

The Great Change

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“Search the Scriptures” (John v, 39), “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Cor. ii, 13). *That* is what we sought to heed in the preceding articles. Therein twenty-five different passages were collated — all of which we are persuaded treat of some aspect or other of “the miracle of grace” or the great change — and in varying measure engaged our attention. It will be observed that in some of them it is the illumination of the understanding which is in view (Acts xxvi, 18), in others the searching and convicting of the conscience (Rom. vii, 9), and in others the renovation of the heart (Ezek. xxxvi, 26). In some it is the subduing of the will (Psa. ex, 3) which is emphasized, in others casting down reasonings and bringing our thoughts into subjection (II Cor. x, 5), and in others the writing of God’s laws in our minds and hearts. In some the miracle of grace appears to be a completed thing (I Cor. vi, 11), in others the great change is seen as a gradual process (II Cor. iii, 18; Phil, i, 6). In one something is removed from its subject (Deut. xxx, 6), while in another something is communicated (Rom. v, 5). In different passages the figures of creation (Eph. ii, 10), of renewing (Titus iii, 5), and of resurrection (I John iii, 14) are employed.

If it be asked, Why has it pleased the Holy Spirit to describe His work so diversely and use such a variety of terms and figures? several answers may be suggested. First, because the work itself, though one, is so many-sided. Its subject is a complex creature and the process of salvation radically affects every part of his composite being. Just as sin has marred each part of our constitution and has corrupted every faculty the Creator gave us, so grace renews and transforms every part of our constitution and purifies every faculty we possess. When the apostle prayed, “The very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*, and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. v, 23), he was asking that God would graciously preserve and perfect that which He had already wrought in His people, and the terms he there used intimated the comprehensiveness and entirety of the grand miracle of grace. This is a gem possessing many facets and our estimate of it is certain to be most faulty if we confine our view to only one of them.

Second, because God would thereby warn us from supposing that He acts according to a stereotyped plan or method in His saving of sinners. Variety rather than uniformity marks all the ways and workings of God, in creation, providence, and grace. No two seasons are alike — no field or tree yields the same crop in any two years. Every book in the Bible is equally the inspired Word of God, yet how different in character and content is Leviticus from the Psalms, Ruth from Ezekiel, Romans from the Revelation! How varied the manner in which the Lord Jesus gave sight to different ones who were blind: different in the means used and the effect produced — one, at first, only seeing men as though they were trees walking (Mark viii, 24)! How differently He dealt with religious Nicodemus in John iii and the adulterous woman of John iv, pressing on the one his imperative need of being born again, convicting the other of her sins and telling her of “the gift of God”! The great God is not confined to any rule and we must not restrict His operations in our thoughts: if we do, we are certain to err.

Third, because God would thereby teach us that, though the work of grace be essentially and substantially the same in all its favoured subjects, yet in no two of them does it appear identical in all its circumstantialia — neither in its operations nor manifestations. Not only does endless variety mark all the ways and workings of God, but it does so equally in His *workmanship*. This is generally recognized and acknowledged in connection with the material world, where no two blades of grass or two grains of sand are alike. But in the spiritual realm it is very far from being perceived and owned: rather is it commonly supposed that all truly regenerate persons conform strictly unto one particular pattern, and those who differ from it are at once suspected of being counterfeits. This should not be. The twelve foundations of the new and holy Jerusalem, in which are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, are all composed of “precious” stones, but how diverse is each! The first jasper, the second sapphire, the third a chalcedony, the fourth emerald, etc. (Rev. xxi) — different in colour, size and brilliancy. Each Christian has his own measure of faith and grace “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. iv, 7).

Fourth, because God would thereby make it easier for His children to recognize themselves in the mirror of the Word. Possessed of honest hearts and fearful of being deceived, some find it no simple matter to be thoroughly convinced that they have truly experienced the great change. So far from sneering at their trepidation, we admire their caution: where the eternal interests of the soul are concerned only a fool will give himself the benefit of the doubt. But if a miracle of grace has been wrought in the reader, there is no good reason why he should long be in uncertainty about it. As in water face answers to face, so the character of the renewed soul corresponds to the description of such furnished by the Word of Truth. That description, as we have seen, is given with considerable variety, sometimes one feature or aspect being made prominent, sometimes another. It is like a photographer taking a number of different pictures of the same person: one with his countenance in repose, another with him smiling; one a full-face view, another of his profile. One may appear to do him “more justice” than another or be more easily “recognized,” yet all are likenesses of himself.

Let then the exercised reader impartially scrutinize himself in the mirror of the Word and see if he can discern in himself some of the marks of the regenerate, as those marks are there delineated. Observe well we say “some of” those marks, and not all of them. Though you may not be sure that Ezekiel xxxvi, 26, has taken place in you, perhaps you know something of what is recorded in Acts xvi, 14, and Romans v, 5. Because your first conscious “experience” was not like that of Romans vii, 9, perhaps it closely resembled that of Zaccheus, who came down from the tree and “received Him *joyfully*” (Luke xix, 6). Commenting on the quickness of his conversion, Whitefield aptly said to those who queried whether any were genuine Christians who had not undergone some “terrible experience “of conviction or terror of the wrath to come,” You may as well say to your neighbour you have not had a child, for you were not in labour all night. The question is, whether a real child is born, not how long was the preceding pain”!

There is nothing in the sacred record to show that either Lydia or Zaccheus felt anything of the terrors of the Law before their conversion, yet from what is said of them in the sequel we cannot doubt the reality of their conversion. Though you may not be sure whether God has put His laws into your mind and written them on your heart, yet you should have no difficulty in perceiving whether or no you “love the brethren” as such, and if you *do*, then you may be fully assured on the Word of Him that cannot lie, you have “passed from death unto life.” The fact that you are afraid to aver that God has renewed you after His image and created you “in righteousness and true holiness” does not of itself warrant you inferring you are still in a state of nature. Test yourself by *other* passages and see if you can discern in your soul some of *their* marks of regeneration, such as a grieving over sin, a hungering after righteousness, a panting for communion with God, a praying for fuller conformity unto Christ. Has the world lost its charm, are you out of love with yourself, is the Lamb of God a desirable Object in your eyes? If so, you possess at least some of the distinctive marks of the regenerate.

Since we are seeking to write these articles for the benefit of young preachers as well as the rank and file of God’s people, let us point out that the nature of this great change may also be determined by contemplating it as *the begun reversal of the Fall*: “begun reversal,” for what is commenced at regeneration is continued throughout our sanctification and completed only at our glorification. While it be true that those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit gain *more* than Adam lost by the Fall, yet we have clear Scripture warrant for affirming that the workmanship of the new creation is *God’s answer* to man’s ruination of his original creation. Great care needs to be taken in cleaving closely to the Scriptures in developing this point, particularly in ascertaining exactly what was the moral and spiritual condition of man originally, and precisely what happened to him when he fell. We trust that a patient perusal of what follows will convince the reader of both the importance and value of our discussion of these details at this stage — the more so since the children have sadly departed from the teaching of the fathers thereon.

Even those sections of Christendom which boast the most of their soundness in the Faith are defective here. Mr. Darby and his followers hold that Adam was merely created innocent (a negative state), and not in (positive) holiness. Mr. Philpot said, “I do

not believe that Adam was a spiritual man, that is, that he possessed those spiritual gifts and graces which are bestowed upon the elect of God, for they are new covenant blessings in which he had no share" (*Gospel Standard*, 1861, page 155). One error ever involves another. Those who deny that fallen man possesses any responsibility to perform spiritual acts (love God, savingly believe in Christ) must, to be consistent, deny that unfallen man was a spiritual creature. Different far was the teaching of the Reformers and Puritans. "And where Paul treats of the restoration of this image (II Cor. iii, 18), we may readily infer from his words that man was conformed to God not by an influx of His substance, but by the grace and power of His Spirit." And again, "As the *spiritual life* of Adam consisted in a union to his Maker, so an alienation from Him was the death of his soul" (Calvin, *Institutes*).

"Adam had the Spirit as well as we: the Holy Spirit was at the making of him and wrote the image of God upon his heart, for where holiness was, we may be sure the Spirit of God was too ... the same Spirit was in Adam's heart to assist *his graces* and cause them to flow and bring forth, and to move him to live according to those principles of life given him" (Goodwin, 6/54). And again, commenting on Adam's being made in the image and likeness of God, and pointing out that such an "image" imports a thing "permanent and inherent," he asked, "what could this be but habitual inclinations and dispositions unto whatsoever was holy and good, insomuch as *all holiness* radically *dwelt in him*" (page 202). So too Charnock: "The righteousness of the first man evidenced not only a sovereign power, as the Donor of his being, but a holy power, as the pattern of His work. . . . The law of love to God, with his whole soul, his whole mind, his whole heart and strength, was originally writ upon his nature. All the parts of his nature were framed in a moral conformity with God, to answer His Law and imitate God in His purity" (vol. ii, page 205).

In his *Discourse on the Holy Spirit* (chapter iv, His "Peculiar works in the first creation"), when treating of "the image of God" after which Adam was created (namely, "an ability to discern the mind and will of God," an "unentangled disposition to every duty" and "a readiness of compliance in his affections"), J. Owen said, "For in the *restoration* of these abilities unto our minds in our renovation unto the image of God in the Gospel, it is plainly asserted that the Holy Spirit is the imparter of them, and He doth thereby restore His own work. For in the new creation the Father, in the way of authority, designs it and brings all things unto a head in Christ (Eph. i, 10), which *retrieves* His original work. And thus Adam may be said to have had the Spirit of God in his innocency: he had Him in those peculiar effects of His power and goodness, and he had Him according to the tenor of that covenant whereby it was possible that he should utterly lose Him, as accordingly it came to pass." The superiority of the new covenant lies in its gifts being unforfeitable, because secured in and by Christ.

"God made man *upright*" (Eccl. vii, 29) — the same Hebrew word as in Job i, 8, and Psalm xxv, 8: "This presupposes a law to which he was conformed in his creation, as when anything is made regular or according to rule, of necessity the rule itself is presupposed. Whence we may gather that this law was no other than the eternal indispensable law of righteousness, observed in all points by the second Adam. . . . In a

word, this law is the very same which was afterwards summed up in the Ten Commandments . . . called by us the Moral Law, and man's righteousness consisted in conformity to this law or rule" (Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*). "When God created man at first, He gave him not an outward law, written in letters or delivered in words, but an inward law put into his heart and concreated with him, and wrought in the frame of his soul . . . *spiritual* dispositions and inclinations, in his will and affections, carrying him on to pray, love God and fear Him, to seek His glory in a spiritual and holy manner" (Goodwin). The external command of Genesis ii, 17, was designed as the *test* of his responsibility, and at the same time it served to make manifest that his "uprightness" was mutable.

When Adam left the Creator's hand the law of God was in his heart, for he was endowed with holy instincts and inclinations, which tended unto his doing that which was pleasing unto God and an antipathy against whatever was displeasing to Him. That "law of God" within him was his original *character* or constitution of his soul and spirit — as it is the "law" or character of beasts to care for their young and of birds to build nests for theirs. Should it be asked, Is there any other Scripture which teaches that God placed His law in the heart of unfallen Adam? we answer, Yes, by clear and necessary implication. Christ declared "Thy Law is within My heart" (Psalm xl, 8), and Romans v, 14, tells us that Adam was "the figure of Him that was to come." Again, just as we may ascertain what grain a certain field bore from the stubble in it, so we may discover what was in unfallen man by the ruins of what is still discernible in fallen humanity: "the Gentiles do *by nature* the things contained in the Law" (Rom. ii, 14) their consciences informing them that immorality and murder are crimes: there is still a shadow in his descendants of the character originally possessed by Adam.

But Adam did not continue as God created him. He fell, and terrible were the consequences. But it is only by adhering closely to the terms used in the Word that we can rightly apprehend the nature of those consequences; yea, unless we allow Scripture itself to interpret those terms for us, we are certain to err in our understanding of them. Possibly the reader is ready to exclaim, There is no need to make any mystery out of it: the matter is quite simple — those "consequences" may all be summed up in one word — "death." Even so, we must carefully inquire what is meant there by "death." "Spiritual death," you answer. True, and observe well that presupposes spiritual life, and that in turn implies a spiritual person, for surely one endowed with spiritual life must be so designated. However, our inquiry must be pressed back a stage farther, and the question put, Exactly what is connoted by "spiritual death"? It is at this point so many have gone wrong and, departing from the teaching of Holy Writ, have landed in serious error.

It is to be most carefully noted that God did not say to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thy spirit or thy soul shall surely die," but rather "*thou* shalt surely die" (Gen. ii, 17). It was not some *thing* in or some part of Adam which died, but Adam himself! That is very, very far from being a distinction without any difference: it is a real and radical difference, and if we tamper with Scripture and change what it says, we depart from the Truth. Nor is "death" an extinction or annihilation; instead, it is a *separation*. Physical

death is the severance or separation of the soul from the body, and spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. The prodigal son was “dead” so long as he remained in “the far country” (Luke xv, 24), because away from his Father. I Timothy v, 6, tells us, “she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”; that is, she is spiritually dead, dead Godwards, while alive and active in sin. For the same reason, “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” is called “the Second Death “ (Rev. xxi, 8), because those cast into it are “punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence of the Lord*” (II Thess. i, 9).

Man was created a tripartite being, composed of “spirit and soul and body” (I Thess. v, 23). That is unmistakably implied in the Divine account of his creation: “God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness” (Gen. i, 26); the Triune God made man a trinity in unity! And when man fell, he *continued to be* a tripartite being: no part of his being was extinguished, no faculty was lost when he apostatized from God. It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that no essential element of man’s original constitution was forfeited, no component part of his complex makeup was annihilated at the Fall, for multitudes are seeking to hide behind a misconception at this very point. They would fain believe that man lost some vital part of his nature when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and that it is the absence of this part in his descendants which explains (and excuses!) all their failures. They console themselves that they are more to be pitied than blamed: the blame rests on their first parents, and they, forsooth, are to be pitied because he deprived them of the faculty of working righteousness. Much preaching encourages that very delusion. [Editor: we must disagree with Mr. Pink’s conclusion that man was created ‘tripartite’, aka: tricotomous and assert that man was created ‘dichotomous’; soul and spirit being synonymous I Thess 5:23.]

The truth is that fallen man today possesses identically the same faculties as those with which Adam was originally created, and his accountability lies in his making a good use of those faculties, and his criminality consists in the evil employment of them. Others seek to evade the onus of man by affirming that he *received a nature* which he did not possess before the Fall, and all the blame for his lawless actions is thrown upon that evil nature: equally erroneous and equally vain is such a subterfuge. No material addition was made to man’s being at the Fall, any more than some intrinsic part was taken from it. That which man lost at the Fall was his primitive *holiness*, and that which then entered into his being was *sin*, and sin has defiled every part of his person; but for *that* we are to be blamed and not pitied. Nor has fallen man become so helplessly the victim of sin that his accountability is cancelled; rather does God hold him responsible to resist and reject every inclination unto evil, and will justly punish him because he fails to do so. Every attempt to negative human responsibility and undermine the sinner’s accountability, no matter by whom made, must be steadfastly resisted by us.

It is by persuading men that the spirit died at the Fall, or that some concrete but evil thing was then communicated to the human constitution, that Satan succeeds in deceiving so many of his victims: and it is the bounden duty of the Christian minister to expose his sophistries, drive the ungodly out of their refuge of lies, and press continually upon them the solemn fact that they are without the vestige of an excuse for their own

rebellion against God. In the day of his disobedience Adam himself died, died spiritually, and so did all his posterity in him. But that spiritual death consisted not of the extinction of anything in them, but of their separation from God: no part of Adam's being was annihilated, but every part of him was *vitiated*. It was not the essence but the rectitude of man's soul and spirit which sin destroyed. By the Fall man relinquished his honour and glory, lost his holiness, forfeited the favour of God, and was severed from all communion with Him; but he still retained *his human nature*. All desire Godwards, all love for his Maker, all real knowledge of Him was gone. Sin now possessed him, and to the love and exercise of it he devoted himself. Such too is *our* natural condition.

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