

WRITINGS OF JOHN H GERSTNER

by John H. Gerstner

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John H. Gerstner, compiled for study and devotional reading.

23 Chapters

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01.00. Biblical Inerrancy

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Appendix on "The Confession of 1967" (of the UPCUSA) Select and Recommended Bibliography http://www.the-highway.com/inerrancyTOC_Gerstner.html Reformatted for e-Sword by Stored on <http://www.davidcox.com.mx/>

01.01. The Bible's Own Testimony as the Basis for Inerrancy

Some Unsound Bases for Sound Doctrine 1^o The Bible's Own Testimony as the Basis for Inerrancy

We could compose a book many times the size of this one consisting merely of fervent and eloquent evangelical appeals to the Bible itself as the proof of its own inspiration. Some three thousand times the Bible does make this claim for itself. "Thus saith the Lord" is a veritable refrain of the Scriptures. No book in the history of literature has made such frequent and moving assertions of its divine origin. Because of this remarkable characteristic of the Scriptures many have almost unconsciously concluded that the Bible is the Word of God. This we believe and later shall attempt to prove is the right doctrine. The Bible is the Word of God; the inerrant revelation from above. It is the Word of God indeed, but not because it says so. Rather, it says so because it is.

How, we ask, would anyone prove the Bible is the Word of God simply because it so often says so? There could only be one basis for accepting Scripture for Scripture's sake; assertion for assertion's sake. But what an incredibly naive notion: A thing must be what it says it is. A man must be what he says he is. A book must be what it says it is.

Surely the mere setting forth of such an argument must be its sufficient refutation. An identification of claim with proof of claim is palpable error.

If it is not beating a horse that was born dead, let us point out the absurd consequences of the position we are here considering. If everything is to be believed simply because it says it is to be believed, then Hitler was a Messiah, the devil is an angel of light and anti-Christ is Christ. As Jesus said: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not" (Matthew 24:23). But on the principle under scrutiny we would have to believe everyone who claims to be Christ — here and there, now and then. After all, according to the supposition we first believed in Jesus as the Christ because he said he was the Christ. We would have to be fair with other claimants whose claim is as loud or louder than his. If we would say: "You are not the Christ because the Christ says you are not the Christ," anti-Christ could well say: "If you believed this other one because he said he was the Christ; why do you not, on the same principle, believe me when I say that I am the Christ? and if you will not believe that I am the Christ because this other Christ, whom you believe merely because he said what I also say, why not believe me when I say that he is not the Christ?"

There cannot be any answer to this criticism for even to attempt to answer it is to admit it, by retreating from the position being maintained (acceptance on mere assertion without any argument). If, for example, one says to anti-Christ, "I believe Jesus' claim because he has confirmed it in my experience," then you do not believe Jesus simply because he says he is the Christ. Rather, you believe him because of something which he does in your heart. Your ground has changed. You are no longer believing him for his mere word's sake but for his work's sake;

specifically, his work in your heart.

Consequently, if you give no answer to the criticism of belief on the mere basis of assertion you are exposed to palpable naiveté and absurdity. But, if you do give an answer you flatly contradict yourself.

Some suppose that the Word of God is a special case to which ordinary rules of evidence do not apply. They admit essentially what has been written above but take exception to its application to the matter in hand. It is true of men, they say, that their word may be challenged and must be proven to be true. But God's Word cannot be challenged but must be immediately accepted as true and obeyed as right. To hesitate when God speaks is to be both foolish and impious, they say. With all of this we cordially agree. But it misses the point under discussion. We are not here asking whether God should be obeyed when he speaks. We are simply asking whether a being must be acknowledged as God speaking merely because he so claims; or, more particularly, whether the Bible is to be regarded as the Word of God merely because it so claims. It cannot be said too emphatically that when God speaks he is to be instantly believed. Any question whatsoever at that moment is utterly and dangerously out of order. When God the Lord does speak, the devout and intelligent mind can only reply: "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." But like Samuel, who spoke those words, we must first know that the voice speaking is that of God.

It would be just as foolish and impious to accept and obey any voice whatsoever which claimed to be divine as it would be not to accept and obey the divine voice when it is shown to be such. To apply some reasonable test for ascertaining the voice of God and distinguishing it from the voice of men is not presumptuous as many charge; but, on the contrary, as humble as it is necessary. Humble? Yes, humble because it is using the only means which our Maker has given us whereby we may distinguish between truth and error; God and men; his Word and theirs. To accept any voice which claimed his divine name would be arrogantly to disregard the means God himself has graciously provided to prevent just such a mistake. The person who professed to believe without evidence would be despising the God who gave us minds which must needs have evidence in order to provide a basis for reasonable belief. While God is, of course, infinitely above his creatures it does not follow that, if and when he condescends to speak to them, he will speak in a manner which is infinitely above them. Manifestly if he speaks to men he must speak so that men can understand what he says. He must, as Calvin has said, "lisp." If parents must accommodate their language to their infants when they would be understood, surely God must indulge in baby talk when speaking to those infinitely below him. If he chose to speak to us in a manner which is as infinitely above us as his being is above ours he would be, literally, infinitely over our heads. This would not only make comprehension by us infinitely impossible, but it would inevitably reflect on God's infinite intelligence which would know no better than to attempt to communicate with finite creatures by going infinitely over their heads. It is equally evident that he will make it known that he is speaking — which means he will give some signs of his presence which the human mind can recognize. In conclusion, then, the fact that the Bible claims its inspiration is not the basis for Inerrancy. If there is a sound basis for believing in Inerrancy, as we shall attempt to show in the second part, the self-testimony of Scripture will be a wonderful confirmation of it. Without the Bible's own claim it would not be impossible, but it would be more difficult, to believe that it is the Word of God. But with such self-attestation the truth of divine Inspiration is gloriously sealed.

01.02. The Holy Spirit's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

2° The Holy Spirit's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

One of the precious doctrines of the church is called the "Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit." Like the self-attestation of Scripture it is a most gracious gift of God to his church. And like that gift it is sometimes misunderstood and misused even by those who love it most. A case in point is the one before us in which the Internal Testimony is submitted as proof that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. The thinking here may be shown to be wrong, but it does have the merit of being clear. It runs like this. Just as the Bible certifies itself by the letter of Scripture, so by the living voice of God the Spirit convinces the hearts of men. Many think that the Bible's witness to itself remains a dead letter until the living Spirit of God speaks within the soul. But when the Spirit does thus speak men have the most solid possible basis for knowing that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. Some, by no means all, of the advocates of this view go on to teach that unless the Spirit testifies, the Bible is not the Word of God; and only when he does is it the Word of God. In any case, the argument at first glance is quite impressive. When God witnesses to his own Word, how can there be any doubt that it is his inerrant Word? If you want evidence, these men assure us, here is the best. What more can any reasonable or spiritual person desire than to have God speaking directly to his own soul?

We agree. As this case is often stated it leaves nothing to be desired. We would never be so foolish as to question the very voice of God in our souls. Our search for truth would be ended promptly when God opened his mouth and spoke and that to each of us individually and inwardly.

We agree, that is, if the Holy Spirit does actually thus speak to individual souls. But I have never heard the Holy Spirit say to my soul or mind: "The Bible is the Word of God." I have never met anyone who claims to have heard the Holy Spirit say that or anything like that to his soul. In fact, the advocates of the Internal Testimony as the basis of Inerrancy never quite get around to saying it either. Rather, most of them would be inclined to rebuke us at this point for gross misunderstanding if not outright caricature of their opinions on this subject. "We do not mean," they will reply, "'testimony' as an audible voice in the soul. Of course, the Holy Spirit has not spoken to individual hearts telling them that the Bible is His Word. Of course, you cannot find anyone in his right mind who claims any such experience," they may indignantly respond.

"Very well," we reply. "We are sorry; we meant no offense and intended no caricature of a brother's doctrine. Nor are we totally ignorant of the history of this doctrine. Indeed, we ourselves believe it in the sense in which Calvin, for example, meant it. But when it is used as the argument for Inerrancy (which, incidentally, we do not think was Calvin's idea at all) that is something else. It is that something else which we are now considering." If it is so used as proof of Inerrancy how is it such unless somehow God's Spirit testifies, tells, signifies to us, reveals in us or the like that the canonical Scriptures are from him? But very well, we will withdraw our query as we hear our wounded brethren protesting that they mean no such thing. Let it be agreed, then, that the "testimony" of the Spirit is not like the testimony of a witness in court speaking to what he did or did

not see or hear. The Spirit's testimony is non-verbal, more subtle, more in the nature of an influence on the soul than an audible voice or mystical writing. But, we must insist, how then does the Spirit's witness reveal Inerrancy?

If the advocates of this line of thought say that the Spirit confirms our own convictions when we read the Bible; if they say that he makes the Bible student sure that the Bible is what the Bible student feels that it is; then the Spirit does not communicate any new information which the Bible reader receives, but somehow intensifies his experiences as he meditates on Holy Writ. We are inclined to believe that the Holy Spirit does precisely that in the hearts of many. But we do not see that even if he does do it that this proves the Inspiration of the Bible. All we would now have is this: A man reads his Bible. His feelings are stirred as he reads. He senses, or thinks he senses, that there is some other spirit besides his own at work in his heart as he reads. He cannot be sure that there is another spirit. If he does believe it he cannot know what spirit it is. Certainly, he has no way of knowing that it is the divine spirit. And even if he did, all he knows is that the divine Spirit is working in his heart as he reads the Scripture and not "testifying" or saying that this Scripture is the inerrant Word of God. If it is said: "But the Bible tells us that the Spirit bears witness and therefore it must be true and the Word to which he testifies must truly be God's Word" we are back where we began: accepting the testimony of the Scripture to itself without any (at present) just reason for so doing. In summary: we must reject the Testimony of the Spirit as the basis of Inerrancy (not, please note, the Testimony of the Spirit) because: first, if his "Testimony" is construed as audible or verbal, it simply does not exist; second, if his "Testimony" is construed as a spiritual effect intensifying our feelings as we read Scripture this is not a proving of the Inspiration or Inerrancy of Scripture.

It may be necessary to show that we are not here opposing the Westminster Confession of Faith's view of things but actually defending it. It teaches that "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof" (of the Scriptures), "is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts" (Acts 1:5). But these words teach only that the "Testimony of the Holy Spirit" "persuades" us of the Inspiration of the Bible. It does not prove the doctrine but persuades us of the truth of the doctrine. It leads us to acknowledge the evidence for Inspiration which apart from the Holy Spirit's influence we (as sinful persons, cf. Acts 6:1-47) are prone to resist. This evidence is utterly sufficient to persuade us if we were frank enough to admit evidence when we see it. Thus the Westminster Confession of Faith says in full: "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." (Acts 1:5).

According to this great creed the various characteristics of the Bible "abundantly evidence" (prove) its Inspiration but only the influence of the Holy Spirit (overcoming our sinful dispositions) can "persuade" us to acquiesce in what we clearly see is the Word of God. The reader may notice a certain difference (not discrepancy) between the approach of the WCF here cited and that of this

little monograph. The “arguments” to which Westminster appeals are internal evidences drawn from the nature (not testimony) of the Bible itself such as its harmony, perfection, etc. That these, in their cumulative effect, are arguments we agree and have so written elsewhere. We are by-passing them in this monograph only because they take longer to develop, involve more debates with modernity, and are not so directly conclusive as the argumentation developed in Part II. That the approach of this Primer was abundantly used by the Westminster divines and seventeenth century Orthodoxy, in general, could be extensively illustrated were there any necessity to prove what no one questions.

01.03. The Believer's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

3° The Believer's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

It may not have been obvious that the fallacies of the preceding views lay ultimately in their unconscious elevation of the creature above the Creator who is blessed forever. It seemed to have been quite the opposite. By accepting the authority of the Bible on the basis of its own divine affirmation or its divine corroboration in the soul, advocates of these positions intended to bow before the majesty of heaven; but, in fact, did not. Since there is no evidence that an avowed Word of God is a genuine Word of God simply because it avows itself to be such, accepting it for no reason is sheer arbitrariness (however reverent the intention). Instead of abiding by the laws of evidence which God has given us we become laws to ourselves. In other words, the first two unsound bases for sound doctrine, though they appear to be quite objective, are actually only appeals to mere personal feelings. But to this position, in the purity of its expression, we now come. The view runs something like this. The Bible is inspired because it inspires me. It "finds" me. It rings a bell in my soul. I know that this is God's book because I feel within that this book is God's book. It affects me as no other literature does. It exhibits a power and an energy which speak to me. This view is not intended, by those who favor it, to be an appeal to subjectivity. It is, of course, an appeal to the subject's experience. However, it is claimed that the subject experiences something not himself. He senses the presence of a spirit not his own. The argument is not subjective, then, in the sense that the subject himself "existentially" produces the experience. It is not a creation of the human soul but something that happens to the soul which is thought to prove that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. This experience then is offered as the basis for believing that the Bible is the Word of God. In itself, and in it alone, is the argument for Inerrancy. No matter how sincere the Christianity of those who reason thus, no matter how truly the Bible, of which they speak, may indeed be the Word of God, still their argument amounts to this: "My heart is moved when I read the Bible more and/or differently than when I read any other literature. Therefore, this Bible, which is the occasion or cause of this wonderful feeling, must be God's Word." These good men do not phrase their argument that way or they, too, would immediately recognize its futility as an argument. They imply this but do not usually express it. Some of them will not even recognize it when someone else expresses it. They may even sincerely resent such a spelling out as saying something which they never intended. And, of course, they may not have meant it. People often imply what they do not intend. "Happy inconsistencies" abound everywhere. Whatever their inner intentions may be we leave to God the only Searcher of Hearts. We concern ourselves only with their reasoning. Experience is set forth as a case for Inspiration and the only way that it could appear to be such is by supposing that such an inference is valid. But is it valid to suppose that because I have a certain experience when I read the Bible that the Bible is thereby shown to be the Word of God? Surely not. First, the experience could be a mere coincidence. One may have happened to have felt well, for some reason, when he began to read the Bible. By association he may have attributed this to what he was reading. Thus the Bible reading may have been a mere concomitant, rather than cause, of his experience. Christians do, in fact, testify that often when

they read the Bible nothing “happens.”

Even if something always happened when one read the Bible, that would not prove that the Bible was the cause of what happened. We all have heard of the rooster who thought that his crowing caused the sun to rise each morning, until he found it rising one morning when he had a sore throat. But suppose that that rooster had never had a sore throat; he would have gone to his death still thinking that his crowing was the cause of the sun’s rising. We must have more than succession for a causal argument. There must be necessary succession. But this can never be shown by mere experience. Second, even if the Bible were the cause of these experiences that would not prove that the Bible was the Word of God. It would prove that it had a unique power, but not divine power. A unique power is not necessarily a divine power. The devil has power that is unique and, so far as men apart from special revelation know, it could account for such a phenomenon as that we are considering. Of course, that is not the case here. Of course, the advocates of this view are correct in saying that this power comes from God. They are right; but, they have no basis for being right. Their conclusion may be correct (as we think); but, their premises are incorrect (as we have shown). No one is likely ever to admit that the Bible is the Word of God apart from this experience here described. Nothing so powerfully affects men’s convictions about Inspiration as this experience. Nevertheless, precious and valuable as it is, the believer’s testimony is not the basis of an argument for Inerrancy. On the contrary, Inerrancy must be the basis of validating Christian experience.

01.04. The Church's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

4° The Church's Testimony as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy The very futility of the preceding views has led some to the church's testimony as the basis of Inerrancy. Sensing that they cannot prove, even to themselves not to mention others, the Inerrancy of Scripture from something within themselves or within the Bible they succumb to the temptation of appealing to Mother Church. Yet, there is more here than that. It is not simply that many are thought to be able to do what a few cannot accomplish but that God does in the many what he has not chosen to do in the few. That is, God has promised guidance to the body of the faithful and will lead them into all truth and not permit them to be misled fatally.

Now, where does the church get the idea that it is the "pillar and ground of the truth"; that it is to bind and loose on earth? From the Bible! So it is the Bible which is the basis of the church's authority, not the church which is the basis of the Bible's authority. The Bible is the pillar on which the church rests, not the church the pillar on which the Bible rests. Incidentally, the expression in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth does not point to a pillar on which truth rests but to a pillar on which truth was posted for public announcement in antiquity. In other words, it refers to the church as witness to the truth and not the basis of it. But some will say that the church came into existence before the Bible and then called everyone's attention to the Bible as the Word of God. This is true in an irrelevant sense and false in a relevant sense. When we say that it is true in an irrelevant sense that the church existed before the Bible we mean that granting the church existed before the written and canonical form of the Bible is no proof of Inerrancy. If, for example, the church is thought of as beginning when the first sinners trusted in the mercy of God and if sinful Adam and Eve were the first sinners to trust in the mercy of God then the church existed centuries before the Bible was probably written and certainly many centuries before it was gathered into a canon of books recognized as Bible. If the church is thought of as coming into existence at Pentecost then the Bible (the Old Testament) preceded it by centuries. Still, the New Testament church would have preceded the New Testament Bible because there were New Testament Christians before a word of the New Testament was written.

All of this is obviously true and just as obviously irrelevant to the matter in hand. First, granted that the church, in a sense, existed before the Bible in its written form, what does this prove? According to the advocates of the view in question it is supposed to prove that the church's testimony is the argument for Inerrancy. But does the church's testimony, which preceded the Bible, prove the Inerrancy of the Bible? How does the fact that the church may have preceded the Bible in existence prove that the Bible is inspired and inerrant? How does the fact that the previously existing church testifies to the subsequently existing Bible prove the Bible to be what the church says that it is? It is no doubt true that if the church had not testified and did not continue to testify to the Bible as the Word of God the world might soon forget about the Bible and thus never come to realize its Inspiration. The church is indispensable to the Bible's being considered for what it is. But, this fact is in no sense a proof that the Bible is what the church says it is. The Bible is, we believe, exactly what the church says that it is; but, it is not what the church says it is because the

church says it is. Rather, in the true order of events, the church testifies because the Bible is what it is, rather than that the Bible is what it is because the church so testifies.

Perhaps it will become clearer if we outline the order of events:

1. God speaks (revelation).
2. Men respond in faith (church).
3. Revelation is recorded (inerrant Bible).
4. The church recognizes, receives and testifies to the inerrant Bible.

(The question is: What is the basis of the church's testimony: Surely it is not the church's testimony.)

Some will still say: Granted, that the church's testimony is not the basis of Inerrancy but Inerrancy is the basis of the church's testimony; still, is not the church's testimony the basis of Inerrancy for us? That is, granted that the church had good and sufficient reasons for recognizing the Bible for what it is, nevertheless we do not have access to these reasons; or even if we did, we do not have the infallible divine guidance necessary for correctly perceiving them. So, we must rest on the church's testimony as the basis for our belief in Inerrancy though the church herself must have another basis. We reply, that even if this were so it does grant our main point: namely, that the church's testimony cannot be the basis for Inerrancy. But this point would still be important because it would terminate our search for the basis for Inerrancy. Our search would have ended in a realization that we should not search anymore; that the answer has been found by another (the church) and can be found by none other.

If this is so, so be it. But, is it so? It is not so, nor could it possibly be so. Why not? For the simple reason that if it be proposed that the church's testimony must become our argument for Inerrancy, we must ask why? If the answer is: "Because the Bible says so," it is obvious that we are right back where we began. It is the inerrant Bible itself which alone can tell us that the church alone can tell us that the Bible is inerrant! So, for us to accept this position that we can only know that the Bible is inerrant by the testimony of the church we must first know that the Bible is inerrant. For example, Rome claims papal authority from Matthew 16:18 but to do so she must first prove the authority of Matthew 16:18. If that church is to establish her authority, she must first establish the Inerrancy of the Bible. That is, even according to her own argument, she cannot establish the Bible's authority, but the Bible must establish hers (which, incidentally, it does not do). This then is another wrong basis for a right answer. We must continue our search. We have not yet found the right basis for accepting the Bible's Inerrancy.

01.05. The Testimony of Divinely Commissioned Messengers as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy

Part II - A Sound Basis for Sound Doctrine 5^o The Testimony of Divinely Commissioned Messengers as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy (a) The Argument from Commissioned Messengers to Inspired Bible.

Let us outline the steps of this argument before proceeding to explain it:

1. There is a God.
2. Men were made in his image, rational creatures.
3. As such, they are designed to make their choices on the basis of evidence.
4. The evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible is as follows:
 1. Men have appeared in history with powers which only God could have given them (miracles). 2. Miracles are God's seal to mark men unmistakably as his messengers. 3. God's message is indubitably true. 4. God's message includes the Inspiration of the Bible. 5. Therefore, the Inspiration of the Bible is indubitably true.

1. There is a God. This must be assumed here. This is a small, popular Primer on Bible Inerrancy. Time, space and the nature of the undertaking make certain assumptions inevitable. What is here an assumption (the existence of God) has been proven elsewhere in many, many volumes. If the reader of the Primer does not believe in God's existence its argument may interest him but it cannot possibly convince him. We must believe there is a God before we can consistently believe that there is a special revelation of God in the Bible or anywhere. But here we will detour a little for there are many today who say that we can only know the existence of God from special revelation (such as the Bible). Exactly opposite to what we said in the preceding paragraph they contend that God is utterly unknown until he supernaturally discloses himself. We say: God cannot supernaturally reveal himself until he has naturally made his existence known. They say: No, his existence cannot be naturally known until he supernaturally reveals himself.

Let us examine their view. According to it:

First. There is a book, the Bible, claiming the existence and revelation of God.

Second. We are to believe in this God.

Third. Apart from this revelation we could not know that there is such a God. The paucity of this approach is plain to see. First, we would have no possible tests to ascertain whether the deity revealed in the Bible is what he says he is. We do not know, on this view, that there is such a being nor whether this Biblical being is such. If this be God we can only accept it on his own word. We would not trust a dollar to a human being whose honesty we know only because he claims it. Here we trust our lives to a being whose Godness and whose very existence we know only from

himself. Custom inspectors look at a visitor to see whether he resembles the picture in the passport before they admit him to their nation. But here comes a God without passport; a God who wants to rule our lives merely because he says he has a right to do so. If this were not bad enough, we have, second, the further objection that there are many claimants to this role of God. Many books present their candidates. If we worshiped any one of them without credentials we would be out of our mind; if we worshiped all of them we would be multiple-schizophrenic.

No, there must be evidence of the existence of God from the creation, of which we ourselves are the most exalted part, if we are to recognize a further revelation of this glorious being, if and when it comes. So here we assume, what most people do quite rightly assume, that God exists. This we can safely assume here only because it is proven elsewhere. Otherwise, the assumption would be gratuitous.

2. Men were made in God's image, rational creatures. This point also we must largely assume because of the limitation of this little book. But this is a very safe assumption, is it not? If we were not rational beings, you would not be reading this (or any other) book in your search for knowledge, nor would we be writing books. Aristotle was quite right: man is a rational animal. If we were not rational beings no one could prove (for this involves reasoning) that we were not rational beings. We could not even think that we were not. So our rationality must be assumed for even to deny it is to assume it.

3. As rational beings, men are designed to make their choices on the basis of evidence. Being rational beings they are not the mere product of natural forces. They choose according to reason (or what appears reason). That is virtually the definition of a rational being. If he were merely the product of external forces how could his own reason and will be operative and if not, how could he be a rational being? Being rational beings they are not the mere product of supernatural forces. That is, not only does nature not force rational beings but even supernature, that is God himself, does not force them. We would go so far as to say that God cannot force men. By definition, they have been made (by God himself) rational beings. If they were forced, even by God, they would cease to be the kind of beings he had made them; that is, rational beings. So if God forced men they would cease to be men. Or, to put it another way, so long as men remain men they are not forced even by God (in fact, least of all by God who made them rational in the first place). Being rational beings they cannot be forced by sin. Granted that man is not what he ought to be. Granted that there is something perverse within him. Granted that he does not always (if ever) think what is true and do what is right. Still, this evil bent of his nature does not actually force him to will against his will. The absurdity of the notion is seen in the last statement: "Still this evil bent of his nature does not actually force him to will against his will." How could he meaningfully be said to will against his will? If he will against his will that would be his will; namely, to will against his "will." So his willing against his "will" would not truly be against his will; or if it were against his will it could not be his will.

Therefore, man is a rational being. It is his very nature to choose according to the judgments of his mind. Nothing could possibly take that character away from man without taking his humanity away from him.

Consequently, if God is graciously disposed to reveal himself to his creature, man, God must necessarily reveal himself according to the rational nature of his human creature. The necessity is

self-imposed and therefore, consistent with the sovereignty of God. God cannot go over or under the “head” of man; he cannot treat him as a God or an animal but as the creature which he, God, made: a rational being.

4. The evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible is as follows: a. Men have appeared in history with powers which only God could have given them; namely, miracles. The discussion of miracles which follows is reproduced from the author’s *Reasons for Faith* with the kind permission of the publishers, Harper and Row.

Concerning miracles there are two important questions to be asked. First, what is the evidence for miracles and, second, what is their evidential value? If there is to be any argument from miracles, there must first be clear evidence that they actually occur.

Before we proceed to consider the evidence for miracles, let us ask ourselves whether there can be any such evidence. This is a rather absurd question, we grant, but we must consider it. Many persons never face the question at all because they rule out the possibility of miracles before they consider any actual evidence for them. One of the most outstanding Biblical scholars in the country once said publicly, in answer to a question concerning his interpretation of miracles in the Old Testament, “When I meet an alleged miracle, I simply treat it as legend.” This scholar no doubt would not bother reading this chapter or anything like it. He knows in advance that any and all alleged miracles are merely legends. But how does he know it? He does not know it; he merely declares it. However, there are more philosophically minded thinkers who would say that this professor is right in his conclusion but wrong in the way he arrives at it. They agree that there is no such thing as miracles and that records of them must be legends of some sort. But these men attempt to prove their statement and not merely to assert it arbitrarily.

Some would offset the evidential power of miracles by claiming that there never could be enough proof of a miracle in the face of the overwhelming evidence of natural law against it. David Hume once argued that there is more evidence for regularity in nature than for irregularity (supernaturalism); therefore, regularity and not irregularity must be the truth of the matter. The argument is palpably unsound, indeed irrelevant. Certainly there is more evidence for the regular occurrence of nature than there ever could be for any supernatural occurrence. But the argument for miracle is not meant to be an argument against the regularity of nature. It is merely an argument against the regularity of nature in every particular instance. Indeed the argument for miracle rests on the regularity of nature generally. There is no such thing as supernatural events except as they are seen in relation to the natural. And they would not be extraordinary if there were no ordinary against which background they are seen. They could not be signs of anything if they were not different from the status quo. When one argues for the occasional miracle, he is in the same breath arguing for the usually non-miraculous. If all nature became supernatural, there would be no room for miracle; nothing would be miracle because all would be miracle. At the same time, all the evidence that there is for the regularity of nature generally is no argument at all against the occasional miracle. Such evidence simply argues for the fact that the normal course of nature is natural. It does not rule out or in, for that matter, the possibility that the irregular may happen. It only proves that as long as there is nothing but nature to take into consideration, there will probably be no deviation from the order with which we have become familiar. If there be a God, all the evidence of an undeviating nature from its creation to the present moment does not

provide the slightest certainty that nature will continue the same way another moment. The same God who made it and preserved it in the present pattern for so long may have fulfilled his purpose in so doing and may proceed immediately, this moment, to do otherwise than in the past. Only if the evidence for the regularity of nature were somehow to show that there is no being outside nature who can in any way alter it, can there be an argument against the possibility of miracles. But this the evidence does not do, does not purport to do, cannot do. Therefore it can never be regarded as an argument against miracle. In the strictest sense Hume's objection is irrelevant.

What is the relation of unpredictability in modern physics to the notion of miracle? Certainly the universe is no longer thought to be fixed in the sense that it once was. The quantum theory has satisfied most physicists that there is such a thing as indeterminism, or unpredictable behavior in the laws of nature. As Bertrand Russell has remarked, while psychology in our time has become more deterministic, physics has become less so. Some have utilized the concept of indeterminacy in nature as a wedge for miracle. Having felt fenced in by the arguments based on the regularity of nature, they have welcomed this apparent avenue of escape by which they may remain scientific and still affirm miracle. Indeterminacy runs interference for the power of God, or more piously we should say, makes it possible to believe that God may act miraculously inasmuch as he acts indeterministically in created nature. So far as we can see, the situation for the credibility of miracle is neither improved nor worsened by indeterminacy. For one thing, indeterminacy is hardly a proven concept. Or more precisely, it would seem more likely that man cannot in every case determine the laws by which nature operates, than that she herself is indeterministic. It is conceivable that in the area of quantum physics no less than elsewhere nature is deterministic, and what is undetermined are the laws of her behavior. Nature may be determined, but man has not determined how. If this is the case, the to-do about indeterminism is wasted mental effort.

If nature herself is indeterministic, then what? Then it still would remain highly unlikely that an indeterminism in nature could explain why once and only once, thousands of years ago, a man walked on water, but no one else has been able to do so before or since. Presumably the indeterminism of nature could never be employed to account for such a unique phenomenon. Furthermore, if this is the explanation, Christ himself was deceived. He should have been surprised to be around at the one moment when nature was behaving differently from all previous times. He should have been as much amazed as the others, unless (and here is the hopeless supposition) he were a downright sophisticated fraud who took advantage of the most unbelievable opportunity that the world could imagine. Furthermore, there is the matter of his actual predictions, which would be rendered impossible in an indeterministic universe.

Some would affirm the a priori impossibility of miracles because of the nonexistence of God. They rightly state that a miracle to have meaning must be the work of an intelligent, powerful, and purposive divine being. In this we go along with them. Then they say that since there is no such being as this, there can be no such thing as miracle. And we agree with that. If it can be shown that there is no God, it will also be shown in the same effort that there is no miracle. But the non-existence of God cannot be proven, while his existence has been.

What is the positive evidence that miracles have occurred? A discussion of this subject with any degree of fullness would require an entire volume itself. We must delimit the field. And so we will consider here only the miracles of Jesus Christ.

Everyone knows that the Gospel narratives (considered only as good historical sources, not necessarily inspired) tell of a large number of miracles that were performed by Christ. A great many more are alluded to but not related. This is so generally known that I feel perfectly safe in assuming the readers' acquaintance with the accounts of Christ's healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, walking on water, multiplying a boy's lunch to feed more than five thousand hungry persons, and a host of other such deeds. No one disputes the fact that the Gospel accounts tell of Jesus Christ's performing miracles. There have been attempted naturalistic explanations, to be sure, but so far as we know no one has attempted the job of showing that all accounts of the apparently miraculous are merely accounts of natural events which were misconstrued by the writer or reader. For example, who would care to show that John's report of Thomas' placing his fingers in the side of the resurrected Christ to feel his former wounds was not meant to present an essentially supernatural event, namely, physical resurrection? Persons may or may not believe what John says, but how can they doubt that John presents them as happening? As even naturalistic New Testament critics usually say, there is no doubt that the early Christians believed these supernatural things did occur.

If it be granted that the biographers of Christ say he wrought miracles, the only questions remaining are: can these writers be believed? (please note again we are not, in a circular fashion, assuming their Inspiration but the well-established historical value of their manuscripts) and if so, what do the miracles prove? Can these writers be believed when they relate that Christ wrought supernatural deeds or miracles? Well, why not? People are assumed to be reliable in their relating of events unless there is some reason for thinking that they are not so. What reason is there for thinking that these writers are not reliable? So far as they are known, they have the reputation of honesty. Was there some bias present which would have tended to corrupt their honesty in the case of these miracles? There is no evidence of bribery by money or position. Their reporting of miracles as vindications of Jesus did not bring them into good standing with the powers in their own community. It caused Peter and John to be imprisoned and all the apostles to be brought into disfavor with most of the Jewish community. It stands to reason that a person cannot advance his own worldly interests by championing a person condemned by law and executed as a criminal. But what about their other-worldly interests? Is it possible that these men believed that by shading the truth and relating what did not occur they would thereby gain an interest in heaven? Did they think that because of their lying about "miracles," Jesus would own them in the next world? Merely to ask this question dispels it. The whole picture of Jesus is that of a teacher of righteousness who required his disciples to make righteous judgments and speak the truth which alone could make free. It would not seem reasonable to believe that they could have thought they would please Jesus by telling lies about him and actually earn his praise in the world of perfect righteousness to come. Or could they have been sentimentalists? That is, could they have supposed that by telling what they knew to be untrue, they could nevertheless do good? Could they have felt that if people could be persuaded that this Jesus was a supernatural being with supernatural powers, they would then obey him and walk in paths of righteousness? Could they have supposed that by doing evil this great good would come? Is it possible that they, knowing there were no miracles, were nonetheless willing to follow Christ to the death, but that others would need the help of such superstition?

There is an insuperable objection to this “pious fraud” idea. As we have already mentioned, Christ himself is depicted as a teacher of strict truth and righteousness. If the disciples had told deliberate and huge falsehoods, their very zeal would have led them into the grossest kind of disobedience. They would also have known that their own souls were in peril, for Christ had said that a good tree brings forth good fruit and that he would say to liars in the last day, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23). “If you love me,” Christ had said, “keep my commandments.” It seems incredible that the disciples in their very zeal for Jesus would zealously disobey his commandments, that in their desire to be with him and advance his cause they would seal their own doom. So much for the inherent improbability of such a course on the part of the disciples. But there is equally great difficulty in the external situation. Even if it were conceivable that the disciples so forgot their Master’s teachings and their own spiritual interest as to violate thus grossly his canons of righteousness, it does not at all follow that those to whom they addressed themselves stood to be deceived. After all, the disciples would have foisted these “pious frauds” upon those among whom they were supposed to have been done. They would have told the very people who were supposed to have been present on the occasion, the fiction that Jesus fed five thousand. They would have told the people of Cana themselves that Christ turned water to wine at a feast in their small community, which everybody in that community would immediately deny ever took place there. The “pious fraud” idea, even if it were psychologically thinkable, could be historically thinkable only if it were perpetrated in a different land at a different time. But that in the same generation these things could have been preached as having occurred among the very people who knew that they had not occurred is hardly credible.

Although the witnesses of these events might have gotten away with such reports among highly credulous strangers who knew nothing about the events in question, they could never have deceived the very people among whom the miracles were supposed to have taken place. It would therefore seem impossible to impeach the honesty of the witnesses. All the factors actually favor their honesty, which must be assumed in the first instance unless there is some reason for questioning it. But when we examine any possible reasons, we find none. Candor requires that their record be received as a record of what they thought took place. But the question still remains whether what they thought took place did actually take place. Granted that they meant to tell the truth, did they succeed in their honest intention? With the best of intentions men have often been grossly mistaken. Is it not possible that these writers were similarly mistaken? In other words, there remains the question of the competency of the witnesses.

We note, in the first place, that they had the best possible jury to test their competency — their own contemporaries among whom the events related were said to have taken place. If the writers had been palpably contradicted by the facts, the people to whom they related the facts would have been the very ones to expose them. If they had been misguided zealots, the non-zealots to whom they spoke could have spotted it in a moment and repudiated it as quickly. If they had garbled the actual events, eyewitnesses in quantity could have testified to the contrary. If these historians had actually been bigoted, benighted fanatics with no historical sense, incapable of distinguishing between fact and fancy, between occurrences in external nature and in their own imagination, thousands of Israelites could have made that very clear. As a matter of fact, their record went unchallenged. No man called them liars; none controverted their story. Those who least believed in Jesus did not dispute the claims to his supernatural power. The apostles were imprisoned for

speaking about the resurrection of Christ, not, however, on the ground that what they said was untrue, but that it was unsettling to the people. They were accused of being heretical, deluded, illegal, un-Jewish, but they were not accused of being inaccurate. And that would have been by far the easiest to prove if it had been thought to be true.

Actually, the Israelites of Jesus' own day, so far from denying his miraculous power, admitted it. They not only admitted it, but they used it against him. Precisely because he did miracles, they condemned him. That is, they attributed the miracles, which they admitted he did, to the power of the devil (Matthew 12:24). We are not here concerned with the accusation but with the incidental admission. What we are concerned with here is that hostile contemporary leaders freely admitted that Jesus' miracles were true, however evil they held their origin to be. The fact they did not dispute, only the interpretation of it. The witness they did not question. The competency of the writers was not doubted by the very generation which alone could have challenged it. It seems highly irrelevant, on historical grounds, for subsequent generations to raise such questions when the generation in which the events are said to have occurred did not do so. Later generations may object on philosophical grounds or argue a priori that these things could not have happened. Those arguments have to be met on their own grounds as we have attempted to do. But the historicity of certain events cannot be questioned by people who were not there when they were not questioned by the people who were there. We may or may not agree with the Pharisees' interpretation that Christ did his works by Satan's power, but we are in no position to contest the Pharisees' knowledge of what he did. They were there and we were not. This corroborative testimony of contemporaries, friends, and, especially, enemies, is the main vindication of the competency of the Gospel witnesses. But there is also the feasibility of the documents themselves. These miracles are not fantastic things such as those recorded in the apocryphal accounts of Jesus. They are of a piece with the character of Jesus himself — benign, instructive, redemptive. He himself was a special and unique person; it is not surprising that he had special and unique powers. Indeed, it would be more surprising if he had not had them. Never man so spake, never man so lived, never man so loved, never man so acted. As Karl Adam has said, Jesus' life was a blaze of miracle. Miracles were as natural to him as they would be unnatural to other men. He was a true man indeed, but he was no ordinary man. Miracles are surprising when attributed to other men; it would appear surprising if they had not been associated with this man.

Some have asked whether the miracles may not be naturally explained as the result of Christ's unusual knowledge and understanding of the laws of nature. May he not have possessed some occult acquaintance with the secrets of nature that enabled him to unleash certain of her powers in a perfectly natural manner, however supernatural it may have appeared to those unfamiliar with these esoteric laws? To this there are several negative replies. For one thing there is a moral objection. Jesus himself referred to his works or allowed others to refer to them as evidence of his supernatural power. It would have been palpable dishonesty to do so if he had known all the time that he was merely exerting secret, but natural, power. Thus he asked his disciples, if they could not believe him for his words' sake, to believe him for his works' sake (John 14:11). He reassured the doubting John the Baptist of the reality of his Messianic calling by appealing to the miracles he wrought (Matthew 11:2-4). He did not object when Nicodemus said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). The blind man whom he healed believed on him because of this miracle, and

Christ took full advantage of that belief to press his claim to being the Messiah (John 9:35 f.). He refuted the Pharisees who had criticized him for forgiving a man's sins, by pointing out that he was able to do the equally supernatural thing of instantly curing his sickness. "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house" (Matthew 9:5-6). The Messianic prophecies had frequently foreseen the Messiah as a miracle worker. Jesus not only knew this but obviously pointed to himself as qualified in this very particular. If he did not believe himself to be possessed of supernatural powers, He must have known himself to be engaged in palpable fraud and deliberate deception. So from the moral angle, if Christ wrought what he wrought merely by an unusual knowledge of nature and not by supernatural power, he must have been a lying deceiver. That is more difficult to believe than any miracle with which he has ever been credited.

Second, on the supposition before us, his own argument in his defense would be an argument against him. That is to say, when the unbelieving Jews claimed that he did his works by the power of Beelzebub, he replied, "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end" (Mark 3:23 ff.). But if Christ really did not do true miracles but only took advantage of his superior knowledge to play on the credulity of his times and later times, then he would have been perpetrating fraud as the prince of deceivers, and as such he would have been the devil's instrument. For he regarded the devil as the father of lies, and he would have been his son. Not only is such a thing utterly unthinkable from a moral standpoint, but it is, as his argument makes it, utterly irrational. For Satan would have been using lies to destroy his own kingdom. By these frauds of his servant Jesus, he would have been establishing the kingdom of Jesus which was founded on truth and which called men to repent of their sins. Thus Satan's house would have been divided against itself, for Christ, the son of lies, would by his lies have been destroying his father's kingdom of lies.

Third, if Christ had had the kind of knowledge which this theory attributes to him, such knowledge would have been as miraculous as the miracles it attempts to explain away. For centuries before and for centuries after, no other person but this solitary, untutored Jew knew how to walk on water. Modern science has performed many amazing feats in this century, but it still is nowhere nearer than it was in Jesus' day to multiplying loaves and fishes by a mere word. Machines can compare, classify, and do hitherto unbelievable things, but with all their powers they still depend on the feeble mind of man their inventor. They cannot even put a question to themselves but can only operate with their wonderful efficiency along channels made for them by men. Certainly none of them can anticipate an historical event tomorrow, much less predict the fall of a city a generation hence as precisely as Jesus did (Matthew 24:1 ff.). This explanation of the miracles of Jesus, therefore, requires as much, if not more, explanation than the miracles. It would be the miracle to end all miracles. Intellectually, it would be straining the gnat and swallowing the camel. b. Miracles are God's seal to mark men unmistakably as his messengers.

If the evidence is convincing that Christ did work miracles, what do these miracles prove? Miracles as such do not prove that Jesus was more than a man. For though men do not have this power as men, they could be enabled by God to perform them in his name. Miraculous power belongs only to the Author of nature, but apparently it is not incommunicable as God's omniscience,

omnipotence, or eternity must be. So the power to work miracles is not necessarily proof that the person who has that power is God himself. But it does prove him to be sent from God, for only God has this power and can delegate it. This is the very conclusion which Nicodemus drew when he said to Jesus, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). At this point, however, we face another problem or question. Is it not possible that there are other, nonhuman beings who, though not the Author of nature, are nevertheless able to influence nature in supernatural ways? Apart from revelation, we cannot know there are not such beings; we therefore consider the possibility that Christ's miracles were wrought by a man who had received his power from some supernatural being other than God, whether good or evil. If there are such beings, and they are good, then they are in subjection to God and his servants. If, therefore, they communicated their powers to the man Jesus, they must have done so in obedience to the will of God. Thus their giving of power would be essentially the same thing as God's giving it, for they would give it in accordance with his will.

If these beings are evil beings, what then? Then they are not subservient to God and do not deliberately do his will. In that case they would not necessarily have power over nature, for that would obviously be in the hands of the Author of nature and of those to whom he willingly permits it to pass. If, therefore, these evil spirits possess any such power as we are here supposing, it can only be by the permission of God. So the question is, is it conceivable that God would permit these evil spirits to possess such power? Maybe we cannot answer that question, but we do not have to. The question that really concerns us here is not whether such spirits could possess such powers, but whether, even if they could, they would be able to communicate them to a human being. But we do not even have to answer that question, for we are dealing with a specific human being, Jesus Christ. So the question precisely is: if there are such evil beings and these beings are permitted by God to have power over nature which could conceivably be communicated to some human being, could they conceivably communicate it to such a human being as Jesus Christ? We have already shown that they could do so only if they wished to destroy themselves. They would be empowering him to make converts to a kingdom which was set up to destroy the kingdom of evil. They would be giving power to one who would use it only for good when, by definition, evil spirits would want it to be used only for evil. They would be providing an instrument for healing when they wished only to spread sickness and death; they would insure the success of the person best fitted to insure their own failure. If these evil spirits were intelligent spirits, they simply could not do such a thing even if God would permit it. And is it possible that God would communicate his great power to a man after his own heart by spirits utterly alien to him? So, from the standpoint of the devils themselves or from the standpoint of God himself, it would seem inconceivable that Christ's supernatural power could have been derived from Satan, if there be such a being. And since there is no other conceivable source from which his power could have come, it must have come, as Nicodemus said, from God. As observed above, what is shown of Christ in particular would apply in general to all true miracle workers from whom the Bible comes. c. God's Message Is Indubitably True.

There are only two ways by which any person can come to say something that is untrue: either by ignorance or lying. A person may either mean to speak the truth but not know it; or know the truth but not mean to speak it. Thus the error must come from a defect of mind (not knowing enough) or

a defect of heart (not loving the truth). God suffers from neither limitation and therefore cannot speak untruth. His message must be true indubitably.

First, God cannot err from ignorance. His knowledge is infinite. There is nothing which he does not know. All things which exist, exist of his power and will and cannot lie outside the range of his knowledge. If there were anything which God did not know it would lie outside his domain. If so, he would not be infallible, all-powerful, independent; in short, he would not be God.

Second, God cannot err by lying. If God lied as well as told truth his creatures could never know which was which. Nor would it do any good to ask him for if he lied he would tell us that the truth was falsehood and falsehood was the truth. This would be cruel. It would leave the creature in hopeless confusion. It would also be unintelligent on the part of Creator for his creature would be of no use as he wandered hopelessly in the dark. So, if God lied he could not be God for he would not be good or intelligent or holy.

Thus, God's message is indubitably true. He could not lie if he would nor would he lie if he could. He could not be wrong if he would and he would not be wrong if he could. d. God's Message Includes the Inspiration of the Bible.

Jesus Christ, the "teacher sent from God" taught that the Bible (Old Testament) was the inspired Word of God. "Scripture," he said, "could not be broken" (John 10:35). Every "jot and tittle" was to be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). He claimed to be divine (Matthew 11:27; John 10:30; John 14:9) and also said that the Scriptures bore witness of him (John 5:39) which implied their Inspiration. He argued from details (John 10:34) and recognized Biblical authority by the formula: "it is written" (Mark 11:17; Luke 18:31). This is admitted by virtually all modern scholars as one of them put it: Christ's teaching concerning the Old Testament Bible was "fundamentalistic."

Likewise, Christ authenticated the New Testament by promising to send the Spirit to lead the apostles into all truth (John 14:26). This leading the apostles in turn claimed (cf. for example, 2 Corinthians 12:1-13) as they wrote or sanctioned the writing of the New Testament. e. Therefore the Inspiration of the Bible Is Indubitably True.

One may and must question whether a message is from God but one cannot question a message which is once shown to be from God. This is the basic point which those who rest the Inspiration for the Bible on the Bible's own testimony overlook. They rightly and righteously recognize that the Bible must be instantly accepted as what it says it is; namely, the Word of God. But they overlook the fact that the Bible is not instantly accepted because it says it is the Word of God. They are unconsciously persuaded of the Bible's divinity on other grounds. Consequently each time they hear the Bible referring to its Inspiration they know and accept this as true. Nevertheless they forget, because they never consciously recognize, that the truth of this self-affirmation is established on other grounds and merely confirmed by the self-affirmation.

There can be no higher proof of anything than the ipse dixit of God. God speaking is Truth speaking. What God says is so, is so. It could not be otherwise. If God could be supposed to have made an error our world and all worlds are in ruins. Reason, meaning, life and all have perished instantly. We may ask these prior questions about God's existence necessarily assuming the validity of our thinking processes as we do. These lead us to the knowledge of God. He, in turn, verifies the validity of our prior assumptions. But if he did not exist, or if he could err (which are one

and the same thing), then the very thinking processes by which we arrive at the conclusion that God does not exist are so many gratuitous assumptions. Therefore if God could err, error would have no meaning for truth would have no meaning. Nothing would have any meaning. Nothing would even be. So God who is truth, who cannot err, has inspired the Bible and the Bible is truth and cannot err.

01.06. The Testimony of Divinely Commissioned Messengers (cont.)

6° The Testimony of Divinely Commissioned Messengers as the Basis for Bible Inerrancy (cont.)
(b) The Argument from Inspired Bible to Inerrant Bible. So far we have shown the Inspiration of the Bible. But some will say: "You are supposed to show more than that: namely, the Inerrancy of the Bible." They seem to think that it is possible to have an inspired Bible which is yet an errant Bible. Or, to put it another way, they suppose that it is possible to have a partially inspired Bible. If this were so we would readily grant that we have not proved our point. If the Bible is partially inspired and partially not inspired, there can be no denying the possibility of error in the uninspired part of the Scriptures. So let us attempt to show the movement from inspired to inerrant Bible.

1. An inspired Bible means an inerrant Bible. They are one and the same thing. To put it another way: an inspired Bible is a completely inspired Bible. If it is completely inspired it is, as we have shown above, a completely inerrant Bible because God cannot err or lie.

Why do we say that for the Bible to be inspired is to be completely inspired? The question should be the other way around. That is, if a message is said to be inspired why does anyone say that it is only partly inspired? We have said above that God commissioned these Bible writers and that they wrote under his commission. If this is so, why would we not assume that all that they wrote rather than certain parts of it were inspired? We admit that if they said that their message was only partly inspired that would prove that such was the case. But then for those parts they would not be speaking as the divinely commissioned writers but on their own, as it were. In other words, the burden of proof is on partial inspirationists and not total inspirationists. They must show that these writers who claimed Inspiration for the Bible exempted certain parts of it from their claim.

Some have accepted this burden of proof. Let us examine one of the very few texts to which they appeal to show the merely human writing of certain parts of the Bible. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:10, "And unto the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord, . . ." First, we note that this proves far more than our friends want to prove or can admit. If these words were intended by Paul as this interpretation would have it, then he is uninspired unless he specifically claims to be inspired within the contexts of his writings. "Not I but the Lord," according to this view, means that it was Paul alone who had been speaking but at this particular juncture the Lord himself speaks. That this is not the meaning we have already shown by proving that the Bible writers claimed the authority of Christ in writing. They were commissioned by God to give his message. On the view being considered, Paul would be going back on that and rarely, on occasions such as this one, actually claims Inspiration for himself. According to this, then only a tiny fragment of the Bible is the Word of God. Second, another construction of these words is possible which would fit with Paul's overall doctrine and appears, therefore, to be his meaning. He may, according to the words themselves, be here distinguishing his particular revelations on the subject of marriage from that which came from the teaching of Jesus himself. (Jesus, in fact, did teach in Matthew 5:32 that infidelity was a just basis for divorce by the innocent party but said nothing about separation which Paul here reveals as another just ground for divorce.)

Paul is also thought to contradict total Inspiration doctrine when in 1 Corinthians 1:16 he says he is unable to remember whether he had baptized any others. But how this in any way, directly or indirectly, denies his Inspiration at that moment is never shown. It is merely insinuated. The insinuation seems to be that God could not inspire forgetfulness. But God's Inspiration guarantees only Inerrancy not necessarily total recall. If Paul remembered wrongly we would have an uninspired Paul; but a Paul who does not remember is a Paul who is inspired to record that very fact for our instruction (presumably, concerning the nature of Inspiration, what it does and does not include, what it does and does not exclude).

2. There are not merely implicit but also explicit statements that the Bible is completely, and not merely partially, inspired. The classic text is 2 Timothy 3:16. We cannot in a small work go into a detailed exposition but can merely say here, as is generally granted, that the correct translation of this text is: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (RSV). "Not one jot or one tittle" (the slightest detail, that is) of the law shall pass away until all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18; cf. also 1 Corinthians 2:13). This could never be said of any partially fallible law. Christ and Paul could not make their arguments rest on single words (John 10:35; Galatians 3:16) if Inspiration did not extend to the individual words.

3. If the Bible were merely partially inspired we would be worse off than if it were totally uninspired, for we would then have the excruciating task of distinguishing the Word of God in the Bible with no means for so doing. No one who has ever advocated the partial Inspiration view has provided us with a means of separating the inspired and uninspired parts. Some think that Luther, for example, used the doctrine of justification by faith alone as the touchstone of Inspiration. We do not think that is an accurate understanding of Luther; but, for the moment, let us suppose it is. How could Luther or anyone else know that justification by faith is true, if not on the ground that it is taught by the Word of God? If the Bible is the Word of God because it teaches justification rather than justification being the truth of God because it is taught in the Bible by what means do we know this? We have shown how we know that the Bible is the Word of God and how from this we could know that justification is true, but how can anyone prove that justification is true and able to serve as the touchstone to the Word of God? This is a basal fallacy of the "Confession of 1967" (cf. appendix) which virtually makes "Reconciliation" as the mark of the Word of God.

If we pushed this matter to fundamentals we would find ourselves back on one of the wrong bases for the right doctrine which we considered in Part I. This is no doubt the reason that adherents of this view prefer merely to advocate it rather than argue for it; that is, to assume that one can know what part of the Bible is inspired and what part is not (but neglect to tell us how to do this little thing).

We said above that the partial Inspiration doctrine is actually worse than no doctrine of Inspiration. With no doctrine of Inspiration you would be most unfortunate; however, you would not be doomed to searching for it where it could not be found. On this present view one would have to search without ever knowing whether he had found. By comparison, searching for a needle in a haystack would be child's play for you know there is the needle and given sufficient effort and time it can be found. But on the partial Inspiration theory you know that a great and invaluable mine of divine truth is there but you also know that while you must seek for such a treasure it is impossible that you would ever find it. You could never know that you found it even when you had it in your hands,

as it were. You could hold the precious gold of God's Word in your hand and not be sure that it was not human slime while, on the other hand, you could hold human slime and not be sure that it was not God's precious truth. You must ever be searching and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Thus, we believe that we have shown that the Bible is the Word of God inspired, and inerrant. Not everything that God says, he says in the Bible. We have indicated that he revealed himself to us before he revealed himself further and savingly in sacred Scripture. But everything that the Bible says, God says.

01.07. Objections Allegedly Arising from Science

Part III - Some Unsound Bases for Sound Doctrine 7^o Objections Allegedly Arising from Science

It is objected to the Inerrancy doctrine that the Bible has many errors traceable to the inadequacy of the knowledge of the period during which the Bible was written. This is a major reason for setting aside the Westminster Confession by the drafters of “The Confession of 1967” as may be seen in the Appendix. It is added that these errors do not invalidate the message of the Bible; but merely disprove its Inerrancy and Inspiration. Adherents of Infallibility, it says, are forced into all sorts of unscholarly and obscurantist positions in their necessary defense of the Bible versus the findings of modern science. Admitting the mere humanness of the Bible and seeking the Word of God elsewhere than in its pages are presented as truly scientific and at the same time truly spiritual. To this we reply: first, this position overlooks the two kinds of authority in an infallible Bible. There is what is called historical authority and normative authority (which is discussed more fully in the Appendix). Historical authority applies to every word of an inerrant Bible and tells us simply that whatever the Bible says was said or done was indeed said or done. Such information does not tell us whether what was said and done ought to have been said or ought to have been done. Only the normative authority of the inerrant Bible answers that question. For a fuller discussion of this difference see the Appendix. Its relevance to the point under question is important. It teaches us that Bible writers themselves may have been laboring under erroneous impressions without this being normative instruction for us. Suppose they did think of a three-storied universe, which was the common opinion in their day, the Bible does not err unless it teaches such as a divine revelation of truth. In fact, by showing that the writers may have personally entertained ideas now antiquated it reveals its own historical authenticity without its normative authenticity suffering.

Second, sometimes the difference between popular and technical or pedantic language is overlooked. “At sunset, Isaac went out to meditate” (Genesis 24:63) does not mean that the Bible teaches the Ptolemaic astronomy. It is not pedantically teaching that the sun rotates about the earth so that there is a literal “sunset.” This was and is a common way of speaking and does not necessarily reflect the thinking of those who use such language. Someone has said that if the Bible were to be scientifically exact it would have read: “when the rotation of the solar luminary on its axis was such that its rays impinged horizontally on the retina, Isaac went out to meditate.” We once lived in “Sunset Hills” and not one adult in the community believed that the sun ever sets. Likewise the “sun’s standing still” (Joshua 10:12) would be the way things would appear, not necessarily the way they would be. While we are referring to this miracle let us add another observation dealing with another criticism. Some object to the accuracy of this particular miracle arguing that if the sun did appear stationary for so long a period the whole universe would have been thrown out of order in one way and another. The objection is puerile. If God is able to do as much as the narrative relates it would be no more difficult to take care of all the attendant details! For the Creator any manipulation of the creation whatsoever would be infinitely easy — but it seems infinitely difficult for some to see this.

Third, much unnecessary strain is caused by the hasty judgments of the Bible's friends and foes alike. We cannot examine at all thoroughly all the problems growing out of the creation narrative (Genesis 1:1-31 Genesis 2:125 Genesis 3:1-24) for example; but, this general statement is true, we believe: If every Bible scholar were careful not to read anything out of the Scripture teachings except what it indubitably teaches and natural scientists were equally careful to claim nothing as scientifically established but what is indubitably true, the tensions between science and Scripture would be reduced to a negligible minimum. For example, the Bible does not teach that God created the world in 4004 B.C. As Gordon Clark has written: we defend the Inspiration of the Bible, not of Archbishop Ussher. These are merely a few samples of a few types of objections to the doctrine of Inerrancy. There are many more types and there are many more answers. But this would seem to be a sufficient sampling for our purposes. A select and recommended bibliography may be found appended which will serve for further and more extensive investigation. In closing we should like to say only this. In the case of alleged discrepancies it is not our burden to show how these may be reconciled as we have done above out of the "goodness of our hearts" and not the exigencies of our situation. We have given a case for the Inerrancy of the Bible. Unless this case can be shown to be false, then it carries with it the guarantee that there are no discrepancies. We have, in other words, if our case is sound, shown that discrepancies are only apparent and must be reconcilable even if we say not one word about how this reconciliation is to be shown. It behooves the opponent to prove us wrong by showing his "discrepancies" to be discrepancies incapable of harmonization. We have every reason to anticipate that he can succeed in so doing no better in the future than he has in the past because the Bible, we believe, is the inerrant Word of God.

01.08. Objections Arising from an Alleged “Docetism”

8° Objections Arising from an Alleged “Docetism” A very modern theological objection to Inerrancy is an implied “Docetism.” Docetism refers to an early heresy denying the genuineness of Christ’s humanity. It maintained that Christ merely appeared (dokein) to be human. Inerrancy does essentially the same thing to the Bible, it is said, that the docetists did to Christ; namely, deny its genuine humanness. “To err is human” and to be human is to err. If the Bible has no error it could not really have been written by men. Thus the human authors of the Bible, according to Inerrancy, it is charged, only appear to have written the Bible. In brief, the argument runs thus:

1. Inerrancy teaches that the Bible authors could not err.
2. But humans can err.
3. Therefore, Inerrancy implicitly teaches that the authors of the Bible were not human.

However, in this neat little syllogism they have neglected to observe a crucial part of the picture. Perhaps it will be clearest if we insert it where it belongs in the otherwise consistent syllogism:

1. Inerrancy teaches that the Bible authors could not err.
2. But humans can err (unless the omnipotent God preserves them from error without destroying their humanity).
3. Therefore Inerrancy implicitly teaches that the authors of the Bible were human (but we deny merely that their sinful erring tendencies were in operation during the writing of Holy Scripture).

Some may think that we here deny a principle we have defended above. There, we said that God could not force the will of man without destroying man as man. Here we say that God can suspend the operation of human sinfulness without destroying the humanity of the persons concerned. The difference is this: freedom is essential to the nature of man but sinfulness is not. Remove freedom and man ceases to be; remove sinfulness and he does not cease to be a man (in fact, he is only perfectly human without sin).

Furthermore, there is a rather interesting inconsistency among most of our critics. While they deny that the Bible writers can be truly human while writing without error they will not deny that Jesus could be truly human while living without error or even sin of any kind. This criticism has the value of calling even greater attention to Inerrancy’s insistence on the genuineness and indispensable importance of human participation in the writing of Scripture. While God’s part has been insisted on throughout this and most literature on the Inspiration of the Bible, this is because it is so often challenged and is of such infinite importance. Sometimes in this stress on the divine, the human is, we regret to say, overlooked. Finally, some critics appear who claim that we deny the human role altogether. This calls forth our reiteration that the Bible is no less the word of man than it is the Word of God. But it is the word of men inspired by God. The Bible, then, is the Word of God expressed in the inspired words of men.

01.09. Appendix on Confession of 1967 (of UPCUSA)

Appendix on “The Confession of 1967”

(of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA) The one position of the Westminster Confession of Faith which the Confession of 1967 avowedly and admittedly changes is that on the Bible. In the “Introductory Comment and Analysis” the Committee says: “This section is an intended revision of the Westminster doctrine, which rested primarily on a view of inspiration and equated the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God. By contrast, the pre-eminent and primary meaning of the word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate. The function of the Bible is to be the instrument of the revelation of the Word in the living church. It is not a witness among others but the witness without parallel, the norm of all other witness. At the same time questions of antiquated cosmology, diverse cultural influences, and the like, may be dealt with by careful scholarship uninhibited by the doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies” (p. 29; all quotations are from the official “Blue-book” of the General Assembly, May, 1965). This is flatly contrary to the promise on page 1 of the “Blue-book”: “The proposal for amending the Confession does not entail revision or deletion (except for the deletion of the Westminster Larger Catechism) . . .” Here is an admitted revision following on the heels of a denial of such a purpose. But still it is to be admired for its candor. We suppose that it was an unintentional oversight that the committee did not mention this one acknowledged revision as it did the one acknowledged deletion. What is far more serious is that the whole mentality of the new Confession is different from that of the old one. Its intention is probably not revision but rejection. But candor has not reached the point of admitting that. The lack of frankness at this point is an advantage as well as disadvantage, however. It results in an ambiguity which, while it covers the probable intention of the committee, also permits adherents of the Westminster Confession of Faith to remain in the church in good conscience. They will be offended by this absence of the very clarity for which the Westminster Confession of Faith has always been justly famous. But whatever heresies may lurk in the shadows of vague language all of them have not yet dared to come to the light. Through the obfuscations of the new creed the light of truth from the old ones will continue to shine unabated to the glory of God and the comfort of those who still believe what they vowed at their ordination.

Let us first examine the preliminary statement (p. 29) before proceeding to the creedal section on the Bible “. . . Westminster doctrine which rested primarily on a view of inspiration and equated the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God We have no serious quarrel with this statement but will elaborate a little so as to prevent misunderstanding especially by the layman. First, Westminster is not unique in resting its doctrines on a view of Inspiration. Virtually all Christian creeds have done this either expressedly or impliedly. (It is one of the notable weaknesses of the new creed that it does not do so.) When we say impliedly, we mean that Inspiration is assumed even when there is no special article on the Bible. Inspiration is a catholic or universal or ecumenical, if you please, and not an exclusively Presbyterian, doctrine. In other words, in its eagerness to be modern the new creed would antiquate the Presbyterian Church by reverting to

the time before creeds began. As soon as the church did begin to speak about the Bible it testified to its Inspiration. Never before has a church spoken of the Bible without bearing witness to its Inspiration. So powerful is the pull of the past even on this new creed that it cannot get entirely free of this tradition as we shall see when we come to consider its testimony that the Bible is the “normative witness.” Even that word “normative” did not satisfy the Commissioners to the General Assembly of 1965.

Second, while Westminster “equated the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God” this does not imply that it admitted of no differences within the Word of God. Obviously, when the Word of God says, “And Satan said,” that does not mean that God said what Satan said! It means that God said that Satan said it. This is quite another thing. To use a distinction that was acknowledged by the Westminster divines, as well as all other Reformed theologians: the authority of the Bible is complete but it is of two kinds. The Bible has descriptive and normative authority (*authenticia historica* and *authenticia normativa*). Descriptive authority means that everything which the Bible says happened, was spoken, or was thought — did happen, or was spoken, or was thought. It is authentic history however bad the event may have been which the history records. All of the Word of God, according to Westminster, has this descriptive authority or authenticity. Within this Word of God as authentic record is the Word of God as normative or authoritative for faith and practice. When God said, as noted above, that Satan said, we know that Satan so said; but, we are not to believe and practice as Satan says. But when the Word of God says that God said then we know both that God so said and that we are so to believe and so to practice.

We must add, also, that although Westminster equated the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God, as thus explained, this does not deny progress within the normative revelation of God anymore than affirming that God is the author of the whole creation is meant to deny that there is a difference between the egg and the chicken which comes from it.

One further and rather technical detail perhaps ought to be added. Westminster did not exactly “equate” the Word of God with the “canon.” It identified the Word of God with the original text of the canonical books. Furthermore, the Word of God is not quite identified with the canon because the canon is the judgment of men about the Word of God and not the Word of God itself. As B. B. Warfield, of old Princeton, who as much as any man since the Westminster standards were formulated shared their mentality, has written: the canon is not an inspired collection of books but a collection of inspired books.

“By contrast, the pre-eminent and primary meaning of the word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate.” What have we here? The “word of God” (that is, the Bible, the fallible word of men which incidentally ought not from this viewpoint to be called the word of God but the word to God) means Jesus Christ (“the Word of God incarnate”). We invite any competent and candid interpreter to make of these words something other than nonsense or blasphemy. If the words of men which we call the Bible means Jesus Christ then such statements as we mentioned above (“Satan said”) mean Jesus Christ; the statement of Paul that “Demas has forsaken us having loved this present world,” means Jesus Christ; “At sunset Isaac went out to meditate” means Jesus Christ; and the like. To say that sinful actions, incidental details, trivial data severally mean Jesus Christ — well, it is far more charitable to say that this is nonsense rather than blasphemy. But what other construction can fairly be placed on these words? But someone

(charging us with a lack of love when we think we are being as charitable as it is possible to be) will say: The statement simply means that the words of the Biblical writers point to Jesus Christ. What words? Some point away from Christ as truly as others point to him. Reformed theology has shown how to distinguish them, as we indicated above; but, in the new creed no such formula is given. We have only the blanket statement: "the pre-eminent and primary meaning of the word of God . . . is the Word of God incarnate." But if we should grant that the words of men in the Bible do in fact point to Christ (directly and indirectly, by inference and affirmation, by what is not, as cue to what is) then what is the difference between this and what the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches? Or, do our new creed writers wish to add slander to neglect when they write: "By contrast" (to the Westminster Confession of Faith!) "the pre-eminent and primary meaning of the word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate"? Do they suppose for one moment that our fathers in the faith thought that the Bible as the Word of God had any other pre-eminent and primary meaning than Jesus Christ? "Ye search the Scriptures for they bear witness of me" (John 5:39). 1647 believed this as much as 1967 and in a far more intelligible manner. What it amounts to is this: the new creed is saying nothing or something; if something, it is a slander of our fathers; if nothing, it is an insult to us.

"The function of the Bible is to be the instrument of the revelation of the Word in the living church." Let us compare this with the classic statement of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. I, Sec. 10: "The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." In the Westminster doctrine the Bible is indeed the instrument of the revelation of the Word (Christ) in the living church. But it is a doctrine of the Bible as instrument which we can understand. The Bible was inspired by God and as such has perpetual authority. The Holy Spirit of Christ still works by means of it as the permanent expression of his will by which the church is to be led. Here is a characteristic reaffirmation of the famous Calvinistic principle: the Word and the Spirit; the Word reveals the Spirit and the Spirit illumines the Word. The Word will not be properly received apart from the Spirit and the Spirit does not speak apart from the Word. If our new creedalists meant this we should rejoice; but, alas, nothing is further from their doctrines. We must not forget that they have explicitly rejected the Westminster view of Scripture. What, then, do they mean? This they attempt to explain first, affirmatively and, second, negatively, in the two sentences which immediately follow to which we now turn.

"It is not a witness among others but witness without parallel, the norm of all other witness." "It" clearly refers to the Bible which is the subject of the preceding sentence. Thus the new creedalists are saying here that the Bible is the witness which is the norm of all other witness. Now a "norm" is a standard by which other of like character are tested. Accordingly, the Bible is the standard or test by which all other witnesses including, for example, this new creed, are tested for their truthfulness. The Bible, mind you, is the norm of all witness to Christ. The Westminster divines could not express it better. In fact, this is what the Westminster Confession of Faith is expressing. Why then do the new creedalists take exception to Westminster while expressing the same doctrine? The fact seems to be that they are not using the normal meaning of "norm." Here is an abnormal "norm"; a standard which is not a standard. It is rather embarrassing to say that men are not using language normally and are not saying what they took seven years to formulate. That

such is the sorry case is, however, as clear as it is surprising. First, they said, as noted, that their doctrine is other than Westminster. Second, they expressly repudiated the historic doctrine of "inspiration." Third, they call the Bible "the word of God" in sharp contrast to the "Word of God." If the Bible is not inspired and is merely the word of men then either men are perfect or a norm of the Word of God is not a norm. The imperfection of men is taught not only in the other creeds left standing in the new program but taught in the "new creed" also (Part I, Sect. I, B). So we lamentably say that the new creed is one in which a "norm" is not a "norm" or error is the norm of Truth (the Word of God).

Fourth, the next, the negative, proposition to which we now come explicitly rejects the Bible as "normative" (in any sense).

"At the same time questions of antiquated cosmology, diverse cultural influences, and the like, may be dealt with by careful scholarship uninhibited by the doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies."

We are certain that every member of the committee which drew up the new creed would agree that the above statement means the following: the new creed, rejecting the doctrine of Inerrancy, leaves its adherents freer to accept historical and scientific studies which contradict the historical and scientific statements of the Bible. This is not, in fact, what this inaccurate, pejorative, disrespectful-to-the-fathers statement actually says; but, since it is undoubtedly what it intended to say let us address ourselves to the intention and ignore the unhappy form of expression. The upshot of the matter is this: We are being told that the scientifically and historically errant word of God is nonetheless the norm of all witness to the Word of God! The committee shows wisdom in not seeking to illustrate this.

We turn now to the main treatment of the Bible in the creed itself, Part I, Section III b. "The Bible."

"The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness in many ways. The church has received the Old and New Testaments as the normative witness to this revelation and has recognized them as Holy Scriptures."

We grant that "the one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ" but why do they not grant that the one sufficient revelation of Jesus Christ is the Bible? Christ did: ". . . they" (the Scriptures) "bear witness of me" (John 5:39). Paul did: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15; cf. Luke 19:10; Romans 5:8). What God has joined together (the Word of God incarnate and the Word of God inscripturated), why does the committee attempt to rend asunder?

". . . to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness in many ways": Whatever the word "norm" may mean when applied to the Bible it is here clear that the Bible is not unique. It is not the only "revelation" of its kind as the church from the beginning (the whole church from the very beginning) has confessed. According to the new confession it is only one among many ways in which the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ. To be sure it is the "norm" for others which, however, can only differ from it in degree, not kind. It is becoming clear that the Bible is thought of merely as the first and best of all these witnesses. But assuming this inadequate view for the sake of argument, how do we know that the Bible is the norm of the rest of the witnesses? Answer: "The church has received" it as such. The Bible claims its own Inspiration some three thousand times but this does

not prove it. But the church recognizes the Bible as normative; this does prove it. Rome must be amused to hear such sentiments coming from the children of Calvin. They may well anticipate that it should not be long before these seers find the Holy Spirit bearing witness to the Word of God in the papacy as Romanists have themselves contended for centuries (for critique of this approach cf. Chapter 4 above).

“The New Testament is the recorded testimony of apostles to the coming of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church. The Old Testament is received in the church as Holy Scripture which bears witness to God’s faithfulness to Israel and points the way for fulfillment of his purpose in the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. The Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New, and is not itself fully understood without the New.” That the New Testament is the recorded testimony of apostles to Jesus Christ is, of course, true. It is also much more than that — it is the recorded testimony of God to the apostles. The most vital thing for us is not that the apostles testify to God but that God testifies to or confirms the apostles. There is a vast difference between an infallible witness to an infallible Christ and a fallible witness to an infallible Christ. If it is a fallible witness it may (fortunately) be generally reliable as historical testimony to the major matters, but not absolutely reliable on all matters.

Here, again, in this paragraph we have the church’s receiving of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the crucial evidence for its authority — an utterly Romish view, as already shown. Here, again, also is the selective, discriminating acceptance of the witness of the Bible. It would seem that the committee is normative for the Bible rather than the Bible, as such, for the committee. That is, the Scripture is received as witness to God’s faithfulness to Israel. But the Scripture also bears witness to God’s rejection of Israel. That witness, nevertheless, seems not to be accepted by the committee, as the Bible teaches it. Hosea, for example, is a favorite Old Testament prophet because of his representation of the longsuffering of Yahweh. But what becomes of Hosea when he says: “. . . I will no more have pity on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all” (Hosea 1:6)? Paul is supposedly writing Scripture which the church can accept when he says (2 Corinthians 5:19): “. . . God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. . . .” But the same apostle must be uncanonical when he declares (Romans 11:22): “Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off.” As soon as we express gratitude for the enunciation of a sound principle, such as the interdependence of the two Testaments, we must immediately remind ourselves that we are reading something into this document which it does not intend. It does not mean that the New Testament is latent in the Old Testament and the Old Testament patent in the New Testament as this phraseology would normally signify. So to construe it would be to wrench this text of the new creed out of its context. It may seem charitable to do so but it would not be true. But if it is not true neither is it charitable, for charity rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6, AV). And the truth, according to this context, must mean: not that the New Testament is latent in the Old Testament but that some of the New Testament is latent in some of the Old Testament. Nor is the Old Testament patent in the New Testament but some of the Old Testament is patent in some of the New Testament. And that “some” in each case is that which the church of the new creedalists deigns to receive.

“God’s word is spoken to his church today where the Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with readiness to receive their truth and direction.”

Surely this is the form of sound words but its meaning is loaded and all in the wrong direction. Faithfully to read and preach the Bible, according to this committee, is to distinguish between the errant husk and cleave to the inerrant but also indefinable Truth. If this seems to be an impossible task an adequate help is suggested in the Holy Spirit’s guidance. But alas, the Holy Spirit cannot help us either for we do not know how to recognize his guidance until the committee tells us. If the Holy Spirit guided us into the understanding of inspired Scripture as the Westminster Confession of Faith taught us — this we could understand. Or, if the Spirit led us into an understanding of some definite part of Scripture —this we could understand. But it is only when the Spirit guides us into an understanding in accordance with this or some committee’s understanding that we can rely upon him. Having dispensed with the Inspiration of the Bible we must now look to the inspiration of a committee. We are sure that this committee does not think that it is the only inspired committee. There must be other committees also, alas. If anything is likely to awaken the church to its real danger it will be the realization that once we have done away with Holy Scripture — Holy Spirit, in the vacuum thereby created we must have an infinite series of holy committees!

“The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God’s work of reconciliation in Christ. The words of the Scriptures are the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current, and the understanding of them requires literary and historical scholarship. The variety of such views found in the Bible shows that God has communicated with men in diverse cultural conditions. This gives the church confidence that he will continue to speak to men in a changing world and in every form of human culture.” The reader will recognize that this has been said before and criticized before. There appears to be no need for repetition. If our earlier words were true then the new creed’s climax is untrue. The important thing for the reader of this and all doctrines, for that matter, is to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). There is an unrighteous judgment of principles as well as a righteous one, and it may be favorable as well as unfavorable. Some seem to think that we do an injustice to a statement only when we draw unfair, incriminating deductions from it. But we also do an injustice when we draw unfair, exonerating deductions from it. To make a righteous judgment, as commanded by our Lord, is to avoid all unfair judgments whether favorable or unfavorable. Because this is the proposed creed of earnest, serious-minded, hard-working Christian persons who are more likely to be unrighteous in our judgments by being too lenient than by being too strict. But we must avoid both if we would render righteous judgments. We must attempt, as we have here attempted (God being our witness), with malice toward none, free of any desire to find anyone at fault for a word, to ascertain what is meant by the proposed “Confession of 1967.” With one member of this present committee we are personally and fairly intimately acquainted and we bear him witness that he appears to be one of the most sincere Christians we have ever had the privilege of knowing. It may be that every other committee member is of such caliber. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the possible soundness of the persons who composed it, this creed is anything but sound. We appeal to them, no less than all others, when we urge them, in the name of the Christ, whom we all profess to love, to rescind this confession before it becomes an indelible blemish on the escutcheon of the church.

01.10. Select and Recommended Bibliography

Biblical Inerrancy by John H Gerstner Select and Recommended Bibliography

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*Warfield is author of other works and articles bearing on our subject. We recommend his writings as best of all and himself as the ablest Reformed theologian of the twentieth century.

02.00. Theology for Everyman

Theology for Everyman By Dr. John H. Gerstner Table of Contents

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Dr. Gerstner was a stalwart champion of the cause of reformed theology and, in particular, the teachings of Jonathan Edwards. This book was first published by Moody Press, Chicago, in 1965..

02.01. CHAPTER I Everyman Must be a Theologian

CHAPTER I Everyman Must be a Theologian LAYMEN SOMETIMES THINK they need not be theologians. That, however, is a very great mistake.

They do need to be theologians; at least, they should be amateur theologians. In fact, that is the one vocation every man is obliged to follow. A layman does not need to be a plumber, a carpenter, a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, a laborer, a housewife. These are all possibilities, not necessities. A layman may be one of these or the other as he chooses. But he must be a theologian. This is not an option with him but a requirement.

I. A Theologian Is One Who Knows About God

Why do we say that a layman must be a theologian? Well, let us first of all realize what a theologian is — that is, an amateur theologian. A theologian is a person who knows about God. A lay theologian is a person who has a true knowledge of God which he understands in nontechnical, nonprofessional, nonacademic terms. However, such a person is truly a theologian. Is it not clear why a layman must necessarily be a theologian? Is there anyone, layman or otherwise, who does not need to know God? Does the Scripture not say, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (John 17:3)? It is, then, no mere option with a layman whether he will be a theologian or not, whether he will have eternal life or not; it is no option with him whether he will know God or not. The knowledge of God is necessary to eternal life. And if eternal life is necessary for every man, then theology is also necessary for every man.

If a theologian is a person who knows God, then by reverse reasoning a person who is not a theologian does not know God. There is no shame in a layman’s being told that he does not know carpentry, or plumbing, or medicine, or law, or teaching, or the ways of a housewife; but there surely is the greatest of shame in a layman’s being told that he does not know God. Furthermore, there is more than shame; there is very great danger. The Scripture says that to live apart from God is death. And just as the text quoted says it is life eternal to know God and Christ, another passage in the same book says that they who do not believe in Jesus shall not see life and, furthermore, the wrath of God abides upon them: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“Well,” the layman may say, “look here, you’ve slipped in a new term on us. That last passage talks about faith and not knowledge. It says except a person ‘believe’ in the Son. It does not say anything there about ‘knowing’ Jesus.” That is true, the passage does not use the word “know.” It does speak about “belief” or “faith” rather than “knowledge” or “reason.” But have you ever believed in somebody or something about which you knew nothing? Is it possible to have faith in Christ unless we know who Christ is? Is it not clear, therefore, that this passage, though it does not state expressly the necessity of the knowledge of Christ, certainly states it implicitly? So, we say

that if a person does not have a knowledge of God and Christ it is not only a shame but a peril to his soul, not only in this life but in the eternity which begins at death.

II. Everyman May Be a Theologian Without Being Saved!

“But,” the layman exclaims, “do you mean to tell me that if I do not have the knowledge of God I shall perish, and that if I do have the knowledge of God I will live forever? Do you mean to tell me that if I am a lay theologian all is well with my soul, whereas if I am not I am doomed forever?” No, we have not said exactly that. Let me call your attention to what we did actually say, and then let me add a comment relevant to one of your questions. We did say that without knowledge of God there is no eternal life, but only eternal death. That is true. And we did say that if we do not know God and Christ we will perish. That is true. However, it needs to be brought out now that there is knowledge and knowledge. The knowledge of which the Scripture speaks so approvingly we may call “saving knowledge.” But we gather from other passages of Scripture which we have not yet cited that there is also a false knowledge which, far from being saving knowledge, is actually damning knowledge. But it seems to me we are now ready for a closer consideration of this theme. Let me, therefore, lay down this statement and devote the rest of this chapter to demonstrating it. The statement is this: A layman may have knowledge of God and not be saved, but he can never be saved without knowledge of God.

There is much to show that a layman may have theology without having salvation, For one thing, the Bible says in many places that frequently persons have a knowledge about God but do not know God. Thus, for example, the Scripture exhorts us to be not only hearers of the Word but doers also (cf. James 1:22). This implies that it is possible to hear, or learn, or know, without doing. It goes on to tell us that only the doing of the Word is profitable, again carrying the implication that persons may hear the Word and understand it without actually doing it and therefore without being profitable.

Again, Paul speaks in Romans of those who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). That is the same as to say that some persons know God (and indeed in this very context Paul does speak of knowing God) and yet do not worship Him nor are they being saved by Him. So, we learn that while their knowledge is sufficient to condemn them, they are not saved by it. In the parable of the sower and the seed recorded in Matthew 13:1-58, our Lord tells of differing responses to the presentation of the gospel. While the wayside soil represents those persons who seem virtually not to hear what is preached, or not to learn what they are taught, still the other two types of useless soil represent persons who do hear and do understand but who nevertheless do not bring forth fruit. Thus the shallow, rocky soil does represent a person who receives the Word, as Jesus says. He receives it with gladness and even seems to respond favorably to it for a while. But when he is beset by difficulties, he repudiates the knowledge which he does have. So we see in his case an individual who knows but does not do, who understands the way of salvation but does not attain to salvation. The thorny soil represents a person who understands and apparently even very deliberately understands and accepts the message but whose knowledge is crushed out in the subsequent contest between that message and his lusts, which are represented by thorns in the soil. But there can be no doubt that he not only has knowledge but deep and penetrating and not merely superficial knowledge. Nonetheless, his knowledge is choked out and the man does not obtain to salvation.

There are many other instances of the possibility of knowing the truth without being saved. But we will take one, that of the Pharisees, and use it as our prime exhibit. The layman will immediately say, "Ah, but the Pharisees were religious teachers and cannot fairly be called laymen." This we admit. But we will also go on to insist that our point is certified all the more by the fact that the Pharisees, as professional theologians, had even greater knowledge than laymen could be expected to have — and yet the Pharisees perished. Remember, we are attempting to show that it is possible to have theological knowledge without being saved. If we can show that one who is regarded as a professional (who has far more religious knowledge than a layman may be expected to have) may yet perish, how much more evident is it that any knowledge that a layman can reasonably be expected to obtain can by no means guarantee his salvation. Jesus approved of the Pharisees in many ways because they attempted to honor Moses' law — and often did — and teach his precepts to the people. However, they came under Christ's withering indictment, "Woe unto you Pharisees, hypocrites," so often that we are led to believe that as a class these highly knowledgeable individuals were not practitioners of their science and therefore were doomed to condemnation. Jesus said to them, "How can you escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33).

III. Everyman Cannot Be Saved Without Being a Theologian!

If the above is enough to indicate that persons may have divine knowledge without being saved, let us go on to indicate the still more pertinent truth — that no one can be saved without the knowledge of divine truth or theology. This is stated very explicitly in Romans 10:17. Here Paul says, "Faith cometh by hearing." That is as much as to affirm that there can be no belief except first the Word of the gospel is proclaimed. The context of this explicit statement confirms that implication. It is a missionary context in which Paul is urging Christians to take the gospel to the world, reminding them that if they do not do so these people cannot be saved — because faith comes by hearing. In I Corinthians we read that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save men. Again, says Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). And, after commanding the disciples to teach whatsoever He had taught them, our Lord Jesus commissioned them to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). That is the same as to say that it is by means of the faithful proclamation of the whole counsel of God that the world is to be discipled to Jesus Christ. Consider again how our Lord prays in His farewell discourse, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). In this final prayer for those who were not yet of His fold but who were to come into His fold, our Lord prayed that they might be made holy by means of the Word of God. Though the Spirit of God was to be given anew as soon as Christ went to Heaven, even the Holy Spirit was not to sanctify except by means of the Word of God. So that while the letter of the Word may be devoid of the Spirit and therefore futile, the Spirit does not work savingly apart from the Word. The Word is called "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) Again, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 we read, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There we are told very plainly that even the eternal predestination of God is accomplished by the instrumentality of truth. People are not brought to life whether they know or do not know. They are not given salvation whether they believe the truth or not. On the contrary, God chose them to salvation through "belief of the truth." The Scripture abounds in so many passages which indicate this same truth that it seems to be laboring the matter unduly to add any

further discussion of this emphatic point of the Bible. We may safely conclude that though men may know the truth and not be saved, they cannot be saved except they know the truth. My dear laymen, laymen must be theologians. No, they need not be professional theologians. They need not study Greek and Hebrew. They need not necessarily be able to teach other people. But they must be theologians. That is, they must know God. They must have sound knowledge about God. They may not excuse themselves from having clear and correct opinions about the Deity on the ground that they are not ordained to full-time church work but have been called to some other service. The duty to be theologians is common to all of us. The difference at this point between laymen and ministers is a difference not of kind but of degree. It is an error of Rome which teaches that there is a difference of kind between priests and people. With the Bible, the Protestant church teaches that the Bible itself was given not solely to the clergy but to all the people of God. We of the clergy have greater obligation, not sole obligation. So far as time permits, and to the degree that your obligations to this world allow, in that measure must you be familiar with the truth of God. For that knowledge, God will hold you responsible in the day of judgment. While you need not read this book or any other particular book except the Book, the Word of God itself, I hope you will read this book to help you in your study of the Bible and in your gaining a sound knowledge of God. But I remind you that while this book may give you some knowledge of God by means of which you may be saved, this book and no other book (indeed, not even the Bible itself) can save you. This truth of God must be loved, must be embraced, and must be yielded to if the person who has saving knowledge is to be saved by it. One theologian has written that it is not enough to “understand” but you must also “stand under.” For the truth of God is a Person — a Person who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). A true theologian, therefore, is a person who knows The Person. Everyman must be a theologian.

02.02. CHAPTER II God's Providence: A Two-edged Sword

CHAPTER II God's Providence: A Two-edged Sword

ACCORDING TO the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions." This comprehensive statement says that God's providence encompasses all and not merely some of the acts of His creatures. Such a definition would include big events and trifles as well — good things, but also evil. Does not Jeremiah teach the same doctrine? "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lamentations 3:37). Is Acts 15:18 any different? "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." If known to God are all His deeds from the beginning, there is nothing not known to Him. Nothing escapes His purposes — not a single hair nor a falling sparrow.

Neither you nor I would be here to discuss providence if Providence had not brought us here — if God had not done His will in the earth. How conscious we are of all the little details on which our lives to this point have turned. I do not know the trifles in your life, but I do know those in my own. Let me mention one. If a child had dropped a marble one inch more to the left or for some reason I had put my foot one inch more to the right as I once went down a fire escape I would not now, probably, be discussing providence at all. Not only in your life and mine but in the lives of historic public figures the same significance of detail is apparent. A. H. Strong in his Systematic Theology reminds us that Muhammad's life once was suspended by a literal thread. The prophet, fleeing his enemies, hid in a cave across which a spider quickly spun a web. When the pursuers saw it, they were convinced that there was no one in the cave. They went on. Muhammad was spared. His religion today numbers more than three hundred million adherents. But if trifles are vital parts of divine providence, what of evil? Evil is often vastly significant. The most important event which ever occurred was, in one aspect, horribly evil. The crucifixion of Jesus from the standpoint of the crucifiers was grotesquely wicked. Yet, even though the killing of Christ was atrocity itself, what event was so vital and its effects so beneficial as the death of Christ? If God's providence does not include evil, it does not include the most important event which has ever taken place. So we say providence is a two-edged sword. It cuts both ways bringing (differently, to be sure, but bringing nonetheless) both the good and the evil. If we deny either, we deny providence. If we deny providence, we deny God. If we deny the benign, we deny the goodness of God. If we deny the evil, we deny the severity of God. The Bible denies neither, but affirms each. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22).

Let us consider then these two aspects of divine providence. But first we examine what we shall call "negative providence."

I. Negative Providence

A. Definition

What do we mean by negative providence? Suppose we begin with the comedian Ed Wynn's definition based on a slight alteration of some famous lines:

"There is a destiny that shapes our ends rough; Hew them how we may." This is negative enough, but is it providence? No, this is Greek fatalism rather than Christian providence. Why? Because human behavior is disregarded. "Hew them how we may" — that makes no difference. Compare, for an example of this type of thinking, the great Greek tragedian Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. This king, Oedipus, is destined to kill his father and marry his mother. No matter how innocent of either he may try to be, he unknowingly and inevitably does both. Though he consciously strives to avoid these sins, he does them nonetheless and is held guilty for them. So his mother commits suicide, and he gouges out his eyes and goes into solitary and hopeless exile. The certainty of the end is present in this tragic definition of negative providence. It also contains the element of human activity. In the Wynn satire the man "hews"; in Sophocles' tragedy Oedipus does all in his power to avoid fate. Neither actor is a puppet. Each one striven, though to no avail. But, what is lacking in these two accounts? It is the connection between the end and the means. There is no connection between end and means; between destiny and striving. The end comes to pass regardless of striving; indeed, it comes in spite of striving against it. The destiny shapes ends rough, hew them how we may — that is, though we hew to the moral line in an endeavor to make our destiny smooth, it remains rough. Oedipus is essentially a moral person, generally admired by his family and subjects. But all this means nothing, for he is destined to commit the accursed crimes of patricide and incest (and accursed crimes they remain although he intends neither of them).

What a contrast to all this is the negative providence of Scripture! Compare Acts 2:23 : "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Judas and others indeed delivered Christ up according to the eternal counsel and foreknowledge of God, but they did so by "wicked hands." Their "hands" were not inactive. They were certainly not opposed to this dread deed. On the contrary, they willfully chose to do the awful deed, for they were denominated "wicked hands." This illustrates the constant Bible teaching about negative providence; namely, that the doers are always voluntary doers, willing actors, guilty men.

Putting the picture together, this is what we find: Negative providence is the divine appointment even of wicked and calamitous events but not apart from — rather, through — the willing though wicked determinations of men.

B. Forms of Negative Providence

1. External

Providence applies to the totality of things. Since we are here concerned only with the human creature, we note that providence applies to the total person. The total human person is a composite one. Thomas Aquinas has observed that man, in possessing a spirit, resembles angels; in possessing a body, he resembles animals. Furthermore, in addition to man's having two parts to his personality, body and spirit, he has two periods — time and eternity. Providence relates both to the temporal and to the eternal. So we consider first that form of negative providence which affects the external, bodily, and temporal aspect of the human personality. Christ referred to temporal providence when He spoke of the hairs of our head being numbered. Both our temporal lives and

our environment are part of providence. But the tragic as well as the beneficent elements of the external and temporal are part of providence. For example, Christ said that He must go as it was written of Him, that He must be killed at Jerusalem and that the Shepherd will be smitten, and the like. All of these evil events concerning death are therefore of divine foreordination.

There is a time coming, says the Bible, when God will reveal more fully the displeasure which He now feels. Meanwhile, it appears to the Psalmist as if God is slumbering and needs to be aroused. But God is waiting until the “cup of iniquity” is full. Thus He withheld his judgment upon the Amorites. “But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Genesis 15:16). But though it might seem that God’s judgments are delayed, Moses warned the Israelites, “Be sure your sins will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). He told them in his farewell address, as well as on other occasions, of the curses which were sure to overtake those who turned away from Jehovah.

We have impressive illustrations of this negative providence pertaining to the externals here and now. Consider, for example, the fall of Jerusalem. Christ was crucified and nothing happened — then. Later, in the lifetime of the same generation, the city was besieged, civil war, famine, butchery, and indescribable suffering took place. Mothers devoured their own children as the wrath of God came upon the city that crucified His Son. Nor are visitations of wrath only in the form of military woes and desolations. Roger Babson once made an investigation of bankruptcies in the United States during a certain number of years. Some of these business collapses were traceable to lack of competence — a few. The majority were owing to lack of integrity and honesty. The eminent historian of the American scene, Charles Beard, said that one of the lessons he learned from his studies was that the mills of the gods grind slowly but they grind exceedingly fine. Still another scholar said in a class that if he were intimately familiar with the condition of a community he could predict within a hundred years the date of its downfall. Then he revised that statement claiming that he could predict the downfall within the space of ten years. Not only do the scholars recognize the temporal judgments which come on mankind and the brimstone which is scattered over all the possessions of wicked men but even the man on the street knows it and sometimes even jokes about it. For example, I used to go bowling with my church people on Thursday nights. Occasionally I would bowl the ball in the corner properly and it would move over to center as it ought and a strike appeared certain. I would start to walk back to the bench. But alas all the pins would not fall down — the two farthest apart still stood! My men should have said: “You were robbed, pastor.” “You should have had a strike, pastor.” “Too bad, pastor.” What they did say was: “You don’t live right, pastor!”

2. Internal

“Your sins will find you out,” said Moses. However, not all visitation is upon the bodies of sinners; it comes upon the souls also. God may wait to pour out wrath upon the external world until the cup of iniquity is full, but apparently He pours out this invisible cup on the soul as soon as it sins. He may seem to slumber as He delays external punishment, but not so in the administration of internal suffering. A person may sin and retribution upon his body not be forthcoming, but his conscience is immediately afflicted. He may, indeed, get away with it; he never gets away from it. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth”; that is, their consciences are alarmed when there is no outward apprehension. “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalms 7:11). That is, though

the wicked prosper outwardly as the green bay tree, he is inwardly blighted. The wicked is as the surging of the sea (Isaiah 57:20). That is, however tranquil his situation may appear to be, he has no true peace within. John Calvin says the sinner sometimes has tranquility because he is too “thick” to understand the judgment of God against him. But he is not tranquil about his tranquility. That is, he is disturbed about his peace of mind. There is no rest for the wicked one even when they are resting because they still vaguely and apprehensively wonder whether they should rest, whether all is well with their soul.

II. Positive Providence

A. Definition When considering the definition of negative providence we used Ed Wynn’s comic parody of the poet. Now, considering positive providence, we consider the poet himself:

“There is a destiny which shapes our ends Rough hew them though we may.” The “rough hew” needs explanation. If the poet means “sin as we please,” if he suggests that a positive providence comes about irrespective of our behavior, if things are going to work out well although we always behave badly — then he errs in the opposite direction. Just as there is no destiny that shapes our ends rough, hew them how we may, neither is there any destiny which shapes our ends well, hew them how we may. The shaping and the hewing are integrally related. God shapes as we hew; we hew as God shapes. So, then, the definition of positive providence is: The divine appointment of good and beneficial events but not apart from (rather, through) the willing determinations of men.

B. Forms of Positive Providence

1. External

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). That includes external and temporal events as well as the internal and eternal. “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7). “We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter,” but nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:36, Romans 8:39). “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Romans 5:1-3). So these adversities are transformed by divine grace and wisdom into blessings. The same event which is negative providence for the wicked is positive providence for the children of God. The meek, says Jesus, shall inherit the earth. Righteousness exalts a nation. The wicked may appear to prosper, but their way perishes while he who meditates on the law of God day and night shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters (Psalms 1:2).

Honesty may work a temporary temporal disadvantage, but in the long run, even in this evil world, honesty pays. Crime may be a temporary temporal advantage, but in the long run, even in this evil world, crime does not pay. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword while the peacemakers shall be called, even in this world, “the children of God.”

2. Internal

If there is no rest for the wicked even in this world, there is rest for the righteous even in this world. They have peace with God, access to grace, hope of glory. For them to live is Christ and to die is gain only because they will have still more of Christ. For the Christian it is: all this and Heaven too.

Note how this internal joy transforms even the temporal bodily pain to which Christians are subject in this life. A former president of Colgate University was stricken and suffered almost incessantly. His son could not refrain from saying: "Father, I wish I could bear some of your pain for you." "Son," the sufferer replied, "I do not have a pain to spare." A woman in a congregation where this story was told said: "That man must never have had gall bladder trouble!" Seriously, a Christian has no pain to spare.

What shall it be for you? A positive or negative providence? Do you wish divine destiny to shape things rough or smooth? In this world and that which is to come?

Remember that providence is not fatalism. Your hewing is related to God's shaping. God's shaping is related to your hewing.

02.03. CHAPTER III Sin Makes No Racial Distinctions

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SPEAKING OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE, we noticed sin incidentally. We now bring it into focus. One cannot think of God's holy ways without thinking of our unholy ones. We cannot think of ourselves without thinking of our sin. Sin is the most important conviction any man can have. It is a bad theology which thinks man good. Any good theology must start with man as bad. In the opening verses of Ephesians 2:1-22, Paul describes unconverted persons by many different expressions. They are called "dead through trespasses and sins"; they are seen as walking in the "course of this world," walking "according to the prince of the power of the air," fulfilling "the lusts of the flesh and of the mind," and "by nature" they are "children of wrath." The former terms refer to the expressions of their character. The last expression, "children of wrath," is the root cause of their character. It is because the unconverted or unquickened person is by nature a child of wrath that he is dead in trespasses and sin and walks according to the will of the world, the devil, and the flesh. These evil works reveal him as naturally liable to "wrath" — the wrath of God, His abiding fury. That is, the unconverted person — whoever he may be — is, by nature, doomed to destruction, for sin is no respecter of persons. Be he a Gentile, like those to whom Paul wrote, or a Jew, like Paul himself, he is a child of wrath. Sin makes no racial distinctions.

I. Sin No Respector of Persons

All people, in and out of the church, are by nature children of wrath. Paul begins his description of the unconverted by referring to the Gentiles, the Ephesians, who were outside the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the promises of God, etc. However, before he finishes his description, he includes Israel as well in the indictment, saying: "Among whom also we [we Israelites also] had our conversation in the times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Paul thereby teaches that although Israelites had received circumcision, which was "the seal of righteousness by faith," they were not thereby changed in nature. Because they had been engrafted into the visible church, they were not thereby necessarily engrafted into the invisible body of Christ. They, just like the Gentiles ("pagans") whom they despised as outside the law, needed to be born again. Though they were heirs of the promises, they still remained by nature children of wrath, even as the others. It was a Jew — and a Jewish ruler at that (Nicodemus) — to whom Jesus had said: "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3).

II. Proof That Sin Is No Respector of Persons A. General Bible Teaching

Note how this teaching of Ephesians is corroborated everywhere in Scripture. David says in Psalms 51:1-19 : "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In Psalms 58:3 we read: "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Eliphaz, one of Job's three friends, is very emphatic: "What is man, that he should clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust

in his saints: yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job 15:14-16). In Job 14:4 Job asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job is speaking here expressly of man being born of a woman, as spoken of in Job 14:1. This is given as a reason for man's not being clean. That is, being a human creature, proceeding by ordinary generation, man is naturally polluted.

B. "Man" Used Synonymously with "Sinner" The Bible sees man so constantly and universally associated with sin that it virtually uses the term "man" as synonymous with "sin." "Cursed is he that trusteth in man," said the Lord in Jeremiah 17:5. Christ said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan. . . . for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). This plainly signifies that to be carnal and vain — opposite to what is spiritual and divine — is what properly belongs to men in their present sinful state. Compare also 1 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Peter 4:2; Job 15:6.

C. Man More Destructive than Animals That man is more wicked and destructive than even voracious and wild animals is clear from a somber remark of our Lord. When He sent forth his disciples into the world, to bear witness of Him, He said: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: . . . but beware of men." It was as if He said, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves. But why do I say wolves? I send you forth into the wide world of men, that are far more dangerous than wolves." Jonathan Edwards was justified in saying: "There is no one lust in the heart of the devil that is not in the heart of man. Natural men are in the image of the devil. The image of God is rased out and the image of the devil is stamped upon them."¹

One writer tells of a Christian who in prayer cited the words of Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked," and then continued by saying: "O Lord, Thou knowest we no longer accept this interpretation." This amounts to saying that we no longer accept the Bible's interpretation of sin. But for us to reject the verdict of the Word of God about sin is a dreadful act of sin, is it not? So if we deny the sin which the Bible says is in our hearts, we prove that it is there, do we not? Perhaps the very best proof of the sin of our hearts is that we deny the sin of our hearts. In or out of the church, then, the unconverted person's liability to eternal destruction is not occasioned by his environment but by his inherited nature. "We are by nature children of wrath." It is not by what we do that we are children of wrath, but by what we are. We do not become children of wrath by doing evil things, but we do evil things because we are children of wrath. Of course, doing evil makes us more and more the children of wrath. As Christ said, the proselytes of the Pharisees became twofold more the children of Hell than they (Matthew 23:15). Not by environment are we the children of wrath, but by nature. It is our nature which makes our environment evil and not our environment which makes our natures evil. This is the startling thing that the inspired Apostle taught in Ephesians 2:3.

Reinhold Niebuhr, America's distinguished neo-orthodox theologian, lectured to the students and faculty of Harvard Divinity School in 1940. He was discussing original sin and gave this domestic illustration. His son, who was then seven, had been in a neighborhood brawl. Niebuhr was inclined to finish what the boys had begun, but the maid interceded. "Professor Niebuhr," she said, "it is not your son's fault. It's the company he keeps." The father replied: "It is not the company he keeps. It is his own little black heart."

D. Even Infants Are Polluted

What shows the iniquity of man most clearly of all is that infants themselves are contaminated with sin. Before babies learn how to think or speak or act responsibly they are by nature children of wrath. The Bible shows this first of all inferentially. That is, it teaches clearly that the wages of sin is death. Where there is no sin, there would be no death. If there were no sin, there would be no suffering. Yet babies both suffer and die. Sometimes they suffer dreadfully and sometimes they die in agony. "Therefore," said John Wesley, "children themselves are not innocent before God. They suffer, therefore they deserve to suffer." Or as the Lutheran theologian Sohnius puts it: "Since infants die, as universal experience teaches, it is evident that they must be chargeable with sin; for Paul clearly represents sin as the cause of death — of the death of all men. 'For the wages of sin is death.'" John Calvin says: "We are by nature the children of wrath. But God does not condemn the innocent. Therefore, . . ." And so Calvin argues that God's calling our natures guiltily corrupt proves that we are corrupt and, at the same time, responsible for our native corruption.

Some moderns have jumped to the conclusion that there is no necessary connection between sin and suffering and death. This they do because our Lord has told us there is no necessary connection between a particular sin and a particular suffering. A calamity coming upon a particular person is no proof that the person is a greater sinner than one on whom that particular calamity did not come. But Christ nowhere says that suffering is unconnected with sin, or that there would be death where there was no sin.

Continuing with the sinfulness of infants, we call attention to the divinely commanded execution of some Midianite children, mentioned in Numbers 31:17. Moses there commanded the Israelites to slay all of the male children, as Saul was commanded on a later occasion to slay all the infants of the Amalekites, 1 Samuel 15:3. In Psalms 137:9 we read: "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Edwards, in his Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin, says: "I proceed to take notice of something remarkable concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, represented in Ezekiel 9:1-11, when command was given [to them that had charge over the city] to destroy the inhabitants, Ezekiel 9:1-8. And this reason is given for it, that their iniquity required it, and it was a just recompense of their sin (Ezekiel 9:9-10). God, at the same time, was most particular and exact in his care, that such as had proved by their behavior, that they were not partakers in the abominations of the city, should by no means be involved in the slaughter. Command was given to the angel to go through the city, and set a mark upon their foreheads, and the destroying angel had a strict charge not to come near any man, on whom was the mark; yet the infants were not marked nor a word said of sparing them: on the contrary, infants were expressly mentioned as those that should be utterly destroyed, without pity (Ezekiel 9:5-6). 'Go through the city and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.'" Sodom would have been spared by God if there had been ten righteous; since there must have been ten infants, these could not have been righteous. We read in Proverbs 22:15 : "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Matthew 18:11 says that the Son of man came "to save that which is lost." If, therefore, children who die are saved, as many believe, it is from a lost condition by nature!

E. Inevitability of Punishment Not only do the above passages teach us that any unconverted person is exposed to wrath but they also teach that it is absolutely certain to come upon him. The expression "children of wrath" was a Hebrew idiom. It meant that the person so described was

inevitably liable to wrath. It was an idiomatic way of saying what Paul says more conventionally in Romans 9:1-33. There he speaks of “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” In Deuteronomy 25:2 the expression “son of stripes” is used to signify one who is to be beaten. In 2 Samuel 12:5; the expression “son of death” is used of one who is certain to die. We remember that Christ referred to Judas as the “son of perdition,” the heir of Hell, the one certain to receive that dread destiny. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul shows that the unconverted person is already under the “prince of the power of the air.” Every soul is the habitation of unclean spirits, precisely because by nature he is a child of wrath. So we have seen from the Ephesians text, from other statements of Scripture, from biblical references to man as virtually synonymous with sinner and worse than an animal and more like a devil, from the lost condition even of babies, and from the inevitability of punishment, that the unconverted are by nature — not by environment, and without respect to persons or distinction of race — children of wrath.

III. Application of the Universality of Sin

Let us now apply this doctrine to ourselves. First, let me apply it to myself. This means that, though I am a minister of the gospel, I am by nature a child of wrath. Even Paul, the greatest of ministers and apostles, included himself. “We also,” he said. No privilege or opportunity can blind us to this sober fact. Indeed, a true minister is one who preaches as a dying man to dying men, telling them of a Saviour who can save both him and them.

Second, as professing Christians we need to take warning. We have already shown that we, too, are “by nature children of wrath even as the rest.” Let us not say to ourselves, “Abraham is our father.” Let us not say we are Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists. Let us not say that we come to church regularly and give our tithes and teach our class and visit the sick. We are by nature children of wrath, just like the rest of this perishing world. If we have a hope of salvation, it must be on some other basis than what we are. By nature we are lost. Let us not say, “Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other men. I am not like people who play golf on Sunday afternoons, or people who give less than a nickel a week to charity, or people who read foul novels and tell dirty stories.” We are by nature children of wrath just like the rest. There is no hope for you, no matter what you join or what you do or what you say unless you acknowledge that you are in yourself reeking with corruption and in a lost condition by nature, a dwelling place for the devil, an enemy of God, a hypocrite, and a criminal. What has made the matter worse is that you have thought well of yourself. You resent having anyone, even God, calling you names because you consider yourself a decent person, one who dwells among decent people. But the Bible tells you, you are no saint. You must recognize yourself to be a sinner by birth and by nature (Luke 18:13-14). Only one who recognizes that he is a sinner can ever be a saint. Sinners deny that they are sinners — for the sin of lying is part of their sin. Saints admit that they are sinners by nature, for as saints they now tell the truth.

Third, those outside the church need to be warned. Professing Christians are presumably repentant (though by no means necessarily so, as we have previously seen). Those outside the church are presumably impenitent (though there may be very rare exceptions). Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Generally, those outside the church do not hear the Word of God, by which faith and salvation comes. That is, they do not hear it unless you tell them. Unless they hear it, they who — like you — are by nature children of wrath will most

certainly perish under the judgment of God. The wrath of God is upon them now. His fury burns hot against them. Their life hangs by a thin thread, and when that thread is broken, they will go to their everlasting home of suffering. How shall they hear without a preacher? You, as a Christian, are their preacher. Do not worry only about what will happen to people who never hear the gospel. Worry about what will happen to you if you never tell them the gospel. They will perish, but you will be held responsible by God for your failure to give them the gospel. There is positively no way by which they can escape the wrath which is to come and that which now is, except through the only name given under Heaven whereby men may be saved — the name of Jesus. You have that name. If you truly believe in it and are trusting in Christ's grace for your salvation, you will most certainly try, as opportunity affords, to win some. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," said Paul. And, knowing the love of the Lord, we should persuade men, too. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). The love of Christ constrains men; the terror of Christ constrains men.

Fourth, nothing less than a change of nature is needed. If we are by nature children of wrath we can only become children of grace by new birth. When we read that a very religious man of great influence and reputation came to Jesus and was told, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God," we realize that a radical change is necessary. This religious man had to be born from above; he had to be born again. He had to be given a new nature. He had to be born twice. He had to have a radical transformation of soul. The ruling disposition of his life had to be changed. Until that time, there was no hope for him. He was by nature a child of wrath just like the rest. He was a perishing sinner. Every moment that he lived, he was odious to God. Every moment that he continued his impenitent way, he was storing up wrath against the day of wrath. Every moment that he lived, he was making the fires of Hell that much hotter. The time would come when he would wish that he had never lived a happy moment longer. The time would come when he would wish that he had never been born. It would be better for that man if he had never been born, or if a millstone had been tied about his neck and he were cast into the sea. Being a child of wrath is as dreadful as being a child of glory is wonderful.

1 "Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition," Works, VIII 10.

02.04. CHAPTER IV Jesus Christ: The God-Man

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WE HAD AN INTERESTING PROFESSOR at Harvard University who used to attempt to introduce Christ to his classes. In attendance, he would have, in addition to the divinity school men, a number of the regular university students. The latter were often totally ignorant of Christ. This fact, far from dismaying the professor, rather pleased him; for from these students he got what he liked to call “the virgin reaction” to Jesus. The theological students, having been acquainted with Jesus before, could only afford the philosophy of the second glance. But Dr. H. J. Cadbury, who himself had studied the texts hundreds of times, could always learn something from those who would give the fresh response of the newly introduced. Let us attempt to put ourselves in the position of these students and try to experience the initial response to Jesus Christ.

I. The Humanity of Christ When we read the accounts of Jesus we instinctively recognize Him as the perfect man. Matthew describes One whom we see to be the ideal Jew; Mark, the ideal Roman; John, the ideal Son of God; and Luke, the universal ideal who is every man’s ideal and God’s as well. Furthermore, every man who approaches Christ seems to feel the same thing — He is the ideal of that man. To the artist Christ is the One altogether lovely. To the educator He is the master teacher. To the philosopher He is the wisdom of God. To the lonely, He is a brother; to the sorrowful, a comforter; and to the bereaved, the resurrection and the life. To the sinner, He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

“No one,” says Watson, “has yet discovered the word Jesus ought to have said, none suggested the better word he might have said. No action of his has shocked our moral sense. None has fallen short of the ideal. He is full of surprises, but they are all the surprises of perfection. You are never amazed one day by his greatness, the next by his littleness. You are quite amazed that he is incomparably better than you could have expected. He is tender without being weak, strong without being coarse, lowly without being servile. He has conviction without intolerance, enthusiasm without fanaticism, holiness without Pharisaism, passion without prejudice. This man alone never made a false step, never struck a jarring note. His life alone moved on those high levels where local limitations are transcended and the absolute Law of Moral Beauty prevails. It was life at its Highest.” The virgin reaction of the world to Jesus Christ is, then, this: He is the ideal, the perfect man; the moral paragon of the race. I do not wish to gloss over the fact that not absolutely everyone has agreed with this verdict. I know that George Bernard Shaw spoke of a time in Christ’s life when, as he said, Christ was not a Christian. I know that some have thought that Socrates died more nobly than Jesus; that others believe Christ to have been surpassed. But the overwhelming testimony of the world is to the perfection, the incomparable perfection, of Jesus of Nazareth. These few exceptions could be easily shown to rest on fundamental misconceptions of certain things which Jesus said or did. Moreover, those who do take exception usually think that some imagined fault is a failure of Christ to be, as G. B. Shaw said, a Christian! It is evident that they know of no higher standard by which to test Christ than the standard of Christ Himself.

II. The Deity of Christ But now we find ourselves in an extraordinary situation. If we admit, as the world does, that Christ is the perfect man, we must then admit that He is also God! Why, you ask, if we acknowledge Christ to be the perfect man, must we then acknowledge Him to be God also? Is there not a great difference between man and God — even between perfect man and God? Why should the admission of the one require the admission of the other? Why must the perfect man be God? For this reason: Because the perfect man says he is God. And if He is not God, then neither could He be a perfect man. We despise Father Divine, as a man, for claiming to be God when we know that he is not. If Jesus Christ is not God, we must despise Him also, for He claims far more clearly than Father Divine that He is God. We must, therefore, either worship Christ as God, or despise or pity Him as man.

A. His own Claim to Deity

Just a minute, you say, what proof do we have that Jesus Christ ever claimed that He actually is God? My answer is that we have overwhelming evidence that He entertained this high opinion of Himself. This, for example, is what He says of Himself:

“I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

“No man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

“Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

“I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” the high priest asked. “Thou hast said,” was Christ’s reply (Matthew 26:63-64).

“Baptize,” He commanded, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

“Whom do ye say that I am?” He asked His disciples. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Peter replied (Matthew 16:16).

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven,” He said (Matthew 16:17).

Well, you say, is this not a characteristic way for religious teachers to speak? Do not all of them make grandiose statements? It is true that Bronson Alcott once said to a friend, “Today I feel that I could say, as Christ did, ‘I and the Father are one!’” “Yes,” the other replied, “but the difference is this: Christ got the world to believe Him.” The significant thing is this: not one recognized religious leader in the history of the world has ever laid claim to being God — except Jesus. Moses did not. Paul was horrified when people tried to worship him. Muhammad insisted that he was merely a prophet of Allah. Buddha did not even believe in the existence of a personal God, and Confucius was skeptical. Zoroaster was a worshiper, but he was not worshiped. We repeat — of the recognized religious leaders of all time, Jesus of Nazareth — and Jesus of Nazareth alone — claimed to be eternal God. Not only did Jesus on various occasions definitely affirm His deity but it is perhaps more telling still that He always assumed it. Take, for example, the Sermon on the Mount. This is regarded as predominantly moral instruction. No heavy theology here, they say.

This is Christ telling us what we are to do; not what we are to believe about Him. It is true that He does not directly claim to be God in this passage. Indirectly, however, He says a great deal about Himself and lays impressive incidental claim to His divinity.

Note these six distinct pointers to His supernatural being in this one sermon on Christian morality (Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29). First, He says with absolute authority who shall and who shall not inherit the kingdom of God (the beatitudes). If I, for example, said anything like that, on my own authority, you would smile pityingly or frown. Second, He said that His disciples would be hated and suffer persecution for His sake. Suppose that I said that Martin Luther suffered for my sake, what would you think about me? Third, “but I say unto you” is a constant refrain through this sermon, by which Christ assumes His right to speak with the authority of the Word of God on which He was commenting. Fourth, He says that in the last judgment people will say to Him, “Lord, Lord”; but “then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Fifth, the sermon concludes with the parable of the two houses, one built on sand and the other on a rock; one to fall and one to stand. And what is this rock? His teaching. Finally, the people sensed the supreme dignity of this person who had taught them, for they observed that “he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

B. Contemporaries Affirm Christ's Deity

What did Jesus' contemporaries think of Him? “Behold the man,” said Pilate. “Truly this was the Son of God,” said the centurion who watched Him die. “Never man so spake,” the people said. “Behold the Lamb of God,” was the testimony of John the Baptist, whom all men recognized as a prophet. “My Lord, and my God,” said doubting Thomas. When Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter, standing near Caesarea Philippi, a city built in honor of Caesar who was claiming divine honors, and not far from the grotto to Pan, the god of nature whom many worshiped, said: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” John said of Him, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” And Paul adored Him with a most abundant variety of expressions as his great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. For example, he uses the expression, “unsearchable riches of Christ,” and other expressions concerning Christ's riches in his epistles. What does Paul mean by the “unsearchable riches of Christ”? That is the very point. It is impossible to put enough meaning into the expression to do justice to the feeling of the Apostle. Rendell Harris, attempting to translate this expression in Ephesians 3:8; threw up his hands in despair and cried: “The unexplorable wealth of Christ!”

C. Influence of Christ Implies His Deity

What of the influence of Jesus Christ on the succeeding centuries? Shortly before His death, He said: “Believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (John 14:11-12). These were very ordinary men to whom Christ — admittedly the most extraordinary person ever to appear in human history — said that they should do greater works than He had done. A strange prediction that was, and stranger still that it has been fulfilled. Yet even stranger still is how it has been fulfilled. When Christ uttered this prophecy, infanticide was a common thing. Quintillian and others regarded it as a beautiful custom to abandon infants. It was the followers of Jesus, to whom Jesus had said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not,” who put an end to this “beautiful custom.” Clement, Origen, Tertullian, the fathers of the church, exposed the horror

of infanticide. And the weakest of all creatures, the human infant, became the best protected of all, as the followers of Jesus continued to much greater lengths the emancipation of childhood. As James Stalker has written:

Christ converted the home into a church, and parents into His ministers; and it may be doubted whether He has not by this means won to Himself as many disciples in the course of the Christian ages as even by the institution of the church itself.

Murder for pleasure was eradicated by the disciples of Christ. When Jesus uttered the promise about "greater works," the Romans regarded gladiatorial combats as the choicest of amusements. The bloodier the battle of condemned slaves or captives the rarer the diversion. Telemachus, who leaped into the arena in an attempt to separate the warriors and succeeded only in having himself stoned by an enraged mob of spectators who saw in this man only a mad spoilsport, was, of course, a Christian. He died, but gladiatorial combats were to die with him, as the church was to do greater works in this area than her Founder.

Another example is cannibalism. Of all the atrocious deeds of man against man, the most gruesome is cannibalism. With this practice of degenerate savagery Christ had no personal contact; yet its abolition is the work of those who, in His name, have done greater works than He. When a South Pacific islander told a European mocker of foreign missions that if it had not been for the missionaries he would not be alive to say that he did not believe in missions, he was true to the record. It was through missionaries, a number of whom actually became victims of this hideous practice, that cannibalism has been almost entirely exterminated. Many a soldier in World War II subsequently told of his amazement to find himself welcomed rather than devoured in some remote island where he had been stranded. How glad were such men, who trudged wearily through the jungles with a fear of what the next clearing would reveal, when they saw Christian churches and knew that they were safe. These were the experiences which made missionaries of GI's and produced the now famous "khaki-colored viewpoint." They found the church there, for the disciples were doing greater works than their Lord.

Time would fail us to mention all the gesta Christi. Suffice it here to repeat what James Russell Lowell said a century ago, "Show me a place on the face of the earth ten miles square where a man may provide for his children in decency and comfort, where infancy is protected, where age is venerated, where womanhood is honored, and where human life is held in due regard, and I will show you a place where the gospel of Christ has gone and laid the foundation."

III. Conclusion

We are fully aware that to attribute Godhood to any man is a colossal affirmation. It borders on the incredible — the impossible. But when we consider the impression of Christ's perfect humanity, the great claims He made for Himself in the most humble way, the unrestrained adoration and worship of those who knew Him, the miracles associated with Him whose life was a "blaze of miracle," and the constantly recurring miracles of grace which have attended the heralding of His name throughout the world, we propose (if it is difficult to believe that a man was also God) that it is impossible to deny Christ's deity. It is difficult to believe; it is impossible to doubt. What will you do with Jesus?

Note: The above was largely taken from the author's *Reasons For Faith*, published by Harper & Row with their permission. This same volume may be consulted to see how we show that Christ certifies the Bible as the Word of God. In this present volume we are, therefore, merely assuming the authority of Scripture and basing our teaching on it.

02.05. CHAPTER V Atonement: How Jesus Paid It All

CHAPTER V Atonement: How Jesus Paid It All I. Christ's Agony

Gethsemane was the place of Christ's exquisite torment. Here we see the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief. Matthew tells us that after the last supper with His apostles He began to be sorrowful. At the supper He had been full of joy. Though the supper represented vividly to Him the death He was to accomplish on the morrow, He was still very happy because He was with His own. His sorrow then was sublimated in a sense of the joy that should follow. Here feasting with Him were the very ones for whom He was to die so that they should be able to feast with him forever. Though the cup was the new testament in His blood, as He told them, He was comforted in the anticipation of eating and drinking again with them in the kingdom of Heaven. "With desire," He had said, "have I desired to eat this passover with you." His desire was fulfilled. The sorrow of Christ was like that of a soldier about to go into battle — a battle which he knows means suffering and death — who is spending his last night with his family. There is his dear wife and beloved children for whom he would go out to fight and die. So on that last evening the divine Soldier was happy because He was in the presence of those for whom He was soon to die, and surrounded by their love. Christ was not sorrowful then; His own grief was swallowed up in the joy of being with His disciples. But when the supper was over and they all went out after singing the Hallel, the divine Warrior was left with His thoughts about the dread battle soon to be waged in order that He might save those with whom He had so happily dined. As a soldier will say farewell to his little children first and then draw apart for a final farewell with that one who understands and loves him most, his wife, so Christ separated himself from his family of apostles and called to him the three who loved and understood Him best of all: Peter, James and John. Then it was that "he began to be sorrowful, and sore troubled. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me." (Matthew 26:37 f., ASV) II. The Cause of His Agony

What was the cause of this amazement, sorrow, and great trouble even unto death which our Lord endured in Gethsemane? It was a taste of the cup He was about to drink. He always knew that He was to die; He had predicted it many times; He had set His face as flint to go to Jerusalem where He was to be delivered up. He had discussed with Moses and Elijah His decease at Jerusalem. It was not a disclosure that He was to drink a cup of woe that so amazed and burdened Him that He sweat great drops of blood. It must have been a divinely given realization of what that cup of suffering was — not just that it was to be, but what it was to be. He had always known that He was to die and be separated from God on the cross; now He was made to feel what it was. In the words of Jonathan Edwards: "The sorrow and distress which his soul then suffered, arose from that lively, and full, and immediate view which he had then given him of that cup of wrath; by which God the Father did as it were set the cup down before him, for him to take it and drink it. Some have inquired, what was the occasion of that distress and agony, and many speculations there have been about it, but the account which the Scripture itself gives us is sufficiently full in this matter and does not leave room for speculation or doubt. The thing that Christ's mind was so full of at that

time was, without doubt, the same as that which his mouth was so full of: it was the dread which his feeble nature had of that dreadful cup, which was vastly more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. He had then a near view of that furnace of wrath, into which he was to be cast; he was brought to the mouth of the furnace that he might look into it, and stand and view its raging flames, and see the glowings of its heat, that he might know where he was going and what he was about to suffer. This was the thing that filled his soul with sorrow and darkness, this terrible sight as it were overwhelmed him. For what was that human nature of Christ to such mighty wrath as this? It was in itself, without the supports of God, but a feeble worm of the dust, a thing that was crushed before the moth. None of God's children ever had such a cup set before them, as this first being of every creature had." The second Adam was undergoing a much greater temptation than the first one. The probation was the same, however, testing obedience to God. There is, however, no indication that Adam faced anything comparable to the ordeal of Christ in His obedience. Adam was to obey God by not eating of the tree. We may assume that there was something very tempting — even without the solicitation of Satan — in that tree's fruit. But certainly that trial could not approach the ordeal of Christ. He had to be obedient unto death; Adam had to be obedient unto life. Adam's obedience would save him from death; Christ's obedience would deliver Him to death. Furthermore, Christ could see in advance all the horror of that death which obedience would cost. Never had there been or could there be a temptation like that. The preview of impending doom was so terrifying that the mighty Jesus Himself asked, if it were possible, to escape it. Normally His obedience was instant and without question. Only the extreme severity of the ordeal can explain the plea: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The Son appealed directly to His loving Father to save Him from this hour if it were by any means possible. Mark tells us that He even first reminded God of His ability to do all things as He said: "Abba [a term of utmost filial intimacy], Father, all things are possible unto thee; . . ." To the same effect, Luke mentions that He said: "Father, if thou be willing, . . ." In John, on an occasion which appears to be identical with the one we are considering, Jesus said, "Father, save me from this hour." The fact that this appeal appears in all accounts and the poignancy with which it is recorded show clearly how fervently Christ must have asked about the possibility of escaping the dread hour. It is not said that God answered His Son's plea on this occasion. There were other occasions when God did speak audibly from Heaven so that His Son and those about could hear Him. On this occasion God seems to have been silent, but the Son knew the answer. Indeed, I think it was a rhetorical question — a question to which the answer was already known. It was a cry of desperation, and not an inquiry at all. Jesus knew that if there had been any conceivable way whereby God could have redeemed the world other than by the horrible death of His Son, God would never have resorted to such an expedient. He knew that there never could be any other name given under Heaven whereby men must be saved. He knew there was none other good enough to pay the price of sin; none other could open the door and let us in. Jesus knew that if those dear ones whom He had left were to drink of the vine again with Him in the kingdom of God, there was but one way — He must drink of the cup of God's wrath.

III. Christ's Self-Surrender to Agony

So, looking directly into the furnace of the coming divine fury into which His own willing obedience alone could cause Him to be cast, Christ said: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." He made God's will His will, even though He knew fully and terribly what such submission meant.

God's will was His will. The Father and the Son were one in their redemptive love for the elect. This is made even more explicit in John's account, where Christ says: "Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" The Saviour was surrendering Himself to the wrath of God for His people. He had asked His chief disciples just to stand by — to understand and to appreciate and to comfort. He did not ask them to do anything else. There was nothing they could do. It was because they could do nothing that Christ had to do everything for their redemption. But could they not even stand by? Could they not sorrow that He had to suffer so for them? Could they not even stay awake for one hour? What a heart-breaking ordeal to find those for whom He was about to die unable to stay awake for an hour to comfort Him in His great and terrible vicarious death for them! Yet our Lord, overwhelmed with the vision He has just had of the fiery torment before Him, to which He would submit Himself for the elect's sake, very gently chides His sleeping disciples. Immediately He turns from His own concerns to their needs. "Love seeketh not her own," and so Love Incarnate quickly forgets His anguish and turns to the disciples' needs. Affectionately He warns them, not for His sake but for their own, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In that remark, grief-stricken as He was, bitterly disappointed as He must have been, Christ does not fail to notice and even praise the drowsy disciples for having the right spirit and meaning well, even though they were so very weak.

IV. Christ's Source of Strength in Agony

Then the Saviour departs from the apostles a second time and prays again. "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." The agony of the first prayer is not over, but a new note is detectable. Realizing that it was not possible for the cup to pass from Him, and still agonizing at the thought of its horror, our Lord is now more definitely praying for the strength to drink the cup of God's wrath. As man He had shrunk from the cup; as man He will drink it; as man He looks to the Father for strength. In John's account He prays: "Father, glorify thy name." Luke tells us that an angel came and ministered unto Him. Having submitted Himself to His sacrifice, He knows that He needs great strength to endure the cross. As a man, He was not equal to it. He looks to his heavenly Father, who has willed His death, to enable Him to perform what has become His own will also. John tells us that on this occasion God does speak, saying: "I both have glorified it, and will glorify it." Possibly in connection with that promise, God sent an angel to minister to His Son. The Redeemer was following the same pattern of prayer which He had taught to His disciples. First He had asked that God's will be done. Then He asked for his daily bread, that is, His strength for the day. God's will was difficult to perform, and only God could enable even the Son of man Himself to perform it. "Command what thou wilt, and give what thou commandest." That He needed superhuman strength desperately is shown in His asking God for the third time to do His will through Him. All the while the apostles, who needed strength so much more than the mighty Son, instead of maintaining their vigil during His, slept. In the sequel, the One who watched and prayed walked quietly to His horrible death while those who slept were scattered by mere danger. When Christ gave His cheek to the betrayer's kiss, He knew that He was putting the cup of wrath to His lips, the full dregs of which He would not taste until the morrow when He would cry out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

V. Those For Whom Christ Endured His Agony

This, then, is how Jesus made atonement — how He paid it all. The punishment which was due to us He voluntarily received. The death which was the wages of our sin He underwent. The stripes with which we deserved to be beaten fell upon His willing back. The chastisement which was owing us was borne by Him. The price we would have paid by endless suffering He paid by an infinite sacrifice. It should have been I who cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It should have been He who said: “I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God.” Because Jesus paid it all, it was He who was forsaken and we who never shall be. Because He drank the full cup of divine wrath, we shall never taste it. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

02.06. CHAPTER VI Justification by Faith: Twofold Salvation

CHAPTER VI Justification by Faith: Twofold Salvation FROM Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20, the Apostle Paul seeks to demonstrate the universal sinfulness of men. He shows the wrath of God revealed against the heathen because they would not have God in their thinking. He shows that the nominally religious people of Israel, by their condemning other persons for sins of which they were also guilty, were treasuring up “wrath against the day of wrath.” In the third chapter Paul shows that all have gone astray. “There is none that doeth good.” With the law or without the law, men have sinned. Every mouth is stopped. The whole world is shut up under judgment. Then and then only does the Apostle come back to his theme, saying: “Now the righteousness of God without [apart from] the law is manifested [revealed], being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:21-26).

Having shown most plainly that no man can be saved by the works of the law, Paul proceeds to show, just as plainly, that men may be saved by the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Now that he has shown men why they should not trust in themselves, he will show them how suitable it is to trust in Christ. Since their own works only condemn them, he will tell them of One whose works can save them. Futhermore, he says that this is no novel way of salvation. It is the only way of salvation in all ages. Abraham was saved this way, and so was David. In the beginning of chapter four Paul points out that “if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” In Romans 4:5 he gives us a classic statement of justification by faith alone. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Justification is by faith alone without works.

I. What Justification Is The Westminster Shorter Catechism has well summarized the abundance of biblical data on this great theme: “Justification is an act of God’s grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.” Justification has a positive and a negative element. It consists at once in the removal of guilt and the imputation, or granting, of righteousness. It rescues the sinner as a brand from the burning and at the same time gives him a title to Heaven. If it failed to do either of these, it would fail to do anything. For man, as a sinner against God, must have that enormous guilt somehow removed. But, at the same time, if he had the guilt removed, he would still be devoid of positive righteousness and with no title to Heaven and would also be certain to fall again into sin and condemnation. If Christ only cancelled out guilt, He would merely return the sinner to Adam’s original state without Adam’s original perfection of nature. There must be the

“double cure.”

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee;

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy riven side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure,

Cleanse me from its guilt and power. This epistle has already shown us that men are guilty before God. Their sins have incurred the wrath of God (“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” — Romans 1:18), and this wrath is further intensified by every sin that is committed (by your hard and “impenitent heart treasureth up wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God” — Romans 2:5). Later, the same epistle tells us that the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Death refers to eternal death in Hell because it is set in contrast with eternal life. Had Christ Himself not said the same thing? “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). “This,” He said, “is my body which is given for you” (Luke 22:19). Had He not said that like “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14)? Why should the Son of man be lifted up as a vile serpent, the symbol of sin, to become sin, and cry out in His desolation, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46) except that, as Paul says, God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us “that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21; ASV). Christ Himself did not say so much about His death. He was making the sacrifice; He left to others the privilege of explaining it. For two thousand years now the church has been glorying in His cross and exploring its wondrous meaning. The positive element, the making just or righteous, is really the central aspect of justification, though it is commonly less noticed. But, as we have said, if Christ did not procure our righteousness as well as secure our remission, the latter would have been of no avail to us, for we would still be outside Paradise and exposed to the recurrence of sin and ultimate damnation. God could not bestow righteousness on us, to be sure, without removing our filthy guilt. But, on the other hand, it would have been no use to remove our guilt if He did not bestow a new righteousness on us. This is what the first Adam failed to do. He was never asked to die for the remission of sin, but he was placed on probation to fulfill the law and secure the perpetual favor of God upon all whom he represented. He failed in this. The second Adam, the man Christ Jesus, both washed us from our sins by His blood and clothed us in the white raiment of His righteousness, justified. In order to do this great thing, Christ had first to be justified Himself so that in His justification those whom He represented might share. This He did. He fulfilled the law perfectly, not for Himself alone but for His people. He was holy and undefiled — a lamb without blemish. He was one who could say, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” He was the Son in whom the Father was well pleased, made in all points like as we are, but without sin. Therefore God vindicated the second Adam, as we read in 1 Peter 3:18 : “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit.” In 1 Timothy 3:16 : “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,

seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here it is seen that the man Christ Jesus was justified by His own keeping of the law, but in Romans 4:25 we see that this justification was not for Himself alone but representatively for His people: "Who was delivered up for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." So I Timothy tells us that He was raised again for His own justification and Romans 4:25 that He was raised again for our justification. In justification, as in all other works of the Mediator, He does not act as a private person, but as a public one; not for Himself alone, but for all of His own; not for the Head only but for the members of the body as well. So that we are quickened, raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Again in Romans 8:34 : "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." So, being justified, being endowed with a title to life as well as a reprieve from death, "we have peace with God, . . . access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice [triumphantly] in hope of the glory of God." That these two elements together constitute justification is shown in Acts 26:18 : "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Also John 5:24 : "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation."

II. That Justification Is by Faith in Christ

Why is faith the means of justification? Is it a kind of good work? No, for the Bible is very plain in teaching that salvation is not by works of any kind. If it were, we would have whereof to glory. We could not boast that we did this or that or the other thing, but we could glory in our belief. "Nothing in my hands I bring," we could sing, "except my faith." No other work could avail, only the work of believing. If faith were a kind of good work, we would be back again at the old heresy of salvation by works; but now it would be the work of faith. Romans 4:5 makes it clear that we are not saved by faith as a good work. For that text says that we are justified while still ungodly in ourselves. God "justified! the ungodly." So, at the moment of justification we are still ungodly. If we are still ungodly then, our faith cannot be a good work. But why is faith the means of justification? Simply because it is the action of union with Jesus Christ. Faith is our coming to Him, our trusting Him, our resting in Him. The moment we are united to Him, we are immediately endowed with all that He has secured for us. We are immediately justified before we have done a single good deed, because we are His and He is God's. Just as a very poor woman is a very poor woman until the very moment that she marries a wealthy man. But at the moment that she becomes his wife, she becomes a wealthy woman. It is by means of her acceptance that she becomes a wealthy woman, but her acceptance does not make her a wealthy woman; it is her husband's wealth that makes her so. So faith does not justify; Christ justifies. But faith is the act of union with Christ.

A. H. Strong uses the analogy of the coupling. The coupling joins a train of cars to a locomotive. The coupling has no power in itself. It cannot move a single car an inch. All the power is in the locomotive. But the coupling is the link by which the power of the locomotive is transmitted to the cars. Faith has no power in itself; it is not a ground of salvation; it is not a good work. It is merely that by which all the goodness and grace and glory of Christ comes to the sinner, III. Justification is by Faith Without Works

How emphatically Romans 4:5 states this central truth of the Bible! “But to him THAT WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the UNGODLY, his FAITH is COUNTED for righteousness.” From this verse we learn that: (a) the justified person is one that worketh not; (b) he believes rather than does; (c) he is ungodly when justified rather than godly or one who has something to his credit; (d) it is his faith, not his deeds, that is the instrument of his justification; and (e) his justification is counted or reckoned to him rather than awarded him on the basis of merit. If it were possible to state the gratuitousness of justification more clearly than this, we doubt if even divine inspiration could find the words. Five separate expressions in one part of a sentence setting forth the absolute freeness of salvation leave no room to doubt that the way to God is wide open. There is nothing standing between the sinner and his God. He has immediate and unimpeded access to the Savior. There is nothing to hinder. No sin can hold him back, because God offers justification to the ungodly. Nothing now stands between the sinner and God but the sinner’s “good works.” Nothing can keep him from Christ but his delusion that he does not need Him — that he has good works of his own that can satisfy God. If men will only be convinced that they have no righteousness that is not as filthy rags; if men will see that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; if men will see that all are shut up under sin — then there will be nothing to prevent their everlasting salvation. All they need is need. All they must have is nothing. All that is required is acknowledged guilt. Only confess your sins. But, alas, sinners cannot part with their “virtues.” They have none that are not imaginary, but they are real to them. So grace becomes unreal. The real grace of God they spurn in order to hold on to the illusory virtues of their own. Their eyes fixed on a mirage, they will not drink real water. They die of thirst with water all about them.

Why do men not accept the gospel? How can they refuse the tender overtures of the gracious Son of God? Why do they even take offense at the cross? Let us consider an analogy. An etiquette book is a very valuable accessory. It is useful on many important occasions. A good one costs considerable money. Who would not be glad to have one, if it were given him? You wouldn’t? Why wouldn’t you be glad to be given such a book? Because it would imply you needed it! That is the reason proud sinners do not come to Christ. Their coming would imply they needed Him. They are too proud and self-righteous in their natural state to admit that!

02.07. CHAPTER VII Sanctification: Christianizing the Christian

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CHRISTIAN PERFECTION is an ideal for which we must all strive. Although there is a double standard of morality in Romish theology, Protestant Christianity knows no such distinction. The priesthood of all believers is a well-known Reformation principle. The perfection of all believers (as a duty) is another cardinal Protestant principle. Some professed Protestants expect their ministers to be perfect, while they think of themselves as under a less demanding ideal. Officers of the church are expected to strive for the ideal, which for the others is regarded as a mere word.

Officers cannot for a moment allow the people to get away with this double standard. Not that there is any objection to demanding perfection of ministers — God does this; but there is an objection to laymen not demanding perfection of themselves. Still, granting all this, there is peculiar propriety in officers applying themselves to the pursuit of perfection. The fact that all Christians are required by God to be perfect does not make that duty less but more binding on those who are to lead and correct the people in the things of God. After all, the snuffers in the ancient tabernacle were made of pure gold, as Matthew Henry observed.

“It appears singular to the reader of St. Paul’s Epistles,” writes W. G. T. Shedd, “that the apostle in one passage speaks of Christians as perfect, and in another as imperfect. At one time, he describes them in terms that would lead us to infer that they are holy as God is holy; and at another, he speaks of them as full of sin and corruption. In the text, he denominates them ‘the elect of God, holy and beloved,’ and yet immediately proceeds to exhort them to the possession and practice of the most common Christian graces — such as humility and forgiveness. In a preceding paragraph, he tells the Colossians that they ‘are dead to sin, and their life is hid with Christ in God,’ and then goes on to urge them to overcome some of the most gross sins in the whole catalogue — ‘mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry’ (Colossians 3:3-5).” The Bible teaches these three things concerning perfection: first, that the Christian in one sense is perfect; second, that in another sense, he needs to become perfect; and, third, what he is to do about it. These points will determine our treatment of the theme of Christian sanctification.

I. The Sense in Which the Christian Is Already Perfect The Bible clearly states that there is a sense in which the Christian is already holy. Colossians 3:12; for example, states: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”

Christians are already holy and perfect in two respects: first, they are actually justified or declared righteous; second, they are sanctified (set apart as holy) in principle, or potentially righteous. This first form of holiness is that which is imputed or reckoned to us; namely, the holiness of Christ which becomes ours through faith. He who knew no sin became sin that we might become the

righteousness of God in Him. Christ took the guilt of our sin, and we received the merit of His righteousness. We are now clothed in the white garments of the spotless lamb of God that took away the sin of the world. This is the righteousness we received when first we believed. "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us, and received by faith alone." So then in this sense, a person is holy, perfectly holy, from the moment he first becomes a Christian.

We are already holy in a second respect; that is, we are sanctified in principle. We have a new living principle within which is certainly destined to conquer our old and sinful nature. It is so certain that this new principle is dominant and shall win out over the evil principle which is mortally wounded at conversion that we Christians are spoken of at times as if we already had won the victory and were already perfectly holy. This is a common way of speaking. For example, on Friday I reached a certain stage in the preparation of a paper on which I was working. I knew that it was then as good as finished. I considered my work virtually completed. The outcome was a practical certainty. To be sure, there was a good deal more work to do, more research to complete, and so on; but fundamentally the back of the job was broken. So I was able to mow the lawn with peace of mind. As J. W. A. Stewart put it: "When the 21st of March has come we say the back of winter is broken. There will still be alternations of frost, but the progress will be towards heat. The coming of summer is sure; in germ the summer is already here." So the believer is holy in the sense that that which is in him is mightier than that which is in the world. The ultimate triumph of this principle of life in Christ Jesus is certain. The saint is as good as sanctified. His seed abideth (1 John 3:9). This is present holiness, which every Christian now possesses and without which no man shall see the Lord. The holiness of imputed righteousness and principial sanctification are illustrated in the following simile: "The steamship whose machinery is broken may be brought into port and made fast to the dock. She is safe, but not sound. Repairs may last a long time. Christ designs to make us both safe and sound. Justification gives the first — safety; sanctification gives the second — soundness." (quoted by A. H. Strong in Systematic Theology, p. 869) II. The Sense in Which the Christian Is Now Imperfect The saint's imperfection is no less apparent than his perfection. It jumps right out from the Scripture. In Colossians 3:12 we are told that Christians are elect and holy; immediately after, we are exhorted to put on mercy, humility, and the other elements of a holy life. In the Lord's Prayer we are specifically instructed to ask God for the forgiveness of our debts, or sins. Paul counted himself not to have attained; he did not consider himself already perfect. The Apostle John, one of the most saintly men of all time, the beloved of the Lord, said that if any man said he had no sin he deceived himself and the truth was not in him. A preacher, commenting on the fact that the Christian who says he has no sin deceives himself, remarked that he does not deceive anyone but himself. Luther likened the sanctification of the Christian to the healing of an open sore. The sore is healing, is potentially healed; but meanwhile it is quite painful and may be putrid.

III. What the Christian Is to Do in This Situation In this situation the Christian is called upon to strive for the very perfection which he already potentially enjoys. That is what a great artist does when he trains to become a great artist. We know that Enrico Caruso and Fritz Kreisler had music in their souls at the beginning. Training for them meant making their potential genius actual. If it had not been there to begin with, no amount of training would have produced it. But, even though

it were there, it would never have come to expression and reality without training. So the Christian has the gift of religious genius. It is given to him at his birth as a Christian (regeneration). He is then called upon to bring it out; the process is called Christian education (from educare, to lead out). In the Colossians passage, Paul says, “put on,” or “put forth.” “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.” That is, “You are holy; therefore put forth these holy acts of mercy, humility, meekness, and long-suffering.”

“You” put on or put forth these virtues. “You” do this; not God. A certain modern movement calls upon its adherents to “let go and let God.” But Christianity does not say, “Let go”; it says, “Put forth.” The Sandemanians were an obscure little sect which taught the deadliness of all doing and the necessity for inactivity in order to let God do his work in the soul. But Christianity says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you.”

Just how God works and we work is beautifully illustrated by the great Dutch theologian, Abraham Kuyper:

You can represent this to yourself most vividly when you think of a ship. At the stern of that ship is a rudder, and attached to this rudder is the tiller, and this is held by the hand of the helmsman. Should there be no steering when at sea, this boat moves under the action of the wind and waves, then when the ship turns the rudder turns, when the rudder turns the tiller turns, and with it the hand and the arm of the man at the helm moves involuntarily back and forth.

Behold the image of a will-less man.

He is adrift upon the sea of life. As wind and waves drive, so he is driven along, under influences from without and from within — of circumstances, of his passion. And as life makes him go, now in this direction, now in that, so he goes; and so turns the rudder in his inward purpose, and so turns the tiller and the hand at the helm; i. e., his will. The will-less one! But it is altogether different when there is steerage in the ship. Then the man at the helm keeps the course. He knows where he wants to go. And when wind and wave would drive him out of his course, he works against them. Then his hand grasps the tiller firmly, he turns it, and therewith the rudder itself, against wind and wave. And the ship that responds to the helm, cuts through the waves, not as tide and wind would direct it, but as the helmsman wills.

Such is the man of character, the man with will-perception and will-power, who does not drift, but steers. But there is still a third point. On the bridge of the ship, far away from the helm, stands the captain, and he has placed a helmsman at the tiller. Now the captain on the bridge must know what course the ship must take. On the bridge he stands much higher, and therefore knows far better how the ship must point to the right or to the left. And so the helmsman has but this single duty, namely, that he listen to what the captain on the bridge commands, and that he carries out those orders.

Applied to the soul, God is this Captain on the bridge, and we are the man at the helm. And if, with the tiller of the small boat of our soul in hand, we but will what God wills, and so turn the helm to right or left as God commands, then no danger need be feared, and presently through wind and wave the little boat enters safely the desired haven.

If this goes on through the whole of life, we grow accustomed to it; we know at length by anticipation, whether the Captain on the bridge will command left or right. Thus, of ourselves we come to know God's will more and more. And this knowledge of God brings us nearer to the haven of salvation, — to eternal life. When God so works in upon our self that at length we will what God wills, the process is not external but internal. (To Be Near Unto God, The Macmillan Co., 1925, pp. 200-202.) But to come back to our point. We must put on holiness. It is not enough to know how it is done. It must be done. It is not enough to know that it must be done, we must do it. Though I have all knowledge to understand all mysteries and have not love, it profits me nothing. Dr. A. H. Strong in his Systematic Theology quotes Dr. Hastings, who told of an occasion when the great French preacher Bourdaloue was probing the conscience of Louis XIV, applying to him the words of St. Paul and intending to paraphrase them: "For the good which I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do," "I find two men in me" — the King interrupted the great preacher with the memorable exclamation: "Ah, these two men, I know them well!" Bourdaloue answered: "It is already something to know them, Sire; but it is not enough, — one of the two must perish."

But, how do we actually put on these virtues which make for Christian perfection? How do we put them forth? How do we exhibit them so that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven? Two things are called for: meditation and exercise. By meditation we practice the presence of Christ. If we would run with patience the race that is set before us, we must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And if we would look to Jesus we will search His Word (John 5:39). We are transformed by the renewing of our minds; by letting the mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus. We know how association with great and good persons has a profound effect upon us. Gamaliel Bradford, the celebrated biographer, said that he "lived" with Robert E. Lee for many years and it made him a better man. He "lived" with Mark Twain for years and it made him a worse man. When Saint-Gaudens was given the job of making a statue of Phillips Brooks, he studied the man carefully. The famous sculptor came to realize that in order to understand Brooks he had to understand Brooks' Christ. So he read the Gospels, lived with Christ, and at last he gave his life to Christ. Chalmers spoke of the expulsive power of a new affection; it also has a propulsive power. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). So let us practice the presence of God. And then exercise! How do we put on virtues? "By taking every occasion to exercise them . . . Strain day after day upon a particular muscle, and it will begin to swell and rise above the flesh. You do not create the muscle by this effort, but you stimulate and strengthen it. . . . There is too much Christian character lying dormant and latent, because there is so much neglect of self-culture in the Church." Church officers and other leaders have a big job. We never hold a retreat in our church without some officer learning, as it were, for the first time how really big his job is, and wanting to resign forthwith. If that happened, there would be literal retreats. But that is not the purpose of a "retreat"; it is, rather, merely drawing back to see the job whole so that we may advance to it. You have the gift for your respective ministries — just exercise it, and you will know you have it. The same applies to all Christians. Develop some spiritual muscle. You who are holy, grow in holiness; you who are perfect, be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. Php 3:13-14 : "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." If

the Apostle Paul needed spiritual exercise, do you, my dear reader, not need it?

02.08. CHAPTER VIII Assurance: How We Know That We Know Christ

CHAPTER VIII Assurance: How We Know That We Know Christ

UP TO THIS POINT our interest has been in coming to Christ. We have considered our lost condition by nature, our need of a Saviour, and Christ's remarkable qualifications for that role, and the way by which we are persuaded of it. But now we address ourselves to the question of how we know that we have truly come to Christ, or how we know that we truly know Christ. Conceivably a person could come to Christ without being certain that he is actually united to him. Presumably, a person could think that he had come to Christ without really doing so. And presumably a person could truly come to Christ and know it. Now what we here want to discover is how we know that we know Christ. In previous chapters we have thought about our sinfulness and how we came to be sinful, and about Christ, His deity and His mediatorial work. All of these were doctrines which could be ascertained objectively and were in a sense external to us. Now we are dealing with something which we can only know by our self-examination. We are to search into our own souls to see if we have a certain experience. At the same time we are being objective, in this sense: we are studying the Word of God to ascertain the evidences for which we must search. While we are considering what the evidences of a saved condition are, we will be asking ourselves whether we possess these qualifications. At that point the discussion is both objective and subjective.

Many indications of a regenerate condition are mentioned in the Scripture. As a matter of fact, there are too many of them for us to consider in this brief chapter. We will, therefore, restrict ourselves to one passage which we will use as a guide in this discussion. We will, however, refer to other passages incidentally but not primarily. The passage which will serve as a foundation of our discussion here is Romans 5:1-3. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." In this passage the Apostle is giving us the argument from experience. In the immediately foregoing passage, the fourth chapter, he has shown the experience of the patriarchs of old, Abraham and David. Now he turns away from the past to the present and speaks of the experience of the Roman Christians, saying, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have . . ."

I. First Indication of Justification: Peace The first fruit of justification, or, we may say, the first evidence of our being in a justified state, is peace. Says the Apostle, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Before we can consider the peace here mentioned, we must first of all notice a minor textual matter. The King James and the Revised Standard Version represent Paul as saying, "we have peace." However, Paul did not actually write that. He wrote, rather, "let us have peace." There is little doubt among the scholars that he did indeed actually write *echômen* and not *echomen*. He

very probably used the subjunctive and not the indicative. Why, then, do they not simply translate it “let us have” instead of rendering it “we have”? Well, most of the scholars are frank enough to say that they render it in the indicative because they believe that is the thrust of Paul’s thought even though he does use a subjunctive word. That is, most interpreters feel that the argument of Romans is so logical and so relentless and so obvious that at this particular point Paul can be making nothing but a declaration. There cannot be anything tentative or uncertain, hypothetical or hortatory, about it. So, in spite of the language which the Apostle uses, the translators construe him otherwise because they feel his thought demands it. We sympathize with these translators and agree with their general appraisal of Paul’s thought here. Nevertheless, we consider it a very serious matter to change an inspired author’s word. We prefer, therefore, to leave the subjunctive just as the Apostle gave it to us.

What is the significance then of the fact that Paul did use the subjunctive and that he wrote: “let us have peace”? Does it somehow diminish the force of this passage because he used a subjunctive rather than an indicative? We think not. As a matter of fact, we are inclined to think that it may, if we understand properly, show a greater significance and contribute more to the movement of Paul’s thought than the indicative would.

We mean this: Paul could never tell these Christians, or urge them, or exhort them, to have peace unless he believed that peace had actually been established by God through justification. His subjunctive, in other words, presupposes a prior indicative. That is, Paul is exhorting the Romans here to have peace in the sense of experiencing peace because peace already has them. That is, peace already has been established and they therefore have every right and duty to appropriate it, to enjoy it, to revel in it. So I rather suspect that the Apostle is far ahead of his translators here. The translators are holding back at the indicative which Paul has already assumed and moved beyond. The point, however, as far as we here are concerned is that the subjunctive necessarily implies the indicative. The exhortation to have peace presupposes that peace has already been established. That is, a man could never be urged by Paul to experience a peace which the Apostle did not believe was already effected between that man and God. We remember that in Romans 1:18 Paul had already said that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, . . .” Now if the wrath of God were still burning against mankind the Apostle would certainly never urge men to have peace. Nowhere in these early chapters where he is shutting up all under divine judgment and exposing them to the wrath of God does he, or could he, urge them to have peace. It is only after the grace of God in Christ and justification by faith is introduced that Paul urges his readers to have peace with God.

Coming now to the peace of God itself, we notice the first great fruit or mark of justification here mentioned. This is indication that there is no longer any estrangement between the holy God and the former sinner who was under His wrath and judgment. If a person has peace established and is in a position to experience, feel, and rejoice in this peace, this is a true indication that he has actually a genuine union with Jesus Christ.

This, however, immediately raises a question. Is it possible that a person could wrongly think that he was justified and therefore think that he had peace established between God and him and then actually feel in his heart this peace to which the Apostle exhorts him? In other words, while a truly justified person will have this fruit of justification, namely peace, is it still not possible for people

who only think they have justification to feel a peace which flows from it, which peace is spurious and quite misleading? Is experienced peace a true indication of a person's converted state? Putting it in the form of a question, Can we know that we know Christ because we have the experience of peace? Obviously, if it is possible to have a spurious feeling of peace, the feeling can be no sure indication that a person has justification or has Jesus Christ.

Yes, it is possible to distinguish between true and spurious peace. Peace may be a feeling, but it rests on some presumed fact which may be logically grasped and evaluated. If you ask some persons why they feel at peace with God, they will answer, "Because God never hates or becomes truly angry with anyone." They suppose that God need never be feared. So they have a variety of peace. The doctrine on which it rests is unscriptural and therefore false and ipso facto; it is spurious. If, however, a person feels peace and knows that it results from faith that Christ satisfied divine justice for him and converted his soul and united him to the Saviour, the peace he feels is genuine since it rests on the truth of God.

II. Second Indication of Justification: Fellowship The second proof of one's salvation that the Apostle mentions is a gracious state. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." The grace here mentioned signifies a condition of fellowship with God. It introduces us to a second level of Christian experience. It is a distinct advance upon the previously mentioned peace which we have and may experience with God. There could have been peace established without any subsequent fellowship. Peace itself signifies merely the cessation of hostilities. It does not necessarily mean the resumption, or the introduction, of friendship. It could be an armed truce or a state of belligerency or a cold war. Peace simply means the absence of hostilities, expressed hostility. Of course, the peace of God is more than merely an armed truce. It does signify that there is no remaining hostility, outward or inward, hot or cold. Nevertheless, the word "peace" itself does not signify anything more than precisely that. Peace can be established without a condition of intimacy and love and fellowship obtaining. But this word "grace" signifies precisely that a condition of fellowship and love does obtain after the peace has been established. This grace which follows the peace of God could only follow peace. That is, there is no possibility of anyone having a cordial relation of friendship and love with the living God until peace is first established between them. So long as the war was on between the soul and Heaven, the soul could not suppose that God was his friend and was pleased with him. So long as the soul was at enmity with God, there could be nothing but a sense of apprehension, fear, shame, and fleeing rather than boldness, rejoicing, and loving communion. As we said, peace could be established without communion necessarily following. But now we are noticing the other side of the coin; namely, that there could be no communion without this peace.

Indeed, a part of this blessedness of fellowship with God consists in the realization of the peace which has been established. Just as truly as fear of God's wrath and judgment destroys any tranquillity between the soul and God, so the overcoming of that wrath of God suffuses the soul with a very great joy. Not only does the soul experience a vast relief, which follows the knowledge that God is no longer angry, but a positive joy as well in this wonderful knowledge.

Perhaps the most blessed characteristic of this Christian experience of fellowship with God is its inalienability. It cannot be lost. Paul indicates this by saying it is the grace "in which we stand." His word translated "stand" signifies "stand rooted," "immovable." So this fellowship, exquisite as it is

in itself, is also of permanent duration.

All other joys with which we ever have any acquaintance in this life are what we may call “furlough” pleasures. As a pastor, during the last war, I often visited families which had been torn apart by the demands of the military forces. Sometimes I visited these families when the loved husband or son or brother was home on a furlough. What a joyous occasion it was to have the family circle completed again, if only for a few days. But I doubt if I ever visited on occasions like that without seeing a mother or a wife in tears. Why? Because she usually would be anticipating that in three days or a week the loved one would be gone again. Even when she was enjoying the company of her husband or her son the joy was spoiled, to a degree, by the realization that it was soon coming to an end. Is this not true of all earthly pleasures? Are they not properly called “furlough” pleasures? They all have a terminal date. Sooner or later they will come to an end. The awareness of this fleetingness of the most exquisite of our pleasures diminishes the pleasure itself very greatly. The anticipation of the termination spoils the present enjoyment. Perhaps, in an ultimate sense, we are incapable of complete happiness unless we are relieved of the apprehension that the present phase of that happiness will be lost or diminished. On the other hand, how wonderfully the knowledge that these pleasures will continue contributes to the present enjoyment of them. Just as truly as the realization that a present pleasure is coming to an end tends to spoil the pleasure even now, so the realization that a present pleasure is never coming to an end tends to augment the pleasure even now. When I realize that some joy will never come to an end, that realization in itself is a joy and accentuates the original joy, just as thinking that a present joy will come to an end is a disturbance and that disturbance detracts from the present joy itself.

Christian joy, fellowship in the Holy Ghost, is the only kind of pleasure, with which we are familiar in this world, which is pure, unalloyed, and augmented pleasure, because it is a grace in which we stand rooted, immovable. This is what our Lord had in mind when He said that He came that you may have life and have it abundantly. This is what the Apostle was speaking of when he called Christians conquerors and more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. This is the blessedness of those who have and to whom it shall be given which contrasts so sharply with the misery of those who have not and from whom shall be taken even that which they have.

III. Third Indication of Justification: Hope The third fruit of justification which the Apostle mentions here is rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. The preceding joy of fellowship with God was augmented, as we have said, by its promise. In a certain sense, that present joyful fellowship was partly from anticipation of its continuance. This matter of the future of Christian experience comes into focus when the Apostle says, “We . . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Here he is taking a full view of the future and telling us that the true Christian rejoices in the anticipation of it. Indeed the word “rejoices” is not quite what Paul actually said. His term would be more adequately translated as “rejoiced triumphantly.” This is not only a note of happiness but of exuberant happiness. There is a certain confidence as well as a delightful anticipation. These are more than great expectations; these are great certainties for the Christian. After all, Jesus Christ gave himself that we may have life eternal. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That is the point of emphasis in the gospel. Not this world but the other world is the center of interest in the message of the evangel. Secularism has so permeated Christian thinking in our time that it has foreshortened the gospel picture. Even many Christians are more absorbed in this world than the

other. However, Christianity and true Christian experience live under the aspect of eternity, and the Bible ends with these words, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The Lord's return is ever "our blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). However glorious the experience of peace may be, however unspeakable the felicity of the Holy Ghost may be, even these blessed experiences are as nothing in comparison with what lies before. The famous evangelist, Moody, used to say, "Some day you will read in the obituaries that D. L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. I will have just begun to live." That is no exaggeration. As some other person has said, "The most wonderful five minutes in a Christian's life are the first five minutes after death." Jonathan Edwards, in an unpublished manuscript, said something like this: The blessedness of Heaven is so glorious that when the saints arrive there they will look back upon their earthly pilgrimage, however wonderful their life in Christ was then, as a veritable Hell. Just as truly, on the other hand, will those who perish in Hell look back on the life in this world, however miserable it may have been, as veritable Heaven [the Christian answer to those who think that Hell is here and now].

How do we know that we know Christ? If we have the above experiences growing out of a sound evangelical belief in the gospel, we know Christ and we know that we know Christ.

02.09. CHAPTER IX The Church: Body of Christ

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THERE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY two views of the church. There are variations of these and mixtures of them, but fundamentally only two views. This division runs through the various denominations or “churches” as we shall see.

I. The Church Defined as Visible The first conception of the church may be stated as follows: It is that body of persons who (1) profess faith in Christ, (2) are subordinate to properly appointed officers, and (3) associate with those of like profession and practice. We must consider these items separately.

First, they profess faith in Christ. This usually signifies more than saying they believe in someone whom they themselves call Christ. Their profession must recognize that Christ is a particular historic person who was none other than God incarnate. This is invariably considered as the minimum profession of Christianity. Insistence is on the fact that the Christ is no mere man — no mere reformer — but the very Son of God. Profession of faith in Christ may be all that is required, but this must be an orthodox profession. Usually Christ, being regarded as divine, is also recognized as a member of the Trinity. Furthermore, His divinity is seen as necessary to His work of redemption, the acknowledgement of which is usually regarded as essential. The person affirms faith in Christ — as God and Saviour.

Second, those who make this profession do so to certain men called church officers, who are thought to be appointed by Christ. After all, there must be someone, it is argued, to determine when men make satisfactory confessions. It is thought that these officers are indicated in the Bible. The Roman Catholic church finds the pope to be the recipient of the keys of the kingdom or church, and he indirectly appoints the necessary subordinates, or the priesthood. The Anglican church acknowledges no order, except administrative, higher than the bishop, who is thought to be in succession from Peter, to whom the keys were given and by whom they were transmitted to the bishopric. Those who defend the view under consideration are advocates of episcopal order, or government by bishops. Others, such as Presbyterians, believe that the officers are ministers (on one level and equal) associated with representatives of the congregation (elders); and still others, such as Congregationalists, regard the congregation itself as retaining and not delegating its authority.

Third, persons who profess faith in Christ to these duly appointed officers are received into the fellowship of like-minded persons. This fellowship constitutes the church. If a person professed Christ and acknowledged certain officers but was not recognized by them, he would not be admitted to this fellowship and therefore would not, in spite of all, be in the church. It is to be understood, furthermore, that membership in this society is not inalienable. A person may be excommunicated, that is, he may be cut off from the communion of the church and no longer be considered a member. This is a very understandable and apparently sound view of the church. But

is it true? Is a person who professes faith in Christ and is received by officers into a fellowship of like professors truly a member of the church in the biblical sense of the word? We admit that he may be, but this does not satisfy advocates of this doctrine who teach that there is no “maybe” here but only certainty. Such a person, they say, is undoubtedly a member of the church of Christ with all its benefits and privileges. They will say that if a person is a member of a certain local church or denomination he is truly a member of the church of Christ. So long as he is not cut off from the communion of this body (excommunicated) he is not cut off from Christ. So these advocates cannot accept our statement that members of their church may be members of the church of Christ. No, say they, they are members of Christ’s church. This notion that members of some particular denomination are necessarily members of Christ’s church or body we cannot grant. We will not deny that a person who sincerely and truly makes a sound profession of faith in Christ is a member of His true church, but how do we (or they) know that all who make the profession sincerely believe it? How can they be sure that they are not receiving hypocrites? So long as officers cannot search the hearts of professing believers, they cannot know whether such professors are sincere, true believers or not; nor can they prevent the admittance of some nominal (in name only) believers.

Advocates of this view must assume the officers’ ability to know the hearts of professors. But while they assume this, they do not claim it and cannot admit that they even assume it. Even the church of Rome claims no such infallibility for individual priests or bishops who receive persons into their church. So there is a dilemma here: This view depends on the officers’ ability to know hearts, but the officers do not even claim such ability. Yet if they do not have this ability, they cannot be certain that the persons they admit are true members of the church of Christ.

Perhaps someone will say that we are overdoing the difficulty here. Can we not be reasonably certain that a person who says he believes in Christ and who is not living in any open or gross sin is a Christian? Yes, we can be reasonably sure — that is, we can be sure enough to allow his profession to be made a basis of admission to this fellowship. But it is unreasonable to say that such a person could not possibly be a hypocrite. After all, the Bible indicates that people may say and do many things that are Christian without themselves being Christian. The rich young ruler, for example, said that he kept the whole law from his youth up, but he rejected Christ actually, even while respecting and reverencing Him. Christ said that some would come in the last day and say: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22). Christ did not deny their ascription of Lordship to Him, nor their claim to have prophesied, cast out devils, and done many mighty works in His name. But He rejected them nonetheless, saying: “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). The Apostle Paul wrote: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). So it is possible for a person to be a great philanthropist and a martyr without having love (that is, Christ) in his heart, and all he does will therefore profit him nothing. If it is possible for a person to call Christ Lord, to cast out devils in His name and die a martyr to His cause without having Christ in his heart, then certainly no man

can judge infallibly about the state of another man's soul.

It is not only that men may err in their judgments about others' profession, but they do err. Christ tells us that hypocrites are added to the professing members of His church. This is the teaching of the Parable of the Tares. An enemy plants the tares; that is, the devil establishes hypocrites in the field (or church) of Christ. Moreover, the parable could be construed as a warning to faithful church officers of their inability always to remove these "tares," or hypocrites, even when they can detect them: "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them" (Matthew 13:29). The separation of true and false believers will not, according to this and other parables (such as the net and fishes, Matthew 13:47 f.), take place in this world but at the final judgment and not by men but by angels. Christ, though He wants us to keep His church as pure as possible, wants us to know that some inevitable impurity must be accepted and borne with until the "harvest."

II. The Church Defined as Invisible

Thus the foregoing definition of the church will not do. The church of Christ is not simply those who profess Christ, are subordinate to his officers, and associate with those of like profession. The devil's children are members of this company. The enemies of Christ profess to love Him. This is the church of the anti-Christ as well as of Christ.

What, then, is the church of Christ? Although the foregoing definition is unsatisfactory, the addition of two words will make it quite satisfactory. Thus: The church consists of all who sincerely profess faith in Christ, and are normally subordinate to his officers and associate with those of like profession. This definition requires that the person's profession correspond to his state of heart. Since no officer can tell whether this is so, God alone knows whether the person is sincere and, therefore, truly a member of the church. For that reason the true church is called "invisible." This does not mean that true Christians are invisible but that their "trueness" or genuineness is invisible to man. For example, the true faith of the eleven apostles was not visible any more than the false faith of Judas was visible (until the betrayal and suicide following Christ's rejection of him revealed it). So long as a person makes a sound profession and does not belie it by gross sin, we "presume" that he has true faith. The Puritans used to say that we exercise a "judgment of charity." Only one thing we must avoid — namely, making a judgment of certainty.

Furthermore, we said that the church consists of all who sincerely profess faith in Christ and are normally subordinate to his officers and in fellowship with those who make a like profession. Normally, sincere believers in Christ will join the "visible" church because Christ wills it. He himself attended the synagogue or church of His own day. The New Testament enjoins the assembling of ourselves together. Christ gave gifts to the church after His ascension, according to Ephesians 4:11 f., and these were ministers to build up the church. Such statements indicate that the establishment of the visible church was His will, although He forbade any to join except those who deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him. Hypocrites may nonetheless profess to do these things and be admitted, but that is no excuse for sincere persons not making the same profession. Christ also commanded His apostles to baptize in His name, thus receiving professors by a visible act into a visible organization. So converts to Christ desiring to do the will of Christ will receive baptism and join the visible church. At least, normally they will do all this. Is it conceivable that they will not do this? It is not conceivable that they will permanently delay uniting with the church if they realize that it is the will of Christ that they do join. But it is conceivable, too, that they

may be wrongly instructed in their duty. Hearing that they should believe and be saved, they may wrongly conclude that merely exercising and expressing faith is sufficient without joining any organization. They may not realize that belief in Christ means belief in all His commands, including the one to join the church. This is not likely, of course, and a Christian person should not long remain in such a condition. But since it is a possibility, at least in rare cases, for short intervals, we must agree with Augustine that there may be lambs outside the fold (just as there are wolves inside).

III. Biblical Use of Term "Church"

What complicates the matter is that the Bible sometimes uses the word "church" in the sense of the visible church and sometimes in the sense of the invisible church. For example, Stephen in his sermon before the Sanhedrin referred to all Israel in the wilderness as "the church." "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38). Now we know that not only were there some hypocrites in that body called the "church" but almost all of the members were such. That was the generation of which God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest (Psalms 95:11). Only the younger generation were spared, but the rest perished in the wilderness — a symbol of eternal perishing. Yet they were called "the church." In the apostolic church itself there were those who were not true believers, as indicated by the Apostle John in 1 John 2:19 : "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." On the other hand, the true church is mentioned, too. Christ said: "I will build my church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The powers of Hell not only stand against but they often make conquests of the visible church. It is only the invisible church of which Christ's description is true. Another instance is Ephesians 1:22-23 : "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Surely nothing false or evil could be part of the body of Christ, in whom God is well pleased. In spite of this double usage of the word "church," in and out of the Bible, we must remember that the true church, the saved church, the church in vital union with Christ, is the invisible church.

IV. Other Qualities of the Church In addition to the description already given of the true, invisible church we find other characteristics mentioned in Scripture. The invisible church is:

Infallible (it knows its Master's voice and will not follow a stranger, John 10:5).

Indestructible (nothing shall separate it from "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:39; no one shall take it out of His hand, John 10:28).

Indivisible ("that they may be one, as we are," John 17:11; "I am the vine, ye are the branches," John 15:5).

Invincible ("the gates [defensive weapons] of hell shall not prevail [or stand] against it," Matthew 16:18; "the meek shall inherit the earth," Psalms 37:11).

Universal ("out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," Revelation 5:9; "the field is the world," Matthew 13:38; "God so loved the world," John 3:16).

Putting everything together, we would have some such definition of the church of Jesus Christ as this: It is the invisible, infallible, indestructible, indivisible, invincible, and universal body consisting of all those who truly believe in and adhere to their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the vast majority of cases, they are members of the visible church.

02.10. CHAPTER X The Future: Gulf Between Two Worlds

CHAPTER X The Future: Gulf Between Two Worlds I. Modern Views of the Future

EDWYN BEVAN (Christianity, p. 224) says that some modern Roman Catholics, speaking off the record concerning their official doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked, “teach that the punishment involves real pain, but that it is not forever, others that the punishment is really forever, but that it is not torment as pictured in the old view.” This observation is even truer of the thinking and teaching of many Protestants. In other words, the tendency of modern times has been to take punishment out of eternity or eternity out of punishment.

Quite recently some seem to be trying to take the blessedness out of eternity also. If Hell is being changed into Heaven, Heaven is being brought down to Hell. Thus Paul Tillich (“The Meaning of Joy”) finds joy and pain apparently inseparable. Moreover, for multitudes of thinkers Heaven must be presently, at least, a very miserable place, or state of mind; for God, say some, suffers because of the sins of His creatures. Being an infinite being, He must suffer infinitely and being omniscient He must suffer every moment. If He, who is the glory of Heaven, is infinitely miserable, it is difficult to believe that creatures, whose joy is in Him, could avoid being miserable also. The traditional churches have not changed their creeds, but there can be little doubt that they have changed their preaching. Walter Lingle, I think it was, once wrote about “The No-Hell Church” where that doctrine had never been mentioned for more than twenty years. John Sutherland Bonnell said that it had been even longer in his Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. How many “No-Hell” churches exist, no one has dared to estimate. Hell is so dreadful that the very thought of it is well-nigh unbearable. At the same time, the conviction is growing that religion without a Hell is not worth much. It seems that the church can neither live with the doctrine nor do without it.

If the orthodox have been strangely silent about what they ostensibly believe, the neo-orthodox have decisively committed themselves to universal salvation. It is an irony of history that a movement which is often called Neo-Calvinism should repudiate the doctrine of particularistic election by which historic Calvinism has been distinguished. In a book recently translated into English (Christ and Adam) Karl Barth’s implicit universalism is clear. Romans 5:1-11, he says, only speaks of Jesus Christ and those who believe in him. If we read that first part of the chapter by itself, we might quite easily come to the conclusion that for Paul Christ’s manhood is significant only for those who are united to him in faith. We would then have no right to draw any conclusion about the relationship between Christ and man as such, from what Paul says about the ‘religious’ relationship between Christ and Christians. We could not then expect to find in the manhood of Christ the key to the essential nature of man. But in vv. 12-20 Paul does not limit his context to Christ’s relationship to believers but gives fundamentally the same account of his relationship to all men. The context is widened from church history to world history, from Christ’s relationship to Christians to his relationship to all men. (pp. 87 f.).

It may be useful to contrast the universalism of Neo-orthodoxy with that of the older Liberalism. According to the latter, men do not deserve to be damned and therefore they do not really need to

be saved. Or, if men do deserve to be damned, a loving God is morally incapable of damning them. So, after their measure of suffering in this world, with or without some further temporary suffering in the next world, all men are "saved." Neo-orthodoxy has too strong a note of orthodoxy to entertain such a view. It holds that man is sinful and does deserve the wrath of God. A reconciliation, however, can divert that wrath. Such a reconciliation has been made in Christ, and it has saved or justified all men whom Adam's sin had damned. Faith is not necessary, according to Barth, to secure justification but only to experience the fruits of it. All men will sooner or later come to faith and thereby realize what they have always possessed but not previously enjoyed.

It has been characteristic of the sects to deny future punishment. Unitarianism emerged in this country basically as a protest against vindictive justice. It is true that this was not always in the foreground of the controversy, but it is probable that it was always in the background. In the debate over depravity and sacrifice and salvation, the great anxiety and offense was traceable not so much to these doctrines as to the fact that they led to vindictive and irremediable punishment. Universalism was explicitly and undoubtedly devoted to an attack on the particularism of New England doctrine. Most of the major present-day sects are opposed to future punishment. Some, like Jehovah's Witnesses, teach annihilation. The Mormons do not advocate annihilation, but most of their teaching either minimizes future punishment or says that only a handful of persons will undergo it. Christian Science, Theosophy, and other pantheistic groups know of no punishment that is not either ameliorative or illusory.

Although the traditional churches have tended to be silent about endless punishment while Neo-orthodoxy has gone universalistic and the sects annihilationist, there appears to be a movement back to a reaffirmation of faith in this doctrine in our time. Carl F. H. Henry's statement that Jonathan Edwards' God is "angry still" is being recognized by many as true. Marcellus Kik finds the subject important enough to write a book on *Voices from Heaven and Hell*, as has Henry Buis in *Doctrine of Eternal Punishment*. Meanwhile Billy Graham and many others preach the doctrine around the world.

Perhaps Dr. Bonnell's *Heaven and Hell* is more symptomatic of our time and more indicative of the general trend. While repudiating what he feels are the excessive statements of Thomas Aquinas and Jonathan Edwards, there is a genuine appreciation by Bonnell of what he considers the neglected truth in this doctrine. While his book does not, in our judgment, do full justice to certain grim but undeniable realities, it is indicative of a far more candid evaluation of biblical eschatology than the naive optimism of a decadent Liberalism. So much for the present lay of the theological ground. In this chapter we will restrict ourselves to a brief discussion of one point; namely, the fixity of the gulf between the two future worlds. There is an impassable gulf between these two worlds. If so, this is the death of any hopes of universal salvation.

II. Biblical Teaching About the Future Our thoughts turn immediately to Christ's parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) in which this impassability of this gulf is stressed by Jesus. Describing Dives, the rich man, in Hell, and Lazarus, the poor beggar, in Heaven, Christ tells us that Dives is so miserable that he asks Lazarus (whom he sees in "Abraham's bosom," another word for Heaven) to wet the tip of his tongue. But this is impossible because, as Abraham explains in the words of the parable, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

We recognize that we have here a parable. That is to say, this manifestly is not an exact description of the other worlds as they were at the time of telling the parable. For example, the parable has Dives in apparent physical misery, judging from the fact that he desires to have the tip of his tongue moistened. However, the Scripture indicates that bodies are not resurrected before the return of Christ. Rather, the bodies of the dead remain in the grave and nothing presumably happens to them except decay until they are later raised from the dead. Whatever the answer to that point may be we may be certain that there is this impassable gulf between the two future worlds. Jesus may be describing these future worlds by way of anticipation; that is, He may be describing the condition of those who are in these worlds in a future time when the final state of them has been established. Or, He may simply be expressing in more easily understandable terms of bodily suffering the misery which persons presently in Hell feel in their souls. But we are citing this passage to show that the Bible teaches the impassability of this separating gulf between the two future worlds. And this the parable very clearly — and indeed emphatically — does, even though it may leave us somewhat uncertain about some details. Regardless of whether this scene is taken to be utterly metaphorical, whether it is taken to be an anticipation of the future and final state of the two worlds; or whether it is a description in bodily terms of the present spiritual anguish of those in the evil world to come, the one point with which we are concerned remains the same in all instances; namely, that there is a wall of separation between these two worlds and it is impossible to go from one world to the other even temporarily.

Again, consider the passage in Revelation 22:11 : “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Here the statement is made that the filthy shall be filthy still. This tells us plainly that there is to be no change in the evil world which is to come. We know that in this present world while there is life there is hope. So long as a man lives and the gospel is extended to him he may believe and be saved. Now is the day of salvation. But in very dismal contrast to that, the future world affords no such opportunity. There is no such possibility of a person entering into life which is everlasting. Just the opposite — if a man departs this world in sin, he shall remain in sin forever without hope of change.

Consider Hebrews 9:27 : “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” We admit that this passage would allow a probation after this judgment. That is, the words themselves do not rule out such a possibility. However, they certainly do not assert such a thing and they do not imply such a thing. Furthermore, we find in Scripture elsewhere no support for the notion. So we are constrained to believe that the bluntness and the apparent solemnity and finality of this stark statement, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,” means to rule out later probation. That is the common sense handling of this verse, and, in the absence of any information which would modify such a common sense interpretation, it seems that we are shut up to such a construction.

Now if there is such a judgment which comes immediately at death and fixes the eternal abodes of those judged, then surely the two groups are eternally separated from each other, at least as far as inter-communication or inter-fellowship or transmigration is concerned. One world may be conscious of another. The heavenly world may be conscious of the hellish world, and that consciousness may contribute to its blessedness in some manner. Likewise the hellish world may be conscious of the heavenly world and that consciousness may contribute to its misery in some

manner. But, there is no going back and forth from one world to the other, nor any fellowship between the two groups of inhabitants.

III. Source of Modern Errors

There is more Scripture to the same effect, but we think this is sufficient to indicate the thought of the Bible. Let us say a final word on this subject concerning the probable reason for persons' thinking that there is a possibility of moving or progressing from one world to the other, namely from the world of Hell to the world of Heaven. As we are acquainted with the history of doctrine, we suspect that it is not any passage in Scripture which gives people such a notion; rather it is the feeling that a future trial is necessary at least for some people. That is, there are some adults who have never heard of the gospel and therefore have never had the possibility of being converted. Some theologians forget that these men who have not heard the gospel had no right to expect that they should hear a gospel; that there was no obligation on God's part to present it to them. But, wrongly supposing that all persons do have some right to a gospel and noticing that some persons have never actually been given that supposed right, these theologians are constrained to conclude that such a presentation of the gospel, since it has not taken place in this world, must take place in the other world. This opens up the possibility of persons in Hell believing and being saved and thus entering into felicity with the heavenly creatures and fellowship with God.

While we admit that this is, internally, a logically coherent pattern of thought, we say first that it is presumptuous to base a doctrinal affirmation, a dogma, upon something which is merely a very tenuous hypothesis. Second, and far more serious, however internally consistent this notion may be, it is destroyed by a false premise. We have reflected on the fact that some theologians assume that all men are entitled to a hearing of the gospel. This, however, is a gratuitous and erroneous assumption. God has no obligation to sinful men except to condemn. He may or may not, as His wisdom dictates, exercise mercy upon them. But mercy is not something which God must offer anybody. He offered no mercy to the angels when they sinned. And He says with respect to fallen human creatures: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (Romans 9:18). He strongly insists that mercy is optional with Him and a matter of His sovereign pleasure alone. Therefore, it is extremely presumptuous for any man to assume that he has a right to hear the gospel. Since we live in a land of light and hear the gospel, we should be that much more grateful that we have such an unmerited opportunity. Furthermore, we should do what is in our power to extend this opportunity to other persons. However, neither we nor they may be said to have any right to the good news. Neither we nor they, if we perish in our sins, can justly blame God for not attempting to rescue us from our sins. We are outlaws; we are violators of God's will; we are spurners of the light of nature and natural revelation which we do have. We are entitled to nothing but Hell. If God leaves us to that to which we are entitled, who will call Him unjust? So, however plausible-sounding this thesis of a future probation may be, a careful examination shows that it must be decisively rejected as erroneous and presumptuous. And if this notion of a future probation is resting upon this erroneous and presumptuous foundation, then that which rests on it, namely the possibility of passing from one world to another, must collapse with its foundation. But there is another side to this coin. If the finally impenitent cannot ever pass into glory, on the other hand, true believers cannot ever pass out of it. The righteous shall be righteous still. So once again the believers' eyes are on the Lord returning on clouds of glory. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" For when He finally takes His own to Himself they shall know that sin shall never again

separate them from Him; for He has separated sin from them. “. . . between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” (See also Revelation 21:7.)

Now is the day of salvation. Let us, therefore, in conclusion consider what we must do now, since there is to be no opportunity to change worlds hereafter.

02.11. CHAPTER XI The Way: Straight and Narrow

CHAPTER XI The Way: Straight and Narrow THE LESSONS ARE OVER. Now comes the homework. This is the “lab” part of the course. Here is where you learn by doing, having learned by reading.

Jesus tells us that, in spite of the glorious way of divine salvation, not many will find it. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:23-24). “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16). Our Lord is not telling us these things in order to develop a curiously morbid interest in arithmetic. We are not to attempt a calculation of the number of the saved and of the lost. Rather, because we have been given advance information that relatively few will be saved, we are to see to it that we are among these. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,” says Jesus. Because there will be few who enter life, you are not to despair of entering, but to strive to enter.

Let us, therefore, address ourselves to this top priority matter of finding the straight and narrow path to life.

I. Recognize the Two Ways

Why has Christ told us that few will be saved? He did this to stress the urgency of being on the right road. As long as persons suppose that just about everybody is going to arrive, they will take the matter quite casually. They will not be concerned about it. They will tend to assume that they are on the right road, of course, and let things rest there. But when they are told that most people are on the wrong road and that relatively few are on the right road, it brings every one of us up short. It makes us ask immediately: How is it with me? Where am I going? Am I with the majority, calmly walking to perdition? How do I get on the right road? If there be few that find it, I had better start looking now. The very first thing one must do is to recognize the simple fact that there are two different roads and that they lead to two different ends. As long as a person entertains the sentimental, popular notion that there are innumerable roads all going to the same place, there is no hope of his getting on the right road. He must recognize the fact that there are not many roads but only two: a right road and a wrong one. So far from going to the same destination, one leads to Hell and one to Heaven. This is a simple matter of fact. The one person who knows about these matters, Jesus Christ, has spoken on the subject. He came from Heaven and He has gone to Heaven, and He knows the way that leads where He is, and He knows the way that leads elsewhere. His word is clear, and His word is final. It is foolish to dispute it; the thing to do is accept it and act on it. A young Hindu student studying in this country heard a speaker at an international group saying that Jesus Christ was the only Saviour of the world. Afterward he said; “I do not like your idea that there is only one way to Heaven — your Christian way. I like to think that

there are many ways — your way and mine, the way of the Christians, and the way of the Hindus, and the way of the Muslims and of all religions. Your way is too narrow. I like room on the road I travel. I want other people with me, not just my own group.” This all sounded very broad-minded. It was broad-minded. It was broad-road thinking. It leads to destruction. Not because the speaker said one thing and he said another; that is irrelevant. But Christ said one thing, and Hinduism says another. If Christ had said that men came to God through Hinduism, the young man could be right; but since Christ said, “No man cometh to the Father but by me” (John 14:6), the young man is dangerously wrong. He may want a broad road with room for all faiths. There is such a road indeed, but it does not lead where he wants to go. He must simply recognize the fact that there are but two roads, and they lead to different places. Until he learns it, until you learn it, you are on the broad road that leads to destruction. Jesus Christ ought to know.

II. Get On the Straight and Narrow Road

You will never get on the right road until you recognize that there are only two roads and that only one of these is the right road. But recognizing this fact is not getting on the right road. You have to find it and enter it. You need make no effort whatever to find the broad road. Men are born on that road. They are born in sin and on the way to destruction. Most of them stay on that road all their lives and forever. Many of them never even think of getting off while they still have an opportunity. They like the road until at last, when it is too late, they see where it leads. But to get on the right road real effort is required. An act of the will is required once the narrow road is found. No effort is required to remain on the broad road. To make no effort is the best way to stay on the broad road. It is the road of no resistance; it is the course of the evil world that walks according to the prince of the power of the air. But the narrow road must be found and entered with great difficulty.

Dante’s *Inferno* tells of Virgil leading Dante to the entrance to *Inferno*. There is a sign saying, “Abandon all hope, all ye who enter here.” There is a sign over the entrance to the Kingdom of God also and it reads: “Abandon all pride, all ye who enter here.” All who would enter this narrow road must abandon all pride. They must recognize that they do not deserve to be permitted to enter this way. They must know that they have forfeited all right to escape the just damnation of their former evil ways. God is under no obligation whatever to rescue them from their Hellhound way. He has every right to permit them to go on to their destruction. The narrow road is a road of free grace, of condescending mercy. No one ever deserves to find or enter this way. Only God’s grace can show and open it. They must enter it in abject penitence, with nothing in their hands, with only a plea of mercy on their lips and in their hearts. “If any man,” said Christ, “will come after me, let him deny himself.” Let him pull himself up by the roots. Let him turn away from himself and rely entirely on Christ. This road is for sinners only. If a man has any righteousness of his own, an iota of merit or goodness to which he can lay claim, the other road is for him. That is where the supposedly virtuous make their self-righteous way to perdition. The road of life is for sinners only — sinners whose hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. A woman said to the preacher after listening to a sermon on this subject, “You make me feel so big,” holding her thumb and index finger about a half inch apart. The minister replied, “Lady, that is too big.” John Bunyan wrote in his autobiography that he found this road so narrow that there was room only for body and soul; not for body and soul and sin.

III. Agonize Along This Road Not only must all who enter here abandon all pride but once they are on it they must agonize all the way to the end of it. It is a narrow road, exacting and confining. It is a road of holiness, and no sin is permitted here. It is for sinners only, to be sure, for those who know that they have no righteousness of their own and who trust in Christ alone. But they must, on this road, prove that they really do trust in Christ. And they prove this only by the striving after holiness. "If ye love," says the Lord of this road, "keep my commandments." Those commandments call for perfect holiness in every area of human behavior. Nor is there any time when a person takes a rest from holiness on this road. All the way he must be striving after his Christ who leads the way.

It is a road which calls for daily self-denial and bearing of one's cross. This is where the eye that offends is plucked out and the arm that offends is cut off. This is where the men of violence overcome every barrier to their progress. This is where men hunger and thirst after more and more progress along this road. This is where men beat their bodies and keep them in subjection. This is where the pilgrim presses ever on and never counts himself to have attained. Does someone ask: If there is the necessity of "agonizing" and striving in the way, can it be a gracious way? Will we not be earning rather than receiving? Not at all! Suppose I were preaching in an auditorium and offered all hearers free watches on the condition that they would come down the center aisle to get them. If they came down the side aisles, or through the basement, or by a rear window, they would not get the watches. Suppose they came down the center aisle — the watches would be theirs as a gift. They would not earn them by coming down an aisle! They would only show that they would accept them as a gift! So our persevering works only show our entire trust in the free gift of God. In spite of the rigor of this way so sharply in contrast to the ease on the broad road, this is a happy road. Christ is this road and Christ is the companion of this road. Those who bear His burden find that the burden is light, and those who are under His yoke find that His yoke is easy. Those who "lose" their lives discover that they really "find" them. Those who deny themselves, find themselves. Those who suffer are very happy. This, in spite of all its hardships and demands is the glory road.

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