

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

**BOOKLET TWO
PART ONE
THE EXISTENCE OF GOD**



A. W. Pink

The Doctrine of Revelation

Booklet Two

Part One

- 2. The Existence of God as Revealed in Man**
- 3. The Existence of God as Seen in Human History**
- 4. The Existence of God as Unveiled
in the Lord Jesus Christ**

A. W. Pink

2. The Existence of God as Revealed in Man

Creation makes manifest the Creator, and having considered some of the mighty products of Omnipotence therein, we turn now to that which comes closer home unto each of us. We are not obliged to go far afield and turn our attention to objects in the heavens or the depths of the ocean in order to find evidences of God's existence—we may discover them in *ourselves*. Man himself exhibits a Divine Maker, yea, he is the chief of His mundane works. Accordingly we find that Genesis 1, after giving a brief but vivid account of how the heavens and earth were called into existence by a Divine fiat and both of them furnished for the benefit of the human race, God made man last—as though to indicate *he* is the climax of His works. In each other instance we are told “God said,” “God called,” “God created,” etc., but in our case there is a marked difference: “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness” (1:26), as if to signify (speaking after the manner of men) there was a special conference of the Divine Trinity in connection with the formation of that creature who should be made in the Divine image. All the works of God bear the impress of His wisdom, but man alone has stamped upon him the Divine likeness.

The fact that man was made by the Triune God and “in Their image” plainly indicates that he was constituted a tripartite being, consisting of spirit and soul and body—the first being capable of God-consciousness, the second of self-consciousness, and the

third of sense-consciousness. The dual expression, “in Our image, after Our likeness,” imports a twofold resemblance between God and man in his original condition: the former referring to the holiness of his nature, the latter to the character of his soul—which competent theologians have rightly distinguished as “the moral image” and the “natural image” of God in man. That is a real and necessary distinction, and unless it be observed we inevitably fall into error when contemplating the effects of man’s defection from God. To the question, Did man *lose* the image of God by the Fall? the orthodox rightly answer in the affirmative; yet many of them are quite at a loss to understand such verses as Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9, which teach that fallen man *retains* the image of God. It was the moral image which was destroyed when he apostatized, and which is restored to him again at regeneration (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Fallen man is made in the image of his fallen parent, as Genesis 5:3, and Psalm 51:5 solemnly attest. But fallen man still has plainly stamped upon him the natural image of God, evidencing his Divine origin. What that “natural image” consists in we will now consider.

We have called attention to some of the wonders observable in the human body, and if God bestowed such exquisite workmanship upon the casket, what must be the nature of the gem within it! That “gem” is the spirit and soul of man, which was made in the natural image of God—we shall not here distinguish between them, but treat of them together under the generic term “soul.” If the human body bears upon it the impress of the Divine hand, much more so does the soul with its truly remarkable faculties and capabilities. The soul is endowed with understanding, will, moral perception, memory, imagination, affections. Man is comprised and possessed of something more than matter, being essentially a spiritual and rational being, capable of communion with his Maker. There was given unto man a nature nobler than of any other creature on earth. Man is an *intelligent* being, capable of thinking and reasoning, which as much excels the instinct of animals as the finished product of the artist’s brush does the involuntary raising of his hand to protect his face, or the shutting of his eye without thought when wind

blows dust into it. From whence, then, has man derived his intelligence?

The soul is certainly something distinct from the body. Our very consciousness informs us that we possess an understanding, yea, an intelligent entity which, though we cannot see, yet is known by its operations of thinking, reasoning, remembering. But matter possesses no such properties as those, no, not in any combination of its elements. If matter *could* think, then it would still be able to do so after the soul was absent from the body. Again—if matter had the power of thought, then it would be able to think only of those things which are tangible and material, for no cause can ever produce effects superior to itself. Intelligence can no more issue from non-intelligence than the animate from the non-animate. A stone cannot think, nor a log of wood understand a syllogism. But the human soul is not only capable of thinking, it can also commune with itself, rejoice in itself. Nor is its ability to rationalize restricted to itself: it is so constituted that it can apprehend and discourse of things superior to itself. So far from being tied down to the material realm, it can soar into the heavens, cognize the angels, and commune with the Father of spirits.

Consider the vastness of the soul's capacity! What cannot it encompass? It can form a concept of the whole world, and visualize scenes thousands of miles away. As one has pointed out, "it is suited to all objects, as the eye to all colours or the ear to all sounds." How capacious is the memory to retain so much, and such variety! Consider the quickness of the soul's motions: nothing is so swift in the whole course of nature. Thought is far more rapid in its action than the light-waves of ether: in a single moment fancy may visit the Antipodes. With equal facility and agility it can transport itself into the far away past or the distant future. As the desires of the soul are not bounded by material objects, so neither are its motions restrained by them. Consider also its power of volition. The will is the servant of the soul, carrying out its behests, yet it knows not how its commissions are received. Now *matter* has no power of choice, and what it is devoid of it certainly cannot convey. As man's intelligence must

have its source in the supreme Mind, so his power of volition must proceed from the supreme Will.

The nature of man also bears witness to the existence of God in the operations and reflections of his *conscience*. If the external marvels of creation exhibit the wisdom and power of the Creator, this mysterious faculty of the soul as clearly exemplifies His holiness and justice. Whatever be its nature or howsoever we define it, its forceful presence within presents us with a unique phenomenon. This moral sense in man challenges investigation and demands an explanation—an investigation which the Infidel is most reluctant to seriously make, and for which he is quite unable to furnish satisfactory explanation. “Conscience is a court always in session and imperative in its summons. No man can evade it or silence its accusations. It is a complete assize. It has a judge on its bench, and that judge will not be bribed into a lax decision. It has its witness stand, and can bring witnesses from the whole territory of the past life. It has its jury, ready to give a verdict, “guilty” or “not guilty,” in strict accordance with the evidence, and it has its sheriff, Remorse, with his whip of scorpions, ready to lash the convicted soul. The nearest thing in the world to the bar of God is the court of conscience. And though it be for a time drugged into a partial apathy or intoxicated with worldly pleasure, the time comes when in all the majesty of its imperial authority this court calls to its bar every transgressor and holds him to a strict account” (A. T. Pierson).

Conscience is that which conveys to the soul a realization of right and wrong. It is that inward faculty which passes judgment upon the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our desires and deeds. It is an ethical instinct, a faculty of moral sensibility, which both informs and impresses its possessor, being that which, basically, constitutes us responsible creatures. It is an inward faculty which is not only of a vastly superior order, but is far keener in perception than any of the bodily senses: it both sees, hears and feels. Its office is twofold: to warn us against sin and to prompt us unto the performance of duty—and this it does according to the light shining into it—from natural reason and Divine revelation. Though the heathen be without the Bible, yet their

conscience passes judgment on natural duties and unnatural sins. Hence, the more spiritual light a person has, the greater his responsibility, and it is according to that principle and on that basis he will be dealt with at the grand Assize. “That servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:47-48). Punishment will be proportioned to light received and privileges enjoyed.

To this moral sensibility of man as the basis of his accountability, the Apostle refers in Romans 2: “For when the Gentiles [heathen] which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves” (verse 14). The “nature” of anything is the peculiarity of its being, that in virtue of which it is what it is: it is that which belongs to its original constitution, in contradistinction from all that is taught or acquired. This ethical sense is an original part of his being, and is not the product of education—a power of discrimination by which he distinguishes between right and wrong is created in man. The natural light of reason enables the uncivilized to distinguish between virtue and vice. All, save infants and idiots, recognize the eternal difference between good and evil: they instinctively, or rather intuitively, feel this or that course is commendable or censurable. They have a sense of duty: the natural light of reason conveys the same. Even the most benighted and degraded give evidence that they are not without a sense of obligation: however primitive and savage be their mode of life, yet the very fact that they frame some form of law and order for the community, proves beyond any doubt they have a definite notion of justice and rectitude.

The very nature of the heathen, their sense of right and wrong, leads to the performing of moral actions. In confirmation thereof, the Apostle went on to say, “which show the work of the Law written in their heart, their conscience also bearing witness [to the existence of God and their accountability to Him], and their thoughts the meanwhile [or “between themselves,” margin]

accusing or excusing [the conduct of themselves and of] one another” (Rom. 2:15). The “work of the Law” is not to be understood as a power of righteousness operating within them, still less as their actual doing of what the Law requires; but rather the function or design of the Law, which is to direct action. The natural light of reason informs them of the distinction between right and wrong. “Their conscience *also* bearing witness,” that is, in addition to the dictates of reason, for they are by no means the same thing. Knowledge of duty and the actions of conscience are quite distinct: the one reveals what is right, the other approves of it, and condemns the contrary. They have sufficient light to judge between what is honest and dishonest, and their moral sense makes this distinction before commission of sin, in the commission, and afterward—as clearly appears in their acquitting or condemning one another.

Those who have given Romans 2:14 any serious thought must have been puzzled if not stumbled by the statement that those in Heathendom, “do by nature the things contained in the Law,” since they neither love the Lord God with all their hearts nor their neighbours as themselves—the sum of what it requires. The American Revised Version is much to be preferred: “Do by nature the things of the Law,” which describes not the yielding of obedience to the Law, but the performing of its functions. The proper business of the Law is to say, This is right, that is wrong; you will be rewarded for the one, and punished for the other. To command, to forbid, to promise, to threaten—these are “the *things* of the Law,” the “work” of it (verse 15). The Apostle’s assertion is this—an assertion exactly accordant with truth, and directly bearing on his argument:

“The Gentiles who have no written Divine Law, perform by nature from their very constitution, to themselves and each other, the *functions* of such a law. They make a distinction between right and wrong, just as they do between truth and falsehood. They cannot help doing so. They often go wrong by mistaking what is right and what is wrong, as they often go wrong by mistaking what is true and what is false. But they approve themselves and one another when doing what they think right;

they disapprove themselves and one another when they do what they think to be wrong; so that, though they have no written law, they act the part of a law to themselves. This capacity, this necessity of their nature, distinguishes them from brutes, and makes them the subjects of Divine moral government. In this way they show ‘that the work of the law’—the work which the Law *does*—*is* ‘written in their hearts,’ woven in their constitution, by the actings of the power we call *conscience*. It is just, then, that they should be punished for doing what they know to be wrong, or might have known to be wrong” (Professor Brown).

Man is the *only* earthly creature endowed with conscience. The beasts have consciousness and a limited power to acquire knowledge, but that is something very different. Certain animals can be made to obey their masters. With the aid of a stick, even a cow may be taught to refrain from plucking the green leaves over the garden fence, which her mouth craves—the memory of the beatings she has received for disobedience incline her to forgo her inclinations. Much more intelligent is a *domesticated* dog: he can be trained to understand that certain actions will meet with reward, while others will receive punishment. But memory is a very different thing from that ethical monitor within the human breast, which weighs whatever is presented to the mind and passes judgment either for or against all our actions, secretly acquainting the soul with the right and wrong of things. Wherever we go, this sentinel accompanies us: whatever we think or do, it records a verdict. Much of our peace of mind is the fruit of a non-accusing conscience, while not a little of our disquietude is occasioned by the charges of wrong-doing which conscience brings against us.

Conscience is an integral part of that light which “lightens every man which comes into the world.” Forceful testimony is borne to its potency by the rites of the heathen and their self-imposed penances, which are so many attempts to appease the ones they feel they have offended. There is in every man that which reproves him for his sins, yea, for those to which none other is privy, and therefore the wicked flee when no man pursues (Prov. 28:1). At times the stoutest are made to quail. The

most hardened have their seasons of alarm. The spectre of past sins haunts them in the night watches. Boast loudly as they may that they fear nothing, yet “there were they in great fear where no fear was” (Psa. 53:5)—an inward horror where there was no outward occasion for uneasiness. When there is no reason for fright, the wicked are suddenly seized with panic and made to tremble like an aspen leaf, so that they are afraid of their own shadows.

The fearful reality of conscience is plainly manifested by the fact that men who are naturally inclined to evil nevertheless disapprove of that which is evil, and approve of the very good which they practice not. Even though they do not so audibly, the vicious secretly admire the pure, and while some be sunk so low they will scarcely acknowledge it to themselves, nevertheless they wish they could be like the morally upright. The most blameworthy will condemn certain forms of evil in others, thus evincing they distinguish between good and evil. Whence does that arise? By what rule do they measure moral actions, but by an innate principle? But how comes man to possess that principle? It is not an attribute of reason, for at times reason will inform its possessor that a certain course of conduct would result in gain to him, but conscience moves him to act in a way which he knows will issue in temporal loss. Nor is it a product of the will, for conscience often acts in opposition to the will, and no effort of the will can still it. It is a separate faculty which, in various degrees of enlightenment and sensitiveness, is found in civilized and uncivilized.

Now even common sense tells us that someone other than ourselves originated this faculty. No law can be without a lawgiver. From whence, then, this law? Not from man, for he would annihilate it if he could. It must have been imparted by some higher Hand, which Hand alone can maintain it against all the violence of its owner, who, were it not for this restraining monitor, would quickly reduce the world to a charnel house. If, then, we reason rationally, we are forced to argue thus: I find myself naturally obliged to do this and shun that, therefore there must be a Superior who obliges me. If there were no Superior, I

should myself be the sole judge of good and evil, yea, I should be regulated only by expediency and recognize no moral distinctions. Were I the lord of that principle or law which commands me, I should find no conflict within myself between reason and appetite. The indubitable fact is that conscience has an authority for man that cannot be accounted for except by its being the voice of God within him. If conscience were entirely isolated from God, and were independent of Him, it could not make the solemn, and sometimes the terrible impressions it does. No man would be afraid of himself if self were not connected with a higher Being than himself.

As God has not left Himself without witness among the lower creatures (Acts 14:17), neither has He left Himself without witness within man's own breast. There is not a rational member of the human race who has not at some time more or less smarted under the lashings of conscience. The hearts of princes, in the midst of their pleasures, have been stricken with anguish while their favourites were flattering them. Those inward torments are not ignorant frights experienced only by children, which reason throws off later on, for the stronger reason grows, the sharper the stings of conscience, and not the least so in maturity and old age. It often operates when wickedness is most secret. Numerous cases are on record of an overwhelming terror overtaking wrongdoers when their crimes were known to none, and they have condemned themselves and given themselves up to justice. Could that self-accuser originate from man's own self? He who loves himself would, were it possible, destroy that which disturbs him. Certainly conscience has received no authority from its possessor to lash himself, to spoil the pleasures of sin, to make him "like the troubled sea, which cannot rest."

The very fact there is that in man which condemns him for sins committed in secret, argues there is a God, and that he is accountable unto Him. He has an instinctive dread of a Divine Judge who will yet arraign him. "They *know* the judgment of God" (Rom. 1:32) by an inward witness. It is a just provision of the Lord that those who will not reverently fear Him, have a tormenting fear of the future. Why is it that, despite all their

efforts to escape from the conclusion that God is, they dread a retribution beyond death?—often demonstrated by the most callous wretches in their last hours by asking for a chaplain or “priest.” If there be no God, why do men strive to silence conscience and dispel its terrors? And why are their efforts so unavailing? Since they cannot still its accusations, some Higher Power must maintain it within the soul. That the most enlightened nations recognize men have no right to *force* the conscience, is a tacit acknowledgment it is *above* human jurisdiction, answerable only to its Author. Conscience is the vicegerent of God in the soul, and will torment the damned for all eternity.

3. The Existence of God as Seen in Human History

Since God is the Creator of all things, He is their perpetual Preserver and Regulator. And since *man* is the chief of His earthly creatures, it is unthinkable that God has left him entirely to himself. The same all-mighty Being who created every part of it, directs the vast machinery of the universe and controls equally all the hearts and actions of men. But the same unbelief which seeks to banish God from the realm of creation, denies that He has any real place or part in the moral government of the world. The one, it is said, is regulated by the (impersonal) “laws of Nature,” while man, endowed with “free will,” must not be interfered with, but left to work out his own destiny, both individually and collectively considered. We have shown how utterly irrational is such a view as it pertains to the material sphere, and it is no more difficult to demonstrate how thoroughly untenable it is as applied to the moral realm. The palpable facts of observation refute it. The affairs of every individual, the history of each nation, the general course of human events—all bear evidence of a higher Power super-intending the same.

In reading history most people are contented with a bare knowledge of its salient facts, without attempting to trace their causes or ascertain the connection of events. For the most part they look no farther than the motives, designs and tendencies of human nature. They perceive not that there is a *philosophy* of

history. They rise not to the realization that the living God has absolute sway over this scene, that amid all the confusion of human wills and interests, all the malice and wickedness of Satan and his agents, the Lord God omnipotent reigns—not only in Heaven but over this earth—shaping all its affairs, directing all things to the outworking of His eternal purpose. Because the reading of human history is done so superficially, and few have more than a general acquaintance with its character, our present line of argument may not be so patent or so potent to some. Nevertheless, it should be more or less obvious unto any person of ordinary intelligence that in the course of the centuries there are clear marks of an over-ruling and presiding Power above the human.

Since there can be no effect without a previous cause, no law without a law-giver, neither do events come to pass fortuitously. Any thoughtful student of history is obliged to conclude that its records are something more than a series of disconnected and purposeless incidents: rather do they evince the working out of a *plan*. True, its wheels often appear to move slowly, and not infrequently at cross-purposes, nevertheless, the sequel shows they work surely. It is in the *combination* of events leading up to some grand end that the workings of Divine Providence most clearly appear. As we perceive the wisdom of the Creator in so admirably fitting each member of the human body to perform its designed functions, so we may discern the hand of the moral Ruler of this world in the adapting of appropriate means to the accomplishment of His ends, in the suitability of the instruments He has selected thereunto, in making each separate human actor play his part, each individual contribute his quota in producing the desired effect. As in the mechanism of a watch, each pivot is in place, each wheel in motion, so that the main-spring guides its index, so in the complicated machinery of history every single circumstance pays its mite toward the furthering of some grand object.

Proofs of a presiding Providence are to be found in the life of each individual. Where is the man who has not passed through experiences which made him feel in his heart there must be a

God who watches over him? In the unexpected and remarkable turns in the course of his affairs, in the sudden thoughts and unaccountable decisions which lead to most important results, in his narrow escapes from grave danger, he has evidence of a higher power at work. Even the most giddy and thoughtless are, at times, forced to take notice of this. That we *are* under a Moral Government which dispenses rewards and punishments in a natural way is also plain to our sense and proved by personal experience. Vicious actions speedily meet with retribution, by involving their perpetrator in disgrace, by often reducing him to poverty, subjecting him to bodily disease and mental suffering, and bringing about an untimely death. On the other hand, we find that virtuous actions not only result in inward peace and satisfaction, but lead to respect, health and happiness.

If there be no living God presiding over this scene, how can we possibly account for the almost exact ratio between the two sexes? Each year there are born into this world millions of males and of females, and yet the balance between them is perfectly preserved. Their parents had no say in the matter, nor did medical science regulate it! The only rational explanation is that the sex of each child is determined by the Creator. Again—if there be no personal Creator fashioning human countenances, how are we to explain their unvarying variation? The features of the human countenance are but few in number, yet so much does their appearance differ, both singly and in their combination, that out of countless millions no two people look exactly alike! Suppose the opposite. If a likeness were common, what incalculable inconvenience and confusion would ensue. If only 100 men in a single large city had the same build and countenance, impersonation would be practiced without fear of detection, and criminals could not be identified. Such endless dissimilarities among those descended from common parents must have the Almighty for their Author.

That the One from above regulates all human affairs is demonstrated on every side of us, look where we may. In the instances alluded to above, the individual is entirely passive, for it is by no decision of his that he is born male or female, black or

white, a giant or a dwarf. But consider something yet more striking, namely, that even our *voluntary actions* are secretly directed from on high. Each year hundreds of thousands of both young men and women choose their ordinary vocations or careers: what is it which moves them to make a proportionate selection from such a variety of alternatives? Is it nothing but blind chance that each generation is supplied with sufficient physicians and dentists, lawyers and school teachers, mechanics and manual labourers? Many of our youth emigrate: what hinders *all* from doing so? Some prefer a life on the land, others on the sea—why? Take something still more commonplace: today I have written and mailed seven letters—suppose every adult in Great Britain did the same! The complicated machinery of modern life would speedily break down and utter chaos would obtain were not an omniscient and omnipresent Being regulating it.

It may be objected that the machinery of our complex social life does not always run smoothly—that there are strikes and lock-outs which result in much inconvenience, that at times the railroads are blocked with traffic, that hotels are overcrowded, and so on. Granted, yet such occurrences are the exception rather than the rule. But we may draw an argument of Divine Providence from the very commotions and confusions which do obtain in the world. Seeing it does occasionally pass through disturbances, is it not evident that there must be a mighty Power balancing these commotions, yea curbing them, so that they do not speedily issue in the total ruin of the world? The same One who has put the fear of man into wild beasts and a natural instinct for them to avoid human habitations, preferring to resort unto the jungles and deserts, to prowl for their prey in the night, and in the morning return to their caves and dens, sufficiently places His restraining hand upon the baser passions of men as to ensure that degree of law and order which makes life possible amid fallen and depraved creatures. Were that restraining Hand altogether removed, any guarantee of safety and security would be *non est*.

God is no idle Spectator of the affairs of this earth, but is the immediate Regulator of all its events, and that, not only in a

general way, but in all particulars, from the least to the greatest. If, on the one hand, not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Divine will (Matt. 10:29), certain it is that on the other no throne can be overturned without His ordering. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). God is not only “King of saints,” but He is “King of nations” (Jer. 10:7) as well. God reigns as truly over His foes as He does over His friends, and works through Satan and his demons as truly as by His holy angels. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, and He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov. 21:1). God presides over the deliberations of parliaments and influences the decisions of cabinets. Human governments act only as they are moved by a secret power from Heaven. Jehovah rules in the councils of the ungodly equally as in the prayerful counsels of a church assembly. The designs, decisions and actions of all men are directed by Him unto those ends which He has appointed, yet that in nowise annuls their moral agency or lessens their own guilt in sinning.

The government of this world is as much a work of God as was the creation of it, and while there be some things as inscrutable about the one as the other, yet each alike bears unmistakably upon it the Divine impress. There are riddles in each which the wisest cannot solve, but there are also wonders in each before which all should be awed. Broadly speaking, the moral government of God consists of two things: in directing the creatures’ actions, in apportioning rewards and punishments according to the actions of rational creatures. No evil comes to pass without His permission, no good without His concurrence; no good or evil without His over-ruling—ordering it to His own ends. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3), and in His balances everything is weighed. The distributions of Divine mercy and of vengeance are, to some extent, apportioned in this life, but more particularly and fully will they be made manifest in the Day to come. God rules in such a way that His hand should be neither too evident nor too secret, and by adopting this middle course, room is left

for the exercise of faith, while the unbelief of Infidels rendered without excuse.

Nothing happens simply because it must, that is, of inexorable necessity. Fate is blind, but Providence has eyes—all is directed by wisdom and according to design. The history of each nation is the outworking of the Divine plan and purpose concerning it. Yet it is equally true that the history of each nation is determined by its own attitude toward God and His Law. In the experience of each one it is made to appear that “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 34:3). Thus the Word of God and the Providence of God are complementary: the former sheds light on the latter, while the latter illustrates and exemplifies the former. Therefore in His government of this world, God displays His manifold perfections: His wisdom and goodness, His mercy and justice, His faithfulness and patience. The rise, progress and triumphs of each nation, as also its decline, fall and ignominy, are according to both the sovereign will and the perfect righteousness of the Lord. He rules “in the midst of His enemies” (Psa. 110:2), yet His rule is neither capricious nor arbitrary, but a wise and just one. The prosperity of nations generally tends to the increase of vice through affording fuller opportunity to indulge its lusts; and in such cases sore calamities are necessary for the checking of their wickedness, or, when it has come to the full, to destroy them as the Egyptian and Babylonian empires were.

The history of Israel affords the most striking example of what has been pointed out above. So long as they honoured God and walked in obedience to His Law, so long they prospered and flourished—witness their history in the days of Joshua and David. But when they worshipped the idols of the heathen and became unrighteous in their conduct man with man, sore chastisements and heavy judgments were their portion, as in the times of the judges and of the Babylonian captivity. Observe, too, the futile attempts made by the most powerful of their enemies to secure their extirpation: the efforts of Pharaoh, of Haman, of Sennacherib to overthrow the purpose of Jehovah concerning His people resulted only in their own destruction. Note how an exact

retribution—“poetic justice,” worldlings would call it—overtook Jezebel: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth” (1 Kings 21:19), who was murdered at the orders of that wicked queen, *there* was her corpse consumed by dogs (2 Kings 9:36). On the other hand, behold how God blessed those who showed kindness to His people: as Rahab and the whole of her family being delivered when Jericho was destroyed because she had sheltered the two Israeli spies; and the Shunnamite woman supernaturally provided for throughout the sore famine for her befriending of the Prophet Elijah. What incredulity regards as “coincidences” right reason views as wondrous providences.

The book of Esther furnishes a most vivid illustration and demonstration of the invisible yet palpable working of God in human affairs. In it we are shown the Jews brought to the very brink of ruin, and then delivered without any miracle being wrought on their behalf. The very means employed by their enemies for their destruction were, by the secret operations of God, made the means of their deliverance and glory. Writing thereon, Carson rightly said: “The hand of God in His ordinary Providence linked together a course of events as simple and as natural as the mind can conceive, yet as surprising as the boldest fictions of romance.” The series of events opened with the king of Persia giving a banquet. Heated with wine, that monarch gave orders for his royal consort to appear before the assembled revellers. Though such a request was indecorous and distasteful to the queen, yet it is remarkable she dared to disobey her despotic husband. Whether a sense of decency or personal pride actuated her, we know not—but in voluntarily acting according to her own feelings, she ignorantly fulfilled the will of Him whom she knew not. That the king should subject her to a temporary disgrace for her refusal to heed his behest might be expected, but that he should give up forever one whom he so much admired is surprising.

How extraordinary it was that the deposing of Vashti made way for the elevating of a poor Jewess to the rank of queen of the Persian Empire! Was it nothing but a “happy coincidence” that she should be more beautiful than all the virgins of over a 100

provinces? Was it only a piece of “good luck” that the king’s chamberlain was pleased with her from the first moment of her arrival, and that he did all in his power to advance her interests? Was it simply “fortunate” for her that she instantly met with favour when the king set eyes upon her? Was it only by blind chance that the conspiracy of two of the king’s servants was thwarted and that Mordecai and all his people were saved from disaster? Haman was sure of victory, having obtained the king’s decree to execute his bloody designs. Why was it, then, that the king was sleepless one night, and why should he arise and, to pass the time away, scan the court records? Why did his eye happen to alight on the reported discovery of the plot on his own life? Why had Mordecai been the one to uncover the scheme and his name entered into the report? Why was the king now—at this critical juncture in Israel’s affairs—so anxious to ascertain whether Mordecai had been suitably rewarded? Cold logic is not sufficiently credulous to regard these things, and the grand sequel to them all, as so many fortuitous events.

The book of Esther plainly evinces that the most trifling affairs are ordered by the Lord to subserve His own glory and effect the good of His own people. Though He works behind the scenes, He works none the less. He does indeed govern the inanimate world by general laws of His own appointing, yet He *directs* their operations-or suspends them when He pleases—so as to accomplish what He has decreed. He has also established general moral laws in the government of mankind, yet He is not tied by them: sometimes He uses means, at others He uses none. As the sun and rain minister to the nourishment and comfort of the righteous and wicked alike, not from the necessity of general laws but from the immediate Providence of Him who has ordained all things, so the free determinations of men are so controlled from on high that they effect the eternal designs of God. So, too, the Book of Esther reveals that it is in the *combination* of incidents the working of Providence most plainly appears. There is a wonderful series of linking events which lead to the accomplishment of God’s glorious purpose: the actions of each person are links in the chain to bring about some appointed

result—if one link were removed the whole chain would be broken. All lines converge on and meet in one centre: all things concur to bring about the decreed event.

If the record of any Gentile nation were fully chronicled, and had we sufficient discernment and perspicuity, we should perceive as definite a connection between one event—which now appears to us isolated—and another, and the hand of God controlling *them* as in the history of Israel. But even a fragmentary knowledge of general history should be sufficient to reveal to any man the directing hand of God in it and the testimony it bears to the truth of the Bible. It abounds in illustrations that, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Eccl. 9:11). The most numerous and powerful armies are no guaranty of success, as has frequently been demonstrated. Providence disposes the event: without any miraculous interference the best trained and equipped forces have been defeated by much weaker ones. The discovery of America by Columbus, in time for that land to afford an asylum for persecuted Protestants, the invention of printing just before the Reformation, the destruction of the “Invincible Armada” of Spain, are more than “coincidences.” Why has England always had a man of outstanding proportions—genius, valour, dynamism, dogged determination—at each critical juncture of her history? Cromwell, Drake, Nelson, Wellington, Churchill—all were the special gifts of God to a people under His peculiar favour.

A real, if mysterious, Providence is obviously at work, controlling the gradual growth of each empire and of the combination of nations: as in the federation of the ten kings of Revelation 17:16, 17—the Divine plan is brought to fruition by those whose intention it is to accomplish their *own* purpose. “For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil *His* will,” though that in nowise lessens their sin: none but the hand of the Almighty can bring good out of evil and make the wrath of His enemies to praise Him. The more their chronicles be studied, the stronger should be our conviction that only the action and interposition of God can account for many of the outstanding events in human

history. The rise and careers of individual tyrants also illustrates the same principle. How often have the workings of Providence verified the Word that “the triumphing of the wicked is *short*” (Job 20:5). At longest it is but brief because limited by the span of this life, whereas their sufferings will be eternal. But often God blows upon the plans of ambitious oppressors, crosses their imperious wills, and brings them to a speedy ruin in this world: He did so with Napoleon, the Kaiser, Mussolini and Hitler! He raised them on high that He might cast them down by a more terrible fall.

We have called attention to the revelation which God has made of Himself in *human history*, that is, to the cumulative evidence which the affairs of individuals and of nations furnish that a Divine Person has full control over those affairs, and orders and directs them all unto the accomplishment of His own eternal purpose. The Ruler of this world makes use of the opinions and motives, the resolves and actions of men, yea, overruling their very crimes to further His design and promote His own glory. Every occurrence upon the stage of human events is not only to be traced back to the Divine counsels, but should be viewed as the outworking of a part of His vast plan. We should behold God in all the intrigues of courts and governments, in all the caprices of monarchs, in all the changes of kingdoms and empires; yea, in all the persecutions of the righteous, as really and as truly as in the progress of the Gospel: though in the former it is more the secret workings of His justice, as it is the more open manifestations of His grace in the latter. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov. 16:33) whether or not we perceive it.

The One who rules the planets is equally master of every human despot. We supplied proof of that in connection with Ahasuerus. Consider now another example. As a judgment upon their long-continued sinfulness, God delivered the Jews into the hands of an invading power, and suffered the flower of their nation to be carried captive into Babylon. Yet His judgment was tempered with mercy, for He assured His covenant, though wayward people, that after 70 years they should return to

Palestine. That promise was definite and sure: but how was it to receive its fulfilment? They were utterly incapable of delivering *themselves* from the midst of the mightiest empire on earth, and there was no friendly and powerful nation demanding their emancipation. How, then, was the Lord's Word to be made good? God had indeed delivered their forefathers from Egypt by a series of great marvels, but from Babylon He freed them without a single miracle. The manner in which He did so supplies a striking example of His providential workings and an illustrious illustration of *how* He shapes the history of nations.

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:1-4).

This is the famous Cyrus whose name occupies a prominent place upon the scroll of secular history. He was the ordained conqueror of Babylon, and when the empire of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius fell before his sword, instead of keeping the Jews in bondage, he decreed their liberation. But why should he do so? Was he a worshipper of Jehovah and a lover of His people? Far from it: he was a heathen idolater! The prophecy of Jeremiah had evidently been read by him, though it effected not his conversion, for he continued a devotee of his own gods. But God so impressed his mind by that prophecy, and secretly wrought in him a desire and determination to free the Jews that he made an authoritative proclamation to that effect. God gave His people

favour in the eyes of the Persian king, and wrought in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure; yet in the forming and carrying out of his decision, Cyrus acted quite freely. Thus with the greatest of ease God can effect His own purpose, and without the use of force remove any obstacle standing in the way.

If (as so many students of prophecy believe) God has predestined that the Jews shall, after centuries of weary wandering among the Gentiles, once more occupy the land of Palestine, and if His time be now ripe for the fulfilment of that decree, then neither the Arabs nor anyone else can prevent their doing so. Whatever method or means God uses will in no wise alter the fact that there will be spread before the eyes of the world a demonstration that One immeasurably superior to man is ordering its affairs. Time will show: but up to now it looks as though God is repeating what He did in and through Cyrus. First, He moved the British Government to take over the mandatory control of Palestine, which has been administered for a quarter of a century at great inconvenience and at heavy cost of life and money, without a “thank you” from anyone. Now He has “stirred up the spirit” of the U.S. Government to insist on the entry of more and more Jews into that land. God has “His way in the whirlwind” (Nahum 1:3).

Let us now carefully consider the objection of the sceptic. If an infinitely wise and benevolent Being be in full control of all the affairs of earth, then why is there so much evil, so much suffering and sorrow? Justice is a rare commodity between individuals or nations—the ruthless and powerful seize the prey, while the conscientious and honest are despoiled. Mercy appears to be mainly a consideration of prudence, for who acts generously or leniently when another is thwarting his own interests?—witness, for example, the toll of the road. If a God of love presides over the scene, then why has He permitted the horrible holocaust of the past few years, with such widespread havoc and misery? The first answer is, Because the earth is inhabited by a *rebellious race*, which has revolted from its Maker, and is now being made to feel that “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). Since man himself was the one who deliberately dashed into pieces the

cup of felicity which was originally placed in his hands, he has no legitimate ground for complaint if he now finds that the potion which he has brewed for himself is as bitter as gall and wormwood.

The Infidel may reject with scorn the contents of the first three chapters of Genesis, but in so doing he casts away the only key which unlocks to us the *meaning* of human history, the only explanation which *rationally* accounts for the course of human affairs. If it be true that man was made by a holy and gracious God and was under moral obligations to serve and glorify Him, and if instead of so doing he cast off allegiance to Him and apostatized, what would we expect the consequences to be? Why, that man should be made to feel His displeasure and reap what he had sown. If this world lies under the righteous curse of its Creator because of man's sin and its Ruler be displaying His justice in punishing offenders and vindicating His broken Law, in what other ink than that of blood and tears may we expect human history to be written?! Does the alternative hypothesis of evolution offer a more satisfactory solution? Very far from it. If man started at the bottom of the ladder and during the course of the ages has gradually ascended, if the human race be slowly but surely improving, how comes it that this twentieth century has witnessed such an unprecedented display of savagery and degradation?!

If an omniscient and beneficent God be governing this world, why is there so much wickedness and wretchedness in it? We answer, in the second place, to demonstrate *the truth of His own Word* The accounts which that Word gives of the corruptions of human nature have been widely refused, as being too gloomy a diagnosis of the same. The descriptions furnished by Scripture of man's depravity have been haughtily despised by the wise of this world. Nevertheless, the annals of human history furnish abundant verification of the same. It may not be palatable to read, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5), that "man is born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12), that "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking

lies” (Psa. 58:3)—yet universal observation discovers clear proof of the verity of the same. Children do not have to be taught to be intractable, to lie and steal. Remove restraints, leave them to themselves, and it quickly appears what is born and bred in them. The widespread juvenile delinquency of our own day is very far from exemplifying any *progress* of the human race!

It certainly is not flattering to proud human nature to be told in the unerring Word of Truth, that, as the result of the Fall, man’s heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), yet every newspaper we open contains illustrations of the teaching of Christ that, “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from *within*, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). Thousands of years ago God described mankind thus: “Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:13-17). And why is this? The closing words of the same passage tell us: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (verse 18). Who that has any acquaintance with the chronicles of history can deny that indictment? Who with the present state of society before his eyes can deny it? The very Word of God which men will not receive by faith is being verified in their very sight!

Why does God permit so much human misery? We answer, in the third place, to manifest the glory of *His own perfections*. The frightful calamity of war causes many to deny or seriously doubt the reality of Divine Providence, for when that fearful scourge falls upon the nations, it appears to them that Satan, rather than the Lord, has charge of things and is the author of their troubles. At such a time God’s own people may find it difficult to stay their minds on Him and rest implicitly in His wisdom and goodness. Yet the Word reveals that God is no mere distant Spectator of the bloody conflicts of men, but that His righteous and retributive agency is immediately involved therein, though

that neither mitigates the guilt of the human instigators nor destroys their free agency. Their consuming egotism, insatiable greed, horrible barbarities—proceed entirely from themselves and are of their own volition; nevertheless, the Most High *directs* their lusts to the execution of His own designs and renders them subservient to His own honour.

The affairs of nations are ordered by a Divine hand. Their rise, development and progress are “of the Lord,” so also are their decline, adversities and destruction. God’s dealing with Israel of old was not exceptional, but illustrative of His ways with the Gentiles throughout the last 19 centuries. While Israel’s ways pleased the Lord, He made their enemies to be at peace with them; but when they gave themselves up to idolatry and lasciviousness, war was one of His sore scourges upon them. Whenever Divine judgment falls upon either an individual or a nation, it is because sin has called loudly for Him to vindicate His honour and enforce the penalty of His Law. Yet warning is always given before He strikes: “space to repent” is provided, the call to forsake that which displeases Him, opportunity to avert His wrath—and if this warning be disregarded and the opportunity to escape His vengeance be not improved—then is His judgment doubly righteous. Ordinarily God makes use of *men*—a Nebuchadnezzar, a Caesar, a Hitler—as the instruments by which His judgment is inflicted, thereby demonstrating His sovereignty over all, who can do nothing without Him, yet who must play the part which He has ordained.

In various ways does the Ruler of this world manifest the glory of His attributes. By the display of His infinite patience in bearing with so much longsuffering those who defy Him to His face and continue in their obduracy. By exhibiting the exceeding riches of His mercy in sometimes calling the most outrageous rebels out of darkness into His marvellous light, bringing them to repentance and granting them pardon: thus it was with King Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus. By manifesting the strictness of His untempered justice in hardening others in sin to their own destruction. “Behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if

thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt also be cut off” (Rom. 11:22). By showing forth His wondrous power, both in directing and curbing human passions. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee [as that of Pharaoh’s was made to do]: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain” (Psa. 76:10), for He holds in check the fiercest as much as He sets bounds to the turbulent seas.

The depravity of human nature, the potency and prevalency of evil, and the power and malice of the Wicked One in whom the whole world lies, only makes more evident and wonderful the Providence of God. Since holiness be so universally hated and the saints of the Lord so detested and persecuted by the great majority of their fellow men, had not God so signally interposed for their preservation, the last of His people had long since perished amid the enmity and fury of their implacable enemies. Were there no other evidence that the living God governs this world, this one should suffice: that though His servants and sons have been so strenuously opposed in this scene, yet they have never been totally rooted out of it; that though the most powerful governments have sought their complete destruction, and though they were weak and possessed of no material weapons, yet a remnant always survived!—as real a marvel that is as the preservation of the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace of Babylon.

What has just been pointed out has not received the attention which it justly claims, for it is a conspicuous feature of history and one that has been frequently repeated. The saints of God in Old Testament times, in the early centuries of this Christian era, and throughout the Dark Ages, when both pagan and papal Rome made the most determined efforts to completely annihilate them, had good reason to confess, “If it had not been *the LORD* who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth” (Psa. 124:2-6). It is quite possible, perhaps likely, that before this

present century has run its course, the restraining hand of God will again be wholly removed from their foes and His people subjected to martyrdom. Should such prove the case, He will, unto the end, maintain to Himself a witness in the earth.

Why is there so much suffering and sorrow in this world? Fourth, for *the good and gain* of God's own people. As there is not a little in the realm of creation which sorely puzzles both the naturalist and the scientist—as there is much in God's written Word that is opposed to proud reason—so many of His governmental works often appear profoundly mysterious. That the wicked should prosper so much and flourish as the green bay tree, while the righteous are often in sore straits and at their wit's end to make ends meet; that the most unscrupulous attain unto positions of prestige and power, while the most virtuous and pious have been counted as “the off scouring of all things,” and ended their days in a dungeon or by suffering a cruel martyrdom; that when God's judgments fall upon a nation they are no respecter of persons, the relatively innocent suffering from them as severely as the most guilty—these and similar cases which might be instanced present real problems to those who reflect upon the same.

True, but the more thoughtfully they be examined, especially in view of *the hereafter*, the less difficulty they present. The thoughts of the materialist and sceptic extend no farther than the narrow bounds of this life, and consequently he sees these things in a false perspective. Because of their misuse of them, the temporal mercies enjoyed by the wicked become a curse, hardening them in their sins and fattening them for the slaughter. On the other hand, afflictions often prove a blessing in disguise unto believers, weaning their affections from the things of earth and causing them to seek their joy in things above. God often thwarts their carnal plans because He would have their hearts occupied with better objects. The more they are dissatisfied in the creature and discover that everything under the sun yields only vanity and vexation of spirit, the more inducement have they to cultivate a closer communion with the One who can fully satisfy their souls.

It is not meet that the righteous should always be in a prosperous and happy case in their temporal estate, for then they would be most apt to seek their rest therein. On the other hand, if their portion were that of unrelieved affliction and misery, while the lot of the wicked was uniformly one of plenty and ease, that would be *too severe* a trial of faith. Therefore God wisely *mixes* His dispensations with each class respectively. God so orders His Providences that His people shall live by faith and not by sight or sense. That is not only for their happiness, but for God's honour. He frequently regulates things so that it may appear that the saints trust Him in the dark as well as in the light. An outstanding example of that is seen in the case of Job, who was afflicted as few have ever been. Yet in his blackest hour he averred, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (13:15). How greatly is He glorified by such conduct! Tribulations are needful for the testing of profession, that the difference between the wheat and the chaff may appear. Heresies are necessary that lovers of Truth may be made manifest (1 Cor. 11:19). Trials are indispensable, that patience may have her perfect work.

If in every instance the righteous were rewarded and the wicked punished in this life, the Day of Judgment would be fully anticipated: but by furnishing some present instances of both the one and the other, the great Assize is presaged and the government of God vindicated. If temporal mercies and spiritual blessings were now evenly distributed, no demonstration would be made of the absolute sovereignty of Him who dispenses His favours as He pleases, and bestows upon or withholds from each individual that which seems good unto Himself. There are not more inequalities in the dispensations of Providence than in the realm of creation. In its widest aspect there is a noticeable and striking *balance* observable in the apportionment of mercies. As in Old Testament times Divine favours were largely confined to the seed of Abraham, so in the New Testament era unto the Gentiles. Something analogous thereto is seen in God's conduct toward the eastern and western parts of the earth. For 2,000 years after the Flood, learning, government and piety were largely confined to the east, while our forefathers in the west were a

horde of savages. For the last 2,000 years the Gospel, with all its beneficent by-products, has travelled westward. Perhaps in the next 2,000 years it will again move eastward.

The living God controls all circumstances, commands all events, rules every creature, makes all their energies and actions fulfil His will, provides a sure and comfortable resting place for the heart. The present outlook may be dismal, but God reigns and is making all things work together for the glory of His name and the good of His people. If the human race is to occupy this earth for several more generations, or perhaps many centuries, then certain it is that out of the throes through which it is now passing shall issue the furtherance of the Gospel and the promotion of Christ's kingdom. The annals of human affairs can only be read intelligently and interpreted aright as we perceive that history is *His-story*. In the final Day of Manifestation it will be plain to all that, "He hath done all things well;" meanwhile, faith now *knows* that it is so.

4. The Existence of God as Unveiled in the Lord Jesus Christ

In the dispensations of His Providence, the revelation which God has made of Himself unto mankind has been a progressive one. First, He is manifested in the realm of creation, and that with sufficient clearness as to leave all without excuse if they perceive not that He is. Second, God is revealed in man himself, so that his very constitution evinces his Divine origin and his conscience bears witness of his accountability to his Maker. Third, God is plainly to be seen in human history: most patently in His dealings with the Jews during the past 35 centuries; yet with sufficient clearness everywhere as to attest that He is the moral Governor of this world, the Regulator of human affairs. But over and above these—O wonder of wonders—God has become *incarnate*. In the Person of His blessed and co-equal Son, God deigned to clothe Himself in our flesh and blood and manifest Himself unto the sons of men. For the space of 33 years He appeared among men and displayed His glory before their eyes; yea, gave proof of His matchless mercy by performing a work, at infinite cost to

Himself, which has made it possible for Him to righteously save the very chief of sinners.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). It is by means of *words* that we make known our wills, reveal the calibre of our minds and the character of our hearts, and communicate information unto others. Appropriately, then, is Christ designated, “The Word of God,” for He has made the Transcendent immanent, the incomprehensible God intelligible to us. Thus, too, is He denominated “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) and the “Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 1:8)—the One who spells out the Deity unto us. “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared” or “told Him forth” (John 1:18). In Christ’s life of impeccable purity, we behold God’s holiness; in His utter selflessness, God’s benevolence; in His peerless teaching, God’s wisdom; in His unrivalled miracles, God’s power; in His gentleness and longsuffering, God’s patience; in His love and grace, the outshining of God’s glory.

The record of Christ’s unprecedented life is found in the four Gospels. Those Gospels were written by men who were constantly in Christ’s company during the days of His ministry, being an ungarnished record of what they personally saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. Numerous copies of those Gospels have been in known existence since the first century of this Christian era. Only three explanations of them are feasible. First, that they were written by deluded fanatics. But the character of their contents, the calmness of their tenor, the absence of anything savouring of enthusiasm, cause anyone capable of weighing evidence to promptly reject such an hypothesis. The dreams of visionaries had never received such widespread credence. Second, that they were the inventions of deceitful men. But that could not be, otherwise their contemporaries had exposed them as impostors. Wicked men could not have devised the Sermon on the Mount. Third, that they were written by honest men, who chronicled actual facts.

The Person of the Lord Jesus presents a baffling problem, yea,

an insoluble enigma unto infidelity. Scepticism is quite unable to supply any rational explanation of the phenomenon which He presents. Yet, “what think ye of Christ?” is a question which cannot be avoided or evaded by anyone who professes to use his reasoning powers or lays any claim to being an educated person. The obvious fact confronts believer and unbeliever alike that the appearing of Jesus Christ on the stage of this world has exerted a more powerful, lasting, and extensive influence than has any other person, factor, or event that can be named. To say that Christ has revolutionized human history is only to affirm what His bitterest foes are compelled to acknowledge. He dwelt in no palace, led no army, overthrew no mundane empire, yet His fame has spread to the ends of the earth. He wrote no book, framed no philosophy, erected no temple—yet He occupies a place in literature and religion which none else has ever achieved. How is this to be explained? Unbelief can furnish no answer! Nor can it refute, for the historicity of Christ is established far more conclusively than that of Socrates and Plato.

Viewed simply from the human plane the Lord Jesus presents a phenomenon which admits of no human explanation. The law of heredity cannot account for Him, for He transcends all merely racial characteristics. Though according to the flesh He was the Son of Abraham, yet He is bounded by no Jewish limitations. Instead, He is the Man of men, the Pattern Man. The Englishman and the Dutchman, with their vastly different racial temperaments, the stolid German and the warm Italian behold their Ideal in Christ: He rises above all national restrictions. The law of environment cannot explain Him, for He was born in poverty, lived in a small town, received no collegiate training, toiled at the carpenter’s bench. Such an environment was not conducive to the development of thought and teaching which was to enlighten the whole world. Christ transcends all laws. There is nothing provincial about Him. “The Son of man” is His fitting title, for He is the Representative Man.

Christ was not tintured or affected by the age in which He lived. And that can be said of no one else. Study the characters and teaching of any of the outstanding figures of history, and we

are at once aware that they were coloured by their own generation. By common consent we make certain allowances for those who lived in former times, and agree that it would not be just to measure them by present-day ideals. Men of the most sterling worth were, in measure, marred by the crudities, coarseness, or superstitions of their contemporaries. But the Lord Jesus is the grand Exception. You may test Him by the light of this twentieth century—if light it be—or you may judge Him by any century, and no lack or blemish is to be found in Him. His teaching was pure Truth without any mixture of error, and therefore it stands the test of all time. His teaching was neither affected by the prevailing traditions of Judaism, by that of Grecian philosophy, nor by any other influence then abroad. The timeless value of Christ's teaching is without parallel. That of Socrates and Plato has long since become obsolete, but Christ's is as pertinent and potent now as the day He uttered it.

There is no part of Christ's teaching which the subsequent growth of human knowledge has had to discredit. Therein it is in marked contrast with that of all other men, whose dicta have to be constantly revised and brought up to date. There is a universal quality to His teaching which is found in none other's—an originality, a loftiness, an adaptability. There is nothing petty, local, or transient about it. It is of general application, suited to all generations and to all peoples. It possesses a vital and vitalizing freshness without a parallel. It is profound enough for the mightiest intellect, practical enough for the artisan, simple enough for the little child. It is profitable for youth, for maturity, and old age alike. It furnishes that which is needed by those in prosperity, brings comfort to those in adversity, and has imparted a peace which passes all understanding to thousands who lay upon beds of suffering, and while they passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Those are *facts* attested by a multitude of witnesses whose testimony cannot be fairly impeached.

Unto Christ the master minds of the ages have paid homage. Such mighty intellects as Lord Bacon and Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday and Lord Kelvin, Milton and Handel; Calvin and John Locke, and a host of others who towered above their fellows in

mental acumen and genius, bowed before Him in adoring worship. Not that Christianity is in any need of human patronage to authenticate it, but that it may be evinced to the thoughtful ones of this rising generation that Christians are far from being a company of credulous simpletons. Christianity is not something suited only to little children or old ladies in their dotage. When the young men of this age behold such hard-headed men as General Dobbie, the valiant defender of Malta, and Field Marshal Montgomery, the Commander-in-chief of the British Army, unashamedly acknowledging Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, they have before them that which clearly challenges them to seriously consider the claims of Christ and carefully examine His teachings— instead of contemptuously ignoring the same as something unworthy of their best attention.

Napoleon Bonaparte, the military genius of a century ago, declared, “Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself have founded empires, but upon *what* did those creations of our genius depend? Upon *force*. Jesus Christ alone established His Empire upon *love*, and to this very day millions would die for Him. I think I understand something of human nature, and I tell you, those were men and I am a man; Jesus Christ is more than a man. I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me . . .but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present, with the electric influence of my looks, of my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts. Christ alone has succeeded in raising the mind of men toward the Unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of 1,800 years Jesus Christ makes a demand which is, beyond all others, difficult to satisfy.”

“He asks for the human *heart*. He will have it entirely for and to Himself. He demands it unconditionally, and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, is annexed to the empire of Christ. All who simply believe in Him experience that remarkable, supernatural love towards Him. This phenomenon is unaccountable: it is altogether beyond the scope of man’s

creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time cannot exhaust its strength, nor put a limit to its reign. This it is which strikes me most. I have often thought of it. This it is which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ.” Paul Richter said of Christ: “The holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, who with His pierced hands has lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.”

Alexander, Napoleon, Lincoln, are dead, and we refer to them in the *past* tense. But not so with Christ. We do not think or speak of Him as One who *was*, but as One who *is*. The Lord Jesus is far more than a memory. He is the great “I am:” the same yesterday and today and forever. He is more real to mankind, His influence still more prevalent, His followers more numerous in this twentieth century than they were in the first. On what principle, scientifically, can we rationally account for the dynamical influence of the Lord Jesus today? That One now at a distance of almost two millenniums is still moulding human thought, attracting human hearts, transforming human lives, with such mighty sway that He stands forth from all other teachers as the sun makes the stars recede into dimness and pale before the lustre of His refulgence. As a strictly scientific question, the mystery of Christ’s influence demands an adequate solution. It requires neither science nor philosophy to *deny*, but it does to *explain*. The only satisfactory explanation is that Christ is God, omnipotent and omnipresent.

We call attention now to what has well been termed “The Logic of the Changed Calendar:” what follows is an enlargement of some notes we made nearly forty years ago from a book entitled *The Unrealized Logic of Religion*. Few people stop to inquire for an explanation of one of the most amazing facts which is presented to the notice of everybody, namely, the fact that all civilized time is dated from the birth of Jesus Christ. This is the twentieth century, and from what event are those centuries dated? From the birth of a Jew, who, according to the view of Infidels, if He ever existed, was a peasant in an obscure province, who was

the author of no wonderful invention, who occupied no throne, who died when, as men count years, He had scarcely reached his prime, and who died the death of a criminal. Now if the Lord Jesus Christ were nothing more than what sceptics will allow, then is it not utterly unthinkable that the chronology of the civilized world should be reckoned from *His* birth? The effect must correspond to the cause, and there is no agreement between such a phenomenon and such an inadequate producer.

To have some common measure of time is, of course, a necessity of organized society, but where shall we find an adequate starting point for the calendar?—i.e., one which will be acceptable to all civilized nations! A world-shattering victory, the founding of some many-centuried city, the birth of a dynasty, the beginning of a revolution: some such event, it might reasonably be expected, would give time a new starting point. But no conqueror's sword has ever cut deep enough on Time to leave an enduring mark. The Julian era, the Alexandria era, the era of the Sileucidae—all had their brief day and have vanished. There is for civilized men but one suitable, enduring and universally recognized starting point for civilized time, and that is *the manger at Bethlehem!* And how is that strange yet startling fact to be explained? It was imposed neither by the authority of a conqueror, the device of priests, the enactment of a despot, nor even by Constantine; but by slow and gradual consent.

The name of Jesus Christ did not emerge in the calendar till five centuries after His death—a space of time long enough for Him to be forgotten had He been an impostor. It took another 500 years to become universally accepted; and the process is linked to no human name. Here, then, is a phenomenon that scepticism cannot explain: that without any conspiracy of Christian fanatics Jesus Christ has altered the almanacs of the world. The one event which towers above the horizon of history serves as a landmark to measure time for all civilized races. The Lord of time has indelibly written His signature across time itself; the years of the modern world being labelled by common consent the years *of our Lord!* Every letter you receive (though penned by an atheist), every newspaper carrying the date of its issue (though published

by Communists), bears testimony to the historicity of Christ! The One who entered this world to shape its history to a new pattern changed its calendar from A.M. to A.D.

All that had transpired previously in human history counted for nothing. The name of the most famous of the world's generals or of its most powerful monarchs was not deemed worthy to be imprinted upon all succeeding centuries. By a deep, unanimous, inarticulate and yet irresistible instinct, each nation has recognized and recorded on its almanacs the true starting point of its life. Several attempts have been made to establish another point of departure for recorded time. Islam has made a faint but broken mark upon the centuries, relating time to the sword; but the Moslem almanac is confined to but a cluster of half-civilized races. La Place, the astronomer, proposed to give stability and dignity to human chronology by linking it to the stars, but the world approved not. France sought to popularize its Revolution, and count 1793 as year one, but her calendar lasted but 13 years. The centuries belong to Christ and pay homage to Him by bearing *His* name!

Men and women of all ages, who are at present being tossed to and fro upon a sea of doubt, there is no reason why you should remain there. It will be your own fault if you fail to secure firm ground to stand upon. You may imagine Christians make an idle boast when they affirm "*we know*," and declare, "That is exactly what you *do not*: you suppose, you hope, you believe. The dream may be alluring, the hope pleasing, but you cannot be sure." If so, you err. The children of God have infallible proof, and if you follow the right course, assurance will be yours too. The value and Divinity of Christ's teaching may be personally *verified* by yourself. How? "If any man will do His will," said Christ, "he shall *know* of the doctrine" (John 7:17). If you will read the record of it in the Gospels, submit to Christ's authority, conform to His requirements, regulate your life by His precepts, then you shall obtain a settled conviction that He "spake as never man spake," that His are the words of Truth.

Nay, further. If you be an honest inquirer, prepared to follow the Truth wherever it leads—and it will be out of the mists of

scepticism and away from the fogs of uncertainty—you may obtain definite and conclusive proof that Christ *is* and that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. His invitation is, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink” (John 7:37), and upon compliance, He promises to satisfy that thirst. Test *Him for yourself*. If the empty cisterns of this world—their poor pleasures or their intellectual speculations—have failed to satisfy your soul, Christ can. He declares, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). If you have toiled in vain for peace and your conscience be burdened with a sense of guilt, then cast yourself on the mercy of Christ right now, and you shall find “rest unto your soul”—such as this world can neither give nor take away. Then you, too, will know the reality and certainty of His so great salvation. Put Him to the test!

The second of eight booklets.

Booklet Two Contents

Part One

- 2. The Existence of God as Revealed in Man**
- 3. The Existence of God as Seen in Human History**
- 4. The Existence of God as Unveiled
in the Lord Jesus Christ**

