:4). While faith be the instrument, God alone makes it effectual; and therefore, we must exclaim, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:57).

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

9c. Its Means

3. *Honouring the Word.* By which we mean according to God's holy and infallible Word, the place which is due it in our affections, thoughts, and daily lives. But we shall only do so as we are deeply impressed with *whose* Word it is, and the reasons for which it has been given to us. God has "magnified" His Word "above all" His Name (Psa 138:2); and if we be in our right minds, we shall value it far more highly than anything else (Psa 119:72). Apart from the Word, we are in total darkness spiritually (Eph 5:8). Without the Scriptures, we can know nothing about the character of God, His attitude toward us, or our relation to Him. Without the Scriptures, we are ignorant of the nature of sin and its infinite demerits, nor are we capable of discovering how to be saved from the love, guilt, and pollution of it. Without the Scriptures, we know not whence we sprang, whither we are going, nor how to conduct ourselves in the interval between. Even as Christians, we have no other means for ascertaining God's will for us, the path we should tread, the enemies we must fight, the armour we require, and how to obtain grace to help in time of need.

All who profess to be Christians will give at least a mental assent to what has just been pointed out. But when it comes to the applying or working out of the same, there are wide differences of practice. In the matter of *what use* is to be made of God's Word, there is considerable diversity of opinion. Rome does all she can to *withhold* the Scriptures from the people, forbidding the reading of them; or, where that is deemed impolitic, seeking to discourage the same. Her evil leaven has spread far and wide—for multitudes of nominal "Protestants" who do not formally accept the dogmas of the papacy suppose that the Bible is a mysterious Book, quite beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated, and that "the Church" alone is competent to explain its teachings. Therefore, they are quite content to receive their religious instructions second-hand, accepting what the prelate or preacher tells them from the pulpit, and since they do not "search the Scriptures" (Joh 5:39; Act 17:11) for themselves, they are unable to *test* what he tells them, and are liable to be deceived concerning their eternal interests. Thus, there is no difference in this respect between them and the infatuated Papists.

But there are others who "read the Bible" for themselves. But here, there are many types: Some do so *traditionally*, because their parents and grand-parents read a portion each day; yet in few cases, do they give evidence of possessing a saving knowledge of the Truth. Others read it *superstitiously*, regarding the Bible as a sort of religious charm—when in great perplexity or deep sorrow, they turn to the Book they generally neglect, hoping to find guidance or solace from it. Many read it *educationally*. If their closest friends are more or less "religious," they would feel ashamed if unable to take an intelligent part in the conversation, and so seek a general acquaintance with its contents. Others read it *denominationally*, that they may be equipped to defend "our Articles of Faith" and hold their own in controversy, seeking texts which will refute the beliefs of others. A few read it *professionally*—it is their text-book. Their principal quest is material suitable for sermons and "Bible readings." Some read it *inquisitively*, to satisfy curiosity and feed intellectual pride—they specialize on prophecy, the types, numerics, and so on.

Now, one may read the Bible from such motives as those until he is as old as Methusalah—and his soul be profited nothing! One may read and re-read the Bible through systematically from Genesis to Revelation, he may "search the Scriptures" diligently—comparing passage with passage—he may become quite an accomplished "Bible student;" and yet, spiritually speaking, be not one whit better off for his pains. Why so? Because he failed to realise the chief reasons why God has given us His Word and to act accordingly—because his motive is faulty, because the end he had in view is unworthy. God has given the Word to us as a revelation of Himself—of His character, of His government, of His requirements. Our motive in reading it, then, should be to become better acquainted with Him, with His perfections, with His will for us. Our end in perusing His Word should be to learn how to please and glorify Him; and that, by our characters being formed under its holy influence and our conduct regulated in all its details by the rules He has there laid down. The mind needs instructing, but unless the conscience be searched, the heart influenced, the will moved, such knowledge will only puff us up and add to our condemnation.

In the preceding articles, we pointed out that in order for spiritual growth, the Christian must needs engage daily in mortifying the flesh and in devoting himself as a living sacrifice unto God, giving our reasons

for placing them first and second among the principal aids to prosperity. Obviously, giving due place to the Word comes next, for only by its instructions can we learn *what* has to be mortified and *how* to please God in our walk. Some thought was required on how best to formulate this third grand help. Many have describe it as *studying* the Word, but as pointed out above, one may “study” it (as the “scribes” of our Lord’s day had), and yet be none the better for it. Others use the expression “*feeding* on the Word,” which is better—though today, there are thousands who think they *are* feeding thereon, and yet give little or no sign that their souls are being nourished, or that they are becoming more fruitful branches of the Vine. We have, therefore, chosen “*honouring* the Word” as being a more comprehensive term.

Now, in order to honour the Word, we must ascertain the purposes for which God has given it to us, and then regulate our efforts accordingly. The Word expressly informs us the chief ends for which it *was* written: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). Since they are inspired by God, it naturally and necessarily follows that they are “profitable”—for He could not be the Author of what was purposeless and useless to its recipients. For *what* are the Scriptures “profitable”? First, *for doctrine*—that is, for sound and wholesome doctrine, “doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3). The word, “doctrine” means “teaching” or instruction, and then the principle or article received. In the Scriptures, we have the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, on every object and subject of which they treat, such as no mere creature could have arrived at or invented. The unfolding of the doctrine of *God* is a revelation of His Being and character, such as had never been conceived by philosophers or poets. Their teaching concerning *man* is such as no physicist or psychologists had ever discovered by his own unaided powers. Such, too, is its doctrine of sin, of salvation, of the world, of Heaven, of Hell.

Now, to read and ponder the Scriptures for “doctrine” is to have our *beliefs* formed by its teachings. So far as we are under the influence of prejudice, or receive our religious ideas on human authority, and go to the Word—not so much with the desire to be instructed on what we know not; but rather, for the purpose of finding something which will confirm us in what we have already imbibed from man, be it right or wrong—so far as we exercise a sinful disregard to the Sacred Canon, we may justly be given up to our own deceptions. Again, if we set up our own judgment so as to resolve not to accept anything as Divine Truth but what we can intellectually comprehend, then we despise God’s Word, and cannot be said to read it either for doctrine or correction. It is not enough to “call no man your father [Master]” (Mat 23:9)—if I exalt my reason above the infallible dictates of the Holy Spirit, then my *reason* formulates my *creed*. We must come to the Word conscious of our ignorance, forsaking our own thoughts (Isa 55:7), with the earnest prayer, “That which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32)—and that, so long as we remain on earth.

First and foremost, then, the inspired Scriptures are profitable for *doctrine*—that our thoughts, ideas, and beliefs concerning all the subjects of Divine revelation may be formed and regulated by their infallible teachings. How that rebukes those who sneer at theological instruction, who are prejudiced against the doctrinal exposition of the Gospel, who ignorantly account such as “dry” and uninteresting, who are all for what they term “experimental religion.” We say, “ignorantly,” for the distinction they seek to draw is an unscriptural and invalid one. The Word of God nowhere draws a line between the doctrinal and the experimental. How could it?—when true experimental piety is nothing but the *influence of Truth* upon the soul under the agency of the Holy Spirit. What is godly sorrow for sin but the influence of the Truth upon the conscience and heart! Is it anything else than a realisation or feeling sense of the heinousness of sin, of its contrariety to what ought to be, of its being committed against light and love, dissolving the heart to grief? Until those truths are realised, there will be no weeping over your sin. Peace and joy in believing—yes, but you must have an Object to believe in; take away the great doctrine of the Atonement, and all your faith and peace are annihilated.

Yes, first and foremost, the Scriptures are “profitable for *doctrine*” (2Ti 3:16): *God* says so, and those who declare otherwise are liars and deceivers. That refutes and condemns those who are prejudiced against the doctrine of the Gospel, on the pretense that it is unfriendly to the *practical* side of the Christian life. That personal piety or holy living may be neglected through an excessive attachment to favourite theological tenets is, readily granted; but that doctrinal instruction is inimical to following the example which Christ has left us, we emphatically deny. The whole teaching of Scripture is “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3)—that is to say, it is the doctrine which inculcates “godliness,” which supplies motives to godliness; and which, therefore, promotes it. If Divine Truth be received according to the lovely proportions in which it is presented in the Word—so far from such a reception of it enervating practical

godliness—it will be found to be the *life* of it. Doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion are so necessarily connected together that they could have no existence apart from each other. The influence of the Truth upon our hearts and minds is the source of all our spiritual feelings, and those feelings and affections are the springs of every good word and work.

Second, the inspired Scriptures are “profitable...for *reproof*” (2Ti 3:16) or conviction. Five times the Greek word is rendered “rebuke” and once, “tell him his fault” (Mat 18:15). Here is the chief reason why the Scriptures are so unpalatable to the unsaved: They set before him a Standard concerning which he knows he falls far short. They require that which is thoroughly distasteful to him, and prohibit those things which his evil nature loves and craves. Thus, their holy teachings roundly condemn him. It is because the Word of God inculcates holiness and censures every form of evil that the unregenerate have such a disrelish for it. It is because the Word *convicts* its reader of his sins, upbraids him for his ungodliness, blames him for his inward as well as outward lack of conformity thereto, that the natural man shuns it. Flesh and blood resent interference, chafes against being censured, and is angry when told his or her faults. It is much *too humbling* for the pride of the natural man to be rebuked for his failures and chidden for his errors. Therefore, he prefers “prophecy” or something which pricks not his *conscience*!

“Profitable...for *reproof*.” Are you, am I, willing to *be reproofed*? Are we really, honestly desirous of having made known to us everything in us which is contrary to the Law of the Lord; and is, therefore, displeasing to him? Are we truly agreeable to be searched by the white light of the Truth, to bare our hearts to the Sword of the Spirit? The true answer to that question reveals whether or not we are regenerate, whether a miracle of grace has been wrought in us, or whether we are still in a state of nature. Unless the answer be in the affirmative, there cannot possibly be any spiritual growth for us. Of the wicked, it is said, “They despised all my reproof” (Pro 1:30). On the one hand, we are told, “he that hateth reproof is brutish” (Pro 12:1) and “shall die” (Pro 15:10); on the other, “reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Pro 6:23), “he that heareth reproof getteth understanding” (Pro 15:32). If we are to profit from the Scriptures, we must ever approach them with an honest desire that all amiss in us may be rebuked by their teachings and be humbled into the dust before God in consequence thereof.

Third, the Scriptures are “profitable...for *correction*” (2Ti 3:16). The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but signifies “setting right.” The reproofing is but a means to an end: It is showing us what is wrong, that it may be put right. Everything about us, both within and without, needs correcting—for the Fall has put man all out of joint with God and holiness. Our thoughts on everything are wrong and need readjusting. Our affections are all disorderly and need regulating. Our character is utterly unlike Christ’s and has to be conformed to His image. Our conduct is wayward and demands squaring with the Rule of righteousness. God has given to us His Word, that under its guidance, we may regulate our beliefs, renovate our hearts, and reform our lives. Hence, it answers but a poor end to read a chapter once or twice a day for the sake of decency, without any definite intention of complying with the mind of God as revealed therein. Since He has given us the Scriptures “for correction,” we should ever approach them with a sincere purpose of bringing into harmony with them everything that is disorderly within us and irregular without us.

Fourth, the Scriptures are “profitable...for *instruction in righteousness*” (2Ti 3:16). *That* is the end for which the other three things are the means. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out: The Scriptures are “profitable to us for all the purposes of the Christian life. They answer all the ends of Divine revelation. They instruct us in that which is true, reprove us for all that which is amiss, direct us in all that which is good.” “Instruction in righteousness” refers not to the imputed righteousness of Christ—for that is included in “doctrine”—but relates to integrity of character and conduct: It is inherent and practical righteousness, which is the fruit of the imputed. For *that* we need “instructing” out of the Word, for neither reason nor conscience are adequate for such a task. If our judgment be formed or our actions regulated by dreams, visions, or supposed immediate revelations from Heaven, rather than by the plain meaning of the Holy Scriptures, then we slight them, and God may justly give us up to our own delusions. If we follow the fashion, imitate our fellows, or take public opinion for our standard, we are but heathen. But if the Word of God is the alone source of our wisdom and guidance, we shall be found treading “the paths of righteousness” (Psa 23:3).

The Bible is something very different from a picture-book for amusing children, though it contains beautiful types, and depicts scenes and events in a manner no artist’s brush could convey. It is something more than a precious mine of treasure for us to dig into, though it contains wonders and riches far more excellent than any unearthed at Kimberley. It has not been sufficiently realised that God has given us His

Word for the *ordering of our daily lives*. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, *that* we may DO all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). How very rarely do we hear or see that *last* clause quoted! Is not the omitting of it a significant and solemn comment upon our times? God has given us His Word not for intellectual entertainment, not for the merely curious to exercise his imagination upon, not for making it a battleground of theological strife, but to be “a lamp unto” our feet, and “a light unto” our path (Psa 119:105)—to point out the way in which we should walk, and to sedulously avoid those by-ways which lead to certain destruction.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Thus, the whole of the Old Testament is for our instruction “in order that by patiently cleaving to the Lord in faith and obedience, amid all our trials and temptations, and by taking comfort from the daily perusal of the Scriptures, we might possess a joyful hope of Heaven, notwithstanding past sins and present manifold defects” (T. Scott). “Now all these things [concerning Israel’s sins in the wilderness and God’s judgments upon them] happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for *our* admonition” (1Co 10:11)—or warning: For us to take to heart, to heed, to avoid. We shall meet with similar temptations, and there is still the same evil nature in us as was in them, and unless it be mortified, the same awful fate will overtake us. “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments” (Psa 119:35). It will profit us nothing—nay, it will add to our condemnation—if we read the preceptive parts of the Scriptures without attention and determination, through God’s help, to conform our conduct thereto.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1Jo 2:1). *That* is the design, bearing, and end—not only of this epistle, but of all the Scriptures. *That* is the object at which every doctrine, every precept, every promise aims: “That ye *sin not*.” The Bible is the only book in the world which pays any regard to sin against God. The revelation which it makes of God’s omniscience—“Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off” (Psa 139:2)—says to me, *sin not*. So of His omnipresence—“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3)—says to me, *sin not*. Are we taught the holiness of God?—it is that we should be holy. Is the truth of resurrection revealed?—it is that we “awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34). For what purpose was the Son of God manifested?—“that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8). Precious promises are given us with the express design that we should “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2Co 7:1).

“Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). In order to be nourished by the Word, we must desire it, and like every other *desire*, that one may be cultivated or checked—as after a time, the manner was loathed by those who lusted for the flesh-pots of Egypt. The aim of that desire for the Word is “that ye may *grow* thereby”: Grow in knowledge, in grace, in holiness, “grow up into him [Christ] in *all* things” (Eph 4:15); grow in fruitfulness to God and helpfulness to your fellows. The Word must not only be desired, but received “with *meekness*” (Jam 1:21)—that is, with yieldedness of will and pliability of heart, with readiness to be moulded by its holy requirements. It must also be “mixed with *faith*” (Heb 4:2)—that is, received unquestioningly as God’s own Word to me, appropriated and assimilated by me. It must be approached humbly and *prayerfully*, as the Hebrews had to bow down or go upon their knees to obtain the tiny manna on the ground. “Teach me thy statutes” (Psa 119:12)—their meaning, their application to all the details of my life, how to perform them.

If we would read the Scriptures to advantage, if our souls are to be nurtured by them, if we are to make true Christian progress, then it must be by earnest prayer and constant *meditation*. It is only by pondering the words of God that they become fixed in our minds and exert a salutary influence upon our thoughts and actions. Things forgotten have no power to regulate us and Scripture *is* soon forgotten, unless it be turned over and over in the mind. A wondrous blessing is pronounced upon the man who *meditates* in God’s Law day and night: “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). “These things write we unto you, that your *joy* may be full” (1Jo 1:4). Holiness and happiness are inseparably connected. Destruction and misery are in the ways of the wicked (Rom 3:16), but Wisdom’s ways are “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17).

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

7d. *Its Meaning*

A beautiful type of what we have contended for in these articles is found in Genesis 8. In the preceding chapter, we behold the fearful judgment of God upon the antediluvian world because of its wickedness—solemn figure of which our Sinbearer endured for us as He was “made a curse” (Gal 3:13) when He cried, “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me” (Psa 42:7). After the storm of wrath had done its awful work, Noah (who represented the company of God’s elect in the place of safety, exempted from the Divine vengeance) opened the window of the ark and “sent forth a dove” (Gen 8:8). Later, he sent her forth again, and “the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf” (Gen 8:11)—the emblem of peace! Christ was the Pacifier of God, and He is “our peace” (Eph 2:14). He is the former, because He was “to make reconciliation for iniquity” (Dan 9:24). He is the latter, because He has satisfied every claim of God upon us. Therefore, He is designated “Shiloh” (Gen 49:10)—an appellation which signifies, “the Peacemaker”—and “The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6).

Reconciliation was one of the effects which resulted from the atonement which Christ made unto God; and in our last, we pointed out that the simplest and surest way of ascertaining the significance of the anti-type is to attend closely to the types. Now, the Levitical offerings were not designed to produce any change within the offerer, but were presented for the express purpose of placating and propitiating God Himself. The Israelites did not offer them with the object of turning away their own enmity from Jehovah; but rather, to turn away *His* anger from them; and since the sacrifices which they presented were emblems of the one great Sacrifice of Christ, it necessarily follows that the chief end of His oblation was to divert God’s wrath from those on whose behalf it was made. The great fact—the terrible thing—brought out by this doctrine is, that God is the offended Party; while the central fact—the grand thing—proclaimed by it is, that Christ is the all-sufficient Pacifier of God.

We are afraid that some of our friends will feel that we have drawn out these articles on the *meaning* of Reconciliation to a rather wearisome length—and for their sakes, we regret that it was necessary for us to do so. But while they may not have been troubled by the errors we have refuted, or the objections answered, yet a considerable number of our readers have been much bewildered by them; and therefore, as a servant of God, it was part of our duty to “prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people” (Isa 57:14). At the beginning of our first article on this branch of the subject, we stated that we proposed to do much more than barely furnish a definition of the word “reconciliation”—having sought to make good that promise, we must now look more closely at the term itself and ponder carefully *how* it is used in Scripture.

Reconciliation presupposes *alienation*; and therefore, it results from the removal of hindrance to concord, and is the act of uniting parties which have been at variance: It is the putting an end to strife, and changing enemies into friends. Sin has placed God and man apart from one another—all harmony between them being disrupted; therefore, satisfaction must be made for sin before peace can be restored. Consequently, to be “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10) is to be restored to His favour: It is the reconciliation of the King to His rebellious subjects, of the Judge to offenders against Himself. To reconcile is to bring to agreement, to unite those who were divided, to restore to unity and amity. Reconciliation is a relation, a mutual one: On God’s part, it denotes a change from wrath to favour; on ours, from one of contempt and opposition to loyal and loving obedience. It is, therefore, a change from hostility to tranquility; from strife to fellowship.

The “peace” which Christ procured for His people was effected through chastisement. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). There are three things here. First, the *history* of Christ’s sufferings: Set out by wounds, bruises, chastisements and stripes—the expressions being multiplied to impress our hearts more deeply. The *cause* of those sufferings: Our transgressions and iniquities—the difference being between sins of commission and omission. The fruits or *benefits* thereof: Peace and healing—a summary of the objective and subjective results thereof. The punishment due our sins was borne by Christ that we might have “peace with God” (Rom 5:1). “He, by submitting to those chastisements, slew the enmity and settled an amity between God and man; He made peace by the blood of His cross. Whereas

by sin, we were become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to His justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with Himself" (Matthew Henry).

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa 53:5) is explained by "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1)—where the reference is not to a state of heart, but to a relationship with God. "Peace with God" does not have reference to anything that is subjective, but only to what is objective—not to an inward peace of conscience (though that follows if repentance and faith be in exercise), nor to that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi 4:7), but to "peace *with* God"—in other words, to reconciliation. It means we are no longer the objects of His displeasure, and have no more reason to dread the Divine vengeance. It is that blessed relation which results from the expiation of our sins—because Christ endured the penalty of them, we are no longer God's enemies in the objective sense, but the subjects of His favour. Every one that is "justified" does not enjoy peace of conscience (though he should); but every justified person *has* "peace *with* God" (whether he knows it or not)—for His quarrel against him is ended, Christ having made God (judicially) his Friend.

There is an interesting passage in 1 Samuel 29, which makes quite clear the meaning of this controverted word, and shows it signifies the very opposite of what the Socinians understand by it. While a fugitive from Saul, David and a company of his devoted followers found refuge in Gath of Philistia, where Achish, its "king" ("lord" or "chief"), showed kindness to him (1Sa 27:2, 3). While he was there, the Philistines planned a concerted attack upon Israel, and Achish proposed that David and his men should accompany him (1Sa 28:1, 2)—to which he acceded. But when the other "lords" of the Philistines discovered the presence of David and his men among the forces of Achish, they were angry, for they feared he would not be loyal to their cause, saying, "Let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he *reconcile himself unto* his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?" (1Sa 29:4). "Reconcile" there means not, How shall he remove his own anger against Saul, but Saul's against him, and how shall he restore himself again to his master's favour.

The great thing to be clear upon in connection with reconciliation is that it is objective in its significance and action—in other words, it terminates upon the object and not upon the subject. The offender does not reconcile himself, but the person whom he has wronged; and that, by making suitable amends or reparation. Socinians and Arminians have sought to make capital out of the fact that in the Scriptures, it is never said in so many words that "God is reconciled to us," but that they uniformly speak of our "being reconciled" to Him (Rom 5:10). The explanation of that is very simple: God is the Party offended, and we, the parties offending; and it is always the offending party who is said to be the one reconciled, and not the offended. Another clear proof of that is found in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

There we have a "brother" offended, a grievance against one who has injured him. Aware of that, the duty of the wrong-doer is clear: He must do all in his power to right the wrong, remove the ground of grievance, and secure amity between them—for until that be done, a holy God will not receive his worship. "Be reconciled to thy brother" does not refer to any state of mind or feeling in the emotions of the wrong-doer, but signifies to make reparation to him, pacify him. The offender is not bidden to lay aside his *own* enmity—though that is understood—but is to go to the aggrieved one and seek to turn away his wrath from him, by means of an humble and frank confession of his sin, thereby gaining an entrance again into his good-will and favour. Nothing could be plainer: "Be reconciled to thy brother" means to put right what is wrong, conciliate him; and thus, heal the breach between you, which is hindering your communion with God.

Before going further, we want the reader to be thoroughly clear upon what has been said. At first sight, "wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master?" (1Sa 29:4) seems to mean David's laying aside his own ill-will and healing a breach *he* had made—yet, the very opposite is its actual sense. It was Saul who hated him! The Philistines feared that David and his men would slay them and take their heads to Saul, and thereby cause him to *look favourably* again on David. So, too, a careless reader of Matthew 5:24 would conclude, "be reconciled to thy brother" signifies that the one addressed was the offended party, who needed to change his own feelings toward the other. But again, the very opposite is the case. It was the brother who had something "against" *him*, because of a wrong he had done him; and thus, the one ad-

ressed is the offender and so “be reconciled to thy brother” means, go and confess your fault and appease him. The *sense* of the words is the reverse of their *sound*!

Matthew 5:24 contains the *initial* occurrence of our term, and in accordance with the law of first mention intimates how the word is used throughout the New Testament. It definitely establishes the fact that to be “reconciled to” another connotes the pacifying of the offended party, so that a state of concord is the result; and it was precisely the same force whenever it is used in connection with *God*: We are reconciled to Him as we are to an injured brother—reparation having been made to Him, we are restored to His favour. This is plain, again, from the next occurrence of the word in Romans 5:10. There, the whole context makes it plain that God is the offended One, that the cause of His indignation against us was our sins, that Christ offered a sufficient satisfaction unto Him, thereby removing His wrath and conciliating Him unto us. Christ’s sacrifice averted God’s displeasure as our Governor and Judge—His relation and judicial attitude toward us was *changed* by a great historical transaction: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10).

Here, then, is the issue: Do those words “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” signify that Christ pacified God so that He has laid aside His judicial wrath against His people?—or, that Christ moves us to lay aside our enmity and hostility against God? We contend that it means the former; that, in the language of William Shedd, “Here the reconciliation is described from the side of the offending party—*man* is said to be reconciled. Yet this does *not* mean the subjective reconciliation of the sinner toward God, but the objective reconciliation of God towards the sinner. For the preceding verse speaks of God as a Being from whose “wrath” the believer is saved by the death of Christ. This shows that the reconciliation effected by Christ’s atoning death is that of the Divine anger against sin.” The reconciliation which is here mentioned is prior to conversion; and therefore, quite distinct from conversion (which is when we lay aside *our* enmity)—for it occurred when Christ laid down His life for us, and not when the Holy Spirit quickened us.

We submit that, from the following considerations, “reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom 5:10) refers to God’s reconciliation to His people. First, from the relation which that clause bears to “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8)—the one being parallel with the other. *Why* did Christ die for sinners? Was it not in order to deliver them from the curse of God, and to secure everlasting felicity for them! Second, from the fact that the same expression is described as “being now justified by his blood” (Rom 5:9)—for in the previous verse, the apostle speaks of Christ’s dying for sinners or rebels against God. The consequence of His death is that believers are “justified by his blood” (Rom 5:9); and, as every Scripturally-enlightened person knows, to be “justified” is to be received into God’s favour (being His acceptance of us, and not ours of Him)—which is precisely what “reconciliation” is. Third, from the fact that the “when we were *enemies*” (Rom 5:10) refers to the relation we stood in to God—the objects of His displeasure. “Sinners...justified by his blood” (Rom 5:8-9) and “enemies...reconciled to God” by Christ’s death (Rom 5:10) correspond exactly the one to the other.

Fourth, from the obvious sense of the verse, the apostle is arguing (as his “if” and “much more” shows) from the less to the greater: If when we had no love for God, Christ’s sacrifice procured His favour, much more—now that we are converted, will His mediation on high deliver us from our sins as Christians. Fifth, from the reconciliation being ascribed to Christ’s *death*—which was definitely and solely *Godward*—had it been the removing of *our* enmity and turning us to love God, it had been attributed to Christ’s *Spirit*. Sixth, from the obvious meaning of the term—as we have shown from 1 Samuel 29:4 and Matthew 5:23, 24—it is the injured party who is the one needing to be reconciled to the offender. Seventh, from the fact that our reconciliation is something which is tendered to us—“we have now received” the reconciliation (Rom 5:11)—we received the reconciliation effected by Christ, and then presented for our acceptance in the Gospel. It would be the height of absurdity to say that we “received” the laying down of the weapons of our warfare against God.

“All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:18-19). That His reconciling of “us” or “the world” unto Himself refers to *God’s* placation unto the favour toward us is clear. First, because it was effected by “Jesus Christ;” therefore, it signifies the removing of God’s anger. Second, because had it meant His work of grace within us, subduing our enmity, it had said, “God is in Christ”—or more precisely, “God by His Spirit is reconciling the world unto Himself.” Third, because “God *was* in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co

5:19), it means God appointed and anointed Christ to procure His reconciliation: He was in Christ as the Surety—God *out* of Christ is “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29) to the wicked. Fourth, because the term is here formally defined as “not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19), which is *God’s* act and not the creature’s—“not imputing” etc. means, not dealing with us as justice required for our sins, on account of Christ’s atonement. Fifth, because the “ministry” and “word of reconciliation” (2Co 5:18-19) was committed to the apostles—i.e. the Atonement was the grand theme of their preaching (1Co 2:2). Sixth, because on that ground, sinners are exhorted to be “reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20)—since God has changed His attitude unto you, change yours towards Him. Seventh, because our sins were imputed to Christ, and since He atoned for them, His righteousness is imputed to us (2Co 5:21).

“And that he [Christ Jesus] might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you” (Eph 2:16, 17). As these verses and their context will come before us again (D.V.), we will confine ourselves now to that which concerns our present purpose. The “both” refers to Jews and Gentiles, “in one body” signifies the Saviour’s humanity—compare “in the body of his flesh” (Col 1:22). “By the cross” speaks of a definite historical action in the past, and not a protracted process throughout the whole Gospel era. “Having slain the enmity thereby” signifies not that between Jew and Gentile (which is mentioned in the former verse), but of God’s judicial disapprobation against both. This is confirmed in the next verse, where the “preached peace” means preached the peace made with God, as the “access” in verse 18 clearly indicates. Having effected peace, Christ, after His resurrection, ministerially (2Co 5:18-20), announced it.

“And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself” (Col 1:20). This passage, we also hope to enter into more fully in a later article, but suffice it now to point out that—since *peace* was “made,” there must previously have been hostility; and since that peace was made “through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20), then the shedding thereof was for the placating of God, by offering a satisfaction to His violated Law. In Scripture, man is never represented as making reconciliation Godward: It is what he experiences or embraces, and not what he makes. It should also be pointed out that never is reconciliation ascribed to the risen Christ, any more than that we are justified in a risen Christ. It is His *blood* that justifies (Rom 5:9), which brings redemption (Eph 1:7), by which we are brought nigh (Eph 2:13), which sanctifies (Heb 13:12), which gives us the right of approach to God (Heb 10:19).

We have been contending for a great truth, and not merely for a word or syllable. When Socinians object that Scripture nowhere says in so many *words* that ‘God is reconciled to us,’ they are guilty of mere trifling—for *equivalent* expressions most certainly *do* occur. If it be admitted that sin is displeasing to God, and that His vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, it must also be admitted that if God’s anger has been turned away from sinners by a propitiatory sacrifice, then He must have been reconciled to them. “He who once threatened to punish another, but has since pardoned him and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him” (J. Dick). The emphasis is thrown upon *our* reconciliation to God, because *we* were first in the breach—we fell out with God, before He fell out with us; and because the averseness is on our side, the Gospel makes known His willingness to receive us (because of Christ’s sacrifice) if we are prepared to cease our fighting against Him.

If it be asked, Was God reconciled to all the elect, and they to Him, the moment Christ cried, “it is finished” (Joh 19:30)?—the answer is both yes and no. We must distinguish between: (1) reconciliation in the eternal purpose of God; (2) as it was effected by Christ; (3) as it is offered to us in the Gospel; (4) as it actually becomes ours when we believe.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

*Part 2: Continuation of a sermon
from an unnamed preacher in the early 1800s*

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war as one of the greatest calamities, but it does not follow from hence that it is in *all* cases unlawful. Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; wherever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so will every other species of injustice; yet while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may at some future time become unnecessary. If our Saviour's command that we resist not evil be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi (Act 16:37), and He Himself would not have reproved the person who smote Him at the judgment seat (Joh 18:22-23).

I allow that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As *individuals*, it may be lawful by this instrument to defend ourselves or our families against the attacks of an assassin—but perhaps this is the only case in which it is so; and even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge. In ordinary injuries, it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary smite us on the one cheek, we had better turn to him the other also (Luk 6:29), than go about to avenge our own wrongs. The laws of honour, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims ordinarily practiced among men will no doubt be found among the works of the flesh. And if, as *nations*, we were to act on Christian principle, we should never engage in war but in our own defence; and not for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more, it is allowed that Christians as such are not permitted to have recourse to the sword for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the Gospel's sake. No weapon is admissible in this warfare but *Truth*, whatever be the consequences. We may remonstrate as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord Himself when unjustly smitten, but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to rescue his Master from the persecuting hands of His enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed His going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances, he was in the *wrong*—and the saying of our Saviour that “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mat 26:52) has commonly been verified, in *this* sense of it. I believe it will be found that when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the Gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French Protestants, and some others within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been that they have *perished* by it—that is, they have been overcome by their enemies and exterminated; whereas in cases where their only weapons have been “the blood of the Lamb, and...the word of their testimony” loving “not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11), they have overcome. Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defence of our country. The ground on which our Saviour refused to let His servants fight *for Him*, that He should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was that His was a “kingdom...not of this world” (Joh 18:36)—plainly intimating that, if His kingdom *had been* of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper. Now, this is what every other

kingdom is. It is right, therefore—according to our Lord's reasoning—that the subjects of all civil states should, as such, when required, fight in defence of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner, recognised civil government by requiring Christians to be subject to it (Rom 13:1)? Has it not expressly authorised the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain," and that he is "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom 13:4). But if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil-doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without—and if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subjects should assist him in it; for otherwise, his power would be merely nominal, and he would indeed beareth "the sword in vain." We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation, and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one—allowing for different talents and situations in life—is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter; and if it be binding upon neither, it must follow that civil government itself ought not be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.

Further, if the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, it were a sin to be a soldier; but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing "centurions" (Mat 8:5-13; Act 10), and neither of them was reprov'd on account of his office, or required to relinquish it. We also read of publicans and soldiers who came to John to be baptized, each asking, "What shall we do?" (Luk 3:14). The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: They are warned against the abuses of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one, he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (Luk 3:13); to the other, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (Luk 3:14). If either of these occupations had been, in itself, sinful or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John's grand object to announce—and into the faith of which his disciples were baptized—he ought, on this occasion, to have said so, or at least not to have said that which implies the contrary.

If it be objected that the sinfulness of war would not lie so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers, as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and executed, I allow there is considerable force in this—but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees. But granting, it may be said that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it may be practiced. But if wars be allowed to be *generally* undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are *always* so; and still less, that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the motives of those who engage in it. The question is, Whether it be *in itself* just? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible. There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed, before we condemn any measure as unjust: We ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between two families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighbourhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it, yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side—till he has

acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of *nations*—which are generally not a little complex both in their origin and bearings, and of which we know but little but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbours, take upon them to pronounce with the utmost freedom upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favour of war, however painful it may be to my feelings as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit and to think well of their decision—till by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving it; and where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the present instance, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, if we merely act in the defensive (and not to resist an enemy whose ambition, under the pretence of liberating mankind, has carried desolation wherever he has gone), then we prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is: Is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged to resist it? That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

2. *"Seek the peace of the city...and pray unto the LORD for it" (Jer 29:7).* There is another duty that we owe to our country—which is, that we pray to the Lord for it. It is supposed that religious people are a praying people. The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well-known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life. King Darius knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, on behalf of himself and his sons. My brethren, your country claims an interest in yours; and I trust that if no such claims were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that all our dependence as a nation is upon God; and therefore, should importune His assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in His sight, all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing—He doth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou?' Indeed, this has been acknowledged—and at times, sensibly felt—by irreligious characters; but in general, the great body of a nation—it is to be feared—think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh (2Ch 32:8). It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by land and sea, as was said of Cyrus, that God hath girded them, though they had not known Him (Isa 45:5). But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you be concerned as much as in you lies to supply the defect. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam 5:16).

You are also aware, in some measure, of *the load of guilt* that lies upon your country; and should, therefore, supplicate mercy on its behalf. I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear

from *this* quarter, than from the boasting menaces of a vain man. If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable slave traffic—in which we have taken so conspicuous a part and have shed so much innocent blood—I tremble! When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God saying unto us, “Loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke” (Isa 58:6)! Yet, peradventure, for His own name’s sake, or from a regard to His own cause—which is here singularly protected—the Lord may hearken to our prayers and save us from deserved ruin. We know that Sodom itself would have been spared, if ten righteous men could have been found in her. I proceed to consider.

II. The *motive* by which these duties are here enforced: “In the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer 29:7).

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind, as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others—nor even refrain from doing them good—without injuring ourselves. The interest of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally speaking, so do the former; and if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy—such as we have to deal with—must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people (which must be severely felt; as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army), who can calculate the loss of lives? Who can contemplate without horror the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery? Let not the poorest man say, ‘I have nothing to lose.’ Yes, if men of opulence lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family with whom—amidst all your hardships—you live in love; and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused; and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as *Christians*—no less than as men and as families—are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If Christians, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed under various relative obligations, it is not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are, we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty in this country, that I fear we have become too insensible of its value. At present, we worship God without interruption. What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home only as a matter of policy, we know not. This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men in our own country—who have been labouring to overturn its constitution—have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Christ. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the United Kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us—to whatever extremities we may be reduced—will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways. Even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in prayer, while their countrymen—and it may be their own children—are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several, whom I now address, freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers.

Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us—if they can pray for anything—will importune the Lord of hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle.

Finally, it affords a satisfaction to my mind to be persuaded that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you of *declining* to learn your exercise on the Lord's Day. Were you called to resist the landing of the enemy on that day, or any other work of *necessity*, you would not object to it; but in other cases, I trust you will. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mar 12:17).

