

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

"The Path of the Just is as the Shining Light,
Which Shineth More and More
Unto the Perfect Day."

SERIES I

The Plan of the Ages

A Vindication of the Divine Character and Government:
Showing, by a Recognition and Harmonizing
of all the Scriptures, that the Permission of
Evil, Past and Present, is Educational and Preparatory
to the Ushering of Mankind Into
THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY
In Which All the Families of the Earth Will
Be Blessed with a Full Knowledge of God and a
Full Opportunity for Attaining Everlasting Life
Through the Redeemer, Who Then Will Be the
Great Restorer and Life-Giver. *Acts 3:19-21*

To the King of Kings and Lord of Lords

IN THE INTEREST OF

HIS CONSECRATED SAINTS,

WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION,

--AND OF--

"ALL THAT IN EVERY PLACE CALL UPON THE LORD,"

"THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH,"

--AND OF--

THE GROANING CREATION, TRAVAILING AND WAITING FOR THE

MANIFESTATION OF THE SONS OF GOD,

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED.

"To make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." "Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of the times He might gather together in one all things, under Christ."

Eph. 3:4,5,9;1:8-10

Written in 1886 by Pastor Russell

Ai

"The Divine Plan of the Ages"

THE AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THE AUTHOR and the publishers desire to publicly acknowledge the favor of God which has permitted them to be identified with the circulation of this Volume, and with the results--light, joy, peace, fellowship with God, to many hungry, thirsty, bewildered souls. The first edition in its present form was issued in 1886. Since then, one edition has followed another in rapid succession and in twenty different languages, until now there are nearly five million copies of it in the hands of the people all the world over.

We cannot hope that these books have all been read; but letters continually coming to hand assure us that they are working powerfully in the hearts and minds of people everywhere. Thousands write us that they have been influenced --some who totally disbelieved in the Bible as a Divine Revelation to mankind. Others write that they have been atheists or approximately so, because they had not previously known the true God and His true Plan of the Ages, and were unable to accept, appreciate or worship the characters usually held before them in the creeds.

For above five years preceding the first publication of this Volume, we had substantially the same matter in print under another name and differently presented. That book was entitled "Food for Thinking Christians." Its style was different in that it first of all attacked the error--demolished it; and then, in its place, erected the fabric of Truth. We finally learned that this was not the best way--that some became alarmed as they saw their errors falling, and failed to read far enough to get a glimpse of the beautiful structure of Truth in place of the demolished errors.

Aii

The present Volume was written from the reverse standpoint. It presents the Truth, shows its strength and beauty, and then suggests the removal of the error, as not only unnecessary, but absolutely useless and very injurious. Thus the reader of the DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES at each step finds a strengthening of faith and a greater nearness to the Lord, and therefore a confidence that he is in the right way. After seeing the Truth, the errors are more and more seen to be absurd, worthless, injurious, and are

gladly abandoned.

The great Adversary, of course, has no love for anything which opens the eyes of God's people, increases their reverence for God's Book, and breaks their reliance upon human creeds. The great Adversary, therefore, as we might have expected, is very much opposed to this book. Few realize Satan's power and cunning; few realize the meaning of the Apostle's words in respect to this Prince of Darkness who transforms himself into a minister of light, in order to fight the Truth and destroy its influence. Few realize that our wily Adversary seeks to use the best, the most energetic, the most influential of God's people to hinder the shining of the light and to keep the Divine Plan of the Ages away from the people.

Few realize that from the time creed-making began, A.D. 325, there was practically no Bible study for 1260 years. Few realize that during that time the creeds were riveted upon the minds of millions, shackling them to horrible errors, and blinding them to the Divine character of Wisdom, Justice, Love, Power. Few realize that since the Reformation --since the Bible began to come back into the hands of the people--well-meaning but deluded reformers have been blinded and handicapped by the errors of the past, and, in turn, have served to keep the people in darkness. Few realize

Aiii

that real Bible study, such as was practised in the early Church in the days of the Apostles, has only now come back to Bible students.

In the earliest editions of this Volume, the title, "Millennial Dawn," was used; but we found that some were deceived thereby into thinking it a novel. In order that none might be deceived, and that none might purchase under such deception, we later adopted the present serial title, "Studies in the Scriptures," which nobody can misunderstand.

Many queries have come to us as to why these books cannot be found in the bookstores. Our answer is that while the book publishers would be glad to have these books, there are certain religious zealots who will not permit their sale--threatening boycott. At first this seemed like a great disaster--as though the power of the Adversary would be permitted to hinder the dissemination of the Truth. But God graciously overruled the matter, so that today probably no other book has so large a circulation and so steady a circulation as this Volume. Those who, through prejudice, refused to read the book and fought against it, did so because

they believed falsehoods, misrepresentations.

Many of these books have been burned by people who never read them, but who were influenced by misrepresentations.

Just so it was during the Dark Ages in respect to the followers of Jesus, who suffered martyrdom.

Yes, Jesus Himself suffered at the hands of those who did not understand Him or His teachings, as St. Peter pointedly declares: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (*Acts 3:17*); "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." *1 Cor. 2:8*

But if the enemies of this book have been bitter, unjust,

Aiv

untruthful, its friends are proportionately warm and zealous.

The millions of copies in the hands of the people have nearly all passed out through the friends of the book, who, from the love of the Truth, have given time and energy for its wide circulation. While we write these lines, we have knowledge of the fact that approximately six hundred Christian people from various walks of life have "left all" earthly business and calling and ambitions that they may glorify the Lord and bless His hungry saints by putting this little Volume into their hands. These include doctors, schoolteachers, nurses, ministers, barbers, mechanics-- people from every walk of life who, touched to the heart themselves with the love of God, are anxious to pass the blessing on to other hearts and heads.

The books are sold at a small price, and these colporteurs who take them around to the public are barely able to make their expenses. They rejoice, however, all the more if sometimes they have privations and are counted worthy to suffer some inconveniences and deprivations for the sake of the Lord, the Truth and the Brethren. The good work goes on, the Message of Life in Christ passes from hand to hand. The present output of this Volume is enormous. May its blessing in future days be proportionately as great as in the past. The author and publishers cannot ask for more.

With very best wishes to all readers,

Your servant in the Lord,
Charles T. Russell

Brooklyn, N.Y.,
October 1, 1916