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THOMAS BARBER AND THE CONVERSION OF ADAM CLARKE
Compiled and Edited by Duane V. Maxey

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Digital Edition 04/11/2000
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INTRODUCTION

I do not claim to be the author of this publication. It is true that I have written some small portions of the text, but for the most part it is material that I have edited, having been taken from: the following digital publications: -- Adam Clarke's Autobiography, hdm0074.txt -- "Adam Clarke Portrayed" by James Everett, work in progress -- "Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers" by P. Douglass Gorrie, hdm0093 -- "The Life and Labors of Adam Clarke" by John M. Hare, hdm1586.txt -- "Christian Theology By Adam Clarke... With A Life Of The Author" by Samuel Dunn, hdm0965 -- and "An Account of the Experience of Hester Ann Rogers," hdm0629.

I have tried to select the best account from this or that author for each portion of this compilation, and have freely blended them into one whole along with my own few insertions. Thomas Barber was greatly instrumental in Adam Clarke's conversion, and, under the 4 points shown below, I have endeavored to present the story of Clarke's conversion, some sketch material about Thomas Barber, a bit of information about Clarke's Commentary, and an interesting Endnote about the triumphant passing of another Thomas Barber. -- DVM

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Part 1

THE PRELUDE TO PARDON

Except the instructions of his mother, Adam Clarke had not yet enjoyed many religious advantages. There was little of personal religion in the parish; and even Mrs. Clarke herself became infected with the general forgetfulness of God. Nor was this attributable to the baleful influence of Popery; for the inhabitants were all either Churchmen or Presbyterians. The latter, pastor as well as people, were verging towards Socinianism, and, as to piety, were living upon the godliness of their ancestors. The Rector, the Rev. W. Smith, was a benevolent and good man; but he was either partially informed concerning the way of salvation, or failed to make it known in his discourses. This deplorable state of deadness and darkness, Methodism was the means of reviving and enlightening.

The agencies of Methodism were becoming more extensive and more potent every year; and, in the order of a merciful Providence, some of the devoted men who toiled in the great work were led to visit the hamlets and villages of the north of Ireland.

About the year 1777, the Methodist preachers, who had been in Coleraine for some time, visited the parish of Agherton when Adam was about 17. The Clarkes had hitherto known nothing of these men. A stray anecdote of one of them, which Adam met with in a newspaper, gave him the first intimation of their existence. One day it was rumored in the neighborhood that there would be preaching that evening at a farm-place, called Burnside; a barn, with a cottage attached to it.

After school hours, Mark O'Neill, one of Adam's school-fellows, came to him, and surprised him, saying, "Come, Adam, let us go to Burnside, there is a Methodist preacher to be there this evening, and we shall have nice fun." Now, although Adam was sufficiently playful, and was always ready to embrace any opportunity for diversion and amusement, yet he was puzzled to understand how preaching and playing could be associated; or how a time set apart for devotion, could be proper for amusement; for he had been always taught to hold preaching in reverence, whether he heard it in the church, or in the Presbyterian meeting. He engaged however to go, yet without the slightest expectation of the promised diversion.

Commenting on the preceding, Gorrie wrote of Clarke: "He had attended balls and parties for the sake of the 'fun;' but although he had very little if any acquaintance with the Methodists, he knew that a religious meeting of any kind was no place to seek for amusement. He, however, concluded to attend for the sake of information." -- P. Douglass Gorrie, "Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers" -- hdm0093

He went accordingly, and found many people assembled in a BARN! In a short time the preacher entered, a plain, serious looking man, but widely different in his dress, from any clerical gentleman he had ever before seen. His name was John Brettell; he was many years a very respectable itinerant preacher among the Methodists, as was also his brother Jeremiah, and sprung from a very respectable family in Birmingham. Adam fixed his eyes upon him, and was not at all surprised with his first sentence, which was this, "I see several lads there, I hope they will be quiet and behave well; if not, they shall be put out of the house."

As Adam expected no diversion, he was not disappointed by this declaration. He did not recollect the text, and the discourse did not make any particular impression on his mind: but he was rather surprised by the following assertion, "The Westminster divines," said the preacher, "have asserted in their Catechism, that no mere man, since the fall, can keep God's commandments: but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed: but the Scriptures promise us salvation from all our sin: and I must credit them in preference to the Westminster divines." Adam had learned his Catechism, as before stated, and had given implicit credence to this assertion: but he reasoned thus with himself, "If the Scriptures say the contrary, certainly I should believe the Scriptures in preference to the catechism."

After preaching was ended, Mr. Brettell went into the man's house, whose barn he had occupied, and several people followed him and among the rest, young Clarke. He talked much on the necessity of Repentance, Faith, Holiness, &c.; and exhorted the people to turn to God with all their hearts, and not to defer it. This second meeting broke up in about half an hour, and the preacher and his friends returned to Coleraine. There was with him, among others, Mr. Stephen Douthitt, well known in Coleraine, as an irreproachable pattern of practical Christianity; and an ornament to the Methodist's society in that place, for nearly half a century.

On his return to his father's house, Adam reflected a good deal on the man, his manner, and his conversation. And thought, if these people talk so continually about religion, both in public and private, they must have a painful time of it.

The next week Mr. Brettell came to another part of the neighborhood, and Adam went to hear him: his text was, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." -- Rev. iii. 20. He pointed out the various methods which God used in order to awaken and alarm impenitent sinners; and the dreadful consequences of slighting, resisting, or neglecting these calls, -- ruin final and eternal must be the inevitable consequence; "but God" said he, "always fires the warning cannon before he discharges the murdering piece."

This was the last time he heard Mr. Brettell: other preachers succeeded him in Coleraine, and occasionally visited Agherton and most of the neighboring towns and villages. "They came frequently, and preached first in one house, and then in another, spreading themselves over the country," said Clarke, and when they were within his reach he attended their ministry.

But, it was not until Mr. Thomas Barber, Brettell's successor, visited Coleraine, that young Adam became decidedly religious. Through the ministry of that apostolic man, (who was acting as a missionary at his own cost, and emphatically doing the work of an evangelist over an extensive

tract of country near the sea coast, in the county of Antrim,) Adam Clarke was brought to a knowledge of the truth; soon after which, his parents also were induced to attend the same ministry.

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Part 2

THOMAS BARBER, INSTRUMENTAL IN CLARKE'S CONVERSION

Since little is known of Mr. Thomas Barber, a short sketch of his personal history may prove acceptable to the reader. According to biographer, John Middleton Hare, Barber was brought to God by the Ministry of John Wesley in Sidare, county of Fermanagh. Soon after he joined the society, he was enabled to rejoice in an assurance of pardoning mercy; and such was the fervor of his zeal for the glory of God, and his melting compassion for the salvation of man, that he almost immediately commenced the work of a public teacher.

At this time in 1777 he was, at his own expense, acting as a missionary through an extensive tract of country, near the sea-coast, in the county of Antrim, which embraced part of the Londonderry circuit. A divine unction attended his ministry, both in the awakening of sinners, and the sanctifying of believers. His first, removal from the place of his conversion, was to a part of the Londonderry circuit; which included Coleraine, and the country specified by Adam.

During his ministry, Thomas Barber had successively twenty-one stations, of one and two years, in each, and finally retired as a supernumerary, at Glass Lough in the county of Monaghan, in 1808, -- dying about the eightieth year of his age, in 1825.* [See Endnote] In the prosecution of his ministry, he feared no danger, and neglected no opportunity of promoting the religious welfare of his fellows. Instant in season, and out of season, he visited from house to house, and was especially attentive to the classes. He has been known frequently to stop a whole congregation at the close of public service, and speak to them more particularly; and irregular as this might seem, a divine blessing often followed. While his holy example led on the humble and upright in the path of piety, the warmth of his devotion animated the lukewarm. His preaching, though singular, was artless, and instructive. He expatiated on the doctrines of the witness of the Spirit, and perfect love; these he denominated the eyes of Christianity without which man was sure to walk in darkness.

In health, he was an example of integrity, humility, and diligence and in sickness, equally remarkable for fortitude, meekness, patience and cheerfulness. One perfection, however, which was remarkable for its prominence, and which threw a charm round him peculiarly attractive to young people, was his simplicity, which reduced him to a child among children. His attention to young people was unusual; he instituted meetings to promote their religious instruction; and these meetings were extensively useful, not only to children but to parents. Here was a suitable foster-father for young Clarke, -- evidently sent in the order of providence, -- and sent to one, whose docility of mind at the time, was such as to inspire the strongest and brightest hopes. They clung to each other, -- Adam, in consequence of the interest and affection manifested by Mr. Barber in his welfare, -- and Mr. Barber, because of the openness, intelligence, and readiness of Adam to receive the blessings of the gospel.

Mr. Barber, in person, was rather above the middle size -- strongly built -- extremely active -- frank -- generous: he was attired in the general costume of the preachers of that day, and finished off with a short stunted wig. He was at the Manchester Conference of 1795, during the whole of which, his son in the gospel, paid him the utmost attention. There was an appeal on some particular subject, made from the English to the Irish Conference, in which Mr. Barber acquitted himself with great credit, showing considerable force, fluency, and aptitude in the discussion of its several parts.

There is an anecdote respecting the good man worth recording, which Adam heard from his own lips. When they were sufficiently familiarized with each other, -- and no doubt with a view to guard his young friend against such things, who was sufficiently quick to perceive their bearings, he remarked, that he was invited once to take tea with a family, and that cards were introduced on the occasion. On having a set handed to him, he rose from his seat, assuming the attitude of invocation, and observed, that they had better ask a blessing upon the game before they commenced. It was objected by one of the party, that they were not in the habit of doing so: he returned "Never mind, we must have a blessing." Seeing him still standing, as if about to implore heaven to grant its blessing upon the act, and perceiving the incongruity of the affair altogether, first one, and then another, began to push the cards from him; and the feeling becoming general, they were thrown aside for more rational and profitable amusement. In this single circumstance, there is a volume of instruction; it told Adam, what it must tell every intelligent, accountable, immortal being, that he ought not to enter upon any act, which he could not unhesitatingly convert into a matter of prayer, and in the course of which, he could not, with confidence, look up to heaven for the blessing of God, in the sanctification of its use.

Two or three other circumstances, though not related by Adam, may be noticed as illustrative of character. On one of the occasions of his meeting some members in class after preaching, Mr. Barber came to a person of some property, who made profession of piety, but who did very little for the support of the Wesleyan interest in the place, and inquired into his state of mind, when he expressed himself as being happy. He again asked, "And you have Christ in your heart?" "Yes," replied the man. On this, Mr. Barber immediately pounced upon the selfish part of his nature, and inquired, "Have you room for a Methodist preacher in your house?" This was rather unexpected; and after a little hesitation, he intimated, that the family had not convenience for the entertainment of a preacher.

Mr. Barber, who had felt the inconvenience of traveling a considerable distance for a bed after preaching, and still suspicious, that the principal difficulty was to be found in the want of disposition, again inquired, "If an intimate friend, or relation, were to visit you, and to be thrown upon your hospitality for the night, do you think you could, with a little contrivance, find a bed for himself, and a stable for his horse?" This was equally unexpected, and in the midst of his embarrassment for an honest reply, -- (a case rather unusual on the other side of the channel,) he at length returned, "Why, in that case, we should be obliged," when Mr. Barber proceeded to speak to another of his auditors.

Thomas Barber's conduct in another instance, was as singular as his address on the present occasion. He had some business to transact with Lord Annesley near Castlewetlan, county Downs. After concluding the object of his visit, he proposed prayer to his lordship. The latter, not quite

prepared for the exercise, as well as unaccustomed to it on such occasions, politely interposed his interdict, by observing, "Oh, Mr. Barber, the ladies are in the room, and they will only laughs at us."

Mr. Barber, too intent on what he deemed the religious improvement of his lordship, replied, "The ladies, my lord, have too much good sense and politeness to laugh at prayer;" and so saying, instantly dropped upon his knees before his lordship had time to meet him with another reply, which he was apprehensive might defeat his purpose. No one, except an honest, zealous man, would thus have ventured to presume on nobility, on its own domain; but Mr. Barber could take liberties, which would mar the credit of many men through life, with the parties concerned, without giving offense.

Thomas Barber resided some time at Glass Lough, a beautiful village on the border of a lake, where he was on terms of intimacy with the family of Colonel Lesley, the brother of Bishop Lesley. The Colonel, during his residence there, had entered into the marriage state a second time, with a lady much younger than himself, and remarkable for beauty. They called upon Mr. and Mrs. Barber, soon after their marriage. The names being announced, they were introduced. The usual ceremonies having passed, Mrs. Lesley entered into conversation, while Mr. Barber, in the opposite part of the room, and near the window, was rubbing and adjusting his spectacles. He placed one pair, of a different focus, in a certain position, in order to aid those commonly used, and then took an eye glass, with, a view to assist both. After having prepared the whole, he stalked across the room, took Mrs. Lesley by the hand, led her up to the window, and peering in her face, through his helps to vision, remarked, "The people say you are very handsome, and I am sure they have not belied you." He then conducted her to her seat. These show the man -- straightforward and unceremonious.

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Part 3

ADAM CLARKE'S CONVERSION

[Continuing the story of Clarke's conversion now, the following is taken from his Autobiography, which is written in the third person -- as if he wrote of another when actually writing of himself -- using "he" instead of "I".]

At length that truly apostolic man, Mr. Thomas Barber, came to the place; and with indefatigable diligence and zeal went through all the country, preaching Christ Crucified, and Redemption through his Blood; in dwelling-houses, barns, school-houses, the open air, &c. &c.; and many were awakened under his ministry. Mrs. Clarke, Adam's mother, went to hear, and immediately pronounced, this is the doctrine of the Reformers -- this is true unadulterated Christianity." In this she greatly rejoiced, and pressed all her family to go and hear for themselves. Mr. Clarke went, and he bore testimony that it was "the genuine doctrine of the Established Church."

The preacher was invited to their house, which he and all his successors, ever had as their home, and were always entertained according to the best circumstances of the family. Under the

preaching and pious advices of this excellent man, Adam's mind gradually enlightened and improved: he had no violent awakening -- his heart was in a good measure, by his mother's pious care, prepared to receive the seed of the kingdom, and the doctrine of God "dropped on him as the rain, his speech distilled on him as dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass."

He followed this preacher every where within his reach; left all childish diversions, became sedate and sober, prayed in private and read the Scriptures; till at last his parents began to think he was likely to be righteous over much; he however went on and attended closely to his work in the farm; sometimes from four o'clock in the morning till between six and seven at night; and then felt quite happy to be permitted to run three or four miles into the country to hear a sermon! By these means he was generally enabled to hear four sermons a-week, when the preacher was in that part of the country: and none could say, that to attend this preaching he had ever left undone one half hour's work, or omitted to perform any thing in its proper season.

Far from making him slothful, the desire he had for his salvation, tended to make him still more active in the secular concerns of the family. Formerly he could while away time and often play when he should have been at work: now, he did every thing from conscience, he served his father as he would have served the merest stranger, in whose employment he should spend every hour of the day. Nay, to labor with his hands was now his delight -- he felt it the full force of those words of the apostle, Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

From his own experience he could say, I love to work with my hands; and as he saw others who were under the same religious concern doubly active in their affairs of life, while earnestly seeking the salvation of their souls, he knew that the reproach which many raised against those who were so intent in their attendance on the means of grace -- Ye are idle, ye are slothful, -- ye do not love work -- ye neglect your families to gad after preaching, &c. -- was a most unfounded slander, deduced from Pharaoh the first persecutor of the Church of God; and shamelessly continued until now. He ever bore testimony, that he had found in all his own religious experience, and in the acquaintance he had with the work of God in others, that men became economists of time, and diligent in their avocations, in proportion as they were earnest for the salvation of their souls. This reproach has long been urged against the Methodists, by those who had no religion; because the diligence of the former in their spiritual concerns, was a standing reproof to the others who were living without a Scriptural hope, and without God in the world.

Prayer also was his delight. He could no longer be satisfied with morning and evening; he was awakened from the dream that this was sufficient, by the following questions of Mr. Barber. "Adam, do you think that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you your sins?" "Sir, I have no evidence of this." "Adam, do you pray?" Yes, Sir. "How often do you pray in private?" Every morning and evening." "Adam, did you ever hear of any person finding peace with God, who only prayed in private twice in the day?" He felt ashamed and confounded; and discerned at once that he was not sufficiently in earnest, nor sufficiently awakened to a due sense of his state. Though he could say, that often during the day, he was accustomed to lift up his heart to God; yet he was not then aware that this requires much less light and heat than are requisite in solemn pleading with God.

He now began to quicken his pace, for he heard in almost every sermon, that it was the privilege of all the people of God to know, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in their consciences, that their sins were forgiven them, for Christ's sake; and that when they became adopted into the heavenly family, and were made children of God, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying Abba, Father. This he earnestly sought, but was damped in his ardor after this blessing by the sayings of man, of whose judgment he had a favorable opinion, that to know their sins forgiven them, was the privilege only of a few, and those the most favored of God's people. On this point they made the following distinctions:--

There is a twofold species of saving faith, -- the faith of assurance, and the faith of adherence. The former the privilege of very few; the latter, the privilege of all true Christians. The former the most comfortable, but the latter equally safe. Trusting in an unseen Christ, will deceive no man but if he may have the comforts of the Spirit, so much the better."

He now determined to search the Scriptures to see whether these things were so; and as he had never yet read the New Testament regularly through, he began that work; and, with deep attention and earnest prayer, read over the whole from beginning to end; spending in this employment almost every leisure moment. With this diligence the merciful God was well pleased, for he shed light both upon his heart, and upon his book. It was indeed a new book to him, -- he read, and felt, and wept, and prayed; was often depressed then encouraged; his eyes were opened, and he beheld wonders in this divine Law.

By this reading he acquired and fixed his Creed in all its articles, not one of which he ever after found reason to change, though he had not as yet that full confidence of each which he afterwards acquired. At this time he had read none of the writings of the Methodists; and from them he never learned that creed, which, on after examination he found to be precisely the same with theirs. He could say, "I have not received my creed from man, nor by man." He learned it -- (without consulting bodies of divinity, human creeds, confessions of faith, or such like) -- from the fountain head of truth, the Oracles of the living God.

He now felt increasing anxiety, not only for his own soul but for those of his family, his school-fellows, and his neighbors. He rejoiced to see numbers attending the word preached, and a society formed in an adjoining village called Mullihicall, though himself never thought of becoming a member in it, or in any other. His mother had gone to see how what was called class-meeting was conducted, and on her return spoke highly of the meeting. She desired her son Adam to accompany her the next Lord's day to the said meeting. He went with some reluctance.

After singing and prayer, the leader spoke to each person severally concerning his spiritual state. Adam listened with deep attention, and was surprised to hear one of his neighbors speak to this effect: "I was once darkness, but now I am light in the Lord: I was once a slave to sin, but now I am made free by the grace of Christ: I once felt that horrors of a guilty conscience, but now I know and feel that God has blotted out my sins." He was deeply struck with these declarations; and though he knew that this man had been a giddy foolish trifler, a drummer to a company of volunteers, yet knowing that he had seriously attended the preaching for some time, he had no doubt a the truth of this testimony.

Some others expressed themselves in the same way; while others deplored their hardness of heart, and darkness of mind. He now began to feel very uneasy: he thought "this is no place for me to be in: I have no right to be here: these people should have none to witness their religious meetings, but those who belong to some society and, in short, he felt grieved that his mother should have been so inconsiderate as to have brought him there. He was afraid lest the leader should question him; and he knew he had no thing to say that would be creditable to himself or profitable to others: at last he was questioned, and got off with a sort of general answer. The meeting broke up, and he was returning home, melancholy and unhappy.

The leader, Mr. Andrew Hunter, of Coleraine, joined him on the road, and began to speak to him on spiritual matters, in a most affectionate and pathetic way; earnestly pressed him to give his whole heart to God; for, said he, "You may be a burning and shining light in a benighted land." Why these words should have deeply affected him he could not tell; but so it was; he was cut to the heart: instead of being rich and increased in spiritual goods, as he once fondly thought, he now saw that he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. All his past diligence, prayer, reading, &c., appeared as nothing, -- in vain he looked within and without for something to recommend him to God; but there was nothing -- multitudes of evils which before were undiscovered, were now pointed out to his conscience as by a sunbeam.

He was filled with confusion and distress; wherever he looked he saw nothing but himself. The light which penetrated his mind, led him into all the chambers of the house of imagery; and everywhere he saw idols set up in opposition to the worship of the true God. He wished to flee from himself, and looked with envy on stocks and stones, for they had not offended a just God, and were incapable of bearing his displeasure.

The season was fine, the fields were beautifully clothed with green, the herds browsed contentedly in their pastures, and the birds were singing melodiously, some in the air, some in the trees and bushes; but, alas, his eyes and his ears were now no longer inlets to pleasure. In point of gratification, nature was to him a universal blank, for he felt himself destitute of the image and approbation of his Maker; and, besides this consciousness, there needed no other hell to constitute his misery. His doleful language was, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold Him, he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." -- Job: xxiii, 3, 8, 9.

He was afraid even to look towards God, because he felt himself unholy, and yet he knew that his help could come from none other than Him whom he had offended; and whose image he did not bear, and consequently could not have his approbation. On a subject of this kind, even an enemy to the Christian faith may teach an important truth. "It was once demanded of the fourth Calif Aalee, 'If the canopy of heaven were a bow and the earth were the cord thereof; if calamities were arrows and mankind were the mark for these arrows, and if almighty God, the tremendous and the glorious, were the unerring Archer, to whom could the sons of Adam flee for protection?' The Calif answered, saying; 'The sons of Adam must flee, unto the Lord.'" -- Teemour.

Mr. Barber, who had always watched over him for good and had lately formed a class of those who desired to save their souls; -- without acquainting him with it, had entered Adam's name

among the rest. When he heard this it did not please him, but he said, "Since they have put down my name, I will, by the help of God, meet with them;" and he did so for several weeks. One morning he was detained by illness: the next time he permitted a trifling hindrance to prevent him: and the third morning he felt no desire to go: thus he was absent three weeks.

It pleased God at this time to permit Satan to sift him as wheat. It was a strong article in his creed that the Passion and Death of Christ were held out through the whole of the New Testament as sacrificial and expiatory; and that His Death was a sufficient ransom, sacrifice, and atonement for the sin of the world: for He, by the grace of God, had tasted death for every man. This doctrine was the only basis of his hope and yet he had not that faith by which he could lay hold on the merit of that Sacrifice for his personal salvation. Were this foundation to be destroyed, what could he do, or where flee for refuge? How it was shaken in his mind I am about to relate.

He had long been intimate in the house of a very respectable family in the neighborhood. He was there as their own child: for him they had all a very strong affection, and he felt for them in return, both affection and reverence. One evening the conversation in the family turned on the Doctrine of the Atonement; and some observations then made filled his soul with doubts and fears. It was, in short, stated one present, that, "the Methodists were guilty of idolatry, for they gave that worship to Jesus Christ that belonged to the Father only." He came home full of confusion: "What have I been doing Have I been adding idolatry to all the rest of my transgressions? Have I had two Gods instead of one?"

He went into the boviere, (shippon) the first place he came to, and kneeled down among the cattle, and began to ask pardon of God, fearing that he had given that glory to another, which was due to Him alone. He was not satisfied, however, with this; he thought he should go farther, and leave the name of Christ out of all his prayers; this proceeded so far that he did not like to converse about Him. What he had lately heard, represented Him to his mind as an usurper; and at last he could not bear to see His name in any religious book.

Darkness now entered into his mind, his spiritual fervor gradually diminished, 'till it was at last entirely gone. He prayed, but it was a form: he read, but it was without unction. He felt this lamentable change, and began earnestly to inquire whence it had arisen? Importunate prayer, his former refuge, was suggested to his mind, as the only help; for he had none to whom he could open his heart.

That he might not be perceived by any of the family, he went once more among the cattle, a place to which he had often resorted, and fell down before his Maker, and prayed to this effect, -- "O Lord God Almighty, look with pity on the state of my soul! I am sinful, ignorant, and confused. I know not what to say, or what to believe. If I be in an error, O Lord God, lead me into thy truth! Thou knowest I would not deceive myself: Thou knowest I esteem thy approbation beyond life itself. O, my God, teach me what is right! if I be in an error, O show it to me, and deliver me from it! O deliver me from it, and teach me Thy truth! O God hear, and have mercy upon me, -- for the sake of JESUS CHRIST!"

These last words had no sooner dropped from his lips, than he started as if alarmed at himself. "What! have I been again praying in the name of Jesus? was this right?" Immediately his

soul was filled with light, the name of Jesus was like the most odoriferous ointment poured out, he could clasp it to his heart, and say, "Yes, my only Lord and Saviour, thou hast died for me, -- by Thee alone I can come unto God, -- there is no other Name given from heaven among men by which we can be saved! Through the merit of thy Blood, I will take confidence, and approach unto God! He now felt that he was delivered from those depths of Satan, by which his soul was nearly engulfed.

This narrow escape from sentiments which would have been fatal, if not finally ruinous to him, he ever held as a most special interference of God; and he always found it his duty to caution men strongly against the Arian and Socinian errors.

Having again got upon the Rock, he had once more a comfortable prospect of the promised land, and set out afresh for the heavenly rest. Though greatly encouraged, he had not yet found rest for his soul. He heard others talk of the witness of the Spirit, and knew several who rejoiced in it with joy unspeakable; and he was determined never to give up, till he was made a partaker of the same grace. His distress was great, yet it neither arose from a fear of hell, nor from any consciousness of God's hatred to him. but from the deep-felt want of the approbation and Image of God.

In seeking this, he had a species of mournful rejoicing, and often vented and expressed the feelings of his heart in words, expressive of his ardent desire to experience the power and peace, the pardon and salvation of his God.

In this state of mind, he thought it right to receive for the first time, the Sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER. This design he communicated to Mr. Barber, who encouraged him in it; but, as the Rubric requires, that those who intend to receive the Holy Sacrament, shall signify their intentions some time before, to the minister; he purposed to wait on Mr. Smith, the Rector, and signify his wish, and ask his permission. He accordingly went, and Mr. S. received him with great affection and tenderness. He was much affected in witnessing so strong a desire in so young a person; and said, "I should be glad, Master Clarke, if you would go to the Rev. Mr. Younge, of Coleraine, he is a very wise and good man, and will examine you, and give you the best advice; and if you will go now, I will write a note by you to Mr. Young."

Adam agreed, and went. Mr. Younge also behaved towards him with much tenderness and affability, examined him out of the Catechism, and particularly explained the last answer to him, relative to the duty of them who come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: viz. "To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, -- whether they steadfastly purpose to lead a new life, -- have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his Death; and be in charity with all men:" and observed, "It is not your being able to say this by heart, that is the qualification here required; but your heart must be impressed with, and feel all these things." The answers of Adam seemed to be satisfactory to Mr. Younge, for he wrote a note back to Mr. Smith, which when he read, he seemed quite rejoiced, and said, "Mr. Y. tells me that I may safely admit you to the Lord's table."

As he was now about to perform one of the most solemn acts of his life, and was greatly afraid of communicating unworthily, and so eating and drinking his own damnation, (as it is

unhappily expressed, i Cor. xi. 29, instead of condemnation) he purposed to go through the Week's Preparation; a book which, however well intended has been the means of misleading many by causing them to trust in the punctual performance of the duties therein required, for a short time before that sacred ordinance, without that change of heart and life so essentially necessary to the Christian character. Adam, however, used it with earnest and deep concern; and as, in the course of that week, he was obliged to go a short journey on his father's business, which took up the whole day (Thursday) and he could not go through the prescribed prayers and meditations; for fear of coming short, he did double work on Friday, and brought the two days into one! If this were mistaken piety, it was at least sincere.

On the morning of Easter Sunday, the day appointed for the Sacrament, he repaired to the church; and after sermon went with his father to the Communion Table. When Mr. Smith, came to him with the sacred bread, he was much affected, and when he had said, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee," he was quite overcome; he sobbed, the tears gushed from his eyes, and he could not for some seconds proceed to the end of the sentence. Here was one proof of a godly pastor; he felt especially for the young of his flock, and was ready to carry the lambs in his bosom. In this holy ordinance Adam's mind was deeply impressed with the necessity of giving himself wholly up to the service of God; and he considered the act of communicating, as one by which he had most solemnly and publicly bound himself to be all that Christianity requires in her votaries, through His especial assistance, by whom that Christianity came. But he did not receive it as a seal of the pardon of his sins; or as a pledge of the kingdom of heaven. Nothing could satisfy him, but a pardon felt in his heart, and registered in his conscience by the light and power of the Holy Spirit; and he well knew, that an entry into the kingdom of glory, depended on his living to God in this world, regaining the divine image, and dying with Christ in him the hope of glory. He received it therefore as a memorial of the Sacrifice of Christ, by which pardon, holiness, and heaven, were purchased for mankind.

It would be well if all communicants, and all pastors, treated this most sacred ordinance as young Clarke and his minister did. On both sides it was supposed, and properly, that too much caution could not be used. Adam on his part attended conscientiously to the rubric, and consulted his minister: the minister on his part, proceeded with a godly caution, lest he should distribute improperly those sacred elements. Is not the same caution still necessary! but is it in general observed? Why is not this ordinance which represents the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, the precious death and burial, and in a word, the redemption of a lost world, by the sacrificial offering of the Lord Jesus, more devoutly and frequently impressed on the minds of young hearers, with the solemnity of that obligation? Let proper warning be given, and strong exhortation to due preparation; for surely it is as possible now to eat and drink our own condemnation in England, as it was to the Greek converts, eighteen hundred years ago in Corinth.

Though often encouraged, so that he

"Seemed to sit with cherubs bright,
Some moments on a throne of love,"

he had not yet found that peace and assurance of which he was in pursuit: and it may seem strange, that one who was following God so sincerely, should have been so long without that powerful

consolation of religion. But God is Sovereign of his own ways; and he gives and withholds according to his godly wisdom. Adam was ever ready to vindicate the ways of God in this respect. "It was necessary," said he "that I should have hard travail. God was preparing me for an important work. I must, emphatically, sell all to get the pearl of great price. If I had lightly come by the consolations of the Gospel, I might have let them go as lightly. It was good that I bore the yoke in my youth. The experience that I learned in my long tribulation, was none of the least of my qualifications as a minister of the Gospel."

He was now come to that point, beyond which God did not think proper any longer to delay the manifestation of Himself to the soul of his ardent follower: and indeed such were his concern and distress, that had it been longer deferred, the spirit that God had made, would have failed before him.

One morning, in great distress of soul, he went out to his work in the field: he began but could not proceed, so great was his spiritual anguish. He fell down on his knees on the earth, and prayed, but seemed to be without power or faith. He arose, endeavored to work, but could not: even his physical strength appeared to have departed from him. He again endeavored to pray, but the gate of heaven seemed as if barred against him. His faith in the Atonement, so far as it concerned himself, was almost entirely gone; he could not believe that Jesus had died for HIM; the thickest darkness seemed to gather round, and settle on his soul. He fell flat on his face on the earth, and endeavored to pray but still there was no answer: he arose, but he was so weak, that he could scarcely stand. His agonies were indescribable; he seemed to be for ever separated from God and the glory of His power. Death, in any form, he could have preferred to his present feelings, if that death could have put an end to them. No fear of hell produced these terrible conflicts. He had not God's approbation; he had not God's image. He felt that without a sense of his favor, he could not live. Where to go, what to say, and what to do, he found not; even the words of prayer at last failed; he could neither plead nor wrestle with God.

O, Reader, lay these things to heart. Here was a lad that had never been a profligate, had been brought up in the fear of God, and who, for a considerable time had been earnestly seeking His peace, apparently cut off from life and hope did not arise from any natural infirmity of his own mind:-- none who knew him, in any period of his life, could suspect this:-- it was a sense of the displeasure of a holy God, from having sinned against him; and yet his sins were those of a little boy, which most would be disposed to pass by, for he was not of an age to be guilty of flagrant crimes; and yet how sorely did he suffer, in seeking to be born again; to have his conscience purged from dead works, and to have his nature renewed!

Etheridge wrote: "Let us not be told here anything about moody melancholy or ignorant fanaticism. There is not a vestige of fanaticism in the case. Here is a young man of education, sound in health, steady in nerves, vigorous in intellect, and, so far as outward morality is concerned, of well-regulated and virtuous habits of life; but thoughtful betimes of the great question which, sooner or later, shakes every human soul, -- How can a fallen sinner be reconciled to God? The Bible is in His hand, and the light of the Holy Spirit shining in His conscience. Can we wonder, then, at his solicitude? He had within himself a dread sense of wrongness before his Divine Judge; and the all-absorbing care of his heart was, 'How can I be set right?' Was not this a

rational inquiry? Who is the insane fanatic, -- the man who in these circumstances, common to us all, asks the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' or he who wilfully ignores it?"

Young Adam Clarke was then being prepared for that work to which he was afterwards to be called; the struggle was great, that he himself might not easily turn again to folly, and thus bring condemnation on himself, and a reproach upon God's cause; and it was, on all probability, necessary that he should experience this deep anguish, that feeling the bitterness of sin, he might warn others more earnestly; and knowing the throes and travail of a sinner's soul, he might speak assuredly to the most despairing, of the power of Christ's Sacrifice, and of the indwelling consolations of the Spirit of God.

God appeared to have "turned aside his ways, and pulled him to pieces; He had bent his bow, and made him a mark for His arrows: He was filled with bitterness, and made drunken as with wormwood:-- his soul was removed far from peace, and he forgot prosperity." Yet even here though his stroke was heavier than his groaning, he could say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed." -- Lam. iii. 11-22. See him in his agony upon the bare ground, almost petrified with anguish, and dumb with grief! Reader, hast thou sinned? Hast thou repented? Hast thou peace with thy God, or art thou still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity? These are solemn, yea, awful questions. May God enable thee to answer them to the safety of thy soul!

But we must return to him whom we have left -- in agonies indescribable. It is said, the time of man's extremity is the time of God's opportunity. He now felt strongly in his soul, "Pray to Christ;" -- another word for, "Come to the Holiest through the Blood of Jesus." He looked up confidently to the Saviour of sinners, his agony subsided, his soul became calm. A glow of happiness seemed to thrill through his whole frame, all guilt and condemnation were gone. He examined his conscience, and found it no longer a register of sins against God. He looked to heaven, and all was sunshine; he searched for his distress, but could not find it. He felt indescribably happy, but could not tell the cause; -- a change had taken place within him, of a nature wholly unknown before, and for which he had no name.

He sat down upon the ridge where he had been working, full of ineffable delight. He praised God, and he could not describe for what, -- for he could give no name to his work. His heart was light, his physical strength returned, and he could bound like a roe. He felt a sudden transition from darkness to light -- from guilt and oppressive fear, to confidence and peace. He could now draw nigh to God with more confidence than he ever could to his earthly father:-- he had freedom of access, and he had freedom of speech. He was like a person who had got into a new world although every object was strange, yet each was pleasing; and now he could magnify God for his creation, a thing he never could do before: O what a change was here! and yet, lest he should be overwhelmed with it, its name and its nature were in a great measure hidden from his eyes.

Shortly after, his friend Mr. Barber came to his father's house: when he departed, Adam accompanied him a little on the way. When they came in sight of the field that had witnessed the agonies of his heart and the breaking of his chains, he told Mr. B. what had taken place. The man of God took off his hat, and with tears flowing down his cheeks, gave thanks unto God. "O Adam" said he, "I rejoice in this; I have been daily in expectation that God would shine upon your soul,

and bless you with the adoption of his children." Adam stared at him, and said within himself, "O, he thinks surely that I am justified, that God has forgiven me my sins, that I am now his child. O, blessed be God, I believe, I feel I am justified, through the Redemption that is in Jesus." Now he clearly saw what God had done; and although he had felt the blessing before, and was happy in the possession of it, it was only now that he could call it by its name. Now, he saw and felt, that "being justified by faith, he had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he had received the atonement."

He continued in peace and happiness all the week: the next Lord's day there was a love-feast in Coleraine; -- he went to it, and during the first prayer, kneeled in a corner with his face to the wall. While praying, the Lord Jesus seemed to appear to the eyes of his mind, as he is described, Rev. i. 13, 14. clothed with a garment down to his feet, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle: his head and his hair white as snow, and his eyes like a flame of fire. And though in strong prayer before, he suddenly stopped and said, though not perhaps in a voice to be heard by those who were by him, -- "Come nearer, Oh, Lord Jesus, that I may see thee more distinctly." Immediately he felt as if God had shone on the work he had wrought, and called it by its own name; he fully and clearly knew that he was a child of God; the Spirit of God bore this witness in his conscience, and he could no more have doubted of it, than he could have doubted of the reality of his existence, or the identity of his person. --

"Meridian evidence put doubt to flight?"

Adam Clarke, having thus found the liberty of God's children, felt a powerful instinct in his heart to enjoy communion with them of whom he could now say, "Their Father is my Father; and their God, my God." He accordingly lost no time in becoming a member of the Methodist Society; thus, at once, giving his heart to God, and his hand to His cause and people.

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Part 4

THE LIGHT OF CLARKE'S ILLUMINATION SHINES ON

The immediate consequence of Adam's spiritual emancipation was intellectual enlargement. Emulation, as we have seen, overcame that native stolidity which made him incapable of acquiring the first rudiments of learning; but he never manifested much quickness of apprehension or expansion of mind, until he had entered into the liberty of the sons of God. Lucian and Juvenal, the authors which he was studying, were still not without their difficulties; but they were easy in comparison with what they had been.

According to his own testimony, he now learned more in one day, than formerly in one month. His mind became enlarged to take in anything useful. He saw that religion was the gate to true learning and science: and he was accustomed to affirm, that those who went through their studies without religion, had, at least, double work to do; besides that, in the end, they did not realize an equal produce.

Amplifying the above, Samuel Dunn wrote: "With this gladness of soul he also received great intellectual enlargement. He could prosecute his literary studies with much greater ease. He now learned more in one day than formerly he was able to do in one month. His mind became enlarged to take in any thing useful. He saw that religion was the gate to true learning and science; and soon began, in addition to his other pursuits, to apply himself to astronomy, natural philosophy, and the mathematics."

More importantly, beyond those mundane things, the heavenly enlightenment of Clarke's mind enabled him to produce his masterful, and enduring, Commentary on the Bible -- a work that dating from its completion in 1828 to the present year 2000, has already been blessed of God to the further illumination of the Church for nearly 175 years!

Etheridge wrote: "On May 1, 1798, he began in good earnest the actual Commentary, commencing with the Gospels... He reached the end of the fourth Gospel in November, 1799... At length, in great exhaustion, he approached the goal. In the beginning of March, 1826, he remarks to a friend: 'For some time past I have suffered much in my eyes: it is impossible they should last. All winter I have written several hours before day, and several after night. Under this they have failed. But I want to get the Commentary done. I have got to the end of the sixth of the twelve minor prophets; so there are six more to do. Jeremiah and Daniel are finished and Printed. Of Ezekiel, thirty chapters. You see, then, that I am fully in sight of land.'

"At length the hour of its completion struck. Adam Clarke closed the work of his Commentary, as he had begun it so many years before, kneeling in the presence of God. 'It will give you pleasure,' writes he to a friend, 'to hear that on March 28th, 1828, at eight o'clock in the evening, I wrote upon my knees the last note on the last verse of the last chapter of Malachi. Thus terminated a work on which I have painfully employed upwards of thirty years.' On referring to the last note itself, we find the following devout and worthy record:-- 'To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be eternal praises. Amen. I have this day completed this Commentary, on which I have labored above thirty years, and which, when I began, I never expected to live long enough to finish. May it be a means of securing glory to God in the highest, and peace and good-will among men upon earth! Amen. Amen.'"

In later years, with his friend, James Everett, Clarke revisited the spot in the field where the light of God's peace and grace first dawned on his soul. Everett wrote: "It is situated near the new church, on the right hand in going from Coleraine to Portstuart, and is the next but one to the residence of the late Counselor O'Neill. One side joins the public road, being separated from it by its own hedge; the upper corner of it pointing towards the Gazebo, from which it is only the distance of a few yards. About the middle of the far fence, on a line with the road, and from two to three hundred yards from the Gazebo, Adam was employed as "a tiller of the ground." The labor of the mind could no longer support the labor of the hand. He laid down his implements of husbandry, and in deep anguish of spirit betook himself to prayer; he was now in an agony, and resolved to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. "The ground whereon I knelt," he observed, 'was like plowed land.' [plowed apparently by Clarke's knees in his anguish]

"But peace ensued. His soul was filled with joy and gladness, and his lips with praise. During the visit, to which allusion has been made, he formed, as will hereafter be seen, the design

of purchasing the field, and of erecting a house upon it, that, amidst those interesting scenes of his youth, he might spend at least a part of the evening of life. He gazed on the spot, which to him was 'holy ground,' with deep interest, having been consecrated, like the circle around the burning bush, by the more immediate presence of God, who lit up, on the altar of his heart, an inextinguishable fire."

The light of that fire is yet burning through the pages of Clarke's Commentary, in his own victorious soul in the presence of God, and it will no doubt continue to burn brightly throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity!

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ENDNOTE

*[The Following is taken from "An Account of the Experience of Hester Ann Rogers, hdm0629, and occurred during December of 1780. It pertains to the triumphant passing of one Thomas Barber, whom Hester Ann Rogers visited while he was on his death-bed. But, even though the story is precious and victorious, "that old saint, Thomas Barber," as he is called, had to have been a different Thomas Barber, since the Thomas Barber of this compilation died in 1825, some 45 years later. Still, the reader may find the reading of the material below a real blessing. -- DVM]:

Tuesday, December 19, 1780 I called upon that old saint, Thomas Barber, who was seized the day before with a malignant fever. I asked him, "Is the Lord precious to your soul?" He said, "He is all love; I shall soon be with him." It seems worth remarking here, that this good old man had prayed and agonized with God for many years, that his aged wife might see his salvation; and also that she might be first taken home. His request was granted in both these respects. A little before her death, the Lord revealed his salvation to her heart; and for some days she bore testimony of his love, often repeating, "Thy rod and thy staff comfort me." Just before she departed, having taken an affectionate leave of her husband and children, she cried aloud, "Now, Lord, thou art mine for ever and ever!" When her breath was gone, her husband said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And from that time his body was perceived to fail.

Thursday, 21 I found him very ill, but very happy. Yet he told me, "I have been tempted to fear patience will not hold out in all this pain, for I feel as if every limb was tearing asunder from my body: but I know God is all sufficient." I called again; he told me, "My pain has been extreme, but I feel the presence of God continually: and I sensibly know, he is as near to me as I am to myself. Whether I die at this time or recover, my will is wholly resigned: but I know if he calls me now, I shall go to glory." In the afternoon his every breath was prayer or praise; and all his attention manifestly taken up with heavenly things. To the doctor he said, "It is of more consequence that you should repent, than that I should recover; for if I die I shall go to God; but if you do not repent you will perish: 'You must be born again.'

Saturday, 23 His dissolution evidently drew near. He was sometimes a little delirious; yet of God and spiritual things he spoke clearly and scripturally, and prayed without ceasing. In the

evening he broke out in the most solemn manner, and repeated several times, "Christ is God! Christ is God! God out of Christ is a consuming fire!" On being asked how he did, he said, "I am going to the heavenly Canaan, that promised land for which I set out long ago." While the doctor spoke to him of his body, he regarded not, but told him, "I am not afraid to die." And then, with lifted hands, prayed that all around him, and especially his children, might follow him to glory. When I asked him, a little after this, "Do you now feel God graciously near?" he said, (looking with a solemn steadfastness in his countenance, as if he saw something,) "His spiritual presence is here!" and bursting into a flood of tears, cried, "I am full of God! His glory fills my soul!" Another asked him, "Have you any doubts?" He answered, "I have not the least doubt upon my mind but I shall reign with him in glory!" Late that night I called again, wishing to see him once more, and though delirious just before, when one said, "Here is Miss Roe;" he hastily put out his hand and said, "May God bless you." This was his last address to me; and he spoke but little afterward. At nine the next morning, I found him speechless, and in a dying state; but quite composed, and just as if falling into a sweet sleep. Mr. Simpson came in, and went to prayer with him; but he appeared insensible to all below. The power of God, however, rested on all present in an abundant manner; and in about an hour afterward he expired without a sigh or a groan.

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THE END