

BE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

We have the impression that things happen blindly. We feel that things could have happened differently when there has been an accident. . Look at how Moses reported the events before and during the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea. The Lord directed Moses what to do when the people were completely at a loss, with mountains hemming them in, the sea in front of them, and the Egyptians pursuing them. He stretched out his staff; but the Lord caused things to happen.

Moses wrote, "Then the Angel of God, who had been going ahead of the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. The column of cloud also moved away from in front of them, and stood behind them." We should think that when God sends an angel, God Himself is present. That observation helps to remove the problem that sometimes the angel of the Lord seems to be the Lord Himself. Who would dare to say that the column of cloud suddenly moved, by pure chance, from in front of the Israelites to the rear, so that it brought darkness to the one side, and it lit up the night for the other, that it was just a contingent phenomenon?

The Lord is at work in our lives. He is present to each of His creatures, even when there are no obvious mighty miracles, like a strong east wind pushing back the sea all night long, to make a path on dry land for the Israelites to cross over, and even when He is not making a wall of water stand up on either side in defiance of the laws of gravity.

Today people would be likely to say that the Egyptians had some bad luck when the wheels of their chariots began to come off. Moses wrote: "In the watch before dawn the LORD looked down through the column of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off, so that they had difficulty driving them."

On that occasion the Egyptians were more perceptive than many people are today when they think and act as if the only things they had to contend with were chance and blind fate. The Egyptians, who were not worshippers of the true God, said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt"

God is certainly no prisoner of fate and blind chance. People who ignore His power, His knowledge, and His grace are themselves blind. Positively, people who know the Lord through His grace in Jesus Christ stand in awe of His mighty power and His knowledge. He has the power to answer prayer, and the knowledge to shape events for those whom He loves. He is a present Helper. Above all, in His grace, He provided redemption, in His mercy, from the greatest enemies of human beings, sin, death, and the devil, when He did not spare His own Son.

He is present today; present in everyday events, present, above all, in His Gospel and sacraments, in absolution, and in the encouragement Christians give each other.