

A lit candle, a magnifying glass over an open book, and a quill pen. The candle is lit, casting a warm glow. The magnifying glass is positioned over the open book, which is lying flat. The quill pen is resting on the right page of the book. The background is dark, making the candle and the book stand out.

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STUDIES IN THE
SCRIPTURES

ARTHUR W. PINK

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Contents

January

Seven Human Looks	5
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	7
1. Introduction	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	13
53. His Failure, Part 1 (9:11-15)	
Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures	18
2. Its Extent, Part 2	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	23
1. Introduction	

February

Seven Divine Looks.....	27
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	29
2. The Humanity of Christ (1:1)	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	34
54. His Failure, Part 2 (9:15-19)	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	38
2. Its Origin	
Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures	44
3. Its Corollaries, Part 1	

March

God's Gifts.....	49
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	51
3. The Life Manifested (1:2)	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	56
55. The Oath (9:20-27)	
Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures	61
3. Its Corollaries, Part 2	

The Doctrine of Human Depravity	66
<i>2. Its Origin, Part 2</i>	
April	
Identification of the Godly	71
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	73
<i>4. Fellowship (1:3)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	79
<i>56. Making Peace (10:1-5)</i>	
Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures	83
<i>3. Its Corollaries, Part 3</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	88
<i>2. Its Origin, Part 3</i>	
May	
Never	94
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	96
<i>5. Fellowship (1:3), Part 2</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	101
<i>57. War Declared (10:5)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	106
Private Judgment.....	111
<i>Part 1</i>	
June	
For Ever	116
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	118
<i>6. Fullness of Joy (1:4)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	123
<i>58. Deliverance (10:6-10)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	128
<i>3. Its Imputation</i>	
Private Judgment.....	133
<i>Part 2</i>	
July	
Sleeping	139
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	141
<i>7. Fullness of Joy (1:4)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	146
<i>59. Miracles (10:11)</i>	

The Doctrine of Human Depravity	150
<i>3. Its Imputation, Part 2</i>	
Private Judgment.....	156
<i>Part 3</i>	
Welcome Tidings	160
August	
Waking.....	162
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	164
<i>8. Light and Darkness (1:5-6)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	170
<i>60. Miracles (10:12-13)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	174
<i>3. Its Imputation</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures	180
<i>Part 1</i>	
September	
Tears	185
The Exposition of John's First Epistle	187
<i>9. Light and Darkness (1:5-6)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	194
<i>61. Makkedah (10:13-21)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	198
<i>4. Its Consequences, Part 1</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures	203
<i>Part 2</i>	
October	
Laughter	209
Exposition of John's First Epistle	211
<i>10. Walking in the Light (1:7)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	219
<i>62. Makkedah (Mortification, 10:17-27)</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	223
<i>4. Its Consequences, Part 2</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures	227
<i>Part 3: Essential Requirements For Preachers</i>	

November

Forgetting.....	231
Exposition of John's First Epistle	233
<i>11. Sin Denied (1:8, 10)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	239
<i>64. The Conqueror (10:28-43)</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures	244
<i>Part 4</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	248
<i>4. Its Consequences, Part 3</i>	

December

Remembering.....	253
<i>New Year's Message</i>	
Exposition of John's First Epistle	255
<i>12. Sins Confessed (1:9)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua.....	261
<i>64. The Conqueror (Revelation 6:2)</i>	
Interpretation of the Scriptures	266
<i>Part 5</i>	
The Doctrine of Human Depravity	269
<i>5. Its Transmission</i>	
Our Annual Letter.....	274

Appendices

About Studies in the Scriptures.....	276
Biography of A.W. Pink	277
<i>By Erroll Hulse</i>	
Chapel Library Resources.....	281

JANUARY

SEVEN HUMAN LOOKS

We continue to write upon “Looking,” for, said the prophet, “Mine eye affecteth mine heart” (Lam 3:51). John Bunyan (1620-1677) wrote impressively on “Eyegate” and showed what a large part it played in admitting enemies into the city of Mansoul.¹ The heart has no more influential gate than the eyes; and if we are wise, we shall do as the patriarch and make “a covenant” with them (Job 31:1). Guard your eye and thereby safeguard your heart. Blessed are they who use their eyes to noble purpose, but better to have been born blind than pervert such a gift. Observation exerts a considerable influence upon the inner man, and therefore is no small factor in moulding the life. But alas, observation is not always rightly used: instead of evoking reflectiveness, drawing out sympathy, and leading to kindly deeds, only too often it excites our corruptions and issues in evil works. Whether observation affects us for good or evil depends not only upon the objects contemplated, but also upon our reflections on and reactions to the same.

1. The look *of faith*. “And the LORD said unto Abram...Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it” (Gen 13:14-15). That was in sharp contrast with the greed of his nephew, Lot, who “lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan” (verse 10), which was the look of covetousness. God here made a great promise and donation to His servant, and bade Abraham view his fair heritage, for it was a land flowing with milk and honey. As he gazed upon such an attractive portion, his heart would indeed be affected by a sense of the LORD’s goodness and magnanimity. And so should it ever be with us. As we behold the wondrous handiwork of God all around us in the realm of creation, we should admire His wisdom, be awed by His power, and adore the grace of Him who “giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1Ti 6:17)—to evoke thoughtfulness, regale our senses, and minister so freely to our needs. God’s workmanship in nature should fill us with wonderment and gratitude.

2. The look *of disobedience*. “But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt” (Gen 19:26). Solemn indeed is that, and chronicled for our admonition. God had given express command, “Look not behind thee” (verse 17), but Lot’s partner disregarded His injunction. In unbelief and love to Sodom, she looked back and probably attempted to return there, for in Luke 17:31-32, we find that our Lord pointed His prohibition, “Let him likewise not *return back*” with the warning, “Remember Lot’s wife.” This incident is recorded to show us the peril of

¹ **Mansoul** – the city attacked by Diabolus and freed by Immanuel in Bunyan’s allegory, *The Holy War*.

hankering after forbidden and forsaken objects, and to make us fear and tremble, lest after having escaped the corruption which is in the world through the knowledge of Christ, we are again entangled therein, and overcome, only to find our latter end is worse than the beginning (2Pe 2:20). Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt as a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates. True conversion is the renouncing of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and it is at our peril that we lust after the things we have abandoned. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says, "Drawing back is *to* perdition, and looking back is *towards* it."

3. The look of *curiosity*. "And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land" (Gen 34:1). So far as Scripture informs us, she was the only daughter he had, and with so many brothers, was probably petted and spoiled. Born just before Joseph (Gen 30:21-24), she could not have been more than fifteen or sixteen; and therefore, her mother was more to blame than she was. The Hebrew for "went out to see the daughters of the land" implies "to look about with them." Probably it was some occasion of public festivity, and unrest and discontent with the tent possessed her; and a spirit of inquisitiveness moved her to mix with the ungodly and to look at the customs and fashions of the heathen. The sequel was disastrous, for not only did she lose her honour, but her conduct led to her brothers committing murder. For young girls to get away from the eyes of their mothers and go out unchaperoned is highly dangerous, because of their inexperience of the world, their ignorance of the artifices of unscrupulous men, and their proneness to be easily deceived by flatterers. Let young women bear in mind that God has inseparably linked together "discreet, chaste, keepers at home" (Ti 2:5)!

4. The look of *contempt*. "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth" (1Sa 17:42). Goliath could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw this stripling advancing toward him, and "looked about" for one whom he deemed more "worthy of his steel." He was expecting to be confronted with the champion of Israel's army; and thus, when he perceived that an unaccoutred shepherd-boy had entered the lists against him, the Philistine utterly despised him. Therein he made the fatal mistake of underestimating his enemy. David indeed had no coat of mail upon him, but, what was infinitely preferable, he was clothed with "the whole armour of God" (Eph 6:11, 13). He might be totally unacquainted with the arts of warfare, but he knew from personal experience that JEHOVAH fails no one who really trusts Him. Said he, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1Sa 17:45); and the giant fell before him. Learn, then, that might cannot prevail over weakness, when that weakness leans upon the Almighty!

5. The look of *discontent*. "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought...and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc 2:11). That was the disappointing discovery made by the one man whom God permitted to obtain everything which the carnal heart craves. The force of his honest acknowledgement is the better perceived by observing what he tells us in the nine verses preceding, and then listening to his summing up: "And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour" (Ecc 2:10). But having realized his ambitions and gratified every desire, he found that so far from their affording him any real and lasting satisfaction, they still left an aching void within. Mere *things*—however costly or lovely in themselves—cannot meet the real needs of the soul. The heart was made for God, and He alone can fill it. Self's enjoyment of the joys of this earth leaves naught but emptiness behind. The thirst of the soul cannot be quenched by the cisterns of this world. Gold can purchase nothing but what proves to be vanity. Christ alone "satisfieth the longing soul" (Psa 107:9).

6. The look *of humiliation*. “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD...and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged” (Isa 51:1). That is very necessary if a lowly spirit is to be preserved in the child of God. It is a most salutary exercise to look back and view our origin, and behold what we were when the hand of divine mercy was first laid upon us. “Wherefore remember,” says the apostle, “that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:11-12). Remember it to your shame. Look to the “horrible pit [and] the miry clay” (Psa 40:2), out of which the God of all grace brought you, that you may be confounded and never more open your mouth boastfully (Eze 16:63). Daily ponder the question, “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” (1Co 4:7)—not only from those who are hastening to destruction, but from what you were *yourself* only a short time since! Let such a look humble you into the dust.

7. The look *of hope*. “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple” (Jon 2:4). That is, though because of my reprehensible conduct, Thou no longer viewest me with approbation and delight; nevertheless, I will not give way to despair, but cast myself upon Thy mercy. Those words, “I will look again toward thy holy temple,” show that his faith laid hold of that statement: “If thy people...shall pray unto the LORD *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven...If they sin against thee...and pray unto thee toward their land...and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer” (1Ki 8:44-49 and compare 2Ch 20:9). When a captive in Babylon, Daniel had acted on the same (Dan 6:10), and now the chastened prophet made it *his* confidence. Though in the whale’s belly, he refused to abandon hope. He “remembered the LORD: and [his] prayer came in unto [Him], into [His] holy temple” (Jon 2:7). He remembered His grace, His faithfulness, His power, His past mercies, and turned unto Him the eyes of expectation; and he was miraculously delivered! Oh, what encouragement is there here for every failing saint who is tempted to despond.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

1. Introduction

When we completed our 1,500-page exposition of John’s Gospel² more than twenty years ago, we were urged to take up the first epistle of John,³ but felt quite incompetent to engage therein. The closing books of the New Testament, as their position indicates, require their expositor to possess a fuller knowledge of God’s Word and a more mature spiritual experience than do the earlier ones. The style of John’s epistle is quite different from that of the other apostles, being

² *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, hardcover, reprinted by Zondervan, 1968.

³ *First John 1 and 2* is reprinted by and available from Chapel Library, www.chapellibrary.org.

more abstract, and for that reason, more difficult of apprehension and elucidation. We still feel very unfit for the task upon which we are now entering, but if we wait until we deem ourselves spiritually qualified, it will never be essayed. During the past quarter of a century, we have given no little prayerful thought to its contents, and have studied carefully all the writings of others thereon which divine providence has brought our way: the benefits of and the gleanings from which we shall now share with our Christian friends.

Not only is John's epistle much more difficult than his Gospel (which is manifestly designed for babes in Christ, though even the "fathers" never outgrow it) and the other apostolic writings, but it does not lend itself so readily to expositions of equal length, for some of its contents afford much more scope to a sermonizer than do others; and thus, while a whole article may be profitably devoted to certain single verses, others require to be grouped together; and because of this, the reader is likely to be disappointed at the varying lengths of their treatment. It is perhaps for these reasons that comparatively little has been written upon this epistle—scarcely anything during the past fifty years. So far as we know, none of the Puritans attempted a systematic exposition of the same, for N. Hardy (1665) scarcely comes under that category. Yet this portion of God's Word is equally necessary, important, and valuable for His children, as are all the others—though what they are likely to get out of it will largely depend upon their acquaintance with all the preceding books, and with the constancy and intimacy of their communion with the Triune God.

A brief word concerning *its writer*. So far as we are aware, no evangelical of any weight has ever denied that this epistle was written by the same person of blessed memory as the one to whom the fourth Gospel is unanimously attributed. There is clear and conclusive evidence of this—both external and internal. As Albert Barnes (1798-1870) stated of the epistle: "It is referred to by Polycarp at the beginning of the second century, it is quoted by Papias and also by Ireneus." It is found in the old Syriac version, which was probably made very early in the second century. Internally, the evidence is strong that the same hand wrote this epistle as penned the fourth Gospel. The resemblances are many and striking, the modes of expression sufficient to identify the one employing them. The similarity of the opening verse of each is too close, yet the variations too marked, to have been made by an impostor. The reference to the "new commandment" (never mentioned by the other apostles) in 1 John 2:8 (and see 1Jo 3:11) find its source in 13:34 of John's Gospel. The reader may also compare 1 John 3:1, with John 1:12; 1 John 3:2, with John 17:24; 1 John 3:8, with John 8:44; 1 John 3:13, with John 15:20; 1 John 4:9, with John 3:16; etc.

To whom it was written. It is correctly designated one of the "General Epistles," for it is not addressed to any particular individual or local assembly. Obviously, it is designed for the whole family of God. Yet, as one reads it through, one gets a clear impression that John was intimately acquainted with those who first read his letter, that the majority of them were the seals of his own ministry, as his repeated "my little children" seems to indicate. As we shall yet have occasion to show (D.V.), it was Jewish Christians who were immediately concerned; 1 John 5:13 makes it evident that John wrote unto believers; and by linking that verse with 1 John 2:3-5, we perceive that it was his design to aid them in the important task of self-examination, that they might be more fully assured of their interest in Christ. From 1 John 2:18-26, we learn that the original recipients of this epistle were being assailed by false teachers, and it was John's object to counteract (not refute *seriatim*!)⁴ their error, and confirm the same in their most holy faith.

Though there is nothing in the epistle to tell us the specific *date when* it was written, yet we may approximate pretty closely thereunto. That it was penned much later than Paul's epistles ap-

⁴ *seriatim* - in a series; one after another.

pears from the fact that with John, “the world” and “the whole world” (1Jo 5:19) comprise *all* that is outside Christianity. Not so with Paul: in his time, there were *two* distinct camps hostile to Christianity—Judaism and heathendom. But the ancient kingdom of God had now passed away: the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed. After A.D. 70, the Jews had no power to persecute Christians. It was manifestly written after his Gospel, for such statements as 1 John 2:17 and 5:6 are unintelligible, unless the reader has a knowledge of his Gospel—not only in general, but in its detailed expressions. The entire absence of such terms as affliction, suffering, and tribulation, intimates that this letter was composed when external opposition to Christianity had largely subsided, when outward hostility was giving place to the corruption of the truth from *within*. Thus it must have first seen the light very near the close of the first century.

In this epistle, the enemies of the saints are neither Jews nor Gentiles as such, but “anti-christs”—counterfeit Christians. Just as Satan himself is presented to us in the Scriptures under two outstanding characters—as the lion and the serpent, as adversary and seducer—so are his emissaries and children. There are two distinct classes by which the truth of God is dishonoured: by those who oppose and corrupt it in doctrine, and by those who misrepresent and malign it in practice—compare the Sadducees (Act 23:8) and the Pharisees (Mat 23:1-36). Heretics, who pervert the Scriptures or openly contradict the fundamentals of the Faith, are the more easily recognized: against them the apostle warns in 1 John 2:18, 26; 3:7; 4:1-3. But numerous formalists and hypocrites shelter behind an empty profession, and are not so readily identified, for *they hold* the letter of the truth, acknowledging it with their lips, though they walk not therein, nor are their lives transformed by it. Concerning these, John has much to say. Right from the beginning, he distinguishes sharply between the real Christian and the nominal one (1Jo 1:6-7), and continues doing so (1Jo 2:3-5, etc.).

The several *aims* of the apostle are easily perceived: in general, it was to make a practical application of his Gospel, as appears from a comparison of 1 John 5:13, with John 20:31; and as 1 John 2:7 confirms. John sought that his beloved children should have just views of their divine Saviour, an intelligent faith in Him, and that they might adorn their profession by a holy and consistent walk—1 John 2:1. It is evident from his “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it” (1Jo 2:21) that he was not addressing himself to those who were uninstructed, but rather to those who were well indoctrinated—compare also verses 20 and 27. Thus, his purpose was not so much to inform as to edify, not to tell them something new, but to confirm them in what they had already heard. This was the more necessary because some of their original number had apostatized (verse 19) and false teachers were seeking to corrupt them: let not their faith be shaken by the former, and let them heed his warnings, and then they would not be drawn away by the wiles of the latter.

A careful reading of the epistle makes it plain that another important end which the apostle had before him was to confute those who taught that because salvation is by grace, God’s people are not “under the law” or required to keep the divine commandments. Antinomianism had raised its hideous head even in his day, and it devolved upon John to counteract the same. This it is which explains his frequent reference to the “commandments” (1Jo 2:4, etc.), which, in its singular or plural form, occurs no less than thirteen times in this epistle. As students of ecclesiastical history are aware, those known as “The Libertines” had attained unto considerable prominence by the end of the first century. Their very name is sufficient to indicate their character. Peter, in his second epistle, described their forerunners as “false prophets” who, “while they promise them [their dupes] liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption” (2Pe 2:1, 19); and Jude had spoken of them as “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” thereby

“denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude :4). John denounces them as “anti-christs” (1Jo 2:18).

There is little indication that John wrote according to a preconceived and definite plan, yet his thoughts are orderly. While the epistle is far from being a systematic doctrinal treatise, nevertheless, for its understanding, a close acquaintance with the distinctively doctrinal epistles preceding it is requisite. One expositor thereon said, “I am deeply convinced, after years of thought about it, that it can be studied aright exegetically only when it is studied theologically...no one is competent to deal in detail with this wonderful book who is not familiar with the evangelical system as a whole, and able therefore to appreciate the bearing of John’s line of thought in connection with it”—Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873), 1866. That remark is, in our judgment, borne out by the *position* his epistle occupies in the Sacred Canon. Yet another and higher qualification is needed, namely, that spiritual-mindedness, which is the fruit of mature Christian experience. But the most difficult part of the expositor’s task here is to trace the connection of the apostle’s successive lines of thought. Our main endeavour will be to bring out the general scope and tenor of his teaching as simply as we can.

“The true knowledge of Christ is the one only key whereby all the treasures contained in this epistle can be opened, for it contains a spiritual treatise on communion with Christ, and with the Father in Him, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. We can have no communion with the Three in JEHOVAH, but as we have a distinct scriptural knowledge of the revelation given concerning Them in the sacred record. No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. This epistle...sets forth the real fellowship which the apostles and saints in that age had with the Holy Trinity, and what all saints in all succeeding ages are to expect and enjoy, in their measure and degree, until the same is consummated with the Eternal Three in the state of everlasting glory. As this epistle begins with this most sublime subject, so it is pursued throughout the whole of it: in showing the fruits and effects which the true knowledge of and communion with the Lord produce in the minds, lives, and conversations of such as know Him, and have free and frequent access to Him”—Samuel E. Pierce (1746–1829), 1817.

What has just been quoted gives much the best summary and coincides most closely with our own concept of anything we have seen on the subject. It intimates that its grand theme is *fellowship* with God in and through Christ. Where that is enjoyed by individual saints, it necessarily leads to fellowship one with another. As usual, the key is hung upon the door, for in 1 John 1:3, the apostle states that the design before him is: “That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This fellowship is the quintessence of blessedness, but only the regenerate enter into it. It is “in the light,” with the Holy One, and therefore impossible for those who are dead in trespasses and sins (verses 5-7). Yet the Christian’s infirmities, be they what they may, are not to be considered as hindrances to his communion with the Lord, since full provision has been made for him in the all-sufficient antidote of Christ’s blood (1Jo 1:7) and advocacy (1Jo 2:1). Later, John goes on to show that this fellowship is in righteousness and in love; but we will not further anticipate.

Among the many peculiarities of style which mark John in this epistle, we may mention that, *negatively*, there is almost an entire absence of that logical reasoning that is so prominent in Paul’s epistles—which is just what might be expected from a simple fisherman in contradistinction from a scholar. There is no “according as” or “for this cause.” “Wherefore” occurs but once (1Jo 3:12); and there, it is a question, “Why?” “Therefore” is found in 1 John 2:24; 3:1, and 4:5; yet in neither instance, as a conclusion drawn from a preceding train of thought. Instead of the argumentative method, John is all for direct and positive assertions. Paul lays down a premise as a

foundation on which he builds what follows; John simply affirms the truth in simple form. And so it is in connection with the ministry of the Word. Some of God's servants deal with their subjects principally in a doctrinal way; others, in a solemn method of pointed averment; yet both are used by the Spirit of God, and are best suited to different types of Christians. The Lord is pleased to bestow a variety of gifts on His servants for the good of His people at large.

John indeed has a style all his own, differing noticeably from all other New Testament writers. This epistle contains no salutation, yet it breathes a spirit of warmth unto those addressed. No reference is made to either of the ordinances. No prayer is recorded therein, though definite encouragement and instruction are given to praying souls. There are no predictions in it, no delineations of the future as in the epistles of all his fellow apostles. Instead of describing the conditions which should characterize "the last days," he declares "it is the last time" (1Jo 2:18). Instead of foretelling the appearing of a future Antichrist, John refers to the antichrists who were then upon the stage (1Jo 2:18 and 4:3).

Turning to the *positive* side, one who attentively reads through the epistle at a sitting will at once be struck by the fact that it possesses and combines certain definite qualities, which, at first sight, seem quite opposed to each other. Its style of expression is simple and unadorned. It abounds in words of one syllable and contains few that a child would have difficulty in pronouncing. Its sense is clear and patent. Nevertheless, there is no lack of dignity in its language, and its matter is elevated and sublime. Its tone warms our hearts, yet the truth it expresses causes us to stand in awe. Therein profoundest mysteries are touched upon and depths are sounded which no finite mind can fathom; still, its speech is plain, and the terms used are non-technical. "He writes at once with the most commanding authority and most loving tenderness; with the profoundest wisdom and the most touching simplicity; the most searching knowledge of the heart, its difficulties and facilities, and the most elevating and bracing courage and confidence; the gentlest affection, and the most pitiless and sternest condemnation of willful departure from the truth in practice or opinion"—Charles J. Ellicott (1819–1905).

Much is said therein about *love*, and nowhere is a spirit of charity more admirably and forcibly inculcated. But there are also a bold outspokenness and sternness which make us shrink. The love enjoined is far from being a stickly sentiment or effeminate weakness, being a holy grace, which—instead of preventing faithful rebuke and severe denunciation—promotes them. In such verses as 1 John 1:6; 2:22; 3:8, 10, 15; 4:20; 5:10, we hear the voice of "the sons of thunder" (Mar 3:17), vehement against every insult to the majesty of the Lord. It is ostensibly written to promote assurance in the saints (1Jo 5:13), yet nowhere else in the Word are we so often called upon to close self-examination and unsparing testing of ourselves. This epistle might well be termed a touchstone by which we may discern between the genuine gold and the counterfeit. It frequently utters the language of confidence, yet as often uses that which is discriminating. As Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) well said, "the apostle mingles caution with caress, and qualifies the most soothing consolations with such stern warning, that in well-nigh every sentence, he constrains us to deep searching of heart."

In our opening paragraph, we mentioned the *abstract* (and absolute) character of many of John's statements. It is most important that the reader should understand this and bear it in mind: failure to do so will lead to a serious misapprehension of many verses. In 1 John 1:3, he says, "truly our fellowship *is* with the Father"—not "ought to be": he speaks characteristically, taking no notice of the things which hinder it. To the "young men" he says, "Ye have overcome the wicked one" (1Jo 2:13-14), and making no mention of their failures. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light" (verse 10)—nothing is said about the degree of love; it is simply contrasted

with “hateth” (verse 11). “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4)—no account is there taken of the presence of the flesh with its unbelief and self-will. John abounds in brief factual statements. “Ye know all things...ye need not that any man teach you” (1Jo 2:20, 27) is left unqualified. To John, there are only two postures of heart: for or against—the points of transition from the one to the other are ignored. Contrasts are put in their sharpest form: light and darkness—no intermediate twilight; life and death—nothing which answers to mere existence.

Throughout the epistle, there rings loudly the note of *certainly*. The two Greek words used for “know” occur no less than thirty-six times in its five chapters, examples of which are: “We know that we have passed from death unto life...And hereby we know that we are of the truth” (1Jo 3:14, 19). “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us...And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us” (1Jo 4:13, 16). The epistle closes with another threefold “we know” (1Jo 5:18-20). Again and again, the apostle describes simple, but definite, marks by which the child of God may be identified, and distinguish himself from self-deceivers and hypocrites. Thus, it was not addressed to those who resided in “Doubting Castle,”⁵ and any who dwell in its dismal dungeons should find here that which, by the divine blessing, will deliver him therefrom. Nor was it only a small and particularly favoured class which shared the apostle’s own assurance, or only mature Christians, as his “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1Jo 2:13) shows.

That his epistle is an *intensely practical* one is evinced in many ways. For example, not once is the word “knowledge” found in the form of a noun, but always as a verb. The same is true of *faith*: he almost invariably uses the verbal form. With John, doctrine is not mere dogma, but faith in action. Truth is not merely a theory, but an energy, which lives and moves in the new life. There is scarcely any strictly “doctrinal” teaching, and very few direct exhortations. It is mainly the vital and experiential side of things; and hence, it is that the line of demarcation and separation is so sharply and often drawn between genuine and graceless professors—not to discourage believers, but to inform and safeguard them against being deceived and imposed upon. John did far more than deal with forms of error which were local and ephemeral, refuting those of his day in a manner whereby he enunciated principles of universal importance and of almost illimitable application—equally suited to the exposure of error in every age.

It is remarkable how many different topics are introduced into this brief letter, so that we are almost justified in saying with J. Morgan, “The whole realm of evangelical truth is traversed by the apostle.” Blessed it is to see how *the balance of truth* is preserved therein. No one would regard it as a theological treatise, yet most of the fundamentals of our faith are briefly set forth therein. The divine incarnation (1Jo 1:1-3), the nature of God (1Jo 1:5; 4:8), the atonement and advocacy of Christ (1Jo 2:1-2), the person and work of the Holy Spirit (1Jo 3:24), regeneration (1Jo 2:29), and the Trinity (1Jo 5:7). The epistle is far from being an appeal to emotionalism, yet it bids believers, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon [them]” (1Jo 3:1), and while affording no encouragement to rest upon feelings (as its repeated dogmatic “we know” shows), yet it is written that our “joy may be full” (1Jo 1:4). While it is not a discourse on humanitarianism, it stresses practical altruism (1Jo 3:17-18). Though not a discussion of eschatology, yet the return of Christ (1Jo 2:28) and “the day of judgment” (1Jo 4:17) are mentioned. Thus this epistle supplies an admirable corrective to one-sided views of the Christian life.

⁵ **Doubting Castle** – a reference from John Bunyan’s famous book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, available to order from Chapel Library.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

53. His Failure, Part 1 (9:11-15)

In our last article (upon the early verses of Joshua 9), we saw how that Israel's supernatural crossing of the Jordan and the victories which the LORD gave them at Jericho and Ai had struck terror into the hearts of the Gibeonites. Consequently, those Canaanites who resided in that part of the land, which Israel must very soon reach, determined—by means of a piece of trickery—to outwit the hosts of God, and thereby preserve their own lives. They decided to pose as those who dwelt in “a far country” (Jos 9:6)—that is, beyond the bounds of Canaan itself—and who wished to enter into a league of peace with the Hebrews. Accordingly, they attired themselves in tattered garments and came to Israel's camp at Gilgal. They told a plausible tale, saying that the fame of JEHOVAH had reached their ears—thereby intimating their desire to come under His protection and become proselytes to His religion. They apologized for their sorry appearance, explaining that it was due to the long and fatiguing journey they had come. It was a subtle appeal to Israel's pride that tidings of the wonder-working power of their God had gone so far abroad that even these remote strangers were acquainted with the same, and therefore sought union with His favoured people. In reality, it was a tempting of Israel to act at direct variance with an injunction from JEHOVAH, which expressly forbade their doing any such thing.

These Gibeonites belonged to the tribe of the Hivites (Jos 9:7), and the renowned Hebraist, John Gill (1697-1771), tells us that “The name Hivites signifies *serpents*”! They certainly acted here in complete accord therewith, conducting themselves “wilily” (verse 4), telling downright lies, and succeeding in thoroughly deceiving Joshua and his princes. Yet Israel ought not to have been imposed upon by them. Even from a natural standpoint, their conduct was excuseless. Only recently they had themselves resorted to a subtle strategy in the taking of Ai; and therefore, it now behoved them to be doubly on the alert, lest they be paid back in their own coin. The men of Israel were indeed suspicious, for they said, “Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?” (verse 7). Evidently they remembered those words, “And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them” (Deu 7:2). Nor was Joshua himself satisfied with the first account they gave of themselves, as his “Who are ye? and from whence come ye?” (Jos 9:8) evidenced. Yet the suspicions of both the one and the other were soon lulled to sleep.

“And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God” (Jos 9:9). It is to be noted that though Joshua had specifically asked them, “Who are ye? and from whence come ye?” in their reply, they neither declared their nationality, nor named the place of their birth. Thus, typically considered, their credentials were unsatisfactory at the *vital* point, for it is the spiritual birth of those applying for fellowship that the churches need to inquire most closely into. “For we have heard...and all that he did in Egypt...And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan” (verse 10), intimating that a deep impression had been made upon them thereby. “Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us” (verse 11).

Thus they pretended that their senate had been formally convened and had unanimously appointed their ambassadors to enter into this covenant with Israel—i.e. they were vouched for by reliable authorities, so that Joshua need have no fear of being imposed upon by charlatans.

If the tale told by these Gibeonites was really true, and they *had* come from “a very far country” (Jos 9:9), then the extreme measures which JEHOVAH had commanded His people to take with the inhabitants of the land (Deu 7:1-2) would not have to be executed against *them*. This is clear from Deuteronomy 20:15-17, where a very definite distinction was drawn between the two cases: “Thus shalt thou do [offer ‘peace’ unto it] (verses 10-11)] unto all the cities which are *very far off* from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites,” etc. Yet these Gibeonites were *not* the inhabitants of another country, but belonged to the tribe of the Hivites (Jos 9:7), and as Genesis 10:15, 17, makes known, “the Hivite” was an immediate descendant of the accursed Canaan (Gen 9:25). “This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey” (Jos 9:12-13).

Their repeated “behold” or “see” was an appeal to Israel’s *senses*. The present condition of the food and clothing of these Gibeonites was appealed to in corroboration of the account which they had given of themselves. But there was no more reason why Israel should be deceived through their eyes than their ears. Had they walked by faith instead of sight, it would have been impossible. For *faith* always has to do with God and is regulated by His Word. Faith is the expression of a spirit of dependence upon Him, and that, in turn, issues from the realization of our own insufficiency. It was doubly inexcusable that Israel were imposed upon *here*, for they were in “the camp at Gilgal” (Jos 9:6), where the tabernacle of the priesthood resided, and therefore, the place where the mind of the LORD could be obtained if they sought Him in the way of His appointment. That way had been plainly made known unto Joshua, for through Moses, God gave orders to him. “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation” (Num 27:21). It was the failure of Israel, and especially of Joshua on this occasion, to avail themselves of God’s gracious provision that rendered their conduct so blameable.

In like manner, there is no excuse for a Christian’s being deceived by appearances, or left in ignorance concerning God’s will as to his path of duty. The LORD has made ample provision for his instruction. It is our holy privilege to go unto the antitypical Eleazar and ask counsel of Him; and the great High Priest of the spiritual Israel will—through the Urim and Thummim, which signify “lights and perfections” (Deu 33:8; Ezr 2:63; Neh 7:65) of His Word—lead us in a plain path. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him” are His requirements; and if we meet them—by His grace, which He is ever ready to give unto those who humbly seek it (Jam 4:6)—then His sure promise is, “and he *shall* direct thy paths” (Pro 3:5-6). As another has aptly expressed it, “This is the polar-star of a child of God—faith in his Father’s providences, promises, and grace. Let the eye look upward, and all will be light (Mat 6:22—compare Psa 32:8; 34:5). To “trust in the LORD with all [our] heart” is to make Him our entire and exclusive confidence. To “lean not unto [our] own understanding” is to renounce our own wit and wisdom and refuse to rely upon the proud dictates of reason. To “acknowledge” God “in all [our] ways” (Pro 3:6) is to own His proprietorship and su-

premacY, to ask counsel of Him, to seek His glory, and to be conformed unto His will. Comply with those conditions and divine guidance is guaranteed—His Spirit will bring to our mind the verse which is exactly suited to our case, and cause us to be regulated by the same.

But alas, instead of trusting in the Lord with all our hearts, we are prone to put our confidence in anyone or anything else. How lamentably we fail in looking alone unto God in each fresh trial and emergency, and counting upon His supplying our every need. It is just because we are so slow in “casting all [our] care upon him” (1Pe 5:7), and so reluctant to draw strength from Him day by day, and hour by hour, that we stand in need of this very exhortation. Equally so with the one which immediately follows. The understanding has indeed been given us by God, and it is our duty not only to exercise the same, but diligently to cultivate it. Nor will anything else so sharpen and refine it as will the study of and meditation upon the Scriptures. Nevertheless, it must not be *dependent upon*, for the mind has been degraded by the Fall and darkened by indwelling sin, and therefore is, at best, an unsafe guide. Even in a regenerated man, a prophet of God, it proved a mistaken counselor (2Sa 7:2-5). As a fallen creature, it is still the tendency of a believer to lean unto his own understanding—to his foolish notions and false fancies; to make a god of reason. Just in proportion as we yield to that tendency are we remiss in acknowledging God in all our ways. If we be regulated by natural prudence, much trouble shall we make for ourselves, for God will justly suffer us to reap the consequences of our folly. It was at these very points Israel failed in the incident we are now considering.

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (Jos 9:14). Here was the crux of the whole matter. Israel failed sadly: failed to give the LORD His proper place; failed to avail themselves of His gracious provision to make known His will via the high priest. And the cause of their failure is here plainly revealed, for the two halves of this verse are inseparably connected. By “the men took of their victuals,” we are not to understand that they sampled the same by eating thereof, for obviously there was no need to do that with *mouldy* bread. No, it signifies that they took it into their hands for a closer inspection in order to confirm what the Gibeonites had told them. In other words, they walked by sight and relied upon the testimony of their senses. They acted naturally and not spiritually. Instead of seeking guidance from the LORD through His servant, as they were in duty bound to do by His Word, they confided in their own wisdom, relied upon their own judgment, and thus, a looking unto God was precluded. They “asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (verse 14): had they done so, there had been no need for them to test the food of these Gibeonites! Had they done so, they had not been deceived by them! The whole blame rested upon themselves.

This was Israel’s *second* failure after their entrance into Canaan, and in neither of them was Joshua guiltless. The previous one occurred in connection with their first assault on Ai. Those who had reconnoitred the place had said unto Joshua, “Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few” (Jos 7:3). Flushed by their victory at Jericho, possessed by a spirit of self-confidence, they too much lost sight of the fact that the capture of Jericho was due not to the brilliance of their strategy or the valour of their arms, but to the miracle-working power of JEHOVAH. They now deemed themselves to be invincible and were assured that the taking of the remainder of Canaan would be a simple task. They, therefore, felt that a single battalion of *their* soldiers would be sufficient to capture that town—even though there were “twelve thousand” men in it (Jos 8:25). And their leader, instead of seeking counsel from the LORD, foolishly adopted their suggestion. As may well be anticipated, God blew upon their carnal policy and suffered their

proud hearts to be humiliated. They were put to shame before their enemies, fled in panic, and the whole congregation of Israel was thoroughly dismayed (Jos 7:4-6).

We would naturally think that if there were another failure on the part of Joshua and Israel, it would be quite dissimilar from the former one, arising from a different cause. Surely, after having had their eyes opened to see the reason for their first defeat, they would now be doubly on their guard against a repetition of the same. Alas, human nature is slow to learn and profit from its failures. Even the father of the faithful *repeated* his initial fault, for though he did wrong, in going down into Egypt to sojourn there, and committed a yet worse offence in denying his relationship to Sarah; and though he was there put to shame by Pharaoh for his deception (Gen 12:10-20), yet he was guilty of the selfsame thing when he went and sojourned in Gerar (Gen 20:1-2)! The same was true of poor Peter: as it was a spirit of cowardice which led to his denial of Christ, so he yielded to the same weakness at Antioch, separating from the Gentile believers when certain ones came from Jerusalem, “*fearing* them which were of the circumcision” (Gal 2:12). In each case, it was “the fear of man” that ensnared him (Pro 29:25); and as that verse clearly intimates, such ensnaring is the consequence of our not “trusting in the LORD” (Psa 112:7; Psa 118:8-9; etc.). Thus it was, too, in the incident we are now pondering: Joshua relapsed into his former fault.

In the very next *test* presented to Israel and their leader, they failed in the same way as they did in connection with Ai. Instead of consulting the LORD, they used their “common sense.” As the result, Israel and Joshua too were deceived by the plausible story told by the Gibeonites, and misled by their appearance and the condition of their victuals. And this too has been recorded for *our* instruction: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom 15:4). Yet it is not the mere reading of them that is required: if we are really to profit therefrom, we must examine each incident closely, pondering each detail carefully, and taking it home unto ourselves. The failures of eminent saints have not been chronicled either to encourage slackness on our part or to discourage us, but rather to illustrate and demonstrate that though “the spirit indeed is willing, [yet] the flesh is weak,” and especially to give point to that exhortation, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). If, after some painful disillusionment, we say, “I believe I have learned my lesson this time,” it is a sure sign we have *not* done so if we now proudly assure ourselves, “I shall not be deceived again in *that* way.”

That which supplies such solemn warning to us in the cases alluded to above is that in each instance, the failure was not committed by a young and inexperienced disciple, but was the lapse of a mature saint: for Abraham, Peter, and Joshua had long walked with God. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear—heed! But, more particularly, that which is now engaging our attention is to be viewed in the light of the book in which it is found and the special theme which is developed therein. As we have so often stated, the book of Joshua sets forth in both a typical and practical manner the spiritual warfare of the saints, and their present entrance into and enjoyment of their spiritual heritage. And in it, the Holy Spirit has described not only Israel’s victories, but their defeats also; and a prayerful study of the same makes known to us both the secrets of success and the causes of failure in “fight[ing] the good fight of faith” (1Ti 6:12). It is only as we keep these facts steadily in mind as we pass from chapter to chapter, and from one episode to another, and faithfully make a personal application of the same unto our own hearts and lives, that we shall really be advantaged by the same. Let us then observe carefully the *nature* of Joshua’s failure on this occasion.

It was more a negative than a positive one. In nowise was it an act of deliberate disobedience or defiant pitting of his own will against the LORD’s. Where *those* elements exist, the offence is very much graver, and the resulting chastisement from God will be much sorer. What Joshua did

here was not by studied premeditation, but was more of a case of being “overtaken in a fault” (Gal 6:1). That in nowise excused him, yet we must not regard him as being guilty of something worse than what he actually did. Both in Joshua 7:3-4, and here (Jos 9:14-15), he acted too impulsively and precipitately. Instead of waiting upon the LORD and seeking direction from Him, in each instance, he acted “on the spur of the moment,” and on the ground of mere nature, walking by sight instead of by faith (2Co 5:7). What point this gives to the divine injunction, “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16)! If we act in too big a hurry to pray over anything and work in the energy of the flesh, we displease the Lord, hinder His cause, and bring trouble upon ourselves. The principal lesson taught us in this incident is that, in order to “fight the good fight of faith” (2Co 5:7) successfully, we must maintain the place of dependence upon God and be constantly seeking wisdom from above.

“And asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (Jos 9:14), and therefore, acted in independence of Him—possibly because he regarded this as too trivial a matter to take unto God. But there also we must not lean unto our own understanding: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phi 4:6)—big as well as little; the least matters, as well as the greatest. What a holy privilege! But “prayer and supplication” is very much more than perfunctorily offering up a petition unto heaven: it is a definite waiting upon God, a diligent seeking from Him. It involved time and trouble for Joshua to ask counsel of the LORD, for it required him to go unto the high priest and inquire His mind through him. As we read in Judges 20:27-28, “And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand”—and compare 1 Samuel 23:9, 12. Observe how frequently the “man after [God’s] own heart” (1Sa 13:14) inquired of Him: 1 Samuel 22:10; 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2Sa 2:1; 5:19, 23. Beautiful too is the picture set forth in Ezra 8:21.

“And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them” (Jos 9:15). This is not recorded to Joshua’s honour, but it manifests the inflexible fidelity of the divine historian. Scripture is impartial in relating the blemishes of its most famous characters. Joshua ought to have said to these Gibeonites what a loyal servant of God said to the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin: “Ye have nothing to do with us” (Ezr 4:3). In order to maintain a testimony unto the holiness of God, His people are required to walk in separation from the world; but here we behold Joshua entering into an alliance with those who were under the divine curse. That is the grand aim of Satan: to destroy the witness of the saints as those who are called to walk apart from the ungodly. Alas, that they so often permit him to succeed! What communion has light with darkness? What concord is there between a people in covenant relation with the Holy One and those who are idolaters? None whatever. Therefore let the former be much on their guard at this point, conduct themselves accordingly, strenuously resist every temptation from Satan to compromise. Finally, let us remember that the Christian is never to “make peace” with his inward enemies, but must ceaselessly fight against them.

DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

2. Its Extent, Part 2

Since these articles are being read carefully by so many preachers and theological students, we desire to give all the help which is in our power to supply, and therefore make them thoroughly complete, covering each aspect of the subject. They form the complement to those which appeared under the sixth division of our recent series on “The Doctrine of Revelation” (now out of print), wherein we presented no less than thirty independent lines of evidence to demonstrate that the Bible is a revelation from God. Following thereon we dealt, first, with the *nature* of inspiration, and showed it was a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby He communicated the mind and will of God through human media, yet in such a way that all error on their part was precluded; and emphasized the fact that divine Inspiration had to do with what is written, and not with the writers themselves. Second, we dealt with the *scope* of such inspiration, and evidenced that it extended to the very words employed, that it reached to every jot and tittle of Holy Writ.

The position we took—and which we are thoroughly convinced the Word of God *requires* us to take—was well expressed by the late Bishop J.C. Ryle (1816-1900): “The view which I maintain is that every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible was originally given by inspiration of God...I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis and the catalogues in Chronicles were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra’s account of the nine and twenty kings and St. Paul’s message about the cloak and parchments were as much written under divine inspiration as the twelfth of Exodus, the seventeenth of John, or the eighth of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that those parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say that they were all equally given by inspiration” (*Old Paths*). As we showed in our last, such was the attitude of Christ and His apostles to the Scriptures: they uniformly regarded and used each part of the Old Testament as being of divine authority and authorship, often basing an argument or drawing a proof from single expressions employed therein.

Such expressions as “The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa 1:20) and “*Thy words* were found, and I did eat them” (Jer 15:16) would be really meaningless if the prophets had been free to select their own language. True, God has given us His Word through human instruments, yet they were not left free to write as they pleased, but rather were they His notaries, who transmitted to us the divine oracles. Though men were the organs of the Holy Spirit, *He* is the sole responsible Author of the Scriptures. Unless we had the very words of God, we could never be sure we had His exact thoughts. Moreover, as François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863) pointed out, “There exists so necessary a dependence between thoughts and words, that it is impossible to conceive a complete inspiration of the former, without a full inspiration of the latter.” Those who affirm that the concepts of Scripture are divinely inspired—but deny that its very words are so—are utterly illogical and inconsistent, for we are only able to *think* through the medium of language, and therefore, an inspiration which concerns the former *must* concern the latter also.

In our recent reading (upon a different subject), we came across a striking demonstration of the verbal inspiration of the Bible as exemplified by its minute accuracy. The writer compared and contrasted Micah 5:2, and Zechariah 9:9, and pointed out that the difference between “*out of thee [Bethlehem] shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel*” and “*Behold, thy King cometh unto thee*” is, in the Hebrew, the difference of just one letter! Had Micah used the one which Zechariah employed, he had been wrong; or had Zechariah used the same letter as Micah, he had erred. In colloquial language, we ask, “Where do you come from?”—meaning, Where were you born? Micah names the place of our Saviour’s nativity; Zechariah, that of His temporary “triumph.” Both were correct, as the New Testament shows. Many pages might be written supplying illustrations of the superhuman precision and accuracy with which terms are consistently used throughout the Scriptures, and where slight shades of distinction are uniformly preserved from Genesis to Revelation; thereby making it unmistakably evident that one superintending Mind directed each writer in the selection of his very words.

In our articles upon evidences of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, we appealed unto the most significant fact of the *concordance* as a proof of their uniqueness, for there is nothing in the least resembling it in connection with the writings of human authors—an exhaustive compilation of all the words they used, and the multitudinous occurrences of the same. The same applies with equal force to *verbal* inspiration, for a painstaking use of the concordance will quickly discover innumerable examples thereof. During the past forty years, we have personally tested literally hundreds of words and have found each one to be used with divine discrimination and precision. For example, the divine titles “God” and “Lord” are never employed haphazardly, but always with uniform significance and selection. The same is true of “soul” and “spirit,” “Jacob” and “Israel,” “Satan” and “the devil”: each has its own distinctive shade of meaning, and it is *preserved in every passage*! “Son of man” occurs over eighty times in the Gospels; and thus, we should naturally expect to find His apostles referring to Him under that title in the epistles—yet they never once do so! Why? We are not expressly informed, but the searcher will soon discover the answer. That was His title during the days of His humiliation (Mat 8:20), and would therefore have been quite incongruous after His exaltation.

Said our Lord to His disciples, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mat 10:19-20). Let those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and disparagingly term it “mechanical” weigh well that passage and ask themselves the question, Since it pleased God so thoroughly to furnish His servant when only appearing before local magistrates, why should it be deemed incredible that He should perform a similar miracle of grace when employing men to write for the benefit of mankind in all future ages? Christ further promised His apostles that when they should be healed before kings and rulers for His name’s sake, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luk 21:15)—not only the inward faculty of thought, but the outward power of utterance too. If the Old Testament prophets spoke only as they were “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21), they no more selected their own language than did the apostles when appearing before their judges.

While we must insist that all Scripture is God-breathed, yet that fact does not oblige us to draw the conclusion that the channels He used were mere ciphers in its communication. Though the Holy Spirit moved them to write precisely as they did, He neither prevented nor wholly set aside the use of their natural faculties. That is evident from the obvious variety of styles which is seen in the different books they penned—styles which can sometimes be clearly identified by the

education and spiritual maturity of their writers. Nevertheless, the Spirit so operated in and through their faculties that every sentence which they wrote was an exact transmission of His mind. A very beautiful expression is used in the margin of Judges 6:34, which we believe casts light on the point now before us, namely, “The Spirit of the LORD clothed [Himself] with Gideon.” It must also be borne in mind that, though it pleased God that neither the mental calibers, nor the individual characters of the men He used should be hidden, yet both their natural endowments and spiritual capacities were given to them by Himself—given to serve this very end: that each instrument was fitted by Him and made suitable for the task in view. As the LORD used those whom He had specially qualified to make the garments of Israel’s high priest (Exo 28:3), and those whom He filled with wisdom and understanding to fashion the holy vessels of the tabernacle (Exo 35:30-35), so He equipped Paul to be a fit instrument to write the epistle to the Romans, and John to compose epistles on brotherly love.

We will now consider the principal objections brought against what we have been advancing. Not that it is our design to enter the lists against those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, but rather to help those who believe therein, yet may have been disturbed by these attacks of the enemy. We will examine first that which is deemed the most decisive one, namely, the evident marks which many books of Scripture bear of the personalities of their scribes. Nor is that to be denied, for if a dozen verses were read aloud from Isaiah or Jeremiah, or from a Pauline or Johannine epistle, to one familiar with the Bible, he would have no difficulty in identifying the penman. Certain peculiarities of style and apparent fondness for particular expressions distinguish one writer from another. But what of that? Ten men might transcribe correctly the twenty-third Psalm, and though their productions tallied, word for word, yet there would be a marked difference in chirography. “He who could use their *hands* to write, could first inform their *minds* so as to employ them altogether in the authorship of Scripture”—Samuel P. Tregelles (1813-1875).

If God is able to work in His children “both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13) without reducing them to mere robots, could He not also fully control and direct the penmen of Scripture without setting aside their personalities? “There, all the words are man’s; as there, too, all the words are God’s. In a certain sense, the epistle to the Romans is altogether a letter of Paul’s; and in a still higher sense, the epistle to the Romans is altogether a letter of God”—F. Gaussen. Instead of stumbling us, that very feature should draw forth our admiration, since it serves to make more evident the *miracle* of inspiration. There is indeed a mystery here, and one which finite reason cannot fully fathom; yet the elements entering into it are patent. The natural faculties of the human instruments were not suspended, nor their personalities denied free play, yet they only acted as they were acted upon (like the different strings of a harp giving forth their distinctive tones as the musician’s fingers run over them)—“moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21). Such then is the Word of Truth: it is God speaking in men, God speaking through men, God speaking to men in their own language.

Against the full inspiration of the Bible, it is demurred that God Himself informed the three disputants of Job that “ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (Job 42:7), yet their several speeches are recorded at length in that book! But that is simply to confuse and confound things which are quite distinct and different. As F. Gaussen succinctly expressed it, “the Holy Spirit is not always the Author of what He reports, but He is always the Historian”! Inspiration relates only to what is written, guaranteeing its absolute accuracy and integrity, but it in nowise vouches for the veracity of each human utterance that is chronicled. The sacred writers were so controlled by God as to transmit to us an inerrant registration of what different ones actually said, yet without endorsing the same. Thus we have as certain a record in

Isaiah 36 of the blatant language used by Rabshaketh, as we have of the pious breathings of Mary and Zacharias in Luke 1. But for the pen of inspiration, we could know nothing of either the lies uttered by Satan in Eden or the sublime songs sung by the saints in heaven.

Again, the fallibility of the penmen is appealed to as an argument against the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Thus, we are reminded that when Paul was admonished for reviling Ananias, he acknowledged, “I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest” (Act 23:4-5), and that in Galatians 2:11, he informs us that “when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” But this objection is so puerile that, unless it had been urged by some who wanted to discredit the Word of God, it would be too trifling for us to notice. Here again there is a confounding of things which are totally different, namely their spiritual enlightenment and conduct as *Christians*, and their inspiration as God’s penmen. Inspiration was not a gift entrusted *to* them, but a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit *upon* them on certain occasions only. But let it be duly noted that in neither of the above instances was any error of doctrine involved. Paul at once acknowledged he had acted contrary to what Scripture required (Act 23:5), while Peter “*walked not* uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:14). We must then distinguish sharply between Peter as a man imperfectly sanctified, and Peter as the perfectly controlled scribe of the Spirit.

Appeal is made to 1 Corinthians, where, in some passages, it is alleged that the apostle himself was uncertain whether or not he was moved by the Holy Spirit; and in others, actually disclaimed divine inspiration for what he wrote. Many regard this one as the most formidable of the objections, and, since young preachers are likely to have difficulty with it, we propose to give these passages a close examination. But before doing so, let us remind our readers that the penman of 1 Corinthians had not only declared elsewhere that the Spirit expressly spoke through him (1Ti 4:1), and that it was *his* pen which asserted, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2Ti 3:16), but that in this very epistle, he declared, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1Co 2:13), and that he was addressing them “in the name of [the] Lord” (1Co 5:4). Even from the human side of things, it is inconceivable that such a writer as this apostle would flatly contradict himself in the same letter; and therefore, the verses appealed to by his detractors must bear a very different meaning from what they imagine.

“But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment” (1Co 7:6): from which it has been erroneously concluded that the apostle was merely expressing his own ideas, and not what God required him to write. But such an inference is obviously untenable, for if what he now stated was contrary to the mind of the Spirit, he had not been allowed to record it. In this chapter, the apostle was replying to certain questions sent him by the Corinthian saints, who were exercised over the matter of marriage, and particularly, whether it was right for a Christian to maintain that relationship if his partner was an unconverted heathen. The question he first answered was, Should a young Christian remain single or marry? The apostle’s line of thought will be more apparent if we place 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 in parentheses, for it is clear that verses 7-9 are a continuation of verse 2; and thus, the “this” of verse 6 refers to what had been said in verse 2—confirmed by the opening “For” of verse 7. Thus, the contrast between “permission and commandment” in verse 6 is not between Paul’s writing as a private individual and as an inspired apostle, but rather, that marriage is a thing allowable, yet *not ordered* by God—as the extreme Jewish element taught. Marriage is something entirely optional for God’s children.

“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord” (1Co 7:12). Here, the contrast is between what the Lord Jesus had taught while He was here upon earth and what His apostle was now “moved by the Ho-

ly Ghost” (2Pe 1:21) to give out. “The Lord” here is not equivalent to “God,” but to the God-man Mediator (1Co 8:6)—compare 7:22; 10:21; and 11:23; where in each instance, the reference is clearly unto *Christ*. The question of which the apostle is here legislating was whether a Christian ought to divorce a heathen partner. On the *general* subject of divorce, the Lord Jesus had given express commandment (1Co 7:10; Mat 19:6-9), but concerning this particular aspect of the subject, Christ had said nothing; therefore, His servant was now authorized by Him to give His people the necessary instructions—which he does in 1 Corinthians 7:12-17. The same explanation applies to verse 25: God had neither commanded nor forbidden virgins to marry, but caused the apostle to proffer counsel which should not be lightly dismissed. In verses 39-40, he likewise gives his advice to Christian widows: not as a binding law, but as the judgment of a spiritually minded counsellor—his “I think also that I have the Spirit of God” (1Co 7:40) had in mind his traducers.

“I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love” (2Co 8:8). The apostle was now treating of Christian benevolence, and desired that this should be as liberal as saints in other places. As there is no binding law to regulate the amount contributed, Christian giving is not to be determined by obedience to commandments, but rather, is to be a free and spontaneous expression of love and gratitude. “That which I speak, I speak it not *after* the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting” (2Co 11:17). As Charles Hodge (1797-1878) well said, “The simple purpose of inspiration was to secure infallibility in the communication of truth. It does not preclude the natural play of the intellect or the feelings.” In this instance, his enemies had compelled Paul to “boast,” and that was not what characterized the style or example of his Master. Self-praise is not the mark of a Christian, yet there are exceptional occasions when the vindication of truth or the honour of Christ requires and demands it. Such was clearly the case here, though it went against Paul’s spiritual instincts and sensibilities—verse 21 is the language of irony.

It should scarcely be necessary to point out that verbal inspiration cannot be claimed for any version—ancient or modern—but only for the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Nevertheless, those who believe the Bible to be the very Word of God—and that He has made good His promise, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1Pe 1:25)—have no doubt whatever that His providence has preserved it intact; and that His Spirit so directed in the principal translations that we possess His Word today in its substantial purity in our own mother tongue. That has been secured, under God, by the deep veneration in which His Word has been held by its custodians both Jewish and Christian, by the opposition of the conflicting sects who—despite their different beliefs and practices—one and all take the Scriptures as the foundation of their faith, and have jealously watched and checked any tampering therewith. One translation may be checked by another, and whatever minor variations exist, it will be found that there is substantial agreement between them.

The same may be said of the variations in thousands of manuscripts: they are trivial in character and comparatively few in number. None better qualified to speak thereon than Professor F. Gaussen, and he declared, “What distance separates Christians from Jews in their worship! And yet, walk into their synagogues, ask their rabbis to show you their sacred scrolls, and you will find there the same books without the difference of a letter! What distances separate in their worship the Reformed Christians from the members of the Roman sect! Yet pursue your search, and you will find in our respective schools the same Greek Testament!...Not only was the Scripture inspired on the day when God caused it to be written, but *we* possess this Word and—while holding our sacred text in one hand, and in the other, all the readings collected by the learned in seven

hundred manuscripts—exclaim with thankfulness, I hold in my hand my Father’s Testament, the eternal Word of God.”

N.B.—Though *you* may have received little edification from this article, please pray that God will graciously make it a real help and blessing unto many preachers.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

1. Introduction

The articles which this one is designed to introduce are likely to meet with a decidedly mixed reception. Some of our readers will probably be very disappointed when they see the title of this new series, deeming the subject quite unattractive and unedifying. If so, they are to be pitied, and we would fain cherish the hope that God may bless their contents unto them. Medicine is proverbially unpleasant, but there are times when all of us find it necessary and beneficial. Others will be thankful that, by divine grace, we seek to glorify God rather than please the flesh. And surely that which most glorifies God is to declare “*all* [His] counsel” (Psa 20:4), to insist on that which puts man in his proper place before Him, and to emphasize those portions and aspects of the truth which our generation is most in need of. As we shall endeavour to show, our theme is one of immense doctrinal importance and of great practical value. Since it is a subject which occupies so prominent a place in God’s Word, no apology is needed for our engaging in such a task.

It is our deep conviction that the vital question most requiring to be raised today is this: Is man a totally and thoroughly depraved creature by nature? Does he now enter the world completely ruined and helpless, spiritually blind and dead in trespasses and sins? According as is our answer to *that* question, so will be our views on many others. It is upon the basis of this dark background that the whole Bible proceeds. Any attempt to modify or abate, repudiate or tone down, the teaching of Scripture thereon is fatal. Put the question in another form: Is man now in such a condition that he cannot be saved without the special and direct intervention of the Triune God on his behalf? In other words, is there any hope for him apart from his personal election by the Father, his particular redemption by the Son, and the supernatural operations of the Spirit within him? Or, putting it in still another way: If man be a totally depraved being, can he possibly take the first step in the matter of his return unto God?

The scriptural answer to that question makes evident the utter futility of the schemes of social reformers for “the moral elevation of the masses,” the plans of politicians for the peace of the nations, and the ideologies of dreamers to usher in a “golden age” for this world. It is both pathetic and tragic to see many of our “greatest men” putting their faith in such chimeras. Divisions and discords, hatred and bloodshed, cannot be banished while human nature is what it is. But during the past century, the steady trend of a deteriorating Christendom has been to underrate the evil of sin and overrate the moral capabilities of men. Instead of proclaiming the heinousness of sin, there has been a dwelling more upon its inconveniences, and the abasing portrayal of the lost condition of man as set forth in Holy Writ has been obscured—if not obliterated—by flattering

disquisitions upon human advancement. If the popular religion of “the churches”—including nine-tenths of what is termed “Evangelical Christianity”—be tested at this point, it will be found that it clashes directly with man’s fallen, ruined, and spiritually dead condition.

There is therefore a crying need today for sin to be viewed in the light of God’s Law and Gospel, so that its exceeding sinfulness may be demonstrated, and the dark depths of human depravity exposed by the teaching of Holy Writ, that we may learn what is connoted by those fearful words, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). The grand object of the Bible is to make God known unto us, to portray man as he appears in the eyes of his Maker, and to show the relation of one to the other. It is therefore the business of His servants not only to declare the divine character and perfections, but also to delineate the original condition and apostasy of man, as well as the divine remedy for his ruin. Until we really behold the hole of the pit in which by nature we lie, we can never properly appreciate Christ’s so-great salvation. In man’s fallen condition, we have the awful disease for which divine redemption is the only cure; and our estimation and valuation of the provisions of divine grace will necessarily be modified in proportion, as we modify the need it was meant to meet.

It was truly pointed out by one of the Puritans that, “The end of the ministry of the Gospel is to bring sinners unto Christ. Their way to this end lies through the sense of their misery without Christ. The ingredients of this misery are our sinfulness, original and actual; the wrath of God, whereto sin has exposed us; and our impotency to free ourselves, either from sin or wrath. That we may therefore promote this great end, we shall endeavour, as the Lord will assist, to lead you in this way, by the sense of misery, to Him who alone can deliver from it. Now the original of our misery being the corruption of our nature, or original sin, we thought fit to begin here, and therefore, have pitched upon these words as very proper for our purpose: ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me’”—from the introduction of David Clarkson’s (1622-1686) sermon on Psalm 51:5 (around 1660).

This subject is indeed a most *solemn* one, and none can fitly write or preach thereon unless his own heart be deeply awed thereby. It is not something from which any man can detach himself and expatiate thereon as though *he* were not directly involved in it, still less as from a higher level looking down upon those whom he denounces. Nothing is more incongruous and ill-becoming than for a young preacher glibly to rattle off passages of Scripture which portray his own vileness by nature. Rather should they be read or quoted with the utmost gravity. “As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express, the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man. In separating him from God, it severed him from the only source of all happiness and holiness. It has ruined him body and soul: in the one, it has filled with sickness and disease; in the other, it has defaced and destroyed the image of God in which it was created. It has made him love sin and hate God”—J. C. Philpot (1802-1869).

The doctrine of total depravity is a very *humbling* one. It is not that man leans to one side and needs propping up, nor that he is merely ignorant and requires instructing, nor that he is run down and calls for a tonic; but rather, that he is undone, lost, and spiritually dead. Consequently, he is “without strength,” thoroughly incapable of bettering himself—exposed to the wrath of God, and unable to perform a single work which can find acceptance with Him. Almost every page of the Bible bears witness to this truth. The whole scheme of redemption takes it for granted. The plan of salvation taught in the Scriptures could have no place on any other supposition. The impossibility of any man’s gaining the approbation of God by works of his own appears plainly in the case of the rich young ruler who came to Christ. Judged by human standards, he was a model of virtue and religious attainments; yet, like all others who trust in self-efforts, he was ignorant of

the spirituality and strictness of God's Law; and when Christ put him to the test, his fair expectations were blown to the winds, and "he went away sorrowful" (Mat 19:22).

It is therefore a most *unpalatable* doctrine. It cannot be otherwise, for the unregenerate love to hear of "the greatness, the dignity, the nobility of man." The natural man thinks highly of himself and appreciates only that which is flattering. Nothing pleases him more than to listen to that which extols human nature and lauds the state of mankind, even though it be in terms which not only repudiate the teaching of God's Word, but which are flatly contradicted by common observation and universal experience. And many there are who pander to him by their lavish praises of the excellency of civilization and the steady progress of the race. Hence, to have the lie given to the popular error of "Evolution" is highly displeasing to its deluded votaries. Nevertheless, the first office of God's servants is to stain the pride of all that man glories in, to strip him of his stolen plumes, to lay him low in the dust before God. However repugnant such teaching be, he must faithfully discharge his duty, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Eze 3:11).

This is no dismal dogma invented by the Church in "the dark ages," but *a truth of Holy Writ*. Said the much-used George Whitefield (1714-1770), "I look upon it not merely as a doctrine of Scripture—the great Fountain of truth—but a very fundamental one, from which I hope God will suffer none of you to be enticed." It is a subject to which great prominence is given in the Bible. Every part of the Scriptures has much to say upon the awful state of degradation and slavery into which the Fall has brought man. The corruption, the blindness, the hostility of all Adam's descendants unto everything of a spiritual nature are constantly insisted upon. Not only is man's utter ruin fully described, but his powerlessness to save himself from the same. In the declarations and denunciations of the prophets, of Christ, and His apostles, the bondage of all men unto Satan and their complete impotence to turn unto God for deliverance are repeatedly set forth—not indirectly and vaguely, but emphatically and in great detail. This is one of a hundred proofs that the Bible is no human invention, but a communication from the Thrice holy One.

It is a *sadly neglected* subject. Notwithstanding the clear and uniform teaching of Scripture thereon, man's ruined condition and alienation from God are but feebly apprehended and seldom heard in the modern pulpit, and are given little place even in what are regarded as the centres of orthodoxy. Rather is the whole trend of present-day thought and teaching in the opposite direction, and even where the Darwinian⁶ hypothesis has not been accepted, its pernicious influences are often seen. In consequence of the guilty silence of the modern pulpit, a generation of churchgoers has arisen which is deplorably ignorant of the basic truths of the Bible, so that perhaps not more than one in a thousand has even a mental knowledge of the chains of hardness and unbelief which bind the natural heart, or of the dungeon of darkness in which they lie. Instead of faithfully telling their hearers of their woeful state by nature, thousands of preachers are wasting their time by relating the latest news of the Kremlin⁷ or development of the atom bomb.

It is therefore a *testing* doctrine, especially of the preacher's soundness in the Faith. A man's orthodoxy on this subject determines his viewpoint of many other doctrines of great importance. If his belief *here* be a scriptural one, then he will clearly perceive how impossible it is for men to improve themselves—that Christ is their only hope. He will know that unless the sinner be born again (Joh 3:7), there can be no entrance for him into the kingdom of God. Nor will he entertain

⁶ **Darwinian** – Darwinism is the theory of biological evolution developed by Charles Darwin and others, stating that all species of organisms arise and develop through the natural selection of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce. The theory is opposed to Creationism as presented in the Scriptures, where God created all things (Gen 1-2).

⁷ **Kremlin** – the fortified complex of the Russian central government in Moscow.

the idea of the fallen creature's free will unto good. He will be preserved from many errors. "I never knew a person verge toward the Arminian, the Arian, the Socinian, the Antimonian schemes, without first entertaining diminutive notions of human depravity or blameworthiness"—Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). Said the well-equipped theological instructor, James M. Stiffler, "It cannot be said too often that a false theology finds its source in inadequate views of depravity."

It is a doctrine of great *practical* value, as well as doctrinal importance. The foundation of all true piety lies in a correct view of ourselves and our vileness and a scriptural belief of God and His grace. There can be no genuine self-abhorrence or repentance, no real appreciation of the saving mercy of God, no faith in Christ, without it. There is nothing like a knowledge of this doctrine so well calculated to undeceive vain man and convict him of the worthlessness and rottenness of his own righteousness. Yet the preacher who is sensible of the plague of his own heart knows full well that *he* cannot present this truth in such a way as to make his hearers actually realize and feel the same, so as to make them out of love with themselves and cause them to renounce for ever all hope in themselves. Therefore, instead of relying upon his faithfulness in presenting the truth, he will be cast upon God to apply it graciously in power to those who hear him, and bless his feeble efforts.

It is an exceedingly *illuminating* doctrine. It may be a melancholy and humiliating one, nevertheless, it throws a flood of light upon mysteries which are otherwise insoluble. It supplies the key to the course of human history, and shows why so much of it has been written in blood and tears. It supplies an explanation of many problems which sorely perplex and puzzle the thoughtful. It reveals why the child is prone to evil and has to be taught and disciplined unto anything that is good. It explains why every improvement in man's environment, every attempt to educate him, all the efforts of social reformers, are unavailing to effect any radical betterment in his nature and character. It accounts for the horrible treatment which Christ met with when He wrought so graciously in this world, and why He is still despised and rejected of men. It enables the Christian himself better to understand the painful conflict which is ever at work within him, and which causes him so often to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24).

It is therefore a most *necessary* doctrine, for the vast majority of our fellows are ignorant of the same. God's servants are sometimes thought to speak too strongly and dolefully of the dreadful state of man through his apostasy from God, but the fact is that it is impossible to exaggerate in human language the darkness and pollution of man's heart or to describe the misery and utter helplessness of a condition such as the Word of Truth describes in these solemn passages: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2Co 4:3-4). "Therefore they *could not believe*, because...He hath [judicially] blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (Joh 12:39-40). This is yet more evident when we contrast the state of the soul of those in whom a miracle of grace is wrought—see Luke 1:78-79.

It is a *salutary* doctrine—one which God often uses to bring men to their senses. While we imagine that our wills have power to do what is pleasing to God, we never abandon dependence on self. Not that a mere intellectual knowledge of man's fall and ruin is sufficient to deliver from pride. Only the Spirit's powerful operations can effect that: yet He is pleased to use the faithful preaching of the Word unto that end. Nothing but a felt sense of our lost condition lays us in the dust before God. ❧

FEBRUARY

SEVEN DIVINE LOOKS

Much is said in Scripture about the eyes of the LORD and His looking upon one and another: much that is solemn and searching; much that is encouraging and comforting. What a contrast is there between “I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good” (Amo 9:4) and “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect [upright, which beats true] toward him” (2Ch 16:9). That is the difference between God’s avenging eye (1Ch 12:17; 2Ch 24:22) and His gracious eye. “For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings” (Pro 5:21): what a restraining influence should our apprehension of that fact exert upon us! On the other hand, assured of the mercy and compassion of the LORD, believers will often desire that He should look upon them, knowing that their very needs and unexpressed longings will plead for them (2Sa 16:12), and give him or her cause to say, “For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden” (Luk 1:48).

1. The look of *covenant faithfulness*. “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen 9:16). There is no doubt whatever in our mind that the rainbow appeared then in the lower heavens for the first time: had it existed previously, it would have possessed no new meaning and message after the flood—compare Genesis 2:6. It was given as an assurance to allay men’s fears, as a divine pledge that the world would never again be destroyed by a universal deluge. It was a ratification of the promise which God had given for the temporal preservation of His creatures. God calls it “my bow,” which He sets in the cloud (Gen 9:13), and upon it, He looks in remembrance of His oath (Isa 54:9)—as *we* also should. “How blessed to know that the cloud that comes across our sky is one of *His* bringing; and if so, how sure that, in some way, He will reveal His glory in it”—Frederick W. Grant (1834-1902). Still more blessed is it to know that the canopy of God’s Throne in heaven is a rainbow (Rev 4:3)—a token and pledge that He is ruling this world according to his covenant engagements.

2. The look of *grace*. “And God looked upon the children of Israel” (Exo 2:25). This, too, was analogous with the former, for as the content informs us, they “cried by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” And well for them that He did so. They had sinned grievously while in Egypt (Jos 24:14; Eze 20:7-8), and were sorely chastised for the same. But now, notwithstanding their provoking transgressions, as their groanings came into His ears, the LORD remembered His cove-

nant and looked upon them. Moses had beheld them with pity, but he was powerless to effect their release. But as JEHOVAH saw their abject condition and hard service, He had a favourable regard to them (Exo 3:7-8). His eyes were now fixed upon them to show Himself strong in their behalf and deliver them. It is a typical picture of God contemplating the wretchedness of His elect by nature when He saves them from their sins: His everlasting covenant of grace is the sure foundation of mercy, and the ground of all His dealings with His people, He is blessed to find that when Israel learned that the LORD “had looked upon their affliction,” then they bowed their heads and worshipped (Exo 4:31). Let each Christian reader do likewise.

3. The look of *encouragement*. “And the LORD looked [literally ‘turned His face’] upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” (Jdg 6:14). Such language as that from God to a worm of the earth is startling, for what “might” had poor Gideon? None—and what is more, he was *conscious* of this fact. Therein is revealed to us an invaluable secret: “Before honour is humility” (Pro 15:33). Gideon confessed his weakness: “Wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house” (Jdg 6:15). True, but set over against that the Almighty’s “Surely I will be with thee” (verse 16). Ah, my reader, the face of the LORD is always turned unto those who acknowledge their poverty and powerlessness. It is the empty vessel which He fills, the one owning himself to be “the least” who He commissions and uses (see Isa 6:5-8; Eph 3:8)! That look of the LORD was designed to dispel Gideon’s fears, to revive his drooping spirits and send him forth in the strength of JEHOVAH. God used Gideon to effect a mighty deliverance for Israel.

4. The look of *revelation and discovery*. “My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself” (Song 2:9). Taken in conjunction with the foregoing verse, we have here a blessed figure of Christ desiring fellowship with “his own” and the increasingly clear discoveries—which He graciously makes of Himself, both to the local church collectively and to the saint individually—He is likened to a “roe” because of His pleasantness and lovingness (Pro 5:19), He being most winsome to His people and gentle in His carriage towards them. In the spiritual visits with which Christ favours His people, He is pleased to make clearer and fuller manifestations of Himself to them. First, He appears as it were “behind *our* wall”—for *we* are ever the ones who interpose barriers!—near, but not yet visible. Then, “he looketh forth at the windows”—a sight, though not yet a full one, being obtained of Him through the ordinances. Finally, He shows “himself through the lattice” of our longings, and we enjoy His manifested presence, and He sups with us and, with Him (Rev 3:20).

5. The look of *approbation*. “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa 66:2). Pride God abominates, but humility and submission He appreciates. Poverty of spirit consists of a realization that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, but have need of all things. It is the Spirit’s emptying the heart of self that Christ may fill it. Contrition is a feeling sense of the heinousness and loathsomeness of sin, causing one to mourn over it with godly sorrow. It is the Spirit’s discovering to us the plague of our hearts, making sin to be bitter and hateful to us, our sorest grief and heaviest burden. To tremble at God’s Word is to be sensible of its searching purity, to be awed by its authority, to be conscious of its requirements, to hold its Author in the utmost reverence. Each soul possessing these qualities is an object of complacency to the Holy One. He views them not only with favour, but with pleasure: it is God delighting in His own handiwork, setting His seal of approval thereon.

6. The look of *welcome*. “But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luk 15:20). The context gives us a

picture of what an elect soul is by nature and practice: a wanderer from God, a dissipater of His mercies, a forlorn creature finding nothing in this world which can meet his spiritual and eternal needs. At length convicted of his wretchedness and sinfulness, his heart and feet turn unto the LORD. The verse now before us reveals the attitude of God unto such an one and the reception awaiting the repentant and seeking sinner. The father is viewed as on the lookout, ready to welcome the returning prodigal. Love's eyes are keen, and he sees him while he is yet "a great way off"—which tells of the awful distance that sin removes the soul from God. It was love's anticipation and readiness to receive the erring one. He "saw him" with the eyes of favour, yea, eagerness. What a word is this for any repenting and seeking reader: a hearty welcome is assured such if he comes unto God by Christ.

7. The look *of recovery*. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luk 22:61). Surely this is one of the most remarkable, blessed, and affecting statements recorded in Holy Writ! Note, first, this is said not simply of "Jesus," but of "the Lord": to emphasize the fact that He acted here with divine understanding, authority, and mercy. Second, that He "turned." It was in the high priest's house, and the Saviour had been facing the motley gang who had apprehended Him in the Garden. One of "his own" had been overtaken in a grievous fault, but He did not contemptuously ignore him, but turned His face toward him! He did not call to him, lest He should endanger His sheep! He "looked upon Peter"—not scowled or frowned! With sad, hiding, yet compassionate expression. It was a look of conviction, for Peter at once remembered His warning word. It was a look of power, for it brought repentance. It was a look of love, for it melted Peter's heart. Christ was about to die and put away Peter's sins, and here He gave him a pledge of it by turning *toward* and "look[ing] upon" him! May He so look today upon backsliders.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

2. The Humanity of Christ (1:1)

This epistle bears no superscription as do all others (save Hebrews), including his own second and third ones, and makes no reference to any particular class of persons by which we may ascertain to whom it was first addressed. We know from Galatians 2:9 that John was one of the apostles who ministered to the circumcision, and such expressions as "from the beginning" in 1 John 2:7, "ye have known him" in verses 13-14, and "ye have heard [i.e. from Christ] that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists...They went out *from us*" (verses 18-19) intimate that it was primarily *Jewish* Christians to whom John wrote. Yet mention of "the world" in 1 John 4:14, and the "whole world" in 1 John 2:2, and the admonition, "keep yourselves from idols" in 1 John 5:21 are more than hints that it was designed for Gentile believers too. The epistle is remarkable for the absence of any local colouring or personal references. While enunciating vital truths and combating fundamental errors, the names of no places or persons are mentioned. Thus,

it contains nothing which is merely ephemeral or provincial, but that only which is suited to all God's children till the end of time.

It is, then, a general epistle: not to any particular assembly, but for the whole family of God. In accordance with that fact, we find no reference here is made to elders or deacons. The privileges described and the duties enjoined pertain alike to the entire Household of Faith. John deals with vital and basic principles, and does not (like the other apostles) point out how they are to be applied to the various relationships of life. Though he treats in some detail of both righteousness and love, he gives no specific instances of how they are to be exercised between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, subjects and kings. He even avoids the term, "saints," preferring to address his readers by the more familiar, "brethren" (1Jo 2:7) and "my brethren" (1Jo 3:13), though more frequently employing the endearing expression, "little children" and "my little children"—which no other apostle did (unless Galatians 4:19, be the sole exception). This has led the thoughtful to conclude that John must have been of a great age—certainly there would be no propriety in one of fewer years so addressing even the "fathers" (1Jo 2:12-13).

Since the apostle was about to write upon *fellowship*, his design and scope in the opening verses appear to be twofold. First, he intimates that the initial requirement for communion with God is the possession of divine life in the soul, and that this life is found in the incarnate Son, here designated "the Word of life" and "that Eternal Life." John Calvin (1509-1564) came very near the mark when he opened his commentary on this epistle by saying, "He shows first that life has been exhibited to us in Christ; which, as it is an incomparable good, ought to rouse and inflame all our powers with a marvellous desire for it and with the love of it. It is said, indeed, in a few plain words, that life is manifested: but if we consider how miserable and horrible a condition *death* is, and what is the kingdom of glory and immortality, we shall perceive that there is something here more magnificent than can be expressed in any words." It is ever the Spirit's object to magnify that blessed One who is despised and rejected of men, and here He does so by presenting Him as the Source and Fount of life.

The second obvious aim of the apostle in his introductory sentence was to confirm the assurance of God's children, and show what a firm foundation has been laid for their fellowship with the Father and with His Son. "These words 'which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes,' etc., serve to strengthen our faith in the Gospel. Nor does he, indeed, without reason, make so many asseverations; for since our salvation depends upon the Gospel, its *certainly* is in the highest degree necessary. And how difficult it is to believe, every one of us knows too well by his own experience. To believe is not lightly to form an opinion, or to assent only to what is said, but is a firm, undoubting conviction, so that we may dare to subscribe to the truth as fully proved. It is for this reason that the apostle here heaps together so many things in confirmation of the Gospel"—J. Calvin. The Gospel is no spurious invention of men, but is the annunciation of reliable witnesses who personally consorted with Christ Himself (Luk 1:1-4).

The absence of John's name from the opening verses of this epistle is in full harmony with the fact that in his Gospel, he never referred unto himself except when the occasion required him to do so; and then only by such a circumlocution as "that other disciple" (Joh 20:3-4) or "that disciple whom Jesus loved" (Joh 21:7, 20)—not, be it observed, the boastful "that disciple who loved Jesus"! As there, so here, the writer retires into the background, unwilling to speak of himself, resembling in this his namesake, who, when asked, "What sayest thou of thyself?" answered, "I am the *voice* of one crying in the wilderness" (Joh 1:22-23)—heard, but not seen. It may also be noted that John's silence here about himself is in beautiful accord with his *theme*, for real fellowship so engages the heart with its Object as to lose sight of self. Yet, because his task required it, he

gives plain indication that he stood in the nearest possible relation to the One he adored, just as in his Gospel he was wont to do so under similar circumstances.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard...of the Word of life” (1Jo 1:1). A superficial reading of this verse has led many to conclude that John begins his epistle in the same way as he had his Gospel—by affirming that eternity of the Son—but a more careful examination of its language should correct that impression. There are indeed several resemblances between the two verses, yet there are notable differences. Each opens at once by presenting the person of Christ: without any preliminaries, the Lord Jesus is immediately set before the reader. Both Gospel and epistle commence by referring to Him under the title of “the Logos.” In each, mention is made of “the beginning.” The contrasts are equally marked. In John 1:1, Christ is viewed absolutely, in His Godhead; here, relatively, as incarnate: in the former, His deity is contemplated; in the latter, His humanity. There, it is “in the beginning”; here, “from the beginning”—which express entirely distinct concepts. Quite another “beginning” is treated of: in the former, ere time and creation began; in the latter, the opening of this Christian era.

Two different interpretations have been given to the clause, “that which was from the beginning.” First, that it refers to Christ’s pre-incarnate and eternal existence, declaring what He was before He appeared on earth. Second, that it described what characterized Christ from the time of His incarnation after He became “manifest” on earth. That all things were created by our Lord, we firmly believe; of His eternal pre-existence, we have not a shadow of doubt; but we do not think *that* is in view *here*. Before anyone assumes that “in the beginning” and “from the beginning” are identical expressions, he should go to the trouble of very carefully examining every instance in the New Testament where the latter is found, and ascertain *how it is used*. As he does so, he will discover it occurs in widely different connections and is employed in various senses. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (and probably there alone), it certainly has the force of eternity. In Matthew 19:8, “from the beginning” signifies the commencement of human history. But in John 8:25; 15:27; 16:4, it clearly means from the start of our Lord’s public ministry.

The words “from the beginning” in our opening verse are found six times more in this epistle, and in none of them do they import *eternity*! “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have *heard* from the beginning” (1Jo 2:7)—from the lips of Christ. “Ye have known him that is from the beginning” (1Jo 2:13)—when He was first made manifest to you. The same is meant in 1 John 2:24 and 3:11. “The devil sinneth from the beginning” (1Jo 3:8) of human history—for “murderer” in John 8:44 is literally “manslayer.” In the opening verse of John’s Gospel, Christ is depicted in His eternal relation to the Godhead, but here in a time state, as incarnate as the clauses which follow make clearly evident, for their obvious design is to demonstrate the reality of His *manhood*. The Son’s assumption of flesh and blood opened a new era, changing as it did the world’s calendar from A.M. to A.D. Christ’s descent to this earth inaugurated a fresh “beginning,” when there was to be a “new covenant.” Now began to be brought in the substance of all the Levitical shadows; now began the Messianic prophecies to receive their fulfilment.

Quotations from several orthodox expositors of the highest repute could be given to show that in what we have said above, no “strange doctrine” has been advanced. Let the following one suffice. The translator and annotator upon J. Calvin’s commentary on this epistle said in his footnote to verse one, “It is more consistent with the passage to take ‘from the beginning’ here as from the beginning of the Gospel, from the beginning of the ministry of our Saviour, because what had been from the beginning was what the apostles had *heard* and *seen*. That another view has been taken of those words has been owing to an over-anxiety on the part of many, especially of the fa-

thers, to establish the deity of our Saviour; but that is what is sufficiently evident from the second verse.” It is the human nature of our Lord that verse one treats of, and most assuredly, that had an historical “beginning.”

Most of the commentators have had considerable difficulty with the prefatory, “*That which* was from the beginning” (1Jo 1:1) and varied have been the speculations as to why the neuter gender was used rather than “he who was.” Obviously, the words are to be explained by the clauses which immediately follow: yet some deem even them to be too indefinite to enable us to strive at any certainty. On the face of it, it appears incongruous to refer to a divine Person as “that which”: on the other side, one can scarcely speak of seeing and handling with our *hands* a “Message.” But no difficulty remains if we take the whole verse to be treating of our Lord’s manhood. The humanity of Christ was not a person, but a thing which He condescended to assume and take into union with His person. Proof of this is found in the words of the Angel to Mary, “that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35)—just as a woman is given the name of her husband as soon as she is wed to him. The Word’s becoming flesh and tabernacling among men marked a new beginning in the world’s history.

“That which was from the beginning.” Those words, when taken by themselves, are admittedly indefinite and mysterious; yet men have greatly *added* to their difficulty by making “from the beginning” synonymous with “in the beginning”—i.e. *without* beginning. If “from the beginning” has the force of from *eternity*, then no satisfactory explanation can be given of the neuter and abstract “that which,” for the allusion could not be to anything created, since matter is not from everlasting; and so far as we have observed, none who take that view have made any real attempt to grapple with the difficulty. If “from the beginning” signifies from eternity, then it must be a divine person that is in view; and in such case, “he who was” would be required. On the other hand, if the reference be to the divine incarnation—and more specifically, still to *the human nature*, which the Son of God took unto Himself—all difficulty vanishes.

In our introductory remarks, reference was made to the fact that those whom John immediately addressed were being assailed by heretical teachers (see 1Jo 2:26). Many conjectures have been made as to the precise nature of their errors, and the names of those who propagated them. Most probably, they were a branch of the Gnostics, Ebion, and Cerentheus being the leaders; but this cannot be determined for sure. What we may be certain about them is (1) that those who were then seeking to seduce John’s converts had themselves once been professing Christians, but later apostatized (1Jo 2:19); and (2) that they denied the reality of our Lord’s humanity (1Jo 4:3). It is, then, with the design of counteracting that error that John here lays so much emphasis upon the evidences which the incarnate Word had presented to the very senses of His apostles. The “Christian[?] Gnostics” taught that Christ’s body was but a phantasm, a mere temporary appearance assumed for the benefit of the world.

“That...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1Jo 1:1)—he “*that which* was from the beginning” is repeated (identically in the Greek) in each of the three clauses, thereby *explaining* it! In those words, John intimates (as the following verse more explicitly states) his intention of describing an experience and knowledge of Christ with which he and his fellow apostles had been favoured. It was far more than a message about life which had been delivered by word of mouth; more than a perfect, but abstract, ideal of life which he would treat of; but namely that Life which had appeared in personal and human form in Jesus of Nazareth—the promised Messiah, the incarnate Son—who had exhibited a life which was eternal and indestructible, even the very life of God. John’s adding of one clause to another, in progressive and climacteric order, was designed

not simply to show that he was speaking about Jesus Christ and none other, but rather, to declare that *that which* was to be announced concerning Him was an absolute certainty and *exhibited* truth—not only the truth *about* Him, but what John himself had actually heard, seen, and handled of Him.

Immediately after his opening clause, John proceeded to give proofs that Christ was really and verily man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh: that “in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17). His body was a palpable one—visible, audible, tangible. By it, the Saviour made full demonstration to each sense of their bodies that *His* was as real as were those of His apostles. The genuineness of Christ’s humanity—denied by the Gnostics and by those now calling themselves “Christian Scientists”—is a cardinal doctrine of the faith once delivered to the saints, and for which we are bidden to “earnestly contend” (Jude 1:3). In that body which God prepared Him (Heb 10:5)—which the Holy Spirit supernaturally produced from the substance of His mother—He lived, died, rose again, ascended to heaven, where He is now beheld in its glorified state; and in which He will yet come again (Act 1:11). At the divine incarnation, the Son of God became what He was not before—“And being found in fashion as a man” (Phi 2:8). Our nature was taken into union with His divine person. Thus, the first verse of our epistle is parallel with John 1:14, rather than with the opening verse of his Gospel.

John commences his epistle by setting before us God manifest in flesh, because He is the grand Subject of the Gospel, the Object of our faith, the Foundation of our hope, the One who brings us to and unites us in fellowship with the Father. The Gospel is no mere abstraction, but is inseparably connected with the Lord Jesus. As Levi Palmer so beautifully expressed it, “As the ray of the light depends upon the sun, and a wave of the sea upon the ocean, so Gospel truth is but the acts, and words, and glory of Christ.” As it is impossible to know and receive Christ apart from the Gospel, so we cannot receive the Gospel except from Him. It was John’s design to make known what sure and firm ground our faith in the Gospel rests upon. He relates not that which he had received second-hand, nor even what he had beheld in a vision, but rather that of which he had first-hand and ocular acquaintance. What he was advancing was real and true, in contrast with all that is merely imaginary, speculative, or dreamed about. His four verbs in verse one not only mark a progress from the more general to the more particular, but breathe a greater intensity as he proceeds.

“That...which we have heard” (1Jo 1:1). John was with Christ throughout the whole of His ministry, and chronicled more of what He *said* than did any of his fellows. This is given the first place because the utterances of Christ are of more importance than His miracles: so in his Gospel, John recorded a greater number of His discourses than did the other evangelists. This indicates the reverential esteem in which he held the Lord’s teaching, as well as supplies guarantee of the accuracy of his report. “Heard” includes more than the actual sound of His voice—namely all the gracious words which issued from His mouth, and also possibly having a special allusion to John 13-16. “We have heard” goes deeper than the words of Christ falling upon their ears: it signifies that their souls had *felt* the power of what He said—“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luk 24:32). If the enemies of Christ acknowledged, “Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46), what must the regenerated apostles have felt? The Lord Jesus wrote nothing, but He spoke much; and we have great cause for thankfulness that God moved the apostles to record so much of what He said, that we too may hear Him (via the printed page) for ourselves.

“That which we have seen” (1Jo 1:3). This is by no means to be restricted to His miracles of healing and other supernatural works, but understood as including the perfections displayed by

His character and conduct as He, untiringly, “went about doing good” (Act 10:38). Seen “with our eyes” (1Jo 1:1) is added for the purpose of emphasis, to show the verity and corporeality of Christ, that it is an historical entity which is here in view. Here too the reference is not limited to the mere sight of their bodily eyes, but implies also their spiritual perception of His peerless excellency. “That...which we have looked upon” (1Jo 1:1). This is no tautology, but expresses a closer and more deliberate inspection, for which John (as one of the three in the innermost circle) had peculiar opportunities. “Looked upon” is the same Greek word as “we *beheld* his glory” in John 1:14, and means to gaze at with desire and delight. “And our hands have handled” (1Jo 1:1) probably has both a special reference to His resurrection body, and a more general one to the closeness of their contact with Him during the days of His flesh—such precluding all possibility of any optical illusion.

The physical experience of the favoured apostles, as set forth by the four verbs in verse 1, is duplicated in the spiritual history of each Christian, and in the same progressive order. At first, his knowledge of Christ is limited to what he hears of Him in the Gospel. Then, when the miracle of grace has been wrought within him, he sees Christ with the eyes of faith—loving and giving Himself for him. Later, as he grows in grace, and becomes more and more enamoured of Him, he looks upon Him more steadfastly and closely with the eyes of love and adoration; the result of all being that, in a spiritual way, he *handles* Christ. He has become a bright, living experiential reality to him. The matchless charms and superlative glories of the Saviour make everything else appear mean and contemptible to him. The soul now has before it a heavenly Object, infinitely excelling all the perishing things of earth. It is an inestimable privilege if reader and writer be among those who can say “*we see* Jesus” (Heb 2:9). Happy day, blessed hour, when our eyes were first opened to behold Him as the Redeemer of our souls. Oh, to behold Him more distinctly and devotedly. The more we contemplate His peerless person, amazing love, and perfect work, the sooner will sin lose its hold over us, the world its charms, and death be robbed of all terror.

For the young preacher, we would suggest the following outline, “The Divine Incarnation”: (1) The new era which it inaugurated—compare Galatians 4:4. (2) Proofs of the reality of His humanity—compare John 20:30-31. (3) The witnesses thereof (the apostles)—compare Luke 1:2, 4. (4) The title here accorded Christ: “The Word of life”—compare Acts 3:15. (5) The bearing of this verse on the theme of the epistle. Under these heads may be arranged most of the material in this article.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

54. His Failure, Part 2 (9:15-19)

It was said by James Durham (1622-1658), the Puritan, “It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether it be more difficult to attain some gracious frame, or to maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping it when made.” That observation is confirmed both in the teaching of God’s Word and the experience of

His children: as it is easier in natural things to squander than acquire, so spiritually to retain it is as hard a task as to obtain. In Psalm 85:8, we read, “I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.” Alas that we should need such an injunction as that. Where a child has burned his fingers, he is afraid of the fire; and when a believer has dishonoured the LORD, and brought trouble upon himself by foolish conduct, he ought to be doubly on his guard against a repetition thereof. Yet only too often, instead of decreasing self-confidence and walking softly before the LORD, he relaxes his efforts to mortify pride, becomes careless in the use of God’s appointed means for the maintaining fellowship with Himself in the paths of righteousness, and therefore, falls again into the same sin.

The very fact that believers are here dehorted, “Let them not turn again to folly” intimates their proneness to do so. Yet that is so far from making any allowance for the same, it expressly forbids it. Moreover, what immediately precedes renders a repetition of the fault the more excuseless. When the LORD has so graciously “spoken peace to his people”—that is, has pardoned their transgressions and allayed their consciences, a spirit of gratitude should cause them to be more careful in avoiding everything which would displease and grieve Him. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly pointed out: “The remission of sins past is not a permission for sins to come, but a great bridle and restraint to it.” Peace is spoken by God unto those who turn from sin, and therefore, we have a clearly implied warning here that if we return thereto, peace will depart from us. Just so far as we really value God’s peace, will we diligently endeavour to avoid whatever destroys it. Sin is a breach of the Law (1Jo 3:4); Godward, it is an “offence” (Rom 5:17) or affront; selfward, it is folly of acting contrary to our interests and “forsak[ing] [our] own mercy” (Jon 2:8).

All sin is foolish, but backsliding is doubly so, and it is because of our corrupt tendency unto it that such a caution as the above requires to be taken to heart by all of us. The more so because of sin’s insidiousness—ever ready to trip us up if we are the least bit off our guard. As pointed out at the close of our last, sin is by no means always premeditated. Joshua’s failure in the making of a covenant with the Gibeonites was no deliberate act of disobedience, but was more a case of being “overtaken in a fault” (Gal 6:1)—through hurried action, instead of seeking counsel from the LORD. To be “overtaken in a fault” is a very different thing from resolving and contriving the same: the one is inadvertent, the other planned. It is ever to be borne in mind that the Christian has no inherent strength of his own: he stands by faith (Rom 11:20), and faith is directly opposed to self-confidence. Therefore, it is that—unless he maintains a constant prayerful vigilance and self-discipline—he is ever in danger of a sudden surprisal from the force of temptation, or being overborne by the heat of his passions.

Joshua had not only failed in a similar way previously, but he had been rebuked for it by the LORD, and convicted of his folly (Jos 7:10-11). The repetition of such failure has been recorded by the Holy Spirit to bring home to us *our* weakness and fickleness. If one so highly favoured of God as he who had so signally honoured Him by the general tenor of his character and conduct was capable of these momentary lapses, then how much do both writer and reader need to heed that exhortation, “Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom 11:20). The sad fact is that a believer may not only fall into sin, but—unless he preserves a spirit of entire dependence upon the LORD—he may, through the infirmity of the flesh, fall into *the same sin*. Samson (who was a believer—Heb 11:32) did so, first by marrying a Philistine woman (Jdg 14), which was expressly forbidden by the divine Law; and later, by consorting with a Philistine harlot (Jdg 16), for which he paid dearly. Jehoshaphat committed a great sin in joining affinity with the wicked Ahab (2Ch 18:1-3) and

was reproved for the same (2Ch 19:2): yet in 2 Chronicles 20:35, we find him relapsing into the same sin. When *we* are guilty of similar folly, it should lead us to deeper repentance, though not to despair.

“And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them. And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them” (Jos 9:15-16). As John Gill (1697-1771) pointed out, “The league seems to have been made the same day they came. The Gibeonites were no doubt in haste to have it confirmed, lest they should be discovered; and Joshua and the princes of Israel took no pains and gave themselves no great trouble to inquire about them, but made peace with them at once.” And now the deception of the one and the folly of the hasty action of the other were discovered. With rare exceptions, lies are quickly exposed. Only truth wears and lasts. Impostures are speedily found out, as Jacob’s by his father Isaac, Jeroboam’s wife’s by the prophet (1Ki 14:1-6), and that of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5). Then how utterly vain must be every attempt to impose upon Him unto whom “all things are naked and opened” (Heb 4:13). It is impossible to deceive Omniscience by masquerading before Him in the garb of a hypocritical profession, nor will His people be deceived thereby if they carefully weigh them in the balances of the Scriptures.

The terrible times in which we are living call for a further word on this practical subject. “The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment” (Pro 12:19). Then how important it is to eye eternity in all our words—doubly so in the case of preachers! The profession of the truth may indeed occasion present inconvenience and trouble from men, but it shall receive an eternal reward from God. On the other hand, the preacher who, for momentary gain and popularity, represses the truth and is a purveyor of lies shall reap a harvest of everlasting shame and woe. But that verse applies to all of us. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) tersely expressed it, “Those that make a lie their refuge, will find it a refuge of lies.” Falsehoods and deceits are not only evil in themselves, but a foolish expedient, for they expose the perpetrator to speedy detection, which renders him suspect and distrusted in everything. Even though his fellows should fail to disprove him, unless he sincerely repents, “He that speaketh lies shall perish” (Pro 19:9). Nothing makes us more like the devil than this, for he was a liar from the beginning (Joh 8:44). How earnestly we should pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29)

“And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them” (Jos 9:16). That may well be viewed from another angle. Not only is it a fact that, as a general rule, deceptions are quickly discovered, but it is equally true that, where the heart beats true to Him, God will not long suffer His people to be imposed upon. They are children of the day and not of the night, and therefore, there is no reason why they should stumble over any obstacles in their path. As their Master declares, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). But to *follow* Christ means very much more than “believing” in Him: it signifies to commit ourselves unreservedly to His government, to walk in His precepts, to emulate the example which He has left us. And in the main, and with few deviations, that is exactly what Joshua and Israel *had done* since their entrance into Canaan. They had been obedient to JEHOVAH, complying with His revealed will in all things. And though they had temporarily failed to seek counsel from Him—and in consequence, had been beguiled by the Gibeonites—yet because the main course of their lives was pleasing to God, He soon allowed them to learn their mistake. How gently the LORD deals with us!

“And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon,” etc. (Jos 9:17). This is explanatory of the foregoing verse and, by implication, shows us how unnecessary was Israel’s precipitate action—had they withheld their judgment and decision but a short time, they would have learned that these Gibeonites had by no means come from a very far country. By “the children of Israel” here, we are not to understand the entire congregation—for the camp still remained at Gilgal (Jos 10:15-17)—but rather their fighting-men with the responsible heads of the tribes. Most probably they had advanced this distance in order to investigate the report they had received. It should be pointed out that this was not the “third day” from setting out on their journey—for it was but a night’s march from Gilgal to their cities (Jos 10:9)—but from the time when they first “heard” that the Gibeonites were their neighbours. Definite confirmation of this was now before them, for here were “their cities.” The Holy Spirit’s emphasis here by the repetition of “the third day” intimates that this is a detail which the reader should duly ponder. A further word thereon.

It should be carefully noted that in John 8:12, Christ did not simply say that the one who followed Him should have light, but “the light of life”; and this is exactly what is typically portrayed here in Joshua 9:16-17, for “at the end of three days” brings us (symbolically speaking) on to resurrection ground. Joshua and his fellows had acted by sight instead of faith, and here the Spirit supplies demonstration of that fact. They had conducted themselves on the ground of mere nature, being regulated by their senses, and not as quickened souls whose privilege it was to enjoy unbroken communion with God and be guided by Him. They had, for the moment, relapsed into carnality, but now “on the third day” they were back on resurrection ground and given to see things in a true light. So the Christian has—by God’s grace and power—been brought from death unto life, and is henceforth called upon to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4) and to “put on the new man” (Eph 4:24), which means to act as one who is a new creature in Christ, to be governed by heavenly principles. If he fails to do so, then he will lack discernment and wisdom for his path, and be left to his erring natural judgment. Only so long as his eye be “single” to God’s glory will he be full of light.

“And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 9:18). Here is further evidence that the rulers in Israel were back again on resurrection ground—in communion with the LORD, conducting themselves as regenerated men. The fear of God was upon them, and they acted accordingly! Had they now been walking according to the flesh, they had argued that “circumstances alter cases”—that because the Gibeonites had lied to them, they were now automatically released from keeping their part of the compact. The carnal mind would reason that a covenant was surely not binding when one of the parties entering into it had acted under false pretences. But no such corrupt principles regulated these princes. Their word was their bond. “Though we have been imposed upon, we must not think ourselves at liberty to retaliate: solemn engagements made, even to our own hurt, must be conscientiously adhered to”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). Two wrongs never make one right, and for a child of God to descend unto the sinful level of worldlings is doubly heinous. The deception practiced by these Canaanites did not excuse Israel’s hasty action: they had been foolish in so rashly committing the nation, and now they must suffer the consequences of the same.

“And all the congregation murmured against the princes” (Jos 9:18). The fault was entirely their own that Israel’s leaders had been ensnared by such a piece of trickery, and though by grace, they had respect unto the LORD’s honour and refused to perjure themselves, yet they were made to feel the evil results of failing to ask “counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (verse 14). There is no previous mention of “murmuring” on the part of any of the Israelites; but now their unity was

disturbed! This was no casual incident, but a divine providence, designed to speak loudly unto those who had ears to hear. It was a divine chastisement, an outward mark of the LORD's displeasure—yet how mild a one! The immediate reason for this “murmuring” is fairly obvious: the soldiers were chagrined at being withheld from seizing and plundering these cities; nevertheless, had not Joshua and the princes offended against the LORD in acting on their own judgment instead of waiting upon Him for directions, His restraining hand had prevented such an exercise of the carnal cupidity of the rank and file of the people, and no spirit of discontent and division would have been shown. Though God judicially pardons our failures, in His governmental ways, He often makes us to eat the fruits of our folly.

“But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them” (Jos 9:19). It is blessed to behold the harmony and unanimity of the princes, that none of them were weakened by the opposition which was encountered. It was not only their own word which was involved, but their word under divine oath, and to violate *that* would both perjure themselves and grossly discredit their God in the estimation of the heathen. It can hardly be doubted that the congregation itself must have known of their oath, but charity requires us to believe that they had temporarily forgotten it. By way of illustration, we may see in this murmuring of the congregation against these princes that, when either religious or political leaders are actuated and regulated by holy and lofty principles, it must not be expected that those under them will appreciate and seek to further their motives, but rather will criticize and oppose. Blessed it is to see how these princes stood their ground, fearing God and not the people. And the LORD honoured them therein, for no further murmurings against them are mentioned—the LORD subduing the people's lusts!

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

2. Its Origin

That something is radically wrong with the world of mankind requires no laboured argument to demonstrate. That such has been the case in all generations is plain from the annals of history. This is only another way of saying that something is radically wrong with man himself, for the world is but the aggregate of all the individual members of our race. Since the whole of anything cannot be superior to the parts comprising it, it necessarily follows that the course of the world will be determined by the characters of those who comprise it. But when we come to inquire exactly *what* it is that is wrong with man, and *how* he came to be in such a case, unless we turn to God's inspired Word, no convincing answers are forthcoming. Apart from that divine revelation, no sure and satisfactory reply can be made to such questions as: Whence have been derived the unmistakable imperfections of human nature? What will furnish an adequate explanation of all the manifold evils which attend man's present state? Why is it that none is able to keep God's law perfectly, nay, do anything which is acceptable to Him while in a state of nature?

To ascertain how sin, which involves all men in it, came into the world is a matter of no little importance. To discover why it is that all men universally and continually are unrighteous and ailing creatures supplies the key to many a problem. Look at human nature as it now is: depraved, wretched, and subject to death. Ask philosophy to account for this, and it cannot do so. None can deny the fact that men are what they ought not to be, but *how* they became so, human wisdom is unable to tell us. To attribute our troubles to heredity and environment is but an evasion, for it leaves unanswered the questions. How came it that our original ancestors and environment were such as to produce what now exists? Look not only at our prisons, hospitals, and cemeteries, but also upon the antipathy which is ever to be seen between the righteous and the wicked, between those who fear God and those who fear Him not. The antagonism between Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, is repeatedly duplicated in every age and clime; but the Bible alone traces that antagonism to its fountain head.

The more judicious of the ancients recognized and bemoaned the universal tendency of men to be law-breakers, but were entirely unaware of its real source. They were agreed that the practice of virtue was the chief thing necessary for the promotion of man's good, but they had to lament an irregular bent in the wills and corruption in the affections of their disciples, which rendered their precepts of little use; and they were completely at a loss to assign any reason why mankind, who have the noblest faculties of any beings on earth, should yet generally pursue their destruction with as much eagerness as the beasts avoid it. Plato (429-347 B.C.), in the second book of his *Republic*, complained that men by their natures are evil and cannot be brought to good. Tully acknowledged that "man is brought forth into the world, in body and soul, exposed to all miseries and prone to evil, in whom that divine spark of goodness, and wisdom, and morality, is opposed and extinguished." They realized that all men were poisoned, but *how* the poison came to be in the human constitution they knew not. Some ascribed it to fate; others to the hostile influences of the planets; still others, to an evil angel which attends each man.

Most certainly we cannot attribute man's natural inordinancy and defectiveness unto his Creator. To do so would be the rankest blasphemy, as well as giving the lie to His Word, which declares that "God hath made man upright" (Ecc 7:29). Even on a much lower ground, such a conclusion is self-evidently false: it is impossible that darkness should issue from the Father of light, or that sin should come from the ineffably Holy One. It is infinitely better to confess our ignorance than to be guilty of grossest impiety—to say nothing of manifest absurdity—by placing the onus upon God. But there is no excuse for anyone to be ignorant thereon: the Holy Scriptures supply a definite solution to this mystery, and show that the entire blame for his present wretchedness lies at man's own door. And therefore, to say that man is a sinful creature, or even to allow that he is totally depraved, is but to acknowledge half of the truth—and the least humbling half at that. Man is a *fallen* creature. He has departed from his original state and primitive purity. So far from man's having ascended from something inferior to an ape, he has descended from the elevated and honourable position in which God first placed him; and it is all-important to contend for this, since it alone satisfactorily explains *why* man is now depraved.

Man is not now as God made him. He has lost the crown and glory of his creation, and has plunged himself into an awful gulf of sin and misery. By his own perversity, he has wrecked himself and placed an entail of woe upon his posterity. He is a ruined creature as the result of *his apostasy from God*. This requires that we should consider, first, man in his original estate, that we may perceive his folly in so lightly valuing the same and that we may form a better conception of the vastness and vileness of his downward plunge, for that can only be gauged as we learn what he fell *from* as well as *into*. By his wicked defection, man brought himself into a state as black

and doleful as his original one was glorious and blessed. Second, we need to consider most attentively what it has pleased the Holy Spirit to record about the Fall itself, pondering each detail described in Genesis 3, and the amplifications of them supplied by the later Scriptures: looking unto God graciously to grant us an understanding of the same. And then, third, we shall be in a better position to view the fearful consequences of the Fall and perceive how the punishment was made to fit the crime.

Instead of canvassing the varied opinions and conflicting conjectures of our fallible and fallen fellows concerning the original condition and estate of our first parents, we shall confine ourselves entirely to the divinely inspired Scriptures, which are the only unerring rule of faith. From them, and them alone, can we ascertain what man was when he first came from the hands of his Creator. First, His Word makes known God's intention *to* bring him into existence: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). There are two things exceedingly noteworthy in that brief statement: namely the repeated use of the pronoun in the plural number, and the fact that its language suggests the idea of a conference between the divine persons at *this point* of the "six days'" work. We say at this point, for there is nothing resembling it in the record of what occurred during the previous days. Thus, the divine conference here conveys the impression that the most important stage of creation had now been reached, that man was to be the masterpiece of the divine workmanship, the crowning glory of the mundane sphere—which is clearly borne out in his being made in the divine image.

It is the usage of the plural number in Genesis 1:26, which, in our judgment, intimates the first signification of the term "image." God is a Trinity in unity, and so also is the man that He made: consisting, in his entirety, of "spirit and soul and body" (1Th 5:23)—while in some passages, "spirit" and "soul" are used as synonyms, in Hebrew 4:12, they are distinguished. The fact that the plural number occurs *three* times in the brief declaration of Genesis 1:26 supplies confirmation that the one made in Their likeness was also a threefold entity. Some scholars consider that we have an allusion to this feature of man's constitution in the apostle's averment, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Act 17:28), pointing out that each of those three verbs has a philological significance: the first, to our animal life; the second (from which is derived the Greek word used by ethical writers for the passions—such as fear, love, hatred, and the like) not, as our English verb suggests, to man's bodily motions in space, but to his *emotional* nature—the soul; the third, to that which constitutes our essential being the "spirit"—the intelligence and will of man.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen 1:27). This announces the actual accomplishment of the divine purpose and counsels referred to in the preceding verse. The repetition of statement, with the change of the pronoun from the plural to the singular number, imports a second signification to the term "image." Viewing it more generally, it tells of the *excellency* of man's original nature, though it must needs be explained consistently with that infinite distance there is between God and the highest creature. Whatever be this glory which God placed upon Adam, it is not to be understood that he was made to participate in the divine perfections. Nor is the nothingness of the best of finite beings any disparagement when they be compared with God: for whatever likeness there is to Him, either as created, regenerated, or glorified, there is at the same time an infinite disproportion. Further, this excellency of man's original nature must be distinguished from that glory which is peculiar to Christ, who, so far from being said to be "created...in the image of God," "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Col 1:15), and "the express image of his person"

(Heb 1:3). There is a oneness and equality between the Father and the Son, which in nowise pertains to any “likeness” between God and the creature.

Examining the term more closely, “the image of God” in which man was made refers to his *moral nature*. John Calvin (1509-1564) defined it as being “spiritual,” that it “includes all the excellence in which the nature of man surpasses all the other species of animals,” and “denotes the integrity Adam possessed”; that it may be more clearly specified “in *the restoration* which we obtain through Christ.” Without an exception, all the Puritans we have consulted say substantially the same thing regarding this “image of God” as moral rectitude, a nature in perfect accord with the divine Law. It could not be otherwise: for the Holy One to make a creature after *His* likeness would be to endow him with holiness. When it is said of the regenerate that he has been “*renewed* in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10), that clearly implies the *same* image in which man was originally made, and which sin has defaced. Not only did that “image” consist of knowledge (i.e. of God), but, as Ephesians 4:24 informs us, of “righteousness and true holiness” also. Thus, man’s original state was far more than one of innocence (sinlessness, harmlessness), which is mainly a negative thing.

That man was created in positive holiness is also taught in Ecclesiastes 7:29, “God hath made [not is now ‘making’] man *upright*”: not only without any improper bias, but according to rule—straight with the Law of God conformed to His will. As Thomas Boston (1676-1732), expressed it, “Original righteousness was con-created with him.” The same Hebrew word occurs in “good and upright is the LORD” (Psa 25:8). We have dwelt the longer on this point, because not only do Romanists and Socinians *deny* that man was created a spiritual (and not merely natural) and holy (not simply innocent) being, but some hyper-Calvinists—who prefer logic and “consistency” with *their own* principles to the Word of God—do so too. One error inevitably leads to another: to insist that the unregenerate are under no obligation to perform *spiritual* acts obliges them to infer the same thing of Adam. To conclude that “if Adam fell from a holy and spiritual condition, then we must abandon the doctrine of final perseverance” is to leave out Christ and lose sight of the superiority of the covenant of grace to the original one of works.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7). This supplies us with additional information upon the making of Adam. First, the matter of which his body was formed: to demonstrate the wisdom and power of God in making out of such material so wondrous a thing as the human body, and to teach man his humble origin and dependence upon God. Second, the quickening principle bestowed, which was immediately from God, namely an intelligent spirit, of which the Fall did not deprive him (Ecc 12:7)—that “the breath of life” included reason or the faculty of understanding is clear from “the *life* was the *light* of men” (Joh 1:4). Third, the effect thereof: his body was now animated and made capable of vital acts. Man’s body out of the dust was the workmanship of God, but his soul was an immediate communication from “the Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9), and thereby earth and heaven were united in him.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” It seems that God chose this mode of making the woman—instead of forming her also out of the dust—to express the intimate union which was to take place between the sexes, to denote their mutual relation and dependence, and to show the superiority of man to the woman. Those two were so made that the

whole human race, physically considered, were contained in them and to be produced from them, making them all literally “of one blood” (Act 17:26).

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:28). Those words intimate that there was yet another meaning to “the image of God,” for the position of headship and authority which He conferred upon Adam shadowed forth the divine *sovereignty*. Psalm 8:5-6, tells us, “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” Adam was constituted God’s viceroy on earth, the government of all inferior creatures being conferred upon him. That was further demonstrated when the LORD brought all before Adam for him to give names to them (Gen 2:19-20), which not only evinces that he was a rational creature, endowed with the power of choice, but manifested his superiority over all mundane creatures, a propriety in them, and liberty to use them unto God’s glory and his own good.

But more. God not only endowed Adam with righteousness and holiness, thereby fitting him to fulfil the end of his creation by glorifying the Author of his being; bestowed upon him the gift of reason, which distinguished him from and elevated him above all the other inhabitants of the earth; conferred upon him the charter of dominion over them; but brought him into a pure and *beautiful environment*. “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed...And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden [which the Septuagint renders ‘the paradise of joy’] to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:8, 15)—Genesis 3:24 confirms the fact that “the garden of Eden” was distinct from the earth. The whole world was given him for a possession, but Eden was the special seat of his residence, a place of pre-eminent delight. It presented to his view the whole earth in miniature, so that he might, without traveling long distances, behold the lovely landscape which it afforded. It epitomized all the beauties of nature, and was, as it were, a conservatory of its fairest vegetation and a storehouse of its choicest fruits.

That the Garden of Eden was a place of surpassing beauty, excelling all other parts of the earth for fertility, is evident from other Scriptures. When prophesying, in a day of wretchedness and barrenness, the bountiful spiritual blessings which would attend the Gospel era, Ezekiel used this figurative but graphic language: “This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden” (Eze 36:35). Still plainer was the promise of Isaiah 51:3: “For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” From those words, it is clear that nothing was wanting in Eden, in its pristine glory, to give the completest happiness to man. That it was a place of perfect bliss is further evident from the fact that heaven itself—the habitation of the blessed—is called “paradise” in Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; and Revelation 2:7—may we not see in that *threefold* allusion (there are no others!) a pledge for the complete satisfaction of the glorified man’s spirit and soul and body?

In the statement that the LORD God put the man into the Garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15), several things are imported and implied. First, and most obviously, that God takes no pleasure in idleness, but in an active industry. That such an appointment was for Adam’s good cannot be doubted; and sure it is that regular employment preserves *us* from those temptations which so often attend indolence. Second, that secular employment is by no means inconsistent with perfect holiness, or a person’s enjoying intimate communion with God and the blessings arising therefrom; though Adam’s would, of course, be performed without any of the

fatigue and disappointment which accompany such today. The holy angels are not inert, but “ministering spirits” (Heb 1:14); yea, of the divine persons Themselves our Lord declared, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (Joh 5:17); thus, this employment assigned Adam was also a part of his conformity to God. Third, it implied the duty of keeping his own heart—the garden of his soul—with all diligence (Pro 4:23), tending its faculties and graces so that he might ever be in a condition to pray, “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song 4:16).

Further, in the “dress it [Hebrew *serve*] till,” we are taught that God’s gracious bestowments are to be highly treasured and carefully cultivated by us: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (1Ti 4:14), “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee” (2Ti 1:6). In the additional “and to *keep it*” (Gen 2:15), we believe there was a tacit warning given by God unto Adam. Not only does the English term convey that thought, but the Hebrew word (*shamar*) here used requires it. Nineteen times, it is rendered “preserve”; twelve times, “take heed”; four times, “watch”; and once, it is actually translated “beware.” Thus, it signified a caution against danger, putting Adam on his guard, and bidding him to be on the lookout against the encroaching of an enemy. The Dutch Puritan, Herman Witisus (1636-1708), pointed out that the “keeping of paradise virtually engaged him of all things to be anxiously concerned not to do anything against God, lest as a bad gardener, he should be thrust out of the garden; and in that, discover a melancholy symbol of his own exclusion from heaven.” Finally, in that “paradise” is one of the names of heaven, we may conclude that the earthly one in which Adam was placed was a pledge of that celestial blessedness, which, had he survived his probation and preserved his integrity, he had become possessed of.

In addition to the institution of marriage (Gen 2:23-25; 1:28), God appointed the weekly Sabbath. “And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen 2:2-3)—should any raise the cavil that the term “Sabbath” is not found in those verses, we would remind them that in Exodus 20:11, JEHOVAH Himself expressly terms that first “seventh day” of rest, “the sabbath day.” The word “blessed” signifies *to declare blessedness*: thus, on the frontispiece of His Word, God would have every reader know that special divine blessing attends the observance of the Sabbath. The word “sanctified” means that it was a day set apart for sacred use. For Adam, it would be a means for his more intimate communion with God, wherein he would enjoy a recess from his secular employment and have opportunity of expressing his gratitude for all those blessings of which he was the partaker.

DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

3. Its Corollaries, Part 1

It now remains for us to make what the Puritans were accustomed to call an “improvement” of what has been before us in the preceding articles. There we have treated with what was more the technical aspect of the subject; here, we turn to the practical side of the same. There, we dealt with what would be of most interest to students and preachers; here, we shall dwell upon what is of a vital moment to every reader. A clear intellectual apprehension of any biblical doctrine is most desirable, but if it goes no farther than that, it profits us little or nothing: it is the *use* which we make of that doctrine that is the most important consideration. What then is my personal attitude toward the Bible? The assurance that it is the fully inspired Word of God carries with it definite implications. It is an inestimable privilege to have in my hands a revelation and communication from the Lord, but that privilege entails certain definite obligations, and greatly adds to my responsibility. We shall, therefore, make a practical application of our subject by pointing out some of these implications and obligations:

1. *Their inerrancy.* Since the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, it necessarily follows that they are free from all error, marred by no human infirmities. Their divine origin vouches for their absolute integrity and insures their flawless accuracy. Because their Author is infallible, His Word is without mistakes. “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psa 12:6)—entirely free of dross. The words of man are yea and nay, but those of God are yea and amen. “In the original, there is an allusion to the most severely purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was passed when the greatest possible purity was desired. The dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained: so clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). As the personal Word was made of a woman without partaking of any defilement, so the written Word has come to us through human instruments without being in any wise sullied by their infirmities.

Since the Scriptures come to us from “the God of truth” (Isa 65:16), they are and must be “the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15). It is not a production of the Church, nor even a composition of the holy but finite angels, but a communication from Him “that cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). What an inestimable boon! It contains no cunningly devised fables, and has nothing in it which will mislead or deceive us. It is the Word of Truth in pointed contrast with all “science falsely so called” (1Ti 6:20), as well as with “philosophy and vain deceit” (Col 2:8). Living as we are in a world of shams and make-believe, of exaggeration and prevarication, of fiction and falsity, how indescribably precious is this “Thus saith the LORD”! As it is the passengers of a ship which has passed through fierce storms who welcome most the safe harbour, so it is those who were long tossed upon a sea of doubt and uncertainty who have the greatest appreciation of the safe anchorage of truth. Man’s teachings are like himself—mutable, contradictory, constantly changing. In contrast therewith, the saint exclaims, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa 119:89)—elevated far

above all the changes on earth, and remains as the Throne of God, stable, unshaken, and unshakable.

Throughout the ages, there have been endless disputes: What is truth? Where is it to be found? The infallible answer to those questions was supplied by Christ when He said unto the Father, “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17). Not only contains the truth, but *is* the truth itself, in its ineffable purity and entirety. It is “the word of truth”: not only in certain parts, but from Genesis to Revelation; not some portion more so, and others less so, but all alike “the word of God.” Consequently, it never needs revising, for there is nothing in it which requires correction or is capable of improvement. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out, “It is the *only* truth, the sole revelation of God that you can build upon, and therefore, it is the *rule* of truth. A thing may be true that is not the rule of truth. It is the *pure* truth. In it there is nothing but the truth, without any mixture of falsehood. It is the *whole* truth. It contains all things necessary for the salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it. It is, therefore, a full as well as perfect rule. Naught else is needed by the spiritual pilgrim to direct him through the mazes of this world to the better land.

2. *Their trustworthiness.* Since the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired, it necessarily follows that they are absolutely dependable and provide a sure foundation for our faith to rest upon. “Thy testimonies are very sure” (Psa 93:5). They are certain discovery of the divine will, a reliable guide in the way of duty, an unerring counselor for every perplexity, a safe pillow on which to repose our dying head. If you would ascertain what you are by nature in the sight of the Holy One, you may do so without the least uncertainty, for in His Word, He has delineated your heart with unfailing accuracy and fidelity. The picture will not flatter you, but is true to life. If you have a genuine concern about your soul and its eternal interests—and inquire, “What must I do to be saved?”—the Word of Truth furnishes an answer which is entirely to be counted upon. If the reader has been given spiritual wisdom, then while he feels that he dare not rest on the theorizing of scientists, the reasonings of philosophers, or the rhapsodies of mystics, he knows that he is perfectly safe in making God’s Word the rock of his confidence.

How desirable is such positiveness in a world of doubt! Then what an unspeakable privilege it is to turn from the quicksands of human speculation to the *terra firma* of divine revelation! The soul craves certainty. Guesses and hypotheses are insufficient where eternal issues are at stake. The one who is sensible of that requires something surer than a “perhaps” to rest upon. And in the “sure word of prophecy” (2Pe 1:19) *he has it*. The Bible gives forth no uncertain sound. It speaks with decisiveness and finality. Its testimony is reliable, and never deceives anyone who makes it his trust. He who rests thereon shall never be confounded. God’s truth is inviolable, His faithfulness unchanging, so that no Word of His shall ever fall to the ground. Neither His threatenings, nor His promises can possibly fail. So certain is this that it is the privilege of the believer reverently, but confidently, to hold God to His Word, and say unto Him, “Do as thou hast said” (2Sa 7:25). That is what Jacob did (Gen 32:12), what David did (Psa 119:49), what Solomon did (1Ki 8:25), and what we should do: “Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified” (2Ch 6:17).

The ablest human reasoner errs, but the Bible cannot deceive us. Since the Scriptures are the Word of God, they transcend all natural and human truth as far as heaven is above the earth. They are therefore worthy of our most implicit credence. He who receives them as God’s Word and trusts in the Saviour they reveal is able to aver, “For I *know* that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). They who make His Word the stay of their souls are able to say, “For we *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2Co 5:1). And during the present interval, they are assured that the

affairs of this life are not the result of blind chance or fickle fortune, but that the living God is ruling this world and making all things work together for their good (Rom 8:28). That is not merely a pleasant theory which they hold, but a sure fact which holds them. From actual experience, the believer will readily acknowledge, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word” (Psa 119:65), that “not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD [promised]” (Jos 23:14).

3. *Their authority.* The Scriptures are not given for our amusement, nor to provide food for idle speculation, still less to serve as a forum for debate. Rather are they provided in order to make us wise unto salvation, and to teach us how to live and please God. And it is very far from being a matter of indifference whether or not we order our lives by the teachings of the Bible: it is our certain undoing and eternal damnation if we do not. God’s Word is not subordinated to our judgment, but peremptorily insists that we must submit to its dominion. It does not plead before the bar of human reason, but insists that human reason must bow to divine wisdom. From beginning to end, it demands acceptance and obedience from every reader. For this reason, the Scriptures are designated, “The law of the LORD...The statutes of the LORD...the commandment of the LORD...The fear of the LORD” (Psa 19:7-9). Like the incarnate Word, the written Word speaks “as one having authority” (Mat 7:29). It does not invite, but demands, unqualified attention and assent to all it says. God’s requirements are made known in dictatorial language beyond which there is no appeal, and woe be to those who despise it.

In the most uncompromising manner and without the least apology, the Bible assumes the absolute right to order men’s conduct, rebuke their misdeeds, and pass sentence upon the evil-doers. Nor does it single out for address only the ignorant and the base, but issues its commands to all alike. The rich, as well as the poor, the civilized as well as the barbarian, the saint as well as the sinner, are all dogmatically told what they must and must not do. Not only does the Bible express itself in imperative language, but as from an infinitely elevated plane. To use the words of another, “It speaks to man not as from the human plane, or even from the standpoint of superior human wisdom and morality, but as from a plane far above the highest human level, and as with a wisdom which admits of no question or dispute from man.” Hear it: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9): “Hear, and your soul shall live” (verse 3). “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16).

Such language is entirely peculiar to the Bible. No sane mind—save an impostor’s—would give vent to such expressions, for it would be such unseemly egotism as to merit only contempt and derision. Yet such a tone is by no means incongruous in the Word of God, but is exactly what we should expect to find in it. So far from His addressing us as equals, it is most fitting that the Almighty should speak thus to His own creatures. Though it be rarely acknowledged by them, what we have been calling attention to is *felt* even by the unregenerate. There is a weightiness and solemn impressiveness about the Scriptures which are not to be met with in any other writings. The precepts are more pungent, their requirements more spiritual, their expostulations more convincing, their warnings more alarming, their denunciations more dreadful. There is that in the Bible which searches the conscience, which condemns self-gratification, and which convicts of sin, as does no other book. Its statutes are so pure, its language so majestic, that it is well-nigh impossible to dismiss the impression that none other than the voice of God is heard therein.

Since the Scriptures are clothed with authority, it becomes us to approach them with the utmost reverence and docility. Far be it from us to sit in judgment upon anything in that Book by which we are to be judged in the Day to come. Instead of coming to God’s Word as proud critics,

we must read it as humble disciples. If the Kingdom of heaven cannot be entered except we “become as little children” (Mat 18:3), equally sure it is that we shall not enter into the sacred mysteries of Scripture, unless a similar spirit possesses us as we examine its contents. No matter if some of its teaching seems incredible to us, we are forbidden to ask, How can this be so? The Word of Truth confirms it, and our understanding must assent thereto without question. A “thus saith the LORD” must silence every objection and produce unqualified subjection. Whenever we read the Bible—any part of it—let us remind ourselves, and seek to impress it upon our hearts, that we are about to listen not so much to holy men speaking for God, as to God Himself speaking through them to us. It is a light shining in a dark place, “whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (2Pe 1:19)—that is, yield up ourselves entirely to its control.

4. *Their supremacy.* Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, nothing must be placed on their level or allowed to compete with them. As Noah and his family had to keep within the ark for safety, and the Israelites in Goshen had to remain inside their houses for preservation, so must we keep within the bounds of Scripture if we would be delivered from error and guided by the Spirit into all truth. The Old and New Testaments have been given us by inspiration of God to be our one rule of faith and practice. We are entirely shut up to the Bible for our knowledge of what God requires us to believe concerning Himself, and what duties He requires us to perform. Nothing is to be believed for salvation, nor anything done by us as Christians, but what is clearly taught and enjoined by the Word of God. It is an infallible and divinely authoritative standard, and therefore must be the final court of appeal on all subjects in debate between Christians. Without the Scriptures, it is impossible for us to attain unto sound doctrine for our conduct to be ordered, so that it will be acceptable unto God, or to secure true consolation for the soul amid the vicissitudes and sorrows of this life. By the Bible, and by it alone, are our thoughts to be formed and our lives regulated; by it, we are to test all that we hear and read.

The philosopher and the scientist would make reason his supreme guide, and when told that it is quite inadequate where spiritual and eternal things are concerned, he contemptuously asks, “Then why have I been endowed with it?” Sufficient to answer, “In order to raise you above the level of the beasts and constitute you a rational creature, so that you may be able to read and ponder the revelation which God has so graciously given us.” Moreover, it is the highest and most logical act of reason to submit itself unto the wisdom and will of its Giver. The Papist insists that the Scriptures must be plussed by “tradition,” by the alleged oral teaching which Christ and His apostles handed down to the Church. But that manifestly clashes with 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which expressly declares the inspired Scriptures to be *complete*, so that the man of God requires nothing else to be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The mystic and fanatic prefer their own intuitional light or inward impressions, which they often term, “the voice of the Spirit in the soul,” but none of them have yet succeeded in devising a sure rule or test whereby one may infallibly determine whether or not that impression or voice be from God or the devil deceiving him.

Our Lord and His apostles always referred to the written Word of God as the *sole* standard of conduct and the supreme judge for determining controversy, and never to any other rule of faith whatsoever. “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luk 10:26). “Search the scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (Joh 5:39). “For what saith the scripture?” (Rom 4:3)—*that* settles the matter; there is no appeal beyond it. Christ rebuked the Pharisees for adding to the Scriptures, and charged them with having “made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Mat 15:6), declaring “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mar 7:7-9). The Bereans were highly commended for bringing all questions, even the apostolic teaching, to the testimony of God’s Word: “These were more noble than

those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Act 17:11)—whether what they heard agreed with the supreme Standard. Everything must be brought to *that* test: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20).

Though the inward operations of the Spirit in the saints be indispensable for their sanctification or growth in grace, both for their illumination and empowering, yet they are *not the rule* for the Christian life. The Holy Spirit never teaches us or moves us to do anything which is in the least contrary to the Book of which He is the Author. “These things write I unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God” (1Ti 3:14-15). What could be plainer than that? Timothy was indeed indwelt by the Spirit of God; nevertheless, it was not His felt promptings, or the absence of such, but the written Word, by which alone he was to be governed. So again, “I give thee charge in the sight of God...That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Ti 6:13-14). The blessed Spirit is not given to take away the Scriptures from us, nor even to supplement them, but rather to enforce their authority and open their meaning to us. Though enlightened by the Spirit, no Christian has His inspiration like that by which He infallibly guided the writers of the Word. Many have been led into the wild extravagances under the plea that they were “led of the Spirit” (Gal 5:18) or prompted by Him therein.

A little serious thought should surely make it evident to any impartial mind that if I be regulated by my inward impressions or spiritual instinct, then I am *my own rule*, the determiner of what I should do or abstain from. Inward illumination from God is indeed a blessed reality unto regenerate soul, yet that very illumination which I may think that I have received from Him must be *tested* by His Word: “Prove all things” (1Th 5:21); “Try the spirits whether they are of God” (1Jo 4:1). “Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8), and since He gave commandment during the days of His flesh that men should search the Scriptures, He certainly does not neglect to tell anyone that he is independent of the Scriptures, and may submit himself unto the Spirit’s inward motions. Whatever I may claim as my “Christian experience,” it is of value only so far as it accords strictly with the Word of Truth. “Thy word” said David—and not his inward impressions or the Spirit’s motions—“is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa 119:105). If I put my trust in, or take my orders from, anything whatever save God’s Word, I *sin*.

There are others who are quite sure that God communicates to them in *dreams*, and by that means, reveals to them their duty. Were it not that several of our readers hold this belief, we would not devote a paragraph to such matter. That God occasionally, and not customarily, used this particular medium before the canon of the Scripture was closed is plain, yet those dreams were not ordinary ones, but extraordinary—bordering on the miraculous. God could certainly give such now if He so pleased, but nowhere does His Word contain any warrant for us to wait upon Him to speak by such a means to justify an expectation that He *will* do so. Even if I could be sure the dream was from Him and not from Satan, how could I be certain of its interpretation? Neither Pharaoh’s magicians or Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men could explain their king’s dreams! But no such uncertainty in ascertaining God’s will is mine if I prayerfully search His Word. Stick to it, and such dreams are unnecessary. ❧

MARCH

GOD'S GIFTS

A *giving God*! What a concept. Alas, that our very familiarity therewith should ever serve to dull our sense of wonderment at it. There is nothing in the least resembling such a thing in the religions of heathendom. Very much to the contrary: *their* deities are thought of and portrayed as monsters of cruelty and greed, ever exacting painful sacrifices from their deluded devotees. But the God of Scripture is portrayed as the Father of mercies “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1Ti 6:17). It is true that He has His own rights—the rights of His holiness and proprietorship. Nor does He rescind them, but enforces the same. It becomes Him to do so, and right reason assents hereto. But what we would here contemplate is something which altogether transcends reason, and which had never entered our minds to conceive. The divine Claimer is at once the divine Meeter. He required satisfaction unto His broken Law, and *Himself* supplied it. His just claims are met by His own grace. He who asks for sacrifices *from* us made the supreme sacrifice *for* us! God is both the Demander and the Donor, the Requirer and the Provider.

1. *The gift of His Son.* Of old, it was announced by the language of prophecy: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given” (Isa 9:6)—given to be all that to us which our fallen state called for. Accordingly, the angels announced to the shepherds at the time of His advent: “For unto you is born this day...a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” That Gift was the supreme exemplification of the divine benignity. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:9-10). That was the guaranty of all other blessings. As the apostle argued from the greater to the less, assuring us that Christ is at once the pledge and channel of every other mercy: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him *also* freely give us all things?” (Rom 8:32). God did not withhold His choicest Treasure, the Darling of His bosom, but freely yielded Him up; and the love that spared not *Him* will not begrudge anything that is for the good of His people.

2. *The gift of His Spirit.* The Son is God’s all-inclusive Gift. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) said, “Christ cometh not to us empty-handed: His person and His benefits are not divided. He came to purchase all manner of blessings for us.” The greatest and chief of these is the Holy Spirit, who applies and communicates what the Lord Jesus obtained for His people. As God pardoned and justified His elect in Old Testament times on the ground of the atonement which His Son should make at the appointed time, so on the same basis, He communicated to them the Spirit (see

Numbers 11:25; Neh 9:20, etc.)—otherwise none had been regenerated, fitted for communion with God, or enabled to bring forth spiritual fruit. But He *then* wrought more secretly, rather than in “demonstration” and in “power”; came as “the dew,” rather than was “poured out” copiously; was restricted to Israel, rather than communicated to Gentiles also. The Spirit in His fullness was God’s ascension gift to Christ (Act 2:33) and Christ’s coronation gift to His Church (Joh 16:7). The gift of the Spirit was purchased for His people by Christ: see Galatians 3:13-14, and note carefully the second “that” (in order that) in verse 14. Every blessing we receive is through the merits and mediation of Christ.

3. *The gift of life.* “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). There is a double antithesis between those two things: first, the justice of God will render unto the wicked that which is due to them for their sins, but His mercy bestows upon His people that which they deserve not. Second, eternal death follows as a natural and inevitable consequence from what is in and done by its objects: not so eternal life, for that is bestowed without any consideration of something in or from its subjects, being communicated and sustained gratuitously. Eternal life is a free bounty, not only unmerited but unsolicited by us, for in every instance, God has reason to say, “I am found of them that sought me not” (Isa 65:1, and compare Rom 3:11). The recipient is wholly passive: he does not act, but is acted upon when he is brought from death unto life. Eternal life—a spiritual life here and now, of glory hereafter—is sovereignly and freely bestowed by God; yet it is also a blessing communicated by Him unto His elect, because the Lord Jesus Christ paid the price of their redemption. Yea, it is actually dispensed by Christ: “And *I* give unto them [not merely ‘offer’] eternal life” (Joh 10:28, and see also 17:3).

4. *The gift of spiritual understanding.* “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20). That which is communicated to the saint when he is born again is wholly spiritual and is exactly suited for the taking in of the Scriptural knowledge of Christ. It is not an entirely new faculty which is then imparted, but rather the renewing of the original one, fitting it for the apprehension of new objects. It consists of an internal illumination, a divine light shining in our hearts, enabling us to discern the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2Co 4:6). Though we are not now admitted into a corporeal sight of Christ, yet He is made a living reality unto those who have been quickened into newness of life. By this divine renewing of the understanding, we are enabled to perceive the peerless excellency and perfect suitability of Christ unto our case. The knowledge we have of Him is seated in the understanding, and that fires the affections, sanctifies the will, and raises the mind into a fixation upon Him. Such a spiritual understanding is not obtained or attained by any efforts of ours, but a supernatural bestowment, a divine gift conferred upon the elect, which admits them into the access of the Most High.

5. *The gift of faith.* The salvation of God does not actually become ours until we believe in, rest upon, and receive Christ as a personal Saviour. But as we cannot see without both sight and light, neither can we savingly believe until life and faith are divinely communicated to us. Accordingly, we are informed, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Arminians would make the second clause of verse 8 a mere repetition of the first—and in less expressive and emphatic language. Since salvation is by grace, it is quite superfluous to add that it is “not of yourselves.” But because “faith” is *our* act, it was necessary—in order that the excellency of it should not be arrogated by the creature, but ascribed unto God—to point out that it is *not* of ourselves. The very faith which receives a gratuitous salvation is not the unassisted act of man’s own will.

As God must give me breath before I can breathe, so faith ere I believe. Compare also “faith which is by him” (Act 3:16); “who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph 1:19); “through the faith of the operation of God” (Col 2:12); “who by him do believe in God” (1Pe 1:21).

6. *The gift of repentance.* While it be the bounden duty of every sinner *to* repent (Act 17:30)—for ought he not to cease from and abhor his rebellion against God?—yet so completely is he under the blinding power and dominion of sin that a miracle of grace is necessary ere he will do so. A broken and contrite spirit are of God’s providing. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates the understanding to perceive the heinousness of sin, the heart to loathe it, and the will to repudiate it. Faith and repentance are the first evidences of spiritual life, for when God quickens a sinner, He convicts him of the evil of sin, causes him to hate it, moves him to sorrow over and turn from it, “Surely after that I *was turned*, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded” (Jer 31:19). “All the pious workings of our hearts toward God, are the fruit and consequence of His grace in us”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Compare “a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel” (Act 5:31); “then hath God also to the Gentiles *granted repentance* unto life” (Act 11:18); “if God peradventure will give them repentance” (2Ti 2:25).

7. *The gift of grace.* “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ” (1Co 1:4). Grace is used there in its widest sense, including all the benefits of Christ’s merits and meditation, providential or spiritual, temporal or eternal. It includes regenerating, sanctifying, preserving grace, as well as every particular grace of the new nature—faith, hope, love, etc. “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7)—that is, according as He is pleased to bestow, and not according to our ability or asking; and therefore, we have no cause to be proud or boastful. Whatever grace we have—to resist the devil, patiently bear affliction, or overcome the world—is from Him. Whatever obedience we perform, devotion we render Him, or sacrifice we make, is of *His* grace. Therefore must we confess: “For all things come of thee, and of *thine own* have we given thee” (1Ch 29:14).

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

3. The Life Manifested (1:2)

It is very evident that John’s first epistle was designed as the sequel to a companion of his Gospel (compare Joh 20:31, and 1Jo 5:13), and since it opened the one by a presentation of the deity of Christ, it was most fitting that he should commence the other with a setting forth of His humanity. That he does in the first verse, where most convincing proofs are supplied reliable witnesses. “That which”—namely our Lord’s manhood—“was from beginning” (of this Christian

era) (1Jo 1:1). That “which we have heard,” speaking personally and audibly to us, and in power to our hearts. That “which we have seen with our eyes” in tangible form, furnishing conclusive evidence of the reality of His manhood. That “which *we* have looked upon” as none of the world did: the surpassing splendour of His countenance when He was transfigured upon the holy mount; His anguished face in Gethsemane, when His features were more marred than any man’s; the marks of the Cross in the resurrection-body; His beloved form, as it gradually receded from our viewing the time of His ascension (Act 1:11).

“And our hands have handled” (1Jo 1:1). John, moved by the Holy Spirit, determined to certify unto his readers the verity and corporeality of the Master’s manhood, that there might be no doubt whatever on that score. There was no possibility of the apostles being misled by an optical illusion. Peter had felt the firm grasp of Christ’s hand when He caught hold of him and delivered him from sinking in the sea. John himself had actually reclined upon His bosom. Thomas and his fellows had been invited to handle Him after He came forth triumphantly from the tomb. It was something far more substantial than an ecstatic vision which John was here relating. “The nature which Christ took when He was born of Mary, He lifted out of the grave at His resurrection. We have, therefore, a Saviour, who not merely became a man, but *wears* His glorified humanity in heaven. His incarnation is thus associated with the redemption of man. He took our nature, stood in our place, and has taken possession of heaven as our Representative”—James Morgan.

“Of the Word of life”—or, more accurately, “[*concerning*] the Word of life”: that is to say, what has been so much insisted upon in the preceding clauses is intimately related to Him—His manhood is an essential part of the Mediator’s complex person. This title, “the Word of life” at once informs us that the One whom John had in view was more than a man, “Life” is one of the prominent terms of this epistle, occurring therein no less than fourteen times. Three different words are employed in the Greek: here, it is *zoe* (ζωή)—the one which has the fullest signification. It is used in John 1:4—“in him was life”: all life resides in Him. But that hardly seems the thought here, for it is not the Word in His essential being, but as incarnate: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (Joh 5:26)—to administer and impart unto others. John’s design here is not so much to declare what the Saviour is in Himself, as to show what He is unto His people—the Communicator of life to them.

“The Word of life” in this verse, we regard as being almost parallel with His own averment in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life”—the *Giver* of life. As “the Word” (*Logos*), He is the highest expression of God’s mind, the Revealer of the Godhead *unto* us; as “the Word of life,” He is the Bestower of life *upon* us, and thus is the Link connecting us with God. If it be asked, What is the precise character of the “life” which Christ gives to His people? The answer is, Every kind that can be conceived. First, natural life, for He is the Author of our beings (Col 1:16). Second, spiritual life: “The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (Joh 5:25)—i.e. those dead in trespasses and sins shall be quickened by Him. Third, resurrection life: “...the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life” (Joh 5:28-29). Fourth, the life of glory: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). Well may He be designated, “The Prince of life” (Act 3:15)!

We can see no reason whatever why 1 John 1:2 should be placed in parentheses, for it is obviously a continuation of the former one, though with most important additions. This is yet more evident in the Greek, for it opens with the word *kai*, (καί) which is usually translated, “and” and scarcely ever “for.” “And the life was manifested”—a divine Person descended into the human

domain. It was into a realm of darkness that the Light entered. It was unto a fallen and sinful people, a world which lay in the wicked one, that the Son of God now came. It was in the midst of a scene where death reigned that the Life was manifested. This divine title is very emphatic. He is life essentially, He is life manifestatively, He is life communicatively. Christ may well be styled, "The Life," for the natural life of all creatures is in Him and from Him. He is the spiritual life of angels, as well as the Church. From heaven, He came to earth to exhibit a life which had no beginning, no limitation, no end; and for the express purpose of conquering death, and becoming eternal life to His people (Joh 17:2-3).

In the first two verses of his epistle, John sets before us Christ in His theanthropic character, His twofold nature of deity and humanity. This was frequently the manner of New Testament writers. Mark commences his Gospel thus: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Paul began his treatise to the Romans by announcing that the Gospel unto which he was separated, the contents of which he was about to expound, concerned "his [God's] Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom 1:3). The epistle to the Hebrews opens with a setting forth of Christ as the final revelation of God in His sevenfold mediatorial glory. In the first chapter of his Gospel, John had affirmed the absolute deity of his Master (verses 1-4), and then spoke of Him as incarnate, tabernacling among men (verses 10-14). The reason for this is not far to seek. "The assumption of human nature by the Son of God is the most stupendous fact in the history of providence. Angels 'desire to look into it,' and are amazed at it. It will be the subject of devout inquiry and adoring wonder to the whole intelligent and holy creation of God throughout eternity. In the meantime, the salvation of the sinner is suspended upon it. In the incarnation of the Word, there is provided for him an all-sufficient Saviour"—J. Morgan.

In the first verse, the whole emphasis was thrown upon the visibility and tangibility of our Lord's humanity. But John, ever jealous of His dignity and glory, would not have his readers form a false or inadequate concept of Christ; so in the second verse, he makes clear his deity, both by the titles then accorded Him, and by affirming His equality "with the Father" (1Jo 1:2). In Christ, all the perfections of God shine forth resplendently: through Him, the whole Godhead is displayed. As another of His servants declared, the incarnate Son is "the brightness of his [God's] glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3). He is the Mirror in which all the divine perfections are exhibited to us. "God, that He might help our weakness, and attract our faith to Himself hath been pleased to come, as it were, out of His unapproachable light, and manifest Himself in attributes such as wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, mercy, and power, with the like. These rays of the divine perfections are let down (in Christ) that we might sanctify Him in our hearts, that our souls might be in a posture of holy humility, fear, love, joy, and obedience, suited to the excellencies in Him"—Edward Polhill (1622-1694), 1678.

"For the life was manifested" (1Jo 1:2) in flesh, in open view of men. Since fallen creatures could not ascend to heaven in their sins, the Son descended to earth to be a Saviour for the lost. In order for the Life to be evident and apparent, the Infinite took upon Himself the limitations of the finite. In order that the Invisible might become visible, He was clothed in flesh and blood. We considered that W. Lincoln, in his brief lectures on this epistle, brought out the most helpfully the thought here, by making the term "manifested" a *summary* of the preceding verse. "*From the beginning*" (verse 1) conveys the idea of *issuing forth* Christ coming from heaven to earth, from God to men. The four verbs then show us Christ, as it were, approaching nearer and nearer, in ever-clear manifestation. A person at a *distance* may be "heard." But "which we have seen with our eyes" means that person has come within the range of our vision. "Which we have looked upon"

or attentively considered signifies he is nigh. “And [which] our hands have handled”—all distance is now obliterated. It is Christ drawing closer and closer, with ever-increasing intimacy, until He is clearly “manifested” (verse 2).

But while the primary reference in “the life was manifested” is to the divine incarnation, it is by no means to be restricted thereto. The Life was manifested not only in bodily form, and through His gracious ministry, but still more especially in His *salvation*. As previously intimated, this title speaks not so much of what Christ is in Himself essentially considered, but what He is unto His people. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Joh 10:10)—than what they originally had in Adam before the Fall. Christ indeed had life in Himself (Joh 1:4); and therefore, He was fully qualified to act the part of Mediator, interposing Himself between God and those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and thus, become a Source of new life to them. But that necessarily involved His death in their behalf and in their stead. Therefore, right after announcing He had come “that they might have life,” He added, “I lay down my life for the sheep...I lay down my life, that I might take it again” (Joh 10:15-17).

These words, “The life was manifested,” are to be regarded as condemnation of our Lord’s statement in John 6: “I am the *living* bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of [appropriate to himself] this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give [by a sacrificial death] is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood [which necessarily implies the crucifixion of His flesh], ye have no [spiritual] life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (verses 51-56). Those verses bring out more definitely the *connection* between the vicarious sacrifice of Christ and the communication of life. The atonement stands in *causal relation* to our receiving life from Christ: His crucified flesh is the fountain from which we derive spiritual life. Thus, verses 1 and 2 make known how perfectly qualified Christ is to bestow life, and thus equip us for fellowship” (verse 3).

“And we have seen” Him. The apostle now proceeds to amplify the foregoing statement, for in this connection, “manifested” had the force of “to be made visible.” The “we have seen” is reiterated here because Christ’s tabernacling among men in tangible form was the most wonderful fact of all history: as Samuel E. Pierce (1746-1829) expressed it, “The greatest event which ever took place in the world.” Yet, as that writer pointed out, “We are not so deeply sensible of this in our minds as we most certainly ought to be. The sufferings, agony, and bloody sweat of Christ—and His sustaining the very curse due to our transgressions—seem to fix a deeper impression of His love on our minds than His taking our nature. Yet there is more love expressed in the incarnation than we can ever possibly conceive. *Out of it*, the whole execution of our salvation proceeded. He could love us in heaven with as great a degree of love as He will to the ages of eternity; but He could not be made sin and a curse for us in heaven...The incarnation of Christ was a most astonishing proof of His love.”

“We have seen.” The senses of the body have their place and value, being given to us by God for the purpose (among other things) of imparting knowledge to the mind. They are therefore a means of information and verification. The apostles had beheld Christ in a manner that the patriarchs and prophets had not done, for they had seen Him only in prophecy and promise, in types and visions. Though He had occasionally appeared unto them in human form—the “theophanies”—they had not looked upon Him as actually incarnate, clothed with flesh and blood, and dwelling among and conversing with them, as He did with the apostles. Thus, as John Calvin

(1509-1564) pointed out, there is “an implied contrast” in this “*we* have seen.” Though the Old Testament saints were partakers of the same Life as us, and though their faith rested upon the sure promise of God, nevertheless, they were shut up under a hope yet to be revealed: whereas in the case of the apostles, that hope was manifested in bodily and visible form.

“We have seen it, and bear witness.” It was not a second-hand report which they proclaimed, but something they had personally heard and seen for themselves. When Judas apostatized and another was needed to fill his office, it was required that he be “of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (Act 1:21-22). The apostles were eye-witnesses, as well as ear-witnesses, and therefore, did one of them declare, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2Pe 1:16). It is that very fact which render excuseless all those who refuse to receive their testimony, for “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that *heard* him”? (Heb 2:3).

Christianity fears not the light, but welcomes the most searching investigation, for not only are the historical facts on which it is based attested by the most reliable witnesses and “by many infallible proofs” (Act 1:3), but it is able to supply rational conviction and solid persuasion of its verity—both to the understanding and to the conscience. Many others indeed heard and saw Christ during the days of His flesh, yet they enjoyed not that constant closeness to Him as had the twelve. They were not only specially called, but supernaturally qualified, being given the power to work “both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Heb 2:4). Thus, a peculiar dignity and position was theirs, for in the foundations of the new Jerusalem are “the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21:14). Hence, in the very nature of the case, they could have *no* “successors.”

“And shew [better, ‘report,’ as the Greek word is rendered in the next verse] unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father.” This is brought in to guard the glory of the One spoken of in the preceding verse, telling us that “the Word of life” came from the bosom of the Father. Though He had only recently been “manifested,” it was not then that He began to be. On the contrary, He had ever been with the Father: hence the “which *was* with,” rather than “which is”—after the ascension. Thus, this declaration is parallel with the “*In* the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God” of John 1:1. “The life,” then, is a divine Person distinguishable from the Father, yet in eternal fellowship with Him: one as the undivided essence of the Godhead, but possessing distinct personalities. “That eternal life, which was with the Father”: His *duration* evidences His excellency and sufficiency. In our judgment, this statement indicates that “*from* the beginning” in verse 1 does *not* have the force of “from everlasting”: had it done so, there had been no need to say there that the Life was “eternal.”

“That eternal life, which was with the Father” “The preposition *pros* (πρός) is very significant. It might be translated ‘toward’ or ‘to,’ and suggests that the Eternal Life was face to face with the Eternal Father”—Levi Palmer. As Christ, speaking as “Wisdom,” informs us: “Then [when God appointed the foundations of the earth] I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him” (Pro 8:30). “Wonderful words! How can we apprehend their meaning and force? He dwelt with Him as His ‘Fellow,’ and partook in common with Him in eternal life. Christ, as the Son of God, is essentially possessed of life in the highest exercises and enjoyments. It is of Him John says in this epistle, ‘This is the true God, and eternal life’ (1Jo

5:20). Life is His to impart it to sinners. ‘And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son’ (verse 11). It is laid up in Him, in His mediatorial person, as in a fountain, to which sinners may ever come and receive out of His fullness”—J. Morgan.

“And was manifested unto us.” This is by no means a repetition of the first clause of the verse: that was general, this particular—as the qualifying “unto us” shows. The reference is to the peculiar privilege enjoyed by the twelve. All the Lord’s ministers—and in a lesser degree His people—are witnesses unto Him; but not all in the same way, or to answer the same end, for which the apostles were appointed. Christ prayed that, from His ascension till His return, all the election of grace might “believe on [Him] through their word” (Joh 17:20). The Church is said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20). In them was specially fulfilled His promise, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide *you* into all truth” (Joh 16:13), so that they could not but give an accurate and divine account of Christ in every particular which they delivered of and concerning Him. The apostles were under the immediate control of the Spirit. After the day of Pentecost, their conceptions of the truth were directly from Him. They were infallibly taught by Him. We may therefore rely on their testimony with absolute assurance of its integrity.

But something more is needed than a firm persuasion of the authenticity and trustworthiness of the apostolic report, namely, a personal knowledge of and saving acquaintance with Christ for ourselves. In reading and re-reading the first three verses of this epistle, one cannot fail to be struck by the earnestness of John, how evidently he longed that Christ might be truly apprehended by his readers; and it is equally clear from much that follows that he feared, notwithstanding all his plainness and urgency, they might still remain ignorant of Him. The manifestation of Christ in the flesh is one thing, the manifestation of Him to the heart, by His Spirit and Word, is another. Have *you*, dear reader, an experiential acquaintance with Him? Have you proved Him to be “the Word of life” (1Jo 1:1) by His effectual working in your *own* soul? “No man can [savingly] say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1Co 12:3). Unless you be taught by Him, you can neither discover your need nor discern the sufficiency of Christ to meet it. But if He be your Instructor, you will really feel and confess both. Pray, then, for His divine illumination and a fuller understanding of Christ.

Were we to sermonize the last clause of verse 1, together with the whole of verse 2, our title and divisions would be: The Life openly revealed. (1) The Person spoken of; (2) The titles accorded Him; (3) The manifestation made by Him; (4) His eternal pre-existence; (5) The witnesses thereto; (6) The peculiar privileges granted them.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

55. The Oath (9:20-27)

“This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them” (Jos 9:20). In the preceding verses, we saw how Israel had been

deceived by some of the Canaanites, who, by pretending to be from a very far country, posed as ambassadors authorized to entreat with Joshua and enter into a treaty of peace for their people. Those imposters had not only prepared a very plausible tale, but were carefully made up in keeping with the part they played, appearing in tattered garments and with mouldy bread as evidences of the long journey they had taken. Instead of seeking counsel at the mouth of the LORD, Joshua and the responsible heads of the nation walked by sight and relied upon their senses (verse 14). Instead of deferring their decision and taking the trouble to carefully investigate the claims of the Gibeonites, Israel hurriedly entered into a covenant with them to spare their lives. Instead of making them a conditional promise, the princes solemnly ratified the agreement by oath (verse 15). All of this should be regarded by us as a pointed warning to avoid precipitate action, and also showing the wisdom of heeding that injunction, “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16).

Within three days, the folly of Israel was made manifest, for upon penetrating a little deeper into Canaan, they came to the cities of the Gibeonites (Jos 9: 16-17). It is to be duly noted that Israel’s discovery of the trick that has been played upon them was not made by any spiritual discernment of theirs—which had assuredly been the case had a “single eye” been maintained to God’s glory (Mat 6:22)—but by external means. Moreover, though the LORD did not allow them to be deceived for any length of time, He made evident, even if in a comparatively mild and gentle way, His displeasure against the princes through His providential dealings with them. The “murmuring” against them by the congregation, though “very natural under the circumstances,” should be regarded as a divine *chastisement*—God suffering the people to voice their discontent, instead of working in them a spirit of acquiescence. Thus, for the moment, the harmony of Israel was disturbed and their unity seriously threatened. But it is good to see that, with one accord, the princes feared God rather than men, and so far from desiring amity at any price, recognized that “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable” (Jam 3:17).

Instead of yielding to the desire of the rank and file of the people, who obviously wanted to avenge themselves upon the Gibeonites, and plunder the cities, all the princes stood their ground, and said, “We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them” (Jos 9:19). Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pertinently remarked that they “did not apply themselves to Eleazar for a dispensation, much less did they pretend that no faith is to be kept with heretics—with Canaanites; no, they were strangers to the modern artifice of the Roman Church to elude the most sacred bonds and even to sanctify perjuries.” No, they were determined to honour the engagement into which they had entered. Happy the nation whose leaders and governors abide by their obligations. The *testing* of these princes was a very real one, but though their fidelity should occasion a mutiny of the people, they refused to go against their consciences. There can be little room for doubt that it was their unanimity which God used to pacify the murmuring congregation, teaching us that the best way to suppress discontent by the governed is for there to be a solid and firm front presented by the governors. Yet it was no mere policy of expedience which regulated these princes, but rather, the fear of God and their determination not to dishonour Him.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exo 20:7). There is the original and fundamental law concerning oaths, and with it should be linked, “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name” (Deu 6:13). An oath, then, is a solemn appeal to the dread name of JEHOVAH, which, by awakening the spirit of the swearer to a consciousness of the awe-inspiring presence and cognizance of the Most High, gives all its sanctity and power to it. Properly speak-

ing, there are four things in an oath. First, a formal asseveration of the truth—which should always be spoken even though no oath be taken. Second, an acknowledgement of the presence of the thrice Holy One, who is solemnly called upon as a Witness in confirmation of the statement that we make. Third, an invocation, whereby we request God to testify unto our conscience that what we swear to is nothing but the truth (Rom 9:1). Fourth, an imprecation, in which the swearer calls upon God to be the Revenger of all lies, binding himself to divine punishment if he swear falsely. Since an oath be the invoking of God, it is an act of *worship*, an ascribing glory and owning Him as Judge.

It is therefore evident that the violation of an oath is a sin of the first magnitude, for it is a breach of the third commandment, a taking of God's name in vain, which He will not hold guiltless. As Leviticus 19:12 informs us, to commit perjury in the name of God is an act of profanity. From such awful considerations, it follows that an oath is to be feared (Ecc 9:2), and that once made, it is binding (Num 30:3)—a solemn example of which is seen in the case of Jephthah (Jdg 11:35). Consequently, it is not to be entered into lightly, nor should one be taken at all except in matters of real importance, and then only in the gravest spirit and manner. There are times, as Deuteronomy 6:13 shows, when it becomes our duty to appeal unto God by solemn oaths, for deciding matters which cannot be adequately settled without one (Heb 6:16). It is to be observed that, when occasion required and men were warranted in the taking of an oath, such obtained centuries *before* the giving of the Law at Sinai. Thus Abraham swore to Abimelech (Gen 21:23-24), and required an oath to be taken by his servant when seeking a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:8-9). Jacob swore to Laban, and Joseph to his father. Since these instances had no respect unto the legal institutes of Moses, they lead us to conclude that there would be nothing in the Gospel to forbid such a practice in this Christian era—again and again, Paul confirmed his testimony by calling on God as Witness (2Co 1:23; Gal 1:20).

“This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them” (Jos 9:20). One of the distinguishing marks given of those who shall abide in the LORD's tabernacle (enjoy intimate communion with Him) and dwell in His holy hill (spend eternity in heaven) is, “He that sweareth to his own hurt, and *changeth not*” (Psa 15:1, 4): that is, who will not go back on his oath no matter what temporal loss might be involved. On the other hand, “perjured persons” are classed with murderers of fathers and mothers, whoremongers, slave-dealers, etc. (1Ti 1:9-10). Very afar were these princes from now treating their engagement with the Gibeonites as “a mere scrap of paper”—the Kaiser Wilhelm, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), and Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) brought down divine wrath upon themselves and their people by just such perfidy. It is exceedingly solemn to observe that this was one of the crimes which characterized Israel during the closing days of their Old Testament history—see Zechariah 5:4; Malachi 3:5; 2 Chronicles 36:11-13—“until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy” (2Ch 36:16). Only so long as Britain honours her treaty obligations—no matter what sacrifices be involved—is there any hope of “remedy” for its people.

“And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them” (Jos 9:21). These princes were twelve in number, one at the head of each of Israel's tribes (Num 1:15, 16, 44). That God was pleased with their sparing the lives of the Gibeonites is clearly evidenced from the sequel, for the very next chapter records how He gave them the most glorious victory in all their wars. Furthermore, we find that, centuries later, He severely avenged the wrong which Saul did unto the descendants of this tribe, manifesting His sore displeasure against that king's injuring of them in violation of this very league (2Sa 21:1)—mark how David, the “man after [God's] own heart”

(Act 13:22), honoured *his* oath to Jonathan in this connection, exempting Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, from the just avengement (2Sa 21:7). Though the lives of these Gibeonites were spared, their liberty was taken from them, and they were made bondmen—not only tributaries, but under the yoke of servitude. To be “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (Jos 9:21, 23, 27) would not only be wearisome employment, but regarded as a very low and menial one (compare Deu 29:11).

From what has been before us in the above incident, as well as from its sequel, we may perceive how that we are never the ultimate losers by fearing the LORD and honouring His name. Folly was committed by Joshua and the princes in so hastily concluding a league with the Gibeonites, and it was too late to rectify it: nevertheless, God overruled the same to His own glory and the benefit of His people, providing both Himself and them with useful servants. God can, and in His own wondrous way often does, turn our mistake into advantages. That way will not be as good and glorious as His first best for us, yet it will not be without blessing. The same incident also teaches us the needlessness of taking things into our own hands and seeking to anticipate the divine appointment. The congregation suffered no injury by restraining their desire to seize and plunder the cities of the Gibeonites mentioned in Joshua 9:17, for if the reader will consult Joshua 18:25-28, he will find that in the end, when the land came to be divided, the first three cities there mentioned were obtained by them, and the fourth in Joshua 15:9. It is never to our detriment to wait the LORD's time!

“And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?” (Jos 9:22). Let us duly observe and admire the blessed restraining which Israel's leader here placed upon himself. Though these Gibeonites were now entirely at his disposal, he used not his power tyrannically. Nor did he give way to an outburst of temper because of their chicanery, and harshly denounce them as base liars. Instead, he mildly reproved them for their fraud and gave them opportunity to explain their conduct. As M. Henry rightly pointed out, “A just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is never made the better by it.” The LORD forbids us rejoice (malignantly) when our enemy falls (Pro 24:17), and severely chastised the Edomites because they had “spoken proudly in the day of [Judah's] distress” (Oba :12). This was the sin of Shimei, scorning his humiliated sovereign (2Sa 16:5-9), for which he paid with his life (1Ki 2:9-10). How very differently was the Lord Jesus dealt with when *He* was arraigned before His judges! In Joshua's mild treatment of the Gibeonites, we may behold blessedly shadowed forth “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2Co 10:1).

“Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God” (Jos 9:23). Those words do not signify that Joshua now pronounced a curse upon them, but rather that it would henceforth be made to appear that they belonged to an accursed posterity. In a previous article, we pointed out that the reason why these Gibeonites are designated “Hivites” in Joshua 9:7-9 was to intimate that they were the descendants of Canaan (Gen 9:25; 10:5-6, 15, 17); and here, we have set before us an illustration of the sentence pronounced upon him because of his father's sin. By the spirit of prophecy, Noah had declared, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren” (Gen 9:25). The curse, then, consisted of *servitude*; and here, we behold one part of its fulfilment in these Gibeonites being made the manual servants of Israel. How mysteriously, yet wondrously, does God order His providences unto the fulfilment of His Word, guiding the princes to select or determine this particular form of punishment upon these men! In Joshua's *confirmation* of the sentence of the twelve princes, we have a striking adumbration of Christ making good

His promise to the twelve apostles: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound [ratified] in heaven” (Mat 18:18).

“And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing” (Jos 9:24). Let us first notice that in this part of their reply, they bore witness to God’s having made good one of His promises to Israel and fulfilled a prophecy made through Moses, to the effect that such reports would reach their ears of the irresistible power of Israel’s God, and the fame of His wondrous works on their behalf, that the inhabitants of Canaan would be filled with dismay and their hearts sink within them. “I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come” (Exo 23:27). “This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations” (Deu 2:25), JEHOVAH had declared, thereby fulfilling the prediction of Exodus 15:14: “The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.” Such terror would fill them that their spirits would sink completely and they would be panic-stricken at the prospect before them. Such was the case here.

“There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you” (Deu 11:25). God would strike such terror into the Canaanites, and make them so conscious of their impotency, that He would render them subservient to the success of His people. Rahab had, previously, avowed the accomplishment of this, acknowledging that tidings of JEHOVAH’s miracle-working power had reached them, that “your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you” (Jos 2:9). In like manner, will God yet make good every prophecy He has made and every promise that He has given. It is therefore to be duly noted that these Gibeonites freely testified that the nation of Israel was now acting according to the commandment of the LORD their God, and not from a spirit of personal bloodthirstiness and greed. They made no attempt to justify the lies which they had told, but frankly owned that they were in dread of losing their lives, and that the principle of self-preservation had moved them to resort to such a device.

“And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do” (Jos 9:25). That was tantamount to saying, We are fully in thy power and entirely at thy disposal, and readily submit ourselves to thy discretion. Their foregoing statement evinces that they had not only “heard,” but also *believed* that God’s promises to His people and threatenings to His enemies would certainly be fulfilled. They realized God’s Word was inviolable and His power invincible, and therefore, nothing remained but for them to cast themselves upon His clemency. In their “as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do” unto Joshua, one can see they hoped for the best: treat with us according to the laws of justice and kindness, and especially act consistently with the league made and the oath taken. It is in precisely such a spirit and attitude that sinners are to come before God in Christ—convicted of their sins, convinced of the verity of God’s threatenings, casting themselves upon His good pleasure, hoping in His mercy, submitting unreservedly to His will, ready to take His yoke upon them.

“And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD” (Jos 9:26-27). How blessedly the anti-typical Joshua was there foreshadowed! Though the guilt of these men was established, and though they belonged to an accursed race, yet He spared their lives, and that on the ground of a covenant made

by oath! Thus, he did what was both “good and right” (verse 25)—yea, he went beyond what they “asked or thought,” showing them favour and conferring honour upon them, by appointing them to minister unto the “altar of the LORD”; and thus, they would be taught the worship of the true God and delivered from idolatry. It is striking to note that the only ones who *acknowledged* what they “heard” about the LORD (Jos 2:10; 9:24) were *delivered* from His judgments. The descendants of these Gibeonites—termed “Nethinim,” or “devoted persons”—had a place of honour in the service of the temple centuries later (1Ch 9:2; Ezr 8:20; Neh 7:60).

DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

3. Its Corollaries, Part 2

5. *Their vitality.* Since the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, it clearly and necessarily follows—as surely so as each of the other four consequences already considered—that it is a *living* Word. It is really deplorable that such a corollary needs to be pointed out in this magazine, and still more lamentable, that it requires to be laboured at some length. Yet such is the case, for Papists are not the only ones who disparage the Scriptures by terming them “a dead letter.” Others, who are at the opposite pole from Romanists on most things, make common cause with them here. A former editor of a magazine which prides itself upon its orthodoxy and fidelity made statements which must have caused grief to those who accord unto God’s Word that honour and reverence to which it is so justly entitled. It was another example of the pendulum swinging too far over to the opposite side. In his strictures against a merely notional and speculative knowledge of the truth, and his emphasis upon the necessity and importance of a vital and experiential acquaintance therewith, he magnified the Holy Spirit and His operations, but slighted the Instrument which He uses therein. We would not “rake up” this from the past were it not that some of his present admirers are injuriously affected by his teaching thereon.

The editor wrote: “It is, then, of the power of the written word that we have now to speak. But when we speak of the power of the Word of God, we do not mean thereby to convey the idea that it possesses any power of its own, any actual, original, innate force, which acts of itself on the heart and conscience. The Word of God is *but* the instrument of a *higher* and distinct power, even the power of that Holy and eternal Spirit, the revealer and testifier of Jesus, by whose express and immediate inspiration it was written. The power of an instrument is the power of him who uses it. This is true literally. The strength of the sword is in the hand of him who wields it. A child may take up a warrior’s sword, but can he use it as a warrior? If, then, the Word of God is ‘quick (or ‘living’ as the Word means) and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword’ (Heb 4:12), it is because he wields it...Thus we ascribe *no power* to the Word itself, but to the power of him who spake it...Before this entrance of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God was not ‘quick’—that

is, ‘living’ (Joh 6:63)—but *dead*” (all italics ours). We protest strongly against such belittling of the Word itself, though we fear some of our readers will see little wrong in it.

Comparisons are notoriously “odious” and to aver that the Holy Spirit’s power is “higher” than the Word which God has “magnified...above all [His] name” (Psa 138:2) is most odious. To deny that God’s Word has any power in itself is to repudiate the very passage which he quotes, for Hebrews 4:12 is not speaking of God’s Word in the hand of the Spirit, but describes its unique and divine characteristics. To say that God’s Word, abstractedly considered, is “but dead” is to degrade it to the level of human writings, which are indeed like their authors—dying creatures. It might just as well be affirmed that there is no light, no food, no comfort, no inherent blessedness in the Scriptures, as to say they possess no life. There *is* in them life and light, meat and drink, though we *be strangers unto* the same until we are regenerated. And in connection with regeneration, the Spirit and the Word must not be severed, nor more ascribed to one than the other; for if we are said to be “born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:6), equally so are we declared to be “born again...by the word of God, which *liveth* and abideth for ever” (1Pe 1:23). The same is true of all His subsequent operations: we are sanctified by the Spirit (1Co 6:11), yet by God’s “truth” (Joh 17:17). Never exalt the Spirit above the Word: Isaiah 34:16; 59:21.

It is an exceedingly solemn thing to disparage the Bible. Who has informed these men that the Scriptures are a “dead letter”? Most certainly God has not done so. “But,” they will reply, “did not His apostle say, ‘For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (2Co 3:6)?” He did, but that is nothing whatever to the point. Paul was not there setting over against each other (to employ the language of another of this same school) “dead, but living truth: not the shell, but the kernel; not the shadow, but the substance; not the form, but the power.” If a little careful attention be devoted to what immediately precedes and follows 2 Corinthians 3:6, it will be found that a contrast is there drawn between the two covenants or economies, for the purpose of showing the superiority of Christianity over Judaism: the terms of the one being written upon tables of stone, the other upon the hearts of its beneficiaries. As verse 7 goes on to say, the Law was “the ministration of death,” so that even it—in “the letter” of it—was not a lifeless and ineffectual thing, for that which “killeth” is neither dead nor impotent! How men catch at shadows to support their delusions!

But must not the written Word be *applied* to us? Most assuredly: by supernatural divine power. Yet not because of any defect in the Word, but because of the state of our hearts. It is not the fault of a glorious sunset that the blind are unable to appreciate it. We must distinguish sharply between what the Word is in *itself*, and what it is *unto us*. If a farmer took a sack of wholesome wheat and scattered it on the streets of London, would you be justified in saying it was “dead cereal” because it produced no harvest? The Spirit indeed graciously prepares the heart for the entrance of God’s Word (Act 16:14), yet that is no reflection upon the Word, and is far from implying that it is lifeless in itself. There is a vitality in the Scriptures which is found in no other writings: “Thy word hath quickened me” (Psa 119:50). A special blessing is pronounced by God upon those who tremble at His Word (Isa 66:2), but why should anyone fear or stand in awe of a lifeless book? In Proverbs 6:21-23, it is declared of God’s Law or Word, “it shall talk with thee,” upon which Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) pertinently remarked, “A dead book cannot talk, nor a drumbrook speak. It is clearly a *living* book then.”

“The law of the LORD is perfect” (Psa 19:7), which could never be said if it were merely a “dead letter.” Nevertheless, while we be unregenerate, we are incapable of appreciating its perfection. As a blind man with the sun shining in his face is in darkness, so it is spiritually (2Co 4:4). A faculty must be given suited to its object before its excellence can be realized. Even the incarnate

Word profits us not until we savingly believe in Him, and before that is possible, we must be sanctified or separated from the dead by the Spirit (2Th 2:13). The Spirit opens and renews the heart, the Word informs and instructs. It is by the Word the Spirit convicts, converts, and comforts (Psa 19:7-8). John Bunyan (1628-1688) was better taught and gave more honour to God's Word than have some who have followed him. "I have sometimes seen more in a line in the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under; and yet at another time, the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick: or rather, my heart hath been as dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least dram of refreshment, though I have looked it all over"—*Grace Abounding* (1666). He placed the defect and fault where it belonged—in himself, and not in the Word.

Let us now set before the reader more specifically what the Bible itself says on this matter. It declares that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2Ti 3:16). Now to inspire means to "inbreathe", and breath is both the means and the evidence of life, for breathing is that which distinguishes a living entity from a corpse—as soon as a person ceases to breathe, he is dead. That the breath is inseparably connected with the life is shown by the first mention of it in Scripture. "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). In like manner, God has breathed into the sacred Scriptures the breath of divine and eternal life, constituting them a living Book. But more: observe well that 2 Timothy 3:16 does *not* say (as men would certainly have expressed it), "All scripture *was* given by inspiration," but "*is* given by inspiration of God." Not only *were* the Scriptures God-breathed, but they *are* so today! The Bible is instinct with the very life of God. The vitality of yours is ever in it, and its leaf withers not. Observe that when the Saviour repulsed the devil's temptation to turn stones into bread, He did not say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that *proceeded* out of the mouth of God," but "that *proceedeth* [now, at this time] out of the mouth of God" (Mat 4:4).

Since, then, the written Word is vitalized by the very life of God, it is a living Book. Therein it differs radically and essentially from all the books of men. The Scriptures are not only "the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2), but "the lively [or 'living'] oracles" (Act 7:38); and those who deny them to be so will yet have to answer to their Author. The Holy Spirit distinctly designates them, "the word of life" (Phi 2:16); and for us, that settles the matter. Yet it is only fair that we should here point out that some have erred in another direction, permitting their love and zeal for God's Word to make statements which it does not warrant, and which as truly (by implication) dishonour the Spirit as others slight the Word. We refer to those who appear to think that the Scriptures possess, abstractedly, some magical power of their own. They say, "Give them the Word, it will do its own work. Since it is a living Word, it will itself impart life." Whether or not it *can* is quite beside the point. What has to be determined is, Has God appointed that it *should*? And to obtain the answer to that question, we must patiently and impartially search the Word and ascertain what it teaches thereon.

Logical inferences are not sufficient. The farmer may sow wheat in his field—good wheat, possessing a living germ. Will *it* "do its own work" and multiply itself? No, not of itself. If there be no rain, there will be no grain. In like manner, the living Seed of Holy Writ (Luk 8:11) may be faithfully sown by the minister of the Gospel, and lie for years in the memory and heart of his hearer, but until the Spirit descends as the dew from heaven upon that soul, the Seed will not spring up into eternal life. There is a balance to be preserved here as well as everywhere. "Being born again...by the word of God" (1Pe 1:23) is indeed part of the truth, and it must not be denied. Howbeit, that fact must not be pressed to the exclusion of the complemental half—"born of the Spirit" (Joh 3:6, 8). Christ declared, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are

life,” yet He prefaced that very statement with, “It is the spirit that quickeneth” (Joh 6:63). Let us be equally upon our guard on this side that we do not exalt the Word to the detriment of the Spirit.

6. *Their verdancy.* Since the Scriptures are God-breathed, “the word of life,” it is evident that the bloom of youth is ever upon them, that their freshness and potency are unfading. The fact is most apparent to those who have had the longest and closest acquaintance with them. The best of men’s writings soon pall upon us, and to continue reading any one of them over and over, year after year, would soon become a profitless and wearisome task. But not so with the Bible. Near the close of a lengthy life, Samuel E. Pierce (1746-1829) wrote: “I have completed reading the whole Bible through since January 1st last. I began it on the first day of the present year and finished it on October 26th. I have read it in that space four times, and not without real profit to myself. I always find in it something new; it being like its Author, infinite and inexhaustible.” For upwards of forty years, the present writer has made the Bible his constant study, and he is unable to recall a single day when he had not occasion to say, “I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil” (Psa 119:162), and so far from having lost its charm, he still finds its teaching drops as the rain, its speech distils as the dew (Deu 32:2), and its springs to be overflowing founts of ever-fresh comfort.

The Bible is immortal in its life, perennial in its freshness, infinite in its fullness. Each soul who maintains communion with God finds constant cause to acknowledge with the Psalmist, “He maketh me to lie down in *green* pastures” (Psa 23:2)—pleasant, inviting, satisfying. They never wither and parch, but remain verdant and nourishing. No matter how frequently we feed therein, they cloy not. As the LORD furnished Israel with a new supply of manna throughout their lengthy sojourn in the wilderness, so does He the souls of His people today. The Bible never becomes stale nor diminishes in its power of response to the needy one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The devout student finds God’s Word to be like the miraculous oil and meal which for so long sustained Elijah in the widow’s house, for its contents cannot be exhausted. If it be approached in a humble yet expectant spirit, each fresh reading discovers precious gems never seen there before, and new delights are experienced, of which we have no previous acquaintance. Its refreshing stream never becomes stagnant or brackish, but is “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal” (Rev 22:1), and is in the believer “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14).

The Bible was completed more than eighteen hundred years ago, when the great majority of mankind were barbarians, yet it is very much more than an interesting relic of the past, namely, something which is exactly suited to our needs today. The literary productions of antiquity have no practical application to ourselves, the mere course of time having rendered them obsolete and worthless. They are mostly documents relating to a state of society, which has long since passed away and sunk into oblivion, and consequently, are of no real value to us. There is nothing in them to feed our souls, stir our pulse, or warm our hearts. Those of them which have been preserved are merely interesting curios, like the silent Sphinx and the lifeless mummies of the Egyptians. But since the Scriptures are the Word of the living God, it necessarily follows that they are ever timely and pertinent. God does not speak today what He means not tomorrow, nor will He in the future go back upon what He tells us now. Note well that when the apostle quoted Psalm 95:7-8 and pressed its solemn warning upon the wavering Hebrews, he was moved to write, “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost *saith* [not ‘*said*’!], To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (Heb 3:7-8).

The Spirit speaks unto us today as freshly as He did unto Moses and David. “Now the Spirit *speaketh* expressly” (1Ti 4:1) as truly as He did in the days of the apostles. Therefore are we en-

joined, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh [now] from heaven” (Heb 12:25)! Thus, the Bible is never out of date, for truth is timeless. It is exactly suited to every generation of men and to all nations, for it utters the voice of Him who is immutable in wisdom, and unerring in counsel, and because the spiritual and eternal needs of men are the same in every age and clime. The promises which God uttered from the beginning are fresh and comforting, because they fall from the everlasting lips today. The same One who upon the morn of creation said, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3), still gives forth through the pages of His Word the same effectual fiat. As there was an ample surplus of food remaining after Christ had fed the multitudes with the loaves and fishes, so the commissariat of God’s Word continues *undiminished* for the souls of each new generation.

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8)—not only indestructible, but unfading, its pastures ever green and verdant. And such have His people ever found His Word. And such may His dear children now prove for themselves. Are they faced with perplexing and baffling problems? Then let them humbly but trustfully turn to the Scriptures for wisdom, and they will assuredly have cause to say with the Psalmist, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa 119:130). Are they faint and weary from the buffetings of life? Let them turn in faith and expectation to the Word, and their strength shall be renewed. Are they deeply distressed and their hearts sore from bereavement? Let them remember that “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). Do the assemblies of the saints desire to be regulated by the revealed will of God? Then let them “hear what the Spirit *saith* [not ‘said’ in the distant past] unto the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, etc.). We can never outgrow God’s Word—rather does it widen and deepen with experience. It scarcely needs pointing out that these last five paragraphs supply additional evidence that the Bible is a *living Book*.

7. *Their perspicuity*. It should at once be apparent that if the Bible be divinely inspired and couched in our mother tongue, it must be plain and lucid. To argue to the contrary would be an insult to its Author, charging Him with the inability to express Himself in simple human language. Moreover, anything less would defeat its own ends: a declaration of God’s will must be given in plain and unambiguous terms—or of what use and practical value would it be to men? The Bible then is not an Apocrypha, but an Apocalypse—not a riddle, but a revelation. Since it be a communication of truth to be believed and a Law to be obeyed, its requirements are given in language which men can grasp. Therefore, it is to be made readily accessible unto the common people. But this is another of the characteristics of Holy Writ which is denied by Rome. The Papacy avers that the Bible is much too profound and obscure for the masses, and insists it is dangerous to place it in their hands. She therefore withholds it from the laity and claims that “holy mother church” is alone authorized and qualified to interpret it.

By doing so, Popery not only violates the dictates of common sense, but directly repudiates what the Scriptures affirm of themselves. “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple...the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa 19:7-8). “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light” (Pro 6:23), written as with a sunbeam. It declares, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein” (Isa 35:8), yet not those fools who are “wise in their own craftiness [conceits]” (Job 5:13, 1Co 3:19), but such as are sensible of their ignorance and pray daily, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa 119:18). When we insist upon the perspicuity of the Scriptures, we are far from saying that

they are within the compass of man's intellect. There is much in them which transcends the grasp of human reason, as well as prophecies so enigmatical that they are unintelligible till the event. No, we simply assert that every essential article of faith and rule of practice is set forth in such terms that misconception of the same is rendered excuseless.

Those who humbly and prayerfully, daily and perseveringly, take God's Word for their counselor are able to say, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies...I have more understanding than all my teachers" (Psa 119:98-99). Since God has given us His Word to be "a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path" (Psa 119:105), it must needs be illuminating, revealing the snares of Satan, discovering to us our sins, making plain the way in which we should go. Nor need we ask God to give us light *on* His Word—as well think of turning a searchlight on the midday sun as it shines in a cloudless sky! The obscurity is always in us, and never in the Word—it is light *from* the Word we need! And here too there is a balance to be preserved. We are not independent of the Spirit: He is the One who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1Co 2:10), and is given to guide us into the truth (Joh 16:13). But as Thomas Manton (1620-1677) well said, "Light is not against Light." Then let us *seek* His help that He may shine upon our sin-darkened understandings.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

2. Its Origin, Part 2

Though Adam had been made in the image of God, taken into communion with Him, fitted to rejoice in all the manifestations of His wisdom and goodness which surrounded him in Eden, nevertheless, he was capable of falling. Since it is a point which has sorely puzzled many of the Lord's people—how it was possible for a holy person, devoid of any corruption, *to sin*—we will endeavour to explain. First, Adam's liability to fall lay in the fact that he was but a *creature*. As such, he was entirely dependent upon Him "which holdeth our soul in life" (Psa 66:9). As our natural life continues only so long as God sustains it, so it was with Adam's spiritual life: he stood only so long as he was divinely upheld. Moreover, as a creature, he was but finite, and therefore possessed of no invincible power with which to repel opposition. Nor was he endowed with omniscience, so that he had been incapable of being deceived or mistaking an evil for an apparent good. Thus, though man's original condition was one of high moral excellence—with no evil tendency in any part of his nature, yea, with nothing in him which in the least deviated from the moral law—yet, being but a creature, he was capable of falling.

Second, Adam's liability to fall lay in his *mutability*. Changeableness is the very law or radical characteristic of the creature, to distinguish it from the Creator. God alone is without "variableness, [or] shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). Therefore, it is that "God cannot be tempted with evil" (Jam 1:13)—i.e. induced to sin: a statement which clearly implies that the creature as such *has* a

capacity to be so tempted—not only a depraved creature, but even an unfallen one. Immutability and impeccability (non-liability to sin) are qualities which essentially distinguish the Creator from the creature—the angels possess neither, as the fall of at least one-third of their number (Rev 12:4) demonstrated. Further, as the excellent Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) pointed out, God alone acts from His own power, whereas, the creature acts by a power given to him which is distinct from himself. “God’s own goodness and happiness is His ultimate end, therefore, He can never act but holily, for He acts by Himself and for Himself, and so cannot fail in acting, but is holy in all His ways and works, and cannot be otherwise.” But man neither acts immediately by his own power nor is himself the legitimate end of his acting, but rather God. Thus, with all his faculties, man may falter when using them.

Third, Adam’s liability to fall lay in the *freedom of his will*. He was not only a creature and a rational creature, but also a moral one. Freedom of will is a property which belongs to man as a rational and responsible being. As we cannot separate understanding from the mind, neither can we liberty from the will, especially in connection with things within its own sphere—and more especially still when considering that all the faculties of man’s soul were in a state of perfection before the Fall. With Adam and Eve, the freedom of their will consisted in a power of choosing or embracing what appeared—agreeable to the dictates of their understandings—to be good, or in refusing and avoiding what was evil; and that without any constraint or force laid upon them to act contrary to the dictates thereof. Such freedom also supposed a power to act pursuant to what the will chooses; otherwise, it could not obtain the good desired, or avoid the evil detested; and in such case, its “liberty” would be little more than a name. Freedom of action is opposed to that which is involuntary or compelled, and the will is both self-inclining and self-determining in the acting—both internally and externally; for then only can it strictly speaking be said to be free.

Our first parents had that freedom of will, or power to retain their integrity. This is evident from the clearly revealed fact that they were under an indispensable obligation to yield perfect obedience unto God, and liable to deserved punishment for the least defect thereof: therefore, they must have been given a power to stand, a liberty of will to choose that which was conducive to their happiness. The same thing is also evident from the difference there is between man’s primitive and present state. As fallen, man is now by a necessity of nature inclined to sin, and accordingly, he is denominated, “the servant of sin” (Joh 8:34)—a slave to it, entirely under its dominion—but it was far otherwise with Adam, whose nature was holy and furnished with everything necessary to his yielding that obedience demanded of him. Nevertheless, his will being free, it was capable of complying with an external temptation to evil, though so long as he made a right use of his faculties, he would defend himself and reject the temptation with abhorrence. It pleased God to leave our first parents without any immediate help *ab extra*, to the freedom and mutability of their own will. But that neither made Him the author of their sin, nor brought them under any natural necessity of falling.

Before considering the probation under which Adam was placed and the test to which his loyalty and subjection to God was submitted, it should be pointed out that Scripture requires us to regard him as far more than a private person—the consequences of whose action would be confined to himself. As we purpose showing, that is made very plain from the event itself. Adam was more than the father of the human race. By divine constitution, he was made the *covenant head* of all his natural seed, so that what he did was divinely regarded and reckoned as being done by them—just as Christ came into the world as the covenant Head of all His spiritual seed, acting and transacting in their name and on their behalf. God willing, this will be considered more fully under the next division of our subject, when we shall treat of the imputation of his offence to all

his posterity. Suffice it now to point out that in Romans 5:14, Adam is expressly called “the figure of him that was to come.” In what was he a type of the Redeemer? The principal respect in which he was distinguished from all other creatures lay in his being the federal head and legal representative of all his offspring. This is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, where the first Adam and the last Adam are designated “the first man” and “the second man,” for they were the only two who sustained that covenant and federal relation unto others before God.

“And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:8-9). That is the first mention of those two notable trees, and it is to be duly observed that, like all the others surrounding them, they were both pleasing to the eye and suitable for eating. Thus, God not only provided for Adam’s profit, but his pleasure also, that he might serve Him with delight. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:16-17). This, as the following verses indicate, took place *before* Eve was created, and thus, the covenant of works was made with Adam alone as the head of our race. Far more was implied in those words than is actually expressed, as we hope to show when considering them more closely under our next division. Meanwhile, a few general remarks thereon may be of interest.

“The tendency of such a divine precept is to be considered. Man was thereby taught: (1) That God is LORD of all things—that it is unlawful for man even to desire an apple but with His leave. In all things, therefore, from the greatest to the least, the mouth of the LORD is to be consulted as to what He would or would not have done by us. (2) That man’s true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing to be desired but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for Him. So that it is *He* only on whose account all other things appear good and desirable to man. (3) Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful and desirable things, if God so command: and to think that there is much more good in obedience to the divine precept than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world. (4) That man was not yet arrived to the utmost pitch of happiness, but to expect a still greater good after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, of any other, greatly to be desired; and this argued some degree of imperfection in that state in which man was forbidden the enjoyment of some good”—Herman Witsius (1636-1708).

In forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, his Maker asserted His dominion and enforced His authority. That it was proper for Him to do so cannot be lawfully questioned; and as the sole Proprietor of the Garden, it was fitting that He should emphasize His rights by this restriction. Moreover, man having been created a rational creature and endowed with freedom of will, he was a fit subject for command, and accordingly was placed under Law. Thereby, Adam’s loyalty and subjection to his Creator and LORD was put to the test. Trial of his obedience was made to discover whether the will of God was sacred to him. It was both meet and just that man should remain in the state of holiness in which God had made him, if he would continue to enjoy His favour. Thus, he was placed on probation, made the subject of divine government. Adam was not an independent creature, for he did not create himself: being made by God, he owed a debt to Him, he was a moral being, and therefore responsible to serve and please God. The commandment given to him was no arbitrary infliction, but a necessary injunction for making it evident and enforcing the relationship in which man stood to God.

The particular injunction laid upon our first parents (Gen 2:17) has been a favourite subject of ridicule by the opponents of divine revelation. Those who are wise in their own conceits have deemed it unworthy of the Almighty to interpose His authority in a matter so trifling, and have insisted it is incredible to believe that He exposed Adam and Eve to the hazard of ruining themselves and all their progeny by eating the food of a particular tree. But a little reflection ought to show us that there was nothing in that prohibition unbecoming of God's wisdom and goodness. Since He had been pleased to give Adam dominion over all creatures here below, it was surely fitting that He should require some peculiar instance of homage and fealty to Him as a token of his dependence and an acknowledgement of his subjection to his Maker—to whom he owed the most absolute submission and obedience. And what mark of subjection could be more proper than being interdicted to partake of one of the fruits of Paradise? Full liberty was granted him to eat of all the rest; and that single abstention was well suited to teach our first parents the salutary lesson of self-denial and of implicit resignation to the good pleasure of the Most High.

In addition to what was noted by Herman Witsius, it may be pointed out that the character of this prohibition taught Adam and Eve to keep their sensitive appetites in subjection to the reasoning faculty. It showed them they must subordinate their bodily inclinations unto finding their highest delight in God alone. It intimated that their desire after knowledge must be kept within just bounds, that they must be content with what God deemed to be really proper and useful to them, and not presume to pry with an unwarrantable curiosity into things which did not belong to them, and which God had not thought well to reveal unto them. It was not sinful *per se* (in itself abstractedly considered) for Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but only because the LORD God had expressly forbidden them to do so. Accordingly, solemn warning of the dire consequences that would certainly follow their disobedience was given—for even in Eden, man was placed under the holy awe of divine threatening, which was a hedge placed around him for his protection. Man's supreme felicity lies in God Himself and the enjoyment of His favour, and in Eden, he was forbidden to seek satisfaction in any other object. In that single restriction upon his liberty was his integrity put to the proof.

So far from that arrangement being unworthy of the divine majesty, such an enforcing of His will and authority upon the creature of His hand was most becoming. It was not only necessary in the nature of the case if the responsibility of a free agent was to be enforced, and his subjection to the divine government insisted upon, but the very triviality of the object withheld from our first parents only served to give greater reality unto the trial to which they were subjected. As Professor John Dick (1764-1833) pointed out, "It is manifest that the prohibition did not proceed from malevolence or an intention to impair the happiness of man: because, with this single reservation, he was at liberty to appropriate the rich variety of fruits with which Paradise was stored. It is certain that, situated as he was, no command could be easier, as it properly implied no sacrifice, no painful privation, but simple abstinence from one out of many things; for who would deem it a hardship, while he was sitting at a table covered with all kinds of delicate and substantial foods, to be told that there was one and only one that he was forbidden to taste? It is further evident that no reason could be assigned *why* Adam should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the divine prohibition.

"The fruit was as good for food as that of any tree, and as pleasant to the eye; and there was nothing sacred in it which would have been profaned by human touch. Hence, you will perceive that if God had an intention to make trial of the newly formed subject, He could not have chosen a more proper method, as it indicated nothing like a harsh or tyrannical exercise of authority, and was admirably fitted to ascertain whether His simple command would be to him instead of all

other reasons for obedience. It is not a proper trial of reverence for a superior when the action which he prescribes is recommended by other considerations. It is when it stands upon the sole foundation of his authority; when, having no intrinsic goodness, it becomes good only by his prohibition; when the sole inducement to perform it is His command. It is in these circumstances it is known whether we duly feel and recognize our moral dependence upon Him. The morality of an action does not depend upon its abstract nature, but upon its relation to the Law of God. Men seem often to judge of actions as they judge of material substances—by their bulk. What is great in itself, or in its consequences, they will admit to be a sin; but what appears little, they pronounce to be a slight fault, or no fault at all.

“Had Adam, it has been remarked, been possessed of preternatural power, and wantonly and wickedly exerted it in blasting the beauty of Paradise and turning it into a scene of desolation, men would have granted that he was guilty of a great and daring offence, for which a curse was justly pronounced upon him. But they can see no harm in so trifling a matter as the eating of a little fruit. Nothing, however, is more fallacious than such reasoning: the essence of sin is the transgression of a law; and whether that law forbids you to commit murder or to move your finger, it is equally transgressed when you violate the precept. Whatever the act of disobedience is, it is rebellion against the Lawgiver: it is a renunciation of His authority, and it dissolves that moral dependence upon Him, which is founded on the nature of things, and is necessary to maintain the order and happiness of the universe. Therefore, the injunction to abstain from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a proper trial of our first parent; and the violation of it deserved the dreadful punishment which was denounced and executed. He was put to the test whether the will of God was sacred in his eyes, and he was punished because he gave preference to his own will.” Our apology for making a longer quotation than we are accustomed to do from the writings of others, but it is that this one just given is of particular weight and importance and greatly needed in this day. We hope the reader will give it a second and more careful perusal.

It only remains for us to add now that the foundation of Adam’s obligation to render such obedience unto God lay, first, in his relations to Him. As his Maker, his Governor, his Benefactor, it behoved him to render full subjection to His revealed will. Second, in the privileges and favours bestowed upon him: these required that he should express his gratitude and thanksgiving by doing those things which were pleasing in His sight. Third, in his endowments, which qualified him so to do: created in God’s image, with a nature that inclined his will unto obedience—ability and obligation then being co-extensive. Fourth, in the relation he sustained to the race: as the head and father of all his progeny, their welfare or ruin was bound up in how he conducted himself, thus greatly augmenting his responsibility to abstain from wrong-doing. Fifth, in that the command forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge was accompanied by a solemn threat of dire punishment to be inflicted in case of disobedience. Not only should that have acted as an effectual deterrent, but the penalty necessarily implied a promise: since death would be the sure result of disobedience, life would be the reward of obedience—not only a continuation of the blessedness and happiness which he then enjoyed in fellowship with his Maker, but such an augmentation of the same as He might be pleased further to make in the exercise of His bounty. That also ought to have served as a powerful incentive unto continued fidelity. Thus, there was every reason why Adam should have preserved his integrity. ❧

APRIL

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

It is a great mistake to suppose that it is only in the Scriptures of the New Testament that we shall find the features of a Christian described: the same is equally true of the Old Testament. It would indeed be passing strange were it otherwise, for God's work of grace within His people is essentially one in all generations. As human nature and human needs have known no change since our first parents were driven out of Eden, neither has God varied His method or means in ministering unto His children. The supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit in Abel, Enoch, and Noah did not differ from those which He put forth in Peter, Paul, and Timothy, and the spiritual fruits which He produced through them were one and the same in each instance. Thus, the marks or characteristics of the godly have been uniform in every age and clime. Antediluvian or postdiluvian,⁸ Jew or Gentile, first century or twentieth A.D., the soul experiences of God's elect have been similar. There has been a like realization of their sinnership and lost condition, a like longing for God's salvation and panting after holiness, a like realization of their own helplessness to improve themselves or do anything to win God's acceptance, a like looking off unto Christ for redemption, and a like peace and joy when assured of their pardon. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Pro 27:19)—true both naturally and spiritually.

A striking and blessed illustration of what has been pointed out above is found in Psalm 119, which was aptly called by a writer of two hundred years ago, "The anatomy of a regenerate soul," for therein we have delineated the most secret dispositions of a godly heart. Its condition and pulsations are there fully opened to our view. The whole psalm supplies us with a complete portrait of a saint: his aspirations, his meditations, the exercises of his inner man, and his conduct. Though the circumstances through which David passed may be, in their accidental and incidental details, different from God's providential dealings with the reader, yet if he be regenerate, his inward history corresponds closely with that of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Joh 3:6), and as Charles Bridges (1794-1869) said in the introduction to his excellent exposition of Psalm 119, "The modern believer, therefore, when employed in tracing the record of Patriarchal or Mosaical experience, will mark in the infirmities of the ancient people of God a picture of his own heart; and in comparing their gracious exercises with his own, he will be ready to acknowledge, 'All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will' (1Co 12:11).

⁸ **Antediluvian or postdiluvian** – before or after the Noahic flood.

“In this view, it is the object of this work to exhibit an Old Testament believer in a New Testament garb as one ‘walking in the same spirit and in the same steps’ with ourselves. ‘Faith which worketh by love’ (Gal 5:6)—the fundamental distinction of the Gospel—pervading the whole man....In all the variety of Christian feelings and holy conduct, we observe its operations leading the soul into communion with God, and moulding every part into a progressive conformity to His image. When we view the ‘man after [God’s] own heart’ taking God for his portion (Psa 119:57), assembling with His people (verses 63, 79), feeding upon His Word (verses 47, 97, 111); when we mark his zeal for his Master’s glory (verse 139), his devotedness (verse 38), and self-denial (verse 62) in his Master’s work; when we see him ever ready to confess His name (verses 46, 115, 172), to bear His reproach (verses 23, 69, 87), and caring only to answer it by a steady adherence to Him (verses 51, 78, 157)—do we not in those lineaments of character recognize the picture of one who in after times could turn to the churches of Christ and say, ‘Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me’ (1Co 4:16)? Happy they who are conformed to this holy man.”

We may well use Psalm 119 (among other purposes) as a *standard* by which to determine the state of our souls. Let each reader of this article bring his inner man to this touchstone, comparing its workings and aspirations with the display there given of David’s affections. If your desires correspond with His, if you find your heart has His holy longings, then you may well conclude that God has “renew[ed] a right spirit within [you]” (Psa 51:10). On the other hand, if you are unacquainted with such spiritual breathings as are here discovered and are a stranger unto such holy exercises, if its language be in your ears as an unknown tongue, then be assured that you are *not* a new creature in Christ. Each lineament of this heaven-born soul should be separately and thoughtfully examined. Here we will confine ourselves unto a single one: “I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight” (Psa 119:174). “Salvation” is here to be taken in its widest sense, and not limited to the pardon of sins or cancellation of guilt. In its fullness, “salvation” includes all the mercies of the everlasting covenant. It is viewed here not from the judicial but the experiential side, and therefore, as an object of longing—unto a soul which is sensible of its deep wants and sees in God’s salvation a complete supply for them.

“I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD” was said by David not as one who had not yet tasted that He is gracious, but who yearned for a fuller acquaintance with Him. David now sat upon the throne of Israel, yet that contented him not. Have *you* found every earthly possession and pleasure to be vanity? Have your eyes been opened to see your wretchedness, your heart been made to feel its deep needs? Is there a hungering and thirsting in your soul after righteousness? Then do you not exclaim, “I have *longed for* thy salvation, O LORD”? That longing has several degrees. At first, it may be like a smoking flax, where one can hardly discern a spark of fire, because it is choked by the prevalence of unbelief. But if it be inspired by the Holy Spirit, it will become more lively and vivid, and break forth into ardent prayers. Yea, it will eventually obtain such strength as to make its possessor say, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa 42:1), and He has promised “the desire of the righteous shall be granted” (Pro 10:24).

Such longing marks the character of *all* quickened souls. It is an evidence of a work of grace, for it springs from love to its Author. But the thoughtful and discriminating reader may ask, “Do not some of the unregenerate have a longing for God’s salvation that they may be delivered from the wrath to come?” At times they think so, and perhaps say so, but their actions prove the contrary. Even so, how am I to distinguish *my* “longing” from theirs? By its very nature. Is your longing actuated only by a sense of dread of the everlasting burnings, or mainly by a desire to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin? Is your desire constant and persistent, something more

than a passing fancy? Is it serious and earnest, and not just a superficial and fickle notion? Is it an influential one which leads to action, to diligent seeking, and not merely an idle whim? Is it a predominant one, so that all other interests are subordinated to its realization, and not one which is overcome by the opposition of the flesh and allurements of the world? If so, there is good reason to believe God is its Author.

But let the inquiry be pressed still more closely. David not only declared, “I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD,” but he added, “and thy law is my delight.” If your longing be for holiness, then it is necessarily accompanied by an approbation of God’s scepter, for subjection thereto is the way unto its realization. A spiritual desire for God’s salvation issues in a delight of His precepts, and such delight is the very pulse of the spiritual life. Complacency of God’s commandments is not found in the unregenerate, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” and is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). But the language of one who is born of God is “I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved” (Psa 119:47). The two things cannot be separated: “LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments” (Psa 119:166)—not perfectly so, but with a sincere and real endeavour to conform unto them. The hearts of all God’s children are in the same mould: they love what He loves, and hate what He hates. Though when they “would do good, evil is present” with them; nevertheless, each one can truthfully aver, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:21-22).

“I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD”—*not* “I have not fully attained unto it.” Such a longing arises from a sense of insufficiency in ourselves. At the close of his eventful life, Jacob declared, “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). A like submissive expectation becomes us. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lam 3:26). “Ourselves also, which have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves do groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption” (Rom 8:23). So long as we are in this scene, our longings are unsatisfied; necessarily so, for we yearn for and press unto perfection. If you can truthfully say, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God” (Psa 42:2), then you need not have the slightest hesitation in declaring, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15).

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

4. Fellowship (1Jo 1:3)

In the opening verses, we have intimated the basic and vast importance of the doctrine of the divine Incarnation. The Word’s becoming flesh and His birth at Bethlehem was the most wonderful event in the world’s history. Not only so, but the Son’s being made like unto His brethren most deeply concerned the welfare of God’s people, and is a matter of profound veneration and delight to them. The principal reason why John here began his letter by stressing so much the

humanity of Christ, rather than His deity, lay in the particular design before him. That design was quite different from the one which guided him when penning his former and larger communication. The grand aim of his Gospel was to set forth the peerless glories of God's *Son*, but the object of his epistle is to delineate the character and distinguishing marks of God's regenerate *sons*. Therefore, it is that he opens by showing us the Beloved of the Father descending to the place where those sons were by nature and in their fallen estate, in order that He might conduct them to His place on high. Thus, the beautiful progressive order of his two productions at once appears: first, the personal incarnation of the divine Redeemer, and then His inhabitation of the redeemed, with the blessed consequences and fruits of the same.

The connection between the first two verses of the epistle and the one now to be before us is equally evident. John commences by setting before his readers the adorable person of Christ, who is the only medium of communication with the Three in God; and then he states, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1Jo 1:3). The "we" is that of the apostolate, and John's was the last of their voices now heard speaking on earth. Beautifully did Samuel E. Pierce (1746-1829) show how well equipped *this one* was to write on such a subject. "This apostle was in the New Testament Church what the prophet Daniel was in the Old. He was addressed by the angel as 'O man greatly beloved' (Dan 10:19), and John was known by the title of 'that disciple whom Jesus loved' (Joh 21:7). He was a high favourite with our Lord Jesus Christ. He was admitted to lie in His bosom; and—like as Christ lay in the bosom of His Father before all time, and drew out all the love of the Father's heart into His own, and shines in the full splendour of it, and reflects the glorious shine of it on His Church—so this apostle, being admitted to such familiar intercourse with our Lord, drew out the very heart of Christ into his own. And hereby, he was most eminently qualified to write concerning one of the greatest of all subjects—communion with the divine Persons."

Throughout 1 John 1:1-3, the "we" and the "our" have reference to the apostolate, and John speaks in their name as well as his own. There were indeed many other of the saints who had both seen and heard the Lord in His incarnate state, yet they were not called to be public witnesses of the same as were the twelve. Nor did all of *them* alike see and hear as much of Christ. There were but two of them present with John when the Saviour restored to life the daughter of Jairus. The same two were with him upon the holy mount. His brother James and Peter only were with him when they gazed upon Christ's agony and bloody sweat in Gethsemane. Those in the innermost circle of privilege were in such immediate proximity to the Lord and enjoyed such intimate contact with Him as afforded the fullest satisfaction, both to their minds and senses of the reality of His person. It may be pointed out that as all of the apostles were not equally favoured with the same views of Christ during the days of His flesh, so it is now with the spiritual views which Christians have of Him. As only three of them beheld His marred visage in the Garden and His radiant countenance on the Mount, so a few believers are privileged to enter experientially more deeply into both Christ's sufferings and glories than are many of their fellows.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." John's reiteration of this intimates the deep importance we are to attach to the experience and testimony of the apostles. Their position and privileges were unique. The evidences which they had of Christ's person and incarnation were different from ours. We receive ours from them, and that in a way of *believing*—taking into our minds from their divinely inspired writings such a knowledge of the Lord Jesus as, by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit, brings us to commit ourselves and our interests unto Him for time and eternity. But the apostles had something more than that. Not only was the deity of Christ

supernaturally revealed to their hearts (Mat 16:17), but they had too the evidence of sense—an ocular⁹ and palpable demonstration of the Messiah was made to them. Christians today hear His voice in the Word; and in hearing, they live. With the eyes of their understanding, they see Him shining in the glass of the Gospel. They handle Him mystically at His holy table. But all of this is quite different from what John is speaking of in the opening verses of his epistle. While our knowledge of Christ is effectual to our soul's benefit as was theirs, yet the different ends served by the one and the other must be distinguished. They beheld what we never shall: they were with Him during the days of His *humiliation*, and that is for ever past. We shall yet see Him with our bodily eyes, but it will be a *glorified* Christ that we behold.

The practical application of the above pertains principally unto ministers of the Gospel, showing us that the first qualification for that holy calling is their own personal and saving acquaintance with Christ. The servants of the Lord Jesus are to declare unto others what they have themselves known and felt of the divine Son's grace and power. They are to communicate unto others what they have first received of the Lord (Mat 14:19). "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips" (Pro 16:23). The discerning hearer will readily perceive the difference between the preacher who merely repeats what he has read or heard from men, and the one who tells forth from a burdened or burning heart that which he has tasted and found satisfying. The ministry of the one will be sapless and spiritless; that of the other, fresh and invigorating. If the heart be taught of God, then out of its fullness, the mouth will speak unto edification. It is those who can truly aver, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (Joh 3:11), who express themselves with that assurance which carries conviction to others. The retailer of other men's thoughts lacks not only warmth and savour, but unction and the note of authority.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." Here is a noble example of spiritual generosity (compare Romans 1:11-12). Instead of keeping their knowledge secret, the apostles longed to share with God's children at large (so far as that was possible) the signal advantages which they had enjoyed during the time when the Word of life had tabernacled in their midst. Having found the honey, they would not eat it alone; having tasted that the Lord was gracious, they desired that others should prove it for themselves. The beloved John and his fellows did not live unto themselves, but realized that the privilege of hearing and seeing involved the duty of testifying. They deemed themselves to be not so much garners for the storing of truth, as sowers for the scattering of it. That is ever the effect of a saving apprehension of the Gospel—expanding the heart with a Christ-like benevolence. As it is the law of God's being to *give*, so is it of the new nature received from Him. The apostles longed that others should participate with them in an inestimable good. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Act 4:20) was the spirit which actuated them.

"That ye also may have fellowship with us" is very blessed, and worthy of our closest attention. The apostles had been eminently privileged, not only in being the immediate attendants of the Saviour for three years, sitting at His feet and drinking direct from the Fountain of living waters, but also in sharing something of His trials and humiliation (Luk 22:28). But all of that was peculiar unto themselves, and they could not make their converts sharers of the same. Not only so; strange to say, it had not fully satisfied either the one or the other if they could. They had themselves experienced a great and profitable change after the ascension of their Master, when the sensible means of knowledge and external opportunities for contact with Him had been withdrawn. They had to say, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him [so] no more" (2Co 5:16)—rather did they know Him after a *higher manner*. As Christ

⁹ **ocular** – seen by the eye.

promised them, the Comforter “shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Joh 14:26). Then they understood much in Christ’s conduct and teaching, which hitherto had been dark to them, and with such spiritual apprehension, they entered into a new and grander fellowship with Him.

“And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Wondrous and blessed is such an unspeakable privilege. Wonderful it verily is, something entirely peculiar to Christianity, for there is nothing which in the least resembles it in any of the religions of heathendom. Their “gods” are one and all regarded as remote, hostile, unrelated to their worshippers—viewed with horror, rather than with veneration and delight. Almost the sole idea in the minds of their devotees is to placate their wrath and endeavour to win their favour. The idea of their *loving* their subjects, and taking them into intimate union and communion, never enters their thoughts. Nor is that to be wondered at. Such an inestimable favour had never entered ours, had not the Scriptures clearly revealed this astonishing truth. What an amazing thing it is that the ineffably Holy One should take into fellowship with Himself those who are by nature fallen and depraved creatures, and in practice rebels against Himself. Oh, my soul, bow in adoration before such a marvel. But most wonderful of all is it that the great God not only desires the company of such, but fits them for, and will have them with Him, in His immediate presence for all eternity.

Even now as this glorious fact *is revealed*, many of God’s dear children find it difficult to apprehend; and still more so, to avail themselves of the privilege, and actually enter into the enjoyment of the same. Probably that is one reason why John expressed himself so emphatically here, for his “*truly our fellowship is with the Father*,” etc., seems to be inserted, because there were some who doubted it—as altogether too good to be true. It was as though he said, “I make this positive assertion for the benefit of the whole Church to the end of time; therefore, let no believer in Christ entertain the thought that such an inexpressible favour was one which God designed for the apostles only; not so, rather is it the birthright of *every* member of His family.” Let no saint be persuaded that this is a privilege so high above him as to be unattainable in this life. Every born-again soul has, through the mediation and merits of Christ, a right and title thereto; and through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, possesses the necessary qualification and meetness for it. If any such enjoy it not, the fault is entirely their own. The grand design and end of God in salvation and the communication of His grace to us is that we may have fellowship with Himself.

The term “fellowship,” which occurs twice in our present verse and again in verses 6 and 7, is the second great word of the epistle. The first is “life,” which is found three times in the two preceding verses. The *order* of them is divinely accurate and doctrinally significant, for there can be no fellowship with God on the part of fallen creatures, until His life or “nature” has been imparted to them. But before we seek to outline the blessed theme comprehended in this important term, let us suggest a further reason why the apostle was so express in saying, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” It is to be borne in mind that the earthly lot of Christians was very different in the early days of this era from what is now ours. At that time, the saints were despised and hated; nevertheless, a most honourable, desirable, and blessed spiritual portion was theirs. It was as though the apostle said, “Though you be looked upon and treated as the filth of the world, be assured *that* is by no means all you have through believing in Christ and following us His apostles. A really astonishing and glorious heritage is yours: you have been made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. As sharers of the divine riches, you are amply compensated for any temporal privations which your Christian profession may involve.”

That grand fact needs to be kept steadily in mind by the Lord’s people in the present hour, and nothing allowed to shake their confidence in the same, or deprive them of the full enjoyment of it.

For some of them are assailed by those who would fain make them believe that there is no Christian fellowship for any who do not accept *their* peculiar views and become followers of them. There are some who proudly imagine themselves to be the only ones who gather together on scriptural ground, and if they no longer openly assert it, they still convey the impression that none outside their circle can enjoy the fullest fellowship with Christ. There is also a species of high doctrinalists who will not regard any as regenerated who are not prepared to pronounce their shibboleths. Likewise, there are experientialists who attach such importance to a certain type and order of experience that all who are strangers to the same are regarded as being entirely “out of the secret” and fatally deceived, if they think they have fellowship with God. These are but variations of the arrogant claims of the Papacy that there is salvation for none outside of “holy mother church.” Let your reply to one and all be, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,” which is infinitely better than fellowship with any body of professing Christians.

Those words are addressed to all saints whatever be their age or spiritual attainments, or whatever their denominational affiliation or lack thereof. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal 5:1), and enter into and enjoy the wondrous privilege which He has purchased for you. “Fellowship” is an old Saxon word; “communion,” a Latin one, which signifies more than to be a recipient of His grace, or even a partaker of His love, and rises higher than the concept of companionship. Literally, it means sharers together, a community of interests, having things in common. In its simple form, the Greek word here rendered “fellowship” is translated “partners” in Luke 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 8:23: “James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were *partners* with Simon”—they were co-owners of the ship; “Titus...my partner and fellowhelper.” The Father and the Son desired not to enjoy one another alone for all eternity, but graciously purposed that a company should be brought into being not only fitted to enjoy Them, but also in whom They would everlastingly delight. Therefore did the Son declare unto the Father, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (Joh 17:22).

Thus, the basic idea of “fellowship” is *sharing together*. Yet we must be careful to interpret and understand the same in the light of the general “Analogy of Faith.” It does not mean that we have been taken into an equality with God, but that according to our finite measure, we are made partakers of His life, His holiness, His ineffable blessedness; that as “the LORD’s portion is his people” (Deu 32:9), so “the LORD is my portion, saith my soul” (Lam 3:24); that as He declares “the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3), so each of them avers, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25). The LORD Himself is ours, and we are His: a joint participation—what an amazing dispensation! No wonder the apostle pressed the fact so emphatically: “*Truly* our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”; I solemnly set my seal to it that such is the case. Not (we repeat) that this signifies an equality, but rather the dutiful, but cheerful, drawing near of an inferior to a superior; yet so as there is a holy intimacy and freedom in the same, because we both love God and are beloved of Him.

“Fellowship” with God necessarily presupposes that we have been taken into a near and dear relation to Him, so that not only do we view Him as One who befriends us, but He condescends to regard and treat us as His friends. Abraham, the father or prototype of all believers, “was called *the Friend* of God” (Jam 2:23)—admitted to share His company and converse with Him. But not only does “fellowship” presuppose our reconciliation with God, but also the reception of a nature and disposition which fits us to be with Him, for “can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

(Amo 3:3). There cannot be friendship unless there is congeniality. Fellowship is not a one-sided thing, but *mutual*. It is the law of friendship to answer it with friendship. None is warranted in regarding himself as the friend of God, unless he has the heart and carriage of one—delighting in Him, seeking to be conformed to His image, endeavouring to promote his interests. Hence, we find the Lord Jesus saying to His disciples, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (Joh 15:14)—if you make it your sincere aim to please Me in all things. A “friend” is one who conducts himself in a friendly manner unto another, avoiding whatever would injure or grieve him.

So long as we do not carnalize it, probably the figure of friendship best enables us to grasp what is meant by “fellowship.” One has a high regard for a friend, esteeming him above mere acquaintances. Thus it is between the LORD and His people: they highly esteem and value one another. What a word is that of David’s: “He delivered me, because he delighted in me” (2Sa 22:20); while the saint confesses, “all my springs are in thee” (Psa 87:7). Real friends find genuine pleasure in each other’s company, being happiest when together: does not the spouse say, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages” (Song 7:10-11), while she exclaims, “Make haste, my beloved” (Song 8:14)? Intimate converse and close communications characterize the dealings of one warm friend with another. Things I would not discuss with a stranger, personal matters about which I would be silent to a mere acquaintance, I freely open to one whose worth I have proved and in whom I delight. It is thus between God and His dear children. Did not “the LORD [spake] unto Moses face to face [without reserve or restraint], as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exo 33:11); and did not he, in return, express himself with great freedom unto the LORD—“shew me now thy way, that I may *know* thee” (verse 13) more intimately?

Fellowship is *reciprocal*. “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa 27:8). Thus, there is an interchange of confidence. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant” (Psa 25:14), while they freely open their hearts unto Him. God sends forth gracious influences into the soul, and we (by the assistance of His Spirit) make suitable responses unto Him. They pour out their souls unto Him, and He opens His ear unto them: “In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul” (Psa 138:3). He makes known to them His will, and they seek to walk according to the same. They seek His glory as their highest end (1Co 10:31), and He makes “all things work together for [their] good” (Rom 8:28). The saints generally are most taken with and speak the oftenest about their communion with God, yet it is His with us which must take place before ours can be perceived even by ourselves. It is wholly a spiritual and supernatural exercise, and doubtless is often carried on when we have no consciousness of the same.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

56. Making Peace (10:1-5)

As its opening verse shows, the tenth of Joshua is closely connected with chapters 6, 8, and 9; and this needs to be duly heeded by us if we are to discover and appropriate the spiritual lessons which it has for the LORD's people today—which should ever be one of our principal quests when reading God's Word. In chapters 6 and 8, we have an account of Israel's conquest of the cities of Jericho and Ai, but in the ninth, something quite different is presented. Following the fighting at Ai, there came a lull, and the capitulation of the Gibeonites unto Israel without any strenuous efforts on the part of the latter. It is often thus in the experience of Christians. When they have been particularly active in engaging the enemy and a notable victory has been obtained, the LORD grants a brief season of rest and comparative quietness. Yet they are not to conclude therefrom that the hardest part of their conflict is now over, so that it is safe for them to relax a little. What we are about to ponder indicates the contrary, and warns us that Satan does not readily admit defeat. Not only was Israel's warfare far from being ended, but a more determined and concerted resistance was to be encountered. Instead of having to meet the force of a single king, the massed armies of five of them had now to be defeated. The same thing appears in the history of our Saviour: the farther His gracious ministry proceeded, the greater and fiercer the opposition met with. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master.

Proceeding from the general to the particular, we observe that the opening verses of Joshua 10 *confirm* the typical application which we made of the concluding portion of the preceding chapter. At the close of our last, we pointed out that what is there recorded of the Gibeonites adumbrated¹⁰ sinners surrendering themselves unto Christ, or, to use an expression which was freely employed by the Puritans, their “making peace with God.” More recently, some have taken decided exception to that expression. It is affirmed that the sinner can do nothing whatever *to* make peace with God, and that it is quite unnecessary for him to essay doing so, seeing that Christ has “made peace” through the blood of His Cross. But that is to confound things which differ, confusing what Christ purchased, when the same is actually applied unto us. The question—and a most important one too—is, “What does God require from the sinner in order for him to become a personal partaker of the benefits of that legal “peace” which Christ made with God?” To which some make answer, “Nothing but faith—simply believing that Christ has fully atoned for all our sins and relying upon the sufficiency of His sacrifice.” But that is only half the answer. The second half leaves out an essential requirement which must precede believing.

“Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15); “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). It is very

¹⁰ **adumbrated** – depicted.

clear from these passages that repentance is as necessary as faith. Nay, we go farther, and declare that an *impenitent* heart is incapable of exercising a saving faith. Christ complained to Israel's leaders, "Ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, *that* ye might believe him" (Mat 21:32)—they responded not to the ministry of His forerunner, because they had no realization of their sinful and lost condition. Those "dispensationalists" who state that repentance is required only of the Jews, evince their ignorance of the most elementary truths of Scripture, for in "the great commission," Christ ordered His servants "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among *all* nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luk 24:47); and His apostle announced that God "now [in this Christian era!] commandeth all men *every where* to repent" (Act 17:30). Of course He does, for such a call is the pressing of His holy claims upon those who have ignored the same—who have disregarded His authority, slighted His law, and lived entirely to please themselves. It is because so little repentance has been preached that Christendom is now crowded with empty professors.

Repentance is a taking sides with God against myself. It is the laying aside of my awful enmity against Him. It is the privative side of conversion, for there must be a turning from something before there can be a turning unto God. Repentance consists of a holy horror and hatred of sin, a complete heart-forsaking of it, a sincere confessing of it unto God. True repentance is always accompanied by a deep longing and a genuine determination to abandon that course which is displeasing to God. It is impossible, in the very nature of the case, that a soul could seek God's pardon with any *honesty*, while he continued to defy Him and persist in what He forbids. Thus, repentance is the sinner's making his peace with God—the throwing down of the weapons of his rebellion, ceasing his warfare against Him. Nor is there anything in the least degree "legalistic" or meritorious about this, for repentance or making peace with God neither atones for our vile misconduct of the past, nor moves God to be gracious unto us. Repentance no more *purchases* salvation than does faith, yet the one is as indispensable as the other. The wicked is required to "forsake his way...and let him return unto the LORD" before He "will have mercy upon him" and "abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7, and compare 1Ki 8:47-50; Act 3:19).

"Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had *made peace* with Israel, and were among them; That they feared greatly" (Jos 10:1-2). Once more, we would note the very varied effects upon different ones of what they had "heard" of Israel's exploits, and how some of them attributed their successes unto JEHOVAH, while others did not so. Rahab (Jos 2:9-11) and the Gibeonites (Jos 9:9) were examples of the former; and the kings of Joshua 9:1, and this Adonizedek, of the latter. The king of Jerusalem, despite his high-sounding name, gave God no place in his thoughts; yet he was thoroughly alarmed at Israel's progress. His fear was cumulative. He was rendered uneasy at the tidings of Jericho's overthrow, still more so at the news of the destruction of Ai; but when he and his subjects learned of the Gibeonites having concluded a league of peace with Joshua, "they feared greatly" (Jos 10:2)—most probably because he had counted on *their* considerable support in resisting these aggressors.

We would also attentively heed the Spirit's emphasis here on the time-mark: "Now it came to pass, *when* Adonizedek...heard" (Jos 10:1). There is nothing meaningless or superfluous in the Scriptures, and it is by noting such a detail as this that we often obtain the key which opens to us the spiritual significance of what follows. In this instance, the immediate sequel was the banding together of four others with the king of Jerusalem against Gibeon, and in the light of the closing verses of chapter 9, the typical force of this is not difficult to perceive. It is when sinners renounce

the service of their former master, and the friendship of the world, in order to make their peace with God and join interests with His people that they must be prepared to encounter persecution from the ungodly. That is why the Saviour bade all would-be disciples of His to sit down first and “count the cost” (Luk 14:28-33); and His servant warned believers, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1Jo 3:13). In Adonizedek’s determination to slay the Gibeonites, we have adumbrated the inveterate enmity of the serpent against the Redeemer’s “seed.” Previously, while Satan keepeth his palace, “his goods are in peace” (Luk 11:21), but when he *loses* any of his captives, his rage against them knows no bounds.

Ere passing on, let us ponder one other detail in our opening verse, namely Israel’s *utter* destruction (Jos 10:1) of Jericho and Ai, for a most important lesson is inculcated by that adjective. In its application to the spiritual warfare of the Christian, it tells us that we must be ruthlessly thorough in the work of mortification. No half measures are to be taken against the things which hinder the present possession of our heritage. There must be no compromising with our lusts, no trifling with temptation, no flirting with the world. True, inward corruptions will strongly resist our onslaughts upon them, as the men of Ai did when Israel came against it. For a time, the king of Ai had the better of the contest, so that Israel were dismayed; but they did not abandon the fight; instead, they humbled themselves before the LORD, and He graciously undertook for them. Not that they were released from the discharge of their responsibilities, so that they could *passively witness* His operations on their behalf. No, indeed. They were required to perform their duty and employ different tactics. Accordingly, as they implicitly followed His instruction, the LORD prospered them, and Ai was “utterly destroyed”: in other words, complete victory was theirs.

But the overthrowing and destroying of Ai proved to be neither an easy nor a pleasant task to Israel, for in the course thereof, they passed through both a humiliating and distressing experience. So it is in that work of unsparing mortification to which the Christian is called. Our Lord likened it unto the plucking out of a right eye and the cutting off of a right hand (Mat 5:29-30). By such language, He intimated the difficulty and severity of the work He has assigned us. The “eye” represents that which is dearest to the natural man; and the “hand,” what is the most useful to him. The plucking out of the one and the cutting off of the other signify that we are to exercise the most rigorous denying of self, that however precious an idol or profitable any unrighteous course may be unto the carnal nature, they must be sacrificed for Christ’s sake. No matter how unwelcome it proves to the flesh, its lusts are not to be spared; for unless they be brought into subjection to God, the soul is gravely imperiled. By divine grace, this difficult task is not impossible. The “utter destruction” of Ai, then, is recorded both for our emulation and for our encouragement. Yet remember that, though a brief lull may follow such a victory, the surrender of our remaining enemies is not to be looked for; rather, must we expect a yet more determined resistance from them, seeking to prevent any further spiritual advance by us.

“That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty” (Jos 10:2). We believe the Holy Spirit’s design in giving us these particulars about the Gibeonites was at least threefold: to magnify the grace of God in subduing them unto Himself, to account for the subsequent actions of Adonizedek, and to cast light upon the typical significance of the sequel. In view of what we are here told about the Gibeonites, it is the more remarkable that they had not only made peaceful overtures unto Joshua, but had offered no demur at taking upon them the yoke of servitude and becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water unto Israel. Therein, we should discern a people hostile to Him by nature, “made willing” in the day of God’s power, and the might of His grace in bringing them to submit readily to the most exacting and pride-abasing terms. Such is the nature

of the miracle of conversion in every case: the slaying of man's awful enmity against God, the humbling of his haughty heart, the bending of his stubborn will, the bringing of him to a complete surrender unto the lordship of Christ, making him an "obedient" child (1Pe 1:14).

"That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty." Gibeon was not only a formidable frontier town, but also the capital of that section; and such a city and territory yielding so tamely to Israel much alarmed the king of Jerusalem. Not only had he lost what he probably counted upon as being a powerful ally, but he feared that other cities would follow suit, so that he now began to tremble for his own skin. If so powerful a people had capitulated without striking a blow, who could be expected to take a resolute stand against Joshua and his men? Not only was he much alarmed, but greatly chagrined and incensed against the Gibeonites, and so resolved upon their destruction (Jos 10:4-5), which indicates the third design of the Spirit here. The "greater" the trophy which grace secures for Christ, the more "royal" his status, the fiercer will be the opposition which he meets with from his enemies. That is why those whom the Lord makes the ministers of His Gospel are the chief marks of Satan's malice. But let them not be dismayed thereby. Not only is it a high honour to suffer for Christ's sake, but the opposition a faithful preacher encounters is a good sign that God is using him to make inroads into the devil's kingdom.

"Wherefore Adonizedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: *for* it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel" (Jos 10:3-4). It will be remembered that the Canaanitish kings whose territories lay farther to the north and the west had previously decided to federate themselves against Israel (Jos 9:2), and by this time would probably be engaged in mustering their forces for a combined assault upon them. But the tidings of Gibeon's alliance with Joshua so intimidated and enraged these five kings, whose cities were nearer the point which Israel had then reached, that they decided to anticipate the plan of their remoter fellows by falling upon Gibeon. It is likely that the king of Jerusalem reckoned upon Joshua having his hands so full—in making his arrangements and deploying his forces to meet the impending attack of the northern and western armies of the Canaanite—that he would be unable to come to the relief of the Gibeonites. It therefore appeared to be a favourable opportunity and a safe venture for these five kings to fall upon those whom they regarded as their renegade countrymen; yet in so doing, they but accelerated their own destruction.

Verse 2 opens by saying, "That *they* feared greatly"; yet the preceding verse mentions no one, save the king of Jerusalem; and so we would expect it to read that "*he* feared greatly." While it is likely that the plural number is designed to include his subjects, it is also highly probable that the "they" looks forward to the four kings mentioned in the next verse; and it intimates *why* they were willing to respond to Adonizedek's call. Thus, we behold again how widespread was the terror inspired by the news of Israel's victories. Not only was this a further fulfillment of what the LORD had announced in Exodus 23:27, and Deuteronomy 11:25, but we may perceive therein a shadowing forth of what takes place under the proclamation of the Gospel. As we pointed out above, the hearing of what the mighty arm of JEHOVAH had wrought reacted very differently in them than in others. There was the same opportunity for those kings to make their peace with Joshua as the Gibeonites had; and their fatal refusal to do so supplies a solemn illustration of the fact that the Gospel is "the savour of life unto life" to those who believe and are saved, but "the savour of death unto death" to those who reject it and are lost (2Co 2:15-16). Nor is *fear* sufficient to move a sinner to throw down the weapons of his warfare against God, as appears not only

from the case before us, but also from that of Pharaoh and of Felix who “trembled” as he listened to Paul speaking on “judgment to come” (Act 24:25).

Not only was Adonizedek unwilling to humble himself and make peace with Joshua, but he was determined that none of his near neighbours should do so, and in his persuading them to follow his policy, we have a sad instance of a strong character being able to influence others to evil. To be a personal transgressor is bad enough, but to be a ringleader in wickedness evinces a high degree of depravity and is doubly damnable. Adonizedek’s “Come up unto me, and help *me*” is to be understood in the light of “that *we* may smite Gibeon” (Jos 10:4), thereby signifying that it was a duty devolving equally upon all of them. At first, one wonders what they thought would be gained by such a course: would it not be more prudent to husband their forces for self-defence when the army of Joshua should invade their section? Probably their purpose was to make an object lesson of Gibeon and thereby intimidate other cities from following their example. But the inspiring motive which prompted the prime mover is clearly seen in *the ground* of his appeal unto his fellows: “For it [Gibeon] hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel” (verse 4), and as the closing words of verse 1 add, “and were among them.” Thus, it was something more than an instinct of self-preservation which moved them to act, namely a malignant spirit against those who had united themselves with the people of God. Thereby, they had alienated themselves from their original associates and evoked their wrath.

DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

3. Its Corollaries, Part 3

8. *Their sufficiency.* Since God Himself [is] the Author of the Scriptures, they must themselves be perfect and competent for those ends for which He has given them. God’s wisdom was able, and His love for His people made Him willing to furnish them with such a sure and adequate guide, that naught else is required by them in the way to everlasting bliss and glory. Such was the confidence of the apostle, for when taking leave of his beloved converts at Ephesus, he declared: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Act 20:32)—he knew full well that everything necessary was therein provided for them. Nor must anything else whatever be placed on a par with the Word of God. “The Bible, and the Bible only, our rule of faith” was the grand watchword of the Reformation. “Scripture *and tradition* taken together are the joint rule of faith” is what Rome insists upon. But the moment we turn from the King’s highway, we lose ourselves in a trackless desert. The Popish contention, as history demonstrates, opens a door wide enough to admit any error or superstition.

The written Word of God must be the final court of appeal in all matters pertaining to doctrine, duty, and deportment. “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not

add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deu 12:32) was the binding injunction laid upon Israel. That was the unswerving position taken by the Lord Jesus: He made God’s Word the sole rule of His actions. When tempted by Satan, He declined to argue with or overwhelm him by His superior wisdom; He refused to crush him with His almighty power, relying only upon, “It is written.” That was the position taken by the greatest of His servants: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). And again, “that [from the examples furnished by Paul and Apollos] ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written” (1Co 4:6). Here then is the sure and all-sufficient criterion to test every religious teaching. Man’s words must never be put on a level with a “Thus saith the LORD.” We may indeed quote what is helpful from the Reformers and Puritans, yet not as authorities, but merely as *witnesses to the truth*.

By this divine rule shall we be tried in the great assize: “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Joh 12:48); “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom 2:16). Therefore, it is our bounden duty to bring everything to that unerring test here and now. We are satisfied that, for the most part, the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism, were drawn up by godly and scholarly men; nevertheless, they were finite and erring men, and therefore, if we value our souls, we shall test everything *in them* by the Word of Truth. Each definition, each custom, must be tried by it. Other writings may be ancient, learned, interesting, and even edifying, yet none of them was “given by inspiration of God” (2Ti 3:16)! The Holy Scriptures are the only perfect standard. It is not a question of what commends itself to our inclination or reason, nor what this church or that church believes and practises, nor what “the vast majority of Christians” hold, but “What saith the Scriptures?” The teaching and experience of the very best of God’s servants *must*, if we would have an impregnable rock under our feet, give place to the final authority of the divine record.

This at once refutes the heresy of Popery, which boasts that “the voice of the Church” is the highest authority. Likewise, it exposes the worthlessness of the pretensions of the spiritualists, who claim to furnish the most convincing evidence of the soul’s survival after death: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luk 16:31). Here too we are provided with a conclusive solution to a problem which has exercised not a few. In Romans 13:1, we are commanded, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” *To what extent?* inquires the conscientious Christian. Absolutely and unqualifiedly, says the “State”—and the more “totalitarian” it be, the larger its demands and the more stringent its enforcing of them. Now while every Christian should be a respecter of law and order, and conformed to the laws of his country, yet *not* to any infraction of the Law of the LORD. Human legislation may grant divorces for other causes than the only one Scripture specifies (Mat 19:9), but that does not make wrong to be right. If the Government demanded that I should do manual work, attend a political meeting, or engage in sport on the Sabbath Day, Exodus 20:8-11 would require me to disregard their ruling. When human statutes clash with the divine, then I must do as the three Hebrews (Dan 3:18) and as Daniel did (Dan 6:10-13)—fear God and not man.

The sufficiency of the Scriptures at once demonstrates the emptiness of the claims made by one and another, to having received an extraordinary communication from heaven: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20). No child of God should for a moment be taken in by these impostors: so far from their being favoured with new light from God, they are deceivers, the emissaries of the power of darkness. Personally, this writer would not take the trouble to walk into the next room to lis-

ten to any man (or woman) relate or deliver what he alleged to be a special message inspired by the Spirit of God. With the *complete* Scriptures in his hands, he needs nothing more, save a teachable spirit, looking to God Himself to apply and interpret the Word unto him. It is recorded of Martin Luther (1483-1546) that, when he had fasted and prayed a whole day and then had a vision of Christ, he cried out, “Avaunt, avaunt,¹¹ thou confounded devil: I have no picture of Christ but the Scriptures.” He refused to be beguiled by the enemy when posing as “an angel of light” (2Co 11:14). Shame upon any who are thus deluded by him.

Under a previous section, we have shown the inadequacy of human reason, the insufficiency of intuitional light and inward impressions, the uncertainty of dreams and what some take to be “the promptings of the Spirit,” as the determiner of our actions. Let us now add that Holy Writ is a much surer guide than divine *providence*. We must not now amplify this point at any length, and though our very brevity is liable to cause some to draw a wrong inference therefrom, yet we believe that spiritually minded readers will have no difficulty in perceiving the force of our remarks. If we have a teachable heart, there is indeed much that we may learn from God’s providential dealings with us, especially discovering therein His approbation of or displeasure at our conduct; yet even here, unless we examine both our conduct and God’s seeming response to the same by the Word of Truth, we are certain to err. The providence of God extends to *all* our acts: not only to those which are good, but those which are evil too (Act 2:23), and therefore, no certain rule or judgment can be made from them. God may sometimes lead a man by unusual ways and work by extraordinary means, but for me to count upon His doing so regularly would be to tempt Him, and for my heart to be drawn off from the ordinary means He has appointed and provided is sinful.

God *does* sometimes direct us by His providence, or as expressed by the Psalmist, “I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa 32:8)—as He did the heathen king who could not sleep, and who called for the state records; and while reading them, found that Mordecai had been faithful to him, and accordingly, was moved (by God) to do something for his good. In a case where two courses are open to me and both of them are *legitimate*, providence, by opening a door to one and shutting the door upon the other, directs me to the former, and not to the latter. But if one of those alternative courses be illegitimate, then it would be very wrong for me to wait for providence to indicate which of *them* I should select. Let this be clear: the providence of God must never be allowed to persuade me that anything is lawful which is manifestly unlawful in itself. Providence directs us in the doing of things lawful by providing opportunities and supplying the necessary means, as, say, relieving the poverty of another; but it does not make any action good or praiseworthy, nor is it the rule for determining between good and evil. If I would ascertain whether any course or act be legitimate or illegitimate, then I must turn to the written Word, for that is the *only* standard by which I am to form a judgment of what is lawful and unlawful, as it is that which alone stamps lawfulness upon any action.

Finally, let it be pointed out that, while God does *direct* by His providences, He also *tests* us by the same. He sometimes orders them to try us and see how we will conduct ourselves: as He kept the children of Israel in the wilderness to prove them, and make it evident whether or not they would keep His commandment (Deu 8:2); permitted false prophets to prove whether they loved Him (Deu 13:1-3); and as He withdrew from Hezekiah, to let him know what was in his heart (2Ch 32:31). If I rely wholly upon the leadings of providence as the determiner of my actions, I expose myself to the utmost hazards. Providence opened a way for his brethren to sell Joseph into Egypt (Gen 37:25), yet that did not warrant their so doing. Providence ordered a ship to

¹¹ **avaunt** – go away; depart.

be bound for Tarshish when the prophet forsook the prescribed path of duty (Jon 1:3), yet that did not justify his embarking therein. Providence caused “the south wind [to blow] softly” (Act 27:13), so that the captain of the ship concluded it was safe to fly in the face of Paul’s warning to the contrary—and disastrous was the consequence. But we are never in the slightest danger by taking heed to the light and directions of Scripture; and therefore, we have no hesitation in affirming that the Word is a surer guide than God’s providence. “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16)—that “good way” is the one marked out for us in the Word, and it is the only one wherein certainty and peace of mind are to be found.

9. *Their worth.* Since the Scriptures are a celestial communication, no elaborate argument is required to prove this predicate. The very fact that they are an inerrant, trustworthy, lucid and all-sufficient revelation to God’s will at once attests their inestimable value. Their very claim to be divinely inspired is a clear averment of their supreme importance and incalculable worth. They are a priceless boon because they make known a Christ whose riches are unsearchable and who is esteemed above all earthly possessions by those granted a personal acquaintance with Him: “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious” (1Pe 2:7). Its contents are not to be exchanged for rubies, for they announce unto sinners the efficacy and sufficiency of an atoning sacrifice: “the precious blood of Christ” (1Pe 1:19). Its pages are to be highly treasured, because they are studded with the most costly gems, even the “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4) of Him who cannot lie. Its precepts are beloved (Psa 119:159) because obedience to them preserves from what would be our certain ruin. The one who feeds upon its teachings proves them to be “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa 19:10), and exclaims, “Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16).

Listen to David’s testimony: “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Psa 119:72). Nor was that the utterance of one who was poor in this world’s goods, but rather that of an immensely wealthy king, and therefore, one who was well qualified by experience to estimate the relative values of money and of truth. They were the words of an enlightened soul who was well able to judge things at their true worth. Because this Law or Word is “of *thy* mouth,” it is not only comparable to, but, infinitely preferable above the fabled material wealth of Croesus. It yielded David better delight and pointed him to a richer inheritance. Gold is of the earth earthy, but the Word is from heaven and stamps its hall-mark upon the heart of each one who receives it in love and is ordered by its statutes. At best, our possession of gold is an uncertain one: it often takes to itself wings and flies away, or is stolen from its owner by robbers; but he who has the Word of God in his heart possesses a treasure which no thief can take from him. The wealth of this world may give me favour in the eyes of men, but only the riches of grace can make me acceptable unto God: “Rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom.”

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold” (Psa 19:10) is the verdict of every regenerate heart in favour of God’s Word. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) pointed out, he knows it to be so *intrinsically* considered. Gold can provide the comforts and pleasures of the senses, but it cannot minister to the needs of the spirit. Money may claim to “speak all languages,” but it cannot purchase real happiness, still less, buy a passport to the better land. The Christian knows that the Word of God is more desirable than much fine gold in its *use*. Gold can indeed obtain for me those things which are needful for the body and support of temporal life, but it cannot heal a broken heart nor afford relief to a stricken conscience. The believer knows the Word of God is infinitely preferable to gold in its *duration*. Material wealth can provide an elaborate funeral, but it is of no service beyond. Nay, it can supply no comfort to one who is dying;

whereas Psalm 23 has afforded cheer and imparted peace to many a soul as he waded through the cold waters of Jordan. With a far higher delight than has the millionaire when calculating his earthly possessions, the saint rejoices in the riches of the Word, for therein God opens *His* treasure and imparts to him what the world cannot bestow.

10. *Their requirements.* What is my attitude and response to the Bible? The knowledge that it is given by inspiration of God adds greatly to my responsibility. Every privilege involves a corresponding obligation. A unique Book calls for unique attention. To treat the Scriptures lightly is to dishonour their Author. To prefer the writings of men is to insult the LORD. The writings of the best man are only of spiritual value, as they afford me a better understanding of God's Word and press its holy claims upon me. It avails us little to be persuaded that the Bible is a gift from God, unless we treat it accordingly. The Israelites were not content to inquire, "What is this?" when they first saw the manna in the wilderness: upon perceiving it was bread from heaven, they went out, gathered it each one for himself, and made it their daily food. Such a Book is entitled to the first place in my affections and to be regulator of my conduct. Has it that place with you? Of old, God complained of Israel, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hos 8:12). Are any of us guiltless in this respect? Nay, has not every one of us cause to hang his head in shame and confess to God his sinful slighting of His Word.

First, such a Book requires from us the utmost *reverence*. Rightly did John Calvin (1509-1564) point out in his comments upon 2 Timothy 3:16, "We owe to them [the Scriptures] the same reverence that we owe to God Himself, since they have proceeded from Him, and there is nothing human mixed with them." It is an unspeakably solemn thing for us to be addressed by the Almighty: each word coming from *His* lips must be received with the profoundest respect. Every verse in the Bible is to be regarded and held by us as a sacred thing, and not to be handled lightly, nor even quoted glibly. It is horrible profanity to make anything therein the subject of a joke or jest, and it is most unbecoming to allow their contents to be the subject of carnal wrangling. The only attitude which becomes us before this divine revelation is that of David: "My heart standeth *in awe* of thy word" (Psa 119:161): not a legal or slavish dread, but a holy fear. "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded" (Pro 13:13). Our conscience must be swayed by its authority, and be very tender of cherishing anything contrary thereto.

Second, such a Book calls for *prayer*. The prime design of that holy ordinance is to humble us before God and show us our place at His feet. It is an acknowledgment of our insufficiency, a testifying to our dependence upon the LORD. Not only is His Word far above the compass of human reason, but its ineffable purity is directly contrary to the corruptions of our fallen nature. Consequently, each time we are about to take it into our hands, we need earnestly to request God to bring our spirits into a fit frame to hear what He says to us; graciously to subdue the self-love and self-will which are ever at work within us. As one old writer expressed it, "We need to present our hearts unto God as a blank sheet of paper, for Him to write thereon." We need to cry daily, "That which I see not teach thou me" (Job 34:32): "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psa 119:18). Such a Book is entitled to the first place in my affections and to be the regulator of my [will]; and further, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies" (verse 36): the will needs to be bent and the affections elevated, as well as the understanding enlightened. This God does by persuasion and power, tempering irresistible might with the sweet constraints of His love.

Third, such a Book requires *faith* from its readers. Faith is to the soul what the eye is to the body: the organ or faculty by which light is admitted and spiritual objects are beheld and known.

There is clearly an obligation upon us to believe the Scriptures, for they are the Word of Truth. God's authority and veracity alike bind us thereto. Every evidence of their heavenly character and supernatural origin renders unbelief the more inexcusable. The very uniqueness of their teaching should convince us of their peerless excellence. The Bible is designated "the word of faith" (Rom 10:8) because it is fully entitled to our credence, requires our unquestioning assent, and claims hearty acceptance. Faith, in its simplest form, is receiving the witness of God (1Jo 5:8), is a setting to our seal that "God is true" (Joh 3:33), an amending of what He says. It is a reliance, a resting upon what God has revealed to us. Only as its reader exercises faith is he really "nourished" by its words (1Ti 4:6).

Fourth, it demands *obedience*. That is why His Word is so frequently denominated "the law of the LORD": unqualified subjection to whatever it enjoins is insisted upon. When self-interests, or the edicts of men, clash with the divine precepts, we must be afraid of defying God. It is by His Word that we shall be judged in the day to come, and therefore, it is not to be trifled with now. The only question for us to consider is not, "Is this polite?"—but "Has God ordered it?" We must give unto Him the glory of His supremacy. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently" (Psa 119:4). Obedience thereto is not optional, but obligatory. It is not left to our arbitrament or discretion whether or not we shall comply. "Thou"—the great God upon whom we are entirely dependent—"hast commanded us," and *His* will is supreme. Dire are the consequences of disobedience, as our first parents, Pharaoh, and millions of others have found. But if we be fully subject to God's commandments, not only do we have His approval, but Satan can gain no advantage over us.

Fifth, such a Book claims our love. It is not only our privilege, but our duty, to accord it the highest place in our affections. It must be received "with all readiness of mind" (Act 17:11). The absence of love for it is a sure mark of apostasy: God gives men over to the lying deceits of Satan, "because they received not the love of the truth" (2Th 2:9-10)—it is not ignorance of His Word, but lack of love for it which is charged against them. Love is necessary, for both faith and obedience work by it. Does not its very uniqueness require it to be cherished above all earthly possessions? Every reason have we to say with Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). It is because our love is so feeble that we delight in and meditate upon it so little. If our affections be warm, we shall turn to God's Word as a starving man unto food, or a miser to his hoard. A realization of its superlative excellence will cause us to take it for our heritage.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

2. Its Origin, Part 3

Though created in the image and likeness of God, man was not endowed with infallibility. In body perfectly sound, in soul completely holy, in circumstances blissfully happy, still man was but a mutable creature. Pronounced by God "very good" (Gen 1:31) on the day of his creation,

man's character was not yet *confirmed* in righteousness, and therefore, he was (like the angels) placed on probation and subjected to trial—to show whether or not he would render allegiance to his LORD. Though “made upright,” he was not incapable of falling; nor did it devolve upon God to keep him from so doing. This is clear from the event, for had there been any obligation upon God, His faithfulness and goodness had preserved Adam. Nor would He have upbraided our first parents had their defection been due to any breach of *His* fidelity. As moral agents, Adam and Eve were required to maintain their pristine purity unsullied, to walk before God in unswerving loyalty and loving submission. But a single restriction was put upon their liberty, which was necessary in order to the testing of their fealty and the discharge of their responsibility.

Alas, man in honour did not abide. He valued at a low rate the approbation of his Maker and the inestimable privilege of communion with Him. He chafed against the love-lined yoke that had been laid upon him. Quickly did he supply tragic evidence of his mutability and disrupt the tranquility of Paradise. The beauty of holiness in which the parents of our race were arrayed was soon succeeded by the most revolting depravity. Instead of preserving their integrity, they fell into a state of sin and misery. They were speedily induced to violate that commandment of God's, obedience to which was the sole condition of their continued felicity. Not for long did they enjoy their fair heritage. Notwithstanding the ideal conditions in which they were placed, they became dissatisfied with their lot, succumbed to their very first testing, and evoked the holy displeasure of their Benefactor. How early did the fine gold become dim! How soon did man forfeit the favour of his Maker, and plunge himself into an ocean of wretchedness and woe! How swiftly was the sun of human happiness eclipsed by man's own folly!

It has been generally held among devout students of God's Word that our first parents remained unfallen for but a very brief season. Such a view is in full accord with the general Analogy of Faith, for it is a solemn and humbling fact that whenever God has been pleased to place anything in the hands of human responsibility, man has proved unfaithful to his trust; that when He has bestowed some special favour upon the creature, it has not been long before he has sadly abused the same. Even a considerable part of the angels in heaven “kept not their first estate” (Jude :6), though how soon they apostatized the Scriptures do not disclose. Noah, when he came forth on to a judgment-swept earth to be the new father of the human race, defiled his escutcheon at a very early date and brought a curse upon his son. Within the space of but a few days after Israel had solemnly entered into a covenant with JEHOVAH at Sinai, they were guilty of the horrible sin of idolatry, so that the LORD complained to Moses, “They have turned aside *quickly* out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it” (Exo 32:8)—how tragically did that portend the whole of their future national history!

No sooner were the “times of the Gentiles” (Luk 21:24) inaugurated by Nebuchadnezzar's being made “a king of kings” (Dan 2:37), so that his dominion was “to the end of the earth” (Dan 4:22), than pride led to his downfall. While he was boasting, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” a voice from heaven announced, “And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:30, 32). Alas, what is man? Even the honour of the primitive Christian Church was speedily tarnished by the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. Thus, it has been all through the piece, and there is no evidence to show that at the commencement of human history, Adam and Eve were any exception. Rather are there clear indications to the contrary, so that God had reason to say of them also, “They have turned aside quickly out of the way” (Exo 32:8).

Personally, we doubt if our first parents preserved their integrity for forty-eight hours, or even for twenty-four. In the first place, they were bidden to “be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen 1:28); and had they complied with that injunction and the blessing of God had attended the same, then a *sinless child* had been begotten and conceived, which, following the Fall of Adam and Eve, would be born into a depraved family—a terrible anomaly, involving the utmost confusion! Second, if those words concerning Christ are to be taken without qualification, that in “*all things*” He might have the pre-eminence (Col 1:18), then He is the only One who kept the Sabbath perfectly on this earth, and consequently, Adam fell before the seventh day ended! Third, in Psalm 49:12, the Hebrew word for “man” is *Adam*—the same as in Genesis 2 and 3 and Job 31:33, while that for “abideth” signifies “to stay or lodge for a night.” Thomas Manton (1620-1677) rendered it, “Adam being in honour abideth not for a night”; and Thomas Watson (1620-1686), in his *Body of Divinity*, said, “Adam, then, it seems, did not take up one night’s lodging in Paradise”—quoted by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) in his *Treasury of David*. Fourth, the devil “was a manslayer from the beginning” (Joh 8:44)—not from the beginning of time, for there was no man *to* slay during the first five days, but “from the beginning” *of human history*. In the morning, holy; by night, a sinner!

It is the melancholy and disastrous episode of the Fall itself we are now to consider. The event is described in Genesis 3, upon which George Whitefield (1714-1770) rightly said, “Moses unfolds more in that chapter than all mankind would have been capable of finding out of themselves, though they had studied it to all eternity.” It is indeed one of the most important chapters in all the Bible, and it should be pondered by us frequently with prayerful hearts. Here commences the great drama which is now being enacted on the stage of human history, and which well-nigh six thousand years have not yet completed. Here is given us the divine explanation of the present debased and ruined condition of the world. Here we are shown how sin entered it, together with its present effects and dire consequences. Here we have discovered to us the subtle devices of our great enemy the devil, and are shown how we permit him to gain an advantage over us. On the other hand, it is a most blessed chapter, for it reveals the grace and mercy of God, and assures us that the head of the serpent will yet be crushed by the victorious Seed of the woman—Romans 16:20, telling us that His redeemed will also participate in Christ’s glorious triumph. Thus we see, from the commencement, that in wrath, our God “remembered mercy”!

A careful reading of Genesis 3 indicates that much is there compacted into an exceedingly small space. The historical account of this momentous incident is given with the utmost conciseness—so very different from how an uninspired pen had dealt with it! Its extreme brevity calls for the careful weighting of every word and the implications of each clause. That there is not a little contained “between the lines” is plainly intimated in the LORD’s words to Adam, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the *voice* of thy wife” (verse 17), yet the preceding verses nowhere tell us that she even spoke to him! Again, from the judgment pronounced upon the serpent, “upon thy belly shalt thou go” (verse 14), we may warrantably infer that previously, it had stood erect. Again, from that part of the divine sentence passed upon the woman, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (verse 16), it is to be concluded that Eve had acted unbecomingly and exerted an undue influence and authority in inducing Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit. Thus, if we fail to ponder thoroughly every detail and meditate thereon, we are certain to miss not a little of interest and importance.

“Now the serpent was more subtil [wiser] than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made” (Gen 3:1). Great care needs to be taken in the interpreting of this sentence. On the one hand, we must not give free rein to our imagination; on the other, it is not to be hurriedly and

thoughtlessly skimmed over. Other passages require to be compared in order for their light to be thrown thereon, if a fuller understanding is to be obtained of it. Personally, we believe that the statement refers to a *literal* “serpent,” yet as being the instrument of a superior being. We consider that the terms of verse 14 make it clear that an actual serpent is here in view, for the LORD’s words there are only applicable to that beast itself: “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle...upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” Nevertheless, what immediately follows in verse 15 makes it equally plain that *more* than a beast of the field was involved, namely Satan. Putting the two statements together, we gather that Satan made use of a literal serpent as his mouthpiece in the beguiling of Eve—as the LORD spoke through the mouth of Balaam’s ass (Num 22:30-31).

Confirmation of what has just been said is found in John 8:44, where our Lord declared that “*the devil...[is] a murderer [or more literally, ‘manslayer’] from the beginning*”—designating him such because by his wiles, he brought death upon our first parents. Moreover, in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, Satan is called “that old serpent,” in manifest allusion to the transaction of Genesis 3. “And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen 3:1). The thoughtful reader is at once struck by the abruptness of this remark, and is almost forced to conclude that the serpent was replying to what Eve had said previously, for his opening, “Yea” plainly implies something going before and with which it was connected. This leads us to raise the question, *Where was Eve* when she was thus addressed and assailed? With many others, we believe the answer is, Standing before the very tree whose fruit had been forbidden them to eat! It is apparent from the immediate sequel that she was at least within sight of the tree, and it was from her beholding of it that the serpent took occasion to speak about and commend it unto her.

We also agree with those who have concluded that Adam was *not with Eve* when the serpent first engaged her in conversation, though we know that soon after, he had rejoined her. Thomas Ridgley (1667-1734), G. Whitefield (1714-1770), John Gill (1697-1771), and many others held that Eve was *alone* when she confronted the serpent. For ourselves, we base that belief upon what we are told in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, where the Holy Spirit has emphasized the fact that the woman was *first* in the transgression, and then became the seducer of the man. That could hardly be said had Adam been present from the beginning, for in such a case, he had been *partaker* of her evil doing—by suffering her to yield to the temptation, instead of making every effort in causing her to reject it. Furthermore, it is to be carefully noted that when the guilty couple were arraigned before their Maker, Eve passed no blame upon her husband for making no attempt to dissuade her, but instead, sought to throw the onus on the serpent. Nor did the LORD Himself charge Adam with any complicity in his wife’s crime, as He surely would have done had Adam been a passive spectator. The serpent, then, tempted Eve in the absence of her husband.

We consider that Eve’s being alone, and more especially her near approach unto the fatal tree, casts considerable light on what then occurred. “Had she kept close to the side out of which she was lately taken, she had not been so exposed”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714); and had she kept away from that which threatened certain death, she had been upon safer ground. Satan cannot injure any of us while we are walking with God and are treading the paths of righteousness. We are expressly told that there is no lion in “the way of holiness”; “nor any ravenous beast shall...be found *there*” (Isa 35:8-9). No, we have to step out of that way and trespass on the devil’s territory before he can “get an advantage of us” (2Co 2:11). That is why we are so emphatically enjoined, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. *Avoid it*, pass not by it, turn from it” (Pro 4:14-15). We certainly do not regard Eve as being guilty of any sin at this ini-

tial stage, but the sequel shows plainly that she incurred great danger and exposed herself to temptation by approaching so near unto that tree whose fruit had been divinely prohibited; and we need not be surprised to discover, as she also did, that that ground was already occupied by the serpent! Such has been recorded for our learning and warning.

“And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen 3:1). The serpent must have looked a very different object then from the repulsive reptile it now is, not only standing erect, but—in keeping with his pre-eminence above all other beasts, and as the Hebrew word intimates—of a striking and beautiful appearance. Apparently, he then stood before the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and it seems more than likely that he personally took and ate of its fruit in Eve’s presence. His so doing evoked from her some ejaculation of surprise or look of horror, which explains why he then said what he did. As Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) long ago pointed out, “It is probable that the serpent told the woman that by eating of the fruit of that tree, he had obtained the use of reason and the faculty of speech which she now saw in exercise; and therefore said that, from his own experience, he could assure her that if she would eat of this fruit, she would be so far from dying that she would reach to a higher degree of perfection and knowledge.” While such an inference must not be pressed dogmatically, we have long felt it possesses much probability, and that it is an illuminating one.

Quite recently, we discovered that in his “Family Bible,” that devout and renowned scholar, John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787), wrote concerning the serpent’s words to Eve, “Perhaps he pretended that himself had acquired what knowledge he had above other beasts by eating of this forbidden fruit. It is certain that he attempted to confirm his contradiction of the threatening by a solemn appeal to God.” This requires us to examine closely the tempter’s words. It is to be noted that the margin of our Bibles gives an alternative rendering: “Yea, *because* God hath said,” which regards his language as a declaration rather than a query—Genesis 13:9; Psalm 35:10; Matthew 26:53; Luke 22:35, are other examples where a strong affirmation and appeal is put (for the sake of emphasis) in the form of an interrogation. Considering it thus, here, we may regard the serpent’s opening words to Eve as answering her previous expression of surprise: “Is it because ‘God hath said’ that you are so startled at seeing me eating the fruit?” Thomas Scott (1747-1821) also pointed out, “Indeed, we cannot satisfactorily account for the woman’s entering into conversation with the serpent, and showing no marks of surprise or suspicion, unless we admit a supposition of this kind.” It is one of the first duties of an expositor to show the *connection*, explicit or implicit, of each statement of Holy Writ.

“And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Therein we perceive the guile and enmity of the enemy. His allusion to the divine restriction made it appear much greater and more severe than it actually was. The LORD had in fact made a free grant for them to eat *freely* of “every tree of the garden” with but a single exception (Gen 2:16-17). Thus, Satan sought to bring reproach upon the divine Law by misrepresenting it! It was as though he said, “Can it be that your Maker has given you appetites and also placed before you the means of gratifying them, only to mock you? You surely must have misunderstood His meaning!” We therefore regard this opening utterance of the serpent’s as an attempt not only to make Eve doubt God’s veracity, but also to cause her to suspect the divine beneficence. *That* is the poison Satan is ever seeking to inject into our hearts: to distrust God’s goodness—especially in connection with His prohibitions and precepts. That is really what lies behind all evil lusting and disobedience: a discontent with our position and portion, a craving for something which God has wisely withheld from us. The more clearly we perceive the precise *nature* of the serpent’s poison, the better enabled are we to *judge* its workings within ourselves. Harken not to any sug-

gestion that God is unduly severe with you! Put from you with the utmost abhorrence anything which causes you to doubt God's lovingkindness. Allow nothing to make you call in to question His love. ✎

MAY

NEVER

The word never means “at no time, in no degree,” yet, paradoxical though it seems, it is one of the emphatic and dogmatic terms of Scripture, as its occurrences show. It is both interesting and instructive to observe the different connections in which it is found in the Bible. They are of considerable variety. Some of them are inexpressibly blessed unto God’s children; others should evoke terror in those who are strangers to Him. What a fearful contrast is there between “Hell and destruction are never full” (Pro 27:20) and “David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne” (Jer 33:17); and between “For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin...it shall never be built” (Isa 25:2) and “The God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44)! It is by such graphic antitheses that the truth is presented more impressively. Set over against the complaint of the elder son to his professed father, “Thou never gavest me a kid” (Luk 15:29), is the promise of Christ, “He that cometh to me shall never hunger” (Joh 6:35). Let us now take a closer look at a few of the verses in which this term is found.

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti 3:7). Here is the “never” of a *fruitless quest*, and alas, there are many engaged in such. It is a sad thing that one may acquire much theological lore, be well versed in the writings of God’s most honoured servants, and sit regularly under sound preaching, and yet have no saving acquaintance with the truth. It is a still more solemn fact that one may spend considerable time daily not only in reading God’s Word, but in diligently studying the same, and yet attain unto no spiritual and experiential knowledge of the truth. The scribes and Pharisees are a case in point, and there are many in Christendom today who are in a like state. Why is this? What is the explanation of this fruitless quest? It is because such souls are not taught by the Spirit of God, and unless *He* be our Instructor, all our efforts are, spiritually speaking, in vain. It is because they are unregenerate, and therefore devoid of spiritual discernment: the Lord has not given them “an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear” (Deu 29:4). Where such be the case, the mind is “corrupt” and the truth is resisted, as 2 Timothy 3:8 goes on to show.

“Never man spake like this man” (Joh 7:46). That is the “never” of *unique utterance*. Everything connected with Christ was unique. His birth was unparalleled, so were His character and conduct, His mission and miracles, His death and resurrection. His speech was no exception, His enemies being witnesses, for that testimony in John 7:46 was borne to Him not by His apostles, but by the officers sent by the scribes and Pharisees to apprehend Him. But instead of arresting Him, they had themselves been arrested and awed by what they heard from His lips. In like man-

ner, those who listened to Him teaching in their synagogue were astonished, and asked, “Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (Mat 13:54). And before the end, so non-plussed were His critics by the profound solutions which He returned to their riddles that “no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Mat 22:46). And why was it that “never [any] man spake like” *He* did? (Joh 7:46). Because He was more than man—man’s Creator. In Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). It was the truth incarnate Who tabernacled among men. It was God speaking “by his Son” (Heb 1:2), and therefore are we commanded to “hear ye him” (Mat 17:5).

“He that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Joh 6:35). That is the “never” of *an unfailing supply*. But let us first note that these words point a most solemn contrast between the satisfying portion of the believer and the experience of the Saviour upon the Cross. Near the close of His awful sufferings there, Christ cried, “I thirst” (Joh 19:28). He made reference to a far more acute pang than any bodily one. It was not mere physical thirst to which He alluded: rather was it to the anguish of His soul. During the three hours of darkness, the face of God had been turned from Him, and He was left alone—“forsaken”—as He endured the fierce fires of God’s outpoured wrath. That cry told of the severity of the spiritual conflict as He yearned for communion again with the Father. In *that* sense, the Christian will never thirst. Nor will he be as he did when convicted of his lost state and dire need. Nor will Christ ever suffer him to be so parched spiritually as to have no moisture in him. He will indeed pant after a fuller knowledge of Christ, but that is more an evidence of deepening desire after holiness. “His soul’s desires are longing ones, not languishing; a desiring thirst he has for more and more of God, but not a despairing thirst”—Matthew Henry (1622-1714).

“And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong” (Psa 30:6-7). That is the “never” of *carnal security*. It throws not a little light on the latter part of David’s life, and also shows us what foolish ideas even saints may entertain. This psalm was probably written (see verse 1) after his deliverance from Saul’s persecuting malice, when he was peacefully settled upon the throne. The LORD had wrought mightily and rendered him victorious over the enemies of Israel, and after the fierce storms there followed a great calm. David now felt quite secure from danger, and in his rashness, imagined all his troubles were ended. He indeed ascribed his prosperity unto the LORD; but to compare his present state to a mountain which stood strong, savoured of pride; and to declare he would never be moved was the language of self-confidence. The sins into which he fell, and his flight from Absalom, demonstrated his error. “Let us beware lest the fumes of intoxicating success get into our brains and make fools of us also”—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892). Neither a continuance of outward prosperity, nor inward peace, is anywhere promised us absolutely; yet how apt we are to say, “To morrow shall be as this day” (Isa 56:12). Let us “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11), and seek grace to heed that warning, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12).

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (Joh 10:28). That is the “never” of *eternal security*. The ones to whom such safety is divinely assured are—as the immediate context shows—those who “hear” (heed) Christ’s voice, who are “known” (approved) by Him, who “follow” Him (and not their own natural inclination); and thus, their preservation is neither mechanical nor one apart from their own concurrence. From the divine-grace side of things, “they shall never perish,” because the Redeemer has given to them eternal life, because He has undertaken “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25), because they are gripped firmly by Omniscience: “All

his saints are in thy hand” (Deu 33:3). From the human-responsibility side of things, they shall never perish, because the LORD causes them to take to heart the solemn warnings and admonitions of His Word; and thereby avoid the things which would destroy them, because He gives them a spirit of prayer and dependence upon Him which delivers them from ruinous self-confidence; because He moves them to feed on His Word and obtain spiritual strength; because He brings them to comply with His precepts, and thus leads them safely Home along the way of practical holiness.

“I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:23). This is a word to graceless professors, and is the most solemn “never” in all the Bible, for it is that of *divine repudiation*, and sounds the eternal doom of those to whom it is uttered. Christ is here heard speaking in the Day of Judgment to many who boasted that they had preached and done many wonderful things in His name. His words do not signify that He was unacquainted with their persons or not cognizant of their performances, for the remainder of the verse shows that He had penetrated their disguise and knew them to be workers of iniquity. Instead, it means that He did not accept or approve of them, that He refused to own them as His. When it is said, “the LORD *knoweth* the way of the righteous” (Psa 1:6), it means that He is pleased with the same. “The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2Ti 2:19) imports that He *loves* them. “I never knew you” (Mat 7:23): neither in the eternal counsels of God, nor while you were in the world, had I any affectionate regard for you; at no time did I view you with favour. To the contrary, you were an offence: “Depart from me.” Highly esteemed in the churches; objects of abhorrence to the Holy One.

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Here we have the most blessed and comforting “never,” for it is that of *the abiding companionship of Christ*, which ensures His continual provision and protection. Living as we are in a world where all is “change and decay”—ourselves unstable and unreliable—how thankful we should be that there is One whose care may ever be counted upon. The power of this companion is illimitable, His wisdom infinite, His faithfulness inviolable, His compassion immutable. And why will He never desert one of His own? Because He loves him, and love delights to be near its object. Because he can do nothing to kill or even chill that love, for He foreknew his every sin when first setting His heart upon him. Because of His covenant engagement: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good” (Jer 32:40). Therefore, we should fear no want, dread no trial, nor view death with any trepidation.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

5. Fellowship (1Jo 1:3), Part 2

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Here we have a communicated knowledge, an affectionate desire, an emphatic assertion, and a shared privilege.

The apostles openly proclaimed what they had received immediately from Christ. They did so because they had an unselfish longing that others should also be benefited thereby. It was no figment of an enthusiastic imagination that they referred to, but a divine and spiritual verity. Fellowship with God is the highest dignity and richest blessing we can be favoured with, either here or hereafter. It is one of the great mysteries of grace. Reason cannot comprehend it, and sense has nothing to do with it. None can have the least conception of its excellence save those who are actual participants in the same. In order thereto, there must be oneness of nature, an intimate knowledge, concord of heart, unity of interests and aims, and an open acknowledgment of one another. Though this fellowship be the utmost of blessedness, it is one in which all the saints partake.

Great is the honour, wondrous the privilege, of being admitted unto communion with the Lord God. Fellowship with Him is both an objective fact and a subjective realization: that is to say, it is based upon a relationship, and is enjoyed in the soul's experience. Since all believers are regenerated and reconciled to God, they are in communion with Him—in a state of sacred friendship. That state consists of a reciprocal communication in giving and receiving after a holy manner; God's in renewings of grace and fresh supplies of His Spirit; ours in the outgoing of our hearts unto Him in the ways which He has appointed. It is consciously *enjoyed* by the exercise of faith and love (for they are the two hands of the soul by which we take hold of God), and by the heart's being engaged with His ineffable perfections and gracious bestowments. Some believers enter into a much richer experience of this fellowship than do others of their fellows, and the degree in which he actually participates may vary considerably with the same believer from day to day. It is chiefly *acted out* by us in praise and prayer. It is *maintained* by avoiding those things which hinder and by using the means which further it—especially devout meditations upon God and His Word.

Opinions differ as to whether the Father and the Son are to be considered here conjointly or distinctly. Grammatically, each is permissible. For ourselves, we incline to the view taken by Robert Candlish (1806–1873), namely that the Object of the Christian's fellowship is *one*. Certain it is that we first have fellowship with the Son, for only through Him may sinners have access unto the Father (Joh 14:6). Christ is the only way, the new and living way, unto Him. But as that expositor pointed out, it is not thus that Christ is presented: rather is the Son here regarded as *associated with* the Father—"together in Their mutual relationship to one another, and Their mutual mind and heart to one another (and unto the saints), They constitute the one object of this fellowship." In 1 Corinthians 1:9, we read, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," in view of which we, personally, prefer to say that our fellowship is with the Triune God in their Person of the Mediator—borne out, we consider, by 1 John 1:5-6, where the Object of our fellowship is simply said to be "God," without distinction of persons. Yet since They may indeed be contemplated separately, it is quite warrantable to distinguish between the communion which we have with Each, and so shall we treat thereof.

Another consideration which supplies confirmation that, essentially regarded, our fellowship is with God in Christ is the fact that our communion is based upon *union* with Him. Now our union with God is not immediate or direct but, mediate through the Lord Jesus. We are first joined to Christ, and then through Him with the Father (1Pe 3:18). The saint's oneness with Christ is a very wonderful and many-sided subject, which we can now but barely outline. First, from all eternity we had an election union with Christ, being chosen in Him. There was also a federal union, so that we were one with Him as the last Adam: it was as such that He took our place and discharged our legal obligations. There is likewise a vital union when, because of regeneration, it

becomes true that “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1Co 6:17). From that issues a moral union, when by faith and love we are espoused to Him. That in turn leads to a practical union, when we take His yoke upon us and walk in subjection to Him. All of this issues in an experiential union in which we enjoy an intimate intercourse with Christ, drinking into His Spirit.

Now each aspect of that multiform union has a corresponding communion. By virtue of our *election* union with Christ, we are “blessed...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” with Him (Eph 1:3-4). Because of our *federal* union with Him, we become legal partakers of His righteousness, and entitled to the full reward of His meritorious obedience. In consequence of our *vital* union with Him, we are made recipients of Christ’s life and are indwelt by His Spirit. As the result of our *moral* union with Him, we enter into His salvation and receive out of His fullness “grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). By our *practical* union with Him, we walk together in agreement: we now “cleave unto the Lord” (Act 11:23) in a life of dependence upon and devotedness unto Him, becoming more and more conformed to His holy image. From our *experiential* union with Christ, we enter into His peace and joy, and become fruit-bearing branches of the Vine. “And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro 18:24) expresses His side of this communion; “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Joh 13:23) declares *our* side of it. This is the result of our *practical* union and communion: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Joh 14:21).

The intimate union which there is between the Lord and His people is intimated in their very names: He is “the Christ”; they Christians: “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*” (Heb 2:11) and to treat them accordingly. The figure that is most frequently used in the New Testament to set forth the oneness of the Redeemer and the redeemed is that of His mystical “body,” of which He is the head, and they the members: “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). The result of that union is communion, or sharing together: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16)—to mutually delight in, to further each other’s interests, to be together for all eternity. It is therefore my sacred privilege not only to have personal contact and converse with Him, but the most unreserved dealings. There is no aloofness on *His* part, and there should be none on *mine*. Christ has not only given Himself for His people, but *to* them—to make full use of: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7). He is ours to feed upon (Joh 6:57), and as our “lamb” (Exo 12:5): that is, Christ in His *sacrificial* character—exactly suited to sin-harassed souls.

Nor is that feasting a one-sided thing: Christ delights to commune with His own—“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luk 22:15) illustrates the fact. He *seeks* such fellowship: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door [for He forces Himself upon none, see Luke 24:28-29], I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev 3:20)—addressed, be it remembered, to a church! The intimate fellowship which there is between Christ and His Church is blessedly exhibited in the Song. He makes request, “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” (Song 2:14); while the spouse declares, “Cause me to hear [thy voice]. Make haste, my beloved” (Song 8:13-14). He exclaims, “Behold, thou art fair, my love” (Song 4:1); and she rejoins, “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (Song 5:10). There is sweet entertainment on both sides: says she, “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song 4:16); “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abun-

dantly, O beloved” (Song 5:1) is His answering call. They are mutually charmed with each other: does she bear testimony, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight” (Song 2:3), “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights” (Song 7:6) is His gracious acknowledgment.

We will now consider that communion which we have with each of the divine Persons distinctly. Clearly there can be none with any of them except through the Mediator. We can only approach the Father through the Son incarnate. Our union with the One is via our union with the Other. We are the sons of the Father (1Jo 3:1), because made one with His Son, and therefore, does the latter say, “Behold *I and the children* which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13). After His resurrection, He said to His disciples, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (Joh 20:17), thereby making it clear that the relation in which He stood to God was theirs also. That relation is further made good unto them by God’s sending forth “the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6); and thus, they cherish toward Him the affections of children. From whence, we may perceive *the character* of that fellowship which the Christian has with the Father. As a child has near access to his father, so does the believer unto God. As a child enjoys his father’s favour, so does the believer that of God. As an earthly parent delights to gladden the heart of his child by special tokens of his love, “How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Mat 7:11).

The nature of our fellowship with the Father is also indicated by the very meaning of that term, namely, a community of interests, and that it is a reciprocal thing. Thus, the Father and His children take mutual pleasure in His beloved Son. Blessedly was that depicted by the Saviour in what is known as the parable of the prodigal son. When the wanderer returns from the far country, and is welcomed home, the father says, “And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let *us* eat, and be merry” (Luk 15:23)—figure of them feasting on a once-slain Christ and rejoicing together. In like manner, as the glorifying of Christ is the chief end which the Father has before Him in all the outworkings of His eternal purpose, such is our grand aim too. Again, the Father makes us “partakers of his holiness” (Heb 12:10), even of His own nature (2Pe 1:4), so that what He hates, they hate, and what He delights in, they do also. Again, they have fellowship with the Father in His affectionate regard for all His dear children: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1Jo 3:14). Further, a most blessed intercourse is maintained between the Father and His children through the means which He has appointed to that very end. As they endeavour to perform His will, He takes upon Him the care of all their concerns.

“And with his Son Jesus Christ.” Yes, and in that precise order. First, we have fellowship with Him as God’s Son, because made His sons, as being “his seed,” yea, “the travail of his soul” (Isa 53:10-11). This explains why Christ is designated “The everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). Second, we have fellowship with Him as “Jesus,” for as faith lays hold of Him, we become partakers of His so-great salvation—as those who believingly touched the hem of His garment were healed of their plagues. Since the exercise of effectual faith be a spiritual act, we must first be made sons, spiritual persons, “new creature[s]” in Christ (2Co 5:17) by regeneration. Faith gives a saving union to Christ, and He is then “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). Not only are our sins removed as far as the east is from the west, but we obtain a personal interest in all that He is and has. Third, we have fellowship with Him as “Christ”, that is, the Anointed One. As “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost” (Act 10:38), so believers “have an unction [same word] from the Holy One,” and “the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you” (1Jo 2:20, 27)—the anointing oil on the head of the High Priest (Exo 29:7) “went down to the skirts of his garments” (Psa 133:2)!

The believer's fellowship with his Saviour opens to him a perennial fountain of blessedness. Since He be God, He is fully competent to undertake for him in every situation and supply all his need. Since He [is] man, He is capable of being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is full of tender sympathy to His sorrowing people. He was tempted in all points as we are, sin excepted, and therefore, fully understands our trials. He personally experienced poverty, neglect, reproach, injustice, and harsh treatment. He was misunderstood by His friends and hated by the religious leaders. He knew what it was to suffer hunger and thirst, and weariness of body, as well as anguish of soul. Consequently, He is "a brother...born for adversity" (Pro 17:17) and is moved with compassion when He beholds the afflictions of the members of His mystical body; yea, it is written, "In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Isa 63:9). So close is the bond that unites the Redeemer to the redeemed, that when Saul of Tarsus (in the days of his unregenerate madness) ill-treated His children, Christ said unto him, "Why persecutest thou me?" (Act 22:7)—by assailing *them*, he "toucheth the apple of *his* eye" (Zec 2:8).

Thus, there is everything in Christ to invite and encourage us to seek and maintain the closest and freest communion with Him. He wears our nature, and we are recipients of His. All the infinite resources of Deity are exercised on our behalf. As He endured our poverty, so we are made the partners of His riches. His righteousness is as truly ours as He made our sins His own. His reward He shares with His redeemed, so that the glory which the Father gave Him He has given to them (Joh 17:22). There is a community of affections between them—running in the same channels, fixed upon the same objects: "I love them that love me" (Pro 8:17). They have familiar intercourse together: they pour out their complaints unto Him, He communicates to them His consolations. They have mutual desires: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (Joh 17:24); "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20) is their response. They participate in like privileges and honours: He is Priest and King, and He "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev 1:6). They gladly endure loss for His sake, bear His reproach, and enter into "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phi 3:10).

It may be asked, Why is no mention made in 1 John 1:3 of the believer's fellowship with *the Holy Spirit*? Though He be not expressly referred to, He is necessarily implied, for none can have fellowship with the Father or with the Son save by Him. "For through him [Christ] we both [believing Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18). The Holy Spirit is the sole efficient cause of all spiritual fellowship. Necessarily so, for the Father and the Son are imperceptible to sense, the Objects on which our faith is exercised, and with whom communion is enjoyed; and it is the Spirit who makes Them real and precious unto us, drawing out our hearts unto Them. He it is who sheds abroad in our hearts the love of the Father, and who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Thus the Spirit is not specifically named here, because He is *the author* of our fellowship with the Triune God in Christ. He introduces us into the same, and is the only transactor of it, for it is by His enablement that we are lifted out of ourselves and our affections drawn unto things above. Yet it must not be overlooked that in 2 Corinthians 13:14, while "grace" is attributed to the Lord Jesus, and "love" unto God, "communion" is definitely ascribed to the Spirit. We are also sharers of His nature, and His mission to glorify Christ.

A word now upon the fellowship which the saints have one with another: "If we have fellowship with the Father, then we are His children, and animated by His Spirit. If we have fellowship with Jesus Christ, then we are His redeemed ones, and the subjects of His grace. It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence, that wherever there is fellowship with the Father and the Son, there must also be fellowship with those who believe in Them. And this is the very light in which the subject is presented in the text, where the three forms of fellowship are treated as indissolubly

connected with one another”—James Morgan. It is to be noted that whereas “that ye also may have fellowship with us” is mentioned *before* “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (because, as previously explained, it is by means of the writings of the apostles that we obtain a full saving knowledge of Them); yet in experience, fellowship with believers *follows* that of our fellowship with the divine persons; for we are united first with the former ere we have any spiritual union with the latter. What that fellowship consists of Ephesians 4:4-6 tells us: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Believers are sharers together of the riches of God’s grace, joint partakers of all the benefits of Christ’s mediation and merits. They possess the same nature and associations of heart. They have common beliefs, experiences, and hopes. They will be together with the Lord for ever. Therefore are they enjoined: “Endeavouring to keep [not ‘make’] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). But that is possible in a practical way only as they personally heed the preceding exhortation, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2). Not only is it their mutual interest so to do, but thereby Christ is most honoured and glorified by them (Joh 13:35). Thus, it should be their earnest and constant endeavour to cultivate this fellowship. If they do not, then their claim to enjoy communion with God is but an idle boast. As this very apostle declares: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1Jo 4:20). Not only are the object of fellowship inseparable, but, the enjoyment of the one is commensurate with the other: in proportion as we have fellowship with the Father and His Son shall we have fellowship (in prayer, at least) with all who believe.

It is not our intention to supply a sermon outline on each verse, for we desire to stimulate unto study, and supply hints of how to go about it, rather than encourage laziness. With this article and the preceding one before him, the young preacher should have no difficulty in culling out sufficient material for at least one sermon on Fellowship—the simpler his style and the fewer his divisions, the better. Homiletically considered, the opening sentences of this article furnish an analysis of verse 3. By way of introduction, the different things which *prevent* any fellowship between God and an unbeliever, and the divine provisions to remove those hindrances, should be shown, such as sin divorcing from holiness—overcome by atoning blood; spiritual death—by the communication of life; alienation of heart—by reconciliation at conversion; the distance between the finite and the infinite—bridged by the Mediator.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

57. War Declared (10:5)

The typical teaching of the Old Testament is one of its most striking and blessed features. It not only demonstrates the divine authorship thereof, by causing the shadows to outline so accurately the coming substance, but supplies valuable instruction for the student of the New. We are

sometimes reminded that “in the Old Testament, the New is contained; and in the New Testament, the Old is explained”; but there is a danger, lest we draw the inference that the latter has largely displaced the former. This is so far from being the case that the former casts considerable light on the latter, and supplies the keys which unlock many of its details. Rather are the two Testaments like the two eyes of our body—both necessary in order to complete vision, the one complementing the other. Not only are we largely dependent upon the prophets for an understanding of the predictions made by Christ and through His apostles, not only is there much in the historical books which supplies vivid illustrations and exemplifications of the practical teaching and precepts of the Epistles, but the ordinances and ceremonies of Judaism foreshadowed and help to open unto us many aspects of Gospel truth. We have sought to give prominence to this in our progress through the book of Joshua, showing that in numerous ways, its central character prefigured the Lord Jesus, that Israel’s experiences in the conquest of Canaan adumbrated the Christian’s spiritual warfare, and that both solemn and precious evangelical pictures are to be found therein.

During the past century, there were those who rendered a valuable service unto Christendom by the stress they laid upon the importance and worth of the Old Testament types, and how that many incidents recorded in its historical books set forth “the way of salvation.” Yet it is much to be regretted that they were so partial in their selection, and that their emphases on certain particular aspects of the way of salvation were often so disproportionate. It is indeed blessed to point out how that Rahab was delivered from destruction and obtained a place among the people of God by the exercise of *faith*, and how that the Cities of Refuge are a blessed representation of that *security* which is to be found in Christ for those who are pursued by the Law; but it is equally striking to behold, and necessary to insist on, if the balance of truth is to be preserved, that the Gibeonites *making peace* with Joshua provides just as real and striking a “Gospel picture” as do the former. There are some of the types which more especially magnify the grace of God; there are others which exemplify His holiness. In the one is displayed His benevolent overtures; in the other, the claims of His righteousness. Sometimes it is the freeness of the divine mercy which is stressed; at others, the responsibility of the sinner is pressed.

Those who have read critically our last six articles on the Gibeonites (Jos 9) may have concluded that we were guilty of contradicting ourselves, for we began by viewing them as illustrating the character and conduct of empty professors and hypocrites applying for union with God’s people, yet ended by regarding them as types of repentant sinners coming to Christ and making their peace with God. It was not a case of our forgetting what we had first pointed out, nor is there anything inconsistent therewith in our latter remarks. There is a fullness in God’s Word which pertains not to the writings of men, and many and varied are the “applications” which may be legitimately made of a single passage in it. In Genesis 22, Isaac is first a type of Christ, in his subjection to his father’s will and his readiness to be offered in sacrifice; but later, he is a figure of the sinner—the ram taking his place and dying in his stead! From Exodus 16, many striking *comparisons* can be drawn between the manna and Christ as the Bread of Life, yet in John 6, we find Him making some very definite *contrasts* between them. Some of the characters in Scripture portray both the unsaved and backslidden believers, nor is there anything incongruous in their so doing. So it is with the Gibeonites: they need to be regarded in two different relations, in accordance with the marked change in their early and later conduct.

We must distinguish between the Gibeonites as they were moved by Satan to act dishonestly and tempt Israel and as they were subsequently moved by the Holy Spirit to surrender unto Joshua and made willing to take his yoke upon them. In his natural condition, the sinner is a hypocrite,

and even when he is brought sincerely to seek after Christ, not a little carnality is mingled with his efforts. There is a very marked difference to be observed between the wily conduct of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:3-6, and their frankness and meekness in verses 24-25; and equally so should there be between the “applications” which the expositor makes of them. What follows in chapter 10 *confirms* the accommodation we made of the closing verses of chapter 9. No sooner had the Gibeonites made their peace with Joshua, than the rage of the enemy was stirred against them. Thus it is in the experience of a saved sinner. If he be truly converted—gives Christ His rightful place in his heart and life, making a thorough break from the world—it is not long before he discovers that, so far from his former companions congratulating him, or being ready to emulate him, they now turn against him and become antagonistic, persecuting him in some form or other, seeking to bring about his downfall rather than encourage him.

But we must take a yet closer look at those who *opposed* the Gibeonites. Five kings of the Amorites combined together to destroy them: they were not only fellow Canaanites, but close neighbours. Thus, we regard them as something more than a figure of the Christian’s foes in general, namely as pointing more definitely to those whom, at first, he does not suspect of being inimical to him. When a young convert has broken from the ungodly, he is more or less prepared for the enmity of the profane world, but not so of the professing world: rather does he expect that those who bear the name of Christ will be his friends. Alas, he has to discover (in principle at least, and often literally) that “a man’s enemies are the men of his own house” (Mic 7:6)—quoted by our Saviour in Matthew 10:36. This is yet another lesson that the Christian has to learn in connection with his spiritual warfare, and a particularly painful one it is. But sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master, for we are told of our Lord that “neither did his brethren believe in him” (Joh 7:5), and that His kinsmen regarded Him as crazy, saying, “He is beside himself” (Mar 3:21); while it was one of His apostles who betrayed Him.

What has just been pointed out was clearly adumbrated by those who assailed the Gibeonites. First, as already remarked, they were near neighbours, fellow Canaanites. Second, they dwelt in the *mountains* (Jos 10:6), and it is ever to be borne in mind that there are no meaningless details in God’s Word. To inform us that these kings resided in the mountains is only another way of saying that they occupied high ground, that theirs was an elevated position. Sad to say, it is often those who hold a similar place in the religious realm who are the least friendly toward the Lord’s little ones. Desiring to have the pre-eminence, they are merciless unto any who refuse to be subject to them—as the Sanhedrin hounded Christ to death and forbade His ambassadors to preach in His name. The mountains are also a symbol of *pride* (Isa 40:4) with which every Diotrophes is filled (3Jo :9). Third, the same feature appears again in the high-sounding names of these kings (Jos 10:3), for Adonizedek, the prime mover, means “lord of righteousness”; Hoham, “Jah (God) protects”; Piram, “wild” or “fierce”; Japhia, “high” or “elevated”; Debir, “speaker”—suitable cognomens¹² for pretentious professors!

Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, sent a message unto the four kings saying: “Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon” (Jos 10:4). Very soon after the Gibeonites had entered into their friendly league with Israel, they found the most powerful forces of southern Canaan arrayed against them. They had done them no wrong, but rather had shown their fellows the wisest and best course to adopt. Yet this was the very thing which the arch-conspirator most dreaded (verses 1-2). Incidentally, we may note how, at that early date, Jerusalem exerted more or less of a dominating influence in the land of Palestine, for not only was it its king who took the lead in this movement, but his city was to be the gathering centre for the others. Yet apparently,

¹² **cognomens** – a name, especially a descriptive nickname.

he had not sufficient confidence in his own forces to act alone, so sought the co-operation of four of his fellows. Had it been merely a matter of coming to *his* aid, it is to be doubted whether they would have responded, for they were more or less rivals. Human nature and tribal bigotry being the same then as now, it would be *self-interest* which moved them to accede; and since Gibeon was “as one of the royal cities” (verse 2), they coveted a share of its spoils.

But let us observe next, *the ground* of Adonizedek’s appeal unto his fellows: “*For* it [Gibeon] hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel” (Jos 10:4). That which so incensed him was their union with the people of God. It is to be duly noted that this is the third time their “making peace” is mentioned (Jos 9:15; 10:1), and the setting in which the phrase occurs leaves us in no doubt as to its precise import. It connotes a change of relationship and the complete reversal of the old order of life. Spiritually speaking, it is our response to the Gospel call, “Be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20)—cease your enmity against Him. The very expression occurs in “Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may *make peace with me*” (Isa 27:5). It is a complete surrendering of ourselves unto God. It is identical with conversion, which is a thorough right-about-face. Genuine repentance is always accompanied by reformation of conduct. The wicked must abandon his course of self-will and self-pleasing and “return unto the LORD” (from whom he departed in Adam’s apostasy) if his sins are to be pardoned (Isa 55:7, and compare Pro 28:13).

The Scriptures are full of what is deliberately and fatally omitted from the false “evangelism” of our day, which blatantly announces that nothing is required from the sinner except faith in Christ. But an impenitent heart cannot savingly believe, nor is there any forgiveness for those who are determined to continue in a course of carnality and worldliness. “Now therefore put away...the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel” (Jos 24:23)—idols must be abandoned before He can be loved and served. “Repent ye therefore, and be converted” (Act 3:19) is the divine demand. Observe well what immediately follows: “*That* your sins may be blotted out.” The same order occurs again in Mark 4:12: “Lest at any time they should [1] be converted, and [2] their sins should be forgiven them.” That is the order of *human responsibility*. “We...preach unto you that ye should [1] turn from these vanities [2] unto the living God” (Act 14:15). Again, Paul declared that his business was to turn men “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Act 26:18); and note well that *precedes* “that they may receive forgiveness of sins.” Likewise must a Christian “cast off the works of darkness” ere he can “put on the armour of light” (Rom 13:12).

“Therefore the five kings of the Amorites...gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it” (Jos 10:5). That is set over against the “made peace” of the preceding verse, teaching us clearly that to make our peace with God signifies to cease fighting against Him. It also shows that, when we do so, those who are opposed to Him will turn against us; and that, no matter how circumspectly we conduct ourselves. It is the desire of a Christian to live amicably with all men, but he soon has cause to say with the Psalmist, “I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war” (Psa 120:7). The enemies of the LORD will not leave alone those who wear His yoke and are joined to His people. In uniting with Israel, the Gibeonites had alienated themselves from their heathen neighbours. The four kings offered no objection to Adonizedek’s plan, but willingly made common cause in seeking the destruction of their fellows. What a sidelight that casts upon the character of the Canaanites! How it serves to demonstrate their fitness to be the objects of JEHOVAH’s judgment! It is also to be noted that all of these five kings were Amorites, and these were the ancient enemies of God’s people (Num 21:21-23).

In those days, it was not the custom of an invading army to make an immediate attack upon a city, but rather to surround it and weaken its inhabitants by a process of starvation—cutting them off from all further supplies from without. Ancient cities were surrounded by high and thick walls and protected by powerful gates; and to make a direct assault at first would prove a costly undertaking. Accordingly, we read that the hosts of these kings “encamped before Gibeon” (Jos 10:5). They were evidently quite sure of themselves and had no doubt of success. Probably, they thought it unlikely that Joshua would go to the trouble of honouring his league with the Gibeonites; and, in any case, that the camp of Israel was too far distant for their fighting men to come up to the relief of the besieged city; and therefore, that the task would prove a simple one. But like many others before and since, they were to prove that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Ecc 9:11). Like Pharaoh of old, these kings had left the LORD out of their reckoning! And they, too, discovered that nothing more surely provokes Him against evil-doers and hastens their destruction than for them to make war against those who have entered into a covenant with Him.

But why should God permit this unprovoked attack? Why did He suffer the Gibeonites to be so menaced? Since they had made their peace with Him, why did He not cause the rest of the Canaanites to be at peace with them? For a variety of reasons. First, to impress upon them their *own origin*. They too were “clay, of the same lump” (Rom 9:21); and in the evil conduct of their invading fellows, they had a solemn reminder of what *they* were by nature. By this painful method, the LORD was saying to them, “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:11-12). It was naught but sovereign grace which made them differ from those who sought to slay them. It is a salutary exercise of heart for us to heed that divine injunction, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged” (Isa 51:1). Such a look will remove pride from us; such a realization will keep us in our proper place—in the dust before God. The Gibeonites belonged to the same accursed race as these five kings; and it was only God’s distinguishing mercy which prevented them from sharing their doom. Seek to remember that, Christian reader, when you are being persecuted by the world, and ask yourself *Who* it is that has delivered you from being among the persecutors!

Many other answers may be returned to our question as to why God permitted the Gibeonites to face such a situation. It was to *test their faith* and make it evident unto them whether or not they now regretted the radical step they had recently taken. Would they tell themselves what fools they had been to antagonize their former companions, or were they prepared to endure afflictions for the LORD’s sake? Those who heed Christ’s exhortation to first sit down and “counteth the cost” (Luk 14:28) before enlisting under His banner will *not* think it “strange” when “the fiery trial” comes upon them (1Pe 4:12). Again, it was to make them realize that they were living in a hostile world, “as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Mat 10:16). Sooner or later, each believer is made to prove that unwelcome fact. “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you” (1Jo 3:13). It *did* your Master, and the more faithful you be to Him, the more fellowship will you have with His sufferings. Again, this trial was designed to cast them back the more upon the LORD: to wean them from any hankering they had to maintain communion with those who were strangers to Him. Finally, it afforded an opportunity to prove God’s sufficiency: His compassion, fidelity, and power.

And *how* did the Gibeonites react to the peril threatening them? They did not repudiate their alliance with Israel and apologize to Adonizedek for what he would regard as their perfidy. They did not put their trust in the strength of the city’s walls; nor did they, on the other hand, regard

their predicament as hopeless, and despairingly await their end. Instead, “the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us” (Jos 10:6). Either they had advance tidings of the impending attack, and in order to save time, dispatched messengers unto Joshua; or the cordon which their enemies had thrown around the city was not so complete as to prevent some of their number issuing forth on their mission. Very blessed is it to behold their conduct on this occasion. They appealed to the one who had recently shown them mercy and spared their lives. They had full confidence in him, neither questioning his willingness to come to their aid, nor doubting his ability to rescue them.

In appealing to Joshua for help, they disavowed their self-sufficiency. So far from proudly entertaining the idea that they were capable themselves of repulsing the enemy, they looked to Joshua for deliverance. Though by nature all the men of Gibeon were “mighty” (Jos 10:2), they relied not on their own skill and valour, but humbled themselves by applying elsewhere for assistance. Note this well, dear reader, if you would be victorious in the fight of faith. Recognize that the forces confronting you are far too formidable for your own wisdom and might. Take the place of dependence and look to the antitypical Joshua. It is in conscious weakness that our strength lies (2Co 12:10). There is no other way of becoming “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10) than by utterly discounting our own fancied competency. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength” (Isa 40:29). On the other hand, woe is denounced on those who “trust in chariots” (Isa 31:1). Trust in the LORD, and thou shalt not be confounded (Psa 22:5).

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

2. Its Origin, Part 4

In the preceding article, we called attention to the exceeding brevity of the narrative of Genesis 3 and the need for us to weigh carefully every word in its opening verses and ponder the implication of each clause. We pointed out that not a little is contained “between the lines”; and therefore that, while we must refrain from reading into it what is *not* there, we must be careful not to overlook anything of importance which *is* there, either explicit or implicit—by definite statement or necessary inference. We also gave our reasons for believing that Eve was away from the side of her husband, and that it was because she had entered dangerous ground by approaching so closely unto the fatal tree that she was there confronted by the serpent and subjected to temptation. Further, we intimated that the sentence passed upon the serpent by the LORD in verse 14 warrants us to conclude that before he seduced the woman, he stood erect, and that his form and appearance at that time were very different from the present repulsiveness of that reptile. We also made reference to the opinion of many reputable writers that there seems reason to think that Eve beheld the serpent himself eating of the forbidden fruit, that such a spectacle evoked from her an ejaculation of surprise, and that this alone accounts for the abruptness of his opening statement.

“And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen 3:1). As Matthew Henry (1662–1714) pertinently pointed out, “Satan tempted Eve that, by her, he might tempt Adam; so he tempted Job by his wife, and Christ by Peter. It is his policy to send temptations by unsuspected hands, and theirs that have most interest in us and influence over us.” Eve’s suspicions ought at once to have been aroused when the serpent introduced such a subject for conversation, and she should have turned away immediately from him.

“Those that would keep from harm, must keep out of harm’s way”—M. Henry. Or, as one infinitely greater than any human commentator bids us, “Go *from* the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge” (Pro 14:7). And again, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Pro 19:27) The serpent’s opening word was designed to produce in Eve a spirit of discontent. It was really a sly insinuation which amounted to this: If you cannot eat of all the trees, you might as well eat of none—as Ahab, with all his royal possessions, was dissatisfied while he denied Naboth’s vineyard; and Haman, though he had found favour with the king, petulantly exclaimed, “All this availeth me nothing” (Est 5:13), so long as Mordecai refused to pay him deference.

If Eve was not already secretly desiring the forbidden fruit, would she have paid any attention to the cunning query made to her? We very much doubt it. Still less can we conceive of her entering into a discussion with the serpent on the subject. Dalliance with temptation always implies a lusting after the object presented. Had she been content with God’s grant in Genesis 2:16, and were she satisfied with the knowledge He had given her by creation, she would have *abhorred* the false knowledge proposed by the tempter; and that would have precluded all parleying with him! That is more than a supposition of ours, for it is obviously confirmed by what follows. Compare her conduct with Christ’s, and observe how very differently He acted! He steadfastly refused to enter into any debate with the devil. He did not dally with temptation, for He had no desire for anything but the will of God. Each time He firmly repulsed the enemy’s advances by taking His stand upon God’s Word—as Eve ought to have done—and concluded by thrusting away Satan’s solicitation with the utmost detestation. A greater contrast cannot be imagined: the woman’s Seed met Satan’s temptation with holy loathing; the woman was in a condition to respond to the serpent’s wiles with unholy delight.

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (Gen 3:2-3). Instead of fleeing in dread from the serpent, Eve conferred with him, which, as the outcome showed, was both foolish and fatal. Satan is much wiser than we are, and if we attempt to meet him on his own ground and argue with him, the result will be disastrous. His evil influence had already begun to affect Eve injuriously, as appears from a close examination of the first part of her reply. The LORD had said, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest *freely* eat” (Gen 2:16); and Eve’s omission of that word “freely” was both significant and ominous—indicating that the generosity of the divine grant was not influencing her heart as it should. But on the other hand, we do not agree with those who charge her with *adding* to God’s Word in Genesis 3:3, for while the “neither shall ye touch it” was not distinctly expressed in Genesis 2:17, nevertheless, it was clearly and necessarily implied: how could she eat of the fruit *without* “touching” it?—the one act requires the other.

There is a very important principle involved in what has just been pointed out: one which it behoves us to understand clearly and make conscience of. That principle may be stated thus: when God forbids any act, He, at the same time, forbids everything tending thereto and leading up to it. Our Lord made that very plain in His sermon on the Mount, as He enforced the spirituality and strictness of the Law when repudiating the errors of the rabbis, who were guilty of modifying its holy requirements. He insisted that “thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13) is by no means to be restricted unto the bare act of murder: that it also prohibits every evil exercise of the mind and heart preceding it—such as hatred, ill-will, and malice. In like manner, He declared that “thou shalt not commit adultery” (verse 14) included very much more than interdicting unlawful intercourse between the sexes, even impure imaginations and desires. That commandment is broken as soon as

there is an unchaste lusting or even looking. God demands very much more than merely keeping clean the outside of the cup and platter (Mat 23:25-26). So too “thou shalt not steal” (Exo 20:15) includes not even *thinking* of so doing, nor handling what is not yours—still less borrowing anything when you have no intention of returning it.

Eve, then, was quite right in concluding that the divine commandment forbidding them to *eat* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil comprehended “neither shall ye touch it,” for the act of eating involves not only the desire and intention so to do, but the touching, handling, plucking, and placing of the fruit in the mouth. But we are not so sure about the exact force of her words, “lest ye die.” Many have supposed she was there toning down the LORD’s “thou shalt *surely* die” of Genesis 2:17. They may be right, but we are not at all sure. “Kiss the Son, *lest* he be angry” (Psa 2:12) is obviously not the language of uncertainty. The Hebrew for “lest” here is *pen* and, in Genesis 24:6, is rendered “that...not.” If the reader will compare John 3:20, 12:42, and 1 Corinthians 1:17, he will see that the force of “lest” in these passages is “otherwise.” John Gill (1697-1771) also states that Eve’s employment of the “lest” is “not at all conclusive that she expressed any doubt, since the word may also be used of the event of anything as in Psalm 2:12, and hence may be rendered, “that ye die not.” We therefore prefer to leave it as “an open question.”

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4). Perceiving his advantage that he had now gained Eve’s ear, the tempter grew bolder and flatly contradicted the divine threatening. He began by seeking to instill a doubt—Is it so or not?—by casting a reflection upon the divine goodness and making Eve dissatisfied with God’s most liberal grant; and then he denied that there was any danger in eating of the fruit. First he had, by implication, slandered God’s character; and now he told a downright lie. If, as we believe was the case, he had himself eaten of the forbidden tree in the woman’s presence, then his action would lend colour to his falsehood. It was as though he said, You need not hesitate, God is only seeking to frighten you. You can see for yourself the fruit is quite harmless, for I have partaken of it without suffering any ill effects. Thus does the great enemy of souls seek to persuade man that he may defy God with impunity, inducing him when “he heareth the words of this curse” to “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst” (Deu 29:19).

No excuse can be made for Eve now. If she had acted foolishly in approaching so near to the fatal tree, if her suspicions were not at once aroused by the serpent’s opening remark, she certainly ought to have been deeply horrified, and turned away immediately, when she heard him giving the lie to the LORD her God. If Joseph “fled” from his temptress (Gen 39:12), much more reason had Eve now to run from the serpent with loathing. Instead, she remained to hear him add, “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5). Therein he declared that not only would no harm be suffered, but they would be the gainers by heeding his suggestion and doing as he had done. A three-fold promise or inducement was set before the woman. First, that by eating of this fruit, their capacity of discernment and perception would be considerably increased, for that is the force of “your eyes shall be opened”—those of their bodies were so already, therefore, his reference must be to the eyes of their understanding. Second, their position would be improved and their power enlarged: they should be as “gods” or angels. Third, their wisdom would be much augmented: “knowing good and evil,” as though that were most desirable, and all of this *at once*—“then,” without any delay.

It will be observed from the above that the serpent addressed himself not to Eve’s bodily appetites, but to the noblest part of her being, by the inducement of such an increase of wisdom as

would elevate our first parents above their then condition and fit them to be meet companions for the celestial creatures. Therein lay the force of his temptation: seeking to fan a desire for forbidden knowledge and self-sufficiency—to act independently of God. From then until now, Satan’s object has been to divert men from the only Source of wisdom and cause them to seek it from him. Nevertheless, the bait dangled before Eve in nowise hid the barb he was using to catch her. Taking together the whole of his statement in verses 4 and 5, the serpent not only charged God with making a threat which He had no intention of fulfilling, but also accused Him of being tyrannical in withholding from them what He knew would be for their good. Said he, You need have no fear that God will be as severe and rigorous as His language sounded. He is only seeking to intimidate you. He is well aware that if you eat this fruit, your knowledge will be greatly enlarged; but this He is unwilling should be your portion, and therefore, He is seeking to prevent it by this unreasonable prohibition.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat” (Gen 3:6). Ere examining the details of this tragic verse, let us carefully consider two questions, and endeavour to supply answers thereto. First, why did not the divine threat in Genesis 2:17 deter Eve from disobeying God? David declared, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart [to be awed thereby, to put it into practice], that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11). It is clear from Genesis 3:3 that God’s Word was at least in Eve’s thoughts when the serpent accosted her: then how was it that it did not preserve her from sin? Surely the answer is that she did not make use of it, but instead dallied with temptation, parleyed with God’s enemy, and believed his lie; and therein is to be found a most solemn warning for us. If we would have God deliver us from the destroyer, then we must determine to shun every occasion of evil and, as Joseph, flee from temptation when it is presented to us. If we really take to heart the solemn failure and fall of Eve, then we shall pray with ever-increasing earnestness, “Lead [me] not into temptation,” and if Thou art pleased for me to be tested, “deliver [me] from evil” (Mat 6:13; Luk 11:4).

Second, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, we are informed that “the serpent beguiled [or ‘cheated’] Eve through his subtilty”; and in 1 Timothy 2:14, that she was “deceived.” How then are we to explain what is recorded of her in Genesis 3, where the historical account seems to make it very plain that she committed the act after due deliberation, with her eyes wide open? Wherein was she “deceived” if she knowingly disobeyed God? The answer is that, as soon as she ceased to be regulated by the light of God’s Word, her imagination became filled with the false impressions presented to her by Satan, and her foolish mind became darkened. Unholy lustings were begotten within her. Her affections and appetites overrode her judgment, and she was persuaded to disbelieve what was true and believe what was false. Oh, the “deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13), which calls good evil and bitter sweet. She was beguiled by consenting to listen to another voice than God’s, and because she disregarded her allegiance to her husband. Oh, my reader, the prelude to every fall from grace is the alienation of the heart from Christ (the Christian’s spiritual Husband), with the consequent beclouding of the judgment. When the truth be rejected, error is welcome. Satan, in his efforts to induce souls to seek their happiness in departing from God, ever adapts his temptations to the cases and circumstances of the tempted.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,” and that it was “pleasant to the eyes.” Let it be duly considered at *what point* this statement comes in the narrative: not at the commencement, but after all that is recorded in the preceding verses had transpired! Let us also observe the *order* of those two clauses. We would naturally expect to find it said that Eve saw the tree was “pleasant to the eyes” *before* mention being made that it was “good for food.” Why then

are the two things reversed? Does not the raising of these queries the better enable us to understand exactly what is meant by “*when the woman saw that the tree was good for food*”? The time-mark must not be ignored, for it cannot be without significance. We suggest that it looks back to the foregoing action of the serpent, which we believe to be clearly implied in the context, namely her seeing him personally eat of the forbidden fruit. How else could she perceive the tree was “good for food” before she had herself partaken of it? Does not the third clause of the verse confirm and clinch this interpretation, for how else could Eve possibly know the fruit was “to be desired to *make one wise*,” unless she had previously witnessed what appeared to her to be an ocular demonstration of the same?

Is it not evident, then, that the words, “And when the woman saw that the tree *was good* for food” signify that since she had beheld the serpent eating thereof without dying or even suffering any injury, she need have no fear to emulate him; yea, could infer that it was from his so doing that he had acquired the faculty of reason and the power of speech, and she too would be much advantaged by partaking of the same? Instead of acting faith on the Word of God, she walked by sight, only to discover—as her sons and daughters often do—that *appearances* are very deceptive. Moreover, she saw “that it was pleasant to the eyes”: there was nothing in the outward appearance of the fruit to denote that it was unfit for eating; on the contrary, it looked attractive. In Genesis 2:9, we read that “out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food”; and, as the remainder of that verse shows, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was no exception. All creation was beautiful and agreeable to the senses, but by her yielding to the serpent’s temptation, *that* tree was now particularly appealing unto Eve: she had a secret hankering after it and unlawfully coveted the same.

Had there been any uncertainty in her mind, her course was plain—to consult her husband, which is ever the wife’s duty and privilege. Instead, we are told that she saw the tree was “to be desired to make one wise.” That is to say, she judged it entirely by what the serpent had told her—and not by what God had said—as a reference to the preceding verse shows. She was flattered with the false hope which the enemy had held out to her. She first gave credence to his “ye shall not surely die.” Next, she was attracted by the prospect of becoming like the “gods” or angels. And then, on her believing the promise of augmented knowledge, lustful longing consumed her. The Hebrew word for “desired” in Genesis 3:6 is the one that is rendered, “Thou shalt not *covet*” in Exodus 20:17. It is the same thing as is termed “concupiscence” in Romans 7:8, and “lust” in James 1:15. Indeed, we may see how that latter passage traces for us in detail the course of Eve’s downfall, and how, in turn, her conduct solemnly illustrates James 1:14-15—“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away [from the path of rectitude] of his own lust [as Eve evidently was in approaching the forbidden tree], and enticed [as she was by the serpent]. Then when lust hath conceived [in her by the seductive promises of the serpent], it bringeth forth sin [externally]: and sin, when it is finished [i.e. the outward act is completed], bringeth forth death”!

“God’s commandment in its full form was Thou shalt not lust after, but abhor the knowledge of good and evil; thou shalt not choose, but refuse it. The prohibition in the instance of the Eden statute, as in that of the Ten Commandments, involved both the inward desire and the outward act, both inclination and volition”—William Shedd (1820–1894). Note well that the holiness of Christ is described as a *refusing* of the evil and choosing the good (Isa 7:15). He who *desires* the prohibited evil does in effect *choose* it; as he who hates another violates the sixth commandment, though he does not actually slay him. The fruit was *not* to be “desired” by Eve, for God had forbidden her to eat it. Instead of desiring, she should have *dreaded* it, but she turned from God as her everlasting portion and chief end. In lusting after what God had prohibited, she preferred the

creature to the Creator. Unspeakably solemn warning for us. If we estimate things by our senses, or by what others say of them, instead of accepting God's valuation, we are certain to err in our judgment. If we resort to carnal reasoning, we shall quickly persuade ourselves that wrong is right. Nothing is *good* for you, my reader, save that which you can receive from *God's* hand and thank Him for it!

"She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" without consulting Adam. So strong was the unlawful lusting of her heart that she could no longer abstain; and thus, she committed the overt act, thereby completing "the transgression." Yes, "*she* took of the fruit thereof, and did eat"—it was not the serpent who put it into her mouth! The devil may tempt, but *force* anyone he cannot. It was by her own free act she took of the fruit, and therefore, she could rightly blame none but herself. By this time, Adam had rejoined her, for we are told that she "gave also unto her husband *with her*"—the first time he is mentioned in the sacred narrative as being by her side! Such is the vile nature of sin: ourselves yielding to temptation, and then becoming the tempters of others—seeking to drag them down to our level. "And he did eat," instead of refusing what his God-defying wife proffered him. He "was not deceived" (1Ti 2:14), which, if possible, made his guilt the greater. He "hearkened unto the voice of [his] wife" (Gen 3:17): probably, she repeated to him what the serpent had said unto her, commending the fruit, and possibly pointing out that they must have misunderstood the LORD's words, since she had eaten and was still alive.

Thus did man apostatize from God. It was a revolt from his Maker, an insurrection from His supremacy, a rebelling against His authority. He deliberately resisted the divine will, rejected God's Word, and deserted His way. Thereby, he was despoiled of his primitive excellence and forfeited all his happiness. Adam cast himself and all his posterity into the deepest gulf of woe and wretchedness. Such, my reader, was *the origin* of human depravity. Genesis 3 gives us the divinely inspired account of how sin entered this world, and supplies the only adequate and satisfactory explanation both of its six thousand years' history and of its present-day condition.

PRIVATE JUDGMENT

Part 1

It is our present design to treat of the right, the necessity, and the duty of each person freely to exercise his reason, conscience, and will—especially in matters pertaining to his soul. Every man has the right to think for himself and express or aver his thoughts on political, moral, and spiritual matters, without being subject to any civil or ecclesiastical penalty or inconvenience on that account. Conversely, no man is entitled to force his ideas upon others and demand that they subscribe thereto, still less to propagate them to the disturbing of the public peace. This is a truth which needs proclaiming and insisting upon today, not only because of the widespread apathy towards taking a firm stand for the same, but because the dearly bought liberties, which have, for so many years, been enjoyed by those living in the English-speaking world [and] are now in danger of being filched from them. On the one hand is the steady growth of what is termed, "Totali-

tarianism,” under which the minds and bodies of its subjects are little more than robots; and on the other hand is the rapidly increasing power and arrogance of Rome, in which the souls of its members are the slaves of a rigid and merciless tyranny.

In writing upon the freedom of the individual, it is our design to shun as far as possible anything which savours of *party* politics; yet, since the scope of our present theme requires us to say at least a few words on the right of *civil* liberty, we cannot entirely avoid that which pertains to human governments. But instead of airing our personal views, we shall treat only of those broad and general principles which are applicable to all nations and all ages, and restrict ourselves very largely to what the Holy Scriptures teach thereon. God has not left His people, or even men at large, without definite instruction concerning their civil and spiritual duties and privileges; and it behoves each of us to be informed and regulated thereby. Broadly speaking, the purpose of the State is to promote the welfare of the commonwealth, and to protect each individual in the enjoyment of his temporal rights; but it is entirely *outside* its province to prescribe the religion of its subjects. Rulers, be they civil or ecclesiastical, have only a delegated power, and are the agents and servants of the community, who entrust to them so much power as is necessary to the discharge of their office and duty.

No human government is perfect, and it may appear to us that a particular form of government is acting unwisely in its legislation and arbitrarily in its administration. The question therefore arises, How should a Christian citizen act under a particularly *offensive* one? First, the Word of God requires from him full submission and obedience to all those of its enactments which are not in themselves *sinful*: and that not because the government is one of his choice or because its policy meets with his approval, but because God Himself has ordered, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God...Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Rom 13:1-2). Whatever be the particular *form* of government, it is of divine ordering, and His providence has placed us under it. This is also evident from both the teaching and personal example of Christ, who bids us, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Mat 22:21). But second, if the government should demand of me compliance with anything which is contrary to the revealed will of God, then it is my bounden duty to *refuse* obedience; yet in such a case, God requires me to submit meekly to any penalty imposed upon me for my declining to comply.

That a child of God *must* refuse to do the bidding of a government when it enjoins something contrary to the divine will is clear from the cases of the three Hebrews (Dan 3:18), and of Daniel in Babylon (verses 10-13), who firmly declined to conform unto the king’s idolatrous demands. It is equally evident from the case of the apostles, who, when they were commanded by the authorities “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus,” answered, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Act 4:18-19, and compare 5:29). Yet note well that, while insisting upon their spiritual rights, in neither case did any of them defend themselves or their cause by resorting to violence against the chief magistrate. Let it be steadily borne in mind that an incompetent or an unjust government is better than none, for the only other alternative is anarchy and a reign of terror, as history clearly and tragically testifies—witness the horrors perpetrated in Paris, when its streets literally ran with blood at the great French Revolution; and the awful carnage and sufferings which more recently obtained in Russia when the regime of the Czars was overthrown. “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (1Pe 3:17).

A further question needs considering at this point: *Who* is to be the judge of *which* decrees of a government are *sinful*? Obviously, in the last resort, [it is] the citizen himself. That is the scriptur-

al and Protestant doctrine of the right of private judgment: to test what the law of the land requires by the divine Law. God's authoritative Word forbids me doing anything which He has prohibited, or which is morally wrong. If any form of government insists upon being the absolute judge of its own case, then there is an end of personal independence and freedom. Every rational being lies under moral obligations to God—obligations which are immediate and inevitable. No government, and no human creature, can answer for him before God in a case of conscience, or come between him and his guilt; and therefore, it is the most monstrous injustice and iniquity that any power, save the divine, should dictate to the conscience. It may be said that this is a dangerous doctrine that it is likely to lead to disorder and insurrection. Not so where the *two* parts of it be maintained: the right to refuse *only* when something is demanded which God's Word forbids, and the duty of meekly submitting to the penalty thereof—the latter will check a misuse of the former.

Under no conceivable circumstances should any man relinquish the right to think and decide for himself. His reason, will, and conscience are divine gifts, and God holds him responsible for the right use of them, and will condemn him if he buries his talents in the earth. But as it is with so many other of His favours, this one is not valued at its true worth and soon may not be prized at all, unless it be entirely removed and there be a return to the bondage of the "dark ages." A considerable majority of the present generation are largely, if not wholly, unaware—so ignorant are they of history—that for centuries, even in Britain, civil liberty and the right of private judgment upon spiritual things were denied the masses by both State and Church, politicians and prelates alike lording it over the people. Nor was their tyrannical dominion easily or quickly broken: only after much suffering and a protracted fight was full freedom secured. Alas, that such a dearly bought and hard-won privilege should now be regarded so lightly and be in real danger of being lost again. Nearly two hundred years ago, Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) pointed out, "Despotism has ever proved an insatiable gulf. Throw ever so much into it, it would still yearn for more." Significantly did he add, "Were liberty to perish from any part of the English-speaking world, the whole would soon be deluged by the black sea of arbitrary power."

But we must now turn to that part of our subject which more especially concerns the child of God and his *spiritual* interests. There were three basic truths which the battle of the Reformation recovered for Christendom: the sufficiency and supremacy of the Scriptures, the right of private judgment, and justification by faith without the deeds of the Law. Each of those was flatly denied by the Papacy, which taught, and still insists, that human "traditions" are of equal authority with God's Word, that the Romish church alone is qualified to explain the Bible or interpret its contents, and that human merits are necessary in order to our acceptance with God. Having treated at some length, in recent articles, with the first, we are now considering the second. Rightly did Martin Luther (1483-1546) affirm that man is responsible to none but God for his religious views and beliefs, that no earthly power has any right to interfere in the sacred concerns of the soul—to be lord of his conscience, or to have dominion over his faith. But while the Reformers contended vigorously for the right and privilege of each individual to read the Scriptures for himself, and, under the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to form his own opinions of what they teach, yet considerable *qualification* was made in the application and outworking of that principle in actual practice. So it was too in the century that followed, commonly termed "the Puritan period."

The early Reformers and many of the Puritans were for one uniform mode of worship and one form of temporal government, with which all *must* comply outwardly, whatever their individual convictions and sentiments. However desirable such a common regime might appear, to *demand* subjection thereunto was not only contrary to the very essence and spirit of Christianity, but also

at direct variance with the right of private judgment. No man should ever be *compelled*—either by reward or punishment—to be a member of any Christian society, or to continue in or of it any longer than he considers it is his duty to do so. Any attempt to *enforce* uniformity is an attack upon the right of private judgment, and is to invade the office of Christ, who alone is the Head of His people. But alas, how few are fit to be entrusted with any measure of authority. When Anglicanism was supreme, at the close of the sixteenth century, anyone who failed to attend the parish church was subject to a fine! In the next century, when the Presbyterians held the reins, they proved to be equally intolerant to those who differed from them.

“Each party agreed too well in asserting the necessity for uniformity in public worship, and of using the sword of the magistrate for the support and defence of their principles, of which both made an ill use whenever they could grasp the power into their own hands. The *standard* of uniformity according to the Bishops was the Queen’s supremacy and the laws of the land; according to the Puritans, the decrees of provincial and national synods, allowed and enforced by the civil magistrate; but neither party was for admitting that liberty of conscience, which is every man’s right, so far as is consistent with the peace of the civil government”—Daniel Niel (1678-1743), *History of the Puritans*, volume 2 (page 92). Well did that faithful and impartial historian point out, “Christ is the sole lawgiver of His Church, and has appointed all things necessary to be observed in it to the end of the world; therefore, when He has indulged a liberty to His followers, it is as much their duty to maintain it, as to observe any other of His precepts.” Differences of opinion, especially in “church government,” soon led to further divisions and the formation of parties and sects; and in many instances, Protestants were as dictatorial and tyrannical as the Papists had been, demanding unqualified submission to *their* articles of faith and forms of worship. Only after bitter persecution and much hardship did real religious liberty gradually emerge, and never yet has it fully and universally obtained in Protestantism.

No doubt it would be interesting to many of our readers were we to trace the gradual emergence of religious freedom from bondage in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Britain, and the U.S.A., and the various and often unexpected set-backs experienced; but even a bare outline of its history would be too lengthy a digression. Nor is it hardly necessary. Human nature is the same in all lands, and in all ages, and those possessing a workable knowledge of the same in themselves and their fellows can easily visualize with their minds the *nature* of those events. Most of us, if we are honest, must acknowledge that there is quite a bit of the pontiff in us, and therefore, we should not be surprised to learn that there have been many popish men in most sections of Christendom, and that a spirit of intolerance and uncharitableness has often marred the characters of real Christians. It has been comparatively rare for those of prominence to insist that “Every species of positive penalty for differing modes of faith and worship is at once anti-Christian, and impolitic, irrational, and unjust. While any religious denomination of men deport themselves as dutiful subjects to the State, and as harmless members of the community, they are entitled to civil protection and social esteem, whether they be Protestants, Papists, Jews, Mohammedans, or Pagans”—A. Toplady. *That*, and nothing short of that, is a true Christian and Catholic spirit.

“Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read” (Isa 34:16), for in it alone is His will made known, the divine way of salvation revealed, and a perfect rule and standard of conduct set before us. That Book is a divine communication, an authoritative, “Thus saith the LORD.” It is addressed to the entire human race, and is binding on every member of it. By it, each of us will be judged in the Day to come. It is therefore both the duty and privilege of every person to read it for himself, that he familiarize himself with its contents, perceive their meaning, and conform his conduct to its requirements. It is to be read reverently, for it is the voice of the Most High which

speaks therein. It is to be read impartially, setting aside personal prejudices and preconceived ideas, receiving it without doubting or question. It is to be read humbly, begging its Author to enlighten the understanding, and teach His way. It is to be read constantly, daily, so that we may drink into its spirit and make it our counsellor. It is not only to be read, but also “seek ye out of the book”: take the trouble to compare one part with another, and thereby obtain its full light on each particular subject and detail. By such pains, it will be found that the Holy Scriptures are self-interpreting.

In a matter so momentous as my obtaining a correct understanding of God’s will for me; and where the eternal interests of my soul are concerned, it deeply concerns me to obtain *first-hand* information of the same; and not to accept blindly what others say and do, or receive without question what any church teaches. I must rigidly examine and test by God’s Word all that I hear and read. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). Religion is an intensely personal thing which cannot be transacted by proxy. It consists of immediate dealings between the individual soul and its Maker. No one can repent for me, believe for me, love God for me, or render obedience to His precepts on my behalf. Those are personal acts which God holds me responsible to perform. Every man is responsible for his beliefs. Neither ignorance, nor error, is merely a misfortune, but something highly culpable, since the truth is available unto us in our mother tongue. If some be deceived by false prophets, the blame rests wholly on themselves. Many complain that there is so much difference and contrariety among preachers, they scarcely know what to believe, or what to do. Let them do as God has bidden: “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD” (Isa 34:16)!

God has given me that precious Book for the very purpose of making known to me what I am to believe and do; and if I read and search it with a sincere desire to understand its meaning and be regulated by its precepts, I shall not be left in the dark. If I so act, there will be an end to my perplexity because of the “confusion of tongues” in the religious world—for there are not contradictions, no contrarieties in God’s Word. He holds me responsible to *test* everything preachers say: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20). That Word is the sole standard of faith and practice, the “sure word of prophecy” to which we do well to give heed as unto a light shining in a dark place (2Pe 1:19). Faith rests not upon the testimony of any man, nor is it subject to any man. It rests on the Word of God, and it is amenable to Him alone. “He that builds his faith upon preachers, though they preach nothing but the truth, and he pretends to believe it, hath indeed no faith at all, but a wavering opinion, built upon a rotten foundation”—John Owen (1616-1683). Then “cease ye from man...for wherein is *he* to be accounted of?” (Isa 2:22), and “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5). ❧

JUNE

FOR EVER

The term “for ever” and its variants occur very frequently in the Bible—one of the many marks by which it is distinguished from the writings of men. Necessarily and obviously so. Man is but of yesterday, a creature of time; and though he is endowed with an immortal soul, his interests are confined to temporal things, and his energies are devoted almost entirely to the acquirement and enjoyment of the same. With very rare exceptions, until he be quickened by the gracious power of God, the outlook of man is limited to the present. Hence, it is that his writings are confined to those subjects pertaining unto things of time and sense; and if he should turn his thoughts unto “the great beyond,” it is but to dream or indulge in idle speculations. But not so of the One who gave us being: of Him it has to be said, “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa 90:2). He is the unchanging I am, “which art, and wast, and art to come” (Rev 11:17). This excellency of His being is clearly reflected in His Word, for it reveals to us those counsels which He made before the foundation of the world, and acquaints us with things after it is finished. The Bible treats of everlasting realities, and makes known to us our eternal interests and destinies.

The certainty of the divine decrees: “The counsel of the LORD standeth *for ever*, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psa 33:11). There is no if or but, peradventure or perhaps, about them: all the divine counsels are inviolable and infallibly sure. At the close of time, it will be clearly demonstrated before an assembled universe that the whole of God’s will was fully accomplished: “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the LORD, *that* shall stand” (Pro 19:21). Man’s purposes are like himself—fallible and fickle: but God’s are firmer than a rock, for they are formed by infinite and immutable wisdom. It cannot be otherwise, for “he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (Job 23:13). With Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17). None can bribe or induce Him to alter one detail of His eternal plan. No unforeseen contingency can arise, for “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act 15:18). His power is invincible, and therefore, it is impossible for any to thwart Him. He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph 1:11), so that none of the devices of His enemies can prevent Him—if they could, He would not be the supreme and universal LORD of all.

The perfection of the divine workmanship: “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be *for ever*: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” (Ecc 3:14). God’s works are like Himself—incapable of improvement, perfect. “O LORD, how great are thy works!” (Psa 92:5). The execution of them may be opposed (as Saul

“kicked against the pricks” Act 26:14), but they cannot be obstructed by any created power. Since there be no deficiency in them, nothing needs adding; since there be no superfluity, nothing taken away. “And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing” (Psa 64:9). While the immediate reference in Psalm 33:11 was to God’s decrees, this one is to the execution of them. His covenant is “ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5). The work of Christ is a “finished” one, so that none can add to or diminish from it. God’s promises are all “Yea” and “Amen.” His sentence of justification will never be reversed. Pardoned sins will never be remembered by Him. The miracle of regeneration is durable. The graces which God works in us “abideth” (1Co 13:13). Well may we exclaim, “Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa 139:14).

The immutability of the saints’ standing: “For by one offering he hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14). That is a wondrous and blessed statement, yet one which the faith of few of God’s people lays hold of. It makes known the present and perpetual acceptance of the Church unto God. It tells of what the efficacious sacrifice of Christ has secured for all His people: not merely the putting away of their sins, not only obtaining for them immediate access to God, but also securing such a perfect standing before Him that they may draw near in full confidence. All the excellence of Christ’s oblation is upon them. His infinite merits have been imputed to them, and therefore, does God view them with the utmost complacency and delight. The word “perfect” here means “completed or consummated” and refers not to anything subjective, but objective. Likewise, “sanctified” here signifies not an experiential but a relative one, having the force of “hallowed.” As another has said, “The sanctification of Hebrews 10 is as complete and permanent as the justification of Romans 5, admitting of neither addition nor diminution.” This sacrificial “perfection” of Christians is irrevocable and cannot be lost, for it rests on something *outside* of themselves. “Perfected for ever”: contrary to all our sense of unworthiness and unfitness for such blessing and glory, it must be *believed* if our hearts are to be kept in peace. Yet, while rejoicing in the same, we shall be for ever humbled by the remembrance that it is all of grace and gift, and that we have no part in it except as the objects of God’s love and the recipients of His favour. Let us rest on the finished work of Christ and express our gratitude in lives which honour Him.

The permanency of the mediatorial office: “Thou art a priest *for ever* after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa 110:4). Only in the God-man is the chasm between the creature and the Creator bridged; and therefore, His mediatorial office is to be exercised not only throughout this time-state, but *eternally*. That office is threefold: prophetic, priestly, and kingly. No doubt, there will be a great change of method in the exercise of that office in heaven; yet exercised it will be. Though the knowledge of His glorified saints will be vastly increased, they will not be infallible, but in need of teaching still; and as Revelation 7:17 assures us: “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall *feed* them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” Though sinless, perfectly holy, yet the merits of Christ are the foundation of their eternal standing before God; and they will still need the great High Priest to present their praises unto God. As for His kingship and government of them, even on the new earth, it is “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1): “God is supreme, but the Lamb administers the power and authority of the throne”—Walter Scott (1796-1861). “Christ shall be the means and way of communications between God and His glorified saints for ever”—John Owen (1616-1683).

The durability of the divine clemency: “O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth *for ever*” (Psa 136:1). This injunction is repeated in the two following verses, so that we have therein a call to laud the Triune Jehovah; and in each instance, for the same reason.

Special thanks are due unto Him for His perpetual benignity unto them, for even at the Redeemer's return, this characteristic will be exercised by Him—"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude :21); "The Lord grant unto him that he may find *mercy* of the Lord in *that day*" (2Ti 1:18). No less than twenty-six times in this psalm occurs the refrain, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Numerous examples of the same are cited: in putting forth His power in cleaving a way through formidable obstacles for the deliverance of His people, in providing for them in their wilderness journey, and in giving them a rich heritage.

The utter hopelessness of the lost: "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *for ever*" (Jude :13). This in nowise clashes with the foregoing, but rather supplies a confirmation, for the separation and banishing of the wicked unto their own place is an act of mercy unto the saints. Equally so is it an act of divine justice on the wicked: since they "loved darkness rather than light" (Joh 3:19), it is fitting that the darkness should be their final and dismal abode. This "blackness of darkness" seems to be a parallel expression with the "outer darkness" of Matthew 8:12—remotest from God, who is the Fountain of light. Thus, it expresses first their eternal exile from God—"punished with everlasting destruction *from* the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:9). Second, as "light" is a figure of life and blessing, so is darkness of wretchedness and woe. Third, the utter remedilessness of their condition—unrelieved by a single ray of hope: after millions of years, their suffering no nearer an end than it was at the outset. "This is the hell of hell, that, as the torments thereof are without measure, so without end"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

The perpetuity of the saints' bliss: "I will dwell in the house of the LORD *for ever*" (Psa 23:6). This is in marked and blessed antithesis from the "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:9), which constitutes the doom of the lost. Their respective portions are contrasted at every point. The wicked enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25); we shall participate in those "pleasures at God's right hand," which are "for evermore" (Psa 16:11). Agents of Satan seize their souls at death; ours are carried to heaven by the angels. They shall be raised "to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2); we in "honour and glory" (1Pe 1:7). To them it shall be said, "Depart from me, ye cursed" (Mat 25:41); to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father" (Mat 25:34). They "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10); we shall "ever be [for ever] with the Lord" (1Th 4:17; Rev 22:5).

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

6. Fullness of Joy (1Jo 1:4)

"And these things write we unto you, that your [or 'our'] joy may be full" (1Jo 1:4). For the benefit of your preachers (and also those of God's people who desire to form the habit of *studying* Scripture more closely), we may say that we began our own examination and meditation of this verse by framing the following questions, and then seeking answers thereto: (1) Exactly what is

referred to by the “these things”? (2) Why the “*we* write” rather than the “I write,” as in 1 John 2:1, 12, 26? What is the connection between the “these things” and the fullness of “joy”? (4) What is the nature of the joy here spoken of? (5) Is a fullness of it attainable in this life? (6) Are we to read it as “that *your* joy may be full” or “*our* joy,” as in the R.V.¹³ and in Bagster’s *Interlinear*? The results of our own searchings and ponderings will now be set before the reader, though we shall not adhere strictly to the order of those six queries. Personally, we have found that by means of such interrogations, we are enabled to make a more definite approach to a verse, and thereby, obtain something better than a general and vague idea of its contents.

“And *these things* write we unto you.” We believe there is a twofold reference. As the opening word indicates, the principal allusion is unto that which immediately precedes. Here again the link connecting one verse with another is quite evident, and the order of their contents corresponds exactly with Christian experience. First, a setting forth of God’s Son as incarnate, and our saving apprehension of Him as such by His revelation unto the soul as “the Word of life”: for as it is rationality and the exercise thereof which fits men to be companionable with one another, so it is our being made recipients of a spiritual life which capacitates us to have intercourse with God. Second, the actual enjoyment of intimate fellowship with the Triune God in and through the Mediator, and with all His children, as the consequence. Third, fullness of joy as the outcome. Thus, the former stands related to the latter as does cause to effect, the tree to the fruit, the means to the end. And here, too, the one is commensurate with the other: as the measure of our fellowship with the Father and the Son determines the measure of our communion with fellow saints, so in proportion to the constancy and depth of this fellowship in its three forms will be the degree of our joy.

More closely still, verse 4 intimates one of the essential characteristics of the communion referred to in verse 3: that it is a fellowship *of joy*—the sharing together of a mutual delight. Thus, we see once more the deep importance of paying close attention to the immediate context, that we may be better enabled to follow the order of thought and development of the subject under discussion. It is by observing the precise relation of one verse to another that much light is cast upon the whole, and the significance and perspective of each detail is more clearly perceived. But more largely the words, “And *these things* write we unto you” must be regarded as including all that follows, for not only do verses 5-7 show that the subject of fellowship is there still under discussion, but John’s specific design in writing this epistle was to lead God’s children into a deeper and fuller experiential fellowship, with the resultant happiness inseparable therefrom. The whole contents of this epistle are to be regarded as a making known of the various *means* which promote both our fellowship with God and the increase of our joy in Him; and a setting forth of the different things which *hinder* the same.

John’s purpose in saying, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (1Jo 2:1) was to warn against what would—if allowed and unrepented of—break their fellowship and quench their joy. When he exhorts them, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (verse 15), he is telling us that any undue familiarity with those who are God’s enemies, or any inordinate affection for the creature, is inimical to our communion with and delighting ourselves in Him. Likewise, his “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (verse 26) signifies that they must ever be on their guard against false prophets, lest their joy be blighted by erroneous teaching. Fellowship with God must not be looked for *outside* the way of His assignment or the order which He has appointed: therefore, we must earnestly

¹³ **R.V.** – The Revised Version, completed in 1885, had Westcott and Hort on the translation committee, attempted to update the A.V., and began the modern translation movement.

avoid all tampering with sin, deny our curiosity to hear or read the proponents of strange doctrine, and flirt not with the world. Finally, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1Jo 5:13) was but a repetition in thought, though varied in language of verse 4, for there can be no fullness of joy while the soul is in a state of uncertainty of its acceptance in the Beloved.

“And these things write *we* unto you.” It will be remembered that John had employed the plural number throughout verses 1-3, for he was not only relating the special privileges which had been enjoyed by the twelve, but was speaking there as their mouthpiece. He longed that all of God’s children should (so far as their case admitted) enter into the same free and familiar intercourse with God in Christ. “That ye also may have fellowship with us” (1Jo 1:3) imported that ye may enter more fully into an experiential knowledge of the truth set forth in verses 1-2, and thereby participate in the ineffable joy which comes through a believing apprehension of it; for Christian “fellowship” consists of association of heart, attachment to the same objects, and having together thoughts, affections, hopes, and joys in common. Thus it was at the beginning, and has (in varying degrees of intelligence) continued throughout this age. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...And they continued stedfastly in the *apostles’* doctrine and fellowship” (Act 2:41-42). Moreover, the saints are “built upon the foundation of the apostles [compare Revelation 21:14] and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph 2:20), which means that the doctrine which the apostles taught, and which is embodied for us in their writings, is the basis on which the Church rests.

Observe two things in the last-quoted Scripture. First, the plural number used again. The Church is not built upon Peter, as Rome erroneously insists, but, doctrinally considered, rests upon the teaching of the whole of the apostles—who were also “prophets,” i.e. endued with the gift of divine utterance. But second, the Lord Jesus is the “chief corner stone” (1Pe 2:6), for the entire validity and efficacy of the apostles’ testimony lay in the name of Him whose witnesses they were. In his second epistle, Peter said, “I now write unto you...That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of *us* the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2Pe 3:1-2). Though each of them wrote on different subjects, with a particular end and design, they were all inspired by the one Spirit. Characteristically speaking, Paul was the apostle of faith, Peter of hope, John of love, James of good works, while Jude warned against apostasy or the abandonment of such. Being of one heart and soul, having the same desire and mission, it was fitting for any one to speak in the name of them all, using the term, “we.” They proclaimed the same Gospel and bore witness to the excellence of the same Christ. Their aim was ever the same: to make Him known and gain unto Him a glorious name. Whenever they wrote, it was in order to build up the saints. In their doctrine, they differed not one iota.

The fountain from which all spiritual joy proceeds is that blessed One who is set before us in the foregoing verses. As He expressly declared, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (Joh 4:14). It is in intimate contact and converse with Christ that real communion with Him consists and satisfaction is found: in seeing, hearing, *handling* Him—we can only “handle” one who is near and dear to us. It is by having the mind engaged with His perfections and beauty, meditating thereon and reveling therein, that the heart is drawn out to Him. Nothing so warms and nourishes a Christian’s soul as a believing and adoring contemplation of the One who loved him and gave Himself for him. We should therefore see to it that, above all else, a realization of Christ’s surpassing love is kept fresh in our hearts; for this, in

turn, will move us to seek yet closer and more constant fellowship with Him. That was the source and spring of Christ's own joy—His absorption with the Father's love unto Him: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (Joh 3:35). Note how frequently He dwelt upon the Father's love: John 5:20; 15:9; 17:23-24.

Fullness of joy is something which all men desire, but which very few attain unto. Nor is that difficult to explain: they seek it in the wrong place. Alas, that many of God's people are so often guilty of making the same mistake. In the pride of their hearts, they want to find something of self to rejoice in; yielding to a spirit of legality, they look for happiness in their own experiences or attainments. But that is to miss the substance and chase the shadows. As it is with our natural eyes, so with our spiritual: they are designed to look at external objects and not internal ones. "Rejoice in the Lord," and that "always" (Phi 4:4), is the delightful task which faith is to engage in. All real happiness is bound up in Him. Every other joy but that which issues from fellowship with the Lord is but a counterfeit one. That is sensual, as the rich fool's "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luk 12:19); this is spiritual. The one is superficial and temporary; the other, solid and lasting. The former comforts only in health and during a season of prosperity; whereas, the latter sustains upon a bed of pain, cheers the soul in times of affliction, yea, enables its possessor to exult at the prospect of death.

Now this joy is not to be regarded as a luxury, but rather as a spiritual necessity. We are obligated to be glad in God. It is something more than a sacred privilege, namely, a bounden duty unto which we are expressly commanded: "But let all those that put their trust in thee *rejoice*: let them ever shout for *joy*, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be *joyful* in thee" (Psa 5:11). "Be *glad* in the LORD, and *rejoice*, ye righteous: and shout for *joy*, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psa 32:11). "*Rejoice* in the Lord always: and again I say, *Rejoice*" (Phi 4:4). "*Rejoice* evermore" (1Th 5:16). If we do not give unto Him, who is so excellent in Himself and so gracious and beneficial unto us, that esteem which rises to the degree of rejoicing in Him, then we sadly fail in rendering to Him that honour which is His due. Our thoughts and valuation of Him are utterly unworthy, unless they bring us so to delight ourselves in Him as to fill us with joy. While we seek God's favour in Christ, live in obedience to His will, and rest in His love, we are warranted to keep a holy feast continually.

It is certainly not the revealed will of Christ that His followers should walk through this world in a spirit of dejection: rather are they a reproach unto Him if they do so. One chief reason why the Lord Jesus uttered His high priestly prayer in the presence of His disciples was that they might be filled with comfort and good cheer: "These things I speak in the world, [in order] that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (Joh 17:13). He was about to leave them and return to the Father, and He would dispel their sorrow and fill them with holy gladness by apprehensions of *His* joy. And of what did *that* consist? First, the realization that He had glorified the Father in the place where He had been so grievously slighted (verse 1). Second, that He had "finished the work" given Him to do (verse 4). Third, that He was about to return to that ineffable glory which He had with the Father "before the world was" (verse 5). Christ was rejoicing at the prospect before Him, and He would have His disciples make His joy theirs. We are to rejoice in a triumphant Saviour who completed the work of our redemption. We are to rejoice in the blessed fact that the head once crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now. The knowledge of this should banish all gloom and fill us with joy unspeakable.

But more. By giving us the wondrous privilege of hearing His prayer in John 17, Christ has made it known that *His* changed position has made no alteration in His attitude toward *us* that His love for His people has not diminished in the least. By His generous act on that memorable occa-

sion, Christ assured His disciples (and us) that when He entered into His well-earned reward and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, His thoughts would still be engaged with His redeemed. They were inexpressibly dear unto Him—as the Father’s gift to Him, and as the travail of His own soul. Their names were inscribed upon the palms of His hands, yea, upon His very heart. He could not forget them: rather would He occupy Himself on high by constantly pleading their cause. If our hearts are suitably affected with the amazing fact that our great High Priest “ever liveth to make intercession for [us]” (Heb 7:25), we cannot but be full of joy. A considerable part of our happiness is to contemplate Christ’s joy in us! He rejoiced in His people before the world was made (Pro 8:29-31), He rejoices now in and “over them to do them good” (Jer 32:41), and He will express it even more abundantly when He brings them Home unto Himself.

Further. The joy of the Christian will be promoted and increased by observing the various things for which Christ here petitioned the Father in John 17, for in them we discover what are the desires of His heart unto “his own.” First, He prayed for their preservation: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me” (verse 11). Second, He sought their jubilation: “That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (verse 13). Third, for their emancipation from sin: “That thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (verse 15), so that none of them should be overwhelmed by it. Fourth, for their consecration: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (verse 17), that they may grow in grace and adorn their profession. Fifth, for their unification: “That they all may be one” (verse 21), which will be fully realized when “we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Sixth, for their association with Himself: “That they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (verse 24). Seventh, for their eternal gratification: “That they may behold my glory” (verse 24). Since all these requests will be granted (Joh 11:42), what cause have we constantly and fervently to rejoice!

Yet further. Christ has made most gracious provision for the joy of His people in the gift of the Comforter. When His disciples were dismayed and dejected at the prospect of His departure, we find that again and again, He reassured and cheered them by the promise of the Holy Spirit. “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (Joh 14:18), which He did in a most blessed manner on the day of Pentecost. Then it was that their “sorrow” was “turned into joy” (Joh 16:20). The Comforter is here not only to convict of sin and bring souls unto repentance, but, following that operation, to fill them with gladness and to experience “joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom 14:17). This He does by opening and blessing the Word, by taking of the things of Christ and showing the same unto them, by witnessing with their spirits that they are the sons of God, by producing in them the spirit of praise. The blessed Spirit uses the words of Christ, especially those of John 17, to work upon the renewed mind, giving it some blessed apprehensions of the joy of which Christ is both the object and the subject, of the joy which comes from Him and centres in Him, bringing us into communion with the same and making our souls realize the satisfying portion we have in Him.

A word now on the *nature* of this joy. That is the more necessary since not a few are apt to naturalize and carnalize the same, regarding it as a mere spirit of elation or happy feeling of exhilaration. Instead, it is a heavenly grace, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), and therefore, something spiritual, supernatural, and divine. God is alike its Author, Object, and Maintainer. As the peace which He gives “passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7), so the joy He communicates is said to be “unspeakable” (1Pe 1:8)—not only excelling sense, but beyond full comprehension. It is an elevation of soul after the Lord and of things above. It is a delighting ourselves in God, for since all happiness be the enjoyment of the chief good, then all felicity is bound up in Him. Joy is heaven

begun in the saint, for his blessedness here and hereafter differs not in kind, but only in degree. It is therefore a joy which is pure and unalloyed. As spiritual love is far more than a sentiment, as God's peace is more excellent than mere placidity or tranquility of mind, so the joy which Christ imparts to the believer is vastly superior to any natural emotion. It is a state of exultation, a complacency of heart, a full satisfaction of soul as it feasts upon a perfect Object.

Spiritual joy results from the heart's being engaged with the LORD: "And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation" (Psa 35:9). "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee...My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" (Psa 63:3, 5). We rejoice that all our sins are forgiven, that we are accepted in the Beloved, that we are made the friends of God, that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, that we have a building of God eternal in the heavens. Such a joy is something to which the natural man is a total stranger: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that *their* corn and *their* wine increased" (Psa 4:7)—the love of God and His goodness to us in Christ affords a pleasure and a satisfaction which no creature can. Spiritual joy is a very different thing from mere exuberance of spirits or ecstatic feelings, being entirely a holy and supernatural experience. No matter what may be his circumstances in this world, the Christian has ground and matter for rejoicing at all times, and is called upon to do so "evermore," being assured "your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (Joh 16:22).

In view of what has been pointed out in the last two paragraphs, the Christian reader should more readily perceive the radical difference there is between natural hilarity and spiritual joy. The former is incapable of rising above the woes of earth. It wanes in the presence of life's hardships. Its bloom departs when the sun of prosperity is beclouded. It cannot survive the loss of health or of loved ones. Vastly different is the joy of the Lord. It is restricted neither to surroundings nor temperaments, and fluctuates not with our varying moods or circumstances. Nature may indeed assert itself, as Christ wept by the grave of Lazarus, yet its possessor can say with Paul, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2Co 6:10). When the hurricane lashes the surface of the sea, the heart of it is undisturbed. Grace enables us to "glory [even] in tribulations" (Rom 5:3). While the bodies of the martyrs were burning at the stake, hallelujahs were on their lips. Joy is quite consistent with godly sorrow, for each fresh discovery of the worthlessness of self should lead us closer to God.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

58. Deliverance (10:6-10)

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1). In the heyday of youth, "while the evil days come not" (Ecc 12:1), those words mean comparatively little unto us. As the sunshine of prosperity is enjoyed, our minds do not dwell upon the shelter provided for the storm. Nevertheless, God has ordained that, sooner or later, each of His children will be devoutly

thankful that such a verse is in His Word, and give them to prove experientially the verity and preciousness of it. Then it is, but only then, we discover that “trouble” is a *blessing* in disguise—as the dark clouds pour down showers which refresh the parched earth. It is true that trouble does not always issue in conscious and manifest blessing, but in such case, the fault is ours. Many of the troubles which people impiously ascribe to “bad luck” or “misfortune” are brought upon themselves by hurried decisions or foolish conduct. But if the Christian will place the blame where it belongs, confess to God the sinful failures which have occasioned his trouble, and beg Him graciously to sanctify the same unto him, his prayer will be answered, and he too will learn that the divine Workman can bring good out of evil.

It is very blessed to observe the climacteric emphasis in Psalm 46:1. First, what God is in Himself: “Our refuge and strength”—the One to whom we may turn for succor and shelter; the One whose grace is sufficient (2Co 12:9) for every need. Second, what He is unto His people in trouble—namely a real “help,” for He is no “fair weather friend,” but One who may confidently be counted upon in the day of adversity and affliction. Third, this is amplified thus: He is not only a “help,” but a *present* one: not one who is far distant, but by our side—“closer than hands or feet.” And to make it still more emphatic and impressive, “a *very* present help,” added the Psalmist—as Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) expressed it, “More nearly present than the trouble itself.” For, mark it well, it is not merely that the LORD is a very present help “in time of trouble,” as so many misquote it, but “in trouble” itself. Thus, His assistance may be counted upon with absolute certainty. He is a very present help in trouble to enable us to bear it, to sustain us under it, to comfort us in it, to bring us through it, yea, to sanctify the same unto us. Thus have His people, in all ages, abundantly proved. He was “a very present help in trouble” unto Jacob when He subdued the enmity of Laban and Esau, to Joseph in Egypt, to the widow of Zaraphath, to Daniel in the lions’ den. And He is the same today!

No matter how cautiously we plan or discreetly we act, there is no escaping trouble in some form or other, for man is “born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). How can it be otherwise: myself a fallen and erring creature, dwelling in a world which lieth in the wicked one? But let not that fact sour or dismay you: rather use it for obtaining personal proof of the validity and value of the divine assurances. Trouble is sent not to drive us from God, but to draw us *to* Him. Emulate the Psalmist: “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord” (Psa 77:2)—not took matters into his own hands, seeking to put right what was wrong, for that ends in making bad matters worse. The believer’s duty and privilege is clear: to appropriate and plead that precious promise, “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psa 50:15). Follow not the vain policy of the world in attempting to forget your trouble, or drown it in pleasure, or grit your teeth and make the best of a bad job. No, make the living God your recourse: count upon His lovingkindness and tender pity, bear in mind His mighty power and infinite resources, so that nothing is too hard for Him.

Does the reader say, I *have* called upon the LORD again and again, but He has not removed my trouble, or even mitigated it? Nor has He promised to do so. But in Psalm 50:15, He says, “I will deliver thee,” and is not that the same thing? No, certainly not; rather is it something much better. There is something worse, something to be far more dreaded than “trouble,” namely, the sinful way in which we are so prone to act while under it. The promise is, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver *thee*”—not “from it,” but *from thyself*. Call upon Me humbly, trustfully, perseveringly, and I will “deliver thee”—from open rebellion against Me, from a suicide’s grave, from sinking into utter despair. But more, “And thou shalt glorify me,” by meekly and patiently enduring what I have appointed thee, by leaning harder upon Me, and by thus improving

the trouble. This is both our duty and privilege: “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD *in the fires*” (Isa 24:15). To glorify Him should ever be our aim, whether in health, or on a bed of suffering. Let not the afflicted saint give way to self-pity and regard himself as “the victim of circumstances,” but seek grace to rise above and be victor over them. “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart” (Psa 27:14).

Trouble is not always in consequence of our wrongdoing or injudicious conduct. So far from it, it may be caused by fidelity to Christ, thereby stirring up against us the enmity of Satan. Such was the case of the Gibeonites. A short time after they had made peace with Joshua, entered into a league with him, and as he had appointed them to be servants “for the altar of the LORD” (Jos 9:27), five kings of the Amorites determined to destroy them, and “they and all their hosts...encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it” (Jos 10:5). Whereupon we are told, “And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us” (verse 6). Most commendable was such an action. In the hour of their need, they turned unto the one who had so graciously spared their lives and entered into a covenant with them: they confided in his sympathy and counted upon his ability and willingness to come to their aid. Thus it is that Christians should ever do with the antitypical Joshua: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1Pe 5:7).

That appeal of the Gibeonites unto Joshua may be typically regarded as the prayer of believers unto the LORD. Considered thus, it contains valuable instruction for us. First, observe the place which they took: “Thy *servants*”—they acknowledge themselves to be. Such language breathed a spirit of dependence, disowning any might or sufficiency of their own. This is what becomes *us* as we approach the Mercy Seat—taking the place of confessed weakness, coming as empty-handed beggars. Second, they acquainted Joshua with the desperateness of their situation, spreading their case before him. Such is ever our privilege: to unburden our hearts unto Him who alone can afford us real relief. Third, they made known their request: “Save us, and help us.” Logically, those clauses should be reversed, but a burdened and agitated heart pays little attention to its phrasing when dire calamity prompts the cry for deliverance. Fourth, this appeal was couched in terms of urgency: “Slack not thy hand...for all the kings of the Amorites...are gathered together against us.” That was not the language of dictation or of impatience, but a cry of distress, and an appeal unto the relation which now obtained between them and Joshua, for subservience is entitled to protection.

But there was one word in their appeal which perhaps some of our readers would deem unsuitable for use in a prayer unto God: “Come up to us *quickly*” begged the Gibeonites. Let God’s Word determine, for to it, we must ever turn for instruction and guidance. Before referring thereto, let us bear in mind that the situation in which those men were placed was no ordinary one, but rather were they in extremity, so that unless effectual help reached them promptly, it would be too late. Thus, we are not about to turn unto the Scriptures for something which will supply us with a general rule to direct us on all occasions, but rather, to ascertain whether there are any prayers to God recorded therein which intimate that it is permissible for His people to employ the language of importunity when, to them, their case appears desperate. Undoubtedly there are, not only in a single passage, but in many: “Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily” (Psa 31:2), cried David. And again, “Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation” (Psa 38:22)—he entreated that the help might not be long in coming. “But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God” (Psa 70:5)—a desperate case calls for timely aid.

God's time is always the best time, yet when we are sorely pressed, we *may* beg Him to act on our behalf without delay. "Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth" (Psa 143:7). When our case is critical, we may plead its urgency. "O my God, make haste for my help" (Psa 71:12). Such a cry was evoked by the sore pressure of affliction, and it shows that if real necessity justifies it, we may be urgent with God, though never out of willfulness. At a time when the enemy had come in like a flood and the cause of God was languishing, and His people were in sore straits, we find that Asaph prayed, "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent ['meet'] us: for we are brought very low" (Psa 79:8): thus in dire distress, it is permissible for us to ask for speed on God's part. What is still more pertinent to this particular point is the example of our Saviour, for in the Messianic Psalms, we find that He cried, "O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me" (Psa 22:19, and compare 40:13). And again, "In the day when I call answer me speedily" (Psa 102:2).

"So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour" (Jos 10:7). Joshua did not send a messenger to the hard-pressed Gibeonites telling them that they must fight their own battles or proffer the excuse that his hands were already too full for him to intervene on their behalf. Nor did he raise an objection against the hard journey which such an undertaking would involve. Not thus would he mock those who were looking to him for deliverance. Instead, he responded promptly and readily to their pressing request. Therein, we see again how blessedly Joshua prefigured the Saviour. As we read through the four Gospels, we find that the Lord Jesus never failed to answer an appeal for help, whether that appeal came from Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, saint or sinner. He was just as willing to heal the servant of the Roman centurion as He was the mother-in-law of His apostle, and to grant the request of the poor leper as to raise Lazarus. Nor did He refuse to give an interview unto Nicodemus because he sought Him by night, or turn a deaf ear to the dying thief when He was experiencing the pains of crucifixion. And, my reader, He is the same today as He was yesterday (Heb 13:8): vastly different in the position He occupies, but *unchanged* in His readiness to succor the needy.

Though we are very familiar with what has just been pointed out, and freely acknowledge the preciousness of the same, yet every one of us needs to be reminded of it, especially when we are hard pressed. Not only are we ever prone to give way to an evil heart of unbelief, but when sore trouble comes upon us, we are likely to be so occupied with *it* as almost to lose sight of our blessed Lord. One reason why He sends or permits the trouble is that we may be drawn closer to Him, and prove more fully His sufficiency to help us, no matter what straits we may be in. As He never turned a deaf ear to any cry of distress during the days of His flesh, nor refused to undertake for anyone who sought His help, neither will He do so now that He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. As He promptly delivered Peter when he cried, "Lord, save me, [I perish]" (Mat 14:30), so will He still thrust forth His mighty hand and rescue any believer who, fearful that he may be drowned in a sea of troubles, calls upon Him for relief. The Gibeonites did not appeal in vain to the captain of Israel in their emergency, nor will the Christian if he trustfully petitions the antitypical Joshua.

"So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour" (Jos 10:7). This shows that he had "learned his lesson" or had profited from his previous failure (Jos 7:3-6), for now he employed at least the major part of his forces and accompanied them in person. We say, "at least the major part of his forces," for it is most unlikely that he would leave the camp, with all the women and children, entirely undefended. Thus, this is probably one of the many instances in Scripture where the word "all" is *not* to be taken absolutely, without qualification, but would here signify battalions of the men of war from all the tribes. Herein we see Joshua fulfilling his covenant engagement, for when those Gibeonites threw in

their lot with the people of God, they came under His protection—compare Ruth 2:12. And a courageous enterprise it was—very different from the former ones. On earlier occasions, at Jericho and at Ai, it was but a single enemy which he had to engage, but here, it was the massed forces of no less than five kings which he had now to encounter; and they had the great advantage of being stationed in the heights unto which he must ascend. Typically, Joshua was here a figure of the good Shepherd going forth to rescue His imperiled sheep, and in the “all the people of war with him,” we behold the plenitude of Christ’s resources (Mat 28:18).

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee” (Jos 10:8). We are not told that Joshua “asked counsel of the LORD” on this occasion, nor is it at all likely that he did so. There is no need for any to inquire what be God’s will for him when his path of duty is clearly marked out before him, as was the case here. They having owned his dominion and submitted to his yoke, Joshua was now under definite obligation to go to the assistance of the Gibeonites—as the government is to safeguard its loyal subjects. Nevertheless, it is more than probable that Joshua’s heart was lifted up to God as he prepared for his arduous and dangerous undertaking, seeking wisdom from Him, and making request for Him to grant him success in the same. Not only is this to be inferred from all that is recorded of the general tenor of his pious life, but had Joshua now gone forth in a spirit of independence and self-sufficiency, we can scarcely conceive of the Holy One, under such circumstances, vouchsafing him such a word as this. In appearing unto Joshua at this time, the LORD intimated His approval of Israel’s sparing the lives of the Gibeonites (Jos 9:18-20), and of their venturing to deliver them from their enemies; and accordingly, He gave him this message of encouragement and assurance.

“Fear them not.” Very gracious was this. The LORD would have the heart of His servant in perfect peace from the outset, and thus be the better prepared for the forthcoming battle. Fear is due to unbelief, through being occupied with the puny might of those who are arrayed *against* us, instead of our faith being fixed upon the almightiness of the One who is *for* us. But the LORD did more than barely exhort His servant to banish from him the spirit of trepidation, giving him an all-sufficient reason why tranquility of mind should now possess him: “*For* I have delivered them into thine hand.” Thus here, too, we are taught that perfect peace of heart is the fruit of the mind’s being stayed upon JEHOVAH. “I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength” (Isa 12:2): the latter is ever the consequence of the former—when we resolve to make Him our confidence, none will affright us. In His “There shall not a man of them stand before thee,” there was a *renewing* of the original promise which the LORD had made unto Joshua in 1:5. “God hath spoken once; *twice* have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psa 62:11)—alas, most of us are so dull of hearing that the message has to be repeated much oftener than “twice” before we *really* believe it.

“Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night” (Jos 10:9). First, we should observe that the assurance which the LORD had just given Joshua was not perverted by him into an excuse for slackness on his part, but very much the reverse. Instead of reasoning that since victory was certain, there was no need to exert himself and his men unduly; rather were they thereby stimulated to self-sacrificing effort. He did not wait until the morning before starting out on the hard and hazardous mountain climb, but, setting aside his own comfort, journeyed all through the night. Second, therein we behold the merciful response which he made unto the urgent request of the Gibeonites, “Come up to us quickly, and save us” (verse 6). He delayed not, but promptly hastened to their relief. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, “If one of the tribes of Israel had been in danger, he could not have shown more care and zeal for its

relief than here for Gibeon, remembering then, as in other cases, that there must be one law for the stranger that was proselytized, as for him that was born in the land.” Third, he came upon the enemy “suddenly,” when they were least expecting it, probably before day had broken and ere they had made their dispositions and taken their places, thereby throwing them into instant confusion and consternation.

“And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah” (Jos 10:10). If more of the servants and soldiers of Christ were willing to lose a night’s sleep in His cause, particularly in efforts to help their distressed brethren, we should oftener behold the LORD baring His mighty arm, showing Himself strong on their behalf. Observe how jealous the Holy Spirit ever is in guarding the divine glory! Joshua was unquestionably an able strategist, and those under him were “mighty men of valour” (verse 7); and no doubt, they acquitted themselves well on this occasion; yet that also was of God, and therefore, the honours must be ascribed unto Him. Not only spiritual gifts, but physical powers, natural aptitudes, mental endowments, military skill and success, are all bestowed upon men by their Maker—“What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1Co 4:7). This is not sufficiently recognized by us: if it were, there would be less of idolatrous hero worship.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

3. Its Imputation

We are now to consider the bearing which Adam’s sin had upon his posterity, and the different effects which it entailed and produced—though the latter will come before us in another article (D.V.), wherein we shall treat more specifically with the consequences of the Fall. What we are here to examine particularly requires us to turn unto and look more closely at what was briefly alluded to in the March issue—namely, that in Eden, Adam acted not simply as a private person, the results of whose conduct affected none but himself, but rather that he transacted as a public person, so that what he did directly concerned and judicially involved others. Adam was very much more than the father of the human race: he was also their legal agent, standing in their stead. His descendants were not only in him seminally as their natural head, but were in him also morally and legally as their moral and forensic head. In other words, by divine constitution and covenant arrangement, Adam acted as the federal representative of all his children. By an act of His sovereign will, it pleased God to ordain that Adam’s relation to his natural seed should be like unto that which Christ sustained to His spiritual seed—the one acting on the behalf of many.

The whole human race was placed on probation in the person of its legal representative and covenant head. This is a truth of great importance, for it casts light not only upon much in Scripture, but upon human history too. While Adam retained the approbation of God and remained in fellowship with Him, the whole of his constituency did likewise. Had he survived the appointed trial, had he faithfully and fitly discharged his responsibility, had he continued in obedience unto

the LORD God, then *his* obedience had been reckoned to *their* account; and they had entered into and been fellow partakers of the reward bestowed on him. Contrariwise, if the head failed and fell, then all his members fell in and with him. If he disobeyed, then his disobedience was charged unto those whom he represented; and the frightful punishment pronounced upon him fell likewise on those on whose behalf he transacted. Justice required that the whole human race should be legally regarded and dealt with as sharing the guilt of its representative, and subjected to the same penalty as was inflicted upon him. In consequence of this arrangement, when Adam sinned, we sinned; and “therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom 5:18).

Instead of placing each member of the human race on probation separately and successively, it pleased God to put the whole of them on formal trial once and for all in the person of their head. Probably, it will make it easier for the reader to grasp the nature of Adam’s legal relation unto his descendants if we make use of a simple contrast and analogy, which have been employed by other writers on this subject. God did not treat with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands on its own individual root; but rather, He has dealt with our race as with a tree—all the branches of which have one common root. While the root of a tree remains healthy and unharmed, the whole of it flourishes. But if an axe strikes at and severs the root, then the whole of the tree suffers and falls—not only the trunk, but *all* the branches, and even its smallest twigs wither and die. Thus it was in connection with the Eden tragedy. When Adam’s communion with his Maker was broken, all his posterity were alienated from His favour. This is no theory of human speculation, but a fact of divine revelation: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

Adam, then, occupied a unique position. At his creation, all his unborn children were germinally created in him. Not only so, but God entered into a solemn covenant with him in their name. The entire human family was represented by him and stood in him before the LORD. The future well-being of his progeny was suspended on his conduct. He was therefore placed on trial, to show whether he would promote the interests of his Creator, or refuse to be subject to His government. Some test must needs be given him in order for the exercise of his moral agency and the discharge of his responsibility. He was made to love and serve God, being richly endowed and fully capacitated thereunto. His supreme blessedness and continued happiness consisted in his so doing. In what follows, we shall submit scriptural proof that Adam *did* transact on the behalf of his descendants, and so stood in their stead before the divine Law that what *he* did was, in effect, what *they* did. Or, as Thomas Manton (1620-1677) expressed it, “We saw the forbidden fruit with his eyes, gathered it with his hands, ate it with his mouth; that is, we were ruined by those things as though we had been there and consented to his acts.”

We propose to show, first, that Adam was the federal head of the race. Second, that he entered into a covenant with God on their behalf. Third, that the guilt of his original sin was divinely imputed to his descendants. Concerning the first, we shall confine ourselves unto two proof texts: “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is *the figure of him* that was to come” (Rom 5:14). That is truly an astonishing statement. Occurring in such a setting, it is really startling and should at once arrest our attention. With what accuracy and propriety could it be said that the father of our fallen race foreshadowed the Lord Jesus? Adam, when tempted, yielded and was overcome; Christ, when tempted, resisted, and overcame. The former was cursed by God; the latter was owned by Him as the One in whom He was well pleased. The one is the source of sin and corruption to all his posterity, but the other is a fount of holiness unto all His people. By Adam came

condemnation; by Christ comes salvation. Thus, they are as far apart as the poles. Wherein, then, was Adam a “figure” of the coming Redeemer?

The Greek word for “figure” in Romans 5:14, signifies “type”; and, in the scriptural sense of that term, a type consists of something very much more than a casual resemblance between two things or an incidental parallel between them. There is a *designed* likeness, the one being divinely intended to shadow forth the other. From all eternity, it was foreordained that the first man should prefigure the incarnate Son of God. Again we ask, In what particular respect? Certainly not in his conduct. Nor in his natural constitution, as consisting of spirit and soul and body—for in that matter, all who lived before Christ was born might as properly be called figures of Him. The whole context makes it clear that it was in the *official position* which he occupied that Adam was a type of the Lord Jesus—as the federal head and legal representative of others. If Romans 5:12-19 be read attentively, it will be seen that all through it, the fact which is there given the greatest prominence is that of the one acting on behalf of the many, the one affecting the destiny of the many. What the one did is made the legal ground of what befalls the many. As the disobedience and guilt of Adam entailed condemnation for all who were legally one with him, so the obedience and righteousness of Christ has secured the justification of all in whose place He served as surety.

The other passage by which it may be proved that Adam sustained the relation of federal head to his posterity is 1 Corinthians 15:45-49: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit...The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven...And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Here again, despite marked contrasts between the type and the Antitype, there is that which is common to both of them. A mundane origin had the one: the other’s was celestial. The former was but a man; the latter was “the Lord.” The first Adam was made “a living soul”; the last Adam is a quickener of others. In the one, “all die”; in the other, “shall all be made alive” (verse 22). But that which marked each alike was his *representative character*—he was the head of an appointed seed, communicating his distinctive “image” to them. Adam is designated “the first man,” not simply because he was the first in order—like the first day of the week—but because he was the first to act as the legal representative of a race. Christ is called “the second man,” though He lived so long afterward, because He was the second to sustain a federal relation to an appointed seed; and called “the last Adam,” because there is to be no further covenant head.

We turn next to show that a *covenant* was entered into between the LORD God and Adam. Our first appeal is unto Genesis 2:16-17, but before considering that passage, let us remind the reader of the extreme brevity of the early chapters of Genesis, and that more is definitely implied by their contents than is distinctly expressed. Let us also point out what are the principal elements in a covenant. A covenant is a formal compact and mutual arrangement between two or more parties, whereby they stand solemnly bound unto each other to perform the conditions contracted for. On the one side, there is a stipulating of something to be done; on the other side, a restipulation of something to be done or given in consideration thereof. There is also a penalty included in the terms of the agreement, some evil consequence which shall result unto the party who violates or fails to carry out his engagement. That penalty is added as a security. Where it is not expressly stated, it is implied by the promissory clause, just as the promise is to be necessarily inferred from a mention of the punishment therein (compare Genesis 31:43-53; Mat 26:14-16).

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:16-17). Here are all the constituent elements

of a covenant. First, here are the contracting parties: the LORD God and man. Second, here is the condition defined and accepted. As the Creator and Governor of His creatures, it behoved God to exercise His authority; owing his being to Him, Adam was in duty bound to comply, and as a sinless and holy person, he would heartily consent to the stipulation. Third, there was a penalty prescribed, which would be incurred if Adam failed to carry out his part of the compact. Fourth, there was by clear implication a promise made and reward assured—"do this, and thou shalt live"—to which Adam was entitled upon his rendering the obedience required. Where there is a stipulation and a restipulation between two parties, and a binding law pertaining to the same, there is a covenant (compare Genesis 21:22-32).

Adam was placed not only under divine Law, but under a covenant of works. The distinction is real and radical. A law requires obedience, and a punishment is threatened, in proportion to the nature of the offence, in case of disobedience. A subject is bound to obey the law, but he cannot be justly deprived of that which he has a natural right to, except in case of disobedience. On the other hand, while obedience to the law gives him a right to impunity, yet nothing more; whereas a *covenant* gives a person the right, upon his fulfilling the conditions thereof, to the reward or privilege stipulated therein. A king is not obliged to advance a loyal subject unto great honour; but if, as an act of favour, he has promised to elevate him upon his yielding obedience in some particular instance, then he would have a right to it—not as yielding obedience to a law, but as fulfilling the terms of a covenant. Thus, Mephibosheth had a natural and legal right to his life and to the estate which had descended to him from his father, because he had lived peaceably and had not rebelled against David. But *this* did not entitle him to the special favour which the king conferred upon him, of sitting at his table continually (2Sa 9:13). *That* was the result of a covenant between David and Jonathan, in which David had promised to show kindness unto his house after him (1Sa 20:11-17, 42).

We consider that it should be obvious to the thoughtful reader that Adam had the promise of life upon his performing the condition agreed, for "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" necessarily implied the converse—if thou eatest not thereof, thou shalt surely live. Just as "Thou shalt not steal" inevitably requires, "Thou shalt act honestly and honourably," and as "Rejoice in the LORD" includes "Murmur not against any of His dealings with thee," so according to the simplest laws of construction, the threatening of death as the consequence of eating affirmed the promise of life unto obedience. This is an essential feature of a covenant—a reward guaranteed upon the fulfillment of its terms. Let it also be duly noted that the threat denounced in Genesis 2:17 not only signified God's intention to punish sin, but was also designed as a motive unto obedience; and therefore, it included in it a promise of life upon man's maintaining his integrity. Again, had Adam been given no such promise, then he had been *without* a well-grounded hope for the future, for the hope which maketh not ashamed is always grounded upon the divine promise (Rom 4:18-20). Finally, Romans 7:10 expressly states that the commandment was "*to life*"—adapted to and setting before its complier such a prospect.

A few words need to be said here upon *the nature of* that "life" which was promised unto Adam. In his original state, he was already possessed of spiritual life: what then did the reward consist of? Two different answers have been returned by the best of the theologians. First, that it was the *ratifying* of the life which he then had. Adam was placed on probation, and it was his response to the test that had been given him which would determine whether or not he remained in the favour of God, in communion with Him, and continued to enjoy his earthly heritage; whether they should be *confirmed*, and would then become the inalienable portion both of himself and his posterity. Such was the view long entertained by this writer. But of late, we incline much more to the

second alternative—namely, that by the “life” promised Adam, we are to understand a yet higher degree of happiness than he then possessed, even heavenly blessedness. Those benefits which Christ came into the world to procure for His people—and which are assured to them by the Covenant of Grace, are, for substance, the same as those which man would have enjoyed had he not fallen. This we consider is clear from those prophetic words of Christ: “I *restored* that which I took not away” (Psa 69:4); and again, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save *that* which was lost” (Luk 19:10). He came to secure “eternal life” (with all that that means), and therefore, *that* had been man’s portion had he maintained his integrity.

The same may also be concluded from the nature of that “death” denounced in Genesis 2:17. When God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*,” something far more dreadful than the loss of physical or even spiritual life was involved, even the “second death”—namely eternal punishment and suffering in the “lake of fire” (Rev 20:14-15). Contrariwise, the “life” promised included more than physical immortality or even the confirmation of spiritual life, even everlasting life, or unclouded fellowship with God in heaven for ever. We also concur with many able expositors that Romans 8:3-4 treats of the same thing. “The law” there looks back to that which was written on man’s heart at the beginning—of which the Sinaitic was but a transcript. The statement that the Law was “weak through the flesh” alludes to the defectability of Adam. What the Law “could not do” with *such* material was to produce an indefeasible righteousness. Therefore, God, in His sovereign grace, sent His own incarnate Son—impeccable and immutable—to make full atonement for the guilt of His people and bring in an “everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24) for them. In a word, Christ performed that perfect obedience which the first man failed to render, and thereby obtained for all His seed the award of the fulfilled Law.

What has last been pointed out should remove any misconception that the view we have just propounded derogates in the slightest degree from the glory of the Saviour. Romans 8:3-4 is treating of something far more essential and weighty than whether or not Christ, by His infinite merits, obtained for us something more than we lost in Adam: undoubtedly He did—our *establishment* in righteousness, our glorification, etc. Rather does that passage intimate what was the highest motive and ultimate end which God had before Him when He foresaw, foreordained, and permitted our fall in Adam. *Christ* is the grand Centre of all the divine counsels, and the magnifying of Him their principal design. Had God withheld Adam from sinning, all his race had been eternally happy. But in that case, Adam had been their saviour and benefactor, and all his seed had gloried *in him*, ascribing their everlasting felicity to his obedience. But such an honour was far too much for any finite creature to bear. Only the Lord from heaven was worthy of it. Accordingly, God designedly made the flesh of the first man “weak” or mutable, and suffered his defection, in order to make way for His laying our help “upon one that is *mighty*” (Psa 89:19), that we might owe our endless bliss unto Him! Moreover, that obedience which Christ rendered to the Law magnified it and made it infinitely more honourable than could the conformity to it of any mere creature.

Returning now to the scriptural evidence that God entered into a covenant with Adam. In Hosea 6:7, we read that God complained of Israel, “But they *like men* [*‘Adam’*] have transgressed *the covenant*: there have they dealt treacherously against me” (margin)—the Hebrew word for “men” there is Adam, as in Job 31:33. Adam, then, *was* placed under a covenant, the requirement or condition of which was his continued subjection unto God—whether or not the divine will was sacred in his eyes. But he failed to love God with all his heart, held His high authority in contempt, disbelieved His holy veracity, and deliberately and presumptuously defied Him. Thereby he “transgressed the covenant” and “dealt treacherously” with his Maker. In like manner, did Is-

rael centuries later transgress the covenant which they entered into with the LORD at Sinai, preferring their own will and way, lusting after those false gods which He had forbidden under pain of death. Finally, let it be pointed out that the fact of Adam's having stood as the covenant head of his race is conclusively demonstrated by the penal evils which come upon his children in consequence of his fall. From the dreadful curse entailed upon all his descendants, we are compelled to infer the covenant relationship which existed between him and them; for the Judge of all the earth, being righteous, will never punish where there is no crime. "In Adam all *die*" (1Co 15:22), because in him, all *sinned*.

PRIVATE JUDGMENT

Part 2

Each one of us is directly responsible to God for the use he makes and the compliance he renders to His Word. God holds every rational creature accountable to ascertain from His living oracles what is His revealed will, and to conform thereunto. None can lawfully evade this duty by paying someone to do the work for him. Whatever help may be obtained from God's ministers, we are not dependent on them. To understand and interpret the Scriptures is not the prerogative of any ecclesiastical hierarchy. We have the Bible in our own mother tongue. The Throne of Grace is available, whither we may turn and humbly make request, "Teach me, O LORD...thy statutes...Give me [good] understanding...Make me to go in the path of thy commandments" (Psa 119:33-35). We have the promise of Christ to rest upon: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (Joh 7:17). Hence, there is no valid excuse either for spiritual ignorance, or for misconception of what God requires us to believe and do. Unto His children, God has graciously imparted His Spirit that they may "*know* the things that are freely given to us of God" (1Co 2:12). Yet it is only as God's Word is personally received into the heart that it "effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1Th 2:13).

There is an urgent *need* for each person who values his soul and its eternal interests to spare no pains in making himself thoroughly familiar with God's Holy Word; and prayerfully endeavouring to understand its teaching, not only for the pressing reason stated above, but also because of the babel now obtaining in Christendom—and particularly in view of the numerous emissaries of Satan who lie in wait at every corner, ready to seduce the unwary and the indolent. As pointed out in our last, the conflicting teaching which now abounds in the churches renders it all the more imperative that each of us should have strong and scripturally formed convictions of his own. Our Lord has expressly bidden us, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat 7:15). That solemn warning points a definite duty, and also implies our being qualified to discharge the same. That duty is to examine closely and test carefully by God's Word all that we read and hear from the pens and lips of preachers and teachers; and that, in turn, presupposes we are well acquainted with the Word, for how else can we determine whether an article or a sermon be scriptural or unscriptural?

There is nothing external by which perverters of the truth may be identified. Not only are many of them men of irreproachable moral character and pleasing personality, but they appear to be deeply devoted unto Christ and His cause. Nor are they few in number, for we are told that “many false prophets are gone out into the world”—a statement which is prefaced by “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God” (1Jo 4:1): that is, diligently weigh their teaching in “the balances of the sanctuary.” These seducers of souls profess to be real Christians, and are often to be met with even in the circles of the orthodox. Though at heart ravening wolves, they are disguised “in *sheep’s* clothing”—pretending to have a great love for souls, they ensnare many. They feign to be the very opposite of what they are: for instead of being the servants of Christ, they are the agents of Satan “transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2Co 11:15). Therein lies their “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14) people by “good words and fair speeches”; and thus, delude the “hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:18).

Having shown the very real *need* there is for each person to form his own judgment of what God’s Word teaches, we now turn to consider his God-given *right* to do so. This is plainly signified or clearly implied in many passages: “Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear *trieth* words, as the mouth tasteth meat” (Job 34:2-3). Upon which the Puritan, Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), very pertinently asked, “You will not swallow your meat until you have chewed and tasted it, nor should you swallow words until you have tried them. Why else have we ears to hear? Why are we trusted with reason to judge things with, or with rules to judge them by? There is no greater tyranny in the world than to command men to believe (with implicit faith) as others believe, or to impose our opinions and assertions upon those who hear them and not give them liberty to try them.” Allow none to dictate to you, my reader, upon spiritual matters. He that is called in the Lord is “the Lord’s freeman”; and hence it follows, “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1Co 7:22-23).

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom 14:5). In order to ascertain the precise scope of those words, we must examine the setting in which they occur. They were first addressed to the saints at Rome, who were composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, between whom there were differences of opinion upon minor matters. Though these Jews had heartily received Christ as their promised Messiah and Saviour, they clung to the idea that the Levitical law—with its distinction of clean and unclean meats and the observance of certain fasts and festivals—was still binding upon them. Not only did they contend zealously for the same, but they were strongly desirous of imposing them on their fellow Christians, whom they regarded as proselytes to Judaism. On the other hand, not only had the Gentile believers not been brought up under the Mosaic rites, but they were convinced that the ceremonial observances of Judaism had been annulled by the new and better dispensation which had been inaugurated by the Lord Jesus. This difference of opinion, with each party holding firm convictions thereon, menaced the unity of their fellowship and the exercise of brotherly love unto each other. The one needed to beware of looking upon the other as being lax and of a latitudinarian spirit, while the latter must refrain from viewing the former as being bigoted and superstitious.

Nothing vital was at stake—any more than there is today when the wearing of jewelry and the use of tobacco are questions agitated in some Christian circles. But since the peace of the Roman assembly was being threatened, and a spirit of intolerance had begun to obtain, through failure of each party to allow full liberty of conscience unto their brethren, it was needful that the apostle should deal with this situation and give such instruction unto each as would prevent these differences of opinion upon non-essentials of faith and practice leading to a serious breach of the peace.

Accordingly, Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit so to counsel them as to give forth at the same time teaching which is most valuable, essential, and pertinent to similar cases in all generations. This he did by laying down broad and general principles which it behoves all Christians to be regulated by; nay, we cannot disregard them without sinning, since they are clothed with divine authority. While human nature remains as it is, and while differently constituted minds do not view things uniformly, if Christian charity is to be exercised and harmony prevail among God's people, it is most necessary that they understand and practice those principles.

First, we are exhorted, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him" (Rom 14:3). Therein both parties are forbidden to give place unto unbrotherly thoughts and sentiments. Second, they were asked, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand" (verse 4). This is tantamount to saying that it is the height of arrogance for any Christian to ascend the tribunal of judgment and pass sentence of condemnation upon a brother in Christ. Third, it is admitted that "one man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike," and then follows, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (verse 5). *There* is the charter of Christian liberty: let none allow himself to be deprived of it. Those words cannot mean less than that every Christian has the God-given right to think for himself, to form his own opinion of what Scripture teaches, and to decide what he considers is most pleasing and honouring unto God.

Note well how emphatic and sweeping are the words of Romans 14:5, "Let every man": not only the preacher, but the private member too. "Be fully persuaded": not coerced, nor uncertain, as he will be if, instead of forming his own opinion, he heeds the confusion of tongues now abounding on every side. "In his own mind": neither blindly following the popular custom, nor yielding to the *ipse dixit* of others. Where doubtful things are concerned, each one should turn to the Scriptures for guidance and carefully examine them for himself, and then act according to his best judgment of what they require him to do. It is an obligation binding on each of us to be regulated by what appears to be the revealed will of God. This is what constitutes the very essence of practical Christianity: the personal recognition of Christ's property in me and authority over me, and in and over my brethren. I am neither to exercise dominion over them, nor submit to theirs over me. Let us seek to help each other all we can, but let us leave Christ to *judge* us. He only has the capacity as He only has the right to do so. Perform what you are assured to be your duty and leave others to do likewise: thereby the rights of the individual are preserved and the peace of the community promoted.

Different opinions on minor matters are to be expected, but that is no reason why those holding the same should not dwell together in amity and enjoy communion in the great fundamentals of the faith. If one is satisfied that certain "days" should be observed, that he had *divine* warrant to solemnly celebrate "Christmas" or "Easter," then let him do so. But if another is convinced that such "days" are of human invention and devoid of divine authority, then let him ignore them. Let each one act from religious conviction and suffer not the fear of censure from, or contempt of, others to deter him; nor the desire to ingratiate himself in the esteem of his fellows induce him to act contrary to his conscience. Each Christian is responsible to believe and act according to the best light which he has from God and continue to examine His Word and pray for more light. The dictates of conscience are not to be trifled with, and the right of private judgment is ever to be exercised by me and respected in others. Thereby the Christian duty of mutual forbearance is alone maintained and a spirit of tolerance and charity exercised.

“I speak as to wise men; *judge ye* what I say” (1Co 10:15). In those words, the apostle called upon the saints to decide discreetly if what he had further to advance on the subject condemned them for continuing to feast in idol temples. He was treating with whether or not such an action came within the scriptural definition of idolatry. In terming them “wise men,” he intimated that they were well able to weigh an argument, and therefore, it was their duty to examine carefully and ponder prayerfully what he said. In his “judge ye,” he signified his desire for them to be personally convinced, from the exercise of those spiritual “senses” which pertain to all the regenerate (Heb 5:12-14). “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God [with her head] uncovered?” (1Co 11:13). Not only would Paul have them obediently submit to the divine requirements, but also perceive for themselves what would be becoming, appealing to their sense of propriety, adding, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” (verse 14). Again, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge” (1Co 14:29). Once more, they were called upon to exercise their own judgment—in this case, whether the messages given out by those claiming to be “prophets” were really the oracles of God.

Now, this right of private judgment, and the duty of each person to determine for himself what God’s Word teaches, is categorically *denied by Rome*, which avers that “ignorance is the mother of devotion,” and that the highest form of service is that of “blind obedience.” The Papacy insists that the Church is absolutely infallible in all matters of Christian faith and practice, and is the divinely authorized interpreter of the Rule of Faith. During Session IV, the Council of Trent (1563) decreed that “No one, relying on his own skill, shall, in matters of faith and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures—hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.” This was ratified and repeated in the *Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council* (chapter 2): “We, renewing the said decree, declare this to be their sense, that in matters of faith and morals, appertaining to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture, which our holy mother Church hath held and holds, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense of the Holy Scripture; and therefore that it is permitted to no one to interpret the sacred Scripture contrary to this sense.”

Nor has the arch-deceiver and enslaver of souls receded one hair’s breadth from that position since then. The following propositions were *denounced* by the Papacy: “It is profitable at all times and in all places for all sorts of persons to study the Scriptures, and to become acquainted with their spirit, piety, and mysteries” (Proposition 79). “The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the hands of a man of business and a financier [Act 8:27-28] shows that it is intended for everybody” (Proposition 80). “The Lord’s day ought to be sanctified by the reading of books of piety, and especially of the Scriptures. They are the milk which God Himself, who knows our hearts, has supplied for them” (Proposition 81). “It amounts to shutting the mouth of Christ to Christians, and to wresting from their hands the Holy Bible, or to keeping it shut from them, by depriving them of the means of hearing it.” Those, together with many other similar postulates, were “condemned to perpetuity” as being “false and scandalous” in his “bull” (a Papal decree to which is affixed the Pope’s seal)—*Unigenitus* by Clement XI, issued on September 8, 1713.

In 1824, the encyclical epistle of Pope Leo XII complained of the Bible societies, “which,” it said, “violate the traditions of the Fathers and the Council of Trent, in circulating the Scriptures in the vernacular tongues of all nations.” “In order to avoid this pestilence,” said this poor creature, “our predecessors have published several constitutions...tending to show how pernicious for the

faith and for morals is this perfidious instrument”—i.e., the Bible society. In those countries ruled by the emissaries of the Vatican, God’s Word has ever been, and still is, withheld from the people; and they are forbidden to read or hear it read under pain of the Pope’s anathema. All known copies of it are seized and committed to the flames. At this very hour, the Lord’s people in Spain are being persecuted for their loyalty to the Bible. So would they be in all English-speaking countries today if the Romanists could secure full temporal power over them. The Lord mercifully grant that such a catastrophe may never again happen.

Ere passing from this aspect of our subject, let us briefly notice one verse to which appeal is made by Romanists in support of their contention that the laity have no right to form their own views of what God’s Word teaches: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2Pe 1:20). On the basis of those words, it is insisted that the Bible must be *officially* interpreted, and that “holy mother Church” is alone authorized and qualified to discharge this duty and to render this service. But that verse affords not the slightest support of their arrogant claim. Those words, as their context clearly shows, treat of the *source* of prophecy and *not* its meaning. The very next sentence explains what is signified by verse 20: “*For* the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Thus, verse 20 manifestly imports, Be assured at the outset that what the prophets delivered proceeded not from their own minds. The Greek word for “private” is never again so rendered elsewhere in the New Testament, but is translated scores of times “his own.” Consequently, the “interpretation” has reference to what was *delivered* by the prophets, and not to the explication of it: had the “interpretation” which the prophets delivered issued from themselves, then they *had been* “by the will of man,” which the next verse expressly denies (verse 21).

Taking verses 20 and 21 together, nothing could more emphatically affirm the absolute inspiration of the prophets. They spoke from God, and not from themselves. The *force*, then, of verse 20, is that no prophetic utterance was of human origination. It is the divine authorship of their words, and not the explanation of their messages, that is here in view—the act of *supplying* the prophecy, and not the explaining of it when supplied. So far from lending any colour to the view that there inheres somewhere in the Church and its ministers an authority to fix the sense of Holy Writ, this very verse, as it is rendered in the Authorized Version, obviously refutes the same, because for any man—be it the Roman pontiff or a Protestant prelate—to determine the meaning of God’s Word *would be* of “private interpretation”! Alas, that is the very thing which has happened throughout Christendom: for each church, denomination, party, or “circle of fellowship” puts its own meaning on the Word, and in many instances, *contrary* to the truth itself. Let the Christian reader be fully persuaded that there is nothing whatever in 2 Peter 1:20 which forbids him weighing the words of Scripture, exercising his own judgment, and under the guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit, deciding what they signify.

Not only is private judgment a *right* which God has conferred upon each of His children, but it is their bounden *duty* to exercise the same. The Lord requires us to make full use of this privilege, and to employ all lawful and peaceful means for its maintenance. Not only are we responsible to reject all erroneous teaching, but we are not to be the serfs of any ecclesiastical tyranny: “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Mat 23:8-9). Those words contain very much more than a prohibition against according ecclesiastical titles unto men; yea, it is exceedingly doubtful whether such a concept is contained therein; rather is Christ forbidding us to be in spiritual *bondage* to anyone. In verse 2, He had stated, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat”: that is, they have arrogated to themselves the power of religious legislation and

demand entire subjection from their adherents. In the verses that follow, our Lord reprehended them for usurping authority and setting up themselves as demagogues: in view of which the Lord Jesus bade His disciples maintain their spiritual liberty, and refuse all allegiance or subservience to any such tyrants.

July

SLEEPING

This article and its companion one are not written to entertain the curious, but with the endeavour of giving God His true place, by moving His people unto more thankfulness for what are loosely termed, “His common mercies.”

It seems strange that the average person should spend at least one-third of his short life in the sleep state. In comparison with eternity, how exceedingly brief is the span of our mortal existence! Yet the God-fearing soul cannot doubt it has been wisely ordered by his Creator that such a proportion of that span should be passed in unconsciousness. The Saviour Himself, whose life was infinitely more important than ours, was no exception, for we are told that He slept (Mat 8:24)—though often the hours of darkness were spent by Him in prayer while others were slumbering (Mar 1:35; Luk 6:12). Sleep has been aptly defined as “the nurse for tired nature.” What cause for gratitude have we that frayed nerves and weary muscles are refreshed and renewed by a few hours of repose! How glad is many a one whose body is racked with pain throughout the day to obtain a few hours’ respite during the unconsciousness of night! Sleep is indeed a merciful provision of God’s, which none of us appreciate as highly as we should.

Common as is this mercy, yet there is an element of mystery about it, for none can define exactly what it is. Nor can any produce it by a mere effort of will. It is not sufficiently recognized that the same One who gave us being also puts us to sleep each night. Yes, even when tired out from the heavy labour of the day, we become unconscious almost as soon as our head rests on the pillow. At some time or other, the majority of us are made painfully aware of the fact that we cannot put ourselves to sleep. When a hacking cough refuses to be silenced, when an over-active brain or disturbed mind declines to relax, when what is termed “insomnia” affects us, the more eagerly sleep is sought, the more it eludes us. “And the LORD God *caused* a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept” (Gen 2:21) is the *first* reference to our subject in the Scriptures; and while that instance was an extraordinary one, yet it was illustrative of a principle of universal application—our sleep is “caused” by our Maker, and is not brought on by ourselves.

Ere proceeding farther, let us here utter an earnest word of warning against attempts to produce artificial sleep, or cure insomnia, by the use of drugs. Any attempt to *force* “nature” is dangerous, and usually leads to disaster. In nine-tenths of cases, the effect is, in the end, to increase the disorder. Most narcotics and soporifics have to be taken in larger doses if they are to produce any continued effect; and frequently, the patient becomes the slave of narcotic habits. No form of stimulant is free from risk. Anyone who attempts to do by *artificial strength* what cannot be done

by natural—to supply by the use of some stimulant a temporary energy for activity to which one would be unequal without it—is courting trouble. There is always a proportionate reaction, and sometimes a collapse is the outcome. Far better to spend the night in restless tossing, than resort to what is likely to issue in a complete breakdown. Better still, seek the cause. Millions today are suffering from nervous disorders as a result of Sabbath desecration, forfeiting the physical and mental benefits which rest from secular tasks and occupying the mind with divine things produces.

There are other passages of Holy Writ, besides Genesis 2:21, which teach that sleep is not only a merciful provision of the Creator's, but also a divine gift, *caused by Him*. On one occasion, the Psalmist said, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking" (Psa 77:4). The Hebrew word for "holdest" here is a very strong one, being rendered to "lay thee [keep] hold on" in 2 Samuel 2:21, and "fastened" in Esther 1:6. Asaph was unable to close his eyes, sleep being withheld from him. Another example where sleep was divinely denied is that of Ahasuerus, of whom we read, "On that night could not the king sleep" (Est 6:1); or as the margin more literally renders it, "Sleep fled away"—the whole context showing that it was a case of divine interposition which prevented his slumbers. Sometimes the LORD withholds sleep that He may give us "songs in the night" (Job 35:10); at others, that we may "meditate on [Him] in the night watches" (Psa 63:6); at others, to bring sin to remembrance, that it may be confessed unto Him. The next time the reader suffers from sleeplessness, let him call to mind that awful night when the Saviour was hounded from court to court and denied any rest.

Conversely, we are told that "*he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Psa 127:2). Most blessed is that. It is not that He "sendeth" it as one from a distance, but that He Himself gives sleep—personally bringing and graciously laying it upon our eyes. That sleep is a fitting emblem of the spiritual rest which He bestows upon the righteous. But let us look at the verse as a whole: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." There appears to be a contrast drawn. All the industry of the natural man avails him nothing without the blessing of God—sorrow is then his portion. But the godly man, though diligent in business (Rom 12:11), is enabled confidently to commit all his affairs unto the LORD, and close his eyes at night with a mind free of carking¹⁴ care. "*So he giveth his beloved sleep,*" as He did Peter, on the eve of his probable execution, as he lay in prison chained between two soldiers—sleeping so sweetly and soundly that an angel's stroke was needed to arouse him (Act 12:6-7)!

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psa 4:8). We are never more helpless and unable to protect ourselves than when wrapped in slumber. We are lost to all apprehensions of danger, and lie exposed to the violence of storms, the perils of fire, the menace of robbers, and the assaults of the evil one. At that time, we have no concern for ourselves, being incapable of thinking, much more so of providing for our safety. But the LORD is our Protector equally during the hours of darkness as of the light. The One who provided for me when I was awake watches over my body when I am asleep. I am under the care of Him who "shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa 121:4). Though I be alone, I am not alone; and therefore it is my privilege to lie down in His loving arms, peacefully assured that I shall be supported and secured by His right hand. But a comfortable bed should cause us to contrast Him who often had no other couch than the cold mountain side (Joh 7:53; 8:2).

Our preservation during the hours of darkness is a notable instance of God's concern for our welfare. "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid...and thy sleep shall be sweet" (Pro

¹⁴ **carking** – being anxious.

3:24). What comforting assurance that breathes! It is a word for us to lay hold of by faith and rest on. If I trustfully give myself in charge to my Father, there is nothing to fear. Plead His promise, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7). Hundreds of times has this writer made personal use of the same, especially during the years when the two of us lived alone in a wooden house in an isolated part of the U.S.A. countryside, and retired to rest many times with the temperature below zero, which required us to leave a fire burning all night in a stove in the kitchen beneath us. When we lie down in the arms of a “faithful Creator” (1Pe 4:19) and covenant God, fear is removed and sleep is sweet. “No pillow so soft as a divine promise, no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ”—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892).

While one would scarcely be dogmatic on the point, yet it appears to us Scripture teaches that sleep is not only designed for the refreshing of our bodies, but is also a time for the instructing of our minds. Those of an energetic and ambitious disposition are apt to regard the hours spent in sleep as so much time wasted, but such a concept may well be more erroneous than many suppose. Who can say to what extent those things which make a deep impression on our consciousness during the day are made the subjects of the cogitations of the subconsciousness during the sleep state? Did not David aver¹⁵ “my reins [conscience and thoughts] also *instruct* me in the night seasons” (Psa 16:7)? Our fathers (so much wiser in many respects than their sons) when called upon to make some important decision were wont to say, “I will sleep on it and D.V.,¹⁶ let you know tomorrow,” having in mind something more than a prayerful deliberation of the same. This writer can testify from repeated experience that “when deep sleep falleth upon men,” the LORD “openeth” the spiritual “ears” and eyes, and “sealeth their instruction” (Job 33:15-16).

In closing, a word of warning: While sleep is both necessary and desirable—for without it we could neither go to our work nor enjoy the blessings of providence—yet it can be sinfully perverted. Therefore we are enjoined, “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty” (Pro 20:13). Alas, what creatures we are—liable to abuse every gift God bestows! May His grace preserve us from giving Him occasion to say, “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” (Pro 6:9). Slothfulness must not be regarded as an infirmity, but as a sin which affects the whole body, and if not watched, grows upon us with unperceived power.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

7. Fullness of Joy (1:4)

“And these things write we unto you, that your joy [and ‘ours’] may be full.” A common desire animated and regulated the apostles: to promote the glory of their Master and the good of His

¹⁵ **aver** – assert as a fact.

¹⁶ **D.V.** – *Latin*, Deo Volenti; literally, “as God wills.”

people—the two things being inseparably connected. They had themselves experienced the unspeakable blessing and blessedness of intimate fellowship with Christ, and the bliss which ever accompanies it; and therefore, they longed that their fellow saints should, according to their measure, freely and fully participate in the same. They desired that their converts should be bright and buoyant Christians, whose hearts would rise above the trials and troubles of this life, rejoicing in the Lord, finding their satisfying and everlasting portion in Him. Accordingly, they one and all, in both their oral and written ministry, employed themselves in setting forth the person and perfections, the offices and work, the Lordship and example, of the Christ of God—knowing full well that it was only by means of a spiritual knowledge of His excellency, an interest in His salvation, the maintaining of a close walk and daily communion with Him, that fullness of joy would be experienced in the souls of those whose welfare they had so much at heart.

Those words, “that your joy may be full” were not penned by an inexperienced visionary or youthful dreamer, aglow with an enthusiasm which would shortly be dampened by bitter disillusionment. Instead, they were written by a very aged person who was thoroughly acquainted with the dark side of life, with the sins and sorrows which beset a Christian, and who knew that it was through “much tribulation” that any entered “into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). But it was to no mere natural emotion he had reference—an exuberance of spirit suited only to high festivals, an enthusiasm raised to the point of excitement. Radically different is the spiritual joy which he had in view. This is a divine grace communicated to and situate in the depths of the soul, which the storms of this world cannot reach. It is something which is suited to everyday life and work, for it is a calm and serene frame of mind, as well as a happy state of heart. Far more was implied than actually expressed in John’s language, for where fullness of joy exists, there is a separation from the world, a close fellowship with God in Christ, a treading of wisdom’s ways, and thus, the Lord is honoured and His people helped.

Fellowship with the Lord is the grand marvel of redemption, and a fullness of joy in the redeemed is its crowning blessing. In Christ, there is matter for perpetual delight: “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound [of the Gospel]: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted” (Psa 89:15-16). Such is the believer’s right and privilege; and if it be not actually realized in his experience, the fault is all his own. The ministers of the Word are “helpers of your joy” (2Co 1:24). The one who feeds thereon will exclaim, “Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). How the heart is gladdened by answered prayers (Psa 116:1)! We have great reason to “call the sabbath a delight” (Isa 58:13), and to “rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa 118:24). Contemplations of God’s perfections: “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (Psa 104:34). The one who is baptized should go “on his way rejoicing” (Act 8:39). The Lord’s Supper is a spiritual feast for the elevating of the Christian’s heart.

Piety, peace, and joy are what ought most to characterize the saints. To “worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phi 3:3) are the marks of the true circumcision. There are three things in connection with that rejoicing. First, an apprehension of our saving interest in Christ and of the glorious benefits we have by Him, for otherwise, how can we glory in Him (1Co 1:30-31)? Second, corresponding affections which result therefrom: love to Him, exultation of soul, feasting upon Him, and joy in Him. Third, an open expression of the same: evidencing that our satisfying portion in Him has made us lose all relish for the things of the world. What we prize most best demonstrates what we are, for where a man’s treasure is there will his heart be also (Mat 6:21). Each of us is discovered by his complacency or displacency: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after

the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5). Thus, to be comparatively miserable manifests a Christian to be in a backslidden state, and places a question mark on the genuineness of his profession. A miserable believer is no credit to Christ, and has a depressing effect upon his brethren.

The advantages and *benefits* of spiritual joy are real, many, and great. It diffuses sunshine over the whole life, supplying vigour for service, lightening our cares, animating for conflict, and making obedience a delight. Joy enlarges the heart and quickens us in the way of God: “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10). It overcomes that natural deadness and dullness in holy duties which arises partly from indwelling corruptions, and partly from the remissness of our wills toward heavenly things. But when there is rejoicing in Christ, irksome and difficult tasks become pleasant and easy. The joy of the LORD is His cordial to fortify us against the infelicities and calamities of this world, whether they be the common afflictions incident to men or persecutions for righteousness’ sake—making bitter things sweet to us (see Hab 3:17-18). It enables us to bear opposition and reproaches with courage and constancy: “And they departed...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Act 5:41). It greatly encourages and cheers our fellows: “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad” (Psa 34:2).

We cannot prosper in our souls nor flourish in the house of the LORD, unless we be assured of that peace which He has made by the blood of His Cross and are daily delighting ourselves in Him. Yet, though the Saviour has not only made His redeemed secure for eternity, but would have them happy in time, the fact remains that many of them are frequently oppressed with dullness and despondency. God does not appear to be the light of their countenance, and their spirits seem to have caught little of heaven’s lustre. If they be children of light and of the day, why is it that they are so often gloomy and cast down, and manifest so little of that brightness which should mark those who have been given “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16)? No doubt cases differ considerably, and a variety of causes account for the failure of so many to enjoy their birthright. Space will permit us to name only two or three of the principal hindrances.

Prominent among them is a *defective ministry*. In view of our text, we place this first. How few ministers could warrantably say, “These things preach we unto you *that your joy may be full*”! What numbers of them are almost for ever talking about the increased wickedness which is in the world, the likelihood of another war, the menace of the atom bomb, or the waning spirituality of the churches—things that tend to horrify rather than edify, to depress rather than delight their hearers. Many others confine themselves very largely to a dwelling upon the shortcomings and failures of God’s people as though it were most desirable for them to cherish doubts and fears. Others are all for the performance of duty and discharge of obligations, which, if stressed disproportionately, can but promote a proud and legal spirit. There is so very little of that preaching of *Christ*, which draws out the renewed heart unto Him, which leads to a closer walking and more intimate communing with Him, and which not only fills the saint with joy, but at the same time instills a deeper abhorrence of sin, and inspires a stronger desire to honour and please Him.

Second, *the lack in many Christians of a definite assurance* of their acceptance. How can one experience the peace of being reconciled to God, or the joy of knowing his sins are forgiven, while he be constantly debating whether or not he be His child? Not a few of His people dishonour the Father’s gift to them of His Son, in whom they *have* redemption and eternal life, by not estimating that gift at its true value. They do not take God at His Word, and believe that the death of Christ has cancelled all the guilt of His people, that He will by no means cast out any sinner who comes to Him for salvation, and that through Him they have full access and welcome to the

Father's house and heart. They have not really learnt the first lesson of the Gospel, the sufficiency of the divine love: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1Jo 4:9-10)—and consequently, they withhold from Him that full confidence which the manifestation of such love calls for, and which He delights to receive from those upon whom He has bestowed such favours.

Third, even when a Christian is well assured of his salvation, he may dim and dampen the joy of it by *failing to walk as a child of light* (Eph 5:8). To do so, he must cast off the "unfruitful works of darkness" (verse 11), so far and so soon as he discovers them to be such. God hates sin, and sent His Son to save us *from* our sins (Mat 1:21). If then we turn again to folly, yield to the lusts of the flesh, and "allow" evil in our hearts and lives, then the Holy One will withdraw from us the light of His countenance. Yet even in this case, He has made most gracious provision for our immediate and complete restoration to the knowledge of His favour and the joy of His smile: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jo 1:9). The moment any emotion, thought, or deed is revealed to us as sin, we should penitently confess the same, and then rejoice in the divine declaration that the blood of Christ has washed away all the stain of it. Thus, if we live up to our holy privilege, not even our sins should cloud the sunshine of God's love, or destroy the happy consciousness that He dwells in us, and we in Him.

When John penned the words, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full," it is highly probable that he had in mind those statements which he had heard from his Master: "These things have I spoken unto you, that *my joy* might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (Joh 15:11). "And these things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves" (Joh 17:13). It is to be carefully observed that both these utterances fell from the lips of the Saviour upon the night of His betrayal. Very remarkable and blessed is it to hear Him—with the terrible crucifixion staring Him in the face—speaking of His *joy*. What a proof that spiritual joy is in no wise created or regulated by circumstances or external conditions! And how those striking declarations ought to correct a one-sided view which only too many have taken of Christ's earthly life! Here too there is a *balance* to be preserved. He was indeed "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3), in a measure and degree which none else ever has been or can be, for His human sensibilities were more refined than ours. His were undulled by sin, and therefore, He felt the effects of sin far more keenly and had a greater capacity for pain than we have.

The sorrows and sufferings of Christ were many, poignant, and inconceivable. It could not be otherwise with One of infinite purity surrounded by those who were hostile to God and enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself. And while we must always keep sight of that fact and be deeply affected with the same in our souls, it is not to exclude from our view and thoughts the *other side* of His experience. Because He was a man of sorrows, we are not to conclude that He was a miserable and melancholy person, that during the years He trod this earth, He was a stranger unto joy. Admittedly, we enter here the realm of mystery, and need to tread very cautiously and reverently with unshodden feet; yet we must not close our eyes to what is clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Not only must we bear in mind that the One who then tabernacled in this scene of wickedness was God, as well as man, not only need we to distinguish sharply between what He endured officially and what He experienced personally, but we are also required to take into careful consideration what is said of Him in the Psalms—as well as in the Gospels—if we are to obtain the complete pictures.

That the Lord Jesus possessed a real, deep, and abiding joy is clear not only from His own utterances in John 15 and 17, but is equally evident from other considerations. He could aver, “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,” and add, “Therefore my heart is *glad*” (Psa 16:5, 9)—JEHOVAH was unto Him a fount of ceaseless consolation. As the connection between 1 John 1:3-4 imports, joy is inseparable from fellowship; and since the Son enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the Father until the three hours of darkness, fullness of joy must have been experienced by Him. Again, Christ found infinite satisfaction in discharging the commission assigned Him: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (Joh 4:34). God’s commandments were never irksome or grievous to Him in the slightest degree, but rather were most blessed, as His “*I delight to do thy will, O my God*” (Psa 40:8) attests. Wisdom’s ways are “ways of pleasantness” (Pro 3:17), and Christ ever walked therein. He found His joy in concurring with the Father’s appointments: since God had ordered His lot, though He had not where to lay His head (Mat 8:20; Luk 9:58), He declared, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places” (Psa 16:6). Contemplating the Father as “Lord of heaven and earth,” sovereignly hiding truth from one and revealing it to another, Christ “*rejoiced in spirit*” and said, “even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Luk 10:21).

Think not, then, of Christ during His earthly life as but “a man of sorrows” (Isa 53:3); contemplate Him too as One who was filled with joy. That the two things are in nowise incompatible is clear from the apostle’s experience: “As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing” (2Co 6:10). Christ’s joy consisted not only in the things which we have mentioned above, but also in the assurance of the Father’s full approbation that was ever His: that He did “always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). He found, too, unspeakable comfort in His consciousness of the Father’s abiding presence: “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone” (Joh 8:29). Since holiness and happiness are inseparably conjoined, deep joy must have been the portion of the Holy One, for He ever walked in the light of God’s countenance. What joy was His in the saving of sinners appears from His “layeth it [the recovered sheep] on his shoulders, *rejoicing*” (Luk 15:5). Finally, He endured the Cross “for *the joy* that was set before him” (Heb 12:2)—in faith’s apprehension and hope’s anticipation of the reward for His perfect work, He rejoiced.

We come now to the question: Is fullness of joy attainable by the Christian in this life? Assuredly it must be, or John had never written our present text. Assuredly it must be, for why did the Lord Jesus say unto His disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be *full*” (Joh 15:11)? Therein Christ told out the fullness of His heart, intimating His desire concerning His own. If it were not attainable, then why has the Saviour also bidden us, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (Joh 16:24)? Ah, is not the littleness and feebleness of our joy due to the paucity of our faith and the smallness of our hope? Has not the eternal Lover of our souls freely invited us, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly” (Song 5:1)? If fullness of joy be not experienced by us, then certainly we are living far below our privileges. The straitness is in ourselves, and not in Him or His revealed will. The Lord knows all about our temperaments, circumstances, trials, and corruptions; yet, notwithstanding, bids us “rejoice evermore” (1Th 5:16), having made full provision for us to do so.

Did not this same John say to those whom he addressed in his second epistle, “I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be *full*” (2Jo :12)? Nor can we legitimately set aside the force of all these passages by saying they express the ideal rather than the actual, that they set before us the standard at which we are to aim, and not what is realized by any soul in this time state. Such an evasion is at once ruled out of court by Acts 13:52: “And the disciples were *filled with joy*, and with the Holy Ghost”—and *they* were men subject to like temptations and pas-

sions as we are! As pardoned sinners, accepted in Christ, made sons and heirs of God, we should “rejoice in the Lord *alway*” (Phi 4:4). We must not be content with a fitful and occasional joy, but rather see to it that we keep this holy fire ever aflame upon the altar of our hearts. It is both our privilege and our right to feed and feast upon the Lamb and satisfy our souls unto a holy satiety.

Throughout our exposition of 1 John 1:4, we have followed the Authorized Version, but a word requires to be said upon the Revised rendering: “That *our* [the apostles’] joy may be full.” Really, it comes to the same thing, for the joy of the minister is largely bound up in the spiritual prosperity of those to whom he ministers, their happiness being mutual. Paul called the Philippians his “joy and crown” (Phi 4:1), and said of the Thessalonians, “For ye are our glory and joy” (1Th 2:20); while John said to those addressed in his second epistle, “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (2Jo :4), and in his third epistle, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3Jo :4). As the saints are partakers of the joy of God’s servants, so they, in turn, of theirs, for they rejoice in the same Saviour.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

59. Miracles (10:11)

The spiritual ignorance and skepticism of the day in which we are living calls for a clear and unhesitating setting forth of the teaching of God’s Word upon this subject. It is the duty of every preacher and Sabbath-School teacher to bring before the rising generation what Holy Writ reveals thereon. Without any drawing upon the imagination, yet by the use of vivid and picturesque language, it is one which can be made deeply interesting to the young. Broadly speaking, the miracles of the Bible are of two kinds or classes: manifest and supernatural judgments of God upon the wicked; gracious and mighty interpositions of God on behalf of His people. Of the former, we may instance the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven; of the latter, the opening of a way through the Red Sea so that Israel passed through dryshod. Briefly, we would define a miracle as a supernatural event brought about by a special act of divine providence, an extraordinary display of God’s power. It is an event occurring in the natural world, which is apparent to the senses and of such a nature that it can be rationally attributed only to the immediate act of God. As a special and more obvious interposition of God, a miracle differs from His common or ordinary providences.

The objection made by infidels against miracles, that they are contrary to nature and its established order, is quite pointless, for it entirely leaves out of consideration the fact that they are due to the direct intervention of One who is superior to those laws and can alter the mode of their operation whenever it pleases Him. The various ways and means by which God governs the universe demonstrate both His freedom and His sovereignty. Matter is ruled by forms, bodies by souls, inferior bodies by celestial, the visible world by invisible angels, angels and souls immediately by God. Nor do the same things always keep the same track or follow the same course. In Moses’ time, the flowing sea stood up as a wall and the flinty rock flowed as a river. In Joshua’s

day, the glorious sun was halted in his race and remained quite stationary for a whole day. In Elijah's life, the iron swam; and in Daniel's, the fire did not burn. During Christ's ministry, there were numerous excesses of nature, acting by prerogative, displays of divine glory. Such variety in the motions of nature exhibits the perfect freedom and superintendence of nature's LORD.

Whatever philosophical difficulties miracles may present to unbelief, the explanation which the Bible gives of them is far more rational and satisfactory than any that human wisdom can supply. The theories and hypotheses advanced by atheists are incredible and irrational, for they are at once unphilosophical and unscientific. But once the living God be postulated as their Author, One who is eternal and almighty, infinite in wisdom and goodness, supernatural works are to be expected. To say that miracles are "impossible" is absurd and the acme of arrogance, for the one who makes such an assertion virtually assumes himself to be possessed of omniscience—endowed with all knowledge. To *deny* that they exist is, if possible, still worse, for it is a deliberate closing of the eyes to that which confronts us on every side. *Creation* is a miracle, for it immeasurably transcends the capabilities and even the understanding of the natural man. The combined wit and resources of all physicists and scientists in the world could not *create* so much as a single blade of grass. No wonder the LORD asks puny man, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" (Job 38:4).

The *sustentation* and preservation of creation is a miracle. None but the One who gave them being could provide for and maintain such an innumerable multitude of creatures. Even if the wise of this world *were able* to bring into existence a blade of grass, they could not keep it alive a single day if deprived of the soil, and denied the water and sunshine which God provides. The *regulation* of the created system is a miracle. Man may tamper with the clocks in his "daylight-saving" schemes, but he cannot make the sun rise an hour earlier or set an hour later. He may sinfully fret and fume at the weather, but he can no more alter or modify it by any of his devices than he can change the tides of the sea. *Providence* is a continuous miracle, supplying the needs of not only a billion human beings, but myriads of animals, the birds of the air, and the denizens of the deep. "Thou openest *thine* hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled" (Psa 104:28-29)—so dependent is the world on its Maker's bounty. Man may attempt to "ration," but when God calls for a famine, he is helpless before it.

Strictly speaking, a miracle is something more than an unusual occurrence or mysterious prodigy, for the effects of the electric telegraph had been such unto those who lived a thousand years ago, but today they are explainable by natural laws. Contrariwise, the more fully a real miracle be comprehended, the more evident it is that such a phenomenal effect is above all the powers of nature, and must be attributed to an immediate¹⁷ act of God's intervention. Nor are we justified in regarding such interventions as anarchical infractions of nature's order, but rather as the interposition of the divine will, directing events unto the outworking of His purpose, every miracle being wrought in strict accord with His decrees. As the Westminster Confession of Faith so admirably expresses it, "God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without [Hos 1:7], above [Rom 4:19], and against [2Ki 6:6; Dan 3:27] them at His pleasure."¹⁸ It must not be thought that the Creator has brought into existence a system or instituted such laws as tie His own hands. No, "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psa 135:6).

Great care needs to be taken how we employ such expressions as "nature" and "the laws of nature," for they were coined by those who had no knowledge of or faith in the living God, and

¹⁷ **immediate** – without the intervention of another cause; direct.

¹⁸ *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647); Chapter 5, "Of Providence," Section 3.

are commonly used by men who would exclude the thought of God's immediate presence and power in the universe. But the Scriptures teach us to see the hand of *God* operating directly in all that is attributed to "natural causes" by the sceptics. The Christian rejects the idea that the universe is naught but a vast machine which works involuntarily, necessarily, and uniformly. Instead, he acknowledges a present God in providence, as well as creation. As he admires the flowers which spring from the tiny seeds, renewing the original grace and beauty of the parent plant, he traces the immediate influence of the Creator, as truly and as much as in making Aaron's rod to bud (Num 17:8). Nor is the vegetating of the seed any less a divine work and marvel because it is multiplied by millions and repeated year by year for successive ages. What unbelief terms "the course of nature" is but the agency of *God*. He is operating on the right hand and on the left, constantly maintaining and directing all things, though men discern Him not. Without Him, not a sparrow falls on the ground (Mat 10:29).

That the so-called "laws of nature" *are* being continually modified in their action by the intervention of divine will, appears plainly in the marked differences in the weather from year to year. Though [the Isle of] Lewis be situated so far to the west, this writer has witnessed snow lying on the ground during July! That is, of course, very exceptional, but it illustrates what has just been said, as do also the frequent falsifications of the "weather prophets," even of those who claim that it "runs in cycles." The same thing is exhibited in the longevity of different individuals: not only do no two centenarians give the same recipe for the attaining of old age, but many of them have been of frail physique and delicate constitution—and if naught but physical properties and laws determine the event, then the strongest should live the longest and the weakest die early. The material world abounds in such exceptions. "Cut off a snail's head and it will grow out again; cut off a crab's head, but it will not grow out again. Cut off a crab's claw and it will grow out again, but cut off a dog's leg and it will not grow out again"—Peter M. Roget (1779-1869), *Animal and Vegetable Physiology Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*.

Why such marked variations in the seasons? Why such disparity in the health and mentality of members of the same family? Why those differences in the operation of the very same properties and laws of animal substance? "It is as easy for God to turn nature out of its settled course as it was to place it in the station it holds and the course it runs"—Stephen Charnock (1628-1680). Verily, "He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psa 115:3). Rightly did Robert Haldane (1764-1842) argue, "To affirm that a suspension or alteration of the laws of nature is impossible, is to confer on them the attribute of deity, and to declare they are supreme and having no superior, precludes the existence of God as well as miracles, or it represents Him as subordinate to His own laws"—*The Evidence and Authority of Revelation, Vol. 1*. We say again that what is called "the course of nature" is nothing but the *direct agency of God*, the exercise of His will, wisdom, and power. "Nature" would cease to move were its Maker to withdraw His energy from it. It can no more operate of itself than it could produce itself. Those laws by which God usually conducts the government of the material creation were originally adjusted by Him, are now preserved by His power, and are deviated from whenever He pleases.

"And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" (Jos 10:11). It will be recalled that when the Gibeonites made their peace with Joshua and entered into a league with him, five kings of the Amorites gathered their armies together and made war upon their capital. They sent to Joshua an urgent appeal for help, which he answered at once by marching at the head of his men through the night. Coming upon the Canaanites unex-

pectedly, and probably before they had made their dispositions and appointed sentries, they threw them into consternation. Moreover, “And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter”; thereby signifying His approval of Israel’s sparing the lives of the Gibeonites by now giving them the most glorious victory in all their wars. As the remaining Amorites fled, the LORD employed against them the artillery of heaven, which demonstrates how hopeless is the case of those who have Him for their enemy.

In casting down the great stones of hail upon the Amorites, we may observe what a *variety of means* God uses in executing His will. In overwhelming the antediluvian world, He employed a deluge of rain; in the destruction of Sodom, fire from heaven; in the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, by removing the wheels of their chariots and drowning them. Therein we behold His sovereignty exemplified, as it is too in ministering unto His people. This was not the first time God made the hail a messenger of judgment, for He did so in the seventh plague upon Egypt (Exo 9:22-26). Many of the premillenarians believe that “hail” will be one of the weapons again used by God in His judgments on the earth (Rev 16:21). This awful visitation on the Canaanites had been foretold: “Hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved...against the day of battle and war?” (Job 38:22-23)—Job was probably written before Joseph’s birth.

There are three things which were singular and striking about the hail in Joshua 10. First, its great size; second, its force and efficacy—being like bullets from a machine gun, slaying men outright. Occasionally, we have read of hail of unusual dimensions, which did great damage to crops and cattle, but not of it effecting such wholesale slaughter of human beings as on this occasion. Third, its *discrimination*—none of the Israelites being killed! This is the feature which most evidently evinced the miraculous nature of this hail. Though Joshua’s men must have been in close combat with the Canaanites and more or less mixed up with them as they pursued them, none of the deadly missiles fell on God’s people. This was even more remarkable than what occurred under the seventh plague, for whereas the LORD then sent it throughout all the land of Egypt, none fell in Goshen (Exo 9:26); but here it fell all round the Israelites, yet without one of them being harmed—illustrating that word, “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh *thee*” (Psa 91:7).

There is probably an allusion to this miracle and others of a similar nature in Psalm 18:13-14—both passages speaking of the LORD “discomfited them” and “scattered [chased] them,” and mentioning the hail. There was no escaping His wrath. Hopeless is the plight of all who provoke Him. When the appointed hour of His vengeance arrives, none can deliver himself. Thus will it be with everyone who mocks Him and persecutes His people. They shall discover, to their eternal undoing, that it is “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). That more died from the hailstones than Israel slew with the sword made good God’s word unto Joshua, “Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you” (Deu 3:21-22). And to Him may the Christian look in his spiritual warfare, and “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

The opening verses of Psalm 44 supply a striking and blessed commentary upon what has been before us: “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.” This was a God-

honouring acknowledgment. Canaan was His gift unto Israel, and *He* put them in possession of it. Their warriors, indeed, were not inactive, but it was the light of His countenance which inspired them with valour. God was the Conqueror of Canaan. Without *His* power working in and for them, all their efforts had been in vain. By employing the artillery of heaven against the five kings, the LORD made this the more evident.

And what is the application which we are to make of the same? First, give unto the LORD the honour which is due to Him, and freely ascribe our victories unto Him. Whatever success be ours, it is wholly due to the might and goodness of God. Without His blessing, all our endeavours would be useless. Second, recognize and own His sovereign grace to be the fount from which proceed all His actings on our behalf; “because thou hadst a favour unto them” (Psa 44:3). Third, make known to our children the miracle-working power of God, especially what He has wrought for us. Fourth, count upon Him undertaking for us: He is the same almighty God and Saviour now as then! What we read of in Scripture and have heard from our fathers should strengthen faith, encourage prayer, stimulate hope: “Thou art *my* King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob” (Psa 44:4). Thou art my sovereign LORD, my sure Defence against all enemies, my all-sufficient Redeemer. Intervene on my behalf, confound my foes, grant me the victory. Thou hast but to speak, and it is done; to “command,” and it standest fast.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

3. Its Imputation, Part 2

Having proved from Scripture that God constituted Adam the covenant head and federal representative of his race, we are now to show that the guilt of his original sin was imputed unto all his posterity. Were there no explicit statements to that effect in the Bible, we should be obliged to infer the same, for with *those* principles such a conclusion is inevitable. If the one was acting in the name and on the behalf of many, then the latter are legally responsible for what he did, and must suffer the consequences of his conduct—be it good or evil. Had Adam survived the test to which he was subjected, had he remained obedient to his Maker and LORD, then his obedience had been reckoned to the account of all his seed, and they had been joint partakers of his reward. But if he revolted from the divine government and preferred his own will and way, then the punishment he incurred must be visited also upon the whole of his constituency. Such a procedure is neither merciful nor unmerciful, but a matter of *righteousness*. Justice requires that the penalty of a broken law shall be visited upon its transgressors. A precept without penalty is simply advice, or at most, a request; and compliance therewith, merely a species of self-pleasing, and not submission unto authority. To divest the divine Law of its sanction would be to reduce God to a mere supplicant—begging His creatures to behave themselves.

Not only had God the sovereign right to constitute Adam the covenant head of his race; not only was it strictly and legally just that its members should be held accountable for what he did, whether it issued in their weal or woe; but consider the *meetness*¹⁹ of such an arrangement. Since the loyalty and subjection of man to his Maker must be put to the proof, only two alternatives were possible: either the human race must be placed on probation in the person of a suitable representative and responsible head, or each individual member must enter upon probation for himself. “The race must either have stood in a full-grown man, with a full-orbed intellect, or stood as

¹⁹ **meetness** – fitness; suitableness.

babies, each entering his probation in the twilight of self-consciousness, each deciding his destiny before his eyes were half-opened to what it all meant. How much better would that have been? How much more just? But could it not have been some other way? There was no other way. It was either the baby, or it was the perfect, well-equipped, all-calculating man—the man who saw and comprehended every thing. That man was Adam”—G. S. Bishop.

Fresh from the hands of his Creator, with no sinful heredity behind and no depraved nature within him—but instead endowed with holiness and indwelt by the Spirit of God—Adam was well equipped for the honourable position assigned him. His fitness to serve as our head, and the ideal circumstances under which the decisive test was made, must forever close every honest mouth from objecting against the divine arrangement and the fearful consequences which Adam’s failure has brought down upon us. It has been well said that, “Had we been present, had we and all the human race been brought into existence at once, and had God proposed to us that we should choose one who was to be our representative, that He might enter into covenant with him on our behalf—should not we, with one voice, have chosen our first parent for this responsible office? Should we not have said, ‘He is a perfect man and bears the image and likeness of God—if anyone is to stand for us, let it be this man Adam’? Since the angels which stood for themselves fell, why should we wish to stand for ourselves? And if it be reasonable that one stand for us, why should we complain when God has chosen the same person for this office that we should have chosen had we been in existence and capable of choosing ourselves?”—G. S. Bishop.

Ere proceeding farther, let it be insisted upon that God is nowise to be blamed for Adam’s fall. After a thorough and extensive investigation, Solomon declared, “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc 7:29). There, the streams of human folly and iniquity are all traced back to their fountain-head of corruption. Man was created without irregularity or blemish; but he departed from his original rectitude. And why? Because he vainly supposed he could *better himself*. “They”—that is, Adam and Eve at first, followed by their crazed descendants—“sought out many inventions.” Significant and suggestive word! What are “inventions” but devices to improve things? And what gives rise to such attempts but dissatisfaction with present conditions? Our first parents thought to find a superior way of happiness by kicking off their traces. Instead of being content with what their Maker had given and appointed them, they preferred their own will to God’s, their inventions rather than His institutions. They forsook their rest in the LORD and sought to improve their case. They promised themselves liberty, only to become the slaves of Satan.

The course taken by our first parents is that which has been followed ever since by all their children, as is intimated in the change from the singular number to the plural in Ecclesiastes 7:29. As indicated above, we do not (as most expositors) regard the prime reference in that passage as being to the “aprons” of “fig leaves” (Gen 3:7) which Adam and Eve sewed together; but rather, to their original sin in being *dissatisfied* with the state in which God had placed them—vainly imagining to improve their lot by leaning unto their own understanding, following the desires of their hearts, and responding to the evil solicitation of the serpent. Thus it has been, and still is, with their descendants. They have turned from the Creator to the creature for their comfort: having forsaken the Living Fountain, they engage themselves in hewing out “broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13)—preferring the “far country” to the Father’s house. Their search after wisdom, their mad quest for pleasure, their pursuit of wealth and worldly honours, are but so many “inventions” or attempts to better their lot, and proofs of a restless and dissatisfied heart! Had our first parents been content with the goodly heritage which their Maker assigned them,

they would not have coveted that which He had prohibited. And today, the remedy for covetousness is *contentment*—see Hebrews 13:5!

We therefore subscribe unhesitatingly to the dictum of John Calvin (1509-1564): “It is clear that the misery of man must be ascribed wholly to himself, since he was favoured with rectitude by the divine goodness, but has lapsed into vanity through his own folly.” God expressly forbade Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He plainly warned him what would be the consequence of disobedience. Though He made man a mutable creature, yet not evil, Adam had ability to stand, as well as to fall. He was fully capable of loving God as his chief good, and of moving toward Him as his last end. There was light in his understanding to know the rule he was to conform unto. There was perfect harmony between his reason and his affections. It was therefore easier for him to continue in obedience to the precept than to swerve from it. Though man was created defectible, yet he was not determined by God influencing his will, by any positive act, to apostasy. God did not force him, but suffered him to act freely. He did not withdraw any grace from him, but left him to that power with which He invested him at his creation. Nor was God under any obligation to sustain him supernaturally, or withhold him from sinning. God created Adam in a righteous state, but he deliberately cast himself and his posterity into a forlorn state.

Adam took things into his own hands, revolted from God, and trampled His law beneath his feet. It behoves us to consider well the relation between that foul deed and the universal miseries consequent thereon, for it supplies the clue to all the dark confusion which perplexes us within and without. It tells us why infants die, why they are estranged from God from the womb (Psa 58:3), and why each of us is born into this world with a “heart [that] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). It is because Adam forfeited his Maker’s approbation and incurred His awful displeasure, with all the terrible effects thereof. In Adam, *we* broke the covenant of works: we offended in his offence and transgressed in his transgression; and thereby departed from God’s favour and fell under His righteous curse. “Thus man apostatized, God was provoked, the Holy Spirit forsook His polluted temple, the unclean spirit took possession, the divine image was defaced, and Satan’s image imposed in its place”—Thomas Scott (1747-1821). Through the sin of its head, the race was ruined and fell into a state of most horrible moral leprosy. Ours is a fallen world: averse to God and holiness, iniquity abounding in it, death reigning over it, lust and crime characterizing it, suffering and misery filling it.

Accordingly, it is written, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). In the light of Genesis 3, that is surely a strange and startling statement, for that chapter makes it clear that Eve fell before Adam did! Why then is it not said, “by one woman,” or at least “by one man and woman sin entered into the world”? Because, as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) long ago pointed out, “Moses tells us the *history* of Adam’s fall, and Paul explains the *mystery* and the consequences thereof”; in other words, Romans 5 opens to us the significance and scope of the Eden tragedy. The opening word of verse 12 indicates that a logical proposition is there advanced, which is confirmed by the “as” and “so.” The reason why no notice is taken of Eve is that throughout what follows the apostle is treating of the *condemnation* of all mankind, and not of the vitiation²⁰ of human nature. That condemnation is due solely to our having revolted from God in the person of our legal representative, and since Adam alone sinned in *that* capacity, no mention is made of Eve—headship always pertains to the man, and not to the woman.

²⁰ **vitiation** – making corrupt; weakening morally.

Before proceeding farther, let us say a few words upon the *relation* of this most important passage. In the preceding chapters, Paul had dealt at length with the depravity and sinfulness of mankind (especially in Romans 1:18-32; 3:10-20) and had declared that even Christians in their unregenerate days were ungodly, without strength, enemies to God (Rom 5:6, 10)—here he shows *why* they were so, Adam’s offence being the cause and source thereof. Second, he had refuted the proud but erroneous view of the Jews, who regarded themselves as holy because of the seed of a holy father (Rom 2:17-3:9); and consequently, they utterly lacked a true estimate of their desperate condition by nature and practice, or a sense of their dire need of divine grace—here the apostle takes them back to a higher ancestor than Abraham, even Adam, who was equally the father of Jew and Gentile, both alike sharing his guilt and inheriting his curse. Third, Paul had presented the grand doctrine of justification by faith (Rom 3:21-31) and had illustrated the same by the cases of Abraham and David—here he shows Adam was a “figure” of Christ (Rom 5:14), that the one sustained an analogous relation to his race as the other did to His seed, that each transacted as the one for the many, and that therefore, the Gospel principle of *imputation* (Christ’s righteousness reckoned to the account of the believer, Rom 3:21-31) is no novelty, but identical with the one on which God acted from the beginning.

To proceed, observe that it is not “through” but “*by one man.*” But exactly what is meant by “*sin entered the world*”? Three explanations are possible. First, sin as an *act* of disobedience: by one man, rebellion against God began. But Genesis 3 shows otherwise: transgression of God’s Law was initiated by Eve! Second, sin as a principle of *depravity*: by one man originated our sinful nature. This is the view generally taken. But it is equally untenable, for the corruption of our nature is as much by the mother as by the father. Moreover, if such were the force of “sin” in the first clause, then the closing one would perforce read, “for that all are *sinful.*” Furthermore, verses 13 and 14 explain and furnish proof of what is asserted in verse 12, and it would be meaningless to say, “a sinful *nature* is not *imputed.*” Finally, all through this passage, “sin” and “righteousness” are contrasted, and righteousness here is judicial and not experiential—something reckoned to our account and not infused into us. “Righteousness” in this passage signifies not a holy nature, but conformity to the Law’s demands; and therefore, “sin” cannot be corruption of nature, but rather the cause of our condemnation. Thus, third, by one man *guilt* entered into the world, exposing the race unto God’s wrath.

“By one man sin *entered.*” Sin is here personified as an intruding enemy, coming as a solemn accuser as well as a hostile oppressor. It entered “the world,” not the universe, for Satan had previously apostatized. “And *death* by sin,” which is not to be limited to mere physical dissolution, but must be understood of the penal consequences of Adam’s offence. All through this passage, death is opposed unto “life,” and life includes very much more than physical existence or even immortality of soul. When God told Adam, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17), He signified, first, die *spiritually*—that is, be alienated from the source of divine life. Second, in due course, die *physically*—thy body shall go to corruption and return to the dust. Third, die *eternally*, suffer “the second death” (Rev 20:14), be cast into the lake of fire, there to suffer forever—unless a miracle of grace redeems and delivers thee, of which there is no record anywhere in Holy Writ.

“And so death *passed upon* all men” because of their complicity in the one man’s sin. It is not that “death” as a principle of evil gained admittance and polluted the nature of his offspring, but that the penal sentence of death was pronounced upon them. Having been charged with his transgression, they must suffer the consequence of the same. The apostle’s design was to show the *connection* between the one man’s sin and the resultant misery of the many. By his disobedience,

all men were constituted sinners—guilty criminals before God—and therefore sharers of the sentence passed upon Adam. “In Adam all die” (1Co 15:22). Those words explain the “by man came death” of the preceding verse, and show that all die by virtue of their relation to the covenant head of our race—die because of their legal union with him. Even physical death is far more than “nature’s debt,” or the inevitable outcome of our frail constitution: it is a *penal affliction*, a part of sin’s “wages.” We are subject to mortality because we were “in Adam” by federal representation; we partake of his fallen nature because we are partners of his guilt and punishment. We are born into this world neither as innocent creatures, nor to enter upon our probation: rather do we come into it as *culprits* condemned to death by the divine Law.

Every man, woman, and child is adjudged guilty before God. The ground of our condemnation is something *outside* of ourselves. Inward corruption and alienation from God are the consequences and not the cause of our condemnation. Antecedent to any personal act of ours (as such), we stand accursed by the divine Law. Since “death” came as the result of “sin,” since it is the penal sentence upon it, that sentence cannot be passed upon any save those who are *guilty*. If, then, death was “passed upon *all* men,” it must be because all are guilty—all participated legally in Adam’s offence. Clear and inevitable as is that inference, we are not left to draw it ourselves. The apostle expressly states it in the next words: “For that all have sinned”—“for that,” or, “because in consequence of.” Here then is the divinely given reason *why* the death penalty is passed upon “all men”—because “all have sinned,” or, as the margin and the R.V. more accurately render it, “in whom all sinned.” The apostle is not here saying that all men sinned personally, but *representatively*. The Greek verb “sinned” is in the aorist tense, which always looks back to a past action that has terminated. The curse of the Law falls upon us first, not because we are sinful, but because we were federally guilty when our covenant head sinned.

In Romans 5:12, the apostle was not referring to the corrupting of mankind. It is true that as a result of our first parents’ sin, the springs of human nature were polluted; but this is not what Paul was writing of. Instead, he went behind *that*, and dealt with the *cause* of which moral depravity is but one of the effects. A corrupt tree can indeed produce nothing but corrupt fruit, but why are we born with corrupt hearts? Such is more than a terrible calamity: it is a *penal infliction* visited upon us because of our prior criminality. Punishment presupposes guilt, and the punishment is given to all because *all* are guilty; and since God accounts all guilty, then they must be participants in Adam’s offence. Well did George Whitefield (1714-1770) say, “I beg leave to express my surprise that any person of judgment should maintain human depravity, and not immediately discover its necessary connection with the imputation, and how impossible it is to secure the justice of God without having recourse to it; for certainly the corruption of human nature, so universal and inseparable, is one of the greatest punishments that could be inflicted upon the species...Now if God has inflicted an evident punishment upon a race of men perfectly innocent, which had neither sinned personally nor yet by imputation; and thus while we imagine we honour the justice of God by renouncing imputation, we in fact pour the highest dishonour upon that sacred attribute.”

Death, penal death, has been passed upon all men because all sinned in Adam. That the “all have sinned” cannot signify their own personal transgressions is clear, because the manifest design of Romans 5:12 is to show that *Adam’s sin* is the cause of death; because physical death (a part of sin’s wages) is far more extensive than personal transgression—as appears from so many dying in infancy; and because such an interpretation would destroy the analogy between Adam and the One of whom he was “the figure,” and would lead unto this comparison: as men die because they sin personally, so all earn eternal life because they are personally righteous! Equally evident is it that “all have sinned” cannot mean death comes upon men because they are de-

praved, for this too would clash with the scope of the whole passage: if our *subjective* sinfulness be the ground of our condemnation, then our subjective holiness (and not Christ's merits) is the ground of our justification. It would also contradict the emphatic assertion of verse 18: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Thus, we are *obliged* to understand the "all have sinned" of verse 12 as meaning all sinned *in Adam*.

If the federal headship of Adam and the imputation of his sin unto all his posterity be repudiated, then what alternative is left us? Only that of the separate testing of each individual. If the race was not placed on probation in the first man, then each of his offspring must stand trial for himself. But the conditions of such a trial make success impossible, for each probationer would enter upon it in a state of spiritual death! The human family is either suffering for the sin of its head, or it is suffering for nothing at all. "Man is born unto trouble" (Job 5:7), and from it there is no escape. What then is the explanation of the grim tragedy now being enacted on this earth? Every effect must have a previous cause. If we be not born under the condemnation of Adam's offence, then why are we "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph 2:3)? "Now either man was tried and fell in Adam, or he has been condemned without trial. He is either under the curse (as it rests upon him from the beginning of his existence) for Adam's guilt, or for no guilt at all. Judge which is more honouring to God: a doctrine which, although profoundly mysterious, represents Him as giving man an equitable and most favourable probation in his federal head, or that which makes God condemn him untried, even before he exists"—Professor Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898).

PRIVATE JUDGMENT

Part 3

“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren” (Mat 23:8). In every generation, there are those of an officious spirit who aspire to leadership, demanding deference from their fellows. Such men—especially when they are endowed with natural gifts above the average—are the kind who become the founders of new sects and parties, and insist upon unqualified subjection from their followers. *Their* interpretation of the Scriptures must not be challenged, their dicta are final. They must be owned as “rabbis” and submitted to as “fathers.” Everyone must believe precisely what *they* teach, and order all the details of his life by the rules of conduct which they prescribe, or else be branded a heretic and denounced as a gratifier of the lusts of the flesh. There have been, and still are, many such self-elevated little popes in Christendom, who deem themselves to be entitled to implicit credence and obedience, whose decisions must be accepted without question. They are nothing but arrogant usurpers, for Christ alone is the Rabbi or Master of Christians; and since all of His disciples be “brethren,” they possess equal rights and privileges.

“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Mat 23:9). This dehortation has ever been needed by God’s people, for they are the most part simple and unsophisticated, trustful and easily imposed upon. In those verses, the Lord Jesus was enforcing the duty of private judgment, bidding believers suffer none to be the dictators of their faith or lords of their lives. No man is to be heeded in spiritual matters any further than he can produce a plain and decisive “Thus saith the LORD” as the foundation of his appeal. To be in subjection to any ecclesiastical authority that is not warranted by Holy Writ, or to comply with the whims of men, is to renounce your Christian freedom. Suffer none to have dominion over your mind and conscience. Be regulated only by the teaching of God’s Word, and firmly refuse to be brought into bondage to “the commandments and doctrines of men,” with their “Touch not; taste not; handle not” (Col 2:21-22). Instead, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal 5:1); yet “not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (1Pe 2:16)—yielding unreservedly to *His* authority. Rather than conform to the rules of the Pharisees, Christ was willing to be regarded as a Sabbath-breaker!

“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2Co 1:24). Weigh well those words, my reader, and remember they were written by one who “was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2Co 11:5); and here he declaims all authority over the faith of these saints! In the previous verse, he had spoken of “sparing” them; and here, “Lest it should be thought that he and his fellow ministers assumed to themselves any tyrannical power over the churches, or lorded it over God’s heritage, these words are subjoined”—John Gill (1697-1771). The word “faith” may be understood here as either the grace of faith or the object thereof. Take it of the former: ministers of the Gospel can neither originate, stimulate, nor

dominate it—the Holy Spirit is the Author, Increaser, and Lord of it. Take it as the object of faith, that which is believed: ministers have no divine warrant to devise any new articles of faith, nor to demand assent to anything which is not plainly taught in the Bible. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1Pe 4:11), neither withholding anything revealed therein, nor adding anything of his own thereto.

Paul’s work was to instruct and persuade, not to lord it over his converts and compel their belief. He had written his first letter to the saints in answer to the queries they had sent him; and at the beginning of this second epistle explains why he had deferred a further visit to them, stating that he was prepared to stay away until such time as they had corrected the evils which existed in their assembly. He refused to oppress them. “Faith rests not on the testimony of man, but on the testimony of God. When we believe the Scriptures, it is not man, but God whom we believe. Therefore, faith is subject not to man, but to God alone...The apostles were but the organs of the Holy Spirit; what they spake as such they could not recall or modify. They were not the lords, so to speak, of the Gospel...Paul therefore places himself alongside of his brethren, not over them as a lord, but as a joint believer with them in the Gospel which he preached, and a helper of their joy, co-operating with them in the promotion of their spiritual welfare”—Charles Hodge (1797-1878). If Paul would not, then how absurd for any man to attempt to exercise a spiritual dominion in matters of faith or practice!

“The elders which are among you I exhort...Feed the flock of God which is among you...not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1Pe 5:1-3). These are part of the instructions given unto ministers of the Gospel as to how they are to conduct themselves in the discharge of their holy office, and we would earnestly commend them to the attention of every pastor who reads this article. They are divinely forbidden to abuse their position and assume an absolute authority or rule imperiously over the saints. Their task is to preach the truth and enjoin obedience to Christ, and not unto themselves. They are not to act arbitrarily or in a domineering spirit, for though they be set over believers in the Lord (1Th 5:12) and are to “rule”—and therefore to be submitted unto in their lawful administration of the Word and the ordinances (Heb 13:17)—yet they are not to arrogate to themselves dominion over the consciences of men, nor impose any of their own inventions; but instead, teach their flock “to observe all things whatsoever [Christ has] commanded” (Mat 28:20).

The minister of the Gospel has no right to dictate unto others, or insist in a dogmatic manner that people must receive what he says on *his* bare assertion. Such a spirit is contrary to the genius of Christianity, unsuited to the relation which he sustains to his flock, and quite unbecoming a follower of Christ. No arbitrary control has been committed to any cleric. True ministerial authority or church rule is not a dictatorial one, but is a spiritual administration under Christ. Instead of lording it over God’s heritage, preachers are to be “ensamples to the flock” (1Pe 5:3): personal patterns of good works, holiness, and self-sacrifice; models of piety, humility, and charity. How vastly different from the conduct enjoined by Peter has been the arrogance, intolerance, and tyrannical spirit of his self-styled successors! Nor are they the only ones guilty thereof. Love of power has been as common a sin in the pulpit as love of money, and many of the worst evils which have befallen Christendom have issued from a lusting after dominion and ecclesiastical honours.

Such is poor human nature that good men find it hard to keep from being puffed up and misusing any measure of authority when it be committed unto them, and from not doing more harm than good with the same. Even James and John so far forgot themselves that, on one occasion, they asked Christ to grant them the two principal seats of power and honour in the day of His glo-

ry (Mar 10:35-37). Mark well this part of His reply: “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them” (verse 42)—they love to bear sway, and, like Haman, have everybody truckle to them. “But so shall it *not be* among you” says Christ to His ministers—eschew any spirit of domineering, mortify the love of being flattered and held in honour because of your office. “But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (verses 43-44)—those who are to be accounted the greatest in Christ’s spiritual kingdom are the ones characterized by a meek and lowly heart, and those who will receive a crown of glory in the day to come are those who most sought the good of others. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (verse 45)—then make self-abnegation and not self-exaltation your constant aim.

“Prove *all* things: hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21). This is yet another verse that, by clear and necessary implication, teaches the privilege and right of private judgment, and makes known the duty and extent to which it is to be exercised. Linking it with what has been before us in the preceding paragraphs, it shows that if it be unwarrantable for the servants of Christ to usurp an absolute power, it is equally wrong for those committed to their care to submit thereto. Church government and discipline are indeed necessary and scriptural; yet not a lordly authority, but a rule of holiness and love, wherein a spirit of mutual forbearance obtains. God does not require the minds and consciences of His children to be enslaved by any ecclesiastical dominion. Each one has the right to exercise his own judgment and have a say and vote upon all matters pertaining to his local assembly; and if he does not, then he fails in the discharge of his responsibility. Well did one of the old divines say on Psalm 110:1, “Christ is Lord to employ, to command, whom and what He will. To Him alone must we say, ‘Lord, save me, I perish.’ To Him only must we say, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ (Act 9:6). To Him only must we go for instruction—‘Thou hast the words of eternal life’ (Joh 6:68).”

It scarcely needs to be said that the right of private judgment certainly does not mean that we are at liberty to bring the Word of God to the bar of human reason and sentiment, so that we may reject whatever does not commend itself to our intelligence, or appeal to our inclinations. The Bible does not submit itself unto *our* opinion, or give us the option of picking and choosing from its contents; rather is it our critic (Heb 4:12). “The law of the LORD is perfect” (Psa 19:7), and, the best of us being very imperfect, it is madness to criticize it. But when we hear preaching from it, we must *try* what is said whether or not it accords with the Word, and whether the interpretation be valid or strained. It is a fundamental truth that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Ti 1:15); yet even in the days of the apostles there were those who, while acknowledging Him as the only Saviour, taught that there was no salvation apart from circumcision. Accordingly, the church met at Jerusalem “to *consider* of this matter” (Act 15:4-11). So must *we* “consider” all we hear and read, whether it agrees with the divine Rule, taking nothing for granted.

“*Prove* all things.” This is not optional, but obligatory: we are divinely commanded to do so. God’s Word is the only standard of truth and duty, and everything we believe and do must be tested by it. Thousands have sought to evade this duty by joining Rome and allowing that system to determine everything for them. Nor are the majority of the members of non-popish churches much better, being too indolent to search and study the Bible for themselves, believing whatever their preachers tell them. Beware, my reader, of allowing *any* influence to come between your soul and God’s Word. How early did the Holy Spirit have occasion to say to one of the primitive churches which had given way to a spirit of partisanship and bigotry, “Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos?” When the mind rests upon the human instrument, not only is spiritual progress

in the truth immediately arrested, but the living power of what truth is already attained dies out of the enslaved heart, being displaced by dogmas received on human authority. Divine truth then degenerates into a party distinction, for which many zealously contend in naught but a sectarian spirit.

The origin of all sectarianism is subjection to men: human authority supplanting the authority of God, the preacher becoming the dictator. We must not suffer any to arrogate the place and office of the Holy Spirit. No human system can feed the soul: it has to come into immediate and quickening contact with the living and powerful Word of God in order to be spiritually nourished. Even where real Christians are concerned, many had their religious beliefs formed before they were converted, receiving them from their parents or the churches they attended, and not directly from God and His Word. Therefore, they, too, need to heed this divine injunction: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*” (1Th 5:21). Bring your beliefs to the test of the Scriptures, and you are likely to discover that it is much harder and more painful to *unlearn* some things than it is to learn new ones. Very few think for themselves, and fewer still are really willing to “*buy the truth*” (Pro 23:23) and set aside their former opinions, no matter what may be the cost. Much grace is needed for that! Since the eternal interests of our souls are involved, it is the height of folly for us to depend upon the judgment of others, for the ablest ministers are fallible and liable to err.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things *were so*” (Act 17:11). Those Bereans sat in judgment upon the teaching of the apostles! They are commended for doing so! Not only was it their privilege and duty, but it is recorded to their honour. But mark *how* they discharged this duty. They brought all that they heard from the spoken discourse to the test of the written Word. They did not judge by their own preconceptions, views, prejudices, feelings, or partialities, but by God’s Word. If what they heard was in accord therewith, they were bound to receive and submit to it; but if it was contrary thereto, they were equally bound to refuse and reject the ministry that taught it. That is recorded as an example to us! It reveals *how* we are to exercise this privilege of private judgment. The apostles claimed to be sent of God, but were they really preaching the truth? The Bereans gave them a ready hearing, but took the trouble to examine and try their teaching by the Scriptures, and searched them daily whether they were so. Do thou likewise, and remember that Christ commended the Ephesian saints because they *had tried* those who said they were apostles and “found them liars” (Rev 2:2).

The right of private judgment does not mean that each Christian may be a law unto himself, and still less lord over himself. We must beware of allowing liberty to degenerate into license. No, it means the right to form our own views from Scriptures, to be in bondage to no ecclesiastical authority, and to be subject unto God alone. Two extremes are to be guarded against: slavery to human authority and tradition, [and] the spirit of self-will and pride. On the one hand, we are to avoid blind credulity; on the other hand, an affectation of independence or the love of novelty, which disdains what others believe in order to obtain a cheap notoriety of originality. Private judgment does not mean private *fancy*, but a deliberate conviction based on Holy Writ. Though I must not resign my mind and conscience to others, or deliver my reason and faith over blindfold to any church, yet I ought to be very slow in rejecting the approved judgment of God’s servants of the past. There is a happy medium between limiting myself to what the Puritans and others taught, and disdaining the help they can afford me. Self-conceit is to be rigidly restrained. Private judgment is to be exercised humbly, soberly, and impartially, with a willingness to receive light from any quarter. Ponder the Word for yourself; but mortify the spirit of haughty self-sufficiency,

and be ready to avail yourself of anything likely to afford you a better understanding of the truth. Above all, daily beg the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. “Prove all things”: when listening to your favourite preacher, or reading these articles! Accord your brethren the same right and privilege you claim for yourself.

WELCOME TIDINGS

“LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power” (2Ch 14:11); rather has He been pleased generally to employ small and feeble instruments. It is His glory to use the weak and to perfect strength out of the mouth of babes, thereby staining the pride of the flesh. That fact has been and still is a great encouragement to us. Though no organization be behind us and our circulation is a wee one, yet by the LORD’s gracious “help,” this monthly messenger is feeding hungry souls far and wide. The following excerpts will rejoice our prayer-helpers.

“I delight to read through your findings in Joshua” (Lewis). “We do look forward to them. They are so faithful—so different from the teaching of the day” (Scotland). “I continue to find the ministry in the Studies very precious” (Scottish preacher). “The more I read them, the more I love them” (Glasgow). “I have received much help and searching from your writings. More and more do I feel my need of divine grace, for the heart is deceitful, the flesh is weak, and we are prone to stray” (English preacher). “What a privilege is mine to have been permitted to receive the Studies for another year. Just now I am re-reading the earlier ones on Joshua, which exactly fit my (Jordan) trial, which has not grown less. Psalm 55:22 is realized” (England). “They are most helpful and valuable. There is little strong meat in these days, and you, by God’s grace, do provide that” (English preacher). “I found ‘Glorious Sinai’ a most helpful and refreshing study” (England). “The Studies are a real help both mornings before business and evenings after business” (Devon). “They are a wealth of Calvinistic teaching to me; and in every article, I find that the once reading is insufficient. So much, in so little compass” (Belfast). “It has always been a delight to get into a quiet place with Studies. As you unfold things new and old out of the Scriptures, it is really a feast of fat things to me” (Ireland). “We would give thanks to our God for your preservation for another year, and pray that if it be His holy will, you may be preserved for many years” (Wales).

“I am a reader of your most precious and effective ministry. I have thanked God for ever directing your magazine into my hands” (Canada). “Since reading the Studies, God has shown me for the first time our utter worthlessness, and His marvelous mercy in saving us, in a way not realized before” (Canada). “I cannot express in words the help your magazine has been to me and my ministry. Thank you for such rich meat” (Canadian preacher). “We thank God for your letters to us during the past three years, and ask His strength and blessing on your behalf in the ministry of the pen” (Minnesota). “Through your printed expositions, I have learned much, and have sought to pass it on to others” (Wisconsin preacher). “How I need the counsel, the admonition, and the good solid food they contain. There is so much to distract in this world. How profitable it is to come home after the work of the day and read the Studies” (Minneapolis). “Your work has been a

tremendous help to open the Scriptures” (Pennsylvania preacher). “I have reread your articles many times and found them far superior to anything else obtainable” (Ohio). “Studies move me to the depths, and at the same time, uplift me. I read them over and over” (Oregon).

“Your magazine is next to my Bible in reading: it is real spiritual food to the soul” (Florida). “It would be impossible for me to tell you how much your writings have blessed my own heart and how deeply they have affected my ministry of the Word of God” (Illinois preacher). “Very seldom I read your magazine without the feeling to get down on my knees and offer up praise to God and not the creature” (Texas). “I find much blessing in your publication, and praise the Lord for the privilege of perusing and meditating on it” (South Dakota). “I have enjoyed the Studies for the past four years, and want to continue taking them as long as they continue on the present foundation of the Bible.” “Have especially enjoyed the articles on ‘Human Depravity’—your thoughts are excellent” (Georgia preacher). “I get a great blessing from the reading of your splendid magazine. It has been a source of much joy spiritually. May God bless you and your good wife” (Tennessee preacher). “For some months, I have been moved to write you of the blessings we have received from your penned thoughts. Your forthright manner refreshes, and we trust and pray, if it please God, your ministry may continue many years more. How rare to find overflowing wells of sweet water” (Missouri). “I have found your expositions of the Scriptures a great blessing to my ministry. How I praise the Lord for the insight which He has given you into His Word” (Arizona pastor). “I sincerely appreciate the faithful work that you are doing in expounding the Word, and will continue to pray the Lord’s blessing upon your labours. I recently distributed extra copies among my students, and it is my impression that some of them will contact you” (Massachusetts).

“They are of much spiritual value to me. Would that I could live up to the standard set in God’s Word” (New South Wales). “I find the Studies my greatest comfort” (Queensland). “I find in every article something suited to my need” (Victoria). “The standard is still very high, and I am glad you and your wife have been able to continue this unique ministry” (New Zealand). “It is a great encouragement to get these Studies when there is no one who cares for our souls” (New Zealand). “We consider the Studies the most instructive periodical we have seen, and now that we are more isolated, we value them increasingly. The Joshua articles have been timely and helpful. We are glad to have them, as they are our only source of instruction apart from the Bible” (Australia).

August

WAKING

“I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me” (Psa 3:5). There is not guarantee when we lie down at night, even though it be in good health, that we shall awake in this world the next morning. Thousands have not done so, and each time we *do*, it is because the LORD has been pleased to “sustain” us: sustain the action of the heart, the circulation of the blood, the heaving of the lungs—none of which is done by us. It is blessed to know that during the hours of darkness, we are the objects of God’s care, protecting us not only from physical harm, but also from the assaults of Satan. What child of God can doubt that our arch-enemy, filled as he is with enmity and hatred against the saints, attacks them in the sleep state? Some of our experiences at that time seem clearly to demonstrate it. Doubtless, many of our dreams are attributable to a disordered stomach or distempered mind; yet by no means all of them. Some of our nightmares cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by any physical or mental cause. That the Christian is not harassed by them regularly is due alone to the sovereign goodness of God in preventing such.

We are equally in danger from the workings of a disordered mind as from extraneous enemies. Some have walked in their sleep and walked to their death. Why have not we or our loved ones done so? And again, the answer is, “I awaked; *for* the LORD sustained me.” Some of our dreams supply evidence of a greatly heated imagination and deluded fancy. James Hervey (1714-1758) relates a well-authenticated case known to him, in which two friends who had hunted through the day spent the night together. One of them pursued a stag in his dreams, crying out, “I’ll kill him, I’ll kill him.” As he felt for the knife in his pocket, his companion sprang out of bed, and by the light of the moon, saw his friend give several deep stabs in the very place where a moment before his own throat had lain. Hervey added, “This is mentioned as proof that nothing hinders us from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amid the mad sallies of sleep, save the preventing care of our heavenly Father.”

In the previous article, we called attention to the element of *mystery* in sleep; let us now point out that it is just as real and evident in connection with our waking. We do not awaken automatically or according to any mere process or law of “nature.” Nor is it caused by any act of *our* will. No, we are awakened from slumber by the same One who put us to sleep. True, we are not sensible thereof, yet that alters not the fact itself. True also that God may employ a variety of means, nevertheless the fact remains: “He wakeneth morning by morning, *he* wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa 50:4). As John Gill (1697-1771) pointed out, “The allusion is to masters call-

ing their students betimes to their studies.” While this verse is part of a Messianic prophecy, we doubt not that it has a general application, particularly unto the regenerate. In this matter, as in many others, God often deigns to make use of human instruments and other agents, while at other times He dispenses entirely with them. Whether by means,²¹ or without them, it is *the LORD* who awakens us each morning. Unless He did so, our eyes would never again open in this world. The clock would run down and stop!

The experience of waking is such a common and everyday one that few of us make any attempt to ponder and analyse it. The supernatural origin of it appears in its very characteristics. Why is it that the minute a person awakes, he is in full possession of his faculties, that after hours of heavy slumber and total subconsciousness, his strength is renewed, his muscles ready for immediate action, his senses alert, the mind thoroughly refreshed? Why is it that we *instantly* arouse from the profoundest stupor which deadens all our powers? How very different is the protracted and disagreeable recovery to full consciousness after an anaesthetic! How thankful we should be that our waking by God is not a lengthy and nauseous process. Our daily emergence from hours (not a few minutes) of total inactivity, which closely resembles death itself; our bodies being completely and suddenly restored to vigour and activity—surely this is “the LORD’s doing,” and it should be “marvellous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23) and move us to praise and thanksgiving.

How completely dependent we are upon the LORD appears further from the terms of that lovely prayer, “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning” (Psa 143:8). Such should be one of our last petitions each night: if it be Thy good pleasure for me to see the light of the morning, awaken me with my heart attuned to Thy beneficence. Arouse me from my slumbers with my faculties attent unto Thy goodness, that my first waking thoughts may be engaged therewith. The fact that David made request, “*Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness,*” evinces that he had no confidence in his own ability to do so. It is only when we make that our sincere, earnest, and trustful request each night that we may warrantably expect to be able to say, “When I awake, I am still with thee” (Psa 139:18). Not “thou art still with me”—though that be blessedly the case—but “I am still with thee”: conscious of Thy nearness, sensible of Thy favours, enjoying happy communion with the eternal Lover of my soul.

As the comparison of one passage with another requires us to believe, it was in humble dependence upon God that David declared, “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psa 5:3). Such was his holy determination that the LORD should be given the first place and not be crowded out by temporal concerns. As His protection was essential for the night, so divine direction would be equally necessary for the day: grace would be required to oil the wheels of pious actions, wisdom from above to instruct him in the performance of duty, and the avoidance of the fowler’s snares. All of this he was resolved to ask for, leaning not unto his own understanding, but seeking unto the LORD at an early hour. Nor would he make request in a merely perfunctory way, but in confident expectation of an “answer of peace,” as his “I...will look up” connotes. Furthermore, he purposed, “I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning” (Psa 59:16). God’s compassions fail not, but are “new every morning” (Lam 3:22-23); equally so should be our acknowledgment of them. That is indeed a “good beginning” when we commence the day with prayer and songs of praise.

“Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1Co 15:34). While the immediate reference there [is] a call to arouse from the spiritual torpor into which false teachers had lulled the Corinthians, through the unsuspected effect of their evil communications; yet those words may suitably be re-

²¹ **means** – human instruments and other agents.

garded as a divine exhortation unto a holy life, and particularly, as a summons for us to attend unto at the beginning of each fresh day. Considered thus, its force is: employ your renewed energies not in self-pleasing, but in walking by the rule that God has given us, for “righteousness” ever has reference to conformity unto a moral or spiritual standard. Earnestly set yourself to the glorifying of Him who has permitted you to see the light of another day; live it as though you knew it would be your last one on earth. Shun sin and the occasions thereof as you would a deadly plague, yea, “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1Th 5:22). Before getting out of bed, remind yourself of this imperative injunction: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not,” and lift up your heart for enabling grace to heed the same.

It is both interesting and instructive to consider some of the different experiences met with by awakened souls. “And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him” (Gen 9:24). What a sad awakening was that—recorded as a lasting warning against intemperance. “But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God” (Jon 1:5-6). What a rude awakening was that, when one of God’s servants was rebuked by a heathen! “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not” (Gen 28:16)—blessed experience was that. “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him” (Mat 1:24)—may a like spirit of obedience characterize us. “And they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mar 4:38)—even His slumbers were disturbed by the unbelieving! “And when they were awake, they *saw his glory*” (Luk 9:32)—may that be, more and more, the happy lot of both writer and reader.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

8. Light and Darkness (1:5-6)

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5). We shall now consider, first, the connection of this verse with the immediately preceding ones—its bearing on the epistle as a whole will be shown under our exposition of verse 6. Second, its message or assertion. Third, its scope, in view of the teaching of Scripture on light and darkness. Fourth, its design, or the reasons why this declaration is here made.

The A.V.²² is rather misleading, for the “then” suggests that the apostle is drawing an inference or pointing out a consequence from what he had stated previously. But such is not the case.

²² A.V. – The Authorized Version, commonly known as the King James Version, is an English translation of the Christian Bible by the Church of England completed in 1611. It was begun in January, 1604, when King James VI of Scotland and I of England convened the Hampton Court Conference. There the Puritans advocated a new English version in response to the

The literal meaning of the Greek is “*And this is the message,*” and is so rendered in Samuel Bagster’s (1772-1851) *Interlinear* and the R.V. The opening “*And*” intimates not only a direct connection between this verse and the foregoing ones, but a *continuation* of the same subject. As usual, the Holy Spirit has graciously hung the key on the door for us by announcing the theme of this epistle in its opening verses, namely *fellowship*—with God, with the apostles, with fellow saints. Concerning that fellowship, we have already seen that it has been made possible by the Son of God becoming incarnate and giving His people an experiential knowledge of Himself as the Word of Life. It is regeneration which capacitates us to enter into this inestimable privilege. Not only is it a fellowship of spiritual life, but also in the truth, consisting of a saving knowledge of Christ and the Father. It is likewise a gladsome fellowship, which, if entered into intimately and constantly, produces “fullness of joy.” Now we are informed it is a *holy* fellowship, for it is exercised only in “the light.”

The blissful fellowship which the apostle was speaking of is radically different from anything known to the natural man. The joy which it produces is greatly superior to any experienced by the senses. It is in nowise carnal, but wholly spiritual. It transcends all natural emotion. It was necessary to insist upon this so that neither congenial social intercourse nor religious excitement should be mistaken for it. There has always been a “mixed multitude” who attach themselves to the people of God, making a profession of Christ and claiming to enjoy communion with God. While this fellowship is open and free for all who are partakers of the Holy Spirit, yet no unregenerate persons can participate in this high favour. It was therefore a point of great practical importance that the apostle should make a clear statement thereon so as to guard against all erroneous conceptions of it and its joy. This he does by a most searching description of the One with whom such communion is had, and by the solemn assertion that “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (verse 6).

Again, one can perceive almost at a glance that “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you” (verse 5) is intimately related to the contents of the previous verses. Both in the first and the third verses, John had made mention of what he and his fellow apostles had heard from that blessed One who had been made manifest unto them, and which it was their mission to “declare” unto His redeemed (verse 3). And now he gives an epitomized statement of what Christ *had* made known unto them: “This then is the message.” The R.V. rendering is preferable: “heard *from* him,” for it was not merely something *about* Christ which the apostles proclaimed, but rather, what they had actually heard from His own lips. The “*from him*” clearly has reference to the incarnate Word: because He is the principal Person spoken of in the immediate context, because He was the Sender of the apostles, and because He is the next antecedent in verse 3. The apostles and ministers of the Gospel are the messengers of the Lord Jesus, and it is their business to communicate *His* mind and will, both to the churches and to the world: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12).

The Greek term translated “message” has several different shades of meaning when rendered into English. Young’s Literal Translation (1862) defines it as “promise,” for that word in 2 Peter 3:13 is derived from the same root and indicates its benign character. In Acts 22:30, it is translated “commandment,” which emphasizes its lordly nature. These agree with the first two statements made in the New Testament concerning our Lord’s oral ministry: His hearers “wondered at the

problems of two earlier translations. The A.V. has become the most enduring Bible of all time due to its literal translation, use of the *Textus Receptus* Greek text, and majestic style.

gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Luk 4:22); “the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having *authority*” (Mat 7:28-29). But here in our text, it is used to express the sum of the revelation communicated by Him. John here puts into a terse sentence what the apostles had gathered from Christ’s announcements. Or, if we place the emphasis on “This then is *the* message which we have heard of him,” its force would be, “This was the dominant and central doctrine our Master proclaimed, around which all others rotated and from which all others issued.” This “message” was one of the greatest importance, both in itself and also in the consequences of it, for it respected the ineffable purity of the divine nature and the imperishable glory of the same.

John’s style here is similar to his opening words in the Apocalypse: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to *shew unto* his servants,” which He sent “unto his servant John: Who *bare record* of the word of God” (Rev 1:1-2). As the Son said unto the Father, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me” (Joh 17:8), so they in turn communicated the same unto their converts (compare 2Ti 2:2). Christ came here to declare and reveal the true and living God (Joh 1:18), and John here summarized His teaching: “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light” (1Jo 1:5). This was not a discovery which the apostles made for themselves, nor an inference which they drew from the divine works and ways. No, it was an authoritative communication which they had received from the Saviour, and therefore is to be accepted without question. We heartily agree with James Morgan (1799-1873), who said of the substance of this message, “Its simplicity and comprehensiveness are amazing. It is so simple, a child perceives its meaning; while it is so comprehensive as to render a full exposition of it impossible.”

“God is indefinable, because to define is to *limit*, and to speak of limiting *infinitude* is an absurdity. Names are ascribed to God in Scripture, and attributes, yet they convey only some faint notions of His exalted perfections; but sufficient is revealed to preserve the mind from vain imaginations or gross conceptions of His Being. Man knows nothing of God, and can know nothing except what He has revealed. In condescension to our capacity, God has revealed Himself under names and notions which may best strike our *senses*—the channel of all our reasonings and the medium by which we know”—Ambrose Serle (1742-1812). Three statements are made (we dare not call them “definitions”) concerning what God is *in Himself*, which, for want of better terms, may be said to tell us something of His nature or character, and they should be reverently pondered in the order in which they occur in Scripture: “God is a Spirit” (Joh 4:24), “God is light” (1Jo 1:5), and “God is love” (1Jo 4:8).

“*God is a Spirit*” (Joh 4:24, A.V.) The absence of the article (in the Greek) imports that God is spirit in the highest sense. The indefinite article in the English, “*a Spirit*” is objectionable, because it places Deity in a class with others. He is spirit itself, absolutely, the alone Source of spirit. The word “spirit” signifies, in man’s lisping speech, “air” or “breath” or “wind,” being that subtle fluid by the respiration of which all things live. “What the air is in motion in the natural world, that the divine Spirit is in the spiritual world...The Deity is revealed under the name of Spirit in order to declare that all existences, both corporate and incorporate, derive their spiritual life and being from Him. He is Spirit in the fount—the creatures are only so as streams proceeding from Him”—A. Serle. *Life* is a principle of power to act or move planted in a substance or being. A living creature then is one which can act from within itself, yet is wholly dependent upon its Giver—the living God, the Author and Sustainer of all life. Negatively, “God is a Spirit” signifies that He is both incorporeal and invisible.

That declaration was necessary in order to correct the erroneous views entertained by those Jews and Samaritans who had, from the elaborate ritual of Judaism, formed a wrong concept of God. It was JEHOVAH Himself who ordained the imposing furnishings of the tabernacle and temple, with their vessels of silver and gold, their brilliantly coloured curtains, and the gorgeous vestments of the high priest. But those things were never intended to intimate that the great God derived any personal satisfaction from them: rather were they appointed as types and emblems of Christ. “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Act 7:48). Nor is He charmed by elaborate services therein. God is spirit, immaterial, and therefore, not sensual or influenced by the senses. God cannot be gratified with carnal things. It is not costly architecture, beautiful music, lovely flowers, and fragrant incense, which please the eyes, ears, and nostrils of the creature, but that which issues from renewed hearts He requires. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Joh 4:24)—spiritually and sincerely.

“*God is light*” tells us very much more than the former statement. God is not only *the* light, but Light itself—absolute, essential, infinite—the source of all light. Scripture speaks of God in a peculiar and immediate relation to light. The pillar of fire was the symbol of His presence with Israel in the wilderness. Daniel tells us, “his throne was like the fiery flame” (Dan 7:9). Habakkuk declared, “And his brightness was as the light” (Hab 3:4). The Psalmist avers,²³ “Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psa 104:2), on which Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) remarked, “The concept is sublime: but it makes us feel how altogether inconceivable the personal glory of the Lord must be: if light itself is but His garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendour of His own essential being?” Perhaps the nearest we can come in framing an answer to that question is to employ the words of 1 Timothy 6:16—“dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” In James 1:17, He is denominated “the Father of lights.”

“God is light” expresses all the excellence and glory of Deity. It is to be taken in its widest sense, as including the divine essence and the three Persons therein, for though the Father be primarily in view, yet the Son and the Spirit are equally possessed of the divine nature, and therefore are equally “light.” “God is light” is a word to search and awe us, for we “were sometimes darkness” (Eph 5:8), such being our woeful condition by nature. But it is also a word to gladden and warm us, for light shines for the benefit of others, as darkness is wrapped up in itself. Thus, there is the *Gospel* in this word, for it tells us that Deity has been pleased to reveal and make Himself known unto men. “Light maketh all things visible on which it falls and from which it is reflected, but it becomes itself visible only in a radiant point or disc, like that of the insufferable sun, from which it floods the world. So God is unknown except in the person of Christ”—George Smeaton (1814-1889). That is why Christ designated Himself “the light of the world” (Joh 8:12; 9:5) and why prophecy pointed to Him as “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2), for where He is unknown, men “sit in darkness” (Luk 1:79) and “in the region and shadow of death” (Mat 4:16).

“The supreme thing in the physical world is light. Apart from this, there could hardly be a world at all, for all life and movement depend on it. It was the first of God’s creations, and it is the last thing that will fade before the approaching glory of the New Jerusalem. And yet, of all things, light is the most mysterious. The distance of the sun from the earth can be measured, the rate at which light travels across space can be gauged, and the rays can be passed through the prisms, divided, and analysed. But the sun itself still dwells in light inaccessible. No eye can search its burning depths, and no mind can wrest from it its profound secret” (L. Palmer). “God is light”: “He is all the beauty and perfection that can be represented to us by light. He is self-acting,

²³ **avers** – asserts as a fact.

uncompounded spirituality, purity, wisdom, holiness, and glory; and then the absoluteness and fullness of that excellency and perfection” (T. Reynolds).

Most appropriate and comprehensive is the metaphor here used. “God is light” is a summarized expression of the divine perfections. It tells us that He is the *living* God, for the rays of the sun exert a quickening influence, being a minister of vigour, health, and growth to all creatures. It is the parent of all fruitfulness, for those regions (the poles) where the sun scarcely shines at all are barren wastes; so it is spiritually. It announces that God is a most *glorious* Being, for light is a thing of lustre, dazzling the eyes of its beholder. It proclaims God’s *excellency*: “Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun” (Ecc 11:7). If it be a pleasant thing to behold the natural light, how much more so for the eyes of faith to behold the King in His beauty! It declares that He is a *beneficent* Being, the Fount of all blessedness. Light is the source of helpfulness and gladness to all who bask in its bright and genial rays. No beauty can appear anywhere without the light: exclude it, and all charm at once disappears from every object. Nor can there be any beauty in the soul until God commands “the light to shine...in our hearts” (2Co 4:6).

More distinctly, light is the emblem of God’s *holiness*. Light is simple or pure. In it is neither mixture nor pollution, nor can there be. Its very nature and property repels defilement. It traverses unstained each object and medium of uncleanness. Snow is so bright that there is no other whiteness equal to it, but man’s step mars and defiles it. Water sparkles brightly as it issues from the spring, but man’s hand soils it. But none can make light’s purity less pure! Such is God in His ineffable purity. Again, light is a symbol of God’s *omnipresence*, for it is diffused throughout all creation, scattering its rays everywhere. In like manner, “Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD” (Jer 23:24), which made the Psalmist exclaim, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psa 139:7). “Light is on the hill and in the valley, on sea and on land, in the city and in the desert. With its crystal fingers, it clasps the round earth, and throws its mantle of brightness over all worlds” (L. Palmer).

In a most striking way, light also adumbrates²⁴ God’s *omniscience*. Not only because it is the figure of knowledge and wisdom, but because of its searching power, entering into every corner and cranny of creation, revealing the hidden things of darkness. “But all things that are reproved [‘discovered,’ margin] are made manifest by the light” (Eph 5:13). Light is all-revealing, equally so are the rays of divine holiness, detecting sin and unmasking the world as a monster lying in the wicked one. As light reveals, so nothing can be hidden from God. He cannot be deceived, but sees things as they actually are. Our motives and aspirations are as palpable to Him as our bodies. “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off...and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether...Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psa 139:1-4, 12).

In Scripture, darkness and light are used in quite a number of figurative senses: among them, as signifying ignorance and knowledge (Eph 5:8), a state of nature and a state of grace (1Pe 2:9), heaven (Col 1:12), and hell (Mat 25:30). Thus, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1Jo 1:5) necessitates and draws the essential moral distinction between good and evil, holiness and sin, innocence and guilt. It also intimates that it is possible for creatures, yea, fallen creatures, to have fellowship with God, for light is diffusive, self-communicating, shining upon and illumi-

²⁴ **adumbrates** – exhibits a faint resemblance.

nating dark bodies. Therein lie both its beneficence and its ascendancy over the darkness, as in Genesis 1:2-3. But more: this most comprehensive “message” elucidates the whole plan of redemption, wherein God acted throughout in *this* character, both exhibiting His opposition to the darkness and yet triumphing over it. In the person of His Son, the light came to save those in darkness, yet preserving inviolable His own ineffable²⁵ purity. Nor was there any surrender of the light to the darkness: no concession, no compromise—for when made sin, God “spared not his own Son” (Rom 8:32)! Likewise are *we* made to hate sin and repent, before forgiveness is ours. Salvation is not only a miracle of *grace*, but the *triumph of holiness*.

“And in him is no darkness at all.” In the Greek, there is a double negative. God is absolutely perfect: there is no blemish, nor ignorance, no sin, no limitation, naught contrary to His perfections, nothing to mar or dim the splendour of His character; no possibility of any deterioration—for with the Father of lights, there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17). God is light which is never clouded, which never wanes. Therein, we behold His paramount excellence. How radically different is the true and living God from every “god” of human invention or conception! While the heathen endowed their imaginary deities with certain virtues, they also attributed some vice or other to them. In the “god” of Pantheism and other systems of philosophy, the distinction between good and evil is only seeming and relative, and not real and absolute, for “he” is identified as much with the one as the other. Here, once more, we have illustrated the *uniqueness* of Holy Writ, for here alone is One made known to us in whom there is “no darkness at all.”

That could not be said of the holy angels, whom He “charged with folly” (Job 4:18), because prior to their establishment in holiness, they were liable to fall. Nor could it be said of Adam in his innocency, for his holiness was but a *mutable* one. But God is immutably holy, impeccable,²⁶ for He “cannot be tempted with evil” (Jam 1:13). We cannot conceive of the least defect in God, for His holiness is *His very being*, and not a superadded thing like ours. “God *is* light”: He not only clothes Himself with the light and dwells in the light, but He Himself *is* light, *only* light, and there is nothing in Him but light. Now to make this affirmation yet more emphatic, the negative is added to the positive: “And in him is no darkness *at all*”: no kind of darkness, in any degree or manner; whatever falls under the appellation of “darkness” is excluded from His being. This has the value of intimating that we are to regard the term “light” in its widest possible latitude, and not to restrict it to holiness, for the antithesis—“darkness”—includes more than *sin*. No element enters into His light to obscure it; there is no limit to His knowledge, no stain on His holiness, no hindrance to His blessedness.

The *design* of the apostle in verse 5 may be briefly summarized thus. First, to indicate the nature of that fellowship into which the saints are called: it is a holy one, “in the light.” *That* is its distinctive character, and is necessarily determined by the nature of God. Second, to impress upon believers the deep reverence of the divine Majesty: that as light cannot mix with darkness, so they cannot converse with God except as their hearts are in a suitable frame, and their minds filled with proper apprehensions of the great, holy, and glorious Being they are approaching. Third, to intimate to all succeeding generations of Christians that the holiness of God shines in and through every doctrine, every part of the truth, and every ordinance He has appointed. Fourth, to prepare his readers for what follows in his epistle.

²⁵ **ineffable** – incapable of being expressed; too great to be described in words.

²⁶ **impeccable** – incapable of sin.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

60. Miracles (10:12-13)

“And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter” (Jos 10:10). Therein, we behold a solemn exemplification of Christ’s utterances in Matthew 18:6: “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” JEHOVAH had previously acted in accordance with that principle in connection with Egypt, for it was because Pharaoh oppressed and afflicted the Hebrews so sorely that his land and people were visited by the ten great plagues. And now the five kings of Canaan had provoked the Most High by their assault upon Gibeon (verses 4-5), for its inhabitants had made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel, entering into a league with them, and thereby coming under the LORD’s protection. As pointed out in a previous article, the Gibeonites are to be regarded as young converts; and in seeking their destruction, the Amorites had affronted God Himself, for as the prophet assured His people, “For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zec 2:8, and compare Act 9:1, 4). Many of those Amorites had fallen beneath the sword of Israel, but a still greater number died under the great hailstones which the LORD cast upon them from heaven (Jos 10:11). In whatever direction they fled, the vengeance of God overtook them, for as Isaiah 28:21 informs us, the LORD acted in wrath with them.

A great number of the Canaanites had fallen, but the remnant of their armies continued in flight. Joshua was reluctant that complete victory should be prevented by failing daylight, and though he and his men had marched all through the preceding night (Jos 10:9) in hastening to the relief of the sorely menaced Gibeonites, so that he could spring a surprise attack upon their invaders; and though they had been engaged in fighting and pursuing the retreating foe over the mountain passes, yet he was loath to call a halt before his task was completed. We therefore behold him, next, supplementing his self-sacrificing diligence by a remarkable display of faith: “And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon” (verse 12). From the natural standpoint, that appears like the act of a madman; and even from a spiritual aspect, it seems to be the height of presumption. Yet it was neither the one nor the other: rather was it the exercise of full confidence in a miracle-working God. Faith must not be judged by the standards of carnal reason.

But, it may be asked, must not faith have something solid to rest upon, some word of God’s to lay hold of and direct it? Generally, yes; but not necessarily something specific in every instance. For example, when David committed his fearful sin in connection with Uriah, no provision was made for such a case, nor had he any promise from God which he could plead. What then did he do? Psalm 51 informs us. He cast himself upon the *known character* of his God. No sacrifice was appointed under the Law for murderers; and therefore, the guilty one here acknowledged, “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it” (Psa 51:16). What then? “According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (verse 1) was his plea. And Psalm 32:5 shows it prevailed! Again, when Daniel was cast into the lions’ den, so far as the Scripture informs us, he had no definite word from God of deliverance; yet he *was* delivered, and that “*because* he believed in his God” (Dan 6:23). Without any specific promise to appropriate to his

case, Daniel's faith confided in the power and sufficiency of his God to extricate him from his perilous position; and the LORD did not confound him. Of course not! It is always safe to trust Him.

In the present instance, there is little room for doubt that Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression made on his heart by the Holy Spirit, for that alone will satisfactorily account for so pious a man asking God to do this unprecedented thing, as it alone explains why He granted such an unheard-of request. It may be objected that nothing is here said of Joshua making any request. Neither are we told in 1 Kings 17 that Elijah made request of the LORD that there should be a drought, yet James 5:17 informs us that he *did*: "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." But further, let it be duly noted, we are informed that, "Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel" (Jos 10:12). Surely that confirms the thought expressed at the opening of this paragraph, that Joshua acted here in response to an extraordinary impulse from above, as was not frequently the case with eminent servants of God during the Old Testament era.

"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon" (Jos 10:12). The two things, it will be noted, are here joined together, and their order intimates their relationship. The inspired record here is too brief to justify dogmatic assertions. To us, it appears that Joshua asked God's permission so to command the sun; or that while he communed with Him, he received commission to do so. As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out, "The prayer had not been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace. God wrought this faith in him and then said, 'According to your faith,' and to the prayer of faith, 'be it unto you' (Mat 9:29). It cannot be imagined, however, that such a thing as this should have entered into his mind if God had not put it there. A man would have a thousand projects in his head for the completing of the victory, before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old Testament saints, 'the Spirit...maketh intercession...according to the will of God' (Rom 8:27). What God will give, He inclines the hearts of His praying people to ask; and for what He will do, He will 'be enquired of' (Eze 36:37)."

Not only was Joshua's ordering of the sun to stand still a glorious exhibition of his faith and implicit confidence in God, but it also manifested his *zeal* in the service of God. This appears more plainly if we bear in mind what has already received our notice; namely, that he had engaged in a tiring uphill march all through the previous night; and then had been employed in fighting from early dawn till late that day, for the terms of this double command to the celestial luminaries intimate that the sun was then near the hour of its setting; and the moon, of its rising. Yet instead of now welcoming a respite, and an opportunity to rest himself and his men, his heart longed for the prolongation of the hours of daylight, so that he might complete his task and utterly exterminate the enemy. How blessedly he here typed out the One who declared by the Spirit of prophecy, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Psa 69:9)! In its practical application unto ourselves, this detail makes it evident that there must be unwearied efforts put forth by us in our spiritual warfare, and that we are not to rest satisfied with partial victories, but must continue fighting until complete success is ours. No doubt Joshua and his men found that "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength" (Isa 40:31); and so shall we, if we do likewise.

"And he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon" (Jos 10:12). To express himself thus before all his army evinced how strong was the assurance of his faith. Joshua was

not afraid that the LORD would put him to confusion before the people. Confident that God had inspired his cry, he doubted not that it would be answered. It was to the Almighty, the Creator of the sun and moon, that he looked; and with Him, all things are possible (Mat 19:26; Mar 10:27). Doubtless, he counted too on JEHOVAH's special favour unto His covenant people. Moreover, He had said, "I have delivered them into thine hand" (Jos 10:8); and therefore, the remaining Amorites must not be allowed the opportunity of escaping under the shelter of nightfall. Looking higher: what anointed eye can fail to see in his action here a striking adumbration of Christ as the miracle-worker, who, by His many wonders and signs, gave proof that He was not only the promised Messiah, but none other than God, manifest in flesh. How vividly does Joshua's staying the planets in their courses remind us of that One who had such command over the elements that His disciples marveled saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Mat 8:27).

"And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (Jos 10:13). This is one of the favourite passages which infidels scoff at. Wise in their own conceits, they affirm that for such a thing to happen as is here recorded is contrary to science and philosophy. We do not propose to waste any time in replying to them. It was long ago pointed out by Bishop Watson: "The machine of the universe is in the hand of God, and He can stay the motion of any part, or of the whole, with less trouble than any of us can stop a watch." If a human engineer can slow the speed of an express train by putting on the brake, and bring it to a complete standstill by cutting off the steam, what cannot the divine engineer do with any ponderous body which He has Himself set in motion. The sun is but an instrument, made by God to perform His good pleasure. That He is in no wise dependent upon or limited by it is clear from the fact that light existed, and the earth was clothed with vegetation, *before* the sun was made (Gen 1)! By the miracles of Joshua 10:13, and Isaiah 38:8, the Most High demonstrated that the daily rising and setting of the sun is *not* from a blind instinct of nature, and that He controls its course: "Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not" (Job 9:7).

"And the sun stood still." Here, as in many other passages, we are taught that the LORD God has a superintendence over all the creatures of His hand. He sends forth His imperious commands not only unto angels and men (Dan 4:35), but to the birds of the air (1Ki 17:4), and to the wild beasts (Dan 6:22), yea, to inanimate things. He issues His edicts to the clouds and to the light of the sun, and they promptly submit and obey. He addresses the light as though it were a rational creature: He commands it not to shine, and it shines not. The host of heaven, as well as the inhabitants of the earth, are entirely at His disposal. The whole course of nature moves or stands still at the mere will of its Maker. As the sun stood still at His Word through Joshua, so at His fiat,²⁷ it went backward in the days of Hezekiah (Isa 38:8); and it is by *His* orders that the same sun, at any time, withdraws its genial beams and is muffled up with dark vapours. "With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt" (Job 36:32).

Those who profess to believe in an omnipotent God, do but betray their crass folly when they attempt to reason and conclude that He either cannot, or does not, exercise His power in other ways than those known to our very limited experience. It is true that the sun rises and proceeds in a natural course, yet only by divine commission. Though nothing in nature be more constant than the rising of the sun, God can suspend its motion whenever He likes. He who at first commanded it to rise can easily countermand it. What is swifter in motion than the sun? All creatures upon earth are but slugs in comparison; the eagle of the air, but a snail. Yet God can stop it instantly. When He sends forth His prohibition, it cannot stir a foot till He removes that prohibition. It

²⁷ **fiat** – formal or solemn command.

shone not for three days upon Egypt (Exo 10:22). Since He can stop the sun from shining, what cannot He do! Great indeed is God's power; equally great is His goodness, which causes His "sun to rise on the evil" (Mat 5:45), and unthankful when it is in His power to withhold it. How little is that realized by the world! O that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and "for his wonderful works unto the children of men" (Psa 107:8, 15, 21, etc.).

Nothing is more "natural" than the succession of the four seasons; nevertheless, there is so great diversity and such marked inequality between Summer and Winter (even in the same part of the earth) that it is obvious to all enlightened minds that each is controlled and regulated by a new and particular providence of God. It was indeed wonderful that when a blind beggar cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And *Jesus stood still*, and commanded him to be called," and healed him (Mar 10:48-49). Behold, there "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2) stayed in His course by the appeal of a poor sinner! There are some who think the action of Joshua in this amazing incident foreshadowed Christ at His second coming when He saves Israel, appealing to Zechariah 14:7—that in the day of the LORD's battle with the nations, "It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light"; upon which, at present, this writer has no definite opinion, either pro or con, having learned from long experience to be very wary of prophetic speculations. Sufficient for him to know that whatever the LORD has purposed, promised, or threatened concerning His future dealings with the earth will certainly come to pass.

Rather would we dwell upon the *practical* message which this miracle has for us today. The Christian's confidence in the LORD ought to be greatly strengthened by a pondering of the same. Though God no longer halts the sun in its course, yet He *does* many remarkable things in answer to the believing supplications of His people. When George Mueller (1805-1898) was crossing the Atlantic to fulfil an important preaching engagement, his ship was delayed by a dense fog off the coast of Newfoundland. Said he to the captain, "I have never yet been late for an appointment: let us go to prayer." The fog lifted almost immediately, and the ship arrived in port on time! When entering our train from Chicago to Pittsburgh (April 1931), we encountered a Christian lady in distress. The porter had wrongly put her into an *express*, which would carry her hundreds of miles beyond her destination; and the ticket collector informed her that there was no possibility of the train halting at her village. The writer and his wife reminded her that nothing is too hard for God. We had special prayer, and were able to assure her that the LORD would *stop the train*. Some hours later, she was told to get ready, and it stopped for a few seconds. Some of our readers in Pennsylvania will recall this incident, for they saw the letter of thanks which Mrs. Pink received, telling of how the experience had brought her to trust more fully in a miracle-working God.

"And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher?" (Jos 10:13). The book of Jasher is generally thought to be the same as "the book of the wars of the LORD" mentioned in Numbers 21:14. A further reference is made to it in 2 Samuel 1:18. Apparently, it was a book in which were chronicled outstanding events in the fighting of Israel. The fact that this miracle was recorded in such a book during the lifetime of Joshua not only indicates the deep impression which this phenomenon had made upon the minds of the people, but attests its verity. As at a later date Israel sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1Sa 18:7; 21:11; 29:5), so they would recite this memorable deed of Joshua's which had an effect upon the whole frame of nature, producing an alteration therein. What is still more important, this miracle is referred to in the inspired writings of the prophets: "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation" (Hab 3:11). As a miracle is of divine causality—an event wrought in the external world by the immedi-

ate power of God—so miracles are authenticated by divine testimony, usually by at least “two witnesses” (Deu 17:6).

Remarkable as was this event, it by no means stands entirely alone in a class by itself. We have already alluded to Exodus 10:22 and Isaiah 38:8, and would further compare the statement that “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera” (Jdg 5:20), and also the star which miraculously moved and led the wise men from the East to the house where the infant Saviour then was (Mat 2). But let us also point out the *mystical* interpretation which may be legitimately made of what has been before us. As God controls the movements of the sun, causing it to shine brightly or to be overcast with dark clouds, so it is with spiritual light. Those parts of Africa and Asia upon which the Sun of righteousness shone so blessedly during the first three centuries of this Christian era have since been under the black dominion of Mohammedanism; and such lands as Italy and Spain, which were favoured with the glorious light of the Gospel in the days of Paul, have long languished under the darkness of popery. On the other hand, heathen lands are now being evangelized. God orders *spiritual* light and darkness as truly as the natural.

What most impresses us in connection with this miracle is the clear demonstration which it affords of the supremacy of God and His absolute control of all creatures. There was no power in Joshua, nor any extraordinary dispensation committed him, to exert such an influence upon the whole frame of nature as to produce so great an alteration therein. No, it is clear that he had a divine warranty to speak that which he knew JEHOVAH Himself was about to effect. He first addressed himself to Him in prayer, then received assurance from Him; and then, at his word, the heavenly bodies remained stationary for many hours. Therein we behold how the living God is both the Alpha and Omega, the first cause and the last end (Rev 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13), the wise Contriver and the sure Moderator of everything to His own glory, according to the counsel of His own will. Thus will faith perceive the wisdom, goodness, and power of God in every event. Anything short of that is virtual atheism, which gives God no place in His dominion over the world. Writing on Joshua 10:13, John Gill (1697-1771) said, “How this is to be reconciled with the Copernican system or that with this, I shall not inquire”—wise man not to pretend to understand what has not been divinely revealed. Wiser still in refusing to allow the theorizings of a Prussian astronomer to cast doubt on what He *has* made known, or to suggest an interpretation which “harmonizes” the same with the hypothesis of “science falsely so called” (1Ti 6:20).

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

3. Its Imputation

At the close of our last, we carefully considered the solemn teaching of Romans 5:12; and we now propose to examine the verses which immediately follow, for they are not only of deep importance in connection with the present aspect of our subject, but their meaning is very little apprehended today, for they receive scarcely any notice either in the pulpit or the religious press. In Romans 5:13-14, the apostle takes no notice of our personal transgressions, but shows the effects

of *Adam's* sin. His design in these verses is to intimate that the *universality* of physical death can only be satisfactorily accounted for on the ground that it is a penal infliction because of the first man's offence. The argument of verse 13 is as follows: the infliction of a penal evil presupposes the violation of a law, for death is the wages of sin. The violation of the Mosaic Law does not account for the universality of death, because multitudes died before *that* law was given. As therefore death implies transgression, and the Law of Moses explains not all of death's victims, then it clearly and necessarily follows that the whole human race is subject to the penal consequence of the primitive law being transgressed by their first father.

"For until the law sin was in the world" (Rom 5:13). The opening "For" imports that the apostle is now about to furnish proof of the assertion made in verse 12. "The law" here has reference to the Mosaic. "Sin," as all through this passage, signifies guilt or the judicial ground of condemnation, and not the corruption of human nature. "The world" includes the entire race: all were accursed, and are so regarded and treated by the Judge of all the earth. Having stated in verse 12 that all mankind participated in Adam's original sin, and that in consequence all share in its punishment, Paul pauses to vindicate and amplify his assertion that "all have sinned" in Adam. The method he follows is by reasoning backward from effect to cause. The argument is somewhat involved and calls for close attention, yet there is no difficulty in following its course if we perceive that it moves back from death to sin, and from sin to Law—the one, in each case, being necessarily implied by the other. Sin was in the world before the Law of Moses was given, as was evident from the fact that death held universal sway from Eden to Sinai—witness the oft-repeated "and he died" in Genesis 5. Thus far, the argument is simple, but the next point is more difficult.

"But sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom 5:13). The meaning of this clause has been missed by many, through failing to follow the course of the apostle's reasoning. They have imagined it signifies that, though sin was in the world prior to Moses, yet it was not reckoned to the account of those who were guilty. Such an idea is not only erroneous, but manifestly absurd. Where sin exists, the Holy One must deal with it *as* sin. And He did so from earliest times, as the flood demonstrated. "Sin is not imputed when there is no law." Why? Because "sin" or guilt is the correlative of "law." Sin or condemnation implies the Law: one cannot be without the other—"sin is the transgression of the law" (1Jo 3:4). None is guilty where no law exists, for criminality presupposes the violation of a statute. Thus, for any to be adjudged guilty is the same thing as saying he has broken the law. This prepares us for verse 14, where proof is adduced that a law, given previous to Moses, *had been violated*; and consequently, God dealt with sinners as sinners long before the time of Moses.

"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Rom 5:14). Though it be a truth that there is no sin where there is no Law, and that where there is no Law transgressed, there can be no death, yet it is a divinely certified fact that death reigned during the first twenty-five centuries of human history. Therefore, the conclusion is so self-evident that Paul leaves his readers to draw it—the human race must have transgressed an earlier law than the Mosaic. Thus, verse 14 clinches the interpretation we have given of verses 12 and 13. Since men died prior to the Sinaitic transaction, there must be some other reason and ground for their exposure to death. Note well "death *reigned*": it held undisputed and rightful sway. If, then, men were justly subject to its power, they must have been criminals. Death is far more than a calamity: it is a punishment, and that argues the breaking of a law. If men were punished with death from the beginning, then it inevitably follows that they were law-transgressors from the beginning. Moreover, death furnished proof that sin *was* "imputed"—because men were guilty of Adam's offence.

“Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression” has reference unto those who in their own persons and conduct had never violated any law by which their exposure to death could be accounted for. The word “even” here suggests a contrast. Generally speaking, death had reigned from Adam to Moses over all alike; but to particularize, it did so even over a class who had not (in their own persons) sinned as Adam had. If we bear in mind that in verses 13 and 14, Paul is proving his assertion (at the end of verse 12) that death comes on all because of the first man’s sin, then his line of reasoning is easier to follow. The word “even” here implies that there was a particular class who it *appears* ought to have been exempted from the dominion of sin, namely *infants*. Thus, the death of infants supplied a conclusive proof of the doctrine here inculcated. Physical death is a penal infliction; and falling as it does on infants, it must be because of Adam’s sin. On no other ground can their demise be accounted for. *They* furnish the climactic demonstration that all sinned in Adam and suffer the penal consequences of his offence.

At the close of verse 14, the apostle stated that Adam was “the figure of him that was to come”: he foreshadowed Christ as the federal head and legal representative of His people. In verses 15-17, it is pointed out that there were contrasts, as well as resemblances, between the first man and Christ. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift” (verse 15). The Fall differed radically from the restoration: though they are alike in their far-reaching effects, they are quite unlike in the nature of those effects. “For if through the offence of one many be dead”—literally “many died,” legally. The “many” includes infants; and since they die because of the one man’s offence, that proves they are adjudged guilty of it; and therefore, that God imputed it unto them, for He never punishes where there is no sin.

“Much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (verse 15). Here, the first contrast is drawn—between justice and grace. The “much more” does not mean numerically, for Christ cannot restore more than Adam ruined, and he encompassed the downfall of all his posterity. Nor does this “much more” signify that grace is more abundant and efficacious than the offence in its effects—that is brought out in verse 20. No, it is employed *argumentatively*, as a logical inference and as a note of certainty. If God willed it that one man should ruin many, much more can we suppose it to be agreeable that His Son should rescue many. If many be suffering from the offence of Adam, much more should we expect that many will benefit from the merits of Christ. Thus, it is not a “much more” either of quantity or quality, but of assurance and certainty. If it was a meet²⁸ arrangement in the divine government that the principle of representation should operate, though it entailed the curse, much more may we look for that principle to operate in producing blessing. If Scripture teaches the imputation of sin, we should not stumble when we find it affirming the imputation of righteousness. If God dealt in inflexible justice with the original sin, then, from all we know of Him, much more may we look for a display of the riches of His grace through Christ.

“And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one [sin] to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification” (verse 16). Here the second contrast is drawn. Though there be a close resemblance between ruin and redemption, in that each was accomplished by the one man, yet there is a great difference between the scope of their respective effects. The destroying power of the former went not beyond the one sin of Adam, whereas the restoring power of the latter covers our countless iniquities. How vastly more extensive then is the reach of the “free gift”! Thus this verse explains itself—the second clause interpreting the first. The divine sentence of condemnation fell upon the entire human family, because

²⁸ **meet** – fitting; appropriate.

of the single offence of their head, but believers are justified by Christ from many offences—“having forgiven you *all* trespasses” (Col 2:13). Christ does very much more than remove the guilt which came upon His people for the first man’s sin: He has also made full satisfaction or atonement for all their personal sins—“who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Ti 2:14).

“For the judgment was by one to condemnation.” Each term requires to be carefully weighed. The word “judgment” obviously signifies a judicial sentence—pronounced by God—and that judgment was “to condemnation” and *not*, be it noted, to “corruption” or vitiation of nature. The judgment “was by one”—not (here) by one man, but rather by one sin, for it is set over against the “many offences” which we have personally committed. Thus, it is expressly asserted that judgment came by Adam’s initial transgression; and if all be condemned for that sin, then all must be accounted guilty of it, for the righteous Judge will not condemn the innocent. “But the free gift is of many offences unto justification”—where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. The finished work of Christ not only provides for the cancellation of original sin, but acquits from the accumulated guilt of all our sins. Moreover, believers in Christ are not merely pardoned, “but justified”—exonerated and pronounced righteous by the Law. They are not only restored to their un-fallen state, but given a title to enjoy the full reward of Christ’s obedience. As Adam’s posterity participate in his guilt, depravity, and death, so Christ’s seed receive through Him righteousness, holiness, and eternal life.

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one [better, ‘by the offence of the one man death reigned’]; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (verse 17). Here is the third contrast: death and life, issuing from the two heads. Here again the central truth of the whole passage is reiterated: death comes on men, not because their natures have been corrupted, nor because of their own personal transgression, but as a judicial sentence passed on account of Adam’s crime. It is here expressly said that death reigned “by [because of] one man’s offence,” and therefore, everyone over whom death has dominion must be regarded as guilty. The word “reigned” here is very impressive and emphatic: those who die are looked upon as death’s *lawful subjects*, for it is regarded as their king. In other words, death has a legal claim upon all men. The forceful language of Hebrews 2:14-15 contains the same concept: “That through death he [Christ] might destroy him that had the power [authority] of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them”—i.e. free death’s lawful prisoners. Note how this verse indirectly confirms Romans 5:14—death could have no dominion over infants, unless they were charged with Adam’s sin.

“Much more they which receive abundance of grace,” etc. The “much more” of this verse emphasizes a different thought from that of verse 15. There, it refers to God dealing with Adam and his posterity consistently with His own perfections: if God could righteously condemn all mankind because of the disobedience of their first parent, then much more could He justify the seed of Christ (Isa 53:10) on the ground of the obedience of their Representative. But here, the “much more” has reference to the *modus operandi* of condemnation and justification. If death has come upon us as a judicial infliction for an offence in which we did not actively participate, then much more shall we share the reward of Christ’s righteousness, which we voluntarily “receive” by faith. There is a double thought conveyed by “the gift of righteousness,” which it is important to observe, for most of the commentators have missed the second. First, it signifies that righteousness is entirely *gratuitous*, neither earned nor merited. Second, it implies that it is *imputed*, for a “gift” is something which is transferred from one person to another. Not only pointless, but senseless is

the objection that if righteousness were transferred from Christ to us, it would leave Him without any. Does God's gift of life unto sinners leave Him without any?

"Shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." They who, by faith, receive the gift of His righteousness are not only saved from the consequences of the Fall, but are partakers of eternal life and made joint-heirs with Christ and sharers of His celestial glory. They who have been wholly under the power of death are not only completely freed from it and spiritually quickened, but as one with the King of kings, they are made "kings...unto God" (Rev 1:6). They are not reinstated in the earthly paradise, but shall be brought to honour and glory and immortality in heaven—given title to a state of eternal and supernal blessedness. The careful student should have observed both a threefold comparison and a threefold contrast between the first and last Adams in Romans 5:15-17. Both are sources of radical influence—"abounded *unto* many" (verse 15); both are conveyors of a judicial sentence—condemnation, justification (verse 16); both introduce a sovereign regime—"death reigned," "reign in life" (verse 17). But by Adam we lost, whereas in Christ we gain; we were charged with the one offence, but are cleared from many; we were the subjects of death, but are made co-heirs with Christ. By Adam, we were ruined; by Christ, we are more than restored. In Adam, we occupied a position a little lower than the angels; in Christ, we are instated far above all principality and power.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (verse 18). In verse 12, only the first member of the contrast was given (verses 13-17 interrupting the extension by a necessary parenthesis), but here the case is stated in full. Throughout the whole passage, Paul contrasts a state of divine wrath and divine favour, and not the states of depravity and holiness. Here, it is plainly asserted that all are condemned for Adam's sin. Infants are therefore included, for they would not be punished if innocent—if Adam's sin was not legally theirs. In precisely the same way, all for whom Christ transacted as their covenant Head are justified by His merits being legally reckoned to their account. As something *outside of ourselves* is the judicial ground of our falling under the divine curse, so something outside of ourselves is the judicial ground of our being under the blessing of God. The second half of this verse speaks not of something which is provided for all mankind, but that which God actually imputes to all believers (compare Rom 4:20-24).

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (verse 19). This goes farther than the preceding verse. There it was the *causes* of condemnation and justification which were stated; here, it is their actual issue or *results*. From verse 11 onwards, the apostle has shown that God's sentence is grounded upon the legally constituted unity of all with their covenant heads. By his breaking of the divine Law, all who were federally one with the first Adam were made sinners; and all who were federally one with the last Adam are made righteous. The Greek word for "made" (*kathistemi*) never signifies to effect any change in a person or thing, but means to "ordain, appoint," to "constitute" legally or officially, as a reference to Matthew 24:45, 47, Luke 12:14, [and] Acts 7:10, 27 clearly shows. Note well that it is *not* here said that Adam's disobedience makes us unholy: Paul goes farther back and explains why such should follow, namely, because we are first constituted sinners by imputation.

Romans 5:12-21 is one of the most important passages in the Bible. In it, the fundamental doctrine of federal representation is openly stated, and the fact of imputation is emphatically affirmed. Here is revealed the basic principle according to which God deals with men. Here we behold the old and the new races receiving from their respective heads. Here are set before us the two central figures and facts of all history—the first Adam and his disobedience, the last Adam

and His obedience. Upon those two things, the apostle hammered again and again with almost monotonous repetition. Why such unusual reiteration? Because of the great doctrinal importance of what is here treated of, because the purity of the Gospel and the glory of Christ's atonement turned thereon, because Paul was insisting upon that which is so repulsive to the proud heart of fallen man. Plain as is its language, this passage has been wrested and twisted to mean many things which it does not teach; the Socinians,²⁹ Arminians,³⁰ and Universalists³¹ refuse to accept what is so plainly asserted.

Wherever this passage has been plainly expounded, it has, in all generations, encountered the fiercest opposition—not the least so from men professing to be Christians. The doctrine of imputation is as bitterly hated as those of unconditional election and eternal punishment. Those who teach it are accused of representing God as dealing *unjustly*. The only reply necessary is, What saith the Scriptures? As we have seen, Romans 5 declares that death has passed upon all men because all sinned in Adam (verse 12), that “through the offence of one many be dead” (verse 15), that “the judgment was by one to condemnation” (verse 16), that “by one man's offence death reigned” (verse 17), that “by the offence of one [man,] judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (verse 18), that “by one man's disobedience many were made sinners” (verse 19). “In Adam all die” (1Co 15:22). God deals with men on the principle of *imputation*. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children (Exo 20:5). The curse of Canaan fell on all his posterity (Gen 9:25). The Egyptians perished for Pharaoh's obduracy. His whole family died for Achan's crime (Jos 9:24). All Israel suffered for David's sin (2Sa 24:15, 17). The leprosy visited upon Gehazi passed “unto [his] seed for ever” (2Ki 5:27). The blood of all the prophets was exacted of the members of Christ's generation (Luk 11:50).

If there be one word which fitly expresses what every man is by nature, it is “sinner.” Waiving all theological systems, if we inquire what be the popular meaning of that term, the answer is, “one who has sinned,” or one who makes a practice of sinning. But such a definition comes far short of the scriptural import of that word. “For as *by one* man's disobedience many were made sinners.” They are such legally made so—neither because of what they have done personally, or by what they are in the habit of doing, but rather, by the action of their first parent. It is quite true that it is the nature of sinners to sin, but according to the unmistakable testimony of Romans 5, we are all sinners *antecedent to* and independent of any personal transgressing of God's Law. It was by the offence of Adam that we were legally constituted sinners. The universal reign of death is the *proof* of the universal power of sin, yet so far from representing death as the consequence of individual acts of disobedience, it is expressly insisted upon that death reigns over infants who are incapable of acts of disobedience. Human probation ended with the original offence; and, in consequence, not only was human nature vitiated³² at its fountain-head, but all of Adam's descendants fell under the curse of God, the guilt of his transgression being imputed to them.

No finite creature—and still less, a fallen and depraved one—is capable of measuring or even understanding the justice of the infinite God. Yet this we may ask: Which appears to be more consonant to human conceptions of justice—that we should suffer through Adam *because* we were legally connected with him and he transacted in our name; or that we should suffer solely

²⁹ **Socinians** – followers of the teachings of Socinus, a 16th century Italian theologian, who reject the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin.

³⁰ **Arminians** – followers of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian, who reject the Reformers' understanding of God's predestination, believing instead salvation is based on man's accepting or rejecting Christ by his own free will.

³¹ **Universalists** – those who reject the particular atonement of Christ for His children, believing instead that Christ died for all men and that all will go to heaven.

³² **vitiated** – corrupted.

because we derive our *nature* from him by generation, though we had *no part* in or connection with his sin? In the former, we can perceive the ground on which his guilt is charged to our account; but by the latter, we can discover no ground or cause that *any* share of the fatal effects of Adam's sin should be visited upon us. The latter alternative means that we are depraved and wretched without any sufficient reason; and in such an event, our present condition is but a misfortune and in no wise criminal. Nor is God to be blamed: He made man upright, but man deliberately apostatized. Nor was God under any obligation to preserve man from falling. Finally, let it be remembered that our salvation depends upon the self-same principle and fact: if we were cursed and ruined by the first Adam's disobedience, we are redeemed and blessed by the Last Man's obedience.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 1

Man is notoriously a creature of extremes, and nowhere is that fact more evident than in the attitude taken by different ones to this subject. Whereas some have affirmed the Bible is written in such simple language that it calls for no explaining, a far greater number have suffered the Papists to persuade them that its contents are so far above the grasp of the natural intellect, its subjects so profound and exalted, its language so abstruse and ambiguous, that the common man is quite incapable of understanding it by his own efforts; and therefore, that it is the part of wisdom for him to submit his judgment to "holy mother church," who brazenly claims to be the only divinely authorized and qualified interpreter of God's oracles. Thus does the Papacy withhold God's Word from the laity, and impose her own dogmas and superstitions upon them. For the most part, the laity are quite content to have it so, for thereby they are relieved of searching the Scriptures for themselves. Nor is it much better with many Protestants, for in most cases, they are too indolent to *study* the Bible for themselves, and believe only what they hear from the pulpits.

The principal passage appealed to by the Romanists in an attempt to bolster up their pernicious contention that the Bible is a dangerous book—because of its alleged obscurity—to place in the hands of the common people, is 2 Peter 3:15-16. Therein, the Holy Spirit has told us that the apostle Paul, according to the wisdom given him, spoke in his epistles of "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." But as John Calvin (1509-1564) long ago pointed out, "We are not forbidden to read Paul's epistles because they contain some things difficult to be understood, but that, on the contrary, they are commended to us, providing we have a calm and teachable mind." It is also to be noted that this verse says "some things" and not "many," and that they are "hard" and *not* "incapable of being understood"! Moreover, the obscurity is not in them, but in the depravity of our nature which resists the holy requirements of God, and the pride of our hearts which disdains seeking enlightenment from Him. The "unlearned" here refers not to illiteracy, but to being untaught of God; and the "unstable" are those with no settled convictions, who, like weather-vanes, turn according to whatever wind of doctrine blows upon them.

On the other hand, there are some misguided souls who have suffered the pendulum to swing to the opposite extreme, denying that the Scriptures need any interpreting. They *aver*³³ they have been written for simple souls, saying what they mean and meaning what they say. They insist that the Bible requires to be *believed* and not explained. But it is wrong to pit those two things against each other: both are necessary. God does not ask for blind credence from us, but an intelligent faith; and for that, three things are indispensable: that His Word should be read (or heard), understood, and personally appropriated. None other than Christ Himself gave exhortation, “Whoso readeth, let him *understand*” (Mat 24:15)—the mind must be exercised upon what is read. That a certain amount of understanding is imperative appears further from our Lord’s parable of the Sower and the Seed: “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart...But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it” (Mat 13:19, 23). Then let us spare no pains to arrive at the meaning of what we read, for what *use* can we make of what is unintelligible to us?

Others take the position that the only Interpreter they need, the only one adequate for the task, is the Holy Spirit. They quote: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things...But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any *man* teach you” (1Jo 2:20, 27). To declare that I need none but the Holy Spirit to teach me may sound very honouring to Him, but is it true? Like all human assertions, that one requires to be *tested*, for nothing must be taken for granted where spiritual things are concerned. We answer that it is not; otherwise, Christ makes superfluous provision by giving “pastors and teachers; *For* the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (Eph 4:11-12). We must ever bear in mind that it is a very short step from trusting God to tempting Him, from faith to presumption (Mat 4:6-7). Neither should we forget what is God’s common and usual method in supplying the wants³⁴ of His creatures—mediately and not immediately, by secondary causes and human agents.³⁵ That pertains as much to the spiritual realm as to the natural. It has pleased God to furnish His people with gifted instructors; and instead of haughtily ignoring them, we ought (while *testing* their teaching, Act 17:11) to accept thankfully whatever help they can afford us.

Far be it from us to write anything which would discourage the young believer from recognizing and realizing his *dependence upon* God, and his need of constantly turning to Him for wisdom from above, particularly so when engaged in reading or meditating upon His Holy Word. Yet he must bear in mind that the Most High does not tie Himself to answer our prayers in any particular manner or way. In some instances, He is pleased to illumine our understandings directly and immediately; but more often than not, He does so through the instrumentality of others. Thereby, He not only hides pride from us individually, but places honour on His own institution, for He has appointed and qualified men to “feed the flock” (1Pe 5:2)—guides over us whose faith we are bidden to follow (Heb 13:7). It is true that, on the one hand, God has so written His Word that the wayfaring man, though a fool, should not err therein (Isa 35:8); yet, on the other hand, there are “mysteries” and “deep things” (1Co 2:10); and while there is “milk” suited to babes, there is “strong meat” which belongs only to those who are of full age (Heb 5:13-14).

Turning from the general to the particular, let us evince there is a real need for interpretation: First, in order to explain seeming contradictions. Thus, “God did *tempt* Abraham, and said unto

³³ **aver** – assert as a fact.

³⁴ **wants** – what is lacking.

³⁵ **mediately...agents** – *mediately* is through secondary causes and human agents, as opposed to *immediately*, which is directly, without anything in between.

him...Take now thy son...and offer him there for a burnt offering” (Gen 22:1-2). Now place by the side of that statement the testimony of James 1:13: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Those verses appear to conflict openly with each other, yet the believer knows that such is not the case, though he may be at a loss to demonstrate that there is no inconsistency in them. It is therefore *the meaning* of those verses which has to be ascertained.

Nor is that very difficult. Manifestly, the word “tempt” is not used in the same sense in those sentences. The word “tempt” has both a primary and a secondary meaning. Primarily, it signifies to make trial of, to prove, to test. Secondly, it signifies to allure, seduce, or solicit to evil. Without a shadow of doubt, the term is used in Genesis 22:1 in its primary sense, for even though there had been no divine intervention at the eleventh hour, Abraham had committed no sin in slaying Isaac, since God had bidden him do so. By the LORD’s tempting Abraham on this occasion, we are to understand not that He would entice unto evil as Satan does, but rather that He made trial of the patriarch’s loyalty, affording him an opportunity to display his fear of Him, his faith in Him, and his love to Him. When Satan tempts, he places an allurements before us with the object of encompassing our downfall; but when God tempts or tests us, He has our welfare at heart. Every trial is thus a temptation, for it serves to make manifest the prevailing disposition of the heart—whether it be holy or unholy. Christ was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without [indwelling] sin” (Heb 4:15). His temptation was real, yet there was no conflict within Him (as in us) between good and evil—His inherent holiness repelled Satan’s impious suggestions as water does fire. We are to “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (Jam 1:2) or “manifold trials,” since they are means of mortifying our lusts, tests of our obedience, and opportunities to prove the sufficiency of God’s grace. Obviously, we should not be called on to rejoice over inducements to sin!

Again, “The LORD is *far* from the wicked” (Pro 15:29), yet in Acts 17:27, we are told that He is “*not far* from every one of us”—words which were addressed to a heathen audience! These two statements seem to contradict one another; yea, unless they be interpreted, they *do* so. It has, then, to be ascertained in *what sense* God is “far from,” and in what sense He is “not far from” the wicked—that is what is meant by “interpretation.” Distinction has to be drawn between God’s powerful or providential presence and His favourable presence. In His spiritual essence or omnipresence, God is ever nigh unto all of His creatures (for He “fill[s] heaven and earth”, Jer 23:24), sustaining their beings, holding their souls in life (Psa 66:9), and bestowing upon them the mercies of His providence. But since the wicked are far from God in their affections (Psa 73:27), saying in their hearts, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job 21:14), so His gracious presence is far from them: He does not manifest Himself to them, has no communion with them, hears not their prayers (“the proud he knoweth afar off”, Psa 138:6), succours them not in the time of their need, and will yet bid them, “Depart from me, ye cursed” (Mat 25:41). Unto the righteous, God is graciously near: Psalm 34:18, 145:18.

Once more, “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true” (Joh 5:31), and “Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true” (Joh 8:14). Another pair of opposites! Yet there is no conflict between them when rightly *interpreted*. In John 5:17-31, Christ was declaring His seven-fold equality with the Father: first in service, then in will. Verse 19 means He could originate nothing that was contrary to the Father, for they were of perfect accord (see verse 30). In like manner, He could not bear witness of Himself *independently* of the Father, for that would be an act of insubordination. Instead, His own witness was in perfect accord therewith: the Father Himself (verse 37), and the Scriptures (verse 39), bore testimony to His absolute deity. But in John

8:13-14, Christ was making direct reply to the Pharisees, who said His witness was false. That He emphatically denied, and appealed again to the witness of the Father (verse 18).

Yet again. “I and my Father are one” (Joh 10:30), and “My Father is greater than I” (Joh 14:28). In the former, Christ was speaking of Himself according to His essential being; in the latter, in reference to His mediatorial character or official position.

Second, interpretation is necessary to prevent our being misled by the mere *sound of words*. How many have formed wrong conceptions from the language used in different verses through their failure to understand its *sense*. To many, it appears impious to place a different meaning upon a term than what appears to be its obvious signification; yet a sufficient warning against this should be found in the case of those who have so fanatically and stubbornly adhered to Christ’s words, “This [unleavened bread] *is* my body” (Mat 26:26; 1Co 11:25), refusing to allow that it must mean “This *represents* my body”—as “The seven candlesticks which thou sawest *are* the seven churches” (Rev 1:20). The error of Universalism, based upon indefinite terms being given an unlimited meaning, points further warning. Arminianism errs in the same direction. “That he by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*” (Heb 2:9) no more included Cain, Pharaoh, and Judas, than “every man” is to be understood absolutely in Luke 16:16, Romans 12:3, and 1 Corinthians 4:5. And “all men” in 1 Timothy 2:4, 6 is no more to be taken as meaning “all without exception,” than it is in Luke 3:15, John 3:26, and Acts 22:15.

“Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations” (Gen 6:9). Of Job, too, it is said that he was “perfect and upright” (Job 1:1). How many have allowed themselves to be misled by the sound of those words. What false concepts have been formed of their import! Those who believe in what they term “the second blessing” or “entire sanctification” consider they confirm their contention that sinless perfection is attainable in this life. Yet such a mistake is quite inexcusable, for what is recorded very soon afterwards of those men shows plainly they were very far from being without moral defect: the one becoming intoxicated, the other cursing the day of his birth. The word “perfect” in those and similar passages signifies “honest, sincere”—as being opposed to hypocrisy. “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1Co 2:6). There, and in Philippians 3:15, the word signifies “mature” (compare “of full age” in Hebrews 5:14) as distinct from infantile.

“And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men...and they shall sleep *a perpetual sleep*, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts” (Jer 51:57). Those words are cited by gross materialists, who believe in the annihilation of the souls of the wicked. They need not detain us long, for the language is plainly figurative. God was about to execute judgment upon the pride of Babylon; and, as a historical fact, that mighty city was captured while its king and his courtiers were in a drunken stupor, being slain therein, so that they awoke no more on earth. That “perpetual sleep” *cannot* be understood literally and absolutely is evident from other passages which expressly announce the resurrection of the wicked: Daniel 12:2, John 6:29.

“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel” (Num 23:21). How often those words have been regarded absolutely, without any regard to their context. They were a part of Balaam’s explanation to Balak, why he could not curse Israel so that they should be exterminated by the Midianites. Such language did not mean that Israel were in a sinless state, but that up to that time, they were free from any open rebellion against, or apostasy from, JEHOVAH. They had not been guilty of any heinous offence like idolatry. They had conducted themselves as to be unfit for cursing and cutting off. But later, the LORD *did* see “perverseness” in Israel, and commissioned Babylon to execute His judgment upon them (Isa 10). It is unwarrantable to apply this relative statement to the Church absolutely, for God *does* “behold in-

iquity” in His children, as His chastening rod demonstrates—though He imputes it not unto penal condemnation.

Third, interpretation is needed for the *inserting of an explanatory word* in some passages. Thus, in “Thou art of purer eyes than to [approvingly] behold evil, and canst not [condoningly] look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13), some such qualifying terms as these are required—otherwise, we should make them contradict such a verse as “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Pro 15:3). God never beholds evil with complacency, but He *does* to requite it.

Once more, “For who hath resisted his [secret or decretive] will?” (Rom 9:19); “neither did according to his [revealed or preceptive] will” (Luk 12:47)—unless those distinctions be made, Scripture would contradict itself. Again, “Blessed are they that [evangelically, i.e., with genuine desire and effort] keep his testimonies” (Psa 119:2)—for none do so according to the strict rigour of His Law.

For our concluding example of the need for interpretation, let us take a very familiar and simple verse: “Jesus Christ *the same* yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). Does that “say what it means”? Certainly, says the reader; and the writer heartily agrees. But are you sure that you understand *the meaning* of what it says? Has Christ undergone no change since the days of His flesh? Is He the same absolutely today as He was yesterday? Does He still experience bodily hunger, thirst, and weariness? Is He still in “the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7), in a state of humiliation, the “man of sorrows” (Isa 53:3)? Interpretation is here obviously needed, for there must be a sense in which He *is* still “the same.” He is unchanged in His essential Person, in the exercise of His mediatorial office, in His relation unto and attitude toward His Church—loving them with an everlasting love. But He has altered in His humanity, for that has been glorified; and in the position which He now occupies (Mat 28:18; Act 2:36). Thus, the best known and most elementary verses call for careful examination and prayerful meditation in order to arrive at the meaning of their terms.

September

TEARS

Tears are one of the many consequences of sin, for there is no weeping in heaven, nor could we conceive of there being any upon earth had man preserved his pristine purity, for holiness and happiness are inseparable. Nevertheless, it is evident that when God made man, He did so with the preview of his fall. “Evident” we say, for the provision of a tear-duct to the eye shows that it was designed, among other things, for weeping. And what a marvelous production is the human eye, not only in the delicacy and complexity of its mechanism, but also in its manifold uses and services. That small but expressive organ can glow with pleasure, flash with anger, stare in wonderment, shrink with horror, and be so suffused with the tears of sorrow as to pour out a rivulet of grief. Nor is it wrong to weep at certain times. Nay, God has bidden us do so: “Weep with them that weep” (Rom 12:15), though that is not to be restricted to the literal and outward act. Nor is weeping necessarily a mark of weakness or effeminacy, for the God-man wept. Weeping is a merciful provision of the Creator’s, for it has been rightly termed “nature’s safety valve.” As might well be expected, much is said in the Bible about weeping, for the Word of God is intensely human. To a few of its references we now turn.

“*And Hezekiah wept sore*” (2Ki 20:3). The context informs us that he was “sick unto death,” and that the LORD had sent Isaiah to him, saying, “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die” (verse 1). Whereupon the king of Judah “prayed unto the LORD” (verse 2), reminded Him that he had walked before Him in truth and with a sincere heart, and sealed his plea with tears. The prophet was then authorized to return and tell Hezekiah, “Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have *seen thy tears*: behold, I will heal thee” (verse 5). Thus, his were the tears of *supplication*, and they were effectual. There is nothing in Scripture which warrants the idea that it was the fear of death which so distressed the king; rather is there reason to believe that it was the circumstances of his family and the state of his nation which so deeply affected him. At that time, he had no son, and he grieved at the prospect of his branch of David’s family becoming extinct. Probably his kingdom was then being threatened by the Assyrians, and there was need of a God-fearing and capable commander for such an emergency. Much might be written on this remarkable and mysterious incident, but the one thing we would here stress is the *prevalency of tears*. Has not many a sorely tried saint reason to acknowledge that “the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping” (Psa 6:8)—that when words failed him, his tears spoke effectually unto God?

“And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews” (Est 8:3). This was the third time she petitioned the king, as a reference to Esther 5:3 and 7:2 shows, but on neither of the former occasions did Esther give way unto tears. But the situation which now confronted her was critical and urgent. Yet it was not in connection with herself personally; it was the fate which threatened her nation that moved Esther so deeply. This is blessed to behold. Though so highly elevated as to be now the king’s consort, she forgot not the misery of her people, but used her influence on their behalf. An edict had gone forth for the destruction of the Jews (Est 3:9-11), and Esther said unto the king, “For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?” (Est 8:6). Thus, hers were the tears of **earnest entreaty**, and as the tear-watered supplication of Hezekiah was effectual before the LORD, so the unselfish and pathetic weeping of Esther prevailed before the king, for we read that he said to her, “Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring” (verse 8); and the wicked edict was cancelled.

“Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow” (Jer 14:17). Here is a call to weeping not for an individual, nor yet for his nation, but for the languishing cause of God. It was tears of **lamentation** which were enjoined in view of the sad state the Church was then in. Israel had sinned grievously and the rod of divine chastisement lay heavy upon her. No longer did she enjoy God’s smile of approbation; instead, His judgments were her portion, and her enemies prevailed over her. She was not to harden her heart or be stoically indifferent, but make conscience of her iniquities and bewail the dishonour done her God. In like manner, His people today should take to heart the present state of things in Christendom, and the reproach it brings on the name of Christ. What a desolate state the LORD’s vineyard is now in! How many a golden candlestick has been removed! What a feeble glimmer is cast by the remaining ones! The glory has departed, the power and blessing of the Spirit is withheld. If the cause of Christ be dear unto us, we shall weep over and mourn for its grievous condition.

“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (Luk 7:37-38). A remarkable scene is here presented to us. Our blessed Lord was the guest of a critical and self-righteous Pharisee—the very last place where we should expect to find such a woman as this one had been! Ah, but “a friend of publicans and sinners” (Mat 11:19; Luk 7:34) was the magnet. Indifferent to the cold and contemptuous glances which she must have known would be cast at her, she could not be restrained from seeking out the One who had won her heart and blotted out her iniquities. Taking her place at Christ’s feet betokened her complete subjection to Him. Her tears were those of **contrition**, though joy inspired them too: godly sorrow for having sinned against and grieved such a One, joy in the assurance that He loved her. Kissing His feet expressed her affection. Wiping them with her (long!) hair—the woman’s “glory” (1Co 11:15)—signified that she would henceforth devote herself to His honour. The anointing of His feet was an act of worship and adoration.

“Jesus wept” (Joh 11:35). The shortest and, in some respects, the most wonderful and blessed verse in the Bible. What an awe-inspiring spectacle does it present to us—the Lord of glory shedding tears! What a mysterious phenomenon—the Maker of heaven and earth weeping! The more so since the Prince of life knew that in a few minutes, He would raise Lazarus! Why then did He

weep? Because God's Son had been made like to His brethren "in all things" (Heb 2:17), partaking of their susceptibilities and emotions. As the perfect Man beheld the grief of the friends and sisters of Lazarus, He could not but be deeply moved and weep with them. His tears on this occasion were those of **compassion**. It was the great High Priest of His people giving proof that He was touched with the feeling of their infirmities. We believe that as the Lord Jesus stood by that grave, He looked down the centuries and beheld each Christian home visited by death, and His weeping at Bethany assures bereaved saints that He sympathizes deeply with them and stands ready to pour the balm of Gilead into their sore hearts.

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb 5:7). Those were the tears of **anguish**, telling us of the severity of the Saviour's sufferings. The "days of his flesh" signifies the whole period of His humiliation. The "strong crying and tears" indicates the extent to which Christ felt the terrible burden laid upon Him. He was no stoic, but felt intensely, both in body and soul, the fearful curse of the Law and the outpoured wrath of God. They were part of the "roaring" predicted of Him in Psalm 22:1. No human mind can conceive the terribleness of the conflict through which the Saviour passed and the "travail of soul" which He endured. He sought deliverance "from *death*" and not from dying, for He had received commandment to lay down His life (Joh 10:18), and therefore, He prayed, "O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul" (Psa 116:4). He was "heard"; His prayers and supplications were answered. God's response thereto was seen in raising Him from the dead.

"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews...by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Act 20:19, 31). Those were the tears of **ministerial love and urgency**. No merely professional or perfunctory service was that rendered by the apostle. He had such a love for souls as made him say, "I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal 4:19). No wonder the Lord gave him so many "seals" to his ministry! Let each servant of Christ who reads these lines search his heart in the light of Acts 20:19, 31, and ask himself whether the *absence* of such "tears" be the explanation of the barrenness of his ministry. It is written, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Psa 126:5); and perhaps the day to come will show that the latter is in exact proportion to the former.

THE EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

9. Light and Darkness (1:5-6)

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1Jo 1:6). In those words, we have: (1) A lofty averment³⁶—claiming to have fellowship

³⁶ **averment** – assertion as a fact.

with God. (2) A flat contradiction—walk in darkness. (3) A solemn indictment—such are denounced as liars. (4) A sweeping inclusion, the “we” taking in the apostles themselves—if the cap fitted, they too must wear it.

Context

The *connection* between this verse and the one immediately following, with verse 5 may be readily perceived. John was writing on the subject of fellowship, and having described the character of the One with whom that fellowship is had, he makes application of his “message” unto two radically different classes, which together make up what is known as Christendom, or “the kingdom of heaven” in the parables of Matthew 13 and 25:1-10—which includes tares as well as wheat, bad fish as well as good, foolish virgins as well as wise ones. The first class comprises those who have a name to live, but are dead; the second, those who actually possess spiritual life. More specifically, the relation of verse 6 to verse 5 is that here we behold the Light detecting and exposing what is contrary thereto. Since in God there be no darkness at all, true piety is to be distinguished from its counterfeit by a walking in the light. By this criterion or test must we judge all who claim to hold converse with God: their characters must harmonize with His.

In verse 6, John was not referring to the unregenerate as such, but to unrenewed *professors*, who boasted of their enjoying communion with the triune God. It was not the openly wicked and profane which he had in view, but those who unwarrantably bore the name of Christians, those who were in church fellowship. In his day, as now, there were in the Christian assemblies those who were born of God, and those who were not so. This is clear from those mentioned in 1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us”—originally, members; later, apostates. Jude also refers to certain men who “crept in unawares,” “ungodly men [who were] turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude :4). Hence, there was a real and pressing need for lip profession to be *tested* by the character of the daily life. This is done here by immediately following up the statement in verse 5 by a solemn warning against self-deception, insisting that fellowship with God is to be gauged by conformity unto Him in holiness and righteousness.

So far as we can discern, the apostle’s *design* in the words before us was at least threefold. First, to stir up the saints themselves, and prevent their becoming careless and remiss. The apostle here warns them of how much need there was to watch their own hearts and to be circumspect and strict of their walk, avoiding everything which had a tendency unto sin, since *that* would interrupt their holding and maintaining communion with their heavenly Father. As the Psalmist declared, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18): when I cherish that which is evil, the Holy One will not connive³⁷ at my sin. “If thou listen to the devil, God will not listen to thee”—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892). Second, to convict and undeceive the deluded, that the ignorant and erring might discover their perilous state, and be led to cry unto God for a real work of grace to be wrought in them. Third, to unmask hypocrites, and thereby prevent the children of God being imposed upon by those who had nothing in common with them; and to separate themselves from all such false pretenders.

In seeking a closer view of our present verse, we not only need to attend to the context, but also to bear carefully in mind John’s peculiar *style*. We made a brief reference to this in the introductory article, when calling attention to the *abstract* (and absolute) character of many of his statements. Thus, in 1 John 1:3, he declared “truly our fellowship *is* with the Father”—not “ought

³⁷ **connive** – to shut one’s eyes to a thing that one dislikes.

to be,” taking no notice of the things which hinder and break it. So it is here: he speaks of that which characterizes a person, and not of something which is exceptional. There are none on earth who enjoy unbroken and unclouded fellowship with God. Only One could say, “I have set the LORD always before me” (Psa 16:8). In like manner, there has never been a saint who walked uninterruptedly in the light, who never deviated from the paths of righteousness. None but Christ could aver, “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). He alone ever practiced what He preached and perfectly exemplified what He taught; hence the unique emphasis of “mighty in deed *and* word before God and all the people” (Luk 24:19), and “all that Jesus began both to *do* and teach” (Act 1:1).

1. A Lofty Avowal

“If we say that we have fellowship with him.” Here is a lofty avowal supposed. “If we say” is a common mode of speaking in Scripture to express a definite affirmation or profession, as in “but now ye say, We see” (Joh 9:41). “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?” (Jam 2:14); “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar” (1Jo 2:4)—where in each instance, as here, the declaration is proved to be an idle boast. It is a bare assertion without any corresponding reality. There is a radical difference between profession and possession. To “have fellowship with God” presupposes regeneration and reconciliation unto Him. To state that we have fellowship with God is tantamount to claiming that we are His children, to be partakers of the divine nature, to be delivered from this present evil world (Gal 1:4), and that we belong to that company whose desire and determination it is to please and glorify Him. To have fellowship with God means that our affections are set upon things above (Col 3:2), that we bask in the light of His countenance.

2. A Flat Contradiction

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie.” Obviously, the first task before the expositor here is to give a *correct* definition or explanation of what it means to “walk in darkness”; and strange as it may sound (heretical to some ears), that is not necessarily the same thing as a *scriptural* one. There are many terms and expressions in God’s Word which are used by no means uniformly; and it is the interpreter’s duty to ascertain by a careful study of its setting, and then demonstrate to the reader, what is its precise meaning in any given instance. Thus, in Isaiah 50:10, the words, “walketh in darkness” are found; yet their force there is quite different from that in our present text, and they respect very diverse characters. Let us, then, examine closely its language. In Scripture, a man’s “walk” refers not to any single act, or even habit, but rather to the general tenor of a person’s behavior—the regular course followed by him. “Walking” is a voluntary act (Pro 2:13), a continuous action (Isa 65:2), and a progressive action (2Ti 3:13). A man’s walk reveals the state of his heart, being a practical expression of what he is.

Whatever that term may signify in other passages, to “walk in darkness” certainly does not here mean to be in doubt about our spiritual state, or to be totally lacking in assurance of our acceptance with God; nor even a deep depression and despondency of soul. It is indeed desirable for the saint to know he has passed from death unto life (Joh 5:24) and to have the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God (Rom 8:16), as it is also both his privilege and duty to “rejoice in the Lord alway” (Phi 4:4). Yet though he may lack both the one and the other (and such is to be greatly deplored, and never excused), the absence thereof is no proof that he is not a

Christian. No, something very much graver than that is here in view. While “the darkness” has reference to the *realm* inhabited by this class, nevertheless, it is also their *activities* in that realm which the apostle had before him. In general terms, to walk in darkness is to order our lives in opposition to the revealed character and will of Him who is light. It is expressive of being in a state of nature and acting accordingly.

More specifically, to walk in darkness is the condition of all the unregenerate, for they are total strangers to God and His so-great salvation. “For [we] *were* sometimes darkness” (Eph 5:8) describes our fearful state by nature. By his fall, man was deprived of the favour of God, the Spirit of God, the image of God in his soul, and darkness became his element. Second, to walk in darkness is to be under the curse of God, for when Christ was made a curse for His people (Gal 3:13), there was “darkness over all the land” (Mat 27:45) for the space of three hours. Third, to walk in darkness is to be under the control of Satan, for salvation is a being turned “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Act 26:18; cp. Col 1:13). Fourth, to walk in darkness is to be completely under the dominion of sin (Pro 4:18-19). To walk in darkness is to tread the broad road which leads to destruction (Mat 7:13), and the one who does so ends by being “cast...into outer darkness” (Mat 22:13).

To walk in darkness is to conduct ourselves *unholily*, to follow steadily a course of self-pleasing, for “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11) are the products of the flesh. It is not simply to be betrayed by the force of temptation into inconsistent actions, but the ruling principle and power of our lives is the very reverse of godliness, demonstrating such to be complete strangers to a work of divine grace. “Darkness” here has reference to the dominion and power of sin, with its awful effects upon the character and conduct of the unregenerate. Even though the grosser forms of sin appear not in the life, yet enmity against God rules the heart, regulates the thoughts and affections, and determines the motives. And though the ungodly may have little or no cognizance of the same, yet all these things are “naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). As the best fruits of grace are produced by the Spirit in the heart and are known and valued only by the Lord, so it is with indwelling sin—its principal and vilest productions are not seen by our fellows.

Again, to walk in darkness is explained both by the contents of the preceding verse and the antithesis pointed in the following one. “Light” is transparent and translucent, open and clear, and it is so always and everywhere; whereas darkness is characterized by the opposite properties—it conceals, disguises, distorts. By his apostasy from God, man lost that element of simplicity and openness in which he was created. Moreover, the clear and bright sunshine of the countenance of Him who is light became intolerant to the fallen creature—man fled and hid himself from God. Hence, it is that insincerity and deceitfulness that mark the natural man. He is not honest, either with himself or in his dealings with God. He tries to make himself out to be other than he is. “Men loved darkness rather than light...For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (Joh 3:19-20).

Finally, let it be pointed out that to walk in darkness includes living under fundamental *error* concerning spiritual and eternal things. Every doctrine of men—everything which is contrary to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, derogatory to the honour and dignity of Christ, or which is opposed to the free grace of God in election, effectual calling, final perseverance, and the inculcation of true piety—is sinful in the sight of God and morally evil in us. He has not given His Word for us to pass judgment upon, but to receive into our minds with all submissiveness. There can be no fellowship with God but in the belief and practice of the truth. While we are walking in the reception and influence of anything contrary to divine revelation, we can have no communion

with Him, for we are in the darkness of error. Every part of the truth is like its Author: light, pure, holy, and perfect. His doctrine is “according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3), promoting and increasing it, supplying motives thereunto. But error is pernicious, and its words “eat as doth a canker” (2Ti 2:17).

3. A Solemn Indictment

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie.” Surely that is self-evident. Not only is the latter manifestly inconsistent with the former, but the two things are utterly irreconcilable. Purity and impurity are opposites. They are radically and essentially distinct. They are contrary in their nature, their properties, and their tendencies. Sin and holiness are diametrically antagonistic to each other. Truth and error can never agree: there can be no such thing as walking in the truth, and at the same time living in that which is flatly contradictory thereto. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord”? (2Co 6:14-15). None whatever: they are the avowed enemies of each other. To make the claim that I am enjoying fellowship with God, and at the same time for me to be ruled by Satan, acting in self-gratification, and taking pleasure in the ways of sin, is not only a patent absurdity and an empty pretence, it is also a manifest falsehood—a wicked lie.

Such glaring hypocrisy calls for strong denunciation. Very different was John from our mealy-mouthed men who gain a reputation for being “gracious” at the expense of fidelity. John did not merely say that this class of Christian professors erred or were “labouring under a delusion,” but spoke plainly and called them what they were. He was the apostle of love, and here gave proof thereof, for love is *faithful*. False pretences need to be dealt with sternly and their dishonesty condemned. The apostle used great plainness of speech, yet no more so than the case called for. It was not only that their lips were uttering what was untrue, but they were acting an untruth; their very lives were a falsehood, and therefore they were not to be spared. To be guilty of making such an outrageous claim is to traduce the character of God, for He holds no intercourse with the unholy; is to repudiate the truth, for such have no access to God; and is grievously to dishonour the cause of Christ.

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” By putting those verses together, not only is the proposition in the latter more self-evident, but the needs be for the former becomes plainer. At first sight, it seems strange that John should announce so formally and emphatically such elementary truths. Surely, if there be anything which believers are clear upon it is the character of God, and that *it* precludes such an incongruity as is here refuted. Why then commence therewith right after the introductory verses? Because one of the chief designs of this epistle is the testing of Christian profession. Because there were, and have been ever since, many in Christendom who came under the description of verse 6. And because there is still a sad tendency remaining in real Christians *practically* to deny this proposition: to act deceitfully, to trifle with sin, fellowship the unfruitful works of darkness, and yet suppose they are in communion with God—which is virtually saying that He is *not* light.

The love of approbation³⁸ is the native trend of the human heart. Each person desires to be well thought of by his fellows, and the vast majority pose as being better than they are. Fear of censure and the contempt of others is another powerful motive which induces many to act the part of hypocrites, and such needs to be unsparingly mortified by the saint, for the extent to which he yields thereto makes him untruthful, and effectually hinders him from walking with the Holy One. Thus it is that so many of the unregenerate apply for Church membership: they profess the truth of the Gospel, but are strangers to its power. Many of them claim to have not only fellowship with God, but an exalted type and high degree thereof. They have much to say about the grace of God, but little or nothing of His holiness. They extol the imputed righteousness of Christ, but give no evidence of being recipients of His imparted righteousness. They prate about their peace and joy, but their daily lives are not ordered by the precepts of the Word. Their walk gives the lie to their profession.

4. A Sweeping Inclusion

“If *we* say”: John here includes himself! Were we, the apostles of Christ, to be found walking in darkness and at the same time asserting that we have fellowship with God, we should brand ourselves as liars. The “if” does not signify that such a thing was possible; rather, John was pointing out what was utterly impossible. The apostles *had* fellowship with God and gave clear proof of the same. The blessed effects thereof were felt in their souls and appeared in their lives. It preserved them from sin, and deepened their hatred of it. It is impossible to have fellowship with God and not become increasingly conformed to Him. If it be true that “he that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Pro 13:20), how much more so will walking with God deliver from folly! If evil communications corrupt good manners, then certainly, divine communications will correct evil manners. Fellowship with God requires oneness of nature, and walking with Him produces sameness of character. Fellowship with God ever issues in spiritual fruitfulness. Thus, it is the wisdom and duty of each of us to test himself by this rule, and then measure his associates thereby.

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and *do not* the truth.” John here denounces such a sham, exposes its base inconsistency, and denies that such have any intercourse with Him who is light. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amo 3:3). Neither can one walk with God without being radically influenced thereby. “What God communicates to us is not a base fiction, for it is necessary that the power and effect of this fellowship should shine forth in the life: otherwise our profession of the Gospel is fallacious”—John Calvin (1509-1564). Yet the spirit of self-deception and hypocrisy prevails to such an extent that our churches are filled with those of high pretensions whose walk is entirely inconsistent therewith—they have no true sight of themselves or sense of their peril. Their practice demonstrates the falsity of their profession. They “*do not* the truth”; they act not in accord with its holy requirements—they are not vitally influenced thereby. Christianity does not consist in “saying,” but in *being*.

Unspeakably solemn is what has been before us. We are plainly warned that “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12), and if I really value my eternal interests, I shall seriously inquire, Do I belong to that company? Remember that self-love works presumption. Take nothing for granted; refuse to give yourself the

³⁸ **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

benefit of any doubt. If you honestly desire to know the truth about yourself, then pray sincerely and earnestly, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2). No matter how well instructed your mind, or what be your happy feelings, measure yourself by this unerring rule. Truth is not only to be believed and loved, but practised. It is at *this* point that graceless professors are to be distinguished from the regenerate. The one who hears Christ’s sayings, but does them not, is building on the sand (Mat 7:26). The one whom He owns as a spiritual kinsman is he who *does* the Father’s will (Mat 12:50). Those whom Christ pronounces blessed are they who “hear the word of God, and *keep* it” (Luk 11:28). “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (Jam 1:22).

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

61. Makkedah (10:13-21)

“And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies” (Jos 10:13). Therein demonstration was made of the absolute supremacy and invincible might of JEHOVAH. Three great miracles were wrought that day by the LORD on behalf of His people, for they are explainable by naught but divine causation. First, there had been the great hailstones that God had cast down from heaven, and which were remarkable for their magnitude, their efficacy, and their discrimination—more of the Amorites dying from them than by the sword of Israel, and so directed that none of the latter were even injured by them. Second, the sun standing still in mid heaven, and remaining so for almost “a whole day.” Third, the staying of the moon in her course, for it is to be noted that Joshua (as the type of Christ) had addressed her *directly*: “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon” (verse 12)—evidently, he did not believe that the two bodies acted so automatically in conjunction that it was unnecessary to give distinct command unto the latter, for in such case, he would have spoken only to the sun. It was therefore a different and additional miracle that the moon also “stayed,” as is further evident by the Holy Spirit’s separate mention of each in verse 13.

It is exceedingly solemn to observe that these extraordinary displays of God’s power were *judgments* upon the Canaanites, and that like the great deluge in the days of Noah, the destruction of the cities of the plain by fire from heaven, and the fearful plagues upon Egypt, the miracles of Joshua 10 were interpositions of JEHOVAH for the express purpose of destroying the wicked. This presents to us an aspect of the divine character that, in the vast majority of pulpits, has been deliberately ignored and suppressed for the past fifty years—until the Deity of Holy Writ is now, even in Christendom, “the unknown God” (Act 17:23). Those miracles make it clearly evident that God’s holiness is as real as His grace, His justice as His mercy, His wrath as His love—and they require to be given equal prominence in the preaching of those who profess to be His ministers. They *were so* by the divine Preacher: neither prophet nor apostle spoke so plainly or so frequently as did Christ upon the fearful portion awaiting the lost—such expressions as, “the wrath of God” (Joh 3:36), “the damnation of hell” (Mat 23:33), “the furnace of fire: [where] there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 13:50), the “worm [that] dieth not, and the fire [that] is not quenched” (Mar 9:44, 46, 48) were upon His lips much oftener than “the love of God” (Luk 11:42; Joh 5:42).

It is lamentable and patent dishonesty of so many pulpits during the past two or three generations that is so largely responsible for the moral corruption of our nation today. Of old, the LORD complained of those in Israel whose “lips should keep knowledge” that “ye have not kept my ways, but have been *partial* in the law” (Mal 2:7, 9), and thus has history repeated itself. Instead of declaring “all the counsel of God” (Act 20:27), unfaithful men dwelt only on those portions of the truth which made for their own popularity, deliberately omitting whatever would be unpalata-

ble to their unregenerate hearers. Such a one-sided portrayal was made of the divine character that the Most High was not held in awe; the moral Law was relegated unto the Jews, so that sin became to be regarded lightly; and the soothing opiate that “God loves everybody” took away all fear of the wrath to come. Thousands of thinking men forsook such an effeminate ministry, and those who continued under it were lulled soundly asleep. The children of the former, for the most part, grew up entirely godless; while those of the latter believed in a “god” which is the figment of a sickly sentimentality. And, my reader, where there is no reverence of God and respect for His Law, there will never be genuine regard for human law.

In consequence of such widespread perfidy³⁹ on the part of the “churches,” and the disastrous effects thereof upon the community, an insulted and incensed God is now dealing with Christendom—not in grace, but in judgment! Never was an error so plainly exposed as “Dispensationalism” has been during our lifetime. So far from the “silent heaven” of Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) and his school, the heavens have been thundering loudly. Instead of this Christian era differing from all previous ones, by an exemption from open displays of God’s anger, it has been, and still is, marked by such with increasing frequency and severity. True, the Day of Salvation has not yet expired, the way of deliverance from the everlasting burning is still available for every individual who accepts the free offer of the Gospel; nevertheless, God has a controversy with those who have slighted His authority and ignored the claims of His righteousness. It is an obvious fact that His judgments have fallen the heaviest upon those parts of the earth which have enjoyed the most spiritual light, but deliberately closed their eyes to it. He has ceased using the “still small voice” of winsomeness, and has been speaking loudly in the earthquake and the fire (1Ki 19:11-12).

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel” (Jos 10:14). Those words supply definite confirmation of our remarks upon verse 12, that these miracles were wrought by God in answer to the supplication of His servant—he had at first addressed himself unto the LORD in private; and then, in the hearing of Israel, to the luminaries of heaven. Therein we behold the amazing condescension of the Most High, that he deigns not only to listen to the voice of His creatures, but also to respond to their appeals. It should be pointed out that, as so often in Scripture, the language of this verse is relative and not absolute—both before and since then, God has often listened to the voice of man, but not to the extent of altering the movement of the whole planetary system. In this extraordinary instance, we may perceive how, once more, the LORD made good His promise to Joshua in 3:7, and, as the man whom He delighted to honour, further “magnified him in the sight of all Israel.” The final clause of the verse tells us why JEHOVAH so acted on this occasion—to make it still more evident that He was the Captain of Israel’s armies, and that when He laid bare His mighty arm, none of their enemies could stand before Him. These supernatural phenomena must have made a deep impression upon the surrounding nations, especially those given to the study of astronomy.

“And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal” (Jos 10:15). This verse is by no means free of difficulty, for in view of what is recorded in verses 17-20, it would appear that both Joshua and his men remained for some time in the vicinity of Gibeon; while verse 21 is still more definite—“And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah.” Moreover, as Thomas Scott (1747-1821) pointed out, “It is most unlikely that Joshua would march his army twenty or thirty miles in the midst of victory”—especially after marching all the previous night and being so strenuously engaged that supernaturally prolonged day. The absence

³⁹ **perfidy** – betrayal.

of the word “Then” at the beginning of the verse precludes the necessity of our understanding it to mean that they returned *immediately* unto “the camp to Gilgal”; and since identically the same statement is made in verse 43, we regard this in verse 15 as being said by way of anticipation and not as something then accomplished. Ultimately they returned there: to acquaint the congregation with their victory, to render public thanks to God, and to resume and complete their preparations for the northern campaign (Jos 11:1-7). Note well the “all Israel with him” (Jos 10:43), which was yet another miracle—not one had been killed by the hail or slain by the Canaanites!

“But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah” (Jos 10:16). These were the same kings mentioned in verse 3, who had determined upon the destruction of Gibeon. That very morning they had proudly stood at the head of their armies, only to see them utterly routed and almost annihilated, not only by the sword of Israel but also by the artillery of heaven. The tables had indeed been turned with a vengeance, as the opening “But” of the verse is designed to emphasize. Instead of seeking to rally the remnants of their armies and leading their men in a final stand, they were panic-stricken, and ignominiously took to their heels in an attempt to preserve their own lives. They must have realized that more than human forces were arrayed against them, and, filled with terror, they sought to escape the avenger. Doubtless, they cherished the hope that the darkness which was due would aid their escape, and they must have been utterly dismayed by the supernatural prolongation of the daylight. They had travelled quite a distance from Gibeon, but the relentless chase of those who sought their death still continued (verse 10).

The “cave” incidents recorded in the Scriptures are of considerable variety. The first one noticed was the place of unmentionable degradation on the part of Lot and his daughters after their merciful deliverance from Sodom (Gen 19:30-38). The next is where Abraham honourably purchased the field of Ephron, wherein was a cave which became the burial place of his wife Sarah (Gen 23:17, 19), as another was the temporary sepulcher of Lazarus (Joh 11:38)—not so the Saviour’s, whose holy body was laid in a new tomb “hewn out in the rock” (Mat 27:60). In the cave of Adullam, David and his loyal followers found asylum from the murderous designs of Saul. At a later day, another cave provided shelter for fifty of the LORD’s prophets, when Obadiah hid them from the wicked Jezebel (1Ki 18:4), to which allusion is made in Hebrews 11:38. The final reference is in Revelation 6, when in the great Day of the Lamb’s wrath—of which Joshua 10 provided a faint adumbration,⁴⁰ for in that day, too, the heavenly bodies shall be affected—the kings of the earth and the great men shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say unto them, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6:12-17).

“And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah” (Jos 10:17). We may perhaps connect this verse with the fifteenth, and understand by its language simply that Joshua had *planned* to return at once unto Gibeon. Before actually carrying out his design, apparently, he determined to make sure that vengeance had been executed upon the ring-leaders of the unprovoked attack upon Gibeon. The fact that Joshua was here told that these kings were “found” suggests that he had given instructions to make search, and ascertain whether the five kings were among those captured, or if their corpses could be identified upon the field of battle. Whether it was some of his own men who had succeeded in locating the fugitives, and now acquainted Joshua with their hiding place, or Canaanitish traitors who had observed their taking refuge in this cave, and desired to ingratiate themselves with Joshua by turning “informers,” we know not. The bare fact alone is stated: their attempt at concealment had failed. It is to be borne

⁴⁰ **adumbration** – exhibiting a slight resemblance.

in mind that they were endeavouring to escape not only the sword of Israel, but the vengeance of God—for “the LORD fought for Israel” (verse 14)—and concealment from *Him* was impossible.

“And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them” (Jos 10:18). Observe the collectedness of Israel’s leader even in the heat of battle. Instead of being elated and excited by the tidings he had just received, or perturbed because it conflicted with his intention of returning forthwith to Gibeon, he calmly gave orders which would effectively prevent the escape of the kings, securing them in the cave until such time as would be convenient for them to be brought before him and dealt with as they deserved, for the next two verses indicate that information had also just been received that Israel’s task on this occasion had not yet been completed. “The kings escaped the hailstones and the sword, only to be reserved to a more ignominious death; for the cave in which they took shelter became first their prison and then their grave”—T. Scott. Very similar was this to the case of Pharaoh, who survived the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, that he might be a greater and more notable memorial of God’s wrath and power. Both instances supply illustrations of that solemn declaration, “The Lord knoweth how...to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2Pe 2:9).

“And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand” (Jos 10:19). When directing the battle against the King of Ai, it appears that Joshua stood on some eminence where he could be seen by his men and from which he issued his orders (Jos 8:18, 26). But on this occasion, they were in a mountainous section of Canaan where the terrain was much more broken, which precluded such a policy. It is clear from verse 10 that after the principal engagement, the Amorites fled in several directions. Possibly, the main body of those who took to their heels had been slain, and Joshua concluded that the death-dealing hail had accounted for the remainder, and had therefore commenced preparations for the return to their headquarters. But the information he had recently received caused him to change his plans, and to issue the above order. His “stay ye not” implies that there had been a pause, and he now gave this word to stimulate his men unto a final effort. Well as they had done, and weary as they might be, this was no time to relax or to sit down congratulating one another.

Note the argument made use of by Joshua as he here encouraged those under him to redouble their efforts and finish the work required of them: “For the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand” (Jos 10:19). It may well be that they were reluctant to act so ruthlessly, and that there was some doubt in their mind about pursuing so merciless a policy. Having completely defeated them in battle, and seen a still greater number killed by the hailstones, should not the remaining survivors be shown clemency? But neither Joshua nor those under him were free to please themselves in this matter: “And when the LORD thy God shall *deliver them before thee*; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them” (Deu 7:2—repeated in verses 16-23). That divine command was a general and not a universal one, being limited as to time (“when”) and qualified by Deuteronomy 20:10-11. On each occasion, the task of Israel’s army was to be regulated by that divine mandate. That it must be so in *this* instance was made unmistakably clear by JEHOVAH’s words to Joshua in verse 8, “I have delivered them into thine hand”—and therefore, they must slay the Amorites without pity or respite.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities” (Jos 10:20). The closing words of this verse make it clear that, notwithstanding the extremely heavy losses which the Amorites had sustained, some of them succeeded in making

good their escape. That some of them *would do so* was intimidated by Joshua's "smite the hindmost" in the preceding verse. It was too late then to round them all up: only the laggards in the rear could be overtaken. So it is in the spiritual warfare of the Christian: even after his greatest victories, some of his enemies still survive. In view of God's dealings with Israel, we need not be surprised at this, for at a later date He told them, "I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not" (Jdg 2:21-22).

"And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel" (Jos 10:21). That "*all* the people returned to the camp" shows that none of the Israelites had been slain by the enemy. So it is spiritually. Whatever buffetings the believer endures, none of his graces can be destroyed by Satan. That the men of Israel returned to the camp to Joshua in peace shows how the saint should conduct himself when he has been granted success over his foes, namely, seek and enjoy communion with the antitypical Joshua. That none moved his tongue against them demonstrates how fully the fear of God had fallen upon the Canaanites: so awed were they that none dared to curse their victors, or utter a word of reproach against them.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

4. Its Consequences, Part 1

The key which opens to us the mystery of human depravity is to be found in a right understanding of the relations which God appointed between the first man and his posterity. As the grand truth of redemption cannot be rightly and intelligently apprehended until we perceive the *federal connection* which God ordained between the Redeemer and the redeemed; neither can the tragedy of man's ruin be contemplated in its proper perspective, unless we view it in the light of Adam's apostasy from his Creator. He was the prototype of all humanity: as he stood for the whole human race, so in him God dealt with all who should issue from him. Had not Adam been our covenant head and federal representative, the mere circumstance that he was our first parent would not have involved us in the legal consequences of his sin, nor would it have entitled us to the legal reward of his righteousness had he maintained his integrity and served his probation, by rendering to his Maker and LORD that obedience which was His due and which he was fully capacitated to perform. It was the divinely constituted *nexus* (connecting principle or tie) and *oneness* of the first man and all mankind in the sight of the Law, which explains the latter's participation in the penalty visited upon the former.

In the previous articles of this series, we dwelt at some length upon the *origin* of human depravity, and the divine *imputation* of the guilt of Adam's transgression unto all his descendants. We are now to consider the consequences entailed by the Fall. Abominable indeed is sin, fearful are the wages it receives, dreadful are the effects which it has produced. Therein we are shown

the Holy One's estimate of sin, the severity of His punishment expressing its hatefulness unto Him. Conversely, the dire doom of Adam makes evident the enormity of his offence. That offence is not to be measured by the external act of eating the fruit, but by the awful affront which was offered against God's majesty. In his single sin, there was a complication of many crimes. There was base ingratitude against the One who had so richly endowed him, and discontent with the goodly heritage allotted him. There was disbelief of the holy veracity of God, a doubting of His Word, and a believing of the serpent's lie. There was a repudiation of the infinite obligations he was under to love and serve his Maker, a preferring of his own will and way. There was a contempt of God's high authority, a breaking of His covenant, a flying in the face of His solemn threat. The curse of heaven fell upon him because he deliberately and presumptuously defied the Almighty.

Very much more was included and involved in Adam's transgression than is commonly supposed or recognized. Three hundred years ago, that profound theologian James Usher (1581-1656) pointed out that it had wrapped up in it "the breach of the whole Law of God." Summarizing in our own language what the Bishop of Armagh (i.e., James Usher) developed at length, Adam's violation of all the Ten Commandments of the moral Law may be set forth thus. The first commandment he broke by choosing him another "god" when he followed the counsel of Satan. The second, in idolizing his palate, making a god of his belly by eating the forbidden fruit. The third, by believing not God's threatening, therein taking His name in vain. The fourth, by breaking the sinless rest in which he had been placed. The fifth, thereby dishonouring his Father in heaven. The sixth, by slaying himself and all his posterity. The seventh, by committing spiritual adultery, and preferring the creature above the Creator. The eighth, by laying hands upon that to which he had no right. The ninth, by accepting the serpent's false witness against God. The tenth, by coveting that which God had not given to him.

We by no means share the popular idea that the LORD *saved Adam* very soon after his fall, but rather take decided exception thereto. Negatively, we cannot find anything whatever in Holy Writ on which to base such a belief; positively, much to the contrary. First of all, it is clear that his sin was not one of "infirmity," but instead a "presumptuous" one, pertaining to that class of willful sins and open defiance of God for which no sacrifice was provided (Exo 21:14; Num 15:30-31; Deu 17:12; Heb 10:26-29)—and therefore, an unpardonable sin. There is not the slightest sign that he ever repented of his sin, or record of his confessing it to God—on the contrary, when charged with it, he attempted to excuse and extenuate it. Genesis 3 closes with the awful statement: "So he *drove out* the man." Nothing whatever is mentioned to his credit afterwards: no offering of sacrifice, no acts of faith or obedience! Instead, we are merely told that he knew his wife (Gen 4:1, 25), begat a son in his own likeness, and died (Gen 5:3-5). If the reader can see in those statements any intimations or even indications that Adam was a regenerated man, then he has much better eyes than the writer—or, possibly, a more lively imagination.

Nor is there a single word in his favour in the later Scriptures; rather is everything to his condemnation. Job denied that he covered his transgression or hid his iniquity in his bosom "as Adam" did (Job 31:33). The Psalmist declared that those who judged unjustly and accepted the persons of the wicked should "die like men [Adam]" (Psa 82:7), for the Hebrew word there rendered "men" is *Adam*! In the New Testament, he is contrasted in considerable detail with Christ (Rom 5:12, 21; 1Co 15:22, 45-47), and if he were saved, then the antithesis would fail at its principal point. Moreover, such a glaring anomaly is quite out of keeping with what is revealed of God's justice—that the great majority of those whom he represented should eternally perish, while the responsible head should be recovered. In 1 Timothy 2:14, specific mention is made of

the fact that “Adam was not deceived,” which emphasizes the enormity of his transgression. In Hebrews 11, the Holy Spirit has cited the faith of Old Testament saints, and though He mentions that of Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., He says nothing about Adam’s! His being *omitted* from that list is solemnly significant. Thus, after his being driven out of Eden, Scripture makes no mention of God having any further dealing with Adam!

Before taking up the consequences upon the descendants of Adams’s defection, we will consider those which fell more immediately upon him and his guilty partner. These are recorded in Genesis 3. No sooner had he revolted from his gracious Maker and Benefactor than the evil effects thereof became apparent. His understanding, originally enlightened with heavenly wisdom, became darkened and overcast with crass ignorance. His heart, formerly fired with holy veneration toward his Creator and warm with love to Him, now became alienated and filled with enmity against Him. His will, which had been in subjection to his rightful Governor, had cast off the yoke of obedience. His whole moral constitution was wrecked, had become unhinged, perverse. In a word, the life of God had departed from his soul. His aversion for the supremely excellent One appeared in his flight from Him as soon as he heard His approach. His crass ignorance and stupidity were evinced by his vain attempt to conceal himself from the eyes of Omniscience. His pride was displayed in refusing to acknowledge his guilt; his ingratitude when he indirectly upbraided God for giving him a wife. But let us turn to the inspired account of these things.

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7). Very, very striking is this. We do not read of any change taking place when Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, but as soon as Adam did so, “the eyes of them *both* were opened.” This furnishes definite confirmation of what we dwelt upon in the preceding articles. Adam was the covenant head and legal representative of *his wife*, as well as of the future children which were to issue from them. Therefore, the penalty for disobedience was not inflicted by God until the one to whom the prohibition had been made violated the same, and then the consequences thereof began to be immediately felt by both of them.

But what is meant by “the eyes of them both were opened”? Certainly not their physical eyes, for those had previously been open—thus we have here another intimation that we must not slavishly limit ourselves to the literal meaning of all the terms used in this chapter. The answer, then, must be the “eyes” of their understanding; or, more strictly, those of their *conscience*—which sees or perceives, as well as hears, speaks, and chastises. In that expression, “the eyes of them both were opened,” is to be found the key to what follows.

The result of eating the forbidden fruit was not the acquisition of supernatural wisdom, as they fondly hoped, but a discovery that they had reduced themselves to a condition of wretchedness. They knew that they were “naked,” and that in a sense very different from that mentioned in Genesis 2:25. Though in their original and glorious state they wore no material clothing, yet we do not believe for a moment that they were without any covering at all. Rather do we agree with G. H. Bishop that they “were not without effulgence shining from them and around them, which wrapped them in a radiant and translucent robe, and in a certain lovely way obscured their outlines. It is contrary to nature, and it is repugnant to us, that anything should be unclothed and absolutely bare. Each bird has its plumage and each animal its coat, and there is no beauty if the covering be removed. Strip the most beautiful bird of its feathers, and, though the form remain unchanged, we no longer admire it. We conceive, then, that artists are wholly at fault and grossly offend against purity, when they paint the human form unclothed, and plead as an excuse the case of Adam in Eden. Could the animals in all their splendid covering coats have bowed down as to the vice-regents of God (Gen 1:28) before beings wholly unclothed? Should Adam, the crown and

king of creation, be the only living thing without a screen? Impossible. To the spiritual sense, there certainly is a hint of something about our first parents that impressed and overawed the animal creation. What was that thing? What, but that shining forth like the sun, which describes the body of the resurrection (Dan 12:3)? If the face of Moses so shone by reflection that the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him, how much more must the (unimpeded) indwelling Spirit of God in Adam and Eve have flung around them a radiance which made all creation do them reverence at their approach—beholding in them the image and likeness of the LORD God Almighty, glorious in brightness, shining like a sun?”

Supplementing the above, let it be pointed out that of the LORD God, it is said, “Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psa 104:1-2)—and man was made, originally, in His image! God “crowned him with glory and honour,” and made him “to have dominion over the works of [His] hands” (Psa 8:5-6); and accordingly, covered him with bright apparel, as will be the ultimate case of those recovered from the Fall and its consequences, for “they are equal unto the angels” (Luk 20:36)—compare “two men stood by them in shining garments” (Luk 24:4). Further, the implication of Romans 8:3 is irresistible: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” Note how discriminating is that language: not merely “in the likeness of the flesh,” but literally, “sin’s flesh.” Upon those words Robert Haldane (1764-1842) rightly remarked, “If the flesh of Jesus Christ was the likeness of sinful flesh, there must be a difference between the *appearance* of sinful flesh and our nature or flesh in its original condition when Adam was created. Christ, then, was not made in the likeness of the flesh of man before sin entered the world, but in the likeness of his fallen flesh.” And since Christ *restored* that which He took not away (Psa 69:4), then its resurrected state shows us its primitive glory (Phi 3:21).

Following the statement, “the eyes of them both were opened,” we would naturally expect the next clause to read, “and they *saw* that they were naked,” but instead it says, “they *knew* that they were naked”—something more than a discovery of their woeful physical plight being included therein. The Hebrew verb is rendered “know” in the vast majority of references; yet eighteen times, it is translated “perceive” and three times, “feel.” As the opening of their eyes refers to those of their understanding, so we are informed of what they now discerned, namely, the loss of their innocence. There is a nakedness of soul, which is far worse than an unclothed body, for it unfits it for the presence of the Holy One. The nakedness of Adam and Eve was the loss of the image of God, the inherent righteousness and holiness in which He created them. Such is the awful condition in which all of their descendants are born. That is why Christ bids them, buy of Him “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear” (Rev 3:18). The “white raiment” is “the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10)—the “wedding garment” of Matthew 22:11-13, without which the soul is eternally lost.

“They knew that they were naked.” As G. H. Bishop expressed it, “Their halo had vanished, and the Spirit of righteousness who had been to them a covering of light and purity withdrew, and they felt that they were stripped and bare.” But more: they realized that their physical condition imaged their spiritual loss. They were made painfully conscious of sin and its dire consequences. This was the first result of their transgression: a guilty conscience condemned them, and a *sense of shame* possessed their souls. Their hearts smote them for what they had done. Now that the fearful deed of disobedience had been committed, they realized the happiness they had flung away and the misery into which they had plunged themselves. They knew that they were not only stripped of all the bliss and honours of the paradise state but were defiled and degraded, and a sense of wretchedness possessed them. They knew that they were naked of everything that is ho-

ly. They might now be rightly termed, “Ichabod,” for the glory of the LORD had departed from them (1Sa 4:21). Such, my reader, is ever the effect of sin: it destroys our peace, robs of our joy, and brings in its train a consciousness of guilt and a sense of shame.

There is, we believe, a yet deeper meaning in those words, “They knew that they were naked,” namely a realization that they were exposed to the wrath of an offended God. They perceived that *their defence* was gone. They were morally naked, without any protection against the broken Law! Very striking and solemn is this. *Before* the LORD appeared unto them, before He said a word or came near to them, Adam and Eve *knew* the dreadful state they were now in, and were ashamed! Oh, the power of conscience! Our first parents stood self-accused and self-condemned! Before their Judge appeared on the scene, man became, as it were, the judge of his own fallen and woeful condition. Yes, they knew of themselves that they were disgraced: their holiness defiled, their innocence gone, the image of God in their souls broken, their tranquility disrupted, their protection against the Law removed. Stripped of their original righteousness, they stood defenceless. What a terrible discovery to make! Such is the state into which fallen man has come—one of which he is himself ashamed!

And what did the guilty pair do upon their painful discovery? How did they now conduct themselves? Cry unto God for mercy? Seek unto Him for a covering? No indeed. Not even an awakened conscience moves its tormented possessor to turn unto the LORD, though it *must* do its work ere the sinner flies to Him for refuge. A lost soul needs something more than an active conscience to draw him to Christ. That is very evident from the case of the scribes and Pharisees in His very presence, for “being convicted by their own conscience, [they] *went out* one by one” (Joh 8:9). Instead of a convicted conscience causing them to cast themselves at the feet of the Saviour, it resulted in their leaving Him! Nothing short of the Holy Spirit’s quickening, enmity-subduing, heart-melting, faith-bestowing, will-impelling operations brings anyone into saving contact with the Lord Jesus. He does indeed wound before He applies the balm of Gilead, make use of the Law to prepare the way for the Gospel, break up the hard soil of the heart to make it receptive to the Seed. But even a conscience aroused by Him, accusing the soul with a voice which cannot be stilled, will never of itself bring one into “the way of peace” (Luk 1:79).

No, instead of betaking themselves to God, Adam and Eve attempted by their own puny efforts to repair the damage they had wrought in themselves. “And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen 3:7). Here we see the second consequence of their sin: a worthless expedient, a futile attempt to *conceal their real character* and hide their shame from themselves and their fellows. As others have pointed out, our first parents were more anxious to save their credit before each other than they were to seek the pardon of God. They sought to arm themselves against a feeling of shame and thereby quieten their accusing conscience. There was no concern at their unfitness to appear before *God* in such a plight, but only that they might stand unabashed before each other! And thus it is with their children to this day. They are more afraid of being *detected* in sin than of *committing* it, and more concerned about appearing well before their fellows than about obtaining the approbation of God. The chief object which the fallen sons of men propose unto themselves is to quieten their guilty conscience and to stand well with their neighbours! And hence, it is that so many of the unregenerate assume the garb of religion.

“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden” (Gen 3:8). Here was the third consequence of their fall: *a dread of God*. Up to this point, they had been concerned only with their own selves and wretchedness, but now they had to reckon with Another. It was the approach of their Judge. Apparently, they saw not His form at this

moment, but heard only His voice. It was to *test* them. But instead of welcoming such a sound, they were horrified, and fled in terror. But whither could they flee from *His* presence? “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?” (Jer 23:24). In the attempt of Adam and Eve to seclude themselves among the trees, we behold how sin has turned man into an utter fool, for none but an imbecile would imagine that he could conceal himself from the eyes of Omniscience.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 2

In our last, we sought to show the *need* for interpretation, that it devolves upon us to ascertain the import of what is meant by every sentence of Holy Writ. What God has *said* to us is of inestimable importance and value, yet what profit can we derive therefrom unless its *significance* is clear unto us? The Holy Spirit has given us more than a hint of this by *explaining* the meaning of certain words. Thus, in the very first chapter of the New Testament, it is said of Christ, “They shall call his name Emmanuel, which *being interpreted* is, God with us” (Mat 1:23). And again, “We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”—margin, “the Anointed” (Joh 1:41). Again, “And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull” (Mar 15:22). Yet again, “Melchisedec, king of Salem...first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace” (Heb 7:1-2). Those expressions make it clear that it is essential that we should understand the sense of each word used in the Scriptures. God’s Word is made up of words, yet they convey nothing to us while they remain unintelligible. Hence, to ascertain the precise import of what we read should be our first concern.

Before setting forth some of the rules to be observed and the principles to be employed in the interpretation of Scripture, we would point out various things which *require to be found in the would-be interpreter himself*. Good tools are indeed indispensable for good workmanship, but the best of them are to little purpose in the hands of one who is unqualified to use them. Methods of Bible study are only of relative importance, but the *spirit* in which it is studied is all important. It calls for no argument to prove that a spiritual book calls for a spiritually-minded reader, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). God’s Word is a revelation of things which affect our highest interests and everlasting welfare, and it demands both implicit and cordial acceptance. Something more than intellectual training is required: the heart must be right as well as the head. Only where there is honesty of soul and spirituality of heart will there be clearness of vision to perceive the truth. Only then will the mind be capable of discerning the full import of what is read, and understand not only the bare meaning of its words, but the sentiments they are designed to convey—and a suitable response be made by us.

We will repeat here what we wrote in this magazine twenty years ago: “There is grave reason to believe that much Bible reading and Bible study of the last few years has been of no spiritual profit to those engaged in it. Yea, we go farther: we greatly fear that in many instances, it has proved a curse rather than a blessing. This is strong language, we are well aware, but no stronger than the case calls for. Divine gifts may be misused, and divine mercies abused. That this has been so in the present instance is evidenced by the fruits produced. Even the natural man can (and often does) take up the study of the Scriptures with the same enthusiasm and pleasure as he might one of the sciences. Where this is the case, his store of knowledge is increased, and so also is his pride. Like a chemist engaged in making interesting experiments, the intellectual searcher of the Word is quite elated when he makes some new discovery; yet the joy of the latter is no more spiritual than would be that of the former. So, too, just as the success of the chemist generally increases his sense of self-importance and causes him to look down upon those more ignorant than himself, such, alas, has been the case with those who have investigated the subjects of Bible numeric, typology, prophecy, etc.”

Since the imagination of man—like all the other faculties of his moral being—is permeated and vitiated⁴¹ by sin, the ideas it suggests, even when pondering the divine oracles, are prone to be mistaken and corrupt. It is part of our sinful infirmity that we are unable of ourselves to interpret God’s Word aright; but it is part of the gracious office of the Holy Spirit to guide believers into the truth, thereby enabling them to apprehend the Scriptures. This is a distinct and special operation of the Spirit on the minds of God’s people, whereby He communicates spiritual wisdom and light unto them, and which is necessary unto their discerning aright the mind of God in His Word, and also their laying hold of the heavenly things found therein. “A distinct operation” we say, by which we mean something *ab extra* or over and above His initial work of quickening; for while it be a blessed fact that at regeneration, He has “given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1Jo 5:20), yet more is needed in order for us to “know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1Co 2:12). This is evident from the case of the apostles, for though they had companied and communed with Christ for the space of three years, yet we are informed that, at a later date, “Then opened he their understanding, that they *might understand* the scriptures” (Luk 24:45).

How what has been just alluded to should impress the Christian himself with the need for holy caution when reading the Word, lest he wrest its contents unto his own injury! How it should humble him before its Author and make him realize his utter dependence upon Him! If the new birth *were* sufficient of itself to capacitate the believer to grasp divine things, the apostle had never made request for the Colossian saints that they “*might be* filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9); nor would he have said to his son in the faith, “the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2Ti 2:7). There never was a more foolish notion or pernicious idea entertained than that the holy mysteries of the Gospel so lie within the province of human reason that they may be known profitably and practically without the effectual aid of the blessed Spirit of truth. Not that He instructs us in any other way than by and through our reason and understanding, for then we should be reduced to irrational creatures; but that He must enlighten our minds, elevate and direct our thoughts, quicken our affections, move our wills, and thereby enable our understandings, if we are to apprehend spiritual things.

Nor does the Holy Spirit’s teaching of the individual Christian by any means set aside or render him independent of making diligent and conscientious use of the ministry of the pulpit, for that is an important means appointed by God for the edifying of His people. There is a happy me-

⁴¹ **vitiated** – made ineffective.

dium between the attitude of the Ethiopian eunuch who, when asked, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” replied, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Act 8:30-31), and the wrong use made of “Ye need not that any man teach you” (1Jo 2:27)—between a slavish reliance upon human instruments and a haughty independence of those whom Christ has called and qualified to feed His sheep. “Yet is not their understanding of the truth, their apprehension of it, and faith in it, to rest upon or to be resolved into *their* authority, who are not appointed of God to be ‘lords of their faith’ but ‘helpers of [their] joy’ (2Co 1:24). And therein depends all our interest in that great promise that we shall be ‘all taught of God’ (Joh 6:45), for we are not so, unless we do learn from Him those things which He has revealed in His Word”—John Owen (1616-1683).

“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa 54:13; cp. Joh 6:45). This is one of the great distinguishing marks of the regenerate. There are multitudes of unregenerate religionists who are well versed in the letter of Scripture, thoroughly acquainted with the history and the doctrines of Christianity, but their knowledge came only from *human* media—parents, Sunday school teachers, or their personal reading. Tens of thousands of graceless professors possess an intellectual knowledge of spiritual things which is considerable, sound, and clear; yet they are not divinely taught, as is evident from the absence of the fruits which ever accompany the same. In like manner, there are a great number of preachers who abhor the errors of Modernism and contend earnestly for the faith. They were taught in Bible institutes or trained in theological seminaries, yet it is greatly to be feared that they are total strangers to a supernatural work of grace in their souls, and that their knowledge of the truth is but a notional one, unaccompanied by any heavenly unction, saving power, or transforming effects. By diligent application and personal effort, one may secure a vast amount of scriptural information and become an able expositor of the Word, but he cannot obtain thereby a heart-affecting and heart-purifying knowledge thereof. None but the Spirit of truth can write God’s Law on my heart, stamp His image on my soul, sanctify me by the truth.

Here, then, is the first and most essential qualification for understanding and interpreting the Scriptures, namely *a mind illumined by the Holy Spirit*. The need for this is fundamental and universal. Of the Jews we are told, “But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart” (2Co 3:15). Though the Old Testament be deeply venerated and diligently studied by the “orthodox” section, yet is its spiritual purport unperceived by them. Such also is the case with the Gentiles. There is a veil of *ill-will* over the heart of fallen man, for “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). There is a veil of *ignorance* over the mind. As a child may spell out the letters and learn to pronounce words the sense of which he apprehends not, so we may ascertain the literal or grammatical meaning of this Word and yet have no spiritual knowledge of it; and thus belong to that generation of whom it is said, “By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive” (Mat 13:14). There is a veil of *prejudice* over the affections. “Our hearts are overcast with strong affections of the world, and so cannot clearly judge practical truth”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). That which conflicts with natural interests and calls for the denying of self is unwelcome. There is a veil of *pride* which effectually prevents us seeing ourselves in the mirror of the Word.

Now, that veil is not completely removed from the heart at regeneration; hence, our vision is yet very imperfect, and our capacity to take in the truth unto spiritual profit is very inconsiderable. In his first epistle to the Corinthian church, the apostle said, “And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1Co 8:2). It is a great mercy when the Christian is made to realize that fact. So long as he remains in this evil world and the corrupt principle of the flesh continues in him, the believer needs to be led and taught by the Spir-

it. This is very evident from the case of David, for while he declared, “I have more understanding than all my teachers” (Psa 119:99), yet we find him praying to God, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law...Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes...Give me understanding” (Psa 119:18, 33-34). Observe that the Psalmist did not complain at the obscurity of God’s Law, but realized the fault was in himself. Nor did he make request for new revelations (by dreams or visions), but instead for a clearer sight of what was already revealed. Those who are the best and longest taught are always readiest to sit at the feet of Christ and learn of Him (Luk 10:39).

It is to be duly noted that the verb in Psalm 119:18 literally signifies, “uncover, unveil mine eyes,” which confirms our opening sentence in the last paragraph. God’s Word is a spiritual light, objectively; but to discern it aright, there needs to be sight or light, subjectively—for it is only by and in His light that “we see light” (Psa 36:9). The Bible is here termed God’s Law, because it is clothed with divine authority, uttering the mandates of His will. It contains not so much good advice, which we are free to accept at our pleasure, but imperious edicts which we reject at our peril. In that Word are “wondrous things” (Psa 119:18), which, by the use of mere reason, we cannot attain unto. They are the riches of divine wisdom, which are far above the compass of man’s intellect. Those “wondrous things” the believer longs to behold or clearly discern, yet is he quite unable to do so without divine assistance. Therefore, he prays that God will so unveil his eyes that he may behold them to good purpose, or apprehend them unto faith and obedience, i.e., understand them practically and experientially in the way of duty.

“Behold, God exalteth [elevates the soul above the merely natural] by his power: who teacheth like him?” (Job 36:22). None; when He instructs, He does so effectually. “I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go” (Isa 48:17)—*that* is what His “teaching” consists of, a producing of pious conduct. It is not merely an addition being made unto our mental store, but a bestirring of the soul unto holy activity. The light which *He* imparts warms the heart and fires the affections. So far from puffing up its recipient, as natural knowledge does, it humbles. It reveals to us our ignorance and stupidity, shows us our sinfulness and worthlessness, and makes the believer little in his own eyes. The Spirit’s teaching also gives us clearly to see the utter vanity of the things highly esteemed by the unregenerate, showing us the transitoriness and comparative worthlessness of earthly honours, riches, and fame, causing us to hold all temporal things with a light hand. The knowledge which God imparts is a *transforming* one, making us to lay aside hindering weights (Heb 12:1), to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Ti 2:12). “Beholding...the glory of the Lord,” we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18).

The very character of divine teaching demonstrates how urgent is our need of the same. It consists very largely in overcoming our native antipathy for and hostility to divine things. By nature, we have a love of sin and hatred of holiness (Joh 3:19), and that must be effectually subdued by the power of the Spirit ere we desire the pure milk of the Word—observe what has to be laid aside before we can receive with meekness the ingrafted Word (Jam 1:21; 1Pe 2:1). Though it be *our* duty, only *He* can enable us to perform it. By nature, we are proud and independent, self-sufficient, and confident in our own powers. That evil spirit clings to the Christian unto the end of his pilgrimage, and only the Spirit of God can work in him that humility and meekness which are requisite if he is to take the place of a little child before the Word. The love of honour and praise among men is another corrupt affection of our souls, an insuperable obstacle to the admission of the truth (Joh 5:44; 12:43), which has to be purged out of us. The fierce and persistent opposition

made by Satan to prevent our apprehension of the Word (Mat 13:19; 2Co 4:4) is far too powerful for us to resist in our own strength; none but the Lord can deliver us from his evil suggestions and expose his lying sophistries.⁴²

Second, an impartial spirit is required if we are to discern and apprehend the real teaching of Holy Writ. Nothing more beclouds the judgment than prejudice; none so blind as those who will not see. Particularly is that the case with all who come to the Bible with the object of finding passages which prove “our doctrines.” An honest heart is the first quality the Lord predicated of the good-ground hearer (Luk 8:15); and where *that* exists, we are not only willing, but desirous, to have our own views corrected. There can be no advance made in our spiritual apprehension of the truth until we are ready to submit our ideas and sentiments unto the teaching of God’s Word. While we cling to our preconceived opinions and sectarian partialities, instead of being ready to abandon all beliefs not clearly taught in Scripture, neither praying or studying can profit the soul. There is nothing which God hates more than insincerity; and we are guilty thereof if, while asking Him to instruct us, we at the same time refuse to relinquish what is erroneous. A thirst for the truth itself, with a candid determination for it to mould all our thinking and direct our practice, is indispensable if we are to be spiritually enlightened.

Third, a humble mind. “This is an eternal and unalterable law of God’s appointment, that whoever will learn His mind and will, as revealed in Scripture, must be humble and lowly, renouncing all trust and confidence in themselves. The knowledge of a proud man is the throne of Satan in his mind. To suppose that persons under the predominancy of pride, self-conceit, and self-confidence can understand the mind of God in a due manner is to renounce the Scripture, or innumerable positive testimonies to the contrary”—J. Owen. The Lord Jesus declared that heavenly mysteries are hid from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes (Mat 11:25). Those who assume an attitude of competency, and are wise in their own esteem, remain spiritually ignorant and unenlightened. Whatever knowledge men may acquire by their natural abilities and industry is nothing unto the glory of God, nor to the eternal gain of their souls, for the Spirit refuses to instruct the haughty. “God resisteth the proud” (Jam 4:6)—“He draws up against him, He prepares Himself, as it were, with His whole force to oppose his progress. A most formidable expression! If God only leaves us unto ourselves, we are all ignorance and darkness; so what must be the dreadful case of those against whom He appears in arms?”—John Newton (1725-1807). But, blessed be His name, He “giveth grace unto the humble”—those of a childlike disposition.

Fourth, a praying heart. Since the Bible be different from all other books, it makes demands upon its readers which none other does. What one man has written, another man can master; but only the Inspirer of the Word is competent to interpret it unto us. It is at this very point that so many fail. They approach the Bible as they would any other book, relying on a closeness of attention and diligence of perusal to understand its contents. We must first get down on our knees and cry unto God for light: “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies...give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments...Order my steps in thy word” (Psa 119:36, 73, 133). No real progress can be made in our apprehension of the truth until we realize our deep and constant need of a divinely anointed eye. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally” (Jam 1:5). It is because they make use of that promise that many a Christian ploughman and simple housewife is taught of the Spirit, while prayerless scholars know not the secret of the Lord. Not only do we need to pray “that which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32), but request God to write His Word on our hearts (2Co 3:3).

⁴² **sophistries** – elaborate and devious argumentations.

Fifth, a holy design. Many are deceived in this matter, mistaking an eagerness to acquire scriptural knowledge for a love of the truth itself. Inquisitiveness to discover what the Bible says is why some read it. A sense of shame to be unable to discover its teaching prompts others. The desire to be familiar with its contents so as to hold their own in an argument moves still others. If it be nothing better than a mere desire to be well versed in its details which causes us to read the Bible, it is more than likely that the garden of our souls will remain barren. The inspiring motive should be *honestly examined*. Do I search the Scriptures in order to become better acquainted with their Author and His will for me? Is the dominating purpose which actuates me that I may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord (2Pe 3:18)? Is it that I may ascertain more clearly and fully how I should order the details of my life, so that it will be more pleasing and honouring to Him? Is it that I may be brought into a closer walking with God and the enjoyment of more unbroken communion with Him? Nothing less is a worthy aim than that I may be conformed to and transformed by its holy teaching.

In this article, we have dealt only with the elementary side of our subject—nevertheless, of what is of basic importance and which few attend unto. Even in the palmy⁴³ days of the Puritans, John Owen had to complain, “The number is very small of those who diligently, humbly, and conscientiously endeavour to learn the truth from the voice of God in the Scriptures, or to grow wise in the mysteries of the Gospel, by such ways as wherein alone that wisdom is attainable. And is it any wonder if many, the greater number of men, wander after vain imaginations of their own or others?” May it not be so with those who read this article.

⁴³ **palmy** – prosperous; flourishing.

October

LAUGHTER

There are some who, if they do not look upon laughter as being actually sinful, certainly regard it as most unbecoming in a child of God. Personally, we do not agree with such a concept, though we are far from being advocates of frivolity and lightness in a saint. It is said, on good authority, that there are more than one hundred muscles in the face which are never exercised except by a hearty laugh. If, then, it be wrong to do so, why did the Creator place those muscles there? But we are not left to form our own opinion or indulge in speculation on the subject, for God's Word plainly avers⁴⁴ there is "a time to laugh" (Ecc 3:4), which shows that on certain occasions it is both right and proper to do so. Yet since those words are preceded by "a time to weep," we learn there is a balance to be preserved there too. No doubt a person's temperament has not a little to do with it, for some are more emotional and demonstrative than others. So, too, have our circumstances and experiences: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance" (Pro 15:13). How close is the sympathy between the soul and the body, though composed of such different elements! A man's countenance is normally the index of his spirit. If the spirit be oppressed, sadness will be reflected in the face; but if the heart be joyful, our features will reveal it.

"Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed" (Gen 17:17). The occasion was a noteworthy one. More than twenty years had passed since the Lord said unto the patriarch "unto thy seed will I give this land," and the only child he had was Ishmael by Hagar. He was then almost a hundred years old, and his wife not much younger. But now God appeared unto him again and declared, "I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her." Blessed is it to behold his reactions to that startling announcement, and to note the double response which he made thereto. First, Abraham "fell on his face": he prostrated himself before the Lord in reverential worship, which teaches us that the higher the favour which God bestows upon us, the lower is the place we should take before Him. Second, "he laughed" or gave vent to his joyful gratitude. In the light of Romans 4:19-22, it is clear that his was the laughter of *faith*. Refusing to consider the formidable obstacles which to sight and reason stood in the way of the fulfillment of the divine promise, he counted upon God's sufficiency, and gave Him glory. His laughter was that of delight and hope, or confident expectation, for it was not the joy of fruition, but of expectation. Nor was it merely the joy of having a son, but because therein he would receive an earnest of Messiah's advent, for it was then that by faith and hope, he saw Christ's day "and was glad" (Joh 8:56).

⁴⁴ **avers** – declares to be true.

“Therefore Sarah laughed within herself” (Gen 18:12) when she heard the angels renewing God’s promise unto her husband. This points a marked contrast with what we have just looked at, and shows how one believer differs from another, even when the bond of union between them is a most intimate one. Instead of believing God and relying upon His omnipotence, she was occupied with the apparent impossibility of the thing promised, dwelling upon the fact that she was now many years past the age of child bearing. She deemed it something incredible, as being contrary to nature, and therefore unbelief rather than faith was exercised by her. Thus hers was the laughter of *doubting and distrust*. Well did Martin Luther (1483-1546) point out, “If you would believe, you must crucify the question ‘how?’” Because her laughter was from weakness and not from scorn, the Lord smote her not, as He did Zacharias (Luk 1:20). But even though God did not quench the smoking flax, He rebuked her, asking, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” Yet instead of acknowledging her fault, she denied it—so reluctant is the believer to confess his sins. But later, as it is blessed to learn, her confidence in God was renewed, for we are told, “Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb 11:11). Thus, though faith ultimately triumphed over unbelief, yet in her case it did not act so promptly as Abraham’s.

“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep” (Luk 6:25). The laughter which Christ here denounced was no mere facial one, but a state of heart which lived only for the present, and had no serious concern for the future. It was His censure of those who go giddily and gaily along the broad road that leads to destruction (Mat 7:13). In the light of the immediate context, the reference is to those who rejoiced in the abundance of their worldly possessions, and found their delight in making gods of their bellies. But the words will warrant-ably admit of a wider application, taking in all those who make a trade of any form of self-gratification and self-jollification. This then is the laughter of *insecurity*, for the pleasures of sin are but “for a season,” and a very brief one at that. This is but a sensual laughter or joy, which issues in endless grief, unless they heed that injunction, “let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (Jam 4:9). If your joy gives place to godly sorrow, it will result in that which no earthly possessions or outward comforts can supply; namely, serenity of mind and contentment of heart. “The end of *that* mirth is heaviness” (Pro 14:13), the outcome of *this* sorrow is “salvation not to be repented of” (2Co 7:10).

There is a natural laughter, which is innocent and harmless; a carnal laughter, which is sinful and injurious; a spiritual laughter, which is God-pleasing and beneficial. There is also a divine laughter, which is terrible and disastrous. To such David referred: “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh” (Psa 2:4), which is the laughter of *derision* against those who think to defy Him with impunity. And again God says, “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Pro 1:26), which is the laughter of divine *retribution*. He has “called”—by His Word, His providences, His ministers, and their own consciences—but they “refused” to heed Him. They were neither melted by the abundance of His mercies nor awed by the terribleness of His threats. They respected not His Law, and had no heart for His Gospel. But though He bears with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, He has appointed a day when they shall be made to reap as they have sown. As they scorned His messengers when they warned of the wrath to come, so shall He turn a deaf ear then to their cries for mercy, and righteously laugh at their calamity. Oh, that none our readers may ever be the objects of it.

“I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?” (Ecc 2:2). Those were the words of one who was granted the opportunity and afforded the means, of gratifying every carnal desire and of obtaining every object which the natural heart and eye can covet—only to prove from ex-

perience that all were but “vanity and vexation of spirit.” There is no real or lasting happiness in anything which money can purchase. The void within the human heart cannot be filled by the objects of time and sense. For one to pursue the shadows and miss the substance; to devote himself to the things which perish with the using, yet be indifferent to those which are eternal; to seek his delight in gratifying the lusts of the flesh and neglect the welfare of his soul, is naught but a species of insanity. “For as the crackling of thorns under a pot [noisy, but of brief duration], so is the laughter of the fool” (Ecc 7:6).

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn” (Psa 22:7). This is one of many instances where the word “all” in Scripture cannot be taken absolutely, for certainly Christ’s mother, the women who accompanied her to the cross, and the beloved John who beheld Him there, are to be excluded. Rather does it signify “all” *classes*: not only the Roman soldiers who jeered at the Saviour, but the Jews as well; and not merely the common rabble, but the chief priests and scribes, elders, and rulers—they now rejoiced in their success and were loudest in reviling Him. The blasphemous ridicule of our blessed Lord was general: all kinds of men were unanimous in their wicked laughter, and vied with each other in insulting Him. So far were they from pitying Him, they added to His afflictions with their ribaldry, making jest of His very sufferings. Horrid humanity! Fearful impiety! None should ever doubt the total depravity of man, as they see here to what unspeakable depths of iniquity he sinks when the restraining hand of God is removed from him. The spectator of the dying Redeemer’s agonies exerted the utmost of the venom of their hearts upon Him. *Diabolical* laughter was this.

“When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter” (Psa 126:1-2). The return of the Jews to Jerusalem was the fulfillment of God’s promises through the prophets and the answer to the prayer of Psalm 106:47. It had been effected in such an extraordinary manner and so suddenly (Ezr 1:1-6) that it seemed more like a pleasant dream than a reality. They were overwhelmed with gladness, theirs being the laughter of *joy*. As good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714) says, “Providence piped to them, and they danced.” In its spiritual application, this finds its fulfillment in the hour of conversion, when the heart is made to rejoice “with joy unspeakable.” Likewise when a believer is recovered from a season of backsliding, and the spirit of heaviness is displaced by the garment of praise. Corporately, when the churches are granted a time of reviving after a season of deadness, such as obtained in the days of Whitefield (1714-1770) and may yet in ours.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

10. Walking in the Light (1:7)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Our present verse, especially its closing portion, is probably the best known and most frequently quoted in all the epistle, yet our familiarity with its language is no proof that we rightly understand its meaning, still less that it calls for no careful study and prayerful pondering. It is only when we come to inquire closely into its terms and the relation of one clause to another that we discover the verse is not quite so obvious and simple as we thought. As it be slowly and thoughtfully examined, the following questions suggest themselves and call for answer:

Why is this statement made in the hypothetical form—"but if"?

What is signified by "walking in the light"?

How are we to understand the amplifying "as He is in the light"?

Who is the "one with another" between whom there is fellowship?

Is the "cleansing" here judicial or experimental,⁴⁵ or does it include both justification and sanctification?

Does the present tense "cleanseth" oblige us to regard it as a process?

What is the exact relation of the final clause to the preceding ones—is the "cleansing" conditional upon our "walking in the light"?

It should be obvious to any careful reader that several of these questions can only be satisfactorily answered by pondering the two verses which immediately precede our text. If it be detached therefrom, we are likely to misapprehend both its force and its terms. We shall, therefore, quote the same (1:5-7):

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Those three verses are, in turn, an amplification of "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (verse 3). There the general fact was stated; here details are entered into. First, the essential nature or character of the One with whom fellowship is enjoyed is described. Then we are shown the characters of those who are debarred from such a privilege. Here we are informed who are the ones that have fellowship with God, and how that fellowship is established and maintained.

"But if..."

Such is the transcendent excellency of God that none can hold converse or have fellowship with Him save those who are partakers of His nature and are being conformed unto His holy image. "If, therefore, our conversation be in darkness; if we wallow in the mire of untamed, unmortified lust, whatever our evangelical profession may be, or howsoever we may fancy ourselves entered into a fellowship with the Father by the means of the Mediator, it is but a lying imagination—for how can there be communion between two natures so different, between light and darkness, purity and impurity, heaven and hell, God and the devil? But if our conversation [manner of life] be agreeable to Gospel precepts, we have then fellowship with Him" (Charnock).⁴⁶ Here then

⁴⁵ **experimental** – through personal experience; experiential.

⁴⁶ **Stephen Charnock** (1628-1680) – Puritan divine, English Puritan Presbyterian clergyman, born in London. He studied at Cambridge, ministered in Southwark, and then completed his studies at Oxford. In Ireland in 1656 he became

is the reason why verse 7 opens with the word “but”—because it presents a contrast with those described in the preceding one. Here, too, is the answer to our first question above: both verses are introduced by an “if” because it is the testing of profession which is in view: in the former, it is shown to be worthless, false; in the latter, genuine and valid. By it each reader should honestly measure himself.

The particular characters set over against each other in verses 6 and 7 are the same as those referred to in John 3:19-21 by Christ: evil-doers who hate the light; truth-doers who welcome it—with the latter there is a concord between profession and performance, with all its blessed consequences. “In the context the apostle speaketh of communion with God. Now communion with God we cannot have till we be reconciled to Him by Christ, and none can be looked upon as reconciled to Him by Christ but those that endeavour conformity to God in purity and holiness” (Manton).⁴⁷ In verse 6 the hypocrite is exposed and condemned; in verse 7 the real Christian is identified and confirmed. He furnishes evidence that he is in fellowship with God and has a saving interest in the cleansing blood of Christ, and *that* by the character of his walk. Thus the “if” is used in our present verse, as in the foregoing, to substantiate the truth contained in the assertion. So far from weakening the statement or rendering it doubtful, it makes it more positive and unequivocal—that is why instead of saying “ye,” the apostle employed “we,” thereby including himself. “There can be no walking with God, who is light, but as we renounce and avoid every false way; and walk in truth, in the light of it, and under the sacred energy of the same” (S.E. Pierce, 1746-1829).

“Walking in the light”

Coming now to our second question, What is signified by “walking in the light?” There is less need for us to dwell at length upon this, since we entered so fully in our last upon walking in darkness. First, it necessarily presupposes regeneration, for certainly one cannot walk in the light unless he first be in the light, and this none are until they be born again. Then they are effectually called and brought “out of darkness into God’s marvelous light” (1Pe 2:9). Then they are made “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8), and therefore is it said of them, “Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness” (1Th 5:5). But, second, they give proof of this by acting accordingly, just as those who “are darkness” love darkness, walk in darkness, and produce “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:11). Thus to “walk in the light” imports much more than the sphere in which the believer lives; namely, the manner in which he conducts himself there. He is not only in the light positionally, but he walks in it practically. In other words, his external conduct reflects his internal condition. As his character corresponds to the nature of God, so his character is exhibited by his conduct. The tree is known by its fruits.

There is a light to which the Christian is journeying—the realm of unclouded glory (Pro 4:18; Col 1:12). There is a light by which he walks—that of God’s Word (Psa 119:105; Pro 6:23). There is also a light in which he walks—the highway of holiness (Joh 8:12). To “walk” connotes

chaplain to the governor. He became widely known for the skill by which he discharged his duties. He began a co-pastorship at Crosby Hall in London in 1675. He is best known for his work, *The Attributes of God*.

⁴⁷ **Thomas Manton** (1620-1677) – Nonconformist Puritan preacher. Graduated from Oxford and preached until forbidden by the Act of Uniformity of 1662. From 1662 to 1670 he preached in his own house, but was finally arrested and imprisoned for six months. Subsequently became preacher for London merchants in Pinners’ Hall. James Ussher called him “one of the best preachers in England.” Appointed as one of three clerks at the Westminster Assembly. Born in Lawrence-Lydiat, county of Somerset, England.

not an occasional step, but an habitual course. A person's "walk" is a figurative expression which signifies the general tenor of his life. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psa 1:1)—whose ways and works are not regulated by carnal policy and self's interests. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2Co 5:7)—with our hearts engaged with the perfection of an invisible God and our wills subjected to His. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Again, to "walk in the light" is to live in separation from the world, with our affections set upon things above, laying up our treasure there. Darkness is the principle which actuates and governs the world, for it is inveterately opposed to the Father (1Jo 2:16), and he who will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (Jam 4:4). Thus it is clear that the fellowship with God estranges its subjects from the world. The Christian belongs to another sphere and manifests it by his deportment.

We must be careful not to restrict the idea of "walking in the light" unto our external actions. God ever looks first upon the heart and desires truth "in the inward parts" (Psa 51:6). He will not tolerate dishonesty and cannot be imposed upon by any species of deception. The Holy One allows neither insincerity nor concealment from those with whom He communes. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed, and there is a radical lack of agreement if we distrust God or hide anything from Him. Light is clear and transparent, and to walk in it means that we are open and candid with Him. There must be complete frankness in all of our dealings with God. If I turn a blind eye to something suspicious in myself, or shrink from meeting a brother or fellow creature because I have an uneasy feeling that he has just cause of complaint against me, then I am seeking shelter from the darkness. But if I genuinely desire that my secret sins should be discovered to me, if I daily measure myself by God's pure truth and judge myself in the light of His holiness, if I sincerely pray "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Psa 139:23-24), then do I truly love the light and hate all shams.

["But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light."](#)

The apostle explains what he intends in the first clause by drawing an illustration from the One who is Himself light and dwells in eternal purity and glory. The self-same Model is here presented to us by the apostle as his Master set before him and his fellows: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Mat 5:48). Nothing short of absolute perfection is the standard at which we ever must aim. But does not our present verse speak of something more than aim—even actual realization? Certainly. Yet it is that of likeness and not of sameness; or, rather, not of sameness in degree. As John Trapp (1611-1669) so well expressed it, "We walk in the light as God is in the light for quality, but not for equality." We are indeed being conformed to His image, and bear His likeness, yet fall very short of His stature. As Spurgeon (1834-1892) pointed out, "I can walk in the light of the sun, though I cannot dwell in it; and I can walk in the light as God is in the light, though I cannot attain to the same measure of excellence, purity, and truth in which the Lord Himself resides."

["We have fellowship one with another."](#)

It strikes the writer as passing strange that any Christian should have difficulty with those words. In view of the ones immediately preceding, surely their meaning is plain. If we be walking

in the light as God is in the light, it follows as a certain fact that we have fellowship with Him and He with us. We are one with Him in nature, in love of the truth, in delighting in holiness. Those who are born of God are as truly attracted unto Him as the babe is to its mother. If we be walking with God, then His secret is with us (Psa 25:14) and our secret is with Him. He opens His heart to us, and we open our hearts to Him. He sups with us, and we with Him (Rev 3:20). Yet our fellowship with God is neither perfect nor constant in this life, any more than our walk is. A godly walk both fits us for, and evidences we are in, communion with God. The previous verse, where the opposite is stated, removes all uncertainty: “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie...But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.”

“Cleansing”: judicial or experimental?

“*And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son [namely, the Son of Him with whom we have fellowship] cleanseth us from all sin.*” Cleansing from sin is a sacrificial term, which can best be understood in the light of the Old Testament types, particularly that of Leviticus 16:30, “For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins.” That cleansing was effected by the shedding of blood. It was in nowise subjective, or something wrought within them, but instead a work done *for* them. It was not a matter of purifying their hearts, but of annulling their guilt and putting away their sins judicially from “before the Lord.” The blood of atonement not only propitiated God, it purged the people—freed them from God’s wrath, rendered them meet to worship Him. Again, in Numbers 35:31-33, we read of Israel’s land being “cleansed” by the penalty of the Law being enforced and guilt thereby expiated.⁴⁸ The “land” signifies the people who resided there; when the claims of divine justice and holiness had been met, sin was not imputed or charged to them.

Though the blessings of justification and sanctification ever accompany each other, yet they must not be confounded, but considered distinctly. Justification has to do wholly with the legal side of our salvation. It consists of absolution from our sins, and being declared righteous by God on account of the perfect obedience of Christ being reckoned to the believer. Sanctification has to do more with the experiential and practical side, the fitting or rendering us meet⁴⁹ for God’s presence, and where that is in view, the operations of the Spirit and the water of the Word are mentioned. That, too, is equally a fruit of the redemptive work of Christ, which procured for His people the gift of the Spirit. But what we have here in our text is judicial only. First, because as a fact no believer is cleansed from all sin in this life in any other way. Second, because the cleansing is by blood, and that always respects the objective side of things: see Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5.

“*When he had by himself purged [or “made a cleansing of ”] our sins*” (Heb 1:3, and cf. 9:26). It is the blood which gives us title to enter into the holiest (Heb 10:19)—“sanctified” by blood occurs only in Hebrews 10:10; 13:12, in its sacrificial sense, of setting us apart before God in all the acceptableness of Christ’s perfect oblation.

If the cleansing be a judicial one, relating to our justification, why is it spoken of in the present tense?

⁴⁸ **expiated** – wiped out.

⁴⁹ **meet** – fit; suitable.

First, to set forth the eternal efficacy of Christ's blood, which may be considered distinctly as shed, as pleaded, and as applied or sprinkled (1Pe 1:2). As Charnock so well put it, "The blood of Christ cleanseth, not hath cleansed or shall cleanse. This denotes a continued act. There is a perpetual pleading of it for us, a continual flowing of it to us. It is a fountain set open for sin (Zec 13:1). There is a perpetual stream of virtue from this blood, as there is of corruption from our nature. It was shed but once, but it is applied often, and the virtue of it is as durable as the Person whose blood it is." We do not immediately enter into the whole good of Christ's redemption at the hour of conversion (Rom 8:23). As there are blessings procured for us by Christ that await us in the future, so there are others which are received by us gradually in this life. Our cleansing is one of them. Sin ever defiles, no matter who commits it. Some say, Though God sees sin in His children, He no longer sees sin *on* them. But He does, and deals with them accordingly. He no longer imputes it to their eternal condemnation, but He notices it to their temporal chastisement (Psa 89:30-33).

Second, our cleansing, even judicially, is in fact continual. This is denied by some on the ground that it is dishonouring to the sacrifice of Christ, bringing it down to those offered under the Law, which produced only a temporary remission. But such an objection is pointless. It is true that at conversion all our previous iniquities are blotted out, but to speak of God's forgiving us our future sins before they are committed is senseless; "having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col 2:13) is quoted by these Antinomians,⁵⁰ but that refers to all pre-conversion ones, or, as 2 Peter 1:9 styles them, "purged from his old sins." Until fresh sins are committed, further guilt accrues not, and therefore cannot be removed until it is there. We will say nothing further upon this point now, as it will come before us again (D.V.)⁵¹ when considering the ninth verse. Rather let us thank God that the cleansing blood is ever available for sinful creatures, and plead it in all our approaches unto Him. Christ's blood is called "a new way" in Hebrews 10:20, and the word signifies "newly slain"—as suited to us today as when shed on the cross.

"And the blood...cleanseth us from all sin."

When taking up the second half of our verse, honest Spurgeon said, "I have been driven to this text, and yet I have been afraid of it." After pointing out that it had very often been handled out of its connection, he added the following.

"I do feel that it is essential to the Christian ministry not to pick passages out of God's Word and rend them away from the context, but to take them as they stand. God's Word must be taken as God speaks it: we have no right to divide the living child of divine truth and detach the second half of our verse from the first half, or wrest it to make it mean other than it does. According to the text, special pardon of sin is the peculiar privilege of those who walk in the light as God is in the light; but it is not the privilege of anyone else. Only those who have been brought by divine grace from a state of nature into a state of grace, and walk in the light, may claim the possession of perfect cleansing through the blood of Christ."

Manton, too, wavered in determining whether our walk in the light is an evidence of a saving interest in Christ's blood or necessary thereunto, and declared, "It is best to say, It is both a sign and a condition without which we cannot have benefit by Christ's death; but the first condition is faith; next, love and holiness, to continue our interest in this privilege."

⁵⁰ **Antinomian** – from the Greek *anti* - against, and *nomos* - law; antinomian basically means "against law." It generally means one who holds the theological view that God's Law has no place in the life of a believer.

⁵¹ **D.V.** – Latin: *Deo Volenti*, literally "as God wills."

In the first three verses John testified that the apostles had fellowship with the Father and His Son, and declared this in order that “*ye also may have fellowship with us.*” But who are the “ye?” The children of God, those redeemed by Christ. But how are such to be identified? In verses 6 and 7 he tells us: not every one who professes to participate in this privilege, but those whose practice accords with their profession. Thus, in the clear light of the whole context, the *first* design of John in here linking together walking in the light and cleansing by the blood is to assure the hearts of believers: they may know their interest in the latter by their sincere endeavours after a more constant subjection to the truth and a closer fellowship with God. As Charnock said, mutual fellowship between God and us “is a certain proof that we are interested in the expiatory virtue of the blood of Christ.”

Second, it is intended to humble us. Our walking in separation from the world and enjoying fellowship with God is no ground for boasting, for they are impossible apart from Christ’s sacrifice—we owe them to His blood, and are here reminded of our complete dependence upon it.

But, *third*, the second half of the verse is brought in for our instruction. “Nothing is said about Christian experience as a means of cleansing. What, says one, do not the first sentences of the verse imply that? Assuredly not. If I walk in the light as God is in the light, what then? Does my walking in the light take away my sins? Not at all. I am as much a sinner in the light as in the darkness, if it were possible for me to be in the light without first being washed in the blood. Well, but we have fellowship with God, and does not that take away sin? Beloved, do not misunderstand me. No man can have fellowship with God unless sin be taken away; but his fellowship with God does not take away his sin—not at all. The whole process of the removal of sin is here: the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin. I beg to repeat: neither our walking in the light, nor having fellowship with God, cleanses us from sin: these go with the cleansing, but they have no connection as cause and results.” (Spurgeon).

Fourth, the closing words of our text are designed for the comfort of the Christian. The more he walks in the light, the more are the hidden things of darkness (the corruption of his heart) revealed and exposed. The greater the sinner he comes to perceive himself, the more highly he prizes the atoning and cleansing blood of Christ, and the more completely does he rest his soul on its sufficiency and plead its virtues before God. Likewise, the closer he be admitted into fellowship with God, the more conscious does he become of those things in his heart and life which are out of harmony therewith, and beg Him for Christ’s sake to enable him to mortify and put them away. And when painfully aware that sinful conduct has broken his fellowship, he mourns over the same, acknowledges it to God, and betakes himself again to that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, that the hindering cause may be removed and communion restored. The farther a Christian proceeds on the path of holiness, the viler he becomes in his own eyes, and the deeper his appreciation of Christ’s sacrifice.

Our present verse emphasizes the enormity of sin: so exceedingly sinful is it that the blood of God’s Son must be shed in order for its removal. It teaches us the defiling effects of sin: it pollutes and renders us filthy. Then let us never think lightly of it, for naught but the blood of Christ can remove its horrible stains. Here too we behold the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement: it has made satisfaction unto God both for our original and personal sins. No sin a Christian ever commits is too black or crimson for it to be blotted out. The precious blood of Christ is of enduring virtue and perpetual efficacy—ever available for the befouled believer. But faith must lay hold of it, and there must be a return to walking in the light, in order to be sprinkled from an evil conscience. “Walk in the light because we are cleansed from our sin; but we are also cleansed from our sin because we walk in the light” (Levi Palmer).

Our title for a sermon on verse 7 would be: Walking in the light, washed by the blood. 1. A definite contrast (with verse 6)—pointed by the “But.” 2. A spiritual performance: walking in the light. 3. A blessed privilege: mutual fellowship between God and us. 4. A gracious provision for failures: the cleansing blood.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

62. Makkedah (Mortification, 10:17-27)

Let us remind the reader once more that Israel's conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan present to us a typical picture of the Christian's warfare and present enjoyment of his spiritual inheritance. That warfare is many-sided, and constitutes one of the principal parts of the "service" in which the Lord requires His people to be engaged, and which renders all their other actions unacceptable unto Him while it be disregarded. Alas that we are living in a day of such gross darkness and crass ignorance that comparatively few, even in Christendom, have any scriptural concept of the kind of enemies which the saint is called upon to conquer, or the nature of that work in which he ought to abound. The worst of his foes is neither the world nor the devil, but rather "the flesh." It is not external temptations but *inward lusts* that constitute his gravest menace and greatest danger. It is the subduing of those "fleshly lusts, which *war against* the soul" (1Pe 2:11), the resisting of his inbred corruptions, which the believer is to be constantly occupied with—for while they be neglected, all his other efforts to please God are in vain. "From whence come wars and fightings among you [Christians]? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (Jam 4:1).

It is the mortification of their lusts and the cultivation of their graces which is the lifelong task that God has set before His children. The greater part of the New Testament consists of the epistles, which are addressed directly to the saints, and they will be searched in vain for any exhortation which bids them preach to others, engage in evangelistic activities, or do "personal work." On the other hand, those epistles will be found to abound in such injunctions as "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God... Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom 6:13; 13:12); "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Co 7:1); "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:22-24); "Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2Pe 3:14).

There is the scriptural answer to the oft-raised question, What can I do for the Lord in return for all He has done for me? How can I best express my gratitude for His wondrous mercy? By keeping "thy heart with all diligence" (Pro 4:23), for true godliness is not so much a thing of the head, or of the hand, but of *the heart*. Therein lies the "sphere of his service." There he will discover more than enough to keep him diligently engaged the remainder of his days: to transform a barren wilderness, or rather a neglected field (Pro 24:30-31), into a garden for his Master to delight in; to root out the weeds and burn up the thorns and thistles, and to replace them with fra-

grant flowers and luscious fruits—for only then will he be able to say, “Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song 4:16). But alas, pride and the restless energy of the flesh cause him to be occupied with the gardens (souls) of his fellows, instead of working out *his own* salvation with fear and trembling (Phi 2:12). It is much easier to preach unto others than to gain the mastery over sinful self. It is greatly to be feared that many a Christian has cause to say, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness” (Col 3:5). Here is the duty enjoined, the great task assigned. The tense of the verb expresses continued action, that which is to be our daily concernment and practice, and not merely by fits and starts. The evil lusts here named are termed “members” because indwelling sin is compared with an organism—“the old man” (Eph 4:22), “the body of this death” (Rom 7:24). In addition to our natural bodies, there is a body of corruption, which wholly compasses the soul—“the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col 2:11). “Your members which are upon the earth” is added to prevent our supposing that the reference is to a mortifying of our physical bodies, for external macerations⁵² are of no avail. It is our depraved nature which uses these lusts, as the natural body does its members. Sin is very much alive in the Christian, for the flesh or evil nature is ever opposing the spirit (Gal 5:17), and he is called upon to employ no half measures in resisting the same. Corrupt propensities are to be dealt with unsparingly, sinful desires sternly denied, evil thoughts rejected with abhorrence.

Dangerous enemies are not to be handled gently, and sin is to be shown no mercy, but is to be so striven against that we earnestly seek to slay it. “Mortify” means put to death, destroy. Extinguish all lustings after earthly and carnal things which are opposed to the spiritual and heavenly life which we have in and from Christ. Yet the term is not to be understood absolutely, in the sense of slaying so as to deprive of the being of sin; but rather to render it useless. In Romans 4:19, we read of Abraham that “he considered not his own body now *dead*,” yet it was not so absolutely; but its natural vigour was greatly abated. Hence Hebrews 11:12 speaks of his being “as good as dead.” As John Owen (1616-1683) well expressed it, “To mortify signifies a continued act, in taking away the power and force of anything, until it ceases to be dead unto some certain ends or purposes.” The flesh cannot be subdued without our doing violence to its affections, and the figurative expression of “mortifying” is used to denote the painfulness and troublesomeness of the task. But however unpleasant the duty, we only make more pain for ourselves if it be neglected. Neglect weakens and wastes indwelling grace, for it is impossible for sin and grace to be strong in the soul at the same time.

Now it is *this* aspect of our spiritual warfare which is in view in Joshua 10:17-27. In the slaying of those five kings, we have shadowed forth the Christian’s obligation to mortify his lusts and render impotent the sin which indwells him. There are several respects in which those kings typed out⁵³ the believer’s corruptions. *First*, they belonged to an alien race, being Amorites: so, too, the lusts of the flesh are not a part of man’s original nature. *Second*, they sought to slay the Gibeonites, who were a figure of young converts: in like manner, the flesh is hostile to the spirit. *Third*, they were defeated by the men of Israel: thus also is the saint frequently given the victory over his temptations. *Fourth*, they hid in a cave: after their temporary defeat, our lusts cease their raving and we are granted a respite. *Fifth*, they were then rendered helpless by Joshua’s orders (verse 18), as our passions are when Christ rebukes them and bids them be still. *Sixth*, they were taken

⁵² **macerations** – wearing away.

⁵³ **typed out** – portrayed in a figure; represented.

out of their concealment and brought before Joshua, teaching us that Christ alone can deal effectually with our enemies. *Finally*, the captains of Israel were bidden to place their feet upon the necks of these kings, after which they were slain.

In the preceding articles on Joshua 10, we have already covered, from the historical standpoint, the first five of the above points, and we must now consider more distinctly their typical significance ere turning to the final ones. The great work of mortification in which God calls His people to engage consists of a constant endeavour to subdue the ragings of indwelling sin, in order that they may serve and glorify Him. Sin is an active principle, ever inclining us to evil—“warring against” the new nature (Rom 7:23), hindering us from that which is good, drawing off the heart from holy duties or distracting us in them—and therefore it is to be steadfastly resisted. Complete exemption from its power is not attainable in this life, but its influence over us may be greatly diminished. Mortification is to be extended unto every internal disposition which is evil, as well as unto our external acts—refusing to hearken to their solicitation and denying them that food on which they could feed (Rom 13:14), vigorously opposing them as water is cast upon fire. We are to aim at extirpating⁵⁴ not only those gross sins which are condemned by men, but even those which are condoned and admired by the world.

When the five kings had met with a summary defeat at Gibeon, they “fled, and hid themselves in a cave” (10:16). Similar is the experience of the believer when the Lord has granted him a notable victory or a blessed season of revival in his soul; his heart rests sweetly on Christ and inward peace is now his portion. Nevertheless, though quiet, his enemies have not ceased to be, and therefore he needs to make close inspection within, and deal with what will again cause him trouble if it be left to itself. Thus we are told that Joshua was informed, “The five kings are *found* hid in a cave” (verse 17), which implies that a diligent search had been made for them. Israel’s leader then gave orders for great stones to be rolled upon the mouth of the cave, and men set before it “for to keep them” (verse 18). Such is our responsibility: to use every means appointed by God for the subduing and suppression of our lusts, and preventing their breaking forth into renewed activity. Said the apostle, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Co 9:27). Said the Psalmist, “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word” (119:101).

“Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave. And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon” (10:22-23). The opening word of those verses is both important and significant, for it not only indicates the connection between them and verse 21, but also serves to intimate and introduce a prophetic picture of things to come. *First*, there has been “a very great slaughter” of the Lord’s enemies (verse 20), as there will be at the close of this world’s history (2Th 1:1, 7-9; Rev 19:11-15). *Second*, “all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at **Makkedah**” (verse 21)—a blessed foreshadowing of the entire Church being gathered around the antitypical Joshua after their warfare is accomplished. *Third*, “none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel” (verse 21): in like manner will the supremacy of Christ and His redeemed be recognized and owned in the great day to come (1Co 6:2-3; Rev 2:26). *Fourth*, Joshua did not personally fetch these kings out of their hiding place, but called upon others to bring them before him: so before Christ “shall *be gathered* all nations” (Mat 25:32)—by “the holy angels” of verse 31, the “reapers” of Matthew 13:30.

⁵⁴ **extirpating** – totally destroying; pulling up by the roots.

Those kings had thought more of their own skins than of the welfare of their men. They had fled for their lives and sought refuge from their pursuers. But in vain—impossible to evade the vengeance of God. Their place of concealment was soon discovered, and, at the time which best suited Joshua, they were brought before him and dealt with as they deserved—those who foment war rarely escape the worst of its consequences. No further respite was allowed them: these kings, who had determined the destruction of the peaceful Gibeonites, must now appear before Israel's commander. Awful and solemn moment was that: an illustration of what shall take place at the final assize,⁵⁵ when the wicked will have to stand before and be judged by the great Joshua. They who made lies their refuge shall then be exposed. They who sought shelter in a nominal profession and mingled with the people of God shall then be openly discovered. None can be concealed from the eyes of Omniscience, none escape His tribunal. "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies" (Psa 21:8), and then will they prove what a fearful thing it is to "fall into the hands" of the One they opposed.

In Joshua's requiring the kings to be brought before him, the Christian is taught that he must (in prayer) bring all his foes—be they inward lustings or outward temptations—to the Saviour, for it is not by his own strength he can vanquish them. Next, "Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." And we are told, "They came near and put their feet upon the necks of them" (verse 24). Very striking is this, and most important the spiritual instruction contained therein. Being dealt with in this manner betokened that these kings were in complete subjugation unto the people of God. And *that* is the attitude which faith is to take unto all its enemies, regarding them as foes already defeated—not by himself, but by his victorious Head; and, as a member of His body, sharing therein. Christ has gloriously prevailed over sin and Satan, and it is the Christian's privilege to appropriate the same unto himself. Has not God promised him, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet" (Psa 91:13)? That is realized each time the saint treats with contempt and abhorrence the evil solicitations of Satan and his agents.

What we have just said ought to be the constant and uniform experience of the believer. That it is not so is due in part to his failure to plead daily the promise of Psalm 91:13, and count upon the Lord making it good more fully unto him. God has "put all things under his [Christ's] feet" (Eph 1:22), which is explained by, "Thou hast put all things *in subjection* under his feet" (Heb 2:8); and by Joshua's bidding his captains place their feet upon the necks of these defeated kings, we are thereby shown that our Saviour would have His people bring into subjection their spiritual enemies and share in His triumph over them. He would have them plead before God the efficacy of His sacrifice, and beg Him to grant them a deeper acquaintance experientially of its cleansing virtues. Is it not written, "they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 12:11)? And so shall we, if we trust in its sufficiency—not only to put away our sins from before God, but also to enable us to prevail over them in our present warfare. Christ has made believers "*kings* and priests unto God" (Rev 1:6); then let them earnestly seek grace to act as such, having dominion over themselves, ruling their spirit (Pro 16:32; 1Co 6:12).

"And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight" (verse 25). The ultimate and complete victory of the believer is infallibly certain. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (Rom 16:20). The juxtaposition of those two things should be carefully noted, the second one intimating that the first state-

⁵⁵ **final assize** – the Last Judgment; an "assize" was a provincial court in England.

ment is made for the express purpose of quickening us to fight the good fight of faith. The issue⁵⁶ of that fight is not left in the slightest doubt. The members of Christ's body must be partakers of the victory of their Head. In emphasizing the prediction of Genesis 3:15, too little attention has been given to the promise of Romans 16:20. Christians have to do with a foe that was completely defeated at the cross, for through death Christ annulled him who had the power of death (Heb 2:14) and spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them (Col 2:15). Those consolatory declarations are made to encourage us to resist the devil, regarding him as a foe already conquered, as one who has no claims upon us, as one whom at the close, God will tread under our feet; and the extent to which we *appropriate* "the [available] grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" will be the measure in which we shall tread him underfoot *now*.

"And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening. And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day" (verses 26-27). The mightiest of those who have rebelled against God and persecuted His people will yet be treated with the utmost ignominy and summary judgment. Hanging them upon trees demonstrated that they were accursed of God (Gal 3:13). "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. Their wisest counsels prove a snare to entangle them, their most valiant and vigorous exertions expose their weakness and end in disgrace and dismay, their choicest blessings are changed into a curse and their secret retreats become their prisons or their graves! Kings and mighty captains, who are disobedient to God, will at last be treated as arch-rebels, to be distinguished only by the deepest infamy and heaviest vengeance; and all the Israel of God will join the triumph of the Captain of their salvation in trampling upon the necks of their proudest opposers, exclaiming, 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord' (cf. Psa 149:6-9)" (Thomas Scott, 1747-1821).

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

4. Its Consequences, Part 2

When Adam and Eve, by an act of wilful transgression, broke the condition of the covenant under which they had been placed, they incurred the double guilt of disbelieving God's Word and defying His will. Thereby they forfeited the promise of life and brought upon themselves the penalty of death. That one act of theirs completely changed their relation to God and, at the same time, reversed their feelings toward Him. They were no longer the objects of His favour, but instead the subjects of His wrath. As the effect of their sinfulness and the result of their spiritual death, the Lord God ceased to be the object of their love and confidence, and had become the object of their aversion and distrust. A sense of degradation and of God's displeasure filled them with fright and inspired them with an awful enmity against Him. So swift and so drastic was the change which sin produced in their relations and feelings toward their Maker, that they were ashamed and afraid to appear before Him; and as soon as they heard His voice in the garden, they fled in horror and terror, seeking to hide from Him among the trees. They dreaded to hear Him pronounce formal sentence of condemnation upon them, for they knew in themselves that they deserved it.

⁵⁶ **issue** – result; what comes forth from some endeavor.

Each action of our first parents after the fall was emblematic and prophetic, for it shadowed forth how their descendants too would conduct themselves. *First*, upon the discovery of their nakedness, or loss of their original purity and glory, they sewed themselves aprons of fig leaves in an attempt to preserve their self-respect and make themselves presentable to one another. Thus it is with the natural man the world over: by a variety of efforts he seeks to conceal his spiritual wretchedness, yet at best his religious exercises and altruistic performances are but things of time, and will not endure the test of eternity. *Second*, Adam and Eve sought to hide from the One they now feared and hated. So it is with their children. They are fallen and depraved; God is holy and righteous; and despite their self-manufactured coverings of creature-respectability and piety, the very thought of a face-to-face meeting with their Sovereign renders the unregenerate uneasy. That is why the Bible is so much neglected—because in it *God* is heard speaking. That is why the theatre is preferred to the prayer meeting. Proof is this that all shamed in the first sin and died in Adam, for all inherit his nature and perpetuate his conduct.

[*Thirdly*,] how clearly did the actions of the guilty pair make evident the serpent's lie. The more closely verses 4 and 5 be scrutinized in the light of the immediate sequel, the more will their falsity appear. The serpent had assured them, "Ye shall not surely die," yet they had done so spiritually, and now fled in terror lest they lose their physical lives. He had declared that they should be advanced—for that was the evident force of his "your eyes shall be opened"; instead, they had been abased. He had promised that they should be increased in knowledge, whereas they had become so stupid as to entertain the idea that they could conceal themselves from the omniscient and omnipresent One. He had said they should "be as gods," but here we behold them as self-accused and trembling criminals. Well do we ever bear in mind the Lord's pronouncement concerning the devil: "He is a liar, and the father of it" (Joh 8:44)—the perverter and denier of the truth, the promoter and instigator of falsehood of every kind throughout the earth, ever employing dissimulation and treachery, subtlety and deception to further his evil interests.

Behold the terrible consequences of listening to the devil's lies. See the awful ravage which sin works. Not only had Adam and Eve irreparably damaged themselves, but they had become fugitives from their all-glorious Creator. He is ineffably pure, and they were polluted, and therefore sought to avoid Him. How unbearable the thought to a guilty conscience that the unpardoned sinner will yet have to stand before the thrice Holy One! Yet he *must*; there is no possible way in which any of us can escape that awful meeting. Writer and reader must yet appear before Him and render an account of their stewardship, and unless we fled to Christ for refuge, and had our sins blotted out by His atoning blood, we shall hear His sentence of eternal doom. Then seek Him while He may be found in mercy; call ye upon Him while He is near in His gracious overtures of the Gospel, for "How shall we escape" the lake of fire if we neglect so great salvation (Heb 2:3)? Assume not that you are a Christian, but examine well your foundations; yea, beg God to search your heart and show you your real condition. Take the place of a hell-deserving sinner and receive the sinner's Saviour.

In the verses that follow, we may discover a solemn shadowing forth of the day to come. "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Gen 3:9). It was the divine Judge summoning him to an account of what he had done. It was a word designed to impress upon him the guilty distance from God to which sin had removed him. His offence had severed all communion between them, for "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2Co 6:14). Observe well that the Lord ignored Eve and confined His address to the responsible head! God had plainly warned him about the forbidden fruit, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And *death*, my reader, is not annihilation, but alienation: as physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from the Holy One, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa 59:2). Such is the terrible plight of us all by nature—"far off" (Eph 2:13)—and unless divine grace saves us, we shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2Th 1:9).

"And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden [which suggests that He was now seen in theophanic manifestation],⁵⁷ and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (verse 10). Mark how utterly unable sinful man is to meet the divine inquisition. He could offer no adequate defence. Hear his sorry admission, "I was afraid": his conscience condemned him. Such will be the woeful plight of every lost soul when, brought out from "the refuge of lies" in which he formerly sheltered, he now appears before his Maker—destitute of that righteousness and holiness which He inexorably requires, and which we can obtain only in and from Christ: filled with horror and terror. Weigh well those words, "I was afraid, because I was naked." His apron of fig leaves was of no avail! Thus it is even now when the Holy Spirit convicts a soul. The garb of religion is discovered to be naught but filthy rags when one is given to see light in God's light; the heart is filled with fear and shame as he realizes he has to do with One before whom all things are naked and opened (Heb 4:13). Have *you* passed through any such experience?—seen and felt yourself to be a spiritual bankrupt, a moral leper, a lost sinner? If not, you *will* in the day to come.

"And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked?" (verse 11). To which inquiry Adam made no reply. Instead of humbling himself before his aggrieved Benefactor, the culprit failed to make answer. Whereupon the Lord said, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" It is striking to notice that God made no reply to the idle and perverse excuses which Adam had at first proffered. They were unworthy of His notice. If the words of Adam in verse 10 be carefully pondered, a solemn and fatal *omission* from them will be observed: he said nothing about his sin, but mentioned only the painful *effects* which it had produced. As another has said, "this was the language of impenitent misery." God therefore directed him to the *cause* of those effects. Yet observe the manner in which He framed His words. The Lord did not directly charge the offender with his crime, but instead interrogated him: "Hast thou eaten?" That opened the way and made it much

⁵⁷ **theophanic manifestation** – God making Himself visible to man in a form he can understand.

easier for Adam contritely to *acknowledge* his transgression. But alas, he failed to avail himself of the opportunity and declined making broken-hearted confession of his iniquity.

God did not put those questions to Adam because He desired to be informed, but rather to provide him with an occasion penitently to own what he had done; and in his refusal to do so, we behold the *fourth* consequence of the fall, namely *the hardening of the heart* by sin. There was no deep sorrow for his flagrant disobedience, and therefore no sincere owning of the same. To the second inquiry of God, the man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Here was the *fifth* consequence of the fall: *self-justification* by an attempt to excuse sin. Instead of confessing his wickedness, Adam sought to mitigate and extenuate it by throwing the onus upon another. The entrance of evil into man produced a dishonest and disingenuous heart; rather than take the blame upon himself, Adam sought to place it upon his wife. And thus it is with his descendants. They endeavour to shelve their responsibility and repudiate their culpability by attributing the wrongdoing to anyone or anything rather than themselves. Ascribing their sins to the force of circumstances, an evil environment, temptations, or the devil.

But in those words of Adam, we may behold something still more heinous, and a *sixth* consequence of his fall, namely a blasphemous *impugning of God Himself*. Adam did not simply say, "my wife gave me of the tree, and I did eat," but "the woman whom *thou* gavest me." Thus did he overtly reproach the Lord. It was as though he said, Hadst Thou not given me this woman, I had not eaten. Why didst Thou put such a snare upon me? Behold here the pride and stoutheartedness which characterizes the devil, whose kingdom has now been set up within man! So it is with his children to this day. That is why we are enjoined: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jam 1:13). It is because the depraved mind of the fallen creature is so prone to think that very thing and seek shelter therein. If God had not ordered His providences, I had never been so strongly tempted; if He had disposed things differently, I should not have been enticed, still less overcome. Thus do we, in our efforts at self-vindication, cast reflection on the ways of Him who cannot err.

"The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD" (Pro 19:3). This is one of the vilest forms in which human depravity manifests itself: that after deliberately playing the fool, and discovering that the way of transgressors is hard, we murmur against God instead of meekly submitting to His rod. When we pervert our way—through self-will, carnal greed, rash conduct, hasty actions—let us not charge God with the bitter fruits thereof; since we are the authors of our misery, it is but reason that we should fret against *ourselves*. But such is the pride of our hearts, and unsubdued enmity against God, that we are fearfully apt to fret against Him, as though He were responsible for our troubles. We must not expect to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles (Mat 7:16)! Charge not the unpleasant reaping on the severity of God, but upon thine own perversity. Say not, God should not have endowed me with such strong passions if I may not indulge them. Ask not, Why did He not give grace so that I would have resisted the temptation? Impeach not His sovereignty; question not His dispensations; harbour no doubts about His goodness. If you do, you are but repeating the wickedness of your first father.

"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." He indeed recited the facts of the case, yet in so doing made it worse rather than better. He was the woman's head and protector, and therefore should have taken more care to prevent her falling into evil. When she had succumbed to the serpent's wiles, so far from following her example, he should have rebuked her and refused her offer. To plead we were allured by others is no valid excuse; yet it is one commonly offered. When Aaron was charged with making the golden calf, he admitted the fact, but sought to extenuate the fault by blaming the congregation (Exo 32:22-24). In like manner, the disobedient Saul sought to transfer the onus unto "the people" (1Sa 15:21). So too Pilate gave orders for the crucifixion of Christ, and then charged the crime upon the Jews (Mat 27:254).

Finally, we behold here yet another [*seventh*] consequence of the fall: it produced a *breach of affection* between man and his neighbour—in this case his wife, whom he now loved so little as to thrust her forth to receive the stroke of divine vengeance.

"And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?" Behold here both the infinite condescension of the Most High and His fairness as Judge. He acted not in high sovereignty, disdain to parley with the creature; nor did He condemn the transgressors unheard, but gave them opportunity to defend themselves or confess their crime. So it will be at the Great Assize: it will be conducted in such a manner as to make it transparently evident that every transgressor receives "the due reward of his iniquities," and that God is clear when He judges (Psa 51:4). "And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (verse 13). Eve followed the same course and manifested the same evil spirit as her husband. She humbled not herself before the Lord, gave no sign of repentance, made no broken-hearted confession. Instead, there was a vain attempt to vindicate herself by casting the blame upon the serpent. Idle excuse was that, for God had capacitated her to perceive his lies and rectitude of nature to reject them with horror. Equally useless for her children to plead, "I had no intention of sinning, but the devil tempted me," for he can force none, nor prevail, without our consent.

Standing before their Judge self-accused and self-condemned, He now proceeded to pronounce sentence upon the guilty pair. But before so doing, He dealt with the one who had been instrumental in their fall. "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Observe that no question was put to the serpent; rather did the Lord treat with him as an avowed enemy. His sentence is to be taken literally in its application to the serpent, mystically in relation to Satan. "The words may imply a visible punishment to be executed on the serpent, as the instrument in this temptation; but the curse was directed against the invisible tempter, whose abject, degraded condition, and base endeavours to

find satisfaction in rendering others wicked and miserable, might be figuratively intimated by the serpent's moving on his belly, and feeding on the dust" (Thomas Scott).

The Lord began His denunciations where sin began—with the serpent. Each part of the sentence expresses the fearful degradation which should henceforth be his portion. First, he was "cursed *above all cattle*"—the curse has extended to the whole creation, as Romans 8:20-23 makes clear. Second, hereafter it would crawl in the dust: from which it is to be inferred that originally it stood erect—compare our remarks on 3:1. Third, God Himself now put an enmity between it and the female, so that where there had been intimate converse, there should now be mutual aversion. Fourth, passing from the literal snake to "that old serpent, the devil," God announced that he should ultimately be crushed—not by His hand dealing immediately with him, but by One in human nature, and what would be yet more humiliating, by the *woman's* Seed. Satan had made use of the weaker vessel, and God would defeat him through the same medium! Wrapped up in that pronouncement was a prophecy and a promise, yet let it be carefully noted that it was in the form of a sentence of doom on Satan, and *not* a gracious declaration made unto Adam and Eve—intimating that *they* had no personal interest therein!

The sentences pronounced upon our first parents need not detain us, for their language is so plain and simple that they call for neither explanation nor comment. Since Eve was the first in the transgression, and had tempted Adam, she was the next to receive sentence. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee" (verse 16). Thus was she condemned to a state of sorrow, suffering, and servitude. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it *all* the days of thy life [definitely precluding the idea that, later, God saved him!]; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee....In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (verses 17-19). Sorrow, toil, and sweat were to be the burden to fall most heavily upon the male. Here we behold the *eighth* consequence of the fall: *physical suffering* and death—"unto dust shalt thou return."

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve [that is "living"]; because she was the mother of all living" (verse 20). This is manifestly a detail communicated by God to Moses the historian, for Eve gave birth to no children until after she and her husband had been expelled from Eden. It seems to be introduced here for the purpose of illustrating and exemplifying the concluding portion of the sentence passed upon the woman in verse 16. As Adam had made proof of his dominion over all the lower creatures (1:28) by giving names to them (2:19), so in token of his rule over his wife, he bestowed a name upon her. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them" (verse 21). With what design we are *not told*: so that each reader is free to form his own opinion. In the face of everything that makes directly against any such theory, many have supposed these words intimate that God now dealt (typically, at least) in mercy with the fallen pair, and that emblematically they were robed in Christ's righteousness and covered with the garments of salvation. To the contrary, this writer sees therein the *ninth* consequence of the fall: that man had thereby *descended to the level of the animals*—observe how in Daniel 7 and Revelation 17, where God sets before us the character of the leading kingdoms of the world (as *He* sees them): He employs the symbol of beasts!

"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (verse 22), which is obviously the language of sarcasm and irony. See the one who vainly imagined that by defying Us he should "be as gods" (3:5), now degraded to the level of the beasts! "Therefore the LORD God *sent* him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken," i.e. bade him leave the garden. But as Matthew Henry intimates, such an order did not at all appeal to the apostate rebel. "So he *drove out* the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (verse 24), thereby effectually preventing his return. Therein we behold the *tenth* consequence of the fall: man *an outcast from God*, estranged from His favour and fellowship, banished from the place of delight, sent forth a fugitive into the world. Observe how this closing verse corroborates our interpretation of verse 21. The Lord does not drive from Him any child of His! And this is the *finally recorded* act of God in connection with Adam! As He cast out of heaven the angels that sinned, so He drove Adam and Eve out of the earthly paradise, in proof of their abhorrence to Him and alienation from Him.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 3: Essential Requirements for Preachers

Our last article dealt with some of the more elementary yet essential qualifications which must needs be found in any who would enter into the spiritual meaning of Holy Writ. It was therefore suited to all the people of God in general. But in this, we propose to treat of those things which have a more particular bearing upon those whom God has called to preach and teach His Word: those whose whole time and energies are to be devoted unto seeking the spiritual and eternal welfare of souls, and the better equipping of themselves for that most blessed, solemn, and important work. Their principal tasks are to proclaim God's Truth and to exemplify and commend their message by diligently endeavouring to practice what they preach, setting before their hearers a personal example of practical godliness. Since it be the truth they are to preach, no pains must be spared in seeing to it that no error be intermingled therewith, that it is the pure milk of the Word they are giving forth. To preach error instead of truth is not only grievously to dishonour God and His Word, but will mislead and poison the minds of the hearers or readers.

The preacher's task is both the most honourable and the most solemn of any calling, the most privileged and at the same time the most responsible one. He professes to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, a messenger sent forth by the Most High. To misrepresent his Master, to preach any other Gospel than His, to falsify the message which God has committed to his trust, is the sin of sins, which brings down upon him the anathema of heaven (Gal 1:8), and will be visited with the sorest punishment awaiting any creature. Scripture is plain that the heaviest measure of divine wrath is reserved for unfaithful preachers (Mat 23:14; Jude 1:13). Therefore the warning is given, "be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (Jam 3:1) if unfaithful to our trust. Every minister of the Gospel will yet have to render a full account of his stewardship unto the One who he claims called him to feed His sheep (Heb 13:17), to answer for the souls who were committed to his charge. If he fails to diligently warn the wicked, and he dies in his iniquity, God declares "his blood will I require at thine hand" (Eze 3:18).

Thus the chief and constant duty of the preacher is to conform unto that injunction, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). In the whole of Scripture, there is no exhortation addressed to preachers which is of greater importance than that one, and few equal. Doubtless that is why Satan has been so active in seeking to obscure its first two clauses by raising such a cloud of dust over the last one. The Greek word for "study" here signifies "give diligence": spare no efforts, but make it your paramount concern and constant endeavour to please your Master. Seek not the smiles and flatteries of worms of the earth, but the approbation⁵⁸ of the Lord. That is to take precedence of everything else: unless it is, attention to the second thing mentioned will be in vain. Entirely subordinate all other aims to commending *thyself* unto God—thine heart and character, thy dealings with and walk before Him, ordering all thy ways according to His revealed will. What are your "service," your ministrations, worth, if He be displeased with *thee*?

⁵⁸ **approbation** – praise (cf. Rom 2:29).

“A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” Be conscientious, diligent, faithful, in the use you make of your time and the talents God has entrusted to you. Give unremitting heed to that precept, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecc 9:10)—put your very best into it. Be industrious and assiduous,⁵⁹ not careless and slovenly. See how well you can do each thing, and not how quickly. The Greek word for “workman” is also translated “labourer,” and in twentieth-century English might well be rendered “toiler.” The ministry is no place for triflers and idlers, but for those who are prepared to spend and be spent in the cause of Christ. The preacher ought to work harder than the miner, and to spend more hours per week in his study than does the man of business in his office. A workman is the very opposite of a shirker. If the preacher is to show himself approved unto God and be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, then he will have to labour while others sleep, and do so until he sweats mentally.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed *unto thyself*, and unto the doctrine; *continue* in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1Ti 4:15-16). This is another part of the mandate which Christ has laid upon His official servants, and a most comprehensive and exacting one it is. He requires them to put their hearts into the work, to give the whole of their thoughts to it, to lay themselves completely out in it, to devote all their time and strength thereto. They are to keep clear of all secular affairs and worldly employments, and show all diligence in the task assigned them. That it is an arduous task appears from the different designations given them. They are called “soldiers” to denote the exertions and fatigue which attend the proper discharge of their calling; “overseers and watchmen” to intimate the care and concern which accompany their office; “shepherds and teachers” to signify the various duties of leading and feeding those committed to their charge. But first and foremost, they are to take heed to their *personal* growth in grace and piety, if they would minister effectually unto others.

Particularly does the minister need to attend unto this injunction “take heed unto thyself” in his study of the Scriptures, reading them devotionally ere he does so professionally; that is, seeking their application and blessing to his own soul before searching for sermonic materials. As the saintly James Hervey (1714-1758) expressed it, “Thus may we always be affected when we study the oracles of truth. Study them, not as cold critics, who are only to judge of their meaning, but as persons deeply interested in all they contain—who are particularly addressed in every exhortation and directed in every precept, whose are the promises, and to whom belong the precious privileges. When we are enabled thus to *realize and appropriate* the contents of that invaluable Book, then shall we taste the sweetness and feel the power of the Scriptures. Then shall we know by happy experience that our divine Master’s words are not barely sounds and syllables, but that they are spirit and they are life.” No man can be constantly giving out that which is fresh and savoury, unless he be continually taking in. That which he is to declare unto others is what his own ears have first heard, his own eyes have seen, his own hands have handled (1Jo 1:1-2).

The mere *quoting* of Scripture in the pulpit is not sufficient—people can become familiar with the letter of the Word by reading it at home; it is the *expounding and application of it* which are so much needed. “And Paul, as his manner was...reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Act 17:2-3). But to “open” the Scriptures helpfully to the saints requires something more than a few months’ training in a Bible institute, or a year or two in a seminary. None but those who have been personally taught of God in the hard school of experience are qualified so to “open” the Word, that divine light is cast upon the spiritual problems of the believer, for while Scripture in-

⁵⁹ **assiduous** – careful and persistent; diligent.

interprets experience, experience is often the best interpreter of Scripture. “The *heart* of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips” (Pro 16:23), and that “learning” cannot be acquired in any of man’s schools. No one can learn what humility is by means of the concordance, nor secure more faith by studying certain passages of Scripture. The one is acquired through painful discoveries of the plague of our hearts, and the other is increased by a deepening acquaintance with God. We must ourselves be comforted of Him before we can comfort others (2Co 1:4).

“To seek after mere *notions* of truth, without an endeavour after an experience of its power in our hearts, is not the way to increase our understanding in spiritual things. He alone is in a posture to learn from God, who sincerely gives up his mind, conscience, and affections to the power and rule of what is revealed unto him. Men may have in their study of the Scriptures other ends also, as the profit and edification of *others*. But if this conforming of their own souls unto the power of the Word be not fixed in the first place in their minds, they do not strive lawfully, nor will they be crowned. And if at any time when we study the Word, we have not this design expressly in our minds, yet if upon the discovery of any truth, we endeavour not to have the likeness of it in our own hearts, we lose our principal advantage by it” (John Owen). It is much to be feared that many preachers will have reason to lament in the day to come: “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6)—like a chef preparing meals for others and himself starved.

While the preacher is to ponder the Word devotionally, he is also to read it *studiously*. If he is to become able to feed his flock with “the finest of the wheat” (Psa 81:16), then he must needs study it diligently and daily, and that to the end of his life. In this, at least, the writer (by grace) practices what he teaches, for though he burns not so much midnight oil as he did forty years ago, yet he has never relaxed, and works now as hard as ever—ten years have passed since he had even a half-day’s holiday, nor has he suffered any perceptible ill effects from such close application. Of course not. It is dishonouring to God and His Word to imagine that anyone will be injured by too much examination of it. Alas, that so many preachers abandon their habit of study as soon as they are ordained! The Bible is an inexhaustible mine of spiritual treasure, and the more its riches are opened to us (by hard digging), the more we realize how much there is yet unpossessed, and how little we really understand what has been received. “If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1Co 8:2).

The Word of God cannot be understood without a constant and laborious study, without a careful and prayerful scrutiny of its contents. This is not to say that it is recondite and obscure. No, it is as plain and intelligible as in the nature of things it can be, adopted in the best possible manner to give instruction in the holy and profound things of which it treats. But none can be instructed by the best possible means of instruction who will not take pains with the same. Promise of understanding is made not to the dilatory and indolent, but to the diligent and earnest, to those who seek for spiritual treasure (Pro 2:3, 5). The Scriptures have to be searched, searched daily, persistently and perseveringly, if the minister is to become thoroughly familiar with *the whole* of what God has revealed, and if he is to set before his hearers “a feast of fat things” (Isa 25:6). Of the wise preacher it is said, “he still taught the people knowledge, yea, he gave good heed, and sought out,” even “sought to find out acceptable words” (Ecc 12:9-10), as if his whole soul was engaged in the discovery of the best mode as well as the best substance of instruction.

No preacher should be content with being anything less than “a man mighty in the scriptures” (Act 18:24). But to attain thereunto he must subordinate all other interests. An old writer quaintly said, “The preacher should be with his time as the miser is with his gold—saving it with care, and spending it with caution.” He must also remind himself constantly *whose* Book it is he is about to

take up, so that he ever handles it with the utmost reverence, and can aver “my heart standeth in awe of thy word” (Psa 119:161). He must approach it in lowly-mindedness, for it is only unto such that the Lord “giveth more grace” (Jam 4:6). He must ever come to it in the spirit of prayer, crying “that which I see not teach thou me” (Job 34:32): the enlightening grace of the Spirit will often open mysteries to the meek and dependent which remain closed to the most learned and scholarly. A holy heart is equally indispensable for the reception of supernatural truth, for the understanding is clarified by the purifying of the heart. Let there also be a humble expectation of divine help, for “according unto your faith be it unto you” holds good here too (Mat 9:29).

It is only by giving heed to the things which have been pointed out in the preceding paragraphs that the necessary foundations are laid for any man’s becoming a competent expositor. The task before him is to unfold, with clearness and accuracy, the Word of God. His business is entirely exegetical—to bring out the true meaning of each passage he deals with, whether it accords with his own preconceptions or no. As it is the work of the translator to convey the real sense of the Hebrew and Greek into English, so the interpreter’s is to apprehend and communicate the precise ideas which the language of the Bible was meant to impart. As the renowned Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) so well expressed it, “An expositor should be like the maker of a well: who puts no water into it, but makes it his object to let the water flow, *without* diversion, stoppage, or defilement.” In other words, he must not take the slightest liberty with the sacred text, nor give it a meaning which it will not legitimately bear; neither modifying its force nor superimposing upon it anything of his own, but seeking to give out its true import.

To comply with what has just been said calls for an unbiased approach, an honest heart, and a spirit of fidelity on the part of the interpreter. “Nothing should be elicited from the text but what is yielded by the fair and grammatical explanation of its language” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). It is easy to assent to that dictum, but often difficult to put it into practice. A personal shrinking from what condemns the preacher, a sectarian bias of mind, the desire to please his hearers, have caused not a few to evade the plain force of certain passages, and to foist on them significations which are quite foreign to their meaning. Said Martin Luther, “We must not make God’s Word mean what *we* wish. We must not bend *it*, but allow it to *bend us*, and give it the honour of being better than we can make it.” Anything other than that is highly reprehensible. Great care needs ever to be taken that we do not expound our own minds instead of God’s. Nothing can be more blameworthy than for a man to profess to be uttering a “Thus saith the Lord” when he is merely expressing his own thoughts. Yet who is there who has not, unwittingly, done so?

If the chemist is required by law to follow exactly the doctor’s prescription, if military officers must transmit the orders of their commanders verbatim or suffer severe penalties, how much more incumbent is it for one dealing with divine and eternal things to adhere strictly to his text book! The interpreter’s task is to emulate those described in Nehemiah 8:8, of whom it is said, “They read in the book in the law of the LORD God distinctly, and *gave the sense*, and caused them to understand the reading.” The reference is unto those who had returned to Palestine from Babylon. While in captivity, they had gradually ceased to use Hebrew as their spoken language, Aramaic displacing it. Hence there was a real need to explain the Hebrew words in which the Law was written (cf. Neh 13:23-24). Yet the recording of this incident intimates that it is of permanent importance, and has a message for us. In the good providence of God, there is little need today for the preacher to explain the Hebrew and the Greek, since we already possess a reliable translation of them into our own mother tongue—though occasionally, yet very sparingly, he may do so. But his principal business is to “give the sense” of the English Bible and cause his hearers to “understand” its contents. His responsibility is to adhere strictly to that injunction, “let him speak my word faithfully, What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD” (Jer 23:28).

November

FORGETTING

What a wonderful thing is the memory—one of the many precious faculties with which the Creator has endowed us. By it we are enabled to live the past over again in our minds, to revive the early experiences of childhood, to recall the words of those who are no longer with us. By it we may review the Lord's dealings with us in grace and in providence, call back to mind His interventions on our behalf, delivering us when in straits or rejoicing our hearts while He talked with us by the way. By it we can turn over the pages of our chequered lives and read what is recorded both for and against us. Memory is the power of retention, the storehouse in which all our knowledge is preserved. It is not possible to assess its value in silver and gold. How much poorer should we be if everything were erased from its tablets! One of the greatest tragedies of life is for a person to lose his mind and memory. It is indeed hard to part with any, but, if compelled to make the choice, probably most of us would rather be deprived of our limbs, our hearing, or even our sight, than our mentality—yet comparatively few cultivate and use it as they should.

The memory is indeed of vast importance, for it is the treasurer of the soul: what the understanding takes in, the memory stores up. Knowledge, intellectual growth, social fellowship, the spiritual life, all have their roots in this faculty of retention. But this invaluable gift, like all others, entails a corresponding obligation. Each talent that God has bestowed upon us is for *use*, and if it be not employed it will deteriorate. As limbs unexercised become stiff and muscles flabby, so an unused memory becomes enfeebled. The memory may be developed and controlled—though time and trouble are required for them, as for everything else of worth. Memory is largely a matter of volition: said the Psalmist, “*I will not forget thy word*” (119:16). Definiteness of purpose is required, whether we shall recall a thing or dismiss it from our minds. Remembering is a setting knowledge awork, reviewing the notions and impressions we have received, by exercising our thoughts about and meditating upon them. The seat of the memory is the heart: of Mary it is said that she kept all these things “in her heart” (Luk 2:19, 51)—things kept *there* are never lost.

This leads us to point out that there is both a notional or speculative remembering and a practical or influential one. The former is where we barely think of things and receive no profit or benefit from them. The latter is where the mind is so engaged with the object recalled that the affections are fired and the will moved by it. Thus the faculty of memory is given us by God as a means unto an end to be a help in promoting *piety*. The Scriptures abound with exhortations to remembrance. At the fore of them, we would place that one where those of tender years are bidden, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not” (Ecc

12:1)—bear in mind that, since He be your Maker, He is therefore your rightful Lord and Owner, so carry yourself toward Him as such, rendering unto Him the homage and honour that are His due. Meditate much upon His glorious perfections, call Him to mind constantly while your heart is yet impressionable and habits for good or evil are being formed for life; and thereby you will be fortified against the temptations of youth. All of men's wickedness and misery comes through forgetting God, hence the warning, "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God" (Deu 8:11).

"They soon forgot his works" (Psa 107:13), so superficially were they affected by them. Pathetic and tragic statement! Of whom was it made? Of the heathen? No, of His own highly favoured people, Israel. They had witnessed Jehovah's mighty power in the plagues upon Egypt. They had themselves been the immediate objects and beneficiaries of the operations of His hand, delivering them from the house of bondage. They had again beheld His intervention for them by miraculously opening a way through the Red Sea and then causing its waters to close over Pharaoh and his hosts. Seemingly, their hearts had been deeply impressed on that occasion, for they had raised a song of acknowledgment and praise unto the Lord for what He had wrought for them—yet mark the sad sequel. Those signal interpositions of God ceased to engage their thoughts; the benefits and blessings of which they had been the partakers, no longer moved them. Nor was it only after an interval of years that those gracious actings of the Lord faded from their minds, but "they *soon* forgot his works." Base ingratitude! Not only so; instead of thankful recollections, they broke forth in murmurings, saying to Moses and Aaron, "ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill the whole assembly with hunger" (Exo 16:2-3).

So it has been in all ages. The first man soon forgot the One who gave him such an excellent being and had entered into solemn covenant with him, allowing the allurements of the serpent and the solicitation of his wife to drive all holy considerations from his mind. How quickly did Noah forget his wonderful salvation from the fatal deluge, no sooner spared from water than he was drowned in wine. How soon did Lot forget his rescue from Sodom and fall into the fire of lust. How quickly did David forget the Lord's delivering him from Saul, and fall into the sins of adultery and murder. How soon did Solomon forget the One who had appeared unto him thrice, turning unto false gods and committing the terrible sin of idolatry. Of the ten lepers who were healed by Christ, all but one forgot to return and give thanks unto God. Even the apostles quickly forgot the miracles of the loaves (Mat 16:9-10). And these things, my reader, have been recorded for *our* learning and warning, for us to take to heart and turn into earnest prayer—that we may be kept from such God-dishonouring conduct, for we are men "subject to like passions" (Jam 5:17).

Not only is the Lord grievously slighted by our forgetfulness of Him, but we ourselves are greatly the losers. As God declared of old through His prophet, "My people hath been lost sheep...they have *forgotten* their restingplace" (Jer 50:6). As the Lord is the only true refuge for the soul, so He alone is its restingplace. Consequently, when He is not in our thoughts, not only are we exposed to danger, but we are given up to a spirit of unrest and disquietude. There can be no joy in communion, no delight in His service, no calm and cheerful subjection to His will when God is forgotten. There can be no strength for the performance of duty, no calm facing of our problems, no courage to enter into conflict with the enemy, unless the sufficiency and fidelity of God be the heart's stay, and the remembrance of His past mercies and deliverances and His present promises be much in our thoughts. Instead, we become like "lost sheep"—pastureless, wretched, an easy prey for the wolves all around us. It is by keeping fresh in our minds how graciously the Lord dealt with us yesterday, how unfailingly He supplied our every need, that faith is strengthened and hope stimulated today. Forget not answered prayers as you ply the throne of grace afresh.

The reasons for our sinful forgetfulness of God are not hard to discover. *First*, it issues from the universal depravation of our nature. No part of man's complex being escaped serious injury when he apostatized from God, his intellect suffered seriously. Fearful indeed have been the effects of the Eden tragedy, chief of which is that the natural man likes not to retain God in his thoughts (Rom 1:28). *Second*, it flows from the little esteem in which we hold the wondrous works of God. The works of the creature are admired, but those of the Creator are slighted. Let a person be desperately ill and then be restored under the ministrations of a doctor, and he will be praised to the skies—while the great Physician will scarcely be thanked at all. *Third*, it results from the mind's being so stuffed with other things. It was thus when the Son of God appeared: the inn was so crowded, they laid Him in a manger. The minds of God's people are so crammed with the things of this world that there is little room for spiritual objects. *Finally*, it is because the gracious actings of God make such slight impressions upon us. When the seed fails to penetrate the surface of the earth, the fowls quickly snatch it away. Things not cherished and meditated upon are soon forgotten.

Grievous as is the sin of forgetting God, a much greater crime is it when we are guilty of attributing the same failure unto Him; yet what reader of these lines can truthfully aver⁶⁰ that he has never done so? Even the Psalmist, in a fit of dejection, asked, "Hath the LORD forgotten to be gracious?" (77:9). What a woeful word to fall from the lips of a renewed person! Even though divine mercy has preserved you from such a grievous utterance, has not the wicked idea been entertained in your mind? Oh, what vile creatures we are! God can no more cease to be gracious unto His children than He can cease to *be*. It is because we give way to unbelief and judge the Lord by sense that such a concept is allowed a place in our hearts. He waits to be gracious (Isa 30:18)—till *we* are ready, till we come to the end of our resources. The vessel must be empty before He pours in His favours. His time is now; it is you who are not prepared for His blessing!

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

11. Sin Denied (1:8, 10)

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

We have linked together these two verses because they are so similar in their substance—giving a separate treatment of verse 9 in the next chapter. Each of them opens with the words "If we say," which indicates that it is the testing of Christian profession that is in view. In the second half of this chapter, John is very discriminating. All through its last five verses and the first two of the following one (which complete this section), we behold the apostle distinguishing sharply between the wheat and the tares, or separating the good fish from the bad ones (Mat 13:24-30, 47-

⁶⁰ **aver** – assert as a fact.

48)—in each instance dealing first with the latter. Those referred to in 1 John 1:6, 8, 10, are guilty of making an empty boast and are expressly charged with falsehood. Over against them are placed genuine Christians, their characteristic marks being described and their peculiar privileges and portions named: they walk in the light, confess their sins, have an Advocate with the Father. The careful reader will observe the absence of the word “say” in 1:7, 9, and 2:1, because therein he was not exposing a worthless claim, but delineating the features of those who actually enjoyed fellowship with God.

What has been pointed out above at once serves to refute superficial students of this epistle who have complained that the apostle followed not so orderly a method as Paul was wont to do. The structure of his opening chapter contains clear evidence that he wrote according to a definite plan and expressed his thoughts regularly and logically. The above paragraph also illustrates two features that are quite prominent in this epistle. *First*, John’s habit of drawing sharp contrasts: 1:6-7; 1:8-9—seen again in 2:3-4; 2:7-8; 3:8-9. *Second*, his fondness for combining triplicates of objects, as the three different classes of graceless professors described in 1:6, 8, 10. That is the first of several triads. For example, in 2:13, he divides the children of God into three grades—fathers, young men, little children. In 2:16, he makes the world to consist of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” Three references are made to the “antichrist”: 2:18, 22; 4:3, and three to “overcoming”: 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4. In 5:7, mention is made of the “Three that bear record in heaven,” and in 5:8, of the three “that bear witness in earth.”

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (verse 8).

Five things in connection with this verse claim our best attention. First, its connection. Second, its comprehensiveness. Third, its proud boast. Fourth, its divine diagnosis. Fifth, its solemn verdict.

Its connection

In view of what is affirmed in the verse immediately preceding, the avowal made at the beginning of the present one appears logically and necessarily to follow. If those who walk in the light as God is in the light have fellowship with Him and He with them, and if the blood of Jesus Christ His Son “cleanseth them from all sin” (1Jo 1:7), it is to be expected that they would say “we have no sin.” Had verse 7 stood alone, that is the only conclusion that could be drawn. Let those who are so fond of repeating that “Scripture says what it means and means what it says” give due weight to this consideration: that in those two verses the same term “sin” is used, but with two very different shades of meaning, and that, unless the distinction here drawn be clearly apprehended by the Lord’s people, they are in real danger of misunderstanding what is so plainly declared at the close of verse 7. By noting the connection between the two verses, we perceive how the Holy Spirit in verse 8 guards us against drawing a wrong inference from verse 7, and how that the latter statement serves to fix the precise signification of the former: that the believer is cleansed from all sin judicially, but not so inherently.

“While the apostle insisted on the necessity of an habitual holy walk, as the effect and evidence of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus and of communion with Him, he guarded, with

equal care, against the opposite error of self-righteousness and pride” (T. Scott).⁶¹ Therein we have a striking example—and one which every preacher should most diligently heed—of how careful the blessed Spirit ever is to preserve the balance of truth, and to prevent us drawing a false conclusion from one aspect of it, by failing to supplement the same by bringing in its complementary aspect. To acquit the consciences of the saints of all sin and guilt on Gospel grounds—and thereby raise up their minds to such conceptions of the virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ as will encourage them to hold communion with the Father in the clear and full apprehension that the blood of His Son cleanseth the believer from all sin—is one of the most blessed and important works in which His servant can engage. Yet it is also his duty to remind them that the blood of the Lamb has not cleansed their unholy natures or made them pure from sin. Instead, though their hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, and they have liberty to enter the holiest by the blood of Christ, nevertheless, the inherency of sin is not yet taken away.

By linking together verses 7 and 8, we perceive that the apostle would have his Christian readers learn how to distinguish sharply between what they were in Christ and what they still were in and of themselves. The blood of Christ is the believer’s everlasting purity in the eyes of divine justice. By it he is completely cleansed from every spot and stain of sin. His purity in the sight of God’s Law is such as cannot be fully conceived by any of us, for not only was the whole of the Christian’s pollution removed when Christ was made sin for him, but he is made “the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21), the perfect obedience of his Surety⁶² being reckoned to his account. Nevertheless, neither his guilt being charged to the Lord Jesus, nor the imputation unto him of the merits of His finished work, has removed the inherency of sin out of him. His old evil nature still remains within him—unchanged, filthy, vile, with “no good thing” dwelling therein (Rom 7:18). That which we inherited from our first parents, which was a part of us at our birth, still defiles every member of our complex beings, and does so unto the very last moment of our earthly history; yet that in no wise contradicts or even qualifies the blessed fact that “the blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

As one with Adam, both federally and seminally, we have derived from him the total depravation of our whole persons. In consequence thereof, we are “born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12)—stupid and intractable. By birth we are “all as an unclean thing,” and consequently “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). His inbred corruptions continue to be the Christian’s plague of heart (1Ki 8:38) so long as he be left in this world. These are very humiliating facts, the consideration whereof ought at all times to humble us before the Lord. So far as our carnal nature be concerned, we are always one and the same, though indwelling sin is more manifest at some times than others. That should teach us to look outside of ourselves for our present and eternal purity before God. There is no other way of getting above the influences and effects of our natural depravity than by having our spiritual minds engaged in real fellowship with God, and in true apprehension of what is contained in the precious and efficacious remedy which His grace has provided. Nothing will so relieve the heart when oppressed by a sense of our vileness as believing views of what we are in Christ: “complete in him” (Col 2:10), “perfected for ever” (Heb 10:14).

It might naturally be supposed that walking in the light and enjoying fellowship with the Holy One will exert a cleansing effect upon our natures. Not so; it leaves “the flesh” unchanged. Yet

⁶¹ **Thomas Scott** (1747-1821) – Anglican minister, born in Lincolnshire, England. He served for some years as parish priest before conversion during correspondence and mentoring from John Newton (1725-1807). He is best known for his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, his autobiography *The Force of Truth*, and being a founder of the Church Missionary Society.

⁶² **Surety** – one who assures the fulfillment of something; a guarantor.

many cherish the idea that if only they walked more fully in the light, and had closer and more constant fellowship with God, the flesh would cease opposing the spirit. And again we say: Not so, though in such a case they would be more delivered from fulfilling its lusts (Gal 5:16). It is obvious, then, that one gracious design of the Holy Spirit in the verse before us is to comfort distressed believers, who are so apt to think that their own grievous case is such as none but themselves have any experience of—the more so if they listen to the glowing “testimonies” of certain ones, for fear is then awakened that they are strangers to the supernatural and saving operations of divine grace. When beholding the cheerful countenance and exuberant spirit of some of their fellows, they are perhaps ready to conclude that they are yet in the bond of iniquity. But appearances are proverbially deceptive. Many a smiling face conceals a heavy heart. While the heart knows its own bitterness, it is not privy to the groans of others, who, in secret, frequently have occasion to cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am” (Rom 7:24).

Its comprehensiveness

Look now at the comprehensiveness of this statement. It is not “if ye,” but “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” By that word John included himself and his fellow apostles, just as he had all through the foregoing verse. He did so with the design of showing that the predication here made is one which admits of no exception. No matter who be the person that affirms he has no sin, he is utterly deceived. Not even the eleven, who were favoured above all other believers; nay, not the very one who was privileged to recline on the Saviour’s bosom could truthfully aver that he was all pure within. See here the omniscience of God, with His foreview of the future, guiding His servant’s pen to use the pronoun “we” rather than “ye”! Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit was anticipating the fact that there would arise those of apparently exceptional piety and attainments who would lay claim to this very thing, and therefore He here cautions the children of God to give no heed unto their arrogant and absurd assertion, assuring us that all such are deluded souls.

Listen attentively, my sin-harassed and distressed brother, to the language that John here employs, as he (by necessary implication) declares that I myself, and my fellow apostles, have sin within us. Mark how he is pointing out that your sad case is far from being unique; as he indirectly affirms, we too are but sinners saved by grace, and still have the root and seeds of all evil within us. Yet, on the other hand, observe well that he did not say they were under sin or that sin reigned in and over them. He could not say that of any of the regenerate, though to their senses there are times when such seems to be the case. No, sin is in them, and is ever more or less active, yet it does not have complete dominion over them—such a thing would be utterly incompatible with the state into which the saints are brought by the new birth, when, being made new creatures in Christ, they are freed from their former slavery and fitted to walk in newness of life; though, alas, they often fail to live up to their privileges.

It is indeed the sincere desire and endeavour of every real child of God to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing and be fruitful in every good work (Col 1:10), but to eradicate his carnal nature is altogether beyond him: “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Pro 20:9). But cannot the grace of God effect sinless perfection? “There is no channel for such a grace to run in, no promise in all the Word of God to bottom such a persuasion upon. There is a promise for the subduing of iniquity, but not for the annihilating of it; a promise that sin shall not reign in us, but none that it shall not be. Therefore, the believer would not seek for that in himself which is found only in Christ, nor for that on earth which is reserved for heaven” (E. Polhill, 1675). God leaves sin in His people to wean them from self-love and self-righteousness, and to develop in them the grace of perseverance, through oppositions and tempta-

tions from within and without. His power is rendered the more evident in preserving the plant of holiness in a heart so filled with noxious weeds. He would conform them to Christ's sufferings: as He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, so they endure the contradiction of sin against themselves. The compassion of our great High Priest is demonstrated in bearing with our infirmities.

"If we say that we have no sin." Such an arrogant assertion goes much farther than saying we commit no sin. It is a declaration that they are without the root from which all evil fruits proceed: that their very nature is undefiled, clean. It seems almost incredible, yet there are those who make the audacious boast of moral perfection, that their hearts are holy, and that all their desires are regular. They are so puffed up with the conceit of their own attainments as to declare themselves to be as immaculate in heart and holy in life as the Law of God requires. They aver themselves to be so "entirely sanctified" that their "old man" has been wholly purged and purified. So imbued are they by a spirit of vainglory that such people profess to be without sin internally or externally, spotless in thought, word and deed, faultless before God and man. That such a preposterous boast should be made by the heathen Gnostics⁶³ is, in measure, understandable, but that it is made by any professing Christians only shows the awful deceitfulness of sin and the blinding power of pride.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," or "err ourselves"—not in the doctrinal but the ethical sense, for their state is far more serious than if only intellectual ignorance were involved, being like unto that of those of whom it was said "they do always err in their hearts" (Heb 3:10). They have so imposed on themselves as to be utterly led astray, regarding darkness as light. Such is the divine diagnosis here made of their condition: the omniscient Physician declares them to be most awfully deluded. Imagining themselves to be the excellent of the earth, they are in reality a stench in God's nostrils, for nothing is so abhorrent to Him as pride. So far from being holier than the rank and file of believers, they are in total spiritual darkness, for they have never seen themselves in God's light or had an experiential discovery made to them of the depravity of their hearts. What is here in view is not deliberate hypocrisy, but a species of self-imposition, and such a state is well-nigh hopeless, for this is the most fatal of all forms of deception.

"And the truth is not in us" is the divine verdict. It is contrary to Scripture, to universal experience, to the confession of every saint recorded in the Word, for one and all acknowledged they were the subjects of sin, inwardly defiled and all their actions affected with it. Neither Abraham, Job, Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, nor Paul could maintain any such thing. Thus it is such self-deception as proves these braggarts to be destitute of a saving acquaintance with the Gospel. Instead of having received what they term "the second blessing," they were never the subjects of the first. Instead of occupying the highest rank in Christ's army, they are not members of it at all. Had the Word of God been in them as a principle of life and light, they could never have made so gross a mistake as proves them to be completely ignorant of God and His holy Law and their own hearts. If they were not so, they would be painfully conscious of the evil that is ever at work within them, and would cry, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psa 19:12). Herein we are shown, from another angle, what a terrible thing sin is: it not only defiles us and renders us obnoxious to God, but it fatally deceives the natural man.

⁶³ **Gnostics** – (from Greek *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge") a group of 2nd and 3rd century heresies that taught escape from the material world through gaining secret knowledge.

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us”
(verse 10).

Its proud boast

Since sin indwells us it cannot but follow that we must, more or less, have the evidence of the same in our experience. This is the ordination of Him who is too wise to err and too loving unto His own people to be unkind to them. But why? Would He not be more glorified had indwelling sin been destroyed and they lived sinless lives in this world? No, or He had so ordered it. Some of the reasons for His not doing so have been intimated above. In addition, we may perceive that, as things are, the saints obtain a much fuller realization of their total depravity and marvel the more at God’s amazing grace unto them. Thereby too they come to perceive more clearly their dire need of, and to value more highly, that Fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. Sometimes God permits their iniquities to prevail against them (Psa 65:3), that they may be humbled and made to loathe and wholly renounce themselves, and wonder at His infinite patience and forbearance with them.

Those known as “sinless perfectionists” are not the only ones to say they have not sinned, for this preposterous and wicked assertion is made by several other classes. It is the implicit if not the explicit avowal of those Satan-blinded people who call themselves “Christian Scientists,” for they emphatically deny that there is any such thing as sin, declaring it to be a delusion of mortal minds: and thus they are neither Christians or scientists—those who “know.” Some extreme Antinomians⁶⁴ have taught that they are “in Christ” in such a way, so one with Him, that they not only *do not* but *cannot* sin, wresting such words as “dead indeed unto sin” (Rom 6:11), as they also do “dead to the law” (Rom 7:4). It is also the doctrine of the infatuated papists⁶⁵ that a man may, all his lifetime, eschew every mortal sin, and do all that the Law of God requires of him; yea, that he can do more than he is obligated unto, and supererogate⁶⁶ and merit for others who fall short of perfection.

Its divine diagnosis

“*If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar,*” for we flatly contradict the Word of truth. In verse 6 it is the hypocrite who is exposed as a liar; in verse 8, those who so believe their own lie as to become fatally self-deceived; in verse 10, those whose consciences are so calloused and hearts hardened by unbelief that they blasphemously assert that which makes God a liar. He has expressly stated that “there is no man that sinneth not” (1Ki 8:46), that “there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20). It is not pre-conversion sins that are in view in our verse, but those committed after, as verse 9 clearly shows. No matter how strict he be over his outward walk, or what he appears in the eyes of his fellows, the most godly and favoured Christian cannot truthfully aver that he is without sin in thought and word and deed; nay, he has to acknowledge himself to be included in the divine declaration, “in many things we all offend” (Jam 3:2)—even when those things wear a religious garb—and therefore does he make daily use of that petition in the family prayer, “Forgive us our sins” (Luk 11:4).

⁶⁴ **Antinomians** – (from the Greek *anti* - against, and *nomos* - law) antinomianism basically means “against law.” It generally means one who holds the theological view that God’s Law has no place in the life of a believer.

⁶⁵ **papists** – those devoted to the pope, i.e., Roman Catholics.

⁶⁶ **supererogate** – to do more than is required or expected.

It is highly important that we should understand what sin is, in its vile nature and exceeding sinfulness. Yet sin as it really is can be seen only in the light of God's Word and Spirit. None but the regenerate have a true concept of that "abominable thing" which God hates (Jer 44:4). Inherent sin is a self-acting principle and is always at work, whether we perceive it or not, defiling our whole being and all that we do. Some sin most in thought, others in words—the boiling over of a hot temper; others in deeds. Rightly did S. E. Pierce (1746-1829) point out, "None of us are saved from sin so much as we conceive. We are saved from a state of sin and sinfulness; we are also saved from a gross way of sin and sinfulness; yet we are not always saved from cursed and carnal affections, nor from dispositions and expressions of our sinfulness"—and every regenerate person is taught of God honestly to acknowledge the same. I cannot say I have not sinned while reading the Scriptures, or when upon my knees, or in the pulpit. Atonement has to be made for our "holy things" (Lev 5:15)! The closer we walk with God, the more conscious are we of our sins.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

64. The Conqueror (10:28-43)

We have now arrived at a passage that offers much less scope for the expositor than did most of those in the preceding chapters, for the closing portions of Joshua 10 consists largely of a series of repetitions, with only slight differences between them. They record how that Joshua and those who were with him encamped before a certain place, fought against it, conquered it, and slew all its inhabitants. Precisely the same thing is narrated again and again of other towns. In the previous articles, we have entered into a close examination of the details of the first twenty-seven verses of Joshua 10, and have commented upon them separately, but for the reason just mentioned, we do not propose to do so with its closing verses—any such attempt would be wearisome to the reader, seeing that they furnish so little variety. Instead, we shall summarize their contents and treat them topically, noticing their several details only so far as they serve to illustrate our theme. This will at least enable us to cover more ground in a shorter time, though as a rule such a course is of very doubtful merits, resulting in mere generalizations that are of little profit.

Taking verses 28 to 43 as a whole, they present a blessed picture of our triumphant Redeemer. Joshua is definitely mentioned in each of the eight sub-divisions, his name occurring no less than eleven times; and in addition he is referred to under the personal pronouns "he" or "him" no less than twenty-five times. We read, "Joshua took Makkedah"; "and Joshua smote him and his people, until he left him none remaining"; "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded"; "And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza"; "And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel." Thus we here behold the nation's leader as the victorious and irresistible warrior, none being able to withstand him or check his onset.

Now, as most of our readers probably know, Joshua means “saviour,” so that in this passage we have a vivid foreshadowment of *the conquering Christ*. That brings before us something which is very precious to the hearts of God’s people.

No feeble and foiled Saviour is the Son of God, but One who is all-powerful and prevalent. Far too little is this dwelt upon either by those in the pulpit or those in the pew. The *balance* has been lost here too. There has been a disproportionate emphasis on the humiliation and sufferings of Christ, and far too little upon His glorious triumphs. Even Calvary may be viewed from too one-sided an angle, so that we fail to perceive that the darkest cloud which ever hung over this earth has a silver lining. Unto the natural man, the cross presents an appalling sight, but the saint is moved thereby to bow in adoring worship before the One suspended upon it. The carnal eye sees only the execution of a criminal—a promising life cut short in ignominy and defeat; spiritual vision beholds the accomplishment of Christ’s mission upon the field of triumph. It was there the Captain of our salvation fought and conquered. Dreadful beyond words was the conflict. “This is *your* hour, and the power of darkness” (Luk 22:53) said Christ to His enemies: nevertheless it was *His* “hour” too (Joh 8:20; 12:23), for the power of Light vanquished the hosts of darkness.

The fight of the ages was waged at Golgotha. It was the decisive conflict between good and evil, and though incarnate Goodness expired, the forces of evil were utterly overthrown. The outward eye looks upon what appears to be nothing but the Saviour’s woe and dishonour, but to the eye of faith the cross itself was His triumphal chariot. It was there that the woman’s Seed confounded the serpent and recovered for His people all that [it] had taken from them in Eden. It was there that He made an end of their sins and brought in for them an everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24). It was there He took away the sting of sin (1Co 15:56) and annulled him which had the power of death (Heb 2:14). It was there He magnified the Law and made it honourable (Isa 42:21) by offering unto God a complete satisfaction unto all its righteous claims. It was there that He blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross,” and there “having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly” (Col 2:14-15). It was there He overcame the world (Joh 16:33).

Mark attentively how valorously Christ carried Himself upon the cross. He had expressly declared, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself” (Joh 10:17-18), and very plainly did He demonstrate the fact, both immediately before and at that very time, that He was no helpless victim in the hands of His enemies. By a word from His lips, the band of officers sent to arrest Him “went backward, and fell to the ground” (Joh 18:6)—awestruck as they dimly apprehended that they were in the presence of incarnate Deity, overpowered by a sense of His majesty. How easily could He have walked quietly away, leaving them prostrate on the ground! Instead, He meekly delivered Himself up into their hands and “was *led* [not “driven”!] as a lamb to the slaughter” (Act 8:32). In like manner, Christ died not from a broken heart (as sentimentalists have imagined), nor from the venom of the serpent, nor even from the thrust of the Roman soldier’s spear (for He had then already expired); but because He had voluntarily “laid down his life.”

During the hours while He hung upon the accursed tree, the Lord Jesus made full proof that instead of being conquered by death, He was the master of Himself. Hear Him making intercession for the transgressors, rather than soliciting prayer for Himself. Behold Him still engaged in His beneficent mission by saving the dying thief. Mark the evidence He gave that He was in complete possession of His mental faculties, as with unclouded mind He reviewed the entire scope of Messianic prophecy, and realizing that there was one particular detail about His sufferings (Psa 69:21) unaccomplished, “that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst” (Joh 19:28). See Him

making provision for His widowed mother as He tenderly entrusted her to His beloved John. Listen to Him crying triumphantly, “It is finished.” Above all, note well His final act, as “with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luk 23:46), or as Mark 15:37 literally means, He “breathed out his spirit”—like a king dismissing His servant. That “loud voice” bore unmistakable testimony to the fact that it was no exhausted sufferer who then expired.

It has been far too little realized that Christ’s death was as wondrous and miraculous as His birth. Everyone else who had expired was helpless in his death, for when the divine summons comes, none is able to resist; but the Prince of life (Act 3:15) could not die except by His own consent. In all other instances, their souls were taken from them; of the Redeemer alone could it be said, “He hath poured out his soul unto death” (Isa 53:12). At the close of life, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, *receive* my spirit” (Act 7:59), only the Lord of glory could *dismiss* His spirit. Christ on the cross was not the helpless victim of violence, but the mighty Victor. He was no mere passive sufferer, but an active Agent who “*offered himself*” unto God as a sacrifice for sin, who out of love for His Church “*gave himself for it*” (Heb 9:14; Eph 5:25). So manifestly did He triumph in that hour that the Roman centurion exclaimed, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mat 27:54). So evidently had He laid down His life, instead of expiring from exhaustion, that “Pilate marveled if he were already dead” (Mar 15:44). His glorious victory at Calvary was signalized by the rending of the temple veil and the quaking of the earth.

In the book of *Revelation*, we are shown all heaven moved to profoundest praise, not when the King of kings comes forth crowned with many diadems, but when it beholds standing “a Lamb as it had been slain”! Yet the unique death of Christ is not the crowning glory of the Gospel: rather is that His triumph over the tomb and His enthronement in heaven. Even a rapid skimming through the sermons recorded in Acts will show that the apostles never made mention of Christ’s death without going on to proclaim His victorious emerging from the grave. The same fact is made prominent in the epistles. Paul reminded the Corinthians that the Gospel he preached was “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day,” and when indicating the relative importance thereof, declared, “It is Christ that died, *yea rather*, that is risen again” (Rom 8:34). Much is said in the epistle to the Hebrews about the atoning sacrifice of Christ, yet no less than seven times is He there viewed as seated on high, at God’s right hand; while in the closing book of the Scripture, again and again, we behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

Such death, as we have attempted to describe above, cannot possibly fail in its design or be defeated in the fulfillment of its purpose. The death of such a Person *must*, my reader, accomplish what it was meant to achieve, and actually secure all that it purchased. If Christ so triumphed on the cross, how much more so must He do so now that He has risen from the dead and ascended on high, and been crowned with glory and honour! Alas, that there should be the slightest need to labour such a point in these pages, and for us to offer proof of what is self-evident. Yet there *is*. For while every Christian will heartily assent to and find his heart drawn out in praise by the above paragraphs, yet—due to the defective and erroneous teaching they have sat under—some of our readers do not really believe what is affirmed in the opening sentences of this one. On the contrary, they imagine that Satan or the “free will” of men may *rob* the victorious Saviour of the spoils of His victory. They may well shrink from such a horrible charge when it is plainly made, yet *that* is exactly what it amounts to; for if Christ shed His precious blood in order that all mankind might be saved thereby, and a large part of the human race be lost, then for them at least His blood was shed in vain.

A defeated or disappointed Christ is a fiction of human invention, for it is entirely foreign to the teaching of Holy Writ. Of old, it was predicted, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” (Isa 42:4). At His incarnation, it was announced, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he *shall save* his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21)—not merely attempt to do so. His own explicit declaration was, “This is the Father’s will which hath sent me: that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (Joh 6:39). And at the close, after saying, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” He added, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory” (Joh 17:24), and the Father hears *Him* “always” (Joh 11:42)! The great atonement, my reader, possesses far more than a conditional efficacy, namely an infallible efficiency. It did not merely make possible the salvation of those who hear the Gospel, but has rendered certain the eternal salvation of all God’s elect. The successful outcome of Christ’s finished work is not left either to chance or the fickle will of men, but is secured by the almighty power and invincible operations of the triune God.

The population of heaven is no more dependent upon the caprice and will of man than was its creation. When it be clearly apprehended that the atoning work of Christ was according to an eternal compact entered into between the Father and the Son, and that the everlasting covenant is “ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5), then we are preserved from much confusion of thought on the subject and delivered from any God-dishonouring errors. Everything in connection with Christ and His Church was indefeasibly⁶⁷ settled before the foundation of the world. The precious blood of the Lamb was not poured out at random, but as He so definitely averred, “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed *for many* for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:28). Since God has borne unmistakable witness unto His acceptance of the full satisfaction that His incarnate Son made unto divine justice and holiness, then it is evident that all the perfections of Deity stand pledged to save or deliver every captive of sin and prisoner of Satan for whom the ransom was paid. To send to hell a single soul for whose sins Christ made atonement would be unjust—demanding payment twice over for the same debt. The law of suretyship demands the reinstatement to God’s favour of all those in whose stead Christ served as Sponsor. Whatever Christ purchased for His people must be bestowed on them, or the righteousness of God would cease to be.

What has been pointed out above is very much more than theological argument, though even as such it cannot be overthrown by any fair reasoning. It is a summarizing of what Holy Writ plainly teaches thereon. To go no farther afield than the ringing testimony of Isaiah 53: in that chapter we have the fullest and most graphic setting forth of the sacrificial and successful work of Christ contained in any single passage of God’s Word. Well has it been said, “It contains both the sum and substance of the Gospel.” Therein the Lord Jesus is described in His person and natures as both God and man. Therein He is set forth in His three principal offices: as the Priest, offering Himself as a sacrifice to meet the requirements of the broken law; as the Prophet, uttering His knowledge to the justifying of many; as the King, dividing the spoil with the strong. Therein too are the two states in which He was to serve plainly depicted: His humiliation, in the nature and design thereof; His exaltation, as the blessed issue of the former and the reward for His sufferings. It is this last, foretold in verses 10-12, which here more immediately concerns us.

⁶⁷ **indefeasible** – without the possibility to be lost or overturned.

Christ's Exaltation

Those verses record the promises which the Father made to the Son in the everlasting covenant. Since Christ has faithfully fulfilled His part of that compact, the reward must be bestowed upon Him. First, “He *shall* see his seed”: a spiritual posterity was assured Him, for that was one of the grand ends of the covenant. Second, “the pleasure of the LORD *shall* prosper in his hand.” He would infallibly make good God’s purpose: no matter what might be the opposition, not one jot or tittle⁶⁸ of the divine decree would fail. Third, “He *shall* see of the travail of his soul and *be satisfied*,” which could not be the case if any of those for whom He laid down His life were to perish eternally. It will be in beholding a completed and glorified Church that its Head will find eternal satisfaction. No defeated and disappointed Saviour will appear before the Father in the last great day: instead, He will triumphantly exclaim, “Behold I and the children which thou hast given me” (Heb 2:13)—not one of them lost.

So infallibly certain was Christ’s triumph that the Old Testament saints forestalled the same in a paean of praise. “O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (Psa 98:1-3). As these last words clearly indicate, this “new song” was *faith’s anticipation*—so fully assured, that it celebrated Christ’s conquest centuries beforehand! A universal chorus was here called for from the redeemed to laud the Lamb, for He had done marvelous things. He put away their sins by the sacrifice of Himself. He vanquished the hosts of hell on their behalf. He conquered death by dying and triumphed over the grave. He gained such a victory as none besides Him could. All the glory, therefore, is due to Him alone. It was by His own right hand He conquered, and His Church partakes of its fruits. Thus it well becomes them to sing His praises forever.

Psalm 98 was written to celebrate the great salvation which Christ has wrought out for His people. He has won complete victory over all the enemies of Himself and His Church. His triumph will last forever, and He will wear the glory of it on high as long as heaven is heaven. His victory and salvation are now made known and openly revealed by the preaching of the Gospel (Rom 3:21). Proclamation thereof is made unto the Gentiles, for God will have a world-wide testimony borne to the exploits of His Son. Out of them too He is taking a people for His name, and they also shall sing this song to the honour of the great Redeemer. As He declared, so it has come to pass: “all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” Such was the immutable will of the triune JEHOVAH. Such was the word of Him that cannot lie, that a thousand years before the divine incarnation, the full results thereof were announced as something already accomplished. The complete fruits of Christ’s victory have not yet been gathered in, but so surely will they be that even now the redeemed are to give thanks for the same and “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Psa 98:4).

⁶⁸ **jot or tittle** – *jot* - the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet; *tittle* - the smallest stroke on a letter in the Hebrew alphabet (Mat 5:18).

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 4

The preacher should be, above everything else, a man of the Book, thoroughly versed in the contents of God's Word, one who is able to bring forth out of his treasure "things new and old" (Mat 13:52). The Bible is to be his sole text-book, and from its living waters he is to drink deeply and daily. Personally, we use nothing else than the English *Authorized Version* and *Young's Concordance*, with an occasional reference to the Greek Interlinear and the American *Revised Version*. Commentaries we consult only *after* we have made a first-hand and exhaustive study of a passage. We strongly urge young preachers to be much on their guard against allowing commentaries to become a substitute for, instead of a supplement to, their own minute and full examination and pondering of Holy Writ. As there is a happy mean between imagining either that the Bible is so plain and simple that anyone can understand it, or so difficult and profound that it would be a waste of time for the average person to read it—so there is between being mainly dependent on the labours of others and simply echoes of their ideas, and utterly disparaging that light and help which may be obtained from God's servants of the past.

It is at the feet of God that the preacher must take his place, learning from Him the meaning of His Word, waiting upon Him to open its mysteries, looking to Him for his message. Nowhere but in the Scriptures can he ascertain what is pleasing or displeasing unto the Lord. There alone are opened the secrets of divine wisdom, of which the philosopher and scientist know nothing. And as the great Dutch Puritan rightly pointed out, "Whatever is not drawn from them, whatever is not built upon them, whatever does not most exactly accord with them, however it may recommend itself by the appearance of the most sublime wisdom, or rest on ancient tradition and consent of learned men, or the weight of plausible arguments, it is vain, futile, and, in short, a lie. 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them' (Isa 8:28). Let the theologian delight in those sacred Oracles: let him exercise himself in them day and night, meditate in them, draw all his wisdom from them. Let him compass all his thoughts on them, let him embrace nothing in religion which he does not find there" (Herman Witsius, 1636-1708).

The inter-relation of the Old and New Testaments

Coming now to those principles which are to guide the student in his efforts to interpret God's Word, we place first and foremost the need for recognizing *the inter-relation and mutual dependence* of the Old and New Testaments. We do so because error at this point inevitably results in a serious misunderstanding and perverting of not a little in the later Scriptures. We do not propose to enter into a refutation of the modern heresy of "Dispensationalism,"⁶⁹ but to treat of this section of our subject constructively. After a long and careful comparison of the writings of that school with *The Institutes* of John Calvin (1509-1564), and our observation of the kind of fruit borne by the one and the other, it is our conviction that that eminent reformer was far more deeply taught by the Holy Spirit than those who claimed to receive so much "new light on God's Word" a century ago. We would therefore urge every preacher who possesses Calvin's *Institutes* to give his very best attention unto its two chapters on "The Similarity of the Old and New Testaments" and "The Difference of the Two Testaments."

The *similarity* of the two Testaments is much greater and more vital than their dissimilarity. The same triune God is revealed in each, the same way of salvation is set forth, the same standard of holiness is exhibited, the same eternal destinies of the righteous and the wicked made known. The New has all its roots in the Old, so that much in the one is unintelligible apart from the other. Not only is a knowledge of the history of the patriarchs and of the institutions of Judaism indispensable for an understanding of many details in the Gospels and the Epistles, but its terms and ideas are identical. That it is entirely unwarrantable for us to suppose that the message proclaimed by the Lord Jesus was something new or radically different from the early communications of God appears from His emphatic warning: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mat 5:17)—to vindicate and substantiate them, to free them from human perversions and misrepresentations, and to make good what they demanded and announced. So far from there being any antagonism between the teaching of Christ and divine messengers who preceded Him, when He enunciated "the golden law," He stated, "for this is the law and the prophets" (Mat 7:12).

Most certainly there was no conflict between the testimony of the apostles and that of their Master, for He had expressly enjoined them to teach their converts "to observe all things whatsoever I *have* [not shall!] commanded you" (Mat 28:20). Nor did the doctrinal system of Paul differ in any wise from that enunciated in the Old Testament. At the very beginning of the first

⁶⁹ **Dispensationalism** — the system of theology that divides the Word of God into arbitrary periods with supposed differences in the way God saves men from their sins. It proposes that the Old Testament saints were not a part of the Church of God, and that the Law has no bearing on the Christian as a guide to moral living.

epistle bearing his name, he is particular to inform us that the Gospel unto which God had separated him was none other than the one He “had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures” (Rom 1:2): and when he stated that the righteousness of God was now revealed apart from the Law, he was careful to add, “being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (3:21). When he vindicated his teaching on justification by faith without the deeds of the Law, he did so by appealing to the case of Abraham and the testimony of David (Rom 4). When he admonished the Corinthians against being lulled into a false sense of security because of the spiritual gifts that had been bestowed upon them, he reminded them of the Israelites, who had been highly favoured of God, yet that did not keep them from His displeasure when they sinned, even though they “did all eat *the same* spiritual meat: and did drink the same spiritual drink” (1Co 10:1-5). And when illustrating important practical truth, he cites the history of Abraham’s two sons (Gal 4:22-31).

In many respects, the New Testament is a continuation of and a complement to the Old. The difference between the old and new covenants referred to in Hebrews is a relative and not an absolute one. The contrast is not really between two opposites, but rather between a gradation from the lower to the higher plane—the one preparing for the other. While some have erred in too much Judaizing Christianity, others have entertained far too carnal a conception of Judaism, failing to perceive the *spiritual* elements in it, and that, under it, God was then as truly administering the blessings of the everlasting covenant unto those whom He had chosen in Christ as He is now; yea, that He had done so from Abel onwards. Rightly, then, did Calvin rebuke the madness of our modern dispensationalists when reproving those of their forerunners who appeared in his day, saying, “Now what would be more absurd than that Abraham should be the father of all the faithful, and not possess even the lowest place among them? But he cannot be excluded from the number, even from the most honourable station, without the destruction of the Church.”

Whether the speaker is Christ or one of His apostles, at almost every vital point he clinches his argument by an appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures, proof-texts therefrom being found in almost every page in the New. Innumerable examples might be adduced to show that both the ideas and the language of the former have given their impress to the latter—more than six hundred expressions in the one occurring in the other. Every clause in the “Magnificat” (Luk 1:46-55) and even in the family prayer (Mat 6:9-13) is drawn from the Old Testament. It therefore behoves the student to give equal attention to *both* of the principal divisions of the Bible, not only thoroughly familiarizing himself with the latter, but endeavouring to drink deeply of the spirit of the first, in order to fit him for understanding the second. Unless he does so, it will be impossible for him to apprehend aright much in the Gospels and Epistles. Not only is a knowledge of the types necessary to comprehend the antitypes⁷⁰—for what would “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7) mean to one ignorant of Exodus 12; and how much in Hebrews 9 and 10 is intelligible apart from Leviticus 16?—but many important words of the New Testament can be correctly defined only by referring back to their usage in the Old Testament: such as “firstborn, redeem, propitiation,” etc.

That there must be a fundamental harmony between Judaism and Christianity appears in the fact that the same God is the Author of both, and is unchanging in His perfections and the principles of His government. The former was indeed addressed more to the outward man, was transacted under visible forms and relations, and had respect primarily to a worldly sanctuary and earthly inheritance; nevertheless, they were all of them a “shadow of heavenly things” (Heb 8:5; 10:1). “In the New Testament, we have a higher, yet very closely related, exhibition of truth and duty than in the Old, which involves both the agreements and differences of the two covenants. The agreements lie deeper and concern the more essential elements of the two economies; the differences are of a more circumstantial and formal nature” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1805-1874). Personally, we would say that the principal variations appear in that, in the one, we have promise and prediction, in the other, performance and fulfillment—first the types and shadows (the “blade”), then the reality and substance of “full corn in the ear.” The Christian dispensation⁷¹ excels the Mosaic in a fuller and clearer manifestation of God’s perfections (1Jo 2:8), in a more abundant effusion of the Spirit (Joh 7:39; Act 2:3), in its wider extent (Mat 28:19-20), and in a larger measure of liberty (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:2-7).

Scriptural quotation

The second principle that the expositor must make a most careful study of is that of *scriptural quotation*. Not a little help in ascertaining the right laws of interpretation may be obtained from diligently observing *the manner in which and the purpose for which* the Old Testament is cited in the New. There can be little room for doubt that the record which the Holy Spirit has supplied of the way in which our Lord and His apostles understood and applied the Old Testament was as much designed to throw light *generally* on how the Old Testament is to be used by us, as it was to furnish instruction on the particular points for the sake of which passages in the Law or the prophets were more immediately appealed to. By examining closely the words quoted and the sense given to them in the New Testament, we shall not only be delivered from a slavish literalism, but be better enabled to perceive the *fullness* of God’s words, and the varied application which may be legitimately made of them. A wide, but generally neglected, field is open for exploration, but instead of endeavouring here to make a thorough canvass of the same, we shall simply supply a few illustrations.

⁷⁰ **types...antitypes** – *types* - figures or symbols representing other things, often spiritual truths; *antitypes* - those things which are represented.

⁷¹ **dispensation** – age; period.

In Matthew 8:16, we are told that on a certain occasion Christ “healed all that were sick,” and then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the evangelist added, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet [namely in 53:4], saying, himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.” Such a use of that Messianic prediction is most illuminating, intimating as it does that it had a *wider* signification than the making of atonement for the sins of His people, namely that during the days of His public ministry, Christ entered sympathetically into the condition of the sufferers, and took upon His spirit the sorrows and pains of those to whom He ministered, that His miracles of healing cost Him much in the way of compassion and endurance. He was personally afflicted by their afflictions. Christ began His mediatorial work of removing the evil which sin had brought into the world, by curing those bodily ailments which were the fruits of sin, and by so doing shadowed forth the greater work He was to accomplish at the cross. The *connection* between the one and the other was more plainly indicated when He said alternatively to the sick of the palsy, “Thy sins be forgiven thee” and “arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house” (Mat 9:2, 6).

Consider next how Christ used the Old Testament to refute the materialists of His day. The Sadducees held the notion that the soul and body are so closely allied that if one perishes the other must (Act 23:8). They saw the body die, and therefrom concluded that the soul had also. Very striking indeed is it to behold incarnate wisdom reasoning with them on their own ground. This He did by quoting from Exodus 3, where JEHOVAH had said unto Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” But *wherein* were those words to the point? What was there in them which exposed the error of the Sadducees? Nothing explicitly, but much implicitly. From them Christ drew the conclusion that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mat 22:32). It was not that He had been their “God,” but that He was so still—“I *am* their God,” therefore they still lived. Since their spirits and souls were yet alive, their bodies must be raised in due course, for being their “God” guaranteed that He would be to them and do for them all that such a relation called for, and not leave a part of their nature to be a prey of corruption. Therein Christ established the important principle of interpretation that we may draw any clear and necessary *inference* from a passage, provided it clashes not with any definite statement of Holy Writ.

In Romans 4:11-18, we have a remarkable example of apostolic *reasoning* from two short passages in Genesis, wherein God made promise unto Abraham that he should be a father of many nations (17:5) and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed (22:18). Since these assurances were given to the patriarch simply as a believer, *before* the divine appointment of circumcision, Paul drew the logical conclusion that they pertained to Jews and Gentiles alike, providing they believed as he did and thereby had imputed to them the righteousness of Christ, that the good of those promises belonged unto *all* who “walk in the steps of his faith.” Therein we are plainly taught that the “seed” of blessing mentioned in those ancient prophecies was essentially of a *spiritual* kind (cf. Gal 3:7-9; 14:29), including all the members of the household of faith, wherever they be found. As Stifler (James M., 1840-1910?) pertinently remarked, “Abraham is called *father* neither in a physical sense nor a spiritual: he is father in that he is head of the faith clan, and so the normal type.” In Romans 9:6-13, the apostle was equally express in *excluding* from the good of those promises, the merely natural descendants of Abraham.

Romans 10:5-9 supplies a striking illustration of this principle in the way that the apostle “opened” Deuteronomy 30:11-14. His design was to draw off the Jews from regarding obedience to the Law as necessary unto justification (Rom 10:2-3). He did so by producing an argument from the writings of Moses, wherein a distinction was drawn between the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith. The Jews had rejected Christ because He came not to them in the way of their carnal expectations, and therefore refused the grace tendered by Him. They considered the Messiah was far off, when in fact He was “nigh” them. There was no need, then, for them to ascend to heaven, for Christ had come down from thence; nor to descend into the deep, for He had risen from the dead. The apostle was not merely accommodating to his purpose the language of Deuteronomy 30, but showing its evangelical drift. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) said, “The whole of that chapter is a sermon of evangelical repentance” (see verses 1 and 2). It obviously looked forward to a time after Christ’s ascension when Israel would be dispersed among the nations, so that the words of Moses there were strictly applicable to this Gospel dispensation. The substance of verses 11-14 is that the knowledge of God’s will is freely accessible, so that none are required to do the impossible.

In Romans 10:18, more than a hint is given of the profound depths of God’s Word and the wide breadth of its application. “But I say, Have they not heard [the Gospel, though they obeyed it not—verse 16]? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (cf. Col 1:5-6), but was as general and free as the divine declarations of the heavens (Psa 19:1). “The universal revelation of God in nature was a providential prediction of the universal proclamation of the Gospel. If the former was not gratuitous, but founded in the nature of God, so must the latter be. The manifestation of God in nature is for all His creatures to whom it is made, in pledge of their participation in the clearer and higher revelations” (E. W. Hengstenberg, 1802-1869). Not only did Old Testament prophecy announce that the Gospel should be given to the whole world, but the heavens *mystically* declared the same thing. The heavens speak not to one nation only, but to the whole human race! If men did not believe, it was not because they had not heard. Another example of the *mystical* signification of certain Scriptures is found in 1 Corinthians 9:9-10.

In Galatians 4:24, the inspired pen of Paul informs us that certain domestic incidents in the household of Abraham “are an allegory,” that Hagar and Sarah represented “the two covenants,” and that their sons prefigured the kind of worshippers those covenants were fitted to produce. But for that divine revelation unto and through the apostle, we should never have known that in those facts of history, God had concealed a prophetic mystery, that those domestic occurrences prophetically shadowed forth vitally important transactions of the future, that they illustrated great doctrinal truths and exemplified the difference in conduct of spiritual slaves and spiritual freemen. Yet such was the case, as the apostle showed by opening to us the occult meaning of those events. They were a parable in action: God so shaped the affairs of Abraham’s family as to typify things of vast magnitude. The two sons were ordained to foreshadow those who should be born from above and those born after the flesh—that

even Abraham's natural descendants were but Ishmaelites in spirit, strangers to the promise. While Paul's example here is certainly *no precedent* for the expositor to give free rein unto his imagination and make Old Testament episodes teach anything he pleases, it *does* intimate that God so ordered the lives of the patriarchs as to afford lessons of great spiritual value.

We have, above, designedly selected a variety of examples, and from them the diligent student (but not so the hurried reader) will discover some valuable divine hints and helps on *how* the Scriptures are to be understood, and the principles *by which* they are to be interpreted. Let them be reread and carefully pondered.

The Analogy of Faith

Third, constant care must be diligently taken strictly to conform all our interpretations to the *Analogy of Faith*, or, as Romans 12:6 expresses it, "let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Charles Hodge (1797-1878), who for doctrinal soundness, spiritual scholarship, and critical acumen is unsurpassed, states that the original and proper meaning of the word "prophet" is *interpreter*—one who declares the will of God, who explains His mind to others. He also says that the word rendered "proportion" may mean either proportion, or measure, rule, standard. Since "faith" in this verse must be taken *objectively* (for there were "prophets" like Balaam and Caiaphas, who were devoid of any inward or saving faith), then this important expression signifies that the interpreter of God's mind must be most particular and scrupulous in seeing to it that he ever does so in accordance with the revealed standard He had given us. Thus "faith" here is used in the same sense as in such passages as "the faith" in Galatians 1:23, 1 Timothy 4:1, etc.—namely, the "one faith" of Ephesians 4:5, "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3), the written Word of God.

The exposition made of any verse in Holy Writ must be in entire agreement with the Analogy of Faith, or that system of truth which God has made known unto His people. That, of course, calls for a comprehensive knowledge of the contents of the Bible—sure proof that no "novice" is qualified to preach unto or attempt to teach others. Such comprehensive knowledge can be obtained only by a systematic and constant reading of the Word itself—and only then is any man fitted to weigh the writings of others! Since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, there are no contradictions therein; thus it obviously follows that any explanation given of a passage which clashes with the plain teaching of other verses is manifestly erroneous. In order for any interpretation to be valid, it must be in perfect keeping with the scheme of divine truth. One part of the truth is mutually related to and dependent upon others, and therefore there is full accord between them. As Johann A. Bengel (1687-1752) said of the books of Scripture, "They indicate together one beautiful, harmonious, and gloriously connected system of truth."

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

4. Its Consequences, Part 3

Having considered those consequences which fell more immediately upon our first parents for their original offence, we shall now look at those they entailed upon their descendants. Nor do we have to go outside of Genesis 3 to find proof that the penal consequences of their transgression are visited upon their posterity. What God said to the whole of mankind, for since the sin was common to all, so was the penalty too. “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (verse 16), and such has been the lot of all Eve’s daughters. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life....In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (verses 17, 19), and such has been the portion of Adam’s sons—in every generation and in all parts of the earth. The calamity or evil which then descended upon the world continues unto this hour: all of Adam’s and Eve’s children are equally involved in the sentence of the pain of childbirth, the curse upon the ground, the obligation to live by toil and sweat, the decay and death of the body.

But let it be pointed out that the things just mentioned above, severe and painful though they be, are trivial in comparison with the divine judgment which has been visited upon man’s *soul*, that they are but the external and visible marks of the moral and spiritual calamity which overtook Adam and his race. By his disobedience, he forfeited the favour of his Maker, fell under His holy condemnation and curse, received the awful wages of his sin, came under the sentence of the Law, was alienated from the life of God, became totally depraved—and as such, an object of abhorrence to the Holy One, driven from His presence. Since the guilt of his offence was imputed or judicially charged unto all those he represented, it follows that they participate in all the misery that came upon him. Guilt consists of an obligation or liability to suffer punishment for an offence committed, and that in proportion to the aggravation of the same. In consequence thereof, every child is born into this world in a state of ante-natal⁷² disgrace and condemnation, and with an entire depravity of nature or disposition which inevitably leads to and produces actual transgression, and with a complete inability of soul to change its nature or do anything pleasing to God.

Psalms 58:3

“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa 58:3). First, from the moment of birth, every child is morally and spiritually cut off from the Lord—a lost sinner. “Estranged from God and all good: alienated from the divine life, and its principles, powers, and blessings” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Adam lost not only the image of God, but His favour and fellowship too, being expelled from His presence: and each of his children was born *outside* Eden, born in a state of guilt. Second, in consequence thereof, they

⁷² **ante-natal** – *ante* - prior to; *natal* - birth; prior to birth.

are delinquents, perverts from the beginning. Their very being is polluted, for evil is bred in the bone with them, their “nature” being inclined unto wickedness only; and, if God leaves them unto themselves, they will never return therefrom. Third, quickly do they supply evidence of their separation from God and the corruption of their hearts—as every godly parent perceives to his sorrow. While in the cradle itself, they evince their opposition to truth, sincerity, integrity. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child” (Pro 22:15): not “childishness” but “foolishness”—that positive propensity to evil, the entering into an ungodly course, the forming and following of bad habits; “bound in the heart”—held firmly there by chains invincible to human power.

But in all ages, there have been those who sought to blunt the sharp edge of Psalm 58:3, by unwarrantably narrowing its scope, denying that it has a race-wide application; those who are determined at all costs to rid themselves of the unpalatable truth of the total depravity of all mankind. Pelagians⁷³ and Socinians⁷⁴ have insisted that that verse is speaking only of a particularly reprobate class, those who are flagrantly wayward from an early age. Rightly did John Owen (1616-1683) point out: “It is to no purpose to say that he speaks of wicked men only: that is, such as are habitually and profligately so. For whatever any man may afterwards run into by a course of sin, all men are morally alike from the womb, and it is an aggravation of the wickedness of men that it begins so early and holds on in an uninterrupted course. Children are not able to speak from the womb, as soon as they be born. Yet here are they said to speak lies. It is therefore the perverse acting of depraved nature in infancy that is intended, for everything that is irregular, that answers not the law of our creation and rule of our obedience, is a *lie*.”

Ephesians 2:3

“And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3). That statement is, if possible, even more awful and solemn than Psalm 58:3. It signifies much more than that we are born into the world with a defiled constitution, for it is not simply “children of corruption,” but “of wrath”—obnoxious to God, criminals in His sight. Depravity of our natures is no mere misfortune: if it were, it would evoke pity and not anger! The expression “children of wrath” is a Hebraism, a very strong and emphatic one. In the margin of 1 Samuel 20:30 and 11 Samuel 12:5, we read of “the son of death,” that is one unto whom death is due. And in Matthew 23:15, Christ used the fearful term “the child of hell”—one whose sure portion is hell; while in John 17:12, He designated Judas “the son of perdition”—divinely appointed thereto. Thus “children of wrath” connotes those who are deserving of wrath, heirs thereto, meet⁷⁵ for it. They are born unto wrath, and under it, as their heritage. Not only defiled and corrupt creatures, but the objects of God’s judicial indignation. But why so? Because the sin of Adam is imputed unto them, and therefore they are regarded as guilty of having broken God’s Law.

Equally forcible and explicit are the words “*by nature* the children of wrath,” for it is in designed contrast with that which is artificially acquired. Many have insisted (contrary to the facts of common experience and observation) that children are corrupted by external contact with evil, that they *acquire* bad habits by imitation of others. We do not deny that environment has a measure of influence, yet if any baby could be placed in a perfect one and surrounded only by sinless beings, it would soon be evident that he was corrupt. We are depraved not by a process of devel-

⁷³ **Pelagians** – those who (perhaps unknowingly) follow the teachings of the heretic Pelagius (c. 354-c. 420), a British monk who argued that people could reform themselves by free will and that they can take the first steps toward salvation without the assistance of God’s grace. His views were condemned as heresy by the Council of Ephesus (431).

⁷⁴ **Socinians** – followers of the sect founded by Faustus Socinius, 16th century Italian theologian, who denied the deity of Christ and denied that the cross brought forgiveness of sins.

⁷⁵ **meet** – fit; suitable.

opment, but by genesis. It is not “on account of nature” but “by nature,” because of our nativity: it is innate, bred in us. As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) solemnly pointed out, “They are children of wrath in the very womb, before they commit any actual sin.” The depraved nature itself is a *penal evil*, and that is because of our federal union with Adam, as partaking of his transgression. We are the children of wrath because our federal head fell under the wrath of God: “There would be no truth in the assertion of Paul that all are by nature the children of wrath, if they had not been already under the curse before their birth” (John Calvin, 1509-1564).

Romans 9:11-13

But a greater than Calvin has informed us: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom 9:11-13). This goes back still farther: Esau was an object of God’s hatred before he was born. Obviously, a righteous God could not abominate one who was pure and innocent. But how could Esau be guilty prior to doing any good or evil? Because he shared Adam’s criminality! And for precisely the same reason, all of us are by nature the children of wrath, obnoxious to divine punishment—not only by virtue of our own personal transgressions, but first because of our constitution; it is coeval⁷⁶ with our very being. We are members of a cursed head, branches of a condemned tree, streams of a polluted fountain; in a word, the guilt of Adam’s sin lies hard upon us. No other explanation is possible; since our guilt and liability unto punishment be not, in the first place, due to our personal sins, they must be because of Adam’s being imputed to us.

It is for the same reason that infants *die* naturally, for sin is not merely the occasion of physical dissolution, but the cause of it. Death is the wages of sin, the sentence of the broken law, the penal infliction of a righteous God. Had Adam never sinned, neither he nor any of his descendants would have become subject to death. Death is altogether unnatural and abnormal to man, as the longevity of the patriarchs evidenced. Had not the guilt of Adam’s offence been charged to his posterity, none would die in infancy. Yet it does not necessarily follow that any who expire in early childhood are eternally lost. That they are born into this world spiritually dead, alienated from the life of God, is clear; but whether they die eternally, or are saved by sovereign grace, is probably one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord. If they be saved, it must be because they are among the number elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Spirit—without which none can enter heaven; but concerning these things Scripture appears to us to be silent. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and there we may submissively yet trustfully leave it. Parenthood is an unspeakably solemn matter!

Ephesians 2:1-3 and John 3:36

In the opening verses of Ephesians 2, the Holy Spirit has described our fallen state. First, as being dead in trespasses and sins (verse 1): dead judicially, under sentence of the Law; dead experientially, without a spark of spiritual life. Second, the outward course of such is depicted (verses 2-3): as completely dominated by “the flesh” or evil principle, inspired unto an ungodly walk by Satan, so that our every action is sinful. Third, the resultant punishment (verse 3): obnoxious to the divine Judge, born in such a condition, and remaining so while in a state of nature. Until the sinner believes, “the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36). Though the sentence be not yet executed, it is suspended over him. The word “abideth” here denotes *perpetuity*: as Augustine (354-430) said, “It hath been upon him from his birth, and remains to this day upon him. The

⁷⁶ **coeval** – contemporary.

children of wrath, *even as others*”: this is the case of *all* of Adam’s descendants, and it is *equally* so. It is a common heritage: by nature no man is either better or worse than his fellows. The very fact that this awful visitation is *universal* can only be accounted for by our relation to the first man, as our covenant head and legal representative.

Atonement for original sin?

It would hardly be fair to conclude this article without taking some notice of those who attempt to dismiss all which has been pointed out above by dogmatically insisting that “Christ made atonement for original sin,” so that the guilt of our first father’s transgression rests not on his sons. But such an arbitrary assertion is manifestly contrary to those patent facts which confront us on every side. The judgment which God pronounced upon Adam and Eve is being as surely visited upon their children *today* as ever it was before the Son of God died upon the cross. The curse upon the ground, the peculiar sufferings of females and the pain of childbirth, the necessity to toil for our daily bread, the universal reign of death, including the demise of so many infants, are all just as evident and prevalent in the New Testament era as ever they were in the Old. But obviously such things could not be were the Arminian⁷⁷ view sound, for if the *guilt* of original sin has been removed, the *effects* thereof could no longer continue. Such an affirmation is baseless, unconfirmed by a single clear statement in Scripture; though some do make a far-fetched attempt to substantiate it by appealing to John 1:29.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” We wonder how many of our readers can perceive anything in those words which strikes them as relevant to the point. Men must surely be hard put to it when they have to press such a verse into service in order to bolster up their theory. Our Lord’s forerunner was here presenting the Messiah unto the people in that sacrificial character which both type and prophecy had prepared them to look for Him, and not raising an abstruse question in theology, which is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture. Had those words occurred in one of Paul’s profound doctrinal discussions, we should be ready to look for a deeper meaning in them, though we would require something very specific in the context obliging us to define “the sin of the world” as the sin *of Adam*! John was the herald of a new dispensation: one which would be radically different in its *scope* from the previous one, and one which should be inaugurated by breaking down the “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14).

For two thousand years, the grace of God had been restricted almost entirely unto a single nation; but now it was on the point of flowing out unto all. The Baptist was there announcing Christ as the heaven-appointed sacrifice which was to expiate the sin not of believing Jews only, but of Gentiles also. Though “the world” be a general expression, it is not to be regarded as comprehending a universality of individuals, as synonymous with mankind. It is an *indefinite* expression, as “The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and *all flesh* shall see it together” (Isa 40:5) and “all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour” (Isa 49:26). “The *sin* of the whole world” signifies all the sins of all God’s people as a collective whole, as one great and heavy burden—just as in Isaiah 53:6, “the LORD hath laid on him *the iniquity* of us all.” It was the entire penalty and punishment of sin which Christ took on Himself, and bore away from before the divine Judge. As Hebrews 9:26 tells us, “But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” and since that sacrifice was a *vicarious* one, it necessarily removed the guilt of all those in whose stead it was made.

⁷⁷ **Arminian** – pertaining to the theology of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian. He rejected the Reformers’ understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God’s predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

Not only is the theory we are here controverting without any scriptural evidence to support it, but it is refuted by very considerable evidence to the contrary. If attention be paid to *the relations* which Christ sustained to those in whose stead He obeyed and suffered, it at once appears that His work was no mere indefinite and general one, but with a particular and restricted design. He transacted as a Shepherd on behalf of His sheep (Joh 10:11, and contrast 10:26)—if He died also for the goats and the wolves, then there was no point in saying He laid down His life for the sheep. It was in the relation of a Husband He served (Eph 5:25-27): *there* is singleness of affection, the exclusiveness of conjugal love! He sustained to His beneficiaries the relation of Head, there being a federal and legal *unity* between them (Heb 2:11). The redemptive work of Christ was like His coat, “without seam,” one complete and indivisible whole, so that what He did for one He did for all—and not merely took away the guilt of original sin.

If it were true that Christ atoned for Adam’s offence, then it would necessarily follow that the government under which the human race is now placed is one which recognizes not the original curse. But such is far from being the case. From the Fall until now, all are born dead in sin, the objects of God’s displeasure. That is very evident from the teaching of Romans 3, where, in unequivocal language, the whole world is pronounced to be under condemnation, brought in “guilty before God” (verses 10-19)—not merely a possible condemnation, but an actual one; not one which may be incurred, but which has been incurred already, and under which all are now lying; and the only way of deliverance therefrom is by faith in Christ. Precisely the same representation is given in the New Testament of the condition of all when first visited by the Gospel. They are addressed as those who are sinners, lost, lying beneath the curse of a broken law, for the dark background of the Gospel is that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18), and until the terms of the Gospel are met, men have *no* hope (Eph 2:12).

The very scene into which we are born confronts us with innumerable evidences that the earth is under the curse of its Maker. “The frowning aspect of Providence which so often darkens our world and appalls our minds, receives the only adequate solution in the fact that the Fall has fearfully changed the relations of God and the creature. We are manifestly treated as criminals under guard. We are dealt with as guilty, faithless, suspected beings that cannot be trusted for a moment. Our earth has been turned into a prison, and sentinels are posted around us to awe, rebuke, and check us. Still, there are traces of our ancient grandeur; there is so much consideration shown to us as to justify the impression that those prisoners were once kings, and that this dungeon was once a palace. To one unacquainted with the history of our race, the dealings of Providence in regard to us must appear inexplicably mysterious. But the whole subject is covered with light when the doctrine of the Fall is understood. The gravest theological errors with respect alike to the character of God and the character of man have arisen from the monstrous hypothesis that our present is our primitive condition, that we are now what God originally made us” (James H. Thornwell, 1812-1862).

December

REMEMBERING

New Year's Message, to be read on January 1

We propose to write now upon a twofold “remembering”—God’s of us, ours of Him. We need hardly point out that when the Scriptures speak of God “remembering,” such language is a gracious concession on His part—the Infinite accommodating Himself to the language of the finite. With the great I am, there is neither past nor future, but rather an ever-present *now*—“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Act 15:18) expresses far more than His bare omniscience. Thus there is no such thing as forgetting or recalling on God’s part, yet that does not mean the term is devoid of significance when it is referred to the eternal One; very far from it. When the Bible tells us God “remembers” His people, it means that He is mindful of them, that they are the objects of His favourable regard, that He has their welfare at heart. As might be expected, the first time the term occurs in Holy Writ, it is in connection with *God*: as a matter of fact, the first five references (the number of *grace*) are to the divine remembering—how significant and blessed! Equally anticipatively and suggestively, the first time it is used of man is in Genesis 40:23, “yet *did not* the chief butler remember Joseph,” who had befriended him—so fickle is the human memory.

“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark” (Gen 8:1). In order to appreciate the blessedness of those words, we need to ponder the occasion and visualize the situation. To carnal reason and natural impatience, it would appear that the Lord had completely forgotten those within the ark. Not only days and weeks, but months had elapsed since He had “shut him in” (7:16). Previously, God had promised Noah that He would preserve him and all who were with him in the ark (6:14-20), and now no less than nine months had passed (8:5) and still they were confined therein! His faith had been put to a great test in the building of the ark, and now his hope was severely tried, for there is no record that God had informed him how long he would have to remain therein. How often it has been thus with the Lord’s people! For a season He seems to overlook them, yet in due course He appears for them. In “wrath” upon the wicked, God remembers “mercy” unto His elect (Hab 3:2). Let every saint who is in straits take comfort and fresh confidence from Genesis 8:1. “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation” (2Pe 2:9). If not one sparrow is forgotten by God (Luk 12:6), He certainly will not forget one of His dear children!

“He hath remembered his covenant for ever” (Psa 105:8), the reference being unto that formal and solemn arrangement which God entered into with Christ before the foundation of the world, wherein, as the Head of His people, the Mediator⁷⁸ pledged Himself fully to discharge their obligations; and the Father, on His part, promised to bestow upon them the reward earned by their Surety.⁷⁹ That everlasting covenant is the basis of all God’s dealings with His elect, the ground of the divine procedure in all His dispensations with them. Exodus 2:23-25 supplies a blessed illustration thereof. When the Hebrews were being sorely oppressed in Egypt, and they sighed and cried by reason of the bondage, we are told “God heard their groaning, and God *remembered His covenant*...and God had respect unto them.” God cannot violate that gracious compact, for it is sacred to Him, being sealed by the blood of His Son (Heb 13:21). In Psalm 105:42, the covenant is termed “His holy promise,” and a holy God must make good His oath (Psa 89:4, 19). “He will ever be mindful of his covenant” (Psa 111:5), for He takes great care in acting always according to its engagement. It does not become obsolete by the lapse of time; it cannot be broken, for God is faithful. Zacharias recognized that the wonders God wrought in his day were the fulfillment of His covenant promises (Luk 1:68-72).

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa 103:14). Blessed consideration is that! God is not forgetful of our mortality nor unmindful of our infirmities, and therefore does He deal gently with us. We too often overlook our frailty, unduly burdening ourselves and overtaxing our strength. Nor do we sufficiently bear in mind the infirmities of others—how many a husband fails to realize that his wife is “the weaker vessel” (1Pe 3:7), and, instead of giving honour unto her as such, imposes upon her. Not so the Lord: “He *remembereth* that we are dust.” He is no Egyptian taskmaster! Nor is the Lord Jesus: His yoke is easy and His burden light (Mat 11:30). The Lord is compassionate unto His feeble creatures. “Feeble” we say, for though the world may talk of some men possessing “an iron constitution,” Scripture declares “*all* flesh is grass” (Isa 40:5). The measure of our natural strength is sovereignly allotted by our Maker. It is not those of the most powerful physique who live longest—witness Marshal Petain, King Gustav, G. B. Shaw. For the Lord to “remember” us is to be considerate of our frailty, to hear our cries (1Sa 1:19-20), to succour and help us (Gal 2:10).

“Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). Those words point one of the many contrasts which the apostle was here drawing between the old and new covenants as he set forth the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, for in the latter there *was* “a remembrance again made of sins every year” (verse 3). How precious is this emphatic declaration! It signifies that God absolves those who savingly believe in Christ from the guilt of their sins, so that they will never more be brought against them for their condemnation. It means that the penal and eternal consequences of our sins have been annulled, and therefore that they will never be recalled by God as He exercises His office of Judge. It expresses the fixity and finality of divine forgiveness: that God will never revoke His pardon, that He has not only remitted our sins, but acts as though He had *forgotten* them. It is unspeakably blessed to observe how repeatedly and emphatically this truth is expressed in the Word. God has cast all our sins behind His back (Isa 38:17). He has removed them from before His face as far as the east is from the west (Psa 103:12). He has cast them all into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19). He has blotted them out, as the sun completely dissipates a cloud (Isa 44:22). Beautifully is this illustrated by the fact that none of the failures and falls of the Old Testament saints are recorded in the New! Why? Because all their sins were under the blood of Christ!

⁷⁸ **Mediator** – one who intervenes between two parties to bring reconciliation; a go-between.

⁷⁹ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another.

“Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God” (Deu 8:18). At the beginning of a new year, beg Him to write this word upon your heart and make it effectual in your life. Does not your past show the need thereof? Alas, how quickly have His mercies faded from our minds. How transient the effects produced in our souls from His Word. Feelings stirred, but no lasting results, for truth loses its efficacy when not seriously thought upon. We listen to a powerful sermon or read an impressive article and receive the Word with joy, but the resultant emotions soon subside. For a brief moment only are we melted by a sense of the Lord’s goodness. Why is this? Because we meditate so little upon His favours: we do not take time to think gratefully upon them, and through our sinful neglect, they depart from our hearts (Deu 4:9). A sanctified remembrance is one where faith, fear, and love for God are active. In the scriptural meaning of the word, to “remember” God is to have heart-warming apprehensions of His perfections and the excellency of His will, as we are said to remember His commandments when we earnestly set ourselves unto the practice of them. Form the habit of daily pondering the wondrous works of God. “Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

“Remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (Deu 8:2). Most suitable word is this too at the beginning of the year. Some are dismally prone to dwell upon the rough parts of the path, others desire to recall only the smooth ones; but we are bidden to remember “*all* the way.” The places where we distrusted and murmured—that the recollection may humble us. The unpleasant sections when, because we followed a policy of self-will, God hedged up our way with thorns (Hos 2:6)—that we may profit from His chastenings. Remember too the testing parts, when providence so ordered your course that you were brought to wits-end corner, yet in response to your cries the Lord delivered you. Recall the trying stages of the journey, when visible supplies and outward means failed, and your wonder-working God gave you water out of the smitten Rock, so that you can acknowledge, “who remembered us in our low estate” (Psa 136:23).

Let these two things be fixed in your mind at the entrance of [the new year]: the fact that the Lord will never forget you, and your duty ever to remember Him. See that you are one of those whose holy resolution it is, “we will remember *thy love*” (Song 1:4). Say “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psa 103:2), realizing that each of them issues from His love. Let the realization of His love ravish your heart, for it will greatly heighten your valuation of it. As you do so, it will make sin more odious, banish fear, tranquillize your mind, and make Christ more precious to you.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

12. Sins Confessed (1:9)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

While our present verse be complete in itself, yet it is also a part of a larger whole, and an apprehension of its coherence with what precedes helps to a better understanding of it. It cannot be

too frequently insisted upon that the Bible is not a collection of separate and unrelated texts, but rather a living body of truth, one member of which is connected with and dependent upon another—as the fingers (though each one be complete in itself) upon the hand, the hand upon the arm, and it with the trunk. The principal subject of 1 John 1 is that of fellowship with God in Christ: made possible by the divine incarnation (verses 1-2), producing a fullness of joy (verse 4), had with Him who is light (verse 5). In verses 6, 8, and 10, we are shown how certain types of godless professors are cut off from this privilege. How then are we to identify those who do enjoy it? That is a most pressing question: What are the clear and infallible marks by which Christians may know themselves to be among those in fellowship with God?

1. Walking in the light (verse 7).
2. Confessing their sins (verse 9).
3. Obedience (2:3, 5).
4. Love to the brethren (3:14), etc.

It is also to be noted that verses 7-10 all treat of some aspect of sin, for that is the great obstacle and hindrance to fellowship with the Holy One.

Coming now to the more immediate context, it is obvious that verse 9 supplies the second member of the general thought begun in verse 7, giving the opposite alternative to the one specified in verse 8. First, the believer is judicially cleansed from all sin; yet, second, the root of evil still remains within him. The questions may therefore be asked: Are we still affected by it? Does it at times occasion us to fall? If so, what must we do? Since the sin that indwells the believer is an active principle, it cannot but be that he will be under the partial influence of the same, and thereby moved to act unworthily of his Christian calling. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider the vileness and power of the flesh, the implacable enmity of Satan against him, the world laying its snares in his path, ever setting before him a multitude of objects to turn away his heart and mind from Christ. Nor can he deliver himself—even inherent grace or “the new nature” is insufficient for such a task. None but the Lord can give the victory. Yet at times He is pleased to leave us, in some respects and in a variety of ways, unto ourselves, so that we stumble in the mire and befoul our garments. And why does He so act and withhold His supporting arm? That we may realize our weaknesses and have experiential proof that “without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5).

That is a very humbling and painful lesson, yet it is one which God has ordained that all of His children shall learn. It is His will that they should have a fuller discovery of their ruined and corrupt condition by nature, and have a personal acquaintance with their weakness and impotency. It is His will that they feel, bewail, and own both the one and the other, that they may be more sensible alike of the disease and the remedy. When a real Christian sins, he smarts under it. He cannot but be affected and afflicted by it, for his peace and joy are temporarily lost, and his free access to God is broken into. That distresses his mind. Sometimes an old sin is revived, and he is greatly perturbed. Rightly so, for sin must never be regarded lightly or excused. Instead, it is to be loathed and lamented. Nevertheless, the saint must be careful that he does not confound his present case with his unchanging state. Though there be guilt on the conscience, pollution on the mind, grief in the heart, that is a very different thing from being in a sinful state—something which none of the Lord’s regenerate can ever be in again, though they may be over and over again in a sinful case and circumstance.

But God has mercifully appointed a relief, exactly suited to this part of His people’s spiritual distress. Marvel with us, fellow Christian, at the grace that has provided for the restoration of un-

grateful and undutiful children. In the verse now before us God has given us directions how we are to act when in and under such sinful cases.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And, my reader, there is no relief for the burdened conscience, no restoration to real fellowship with God, until we do so. Alas, that we are so slow, so reluctant to avail ourselves of the same. But pride hinders us, and we are loath to humble ourselves before the One against whom we have transgressed. When we realize who it is we have offended and grieved, call to mind the privileges we have enjoyed and abused, think upon the profession and promises we have made, dwell upon the heinousness of the sins into which we have fallen, there is a sad tendency in us to keep silent, and then to excuse ourselves. But that is fatal both to our present peace and future spiritual prosperity. Unjudged sins produce a cold reserve in the heart toward the Holy One, and if that be persisted in, divine chastisement will be our sure portion.

What has just been said receives forcible illustration in Psalm 32:3-4, where David describes the painful experiences that befell him during those months when he had refused to acknowledge his foul offences. Said he, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." He was like a man in a fever—tossing about upon his bed, trying first one position and then another, but finding no rest. Such perturbation⁸⁰ and disquietude of spirit in a believer is one of the surest signs that he is out of communion with the Lord. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa 57:21), and such is the case of a backslider. There is nothing more distressing for one who has walked with God than to have a spiritual relapse; and if he be overcome again and again by his chief besetting sin, then is he most wretched—far more so than had he suffered a temporal loss, were afflicted bodily, or had encountered persecution. And there is no relief for him, no ease for his conscience, no joy in the Lord, no delight in His Word, no liberty in prayer, until he unburdens his heart unto Him by free and frank confession.

God has most graciously provided for just such emergencies. He is pleased to address Himself unto His people thus: "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful...Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers...Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you" (Jer 3:12-14). "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God" (Jer 31:18). "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" (Hos 14:2). Such Scriptures are exactly suited to us when we are in particular cases and distressing spiritual circumstances arising from our inherent sinfulness and actual defilements. Let no Christian allow a lying devil to rob him of such precious and needed portions of God's Word by listening to 'dispensationalists'⁸¹ who say they are not for him. They are as much a part of his spiritual heritage as is Psalm 23.

Many such passages as the above would be meaningless to believers today were their experiences different from what they actually are. On God's part they are blessed memorials of His grace; on our part they are solemn testifications unto sad wanderings of heart. Our cases vary

⁸⁰ **perturbation** – inner turmoil or agitation.

⁸¹ **dispensationalists** – those who believe Dispensational theology, which divides the Word of God into arbitrary periods with supposed differences in the way God saves men from their sins. It proposes that the Old Testament saints were not a part of the Church of God, and that the Law has no bearing on the Christian as a guide to moral living.

much at different times. This morning I may be able to say, “Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over”; but ere night falls I may have to lament, “Iniquities prevail against me” (Psa 65:3). When such be the case, the only thing to do is to pour out our hearts before the Lord. Not to conceal it in our minds, but to cry, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions” (Psa 51:1-3). He is the only one who can pardon us, and to Him we must go. “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa 32:5). Then will the restored soul have reason to exclaim, “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psa 86:5).

Confession is not optional but obligatory, a necessary thing. First, that God Himself may be honoured (Jos 7:19). Non-confession is a virtual and practical disowning of His rectoral⁸² office—“he confessed and denied not” (Joh 1:20). Second, that God may be obeyed. He has appointed that His children should daily acknowledge their sins and ask for His forgiveness (Luk 11:4). “God’s justice is satisfied by Christ, but it must be glorified and owned by us” (Thomas Manton, 1620-1677). All through Scripture pardon presupposes confession (Lev 26:40; 1Ki 8:33; Jer 3:12-13; Luk 15:18). Nowhere is there a promise of forgiveness unless acknowledgment of sin is made. God requires us to sue out our pardon: as He said to the ascended Saviour, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance” (Psa 2:8). Third, that we may be affected and afflicted by our offences in a due manner, for genuine confession is an expression of hatred of sin and grief for it. Failure at this point is a bar to our advancement: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). Fourth, in order to the maintenance of our communion with the Holy One. “Only on the footing of sin daily confessed and pardoned can there be any fellowship between us and God this side of heaven” (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Confession of sin is both the consequent and the condition of fellowship with God, as also is walking in the light. Communion with God produced frank and honest dealings with Him, bringing things out into the open. Such a one not only walks in the light, but he owns whatever in him is opposed unto the light. Yet it is much more than a bare admission that he has sin (in contrast with verse 8): it is the acknowledgment of individual and specific sins, which is the form that confession must ever take if it is to be real and valid. A merely general acknowledgment soon degenerates into an empty phrase. The God of truth will tolerate no pretence. The flesh would have us gloss over things and call them by a pleasanter name than “sins,” but close dealing with God purges the spirit of guile. In the light, things are seen in their true colours; contact with God convicts of what is contrary to His holiness, and that leads to a contrite confession.

As Robert S. Candlish (1806-1873) discerningly remarked, the confession here is from those who are walking in the light, and “such confession is very different from that in which the natural conscience seeks a lightening of its guilty burden, and a lessening of its guilty fears.” Rather does it proceed from an ardent longing of soul for everything to be put right between himself and his Beloved, refusing to hide anything from Him. The farther we proceed thus with God, the more intimate be our dealings with Him, the more discoveries do we make of what is displeasing to Him, and such discoveries are welcome to us. He desires truth in the inward parts, and we do so too, and therefore do we open our hearts fully to Him, and bring everything out into the light.

⁸² **rectoral** – pertaining to a rector: a parish priest in the Church of England, responsible for shepherding the saints in that parish.

Such confession is a spreading of our case before the Lord, concealing nothing, palliating⁸³ nothing. It is the laying bare of our inner man to the loving and wise Physician, who alone knows how to deal with us. Of course, where sins are committed against our fellows, they must be confessed unto them too (Mat 5:23-24; Jam 5:16).

Confession is alike a sign and adjunct of repentance, since it proceeds from both conviction and contrition. It begins by owning the fact of sin (Jos 7:20), and then the fault of it—or as David called it, “the iniquity of my sin.” He not only acknowledged his crime of adultery, but the foulness and enormity of it. So again when his heart smote him for his pride and presumption in numbering Israel, he not only admitted what he had done, but added “I have sinned greatly in that I have done...I have done very foolishly” (2Sa 24:10). The aggravations of our sins are to be declared: that they were committed against light, persuasions, warnings, conscience, the motions of the Spirit—for such things, especially after our being the recipients of countless privileges, mercies and blessings, greatly heighten the enormity of our iniquities, and are to be sorrowfully owned by us. Observe how Daniel did so when confessing the sins of his people: “Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets” (9:10). The guilt of our sins too must be confessed: what we should suffer did we receive our deserts (Ezr 9:13).

Confession of sins is to be made freely, owning every known offence, making no attempt to hide anything, either from God or ourselves. We are not to generalize but to particularize, and acknowledge sins of omission, some of which—such as failure to perform duty, lack of love, absence of zeal, unthankfulness—are worse than many sins of commission. If we are definite and precise when making known our requests unto God, we should be equally so in specifying our sins. Contritely, with a due sense of the infinite evil of sin, as it is dishonouring to God’s holiness, an opposition to His sovereign majesty, a contempt of His Law, a flying in the face of His Word, and a grieving of His Spirit. If there be a real apprehension of those things, a regenerate soul cannot but be filled with godly sorrow over his transgressions, and mourn before the Lord on their account. Sincerely, laying bare our case before God just as it stands, proffering no excuses, refusing to throw the blame upon others. Though an unpleasant exercise unto flesh and blood, nevertheless it is salutary to unburden the conscience, pour out our grief into the ears of One who is “very pitiful and of tender mercy.”

Confession is to be accompanied with shamefacedness, lamenting our ingratitude unto Him who daily loads us with His benefits (Psa 68:19). The more we realize our base requital of God’s wondrous love to us, the more shall we say, with Ezra, “I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God” (9:6). It is to be accompanied with hatred of sin and loathing of ourselves, such as marked those of whom the apostle could say, “Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge” (2Co 7:11). It is to be made in faith, in the everlasting efficacy of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ—just as when Aaron confessed the sins of Israel, he did so with “both his hands upon the head of the live goat” (Lev 16:21)—asking the Father to pardon you for Christ’s sake. It is to be done daily. Keep short accounts with God and suffer no cloud to remain between your heart and Him.

“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Here is the grand encouragement for us to perform this painful duty: it makes way for blessing, for though confession be not the cause, yet it is the condition of divine forgiveness. That for-

⁸³ **palliating** – making an offense seem less serious by excuses.

givenness is what the penitent soul seeks from God, and as he does so, let him bear in mind the fact that one of the titles which Deity has been pleased to take unto Himself is “the God of pardons” (Neh 9:17, margin)! Unto such we are to repair; unto Him who declares, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34). “Let us therefore come boldly [unhesitatingly and freely] unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Unto us, considered in ourselves, divine forgiveness is always an act of pure mercy or clemency, for it is something we deserve not. But more—and oh, the preciousness of it!—God’s forgiveness is also an act both of faithfulness and justice: faithfulness to His promises, His covenant engagements; justice unto Christ, in bestowing on His people what He purchased for them.

We are inclined to think the Spirit has designedly duplicated terms here for the comfort of distressed believers. “Faithful and just” are of much the same import, and while they may be distinguished (as above), yet both have a regard to the everlasting covenant, the latter being brought in to supply an additional ground of confidence for us—that the fulfillment of God’s gracious promise is at the same time an act of strict righteousness on His part. As John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out, “The penitent has here two of God’s attributes, faithfulness and justice, to encourage and support him.” Thus the contrite soul should have full and firm assurance of God’s readiness to pardon. Personally we believe that both the forgiveness and the cleansing here include alike a judicial and an experiential one, an objective and a subjective, but lack of space now prevents our enlarging upon that statement. Admittedly the point is a difficult one: not only to apprehend, but more so to express—such is always the case when the finite mind is occupied with things that are infinite.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

64. The Conqueror (Revelation 6:2)

In our last, we pointed out that the unbroken series of military successes of Israel's leader recorded in the last fifteen verses of Joshua 10, typed out⁸⁴ the spiritual victories of our Saviour. We showed how that both His bearing and His actions while on the cross gave clear demonstration that He was no weak and helpless victim, but in truth the conquering Christ. We argued therefrom that *such* a death, and more particularly the death of such a Person, could not possibly fail to accomplish all that it was designed to secure. That argument is greatly strengthened by Christ's triumphant resurrection and enthronement in heaven, and is definitely established by the promises made to Him in Isaiah 53:10-12. We also pointed out the striking fact that in Psalm 98, the Old Testament saints were required, by faith's anticipation, to celebrate the Victor's mighty performances and wondrous achievements. We now continue that same blessed subject by calling attention to Revelation 6:2, "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

During our spiritual infancy, we were taught that the rider on that white horse was the Antichrist, aping the true Christ; and, taking it for granted that our instructors knew what they were talking about, we accepted the same and echoed it. But today, we regard such a concept as no more trustworthy than a nursery tale. For in the first place, it rests upon the bare word of the one asserting the same, being unsupported by any scriptural proof. In the second place, it is entirely out of accord with the *context*, for not only is the whole of the foregoing chapter concerned with the triumphant Lion-Lamb, but He is expressly mentioned by name in the verse immediately preceding the one quoted above, and since that opens with the word "And," it is a manifest wresting of Scripture to make verse 2 refer to an entirely different person from the One mentioned in verse 1, unless there were plain intimation to that effect. And in the third place, so to explain the terms of verse 2 is to throw into the utmost confusion the meaning of the symbols employed therein.

The word "white" occurs quite a number of times in the Apocalypse,⁸⁵ and from its first reference (1:14) to its last (20:11), it is the emblem of *unsullied purity*. In its initial occurrence, it is used of the Lord Jesus, where it is said, "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" (1:14). Its second occurrence is in 3:4, where Christ makes promise to those who have not defiled their garments, "They shall walk with me in white." The twenty-four elders of 4:4 are seen in heaven "clothed in white raiment." Of others, we read "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14); while of the Lamb's Wife, it is said, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (19:8). Thus, to make the rider of the "white horse" of 6:2 to be such a

⁸⁴ **typed out** – portrayed in a figure; represented.

⁸⁵ **Apocalypse** – transliteration from the Greek in Revelation 1:1, meaning "to disclose"; commonly used to refer to the end-time destruction of the world; *The Book of The Revelation*.

vile monster as the Antichrist is to introduce discord, being entirely out of harmony with the uniform application of that term. Furthermore, it clashes with what is said of that evil character elsewhere in this book, for not only is Satan therein depicted as “a great *red* dragon” (12:3), but his chief vicegerent is spoken of as “a *scarlet* coloured beast” (17:3, 8).

No, it is not the Antichrist, but the Christ of God, who is portrayed in 6:2, as what is there said of Him plainly enough indicates: “He went forth conquering, and to conquer” is language that could not with any propriety be applied to anyone else, for those words obviously denote not only a successful course, but also a victorious *finish*. Men like Napoleon and Hitler carried all before them for a short season, but their careers terminated in defeat and disgrace. “The triumphing of the wicked is short,” and that of the Antichrist is no exception, for so far from his ending as a conqueror, he is conquered—cast alive into the lake of fire (19:20)! It is also to be carefully noted that 6:2 is not the only passage in the Revelation which makes mention of a rider upon a white horse, and since Scripture must ever be interpreted by Scripture, a reference to the later passage unequivocally fixes the meaning of the earlier one. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war...And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (19:11, 16).

And let it be duly observed that this august Rider is “crowned” *before* He goes forth in His invincible might. Nor does that fact, or any other consideration, oblige us to regard this verse as pertaining to some future “millennium.”⁸⁶ No indeed, for Christ is *now* possessed of royal authority, being King of kings today—not merely *de jure*, but *de facto*.⁸⁷ All power has been given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Mat 28:18); all things have been put under His feet (Eph 1:22); He is “crowned with glory and honour” (Heb 2:9); seated upon the eternal throne (Psa 45:6); invested with the scepter of universal dominion, His mediatorial kingdom rules over all. Revelation 6:2, then, contains an emblematic portrayal of the conquering Christ, triumphing over all opposition; or as Thomas Manton expressed it, “This is a notable representation of the rise and progress of Christ’s kingdom.” A career of unchecked triumph is here predicated of the royal Warrior; victory after victory, without reverse or break, marks His course. Neither the enmity of the serpent, the malice of the unbelieving Jews, nor the persecution of a Nero could stay His progress. The rage of papists and the forces of Mohammedanism have been alike unable to withstand His power, for all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him.

But, says an objector, the history of Christianity during the centuries and the state of the world today are far from bearing out your interpretation. Our reply is: Not quite so fast, please—we have not yet completed our interpretation, for it rests not only on the signification of the symbols used in Revelation 6:2, but also on its *connection* with all that precedes. By no sound exegesis can 6:1-2 be divorced from the contents of chapter 5, and if Scripture be explained by Scripture, then in the light of Jeremiah 32:6-12, the “sealed book” of Revelation 5:1-7 can signify nothing else than the *title-deeds* to Christ’s purchased possession. This is clearly borne out by the dual character in which the Saviour is there viewed, namely the Lion-Lamb (verses 5 and 6), for redemption is both by the payment of a price (1Pe 1:18-19) and the putting forth of power (Exo 6:6); and the same is most surely confirmed by verse 9, for the new song which is there sung is the song of *redemption*. Revelation 6 begins by showing us the Lamb opening one of the seals of the book of redemption, or in other words, exercising His sovereign right to use the authority He has acquired.

⁸⁶ **millennium** – period of one thousand years.

⁸⁷ **de jure...de facto** – *de jure*: by right or legal establishment; *de facto*: in actual fact, regardless of legal or official status.

Revelation 6:2, then, shows us the coronated Redeemer going forth to secure His inheritance, but it is just because the vast majority both of pre- and post-millenarians hold a false view of *the extent* of Christ's inheritance that they misunderstand this verse, and much else in prophecy. They who deny the unconditional election and preterition⁸⁸ of a sovereign God, and the special design and restricted scope of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, are unsafe guides to follow on any subject, for they lack the principal keys to the interpretation of God's oracles and His ways in providence. It was not because the sins of all mankind were laid upon Christ that the sword of divine justice awoke against Him, but "for the transgression of *my people* was he stricken" (Isa 53:8), declares God Himself. It was not for the goats but for the sheep that Christ laid down His life (Joh 10:15). It was not the human race which He loved and for which He gave Himself, but "the church" (Eph 5:25). The portion which Christ purchased for Himself is clearly defined for us in Ephesians 1:18, where we read of "the riches of the glory of *his inheritance in the saints*"—as they, in turn, have their inheritance in Him (1:11).

The inheritance of the Redeemer is His redeemed, and who *they* are Holy Writ leaves us in no doubt. Redemption is restricted to God's people. "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Act 20:28). It is limited unto the saved: "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7); "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*" (Heb. 9:12). In Revelation 5:9, we hear the saints in heaven singing, "Thou art worthy to take the book [the title-deeds to the inheritance]...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"—*there* is particular or restricted, rather than indefinite or universal, redemption. Thus, when Revelation 6:2 shows us Christ going forth "conquering and to conquer," there should be no uncertainty whatever in understanding what is in view. We need not be surprised that Arminians⁸⁹ should imagine it makes promise of Christ "winning the world unto Himself," but there is not the slightest excuse for any well-instructed Calvinist⁹⁰ falling into such error, nor for him to cut the knot by making it refer to Christ's triumph in some future era.

"And I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow," which, as another has pointed out, is interpreted for us in Habakkuk 3:8-9, where, after saying "Thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots *of salvation*," we are told, "Thy *bow* was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy *word*." "And a crown [emblem of His royal authority] was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer," for when Christ works, none can withstand His invincible power. But perhaps the one who has followed us critically from the opening of the previous article to this point will ask, How can Joshua's *slaying* of Israel's enemies suitably prefigure the Lord Jesus *saving* those whom He bought with a price? Surely the answer is obvious: because in their unregenerate state they are enemies both by nature and by practice—"when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10): "you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col 1:21). Christ slays their enmity, kills their love of sin, destroys their self-righteousness, delivers them from Satan, wins them to Himself.

Psalm 45:1-5 supplies a commentary on Revelation 6:2. There the saints beg their King, into whose lips "*grace* is poured," to gird upon Him His sword and make open display of His glory,

⁸⁸ **preterition** – the passing over by God of those not elect.

⁸⁹ **Arminians** – followers of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian, born in Oudewater, the Netherlands. He rejected the Reformers' understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God's predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

⁹⁰ **Calvinists** – those who believe, along with the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the doctrines of grace.

by riding “prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness,” saying: “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.” As Spurgeon well remarked, “Our Captain aims at men’s hearts rather than their heads...Jesus’ arrows are sharp in the quiver of His Word, and sharper on the bow of His ministers, but they are most known to be so when they find a way into careless hearts.” So too John Owen (1616-1683), “Let men be never so much His enemies; if He intend their conviction, He will so sharpen His Word upon their hearts as that they shall let go their enmity and fall in the acknowledgment of His power”—contritely confessing their sins and crying for mercy.

Each generation of mankind is inveterately opposed to the Lamb, but He overcomes those members of it that were given to Him by the Father. Since His ascension, Christ has been a merciful and pacific⁹¹ Conqueror, for His beneficent victories over those who oppose Him are gained in converting them by His Word and Spirit. “The victories of Jesus are all the more wonderful because they are accomplished by means to all appearance most inadequate: they are due not to physical but moral power—the energy of goodness, justice, truth” (Spurgeon). But, *at the close*, Christ will deal in a very different way with those who refuse to submit to the scepter of His grace: “taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel” (2Th 1:8-9). As the former is in view in Revelation 6:2, so the latter is solemnly depicted in 19:11-16. Those widely different actions of the Redeemer are again set forth in one of the Messianic Psalms. At the beginning of Psalm 110, we behold Christ enthroned on high and hear JEHOVAH saying unto Him, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” and in what follows, we are shown *in what way* that promise is made good unto the glorified Redeemer, namely in a twofold manner.

“The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” The rod of His strength is the same thing as the “report” of the Word accompanied by “the arm of the Lord” (Isa 53:1), namely the Gospel applied by the Spirit in demonstration and in power, which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2Co 10:4). There was a begun-fulfilment of this promise on the day of Pentecost, when the mighty power of Christ was gloriously manifested by subduing the hearts of three thousand to Himself. On “rule thou in the midst of thine enemies,” Spurgeon said, “as He does whenever His mighty scepter of grace is stretched forth to renew and save them. Moses’ rod brought water out of the flinty rock, and the Gospel of Jesus soon causes repentance to flow in rivers from the once-hardened heart of men.” In contrast with the terrors of Sinai, that rod goes forth out of the spiritual Zion (Heb 12:22) unto a gracious end, for verse 3 tells us *how* Christ “rules” and conquers. “Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power”: He overcomes their native enmity and unbelief. Verse 4 divides the Psalm: verses 5 and 6 correspond with Revelation 19:11-15.

Little space is left for us to round off the subject by dwelling upon the conquering Church, which is a pity, for there is scarcely anything being written thereon today. Instead, the concept which now most widely prevails is that “the Church is a complete failure.” Such is the charge made by an unfriendly world and now echoed by not a few professing Christians; but it is just as anti-scriptural as is the notion of a frustrated and disappointed Christ. A victorious Christ has for its natural, yea, necessary, complement a victorious Church, for the members *must* share in the triumphs of their Head. To speak of the Church of Christ being defeated and disgraced is a contradiction in terms, for by the Church we allude not to what men term “organized Christianity,” but to that favoured company given to Christ by the Father, and who by regeneration are made one with Him vitally. We mean those seen in our type, for Joshua 10:29-43 is very express in re-

⁹¹ **pacific** – bringing peace.

ferring six times over to “all Israel *with him*” being participants of Joshua’s military successes. No, the failure is rather in those who have erroneously supposed that it was the function of the Church or the mission of the Gospel to “win the world [i.e., every person] to Christ.”

But let it be clearly understood that a conquering Church is just as much an object *of faith* (a reality to the believing heart on the authority of God’s sure Word) as is the conquering Christ. To carnal reason and the eye of sense, it was a vanquished Christ who expired upon the cross (and the world never once saw Him after He rose triumphantly from the grave!), and thus it is with His mystical or unseen body. Nevertheless, it is far otherwise in fact. As the Redeemer so emphatically declared, “upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18). Whether “the gates of hell” refers to death, which daily claims some of its members, or the powers of darkness which are ever opposing it, the perpetuity and triumph of the Church are here most definitely assured. It is built upon a rock that neither winds nor waves can destroy, namely Christ Himself, “who is both its foundation and founder” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714)—Peter’s confession being its *doctrinal* foundation. The spiritual mount Sion “cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psa 125:1; Heb 12:22; Rev 14:1-3)—subsisting in the midst of the enemies, a little flock surrounded by wolves.

During the last nineteen centuries, it has often looked as though the gates of hell *had* prevailed against the Church of Christ, yet here too appearances were deceptive. God had sworn upon oath unto the covenant Head, “His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and His throne as the days of heaven” (Psa 89:29), and they *have*—as our own generation bears witness. Christ made promise to His disciples, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me” (Luk 22:29), and the united opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot thwart that appointment; and even while left in this scene, their life “is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Well then could the apostle make challenge, “and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1Pe 3:13). Hated by the serpent, persecuted by his minions, yet nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35). Harassed by indwelling sin, receiving many a wound and temporary fall in their fight of faith, nevertheless they are victors (1Jo 2:14; Rev 12:11), for “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1Jo 5:4).

Faith views the entire election of grace *as God does*, and therefore is fully persuaded that a victorious Christ and a vanquished Church is an impossibility. It knows that the “shalls” of Psalm 45:14-15 are as infallibly certain as those of Isaiah 53:10-12. The Church of Christ is unconquerable, for though its enemies be implacable and mighty, yet they are neither invincible nor almighty, and therefore are they *incapable* of nullifying the divine decree that His elect shall *all* be “conformed to the image of his Son,” or of neutralizing His promise “whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30). Even now “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:37), though sense perceives it not.

*“His be the Victor’s name, Who fought our fight alone;
Triumphant saints no honour claim, Their conquest is His own.”*

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 5

To say that all our interpretations must conform strictly unto the Analogy of Faith⁹² may sound very simple and obvious, yet it is surprising to find how many not only unskilled but experienced men depart therefrom. Of course those who covet “originality,” and have a penchant for bringing out something new or startling (especially from obscure passages) without regard to this basic principle, are sure to err. But as John Owen observed, “Whilst we sincerely attend unto this rule, we are in no danger of sinfully corrupting the Word of God, although we shall not arrive unto its proper meaning in every place.” For example, when we learn that “God is a spirit” (Joh 4:24), incorporeal and invisible, that prevents us from misunderstanding those passages where eyes and ears, hands and feet are ascribed unto Him; and when we are informed that with Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam 1:17), we know that when He is said to “repent” He speaks after the manner of men. Likewise, when Psalm 19:11 and other verses make promise of the saints being rewarded for their gracious tempers and good works, other passages show that such recompense is not because of merit, but is bestowed by divine grace.

No verse is to be explained in a manner that conflicts with what is taught, plainly and uniformly, in the Scriptures as a whole, and which whole is set before us as the alone rule of our faith and obedience. This requires from the expositor not only a knowledge of the general sense of the Bible, but also that he takes the trouble to collect and compare all the passages that treat of or have a definite bearing upon the immediate point before him, so that he may obtain the *full* mind of the Spirit thereon. Having done that, any passage that is still obscure or doubtful to him must be interpreted by those which are clear. No doctrine is to be founded on a single passage, like the Mormons base on 1 Corinthians 15:29, their error of members of that cult being baptized for their ancestors; or as the papists appeal to James 5:14-15 for their dogma of “extreme unction.” It is only in the mouths of two or three witnesses that any truth is established, as our Lord insisted in His ministry: John 5:31-39; 8:16-18. Care is to be taken that no important teaching is based alone on any type, figurative expression, or even parable; instead, they are to be used only in *illustrating* plain and literal passages.

Let it, then, be settled in the mind of the expositor that no Scripture is to be interpreted without regard to the relation in which it stands to other parts. Adherence to this fundamental rule will preserve from the wresting of many a verse. Thus, when we hear Christ saying, “My Father is greater than I” (Joh 14:28), attention to His previous declaration, “I and my Father are one” (Joh 10:31) will preclude any idea that He was, in His essential person, in any wise inferior; therefore the reference in John 14:28 *must* refer to His mediatorial office, wherein He was subservient to the Father’s will. “Must,” we say, for the Son is none other than “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6), “the true God” (1Jo 5:20). Again, such words as “be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Act 22:16) must not be understood in a way that conflicts with “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7), but regarded as a *symbolical* “washing” only. “To reconcile all things unto himself” (Col 1:20) cannot teach universalism, or every passage affirming the eternal punishment of the lost would be contradicted. 1 John 3:9 must be understood in a way consistent with 1 John 1:8.

Context

Fourth, the need for paying close attention to *the context* is also a matter of first importance. Not only must each statement of Scripture be explained in full harmony with the general Analogy of Faith, but more specifically, in complete agreement with the plain sense and tenor of the passage of which it forms a part. That “plain sense” must be diligently searched for. Few things have contributed more to erroneous interpretations than the ignoring of this obvious principle. By divorcing a verse from its setting or singling out a single clause, one may “prove” not only absurdities but real falsities by the very words of Scripture. For instance, “hear the church” is not an exhortation bidding the laity submit their judgments unto clerics, but, as Matthew 18:17 shows, the local assembly must decide the issue when a trespassing brother refuses to be amenable to private counsel. As another has pointed out, “An ingenious and disingenuous mind can select certain detached verses of Scripture, and then com-

⁹² **Analogy of Faith** – method of biblical interpretation where clearer, related Scriptures are used to interpret a particular passage (Rom 12:6).

bine them in the most arbitrary manner, so that while they indeed are all the very words of Scripture, yet, at the same time, they express the thoughts of the compiler and not the Holy Spirit's."

Much help is obtained in ascertaining the precise significance of certain expressions by observing the circumstances and *occasion* of their utterance. Through failure to do so, many a sermonizer has failed to perceive the real force of those well-known words "Open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise" (Psa 51:15). David's mouth had been closed by sin and non-confession, and thereby the Spirit quenched! Now that he had put matters right with the Lord, he longed for Him to unstop his shame-covered lips. The spiritual significance of an event is often perceived by noting *its connection*. A striking illustration of this is found in Matthew 8:23-26, which, be it borne in mind, has an application unto us. The key to it is found in the last clause of verse 23 and in reading verses 19-22. The order of thought there is very suggestive: the whole passage treats of "following" Christ, and verses 23-26 supply a typical picture of the character of the disciple's path through a stormy world: encountering trials, difficulties and dangers; and it often *appears* that the Lord is "asleep"—unmindful of or indifferent to our peril! In reality, it is a testing of faith, a showing us that He requires to be waited on, that He is our only recourse, sufficient for every storm!

The parable recorded in Luke 15:3-32 cannot possibly be interpreted aright if its context be ignored. What needless perplexity has been occasioned, and diversity among the commentators, concerning the *identity* of the ninety-nine sheep left in the wilderness (defined as "just persons who need no repentance") and the "elder son" (who complained at the generous treatment accorded his brother), through failure to use the key supplied at the beginning of the chapter. If its first three verses be noted, we observe that this one parable (in three parts) was not spoken by Christ to the disciples, but addressed to His enemies. It was given in reply to the Pharisees and scribes who had murmured because our Lord received sinners and ate with them. His design was to expose the condition of their hearts, and to vindicate His own gracious actions. He did so by portraying the lost condition of His carping critics, and by making known the ground on which He received sinners into fellowship with Himself, and revealing the divine operations which issue in that blessed result. Once those broad facts be apprehended, there is no difficulty in understanding the details of the parable.

Two distinct and sharply contrasted classes are set before us in Luke 15:1-2—the despised publicans and sinners who, from a deep sense of need, were attracted unto Christ; and the proud and self-satisfied Pharisees and scribes. In each of the three parts of the parable, the same two classes are in view, and in that order. First, the good Shepherd seeks and secures His lost sheep, for it is *His work* which is the basis of salvation; the ninety and nine, who in their own estimation needed no repentance, figured the self-righteous Pharisees—left in "the wilderness," in contrast with the sheep brought "home." In the second, the secret operations of the Spirit in the heart (under the figure of a woman *inside* the house) are described, and by means of the "light" the lost coin is recovered—the other nine being left to themselves. In the third, the one sought out by the shepherd, illumined by the Spirit, is seen with the Father; whereas the older son (who boasted "neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment") figures the Pharisee—a *stranger* to the feasting and rejoicing! Learn from this the importance of observing to whom a passage is addressed, the circumstances and occasion when uttered, the central design of the speaker or writer, *before* attempting to interpret its details.

Every verse beginning with the word "For" requires us to trace the connection: usually it has the force of "because," supplying proof of a preceding statement. Likewise the expression "For this cause" and words like "wherefore and therefore" call for close attention so that we may have before us the promise from which the conclusion is drawn. The widespread misunderstanding of 11 Corinthians 5:17 supplies an example of what happens when there is carelessness at this point. Nine times out of ten, its opening "Therefore" is not quoted, and through failure to understand *its* meaning, an entirely wrong sense is given to "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That prefatory "therefore" indicates that this verse is not to be considered as a thing apart, complete in itself, but rather as closely connected with something foregoing. On turning back to the previous verse, we find it too begins with the word "wherefore," which at once shows that this passage is a didactic or doctrinal one, and neither a biographical one which delineates the experience of the soul, nor a hortatory⁹³ one calling unto the performance of some duty.

It should be carefully noted that the "any man" of 11 Corinthians 5:17 shows it is not describing some exceptional attainment of a favoured few, nor depicting mature Christians only, but rather is postulating something which is common to *all* the regenerate. As a matter of fact, the verse is not treating of Christian experience at all, but of the new relationship into which regeneration brings us. It would take us too far afield now to supply detailed answers to the questions: What particular subject was the apostle writing upon? What required him to take it up? What was his special design on this occasion? Suffice it to say, he was refuting his Judaizing traducers⁹⁴ and cutting the ground from under their feet. In 5:14-16, he insists that union with Christ results in judicial death to natural relations, wherein all fleshly distinctions of Jew and Gentile cease; yea, brings us on to new or resurrection ground, producing a new standing before God. As members of a new creation, we are under an entirely *new covenant*, and for us the limitations and restrictions of the old covenant are "passed away." It is the principal design of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* to make *this* fact fully manifest.

⁹³ **hortatory** – exhorting.

⁹⁴ **Judaizing traducers** – *Judaizing*: requiring professing Christians to first obey the Old Testament Laws; *traducers*: slanderers.

Scope

Fifth, equally necessary is it for the interpreter to determine *the scope* of each passage, i.e., its coherence with what precedes and follows. Sometimes this can best be done by duly noting *the particular book* in which it is found. Notably is this the case with some in *Hebrews*. How many a Christian, who has had a bad fall or been stayed in a course of backsliding, has, after his repentance, needlessly tortured himself by such verses as 6:4-6 and 10:26-31! We say needlessly, for those verses were addressed to a very different class, one whose case was quite otherwise. Those Hebrews occupied a *unique* position. Reared under Judaism, they had espoused the Gospel; but later were distressed and shaken because of the non-realization of the carnal hopes they entertained of the Messiah, and the sore persecution they were then suffering, and were sorely tempted to abandon their Christian profession and return to Judaism. In the passages mentioned above, they were plainly warned that such a course would be fatal. Thus to apply those passages to backslidden Christians is entirely unwarrantable, making a use of them that is quite foreign to their scope and design.

Sometimes the key to a passage is to be discovered by observing *in which part* of a book it occurs. A pertinent example of this is found in Romans 2:6-10, which has been grievously wrested by not a few. The grand theme of that epistle is “the righteousness of God”—stated in 1:16-17. Its first division runs from 1:18 to 3:21, wherein the universal need for God’s righteousness is demonstrated. Its second runs from 3:21 to 5:1, in which the manifestation of God’s righteousness is set forth. Its third, the imputation of God’s righteousness: 5:1 to 8:39. In 1:18-32, the apostle establishes the guilt of the Gentile world, and in chapter 2, that of the Jew. In its first sixteen verses, he states the principles which will operate at the Great Assize,⁹⁵ and in verses 17-24, makes direct application of them to the favoured nation. Those principles are as follows: (1) God’s judgment will proceed on the ground that man stands self-condemned (verse 1); (2) it will be according to the real state of the case (verse 2); (3) mercy abused increases guilt (verses 3-5); (4) deeds, not external relations or lip profession, will decide the issue (verses 6-10); (5) God will be impartial, showing no favouritism (verse 11); (6) full account will be taken of the various degrees of light enjoyed by different men (verses 11-15); (7) the judgment will be executed by Jesus Christ (verse 16).

From that brief analysis (which exhibits the *scope* of the passage), it is quite evident that the apostle was *not* making known the way of salvation when he declared, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (verses 6-7). So far from affirming that fallen men could secure everlasting felicity by their own well-doing or obedience to God, his design was the very opposite. His purpose was to show what the holy Law of God required, and that that requirement would be insisted upon in the Day of Judgment. Since his depraved nature makes it impossible for any man, Jew or Gentile, to render perfect and continual obedience to the divine Law, then the utter hopelessness of his case is made apparent, and his dire need to look outside himself unto the righteousness of God in Christ is plainly evinced.

Another passage where inattention to *its scope* has resulted in false doctrine being drawn from it is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. Appeal is frequently made unto it in support of the dangerous delusion that there is a class of real Christians who have forfeited all “reward” for the future, having *no* good works to their credit; yet will enter heaven. Such a concept is grossly insulting to the Holy Spirit, for it implies that He performs a miracle of grace in the soul, indwells that person, yet that he brings forth no spiritual fruit. Such a grotesque idea is utterly contrary to the Analogy of Faith, for Ephesians 2:10 tells us that those whom God saves by grace through faith are “His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Those who walk not in good works are *unsaved*, for “faith without works is dead” (Jam 2:20). Scripture declares, “Verily there is a reward for the righteous” (Psa 58:11), that “every [regenerated] man shall have praise of God” (1Co 4:5), which certainly could not be the case if some of them are but cumberers of the ground.

Not only is this erroneous interpretation highly dishonouring to God and at direct variance with the plain teaching of other Scriptures, but it is refuted by the *context*. In order to understand 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, verses 1-10 must be heeded—so as to determine *the subject* that the apostle is treating of. At the beginning of chapter 3, Paul returns to the charge he had made against the Corinthians in 1:11, where he reproved them for pitting one servant of God against another, with the resultant divisions—the principal occasion of his writing to them. In 3:3, he points out that such conduct evinced their carnality. He reminds them that both himself and Apollos were “*but* ministers” (verse 5). He had merely planted and Apollos watered—it was God who gave the increase. Since neither of them was “any thing” unless God deigned to bless his labours (verse 7), what madness it was to make an idol of a mere instrument! Thus it is clear, beyond any doubt, that the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 3 treat of *the official ministry* of God’s servants. It is plainer still in the Greek, for the word “man” occurs nowhere in the passage, “every man” being literally “every *one*,” i.e. of the particular class referred to.

The same subject is continued in verse 8, though there be diversity in the work of God’s servants (one evangelistic, another indoctrinating), yet their commission is from the same Master and their mutual aim the good of souls; therefore it is sinful folly to array one against or exalt him above another. Though Christ has distributed different gifts to His servants and allotted them a variety of ministry, “each shall receive his own reward.” The building itself is *God’s*, ministers being the workmen (verse 9). In verse 10, Paul refers to the *ministerial* “foundation” he had laid (see Eph 2:20), and what follows concerns the *materials* used by builders who came after him. If those materials (their preaching) honoured Christ and edified saints, they would endure and be rewarded. But if instead, the preacher used for his themes the increase in crime, the menace of the bomb, the latest doings of

⁹⁵ **Great Assize** – the Last Judgment; *assize*: a periodic court session formerly held in each of the counties of England and Wales for the trial of civil or criminal cases

the Jews, etc., such worthless rubbish would be burned up in the Day to come and be unrewarded. Thus it is *the materials used by preachers* in their public ministrations, and *not* the walk of private Christians, which is here in view.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

5. Its Transmission

Moral Principles

In introducing this aspect of our subject, we cannot do better than set before the reader what Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886) pointed out are “the self-evident moral principles which must ever be certainly presupposed in every inquiry into the dealings of God with His responsible creatures. (1) God cannot be the Author of sin. (2) We must not believe that He could consistently with His own perfections create a creature *de novo* (anew, originally) with a sinful nature. (3) The perfection of righteousness, not bare sovereignty, is the grand distinction of all God’s dealings. (4) It is a heathen notion that the ‘order of nature’ or ‘the nature of things’ or ‘natural law’ is a real agent independent of God, limiting His freedom, or acting with Him as an independent concause in producing effects. (5) We cannot believe that God would inflict either moral or physical evil upon any creature whose natural rights had not been previously forfeited.

“State the two distinct questions thence arising, which, though frequently confused, it is essential to keep separate. First, *How* does an innate sinful nature originate in each human being at the commencement of his existence, so that the Maker of the man is not the cause of his sin? If this corruption of nature originated in Adam, how is it transmitted to us? Second, *Why*, on what ground of justice, does God inflict this terrible evil, the root ground of all other evils, at the very commencement of personal existence? What fair probation have infants born in sin enjoyed? When, and why, were their rights as new created beings forfeited? It is self-evident that these questions are distinct and should be treated as such. The first may possibly be answered on physical grounds. The second question, however, concerns the moral government of God and inquires concerning the justice of His dispensations. In the history of theology, of all ages and in all schools, very much confusion has resulted from the failure to emphasize and preserve prominent this distinction” (*Outlines of Theology*, A.A. Hodge).

The “why” has been discussed by us at some length in the preceding articles: the guilt of Adam’s offence was imputed to all his posterity because he served as their covenant head and federal representative. Since they were legally one with him, the punishment passed upon him falls on them too, involving them in all the dire consequences of his crime. One of the most terrible of those consequences is the receiving of a sinful nature, which brings us to consider the “how” of the great human tragedy. We do not propose to make any attempt to enter into a philosophical or metaphysical inquiry as to how God can be the Creator and Maker of our beings (Job 31:15), the “Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9), and yet *not* be the Author of the sin now inhering in our natures. Rather shall we confine ourselves to an examination of the bare facts that Scripture presents thereon. Nowhere in the Word is the pollution of fallen man ascribed unto the Holy One, rather is

it uniformly attributed unto human propagation: that by natural generation a corrupt offspring is begotten and conceived by corrupt parents.

It was a divinely instituted law of the original creation that like should produce like, as plainly appears in that word “whose seed is in itself” (Gen 1:11-12), and that oft-repeated expression “after his kind” (verses 21, 24, 25)—and that law has never been revoked, as the biology of every department of nature demonstrates. Hence it follows that since the whole human race sinned in its covenant head, and since every member of it receives its nature from him, when the fountain itself became polluted, all the streams issuing therefrom were polluted too. A corrupt tree can bring forth nothing but corrupt fruit: since the root became unholy, its branches must also be unholy. All of Adam’s offspring do but perpetuate what began in him: from the first moment of their existence they become participants of his impurity. Though our immediate parents be the occasion of conveying a depraved nature unto their children, yet it is because that nature is derived originally from the first man. In other words, the present relation of sire and son is not that of cause and effect, but that of an *instrument* or channel, in transmitting the sinfulness of Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 5:3, we are told, “Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in *his own likeness*, after his image.” That occurred after his fearful defection, and the statement is in designed and direct contrast with the declaration of verse 1: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.” Adam communicated not to his descendants the pure nature that he had originally by creation, but the polluted one that he acquired by the fall. It is very striking to note the precise *place* where this statement is made in the sacred narrative: not at the beginning of Genesis 4, in connection with the begetting of Cain and Abel, but here as introducing a lengthy *obituary list*—showing that dying Adam could only beget mortals. The image of God included both holiness and immortality, but since Adam had lost them and become sinful and mortal, he could propagate none but those in his own fallen likeness, which had in it corruption and death (1Co 15:49-50, and cf. verse 22). The copy answered to the original. He could not beget in any other way than in his own image, for a clean thing will not issue from an unclean. A depraved parent could produce naught but a depraved child.

Psalm 14

Born in Adam’s fallen likeness, not only in substance but in qualities also, all of his posterity are but a continuous repetition of himself. Remarkably is this intimated in the opening verse of that Psalm which has for its theme the awful depravity of the human race. As John Owen (1616-1683) pointed out, “There is a peculiar distinguishing mark put upon this Psalm, in that it is found twice in the book of Psalms. The fourteenth and fifty-third Psalms are the same, with the alteration of one or two expressions at most. And there is another mark put upon its deep importance in that the apostle transcribed a great part of it in Romans 3.” That Psalm opens with the statement, “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*.” The careful reader will have noticed that the words “there is” have been supplied by the translators, and we consider unwarrantably so in this instance. The fool says not “in his head” there is no God, but rather “in his *heart*—no God” for me: I decline allegiance to Him. It is not intellectual unbelief denying the existence of Deity, but the enmity of a rebel who refuses to practically own or be in subjection to God.

“The fool hath said in *his* heart—no God. *They* are corrupt, they have done abominable works” (Psa 14:1). Most significant and noticeable is that change of number in the pronouns, though for some strange reason it appears to have escaped the notice of the commentators—at any rate none whom we have consulted makes any reference thereto. As stated above, the verses

which follow give a full description of the deplorable condition of all mankind, and that is prefaced with a statement about “the fool.” Nor is there the slightest difficulty in identifying him. Were we to ask our readers carefully to ponder and answer the question, Who is *the fool* of all fools? We believe they would unanimously reply, *Adam*, for none has ever acted so madly and wickedly as he. This is confirmed by the fact that the Hebrew word for fool in Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 is nowhere else prefaced by the definite article—some render it “The apostate.” Adam was the arch-fool: his heart had become not only devoid of wisdom, but filled with hatred against it. Such was now the father of our race, and what could his children be like? Our verse answers, “they are *corrupt*,” and prove themselves to be so by doing abominable works.

Psalm 51

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). Such is the sad confession which every one of us makes. Born in the likeness of Adam as a fallen creature, all of his descendants are but replicas of himself, and since moral corruption be transmitted by him to them by a fixed constitution or law of heredity, then that corruption dates from the very beginning of their existence. Because by being Adam’s children they are depraved, it necessarily follows that they must be so as soon as they *are* his children. David was the son of lawful and honourable marriage, yet from his parents he received Adam’s vitiated nature with all its evil dispositions. Note well that he was careful to intimate that it was not by divine infusion, but by natural generation and human propagation. He mentioned it not to excuse his fearful fall, but to aggravate the same. “Had I duly considered this before, I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). A realization that our whole being is horribly degenerated from its pristine purity and rectitude, should make us thoroughly distrustful of self and cause us to walk most warily.

Because our very nature is contaminated, we enter the world a mass of potential wickedness, which is one reason why Job declared, “I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister” (17:14). James Hervey (1714-1758) tells us the Hebrew word there for “worm” signifies a grub, which is bred by and feeds upon putrefaction. I commenced my existence with all sorts of impurity in my nature, with every cursed propensity to evil, with everything earthly, sensual, devilish in my mind. That depraved nature is the source of all our other miseries, the root from which proceed all evil actions. This solemn and sad fact is demonstrated by antithesis. Why was it necessary for Christ to be incarnated supernaturally, by the miracle of the Virgin birth? So that what was born of her should be “that *holy* thing” (Luk 1:35), which had not been the case if He had been begotten by natural generation from a man. Though this doctrine of original sin, of ante-natal⁹⁶ defilement, be purely a matter of divine revelation, yet it explains what nothing else does, namely that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21)—in every instance, Christ alone excepted.

Psalm 58

“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent” (Psa 58:3-4). There are three indictments here made against fallen human nature. First, that from the beginning of his existence man is alienated

⁹⁶ **ante-natal** – *ante* - prior to; *natal* - birth; prior to birth.

from God, divorced from His favour, cut off from fellowship with Him. Second, that he evidences his deplorable state as soon as he enters this world, manifesting his sinfulness in the cradle. But, third, why is it that everyone turns to his own way, and the very first steps he takes are in that broad road which leads to destruction? Because his very being is poisoned and poisonous, malicious: at ill will with God and goodness, and his fellows—“hateful, and hating one another” (Ti 3:3). Our poison “is like the poison of a serpent.” The serpent does not acquire his venom, but is *generated* a poisonous creature. Poison, deadly poison, is its very nature from the outset, and when it bites, it only acts out that with which it was born. Though its poison be hid, it is there lurking, ready for use as soon as it be provoked.

“Antecedent to all trespasses and acts of sin, before any apprehension of good or evil has dawned upon our hearts, before any notion respecting God has been formed in our souls, before we have uttered a word or conceived a thought, sin—essential sin—is found to dwell within us. Bound up with our being, it enters into every sensation, lives in every thought, sways every faculty. If the senses, by means of which we communicate with the external world, had never acted: if our eye had never seen, and our ear had never heard; if our throat had never proved itself to be an open sepulcher, breathing forth corruption; if our tongue had never shown itself to be set on fire of hell—still sin would have been the secret mistress of that world of thought and feeling which is found within us, and every hidden impulse there would have been enmity against God” (Benjamin W. Newton, 1807-1899). When therefore Scripture speaks of men as sinners, it refers not to their practice alone, but chiefly to their evil nature—a nature that is entailed by Adam and transmitted from parent to child in successive generations.

Children in Proverbs

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it from him” (Pro 22:15). This foolishness is not merely intellectual ignorance, but a positive principle of evil, for in the book of Proverbs the “fool” is not the idiot, but the sinner. Deep-rooted is this corruption. It lies not on the surface, like some of the child’s habits, which may easily be corrected. That moral madness, as Matthew Henry pointed out, “is not only *found* there, but *bound* there; it is annexed to the heart.” It is rooted and riveted in him from the first breath he draws. This is the birth-right of all Adam’s progeny. “A little innocent” is but the miscalled name of fondness and fancy. Said John Bunyan (1628-1688), “I do confess it is my opinion that children come polluted with sin into the world, and that oft-times the sins of youth, especially while they are very young, are rather by virtue of indwelling sin than by examples that are set before them by others; not but they may learn to sin by example too, but example is not the root, but rather the temptation to sin.” The rod of correction (not of caprice or passion) is the means prescribed by God, and under His blessing it will prevent many an outburst of the flesh.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Pro 29:15). “Discipline is the order of God’s government. Parents are His dispensers of it to their children. The child must be broken in, to ‘bear the yoke in his youth’ (Lam 3:27). Let reproof be tried first; and if it succeed, let the rod be spared (Pro 17:10). If not, let it do its work” (Charles Bridges, 1794-1869). If parents fail to do their duty, sad will be the consequences—the “mother” only is mentioned as being brought to shame, because she is usually the most indulgent, and because she (normally) *feels* most keenly the affliction brought upon herself by her own neglect. But fathers too are disgraced. Eli gave reproof, but spared the rod (1Sa 2:22-25; 3:13), and paid dearly for his folly. What dishonour was brought upon David’s name and what poignant grief must have

filled him because his perverted fondness brought his sons to their ruin—one palliated in the most aggravated sin (2Sa 14:28-33; 15:6; 18:33), another having been not even corrected by a word (1Ki 1:5-9). As Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690) said, “Take this for certain, that as many deserved stripes as you spare from your children, you do but lay up for your own backs.”

A child does not have to be taught to sin: remove all inhibitions and prohibitions and he will bring his parents to the grave in sorrow. If the child be humoured and no real efforts are made to counteract its evil propensities, it will assuredly grow more self-willed and intractable. How very far are the Scriptures from flattering us, my reader! A “transgressor from the womb” (Isa 48:8) is one of the hereditary titles of everyone entering this world. We are transgressors by internal disposition before we are so in external acts. Because every parent is the channel of moral contagion to his offspring, they are by nature “children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2). Original sin is transmitted as leprosy is conveyed to the children of lepers (2Ki 5:27). That is one reason why the corruption of nature is designated our “old man”: it is coeval⁹⁷ with our beings. Our very “heart,” the centre of our moral being, from which are “the issues [or outgoings] of life,” is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked from the very first moment of its existence (Jer 17:9).

All Equally Corrupt?

It is argued against what has been advanced above that if corruption be derived unto all men from their first parents, then all will be equally corrupt; and this is quite contrary to known fact, for we see some who are subject to no inordinate affections, respectable and law-abiding citizens. A number of answers may be given in reply to that objection, though all of them may be reduced unto these two. First, that though, everything else being equal, such a conclusion is logical, yet even then it will not necessarily follow that all men will *manifest* the corruption in the same manner, nor even to the same extent. When we say “everything else being equal,” we include such things as the watchful care of pious parents, the discipline of a good education, the demands and effects of a refined environment, the positions and circumstances in which one and another may be placed—for while none of these things, nor all of them combined, can produce any change in a person’s nature, they are factors which exert an influence upon his outward conduct. Nevertheless, though one man may have less dissolute manners than another, yet his imaginations are not pure; and though his bodily lusts be under better control, he may yield more to the lusts of the mind. There are diversities in men’s *lives*, but original sin has the same defiling effects upon all *hearts*.

Second, though all men be made in the likeness of fallen Adam, *God restrains*, in different ways and in varying degrees, the outbreakings of the corruption that has been transmitted to them. Nowhere is the sovereignty of God more evident than in His disposing of the lot of one and another: denying to some the opportunity to satisfy their evil desires, hedging up their way by poverty, ill-health, or putting them in isolated places; whereas others are given up to their hearts’ lusts, and God so orders His providences that they fatten themselves as beasts for the slaughter. Some men’s callings draw out their sins more than do those of their fellows, so that they are subject to frequent and fierce temptations. Various dispositions are excited to action by the conditions in which they are placed: as Jacob was induced to impose upon his father by an unscrupulous mother, or as a sight of the spoils of Jericho stirred up the cupidity of Achan. It was for this reason that holy Agar was moved to pray, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me

⁹⁷ **coeval** – contemporary.

neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Pro 30:8-9).

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

“This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23). Those words admit of a very wide application, for whatsoever is done by our wonder-working God should evoke our admiration and adoration. Certainly they should ever be the language of each of His people, for they have abundant *proof* thereof, both in their personal experience of His so-great salvation and in His providential dealings with them day by day. Yet there are times in their lives when His hand is more plainly perceived by them, and their hearts are drawn out in joyful acknowledgment of the same—times when they are more conscious of His supernatural interpositions on their behalf, or the sufficiency of His grace. Such is the case with the editor and his wife as they review God’s gracious dealings with them and this printed ministry through the course of yet another year. It is, in several respects, the best one we have had for the past decade; and not only are we fully assured that “this is *the LORD’s doing*,” but it is “marvelous in our eyes”—marvelous that He should deign to make any use of such unworthy instruments, marvelous that He is doing so in increased measure as the darkness deepens and the spiritual deadness of so much Christian profession becomes more and more apparent.

First, we have good reason to believe that a greater number of our readers have prayed more definitely during 1950 that the Lord would “enlarge our coast” (1Ch 4:10). Second, He has graciously answered their petition, and granted quite a marked improvement in our wee circulation. Third, more than the usual number of letters have come to hand, from near and far, telling of help and blessing received under God from these pages. Fourth, once more the Lord of the harvest has faithfully provided the sower with seed, enabling him to bring forth from His garner “things new and old,” so that we have experienced *no* anxiety wondering how to “fill up” this twenty-ninth volume. Fifth, despite such close concentration and confinement, we have again been preserved in health and strength—we are thoroughly convinced that a spiritual feeding on the Word of life has a vitalizing effect on the body! Sixth, our printers have again rendered us good service, and we trust our readers are pleased with the exceptionally white paper used this year. Seventh, the Lord has sent us in funds to meet every bill promptly and to leave a balance to the good.

We regard each and all of the above things as “the LORD’s doing,” and they are truly marvelous in our eyes (Psa 118:23). But we would now make separate mention of what has most impressed us. During the year, we have learned that, without any suggestion from us, a message which appeared in these pages two or three years ago entitled “A Word to Parents” has been translated into Chinese, and a 50,000 edition of it circulated in that unhappy land. A missionary in Central America has written to say, “I have translated several of the front-page articles and they appear from time to time in our Spanish paper.” Another missionary reader in Quebec has done

the same for his French paper. In these and several other ways, the truth published in this little monthly is being circulated by others.

We sincerely trust that the above testimony will not only provoke much praise to our blessed Master, and encourage our fellow helpers to “continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col 4:2), but also that it may prompt many of our readers to be more attentive in observing “the LORD’s doing” *for them* (Psa 107:43). You may not be called to engage in public service to His people, yet it is your sacred privilege to expect Him to show Himself strong in your behalf (no matter how humble and inconspicuous be the place which He has given you to occupy), and to marvel at the gracious ways in which He is undertaking for you. These days are indeed dark and evil, yet on that very account they afford a golden opportunity for each of us to prove God’s sufficiency and discover afresh that “His hand is not shortened” (Isa 59:1). According unto your faith be it unto you: the more you expect from Him in the way of spiritual blessings, the more do you honour Him. And thus, by grace, the editor and his wife count upon the Lord’s continued goodness in supplying our every need, and to further increase our circulation. D.V.,⁹⁸ the same themes will be continued next year.

By the mercy of God, not only have our receipts exceeded costs of publication, but a larger credit balance than usual remains... We regard readers as far more than mere names on our mailing list, namely personal friends in whose spiritual welfare we are interested, and therefore are glad that more of them are writing to us about their personal problems, asking for light thereon from God’s Word. With Christian love to all in Christ.—A. W. and V. E. Pink

⁹⁸ D.V. – *Latin* Deo Volenti; “as God wills.”

APPENDICES

About Studies in the Scriptures

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) wrote and published his monthly 28 page expository digest, *Studies in the Scriptures*, from 1922 to 1953. He mailed it worldwide by paid subscription to whomever desired the deeper truths of God. Each issue contained continuing serialized articles on six to eight subjects. When one subject was “completed” to the author’s satisfaction, another subject series began in its place in the next issue. In total, the 380 issues comprise a treasure of immense proportions.

By God’s grace, Chapel Library republishes the *Studies* beginning with the year 1934, available for download worldwide, and mailing three issues each quarter by free subscription in North America. We also print many books and booklets gleaned from articles in the *Studies*. These may be ordered in print in North America, or downloaded from our website worldwide without charge:

Studies: www.chapellibrary.org/studies

Other literature: www.chapellibrary.org/literature/title-catalog

Today the various subjects are being gathered together by topic, and republished in paperbacks by several sources. *Chapel Library* offers the following at the time of this printing:

- *The Sovereignty of God* 176 pages
- *Comfort for Christians* 79 pages
- *Profiting from the Word* 96 pages
- *Seven Sayings of the Savior* 94 pages
- *Spiritual Union and Communion* 175 pages
- *The Attributes of God* 84 pages
- *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* 238 pages
- *The Doctrine of Revelation* 214 pages
- *1 John – An Exposition, Part 1* 190 pages
- *1 John – An Exposition, Part 2* 173 pages
- *The Holy Spirit* 196 pages

Biography of A.W. Pink

by Erroll Hulse

Concerning Calvinism⁹⁹ and Arminianism¹⁰⁰ during the first half of the Twentieth Century, a most interesting case study is the experience of Arthur W. Pink. He was a preacher and writer of outstanding talent who ministered in Britain, America, and Australia. When he died in 1952 in isolation on the Island of Lewis in north eastern Scotland, he was hardly known outside a small list of subscribers to his magazine, *Studies in the Scriptures*. Yet, by the 1970s, his books were in wide demand and his name was widely known among publishers and ministers. In fact, for that period it would be difficult to find a reformed author whose books were more widely read.

The preaching ministry of A. W. Pink had been remarkably blessed in the USA, but it was in Australia that he seemed to reach the apex of his public ministry, and there in particular that his preaching ministry reached great heights. He was then faced with accreditation by the Baptist Union and was rejected on account of his Calvinistic views. He then ministered in a Baptist church of Strict Baptist pedigree. There he came unstuck since they esteemed him an Arminian! A considerable group, however, appreciated Pink, recognised his worth, and seceded from that Strict Baptist Church to form a new church of 27 members. Then suddenly, in 1934, Pink resigned and returned to Britain. It is widely held that one rejection is enough to cripple a minister for life, but two in quick succession can destroy a pastor completely. So it proved for Arthur Pink. He never again found meaningful entrance into the ministry, though he tried his utmost. He sought openings in both the UK and the USA without success. He became increasingly isolated. He ended his days as an evangelical recluse in the Island of Stornoway off the coast of Scotland. It was rumoured that not more than ten souls attended his funeral.

There is much that we can learn from the life of A. W. Pink. Firstly, we will trace out his early life in broad outline. Secondly, we will describe his experience in Australia, and trace out the adverse effects of this on his life. Thirdly, we will the impact of his writing ministry.

1. Early Life

Arthur Pink was born in Nottingham, England, in 1886. His parents were godly. They lived by the Bible and kept the Lord's Day holy. Arthur was the first of three children brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. To the grief of their parents, all three children drifted into lives of unbelief. Worse was to come: Arthur embraced *Theosophy*, an esoteric cult that claimed powers of the occult! "Lucifer" was the name of the leading theosophy magazine. A natural feature of Arthur's character was wholeheartedness, and he entered theosophy with zeal. A leadership role was offered him, which meant that he would visit India. At the same time a friend who was an opera singer, noted that Arthur possessed a fine baritone voice; he urged him to study for a career

⁹⁹ **Calvinism** – the doctrinal system developed from the teachings of the French-born Swiss Reformer John Calvin (1509-1664), holding that the Bible teaches the supreme authority of the Scriptures, the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the "doctrines of grace"; these doctrines were the response of the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to the Arminians' remonstrance (protest) and are commonly known by the acronym TULIP.

¹⁰⁰ **Arminianism** – (from Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609, Dutch theologian) the doctrinal system that rejects the Reformers' understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God's predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

in opera. Then suddenly on a night during 1908, Arthur was converted. His first action was to preach the Gospel to the theosophist group.

Simultaneous with Pink's conversion was a call to the Christian ministry. But the colleges were in the hands of liberals bent on the destruction of the Scriptures. Arthur, however, heard of the Moody Bible Institute, which had been founded by D. L. Moody¹⁰¹ in 1889. In 1910, aged 24, Pink left for Chicago to begin a two-year course. His time at Moody lasted only six weeks, however. He decided that he was wasting his time, and that he should enter directly into a pastorate—and his professors agreed! He was not disgruntled, but rather frustrated, that the teaching was pitched at such a primary level that it did nothing for him.

During 1910, he began in his first pastorate in Silverton, Colorado, a mining camp in the San Juan Mountains. We possess little detail of this period, but we know that from Silverton, Pink moved to Los Angeles. He was always a hard worker, and this is illustrated by the fact that at one point in Oakland he was engaged in tent evangelism six nights a week for eighteen weeks!

From Los Angeles, he moved to Kentucky. It was here that he met and married Vera E. Russell. There could not have been a better gift from heaven. Vera was entirely committed to the Lord. She was hard working, gifted, intelligent, and persevering. She died just ten years after Arthur's decease on the island of Stornoway.

The next move was to Spartanburg, South Carolina, from 1917 to 1920. This church building consisted of a small and frail wooden structure, while he and Vera lived in a small wooden house standing on wooden columns. Heating was inadequate, and in the freezing winter it was like an ice box.

It was during this time Pink began writing books. There were two of significance: one with the title *Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, and the second *The Sovereignty of God*, the foreword of which is dated June 1918. It was this book that was later taken up by The Banner of Truth publishers. The first edition, according to I. C. Herendeen, his first publisher at that time, was only 500 copies, and it was a struggle to sell that number. When the book came to Banner, it was edited by Iain Murray and vastly improved. It became one of the most popular of The Banner of Truth paperbacks. By 1980, 92,000 copies had sold.

After about a year at Spartanburg, Pink almost came to grief. He felt a strong conviction to give up the ministry and devote himself to writing only, and at one point was disconsolate. Vera wrote to a friend saying that her husband was even thinking of leaving the ministry and going into business, to make money for the Kingdom as a better way of serving God. In 1920, Arthur resigned the pastorate at Spartanburg. He and Vera moved and settled at Swengel, Pennsylvania, in order to be near the publisher I. C. Herendeen.

In the middle of July, 1920, he left to take a series of meetings in California. Large crowds gathered and numbers were saved. At one point 1,200 gathered to hear the Gospel. Other crusades and conferences followed; it was evident that Pink was eminently suited to this kind of ministry. Looking back over his life, it is apparent that he experienced more blessing in the itinerant ministry than he did in a total of twelve years in pastoring churches. This had to do with his temperament; he preferred being in his study to visiting.

In 1921, Arthur and Vera were back in Pennsylvania. The monthly digest, the *Studies in the Scriptures*, first appeared in 1922. It ran continuously without interruption for 32 years, until Ar-

¹⁰¹ **D. L. Moody** (1837-1899) – American evangelist and publisher who founded the Moody Church, Northfield School and Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts (now the Northfield Mount Hermon School), the Moody Bible Institute, and Moody Publishers.

thur's death in 1952. Initially, this was a 24 page magazine, with four to six articles as instalments in a series. To write expository material at a high standard at this rate every month is a tremendous testimony to his insight into the Scriptures, and to the Lord's blessing and enabling. All his articles had to be written by hand and finished for the printer at least two months before the date of publication. *Studies in the Scriptures* had about 1,000 circulation at the beginning, but for most of its existence the subscription level hovered at about 500. The financial side was always precarious, with only just enough to cover printing costs from one month to the next. Pink corresponded with some of his subscribers; eventually this formed his pastoral work. Throughout he was assisted by his very hard working wife, who acted as secretary. They never had a family, always lived very humbly, and managed always to make ends meet. This was made possible through a modest inheritance left to him by his parents and through gifts that he received from his readers.

During 1923, Arthur fell into a deep depression, which turned out to be a nervous breakdown. At this juncture a young couple that had been greatly blessed by Pink's ministry came to the rescue, and Arthur was nursed through a period of several months enforced rest, which brought him back to normal health.

In 1924, a major new direction came by way of letters of invitation from a publisher in Sydney, Australia. Before departing for Australia, no less than four months preparation had to be made for the *Studies*. On his way to Australia, Pink engaged in more Bible conference preaching in Colorado, then in Oakland, California, and also San Francisco—from where he and Vera took ship across the Pacific to Sydney.

2. *Pink's Experience in Australia*

The Pinks spent a total of three and half years in Australia. These times were for them the best, but also turned out to be the worst. Upon arrival Arthur had more invitations than he possibly fill. Initially his ministry in Australia was a great success. Crowds gathered; churches were filled; believers were revived; and souls were brought to the Saviour.

Attendance swelled in every place he preached. In the first year in Australia Arthur preached 250 times. He would often work until 2:00 in the morning to keep *Studies in the Scriptures* going. The Pinks truly must have felt that at last they had found the place of permanent fulfilment. There was an evident power in his ministry. One mature believer declared that he drew people "like a magnet," and that he preached the "whole counsel of God's Word," and was capable of preaching a sermon "from every word of the text."

This period proved to be one of great joy. Pink was now 40 years old. He was preaching almost daily for well over an hour. He would get home at 10:00 PM and then work until 2:00 AM. He wrote, "never before during our 16 years in the ministry, have we experienced such blessing and joy in our souls, such liberty of utterance, and such an encouraging response as we have done in this highly favoured portion of Christ's vineyard."¹⁰²

We can be sure that a thrilling and powerful soul-saving ministry will arouse the fury of Satan. And so it proved to be in this case when that old serpent, the devil, mounted a cunning counterattack. The Baptist Union leaders were fundamentally opposed to Calvinism. These leaders invited Arthur Pink to read a paper on "Human Responsibility." Sadly, Pink did not realise that this was a plot to demote him in the eyes of the public—and in his sincere earnestness he fell into the trap. Instead of declining this invitation, he presented the paper and then answered questions for over an hour. The result of this was that the BU of New South Wales published a statement that they agreed unanimously *not* to endorse his ministry. What they really meant (for they did not them-

¹⁰² *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, by Iain H. Murray, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 49.

selves clarify any doctrine) is that they did not agree with Pink's Reformed doctrine. They were fundamentally Arminian. The effect of all this was that invitations dried up, and Pink's wider effective ministry in Australia was drastically reduced.

It was at this juncture that one of three Strict and Particular Baptist Churches invited Pink to become its pastor. This church was known as the Belvoir Street Church. Here Pink was as busy as he had ever been in his life. He had preached 300 times in the year ending 1926. In addition to preaching three times a week at Belvoir Street, he preached in three different places in Sydney each week to an average of 200 at each meeting. He still managed to maintain *Studies in the Scriptures* by burning midnight oil.

Trouble however was in store. The early part of the Twentieth Century was a time of lack of clarity in doctrine. One of the evidences of this was confusion over Calvinism, Arminianism, and hyper-Calvinism.¹⁰³ Many churches polarized. The Baptist Union was Arminian, and the Strict and Particular Baptists tended to be hyper-Calvinist. This proved to be the case at Belvoir Street. Until about May 1927, the Pinks believed that they had found a permanent church home.

3. *Impact of Pink's Writing Ministry*

If history had progressed normally, Arthur Pink would have been forgotten. There are several leaders in each generation who are well known, but it is unlikely that their names will be remembered for very long. When Arthur Pink died, he was known to a small circle of readers—about 500—who read his monthly periodical *Studies in the Scriptures*, which he had faithfully produced with the help of his wife Vera for 31 years. Yet, after his decease, as his writings were collected and published as books, his name became very well known in the English-speaking evangelical world. During the 1960s and '70s, there was a dearth of reliable expository writing; Pink's writings filled an important need. His expositions are God-centred, theologically compelling, and reliable—as well as practical and experimental. That was precisely what was needed during a period of spiritual drought. Publishers discovered the value of his writings. The outcome was dramatic.

For instance, Baker Book House published twenty-two different titles by Pink, with a combined total sales by 1980 of 350,000. By the same date just three books (*Sovereignty of God*, *Life of Elijah*, and *Profiting from the Word*) totaled 211,000. Yet as contemporary reformed authors have multiplied, so the demand for Pink's books has lessened.

We must remember that with the dawning of the twentieth century, the mainline denominations had already suffered extensive losses to higher criticism and modernism. Such was the advance of modernism in the late nineteenth century and through the first half of the twentieth century, most Bible colleges and seminaries were lost to an agenda of unbelief and anti-Christianity. Instead of producing preacher/pastors for the churches, men were sent out who emptied the churches. The most striking example is Methodism. The aggregate membership in Methodism grew to be the highest of the non-conformist churches. Yet this denomination has been virtually annihilated by modernism.

The writings of Pink provided not only food for the spiritually hungry, but as Iain Murray asserts, "Pink has been immensely important in reviving and stimulating doctrinal reading at the popular level. The same can be said of few other authors of the twentieth century."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ **hyper-Calvinism** – the doctrinal error that holds men need not evangelize, since God will save His elect children with or without the means of preaching the Word. This represents only one side of biblical truth; the other is that God is pleased to use human instruments as means to His work, and the preaching of the Word is uniquely marked out for this purpose (2Ti 4:2; 2Ti 3:16; Mat 28:19).

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

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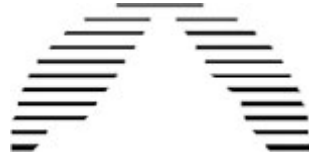
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