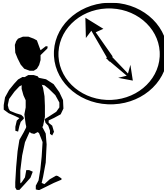


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

The Bible – God's Revelation

By Fanning Yater Tant
(continued)

Moral Effects

For one thing, consider the moral effects this book has had. It is a known fact that men tend to become like the god or divinity which they worship. Ancient Greeks who worshipped Bacchus became addicted to drunkenness; those who bowed before the shrine of Aphrodite were likely to become lascivious and licentious; the Phoenicians who worshipped Astarte the goddess of fertility indulged in the lewdest and most obscene rites of religion. The worshippers of cruel and capricious divinities always tended to become like those objects of their worship. The Bible holds forth to us a God who is perfection itself. He is perfect in moral holiness, in love, in wisdom, in justice, and in every virtue that commends itself to the mind of men. In him, there is found no flaw, no weakness, no error. This God was made flesh and dwelt among men in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus was such a one that men of every age have been unstinted in their praise of his worth and excellence. Those who walked and talked with him recognized him as being superior to anything this earth had ever produced. *"He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth"* (1 Peter 2:22). Luke says *"He went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38).

Mystic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Savior's brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned,
His lips with grace O'er flow.
No mortal can with him compare

Among the sons of men
Fairer is he than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train
This is the God the Bible sets forth; this is the Savior

believers' worship. The effect of such worship reflects itself in elevating man and raising him in all things to a higher and nobler plane of living.

As the author and originator of Christianity is a perfect being, so also is the law which he gave. The Psalmist spoke the truth when he said, "*The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul.*" No sin is known to mankind which that law does not forbid and prohibit; no virtue is to be found which it does not inculcate and encourage. Every relationship known to us, parents and children, husbands and wives, slaves and masters, rulers and subjects, friends and neighbors — all of them are set forth and the duties and obligations and responsibilities of each are fully declared. Could the hearts of all men of the earth at this moment be brought into conformity with the teachings of this book, ten thousand streams of joy and happiness would be opened up to flood the earth.

You have but to look at the history of the earth since the days of Christ to know how benign and how beautiful have been the blessings brought to the children of men by this book. Edward Gibbon, the great infidel historian, who made a complete and thorough investigation into all the circumstances surrounding the early years of Christianity, has been unstinted in his praise and has been astonished almost beyond expression at the benevolent effects the gospels had on those whom it reached in the early days of the church. Surrounded by lewdness and immorality, they retained their chastity; in the midst of violence and bloodshed and cruelty, they were always willing to suffer pain, but never to inflict it; when falsehood and dishonesty and theft were accepted at all as the common practice, the Christians were scrupulously honest and truthful on all things. Gibbon says, "It is a very honorable circumstance for the morals of primitive Christians that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue." In his correspondence with Emperor Trajan, Pliny, governor of the province of Asia, had much to say concerning the sect of the Christians whom he had been ordered to exterminate. He wrote to Trajan, "they bind themselves with an oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, not to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it." And Gibbon questioned Tertullian as boasting with an honest pride that "very few Christians had suffered at the hand of the executioner except on account of their religion."

Perhaps someone is likely to complain that this is not a true picture, that we must also include all the moral depravity of the dark ages, that we must mention the Catholic inquisitions, the burning of heretics, the evil and hypocrisy, and vicious practices that have come about as a result of religion. To which we reply that this very circumstance adds weight to our contention. For it shows us that the natural tendency of mankind is vicious and cruel, and when he rejects the restraining influence of the Bible, he will go to every kind of excess, for it is not perfectly clear that the wickedness and immorality of the dark ages and of the Catholic church, in particular, came about as a result of a departure from the teachings of the Bible, rather than because of following these teach-

ings? I affirm without any hesitation that every good thing in Catholicism, as in every Protestant religion, is the result of following in some degree the teachings of the Bible; while every evil and wicked thing is the result of a departure from the Bible. It is not fair to charge the Bible with the perversions men make of it. We are saying that the influence of this book when followed, is wholly good and never evil. Its moral effects are such as to demonstrate its truthfulness.

Intellectual Effects

In the second place, consider the intellectual effects of the Bible. Is it not perfectly evident that this book, above all others every written encourages and stimulates intellectual growth and development? Does not the Bible place supreme value on truth — the whole truth unmixed with error? It is not the word of inspired writers which said, “Buy the truth and sell it not?” “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” Paul affirmed that the church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*” And every inspired writer who has touched the subject has encouraged the search for truth. The desire has always been to promote and cultivate intellectual growth, to bring man to the very highest use possible of all his natural talents and endowments.

Again, a look at history will confirm this statement. If you but look at the most civilized and advanced nations of the earth, you will find without exception they are places in which the Bible has for generations had its greatest influence. Britain and America are cases in point. Why it is that civilization came westward rather than eastward? The Bible originated in the orient, but the trek of civilization was toward the West, not toward the East. Is it not true that civilization follows the Bible? Missionaries went out and won people to an acceptance, often crude and uninformed to be sure, but still some sort of acceptance of this book. The result was a phenomenal stimulation of all their mental powers. The orient, which rejected the book, stagnated and remained unmoved; the West progressed and developed. If someone wants to argue against this by citing us to Germany as an example of undeveloped land where the Bible had great influence, we have but to remind you that all the foundations for Germany’s growth and marvelous scientific and intellectual development were laid during the years when Germany, above all other nations, was a Bible following nation. When Martin Luther began his great Reformation in Germany, he gave impetus to the intellectual development of the nation which is still felt. It was only within the last century, when the higher critics and infidels began to undermine respect for the book, that Germany took a definite turn toward a pagan way of life. Look how civilization has been retarded and held back in the Latin nations and in South America, where, under the influence of Catholicism, the Bible is relegated to a place of inferiority and disrespect. In contrast, see how the general culture has advanced in the nations that have a different view of the Scripture. In America, how many of our colleges and universities are in existence today because of the influence of the Bible? Even our state-supported schools are with us because our

rulers and leaders have felt, even though unaware of it, the influence from this book. They have recognized the wisdom and the advantage to a nation of literate and educated people; they have realized that ignorance and stupidity go hand in hand; that as a people, become literate they advance to a higher and nobler plane of living. (NOTE: It is sad to note that in our nation's current history, we are moving away from belief in God and the Bible, with the result that crime and immorality are becoming widespread. –jdt)

Emotional Effects

I have one other thing to mention concerning the effects of this book. That is personal. I want to talk about the effect it has on each of us in an emotional way. For we are living in a world that keeps us constantly in a state of turmoil and distress. Everything about us is transient, fleeting, evanescent. We are filled with vague, uneasy longings for a different life and a different world. Conscious of the perpetual conflict within our own hearts, our lives are disquieted and our hearts are fearful. I think it can be said pretty truthfully of nearly all of us that in our natural state we are as "restless as willows in a windstorm, as jumpy as puppets on a string." And that is so even when we don't have spring fever. The inner conflict may burst forth in the woeful lament of Paul, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*" ([Romans 7:24](#)), or it may come in the pessimistic cynicism of Solomon, "*Vanity of vanities,*" says *the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity"* ([Ecclesiastes 1:2](#)), or perhaps it will be felt in some other way. In one way or another, all of us feel the inadequacy and the incompleteness of this life. We recognize that we are creatures of eternity, and here we have only time. We are infinite in our capacity for growth, and here we have only finite opportunities. We are the children of a king, but on this earth, we have only the chances of a slave. So our lives are disordered, distressed, and disturbed.

When we open the pages of this book, how beautifully the restless spirit is quieted, how perfectly the anxious heart is eased, how completely the burdened mind is put to rest. For here we learn that God is in his heaven, and all's well with the world. We are not mere creatures of blind chance, born for a day, to be swept into eternal oblivion tomorrow; we are a creation of God, destined for eternal glory with him. Let the world continue in their courses for uncounted billions of years, or let them cease to roll tomorrow, it is all the same to us. Death has lost its terrors, the grave has lost its victory. Come weal or woe; we are the children of God, and it is well with our souls. What perfect peace, what calm fortitude, what complete acceptance this book brings us. Now we can forget the burden of the world, now we can dispense with the problems of existence. We can live and enjoy life as free and as loving and beloved children of God. The effects of this book on the mental peace of mankind are indeed beyond calculation. It soothes, calms, and puts at rest all our troubled longing thoughts.

Can we credit for one minute the monstrous absurdity that the book which has had the greatest moral effect, the most stimulating intellectual effect, and the richest

emotional effect on all ages of the world is, at the same time, the most blatant falsehood that has ever existed? Are we willing to say the falsehood and fabrications and plain unadorned lies have proved the greatest boon to civilization, have brought the greatest happiness to the race, have lifted lives to the noblest pitch of living the earth has ever seen? My friends, men do not gather such grapes from thorns, nor such figs from thistles. An evil tree does not — cannot — bring such fruit!



Careful with the Word “Miracle”

By Gardner Hall

I see increasing numbers of references among disciples of Christ referring to events in their lives as miraculous, or even asking for a miracle. Perhaps it's time for a reminder that we don't live in the miraculous age. That fact almost used to be taken for granted in congregations I know and perhaps for that reason many have neglected to teach on it. Therefore, we increasingly see loose usage of the word, perhaps as a result of the influence of postmodernism and its emphasis on feelings over reason.

By definition, a miracle involves an act that violates the laws of nature, in many cases the instant healing of permanent and visible defects (John 11; Acts 3:2; 13; Jn. 9, etc.). Sometimes miracles were supernatural signs such as walking on the water, turning water into wine, feeding the 5,000, etc.

What is marvelous is not necessarily a miracle. The design of our body and especially our brain with the amazing ability to fight disease, give birth, and invent medicines is a work of God that shows His infinite intelligence. But the wonderful function of our bodies isn't a miracle in the biblical sense.

The danger in applying the term “miracle” to what is not truly miraculous is a cheapening of the concept. If we apply the word to gradually getting better from an illness or to having a tumor shrink with treatment, unbelievers will begin to see “miracles” as no big deal, but something that commonly happens among all people as well as believers. We don't want to cheapen the impact of the true miracles of Jesus and the apostles! Therefore, let's be discreet and avoid applying that word loosely.