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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

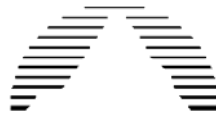
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God's people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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A WORD TO PARENTS

One of the most terrible tragedies of this war is that hundreds of thousands of our sailors, soldiers and airmen are going forth into active service without any saving acquaintance with God in Christ, and the great majority of them without even an intellectual knowledge of Him. Many of them grew up without attending the “churches,” and the few who went there heard, for the most part, nothing of God’s just claims upon them, nothing about the exceeding sinfulness and infinite guilt of sin—little about how Divine forgiveness of sins may be obtained, and nothing about the everlasting punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14, 15) which awaits all who die with their sins unpardoned. What is still more pathetic (in the judgment of the writer) is that the great majority of these young men received no Scriptural and spiritual instruction in the *homes* where they were reared. As children, they listened to the jazz of the radio, rather than the songs of Zion; they saw their parents reading the Sunday newspapers rather than the Word of God; and never was the voice of prayer heard in the family circle. How far is any country entitled to be called “Christian” where the vast majority of its homes are Pagan.

But let us turn now to a very much smaller and more favourable circle. Let us contemplate the homes of “church members.” The fathers and mothers “belong to” some denomination, and occasionally, perhaps on each Lord’s Day, attend “Divine service”—mostly because their parents before them were accustomed so to do. Yet apart from for this single exception, there is nothing to distinguish them from “respectable” neighbours who make no formal profession at all. No family worship is conducted in these homes, and even on the Sabbath Day, the conversation is of the work from morn to night. The parents—while very solicitous about the bodily welfare of their children—act toward them as though they had *no soul*. True, some of them sent their little ones to the “Sunday school” where they were amused and entertained, and knew little more of Holy Writ at the finish than they did at the beginning; but that was a shelving of their responsibility and not a discharging of it.

Narrow the circle still further—and it is indeed a tiny one—and take the homes of those which charity requires us to regard as Christian ones. Here there is indeed a noticeable difference, but in only too many cases, it is merely a negative one. Here, there are no “Sunday” newspapers or world literature to grieve the eye. Here, the radio is silent during the Sabbath. Here, the whole family attend Divine service, perhaps morning and evening; and in the interval, there is a discussing of the sermon and the general conversation is on spiritual lines. In some of these homes, God is honoured with family worship and an attempt is made to familiarize the children with the letter of Scripture. So far so good. But suppose the oldest boy is called to the colours, will he leave home knowing in theory at least what he must do to be saved? Will he, at camp, and later, perhaps lying wounded in a hospital thousands of miles from home, have the memory of father and mother kneeling with him ere he parted from them, as they earnestly committed him into the hands of the Lord? If not, then his parents failed him at the most crucial point.

Some who read this magazine are likely to have sons and daughters who have not yet quite reached the “calling up” age. Perhaps only a year or two is now left before they too will be required to leave home, joining the forces or one of the services. If so, it is high time you seriously took stock of the situation, and diligently sought help from above to redeem the time. You have not fulfilled the whole of your duty toward your offspring by sheltering them from the grosser elements of the world, by providing them with wholesome food, by sending them to a good school. Those things concern time: What about *eternity*? Are you setting before the children an example of piety, which will give them to feel it is real and not a pose? Is your Christian character winsome or depressing and chilling? Do they take knowledge of you that you have “been with Jesus” (Act 4:13)? Can they perceive that your affections are set upon things above and that “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10)? Does your general demeanor in the home commend Christ to them?

Have you had a heart-to-heart talk with your son or daughter? Do they know that their eternal welfare is your deepest concern? Have you encouraged them to read the Word of God for themselves in private, and told them of the need for asking God to give them an understanding of it? Have you explained to them the Gospel of the grace of God, so that they are quite clear Christ is the sinner’s only Saviour? You may have prayed much *for* them in secret, have you ever prayed *with* them singly? These are duties you cannot legitimately transfer to a minister of the Gospel, nor should you desire to do so. They are duties and

privileges which devolve upon *you* toward the fruit of your bodies. You may be deeply conscious of your weakness and unworthiness, but it is just *such* instruments that God is pleased to use—that the glory may be His. A broken prayer that is watered with tears is often more effectual than the most orthodox sermon.

Do you say, But the salvation of my children is not in *my* hands: God alone can save them. If that be an attempt to evade your responsibility by hiding behind the truth of Predestination, then such a rejoinder (pious as you may deem it) is of the Devil. Predestination is none of *your* concern. The *physical* well-being of the children was not in *your* hands, yet the knowledge of that did not hinder you from using all appointed means, and asking God's blessing on the same. If you be a hyper-Calvinist, bear with us for a moment, dear friend. It was no cold and fatalistic Christ who, when He, behind the city of Jerusalem, "wept over it" (Luk 19:41). It was no hard and dry doctrinaire who declared, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1Co 9:22). If *your* belief of Election is hindering you from doing everything in your power to direct your offspring to Christ, you have an erroneous concept of that blessed truth. None ever believed more firmly in the sovereignty of Divine grace than did the apostle Paul, yet his belief therein did not hinder him from saying, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom 10:1). And we have but to read through the book of Acts to see how such a desire and prayer was expressed in constant and earnest efforts after this Salvation.

If the "Articles of Faith" subscribed to by the reader have bred in his heart a spirit of apathy, so that he or she assumes a more or less fatalistic attitude toward the eternal interests of those nearest and dearest unto them, then that is proof positive there is something radically defective about those "Articles," for the teaching of the Scriptures inculcates the very opposite spirit. Concerning their children, Christian parents are expressly bidden to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4), and that involves considerably more than "taking them to church" with them on the Sabbath, or even having them join in family worship each day. It signifies to give them such instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord, to train them *for Him*, to make known His claims upon them, to explain to them His Law and to preach to them His Gospel; and to relinquish not their efforts until each of them shall voluntarily avow with Ruth, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Rut 1:16).

It is indeed true that *you* cannot save your offspring, but it is both your privilege and duty to seek to be an *instrument* therein. The minister of the Gospel cannot save any in his congregation, but his knowledge of that does not deter him from seeking of God an appropriate message, putting forth his best endeavours in preparing that message for the pulpit, supplicating the blessing of Heaven thereon, and then delivering that message earnestly and expectantly. It has pleased God "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1Co 1:21), and there requires not to be a congregation before there can be "preaching," nor a "consecrated building" for it to be done in. As Philip rode in the chariot with the eunuch, he "preached unto him Jesus" (Act 8:35). Thus, one may "preach" to a single individual! Let it be noted that Philip preached the Saviour to that Ethiopian out of Isaiah 53, and there is no more suitable passage in the whole Word of God for *you*, Christian father, to "preach" Christ from to your son or daughter. Once they leave your home, they may never again hear "the Gospel of Christ," so make the most of your present opportunity.

A personal testimony and we conclude. The father of the writer was an exceptionally busy business man—so busy that for over thirty years, he never had more than three consecutive days' holiday. He was a corn merchant, and after returning from market, attended to much of the clerical work in person, so that for years, he did not cease till 11:50 Saturday night. Yet he did not lie in bed Sabbath mornings, but took his children to hear God's Word preached. He did not send us to "Sunday school" while he took a nap in the afternoon, but gathered us around him and spent a couple of hours in reading to us from the Scriptures, from *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*, etc. Every day, he conducted family worship, and when we were too little to sit up for the evening, our godly mother took us around her knees and prayed with us. Those are sacred memories. "Them that honour me I will honour" (1Sa 2:30)—my parents honoured Him, and He honoured them by calling their firstborn into the ministry. —A.W.P.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

12. 2 Corinthians 13:14

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” (2Co 13:14). This threefold invocation is familiarly known as the Christian Benediction. The O.T. formula of blessing was authorised to be used in the assemblies of Israel: “Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall [thus] put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” (Num 6:22-27). But there is nothing to indicate that God required the Benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 to be employed in the Christian churches; yet there is certainly nothing to show that it is incongruous to do so. As a fact, it has been made wide use of; and that, because of its deep importance doctrinally and because of its appropriateness—for those words are both a confession of the Christian faith and a declaration of Christian privilege.

The Benediction contains a brief summary of *the Christian doctrine of God*. We say the *Christian* doctrine of God, in contradistinction from not only the horrible delusions of the idolatrous heathen, but also from the inadequate conception of Deity which obtained in Judaism. By the Christian doctrine of God, we mean the revelation which is given of Him in the N.T. more particularly. And that brings us to ground where we need to tread very carefully, lest we disparage or underestimate what was revealed of Him in the O.T. If on the one hand, we must guard against the fearful error that the God of the O.T. is a very different character from the God of the New; on the other hand, we need to be careful that we do not too fully read the clearer teaching of the New into the Old—or at any rate, conclude that those under the legal dispensation perceived the same significance in some of those things in their Scriptures, which we now interpret in the brighter light of the evangelical economy. Such statement as “the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth” (1Jo 2:8) needs to be remembered in this connection.

It has been erroneously and blasphemously asserted by German neologians and their Anglo-Saxon echoers, who deny the real inspiration of the Scriptures that Jehovah was but a tribal God, and that what is said of Him in the O.T. is but the views which the Hebrews entertained of Him. But it is greatly to be feared that many who reject such a Satanic crudity as that, and who regard the O.T. as being equally the Word of God with the New, nevertheless hold the idea (with varying degrees of consciousness) that the revelation which we have of the Divine character in the latter, is much to be preferred above the delineation given thereto in the former. But such is a serious misconception. The severity of God appears as plainly in the book of Revelation as it does in Joshua; in fact, the vials of His wrath are more fearful in their nature than the plagues which He inflicted upon Egypt and Canaan. On the other hand, the goodness of God, as made known in the Epistles, in no wise surpasses His benevolence as depicted in the Psalms. The God of Sinai and of Calvary are one and the same, as He is also the Author of both the Law and the Gospel.

In saying that we need to be careful not to read too fully into the O.T. Scriptures the clearer teaching of the New, we mean that while we who ever have the completed Word of God in our hands, and are thereby enabled, recognise more plainly that the substance of the truth of the Tri-unity of God is found in the earlier Books. Yet it has to be granted that there is no statement in them, which is quite as explicit as say, Matthew 28:19, and certainly, it is much to be doubted if the Jewish *nation* as such recognised that there were three distinct Persons in the Godhead. The grand truth made known under the old economy was rather the *unity* of God: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deu 6:4) in sharp contrast from the polytheism of the idolatries of the heathen. On the other hand, we have no doubt that individual saints in these times had a saving knowledge of the Triune God, yet not so fully perhaps as we have. “As God afforded a clearer manifestation of Himself at the advent Christ, the three Persons became better known” (John Calvin)—especially in the covenant offices and distinct operations.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). It is to be remarked that those words have a corporeate fulfilment as well as a personal: they apply to the Church collectively, as well as individually. The light of Divine revelation brought forth “here a little, and there a little” (Isa 28:10, 13) and shone not in meridian splendour until Immanuel Himself tabernacled

among men. The degree in which the doctrine of the Trinity was made known in the O.T. Scriptures no doubt bore a proportion to the discovery of other mysteries of the Faith. It was definitely revealed from the beginning, yet hardly with the same explicitness and perspicuity as now. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1:1, 2). This is the first contrast given in that epistle, the theme of which is the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Until the former era God's revelation of Himself was fragmentary and incomplete, but in this final dispensation, His mind and heart have been fully told—only there, it was through such instruments as "the prophets"; now it is by the Person of His Own Son.

The Christian revelation comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. God is manifested in and by the incarnate Son, for as He can only be approached through the Mediator, so He can only be vitally and savingly known in Him. It was the grand mission of Christ as the Prophet of His Church to make known the character and perfections of God. That is signified by His title, "The Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (Joh 1:1, 14). A "word" is a medium of manifestation. I have in my mind a thought, yet others know it not. But the moment I clothe that thought in words, it becomes cognisable. Words then make objective unseen thoughts. This is precisely what the Lord Jesus has done: He has made manifest the invisible God. A "word" is also a means of communication. It is by my words that I transmit information to others. By words I express myself, make known my will, and impart knowledge. So Christ, as the Word, is the Divine Transmitter, expressing to us God's full mind and will, communicating to us His life and love.

A "word" is also a means of revelation. By his words, a speaker or writer exhibits both his intellectual caliber and his moral character. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh" (Mat 12:34), and our very language betrays what we are within. By our words, we shall be justified or condemned in the Day to come, for they will reveal and attest what we were and are. And Christ, as the Word, reveals the attributes and perfections of God. How fully Christ has revealed God! He displayed His power and illustrated His patience, He manifested His wisdom and exhibited His holiness, He showed forth His faithfulness and demonstrated His righteousness, He made known His grace and unveiled His heart. In Christ, and nowhere else, is God fully and finally told out. That is why He is designated, "Who is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), for He has set before our eyes and hearts a visible, tangible and cognisable representation of Him. Though "no man hath seen God at any time," yet "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (Joh 1:18)—that is, He has faithfully and fully told Him out—the word for "declared" is rendered "told" in Luke 24:35.

There was an infinite suitability that He who was in the bosom of the Father, even when He walked this earth, should declare Him, for only One who was His "fellow," His co-equal, was capacitated to tell Him forth. So perfectly did Christ reveal Him that at the close of His ministry, He said unto Philip, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Joh 14:9), and to Him He affirmed, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world... And I have declared unto them thy name" (Joh 17:6, 26). By the "name" of God is meant all that He is in a manifestative and communicative way. For what God is essentially in His absoluteness, in His ineffable majesty, in His incomprehensible boundlessness, in His self-existing essence, as three in one and one in three, the infinite Jehovah, cannot be made fully known to any finite intelligence, however spiritual, no, not unto eternity. It is in His love to His Church, in His covenant relationship to His people in Christ, in His everlasting delight to them in His Beloved, as the Medium and Mediator of all union and communion with them, that He has been graciously pleased to reveal and make Himself known.

That in and by and through the Lord Jesus Christ, *God is revealed* unto us is the testimony of the chief of the apostles when he declared Him to be "the brightness of his [the Triune God's] glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb 1:3), where he was certainly speaking of Christ as the God-man—that is, of the Son as incarnate—as the same verse goes on to show: "when he had by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3). By that blessed statement, we understand that through Christ, a clear and full exhibition has been made of the Father's personality, and that in the Mediator, all the glory of the Godhead is realised and manifested—so as for it to be reflected on the Church and hereby to be known and enjoyed, and so as for God to be glorified. A manifestation consists in revealing, so our Lord revealed and made known the "name" of God. He did so by His incarnation, by His holy life, by His magnifying of the Law, by His preaching, by

His miracles, by His sufferings and death, by His triumphant resurrection, by His ascension. He did so by His Spirit, for it was more than an external manifestation of God which Christ made unto His own—namely, an internal, by supernatural revelation, just as He “opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luk 24:45).

That which we have dwelt upon at such length above is, that if the Benediction sets before us, in summarised form, the Christian doctrine of God, it is to the Lord Jesus we are especially indebted for that revelation; not exclusively in the letter of it, but supremely so in the spirit thereof. It is because this is not sufficiently realised, even by many of God’s dear people, and also because we find the subject so fascinating, that instead of entering at once into a detailed exposition of 2 Corinthians 13:14 or even of offering some more definite remarks upon the Holy Trinity, we deemed it best to make clear what we owe to our Redeemer in making known to us the character of God Himself and the relations which He sustains to us. As He averred, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal him*” (Mat 11:27). As none can approach unto the Father except by Christ’s mediation, so none can have any vital and spiritual knowledge of Him except by Christ’s supernatural revelation of Him to the soul.

When our Lord declared, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (Joh 14:9), He uttered words with a far deeper significance than appears on their surface. Locally they were spoken more by way of reproof, for Philip had said unto Him, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (Joh 14:8). To which the Saviour replied, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” My life, My teaching, My works, reveal plainly enough who I am. And then He added, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (Joh 14:9). But it is to be remembered that the Spirit was not then given as He now is, and that the hearts of these apostles were sore troubled (verse 1) at the prospect of His death and His subsequent departure from them. But in its deeper meaning, “he that hath seen me” refers not to any physical sight of Him, but he that has been granted a spiritual view of Him with the eyes of a Divinely-enlightened understanding—such an one is enabled to recognise His *oneness* with the Father, and to exclaim, “my Lord and my God” (Joh 20:28).

The two things we have mentioned above are brought together in that familiar statement, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). First, the clearest revelation of that God is and what He is, is made in the person of Christ, so that those who refuse to see God in the Redeemer lose all true knowledge of Him. Second, as the glory of God is spiritual, it can only be spiritually discerned. Only in God’s light can we see Him who is light, and therefore God must shine in our hearts to give us a real and experimental knowledge of Himself—for such knowledge of Him is not by mental apprehension, nor that which one man can communicate to another. Our reception of that light is not the result of our will or any effort put forth by us, but is the immediate effect of a Divine fiat, as when at the beginning of this world God said, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen 1:3). God created light, and He awakens the dead souls of His elect, thereby calling them out of darkness into His own marvellous light, whereby they behold Himself shining in the perfection of grace and truth in the face or person of Jesus Christ. Nothing but the exercise of Omnipotence can produce a miracle so wondrous and so blessed. God shines in our hearts by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit.

Here then is found the answer to that all-important question, How may I obtain a better, deeper, fuller and more influential knowledge of God? By the heart’s occupation with the Lord Jesus. By studying and meditating upon all that is revealed in Holy Writ concerning His wondrous person and work. By realizing my complete dependency upon the Holy Spirit and begging Him to take of the things of Christ and show them unto me (Joh 16:14); and therefore, by abstaining from everything which grieves the Spirit and would (morally) hinder Him from performing this office work of His. Nothing can make up for or take the place of personal intercourse with the Redeemer. It is only as we behold, with the eyes of faith and love, the glory of the Lord in the mirror of the Lord that we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Then let us emulate the apostle and make it our chief ambition and endeavour “that I may know him” (Phi 3:10)—for in knowing Him, we arrive at the knowledge of the triune God.

The Christian Benediction stands closely linked with both the baptism of Christ and the baptismal formula which He gave to His disciples. The former presents to us a most remarkable scene—for it was there that the three Persons of the Godhead were openly manifested together, in connection with that which gave a symbolical showing forth of the work of redemption. John the Baptist had come preaching repentance toward God and faith in His Lamb who should take away the sin of the world, while he also made definite mention of the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:11). When the Saviour presented Himself for baptism at the hands of His forerunner in the Jordan, He came as our Surety acknowledging that death was His due, and it was there He entered upon that path which was to terminate at the cross. As He rose from that symbolical grave, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God in form as a dove descended and alighted upon Him, thereby anointing Him for His priestly work (Act 10:38). At the same time, the Father's voice was audibly heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17). "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (Joh 10:17)—and here, while emblematically pledging Himself so to do, the Father attested His pleasure in Him and the acceptance of His offering.

Christ's reception of the Spirit at the Jordan was the equipment for His messianic ministry. And as He was sent, and anointed by the Spirit, so He commissions and endows His ambassadors: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:" (Joh 20:21, 22). After which He gave them the great commission: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them [after they had been taught and become disciples or Christians] in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" (Mat 28:18-20). Baptism into "the name" means baptism unto God, and the name of God in the new covenant is "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"—the Triune God being now fully revealed. That was the culmination and consummation of Christ's teaching concerning God. He ordained that rite for all time to be the initiating avowal of faith for all who would enter His kingdom. It is the inspired formula with which all believers are to be received into Christian fellowship, for it sets forth the fundamental doctrine of the Christian Church. It is both the basis of all Christian doctrine and the general confession of the Christian Faith. —A.W.P.

THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA

24. Fifteenth Miracle – Part 2

“Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day” (2Ki 6:31). This was the language of hatred and fury. Refusing to own that it was his own impenitency and obduracy which was the procuring cause of the terrible straits to which his kingdom was now reduced, Jehoram turned an evil eye on the prophet and determined to make a scapegoat of him. As though the man of God was responsible for “the famine,” Israel’s apostate king took a horrible oath that he should be promptly slain. He was well acquainted with what had happened in the reign of his parents, when in answer to the words of Elijah, there had been no rain on Samaria (1Ki 17:1), and he probably considered that his own desperate situation was due to Elisha’s prayers. Though just as Ahab declined to recognise that the protracted drought was a Divine judgment upon his own idolatry, so his son now ignored the fact that it was his personal sins that had called down the present expression of Divine wrath.

This solemn and awful incident should be viewed in the light of that Divine indictment, “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7)—and that, my reader, is true of *your* mind and of *my* mind by nature. You may not believe it, but He before whose omniscient eye your heart is open, declares it to be so. You may be quite unconscious of your awful condition, but that does not alter the fact. If you were better acquainted with the true God, made sensible of His ineffable holiness and inexorable justice, and realised that it was *His* hand that smites you when your body suffers acute pain or when your circumstances are most distressing, you might find it easier to discover how your heart really beats toward Him and the ill-will you bear Him. True, that fearful “enmity” does not always manifest itself in the same way or to the same degree—for in His mercy, God often places His restraining hand upon that wicked and prevents the full outbursts of their hostility and madness. But when that restraining hand is removed, their case is like that described in Revelation 16:10, 11: “They gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”

And why do we say that Jehoram’s conduct on this occasion made manifest “the enmity of the carnal mind against God”? Because, while he was unable to do Jehovah any injury directly, he determined to visit his spite upon Him indirectly, by maltreating His servant. Ah my reader, there is important—if solemn—instruction for us in that. Few people realise the *source* from which proceeds the bitterness, the opposition made against, the cruel treatment meted out to many of the ministers of the Gospel. As true representatives of the Holy One, they are a thorn in the side of the ungodly. Though they do them no harm, but instead desire and seek their highest good, yet are they detested by those who want to be left alone in their sins. Nothing recorded in human history more plainly and fearfully displays the depravity of fallen man and his alienation from God than his behaviour toward the most faithful of His servants—supremely manifested when the Lord of glory took upon Him the form of a servant and tabernacled among men. It was just because He made known and revealed the character of God as none else ever did, that man’s hatred of and enmity against Him was so inveterately and fiercely exhibited.

“But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him” (2Ki 6:32). This verse also needs to be pondered in the light of other Scriptures. For example: “Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Pro 1:33). The one who truly fears the Lord, fears not man, and his heart is preserved from those trepidations which so much disturb the rest and so often torment the wicked. No, “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings”—he shall neither have alarming anticipations of such, nor be dismayed when they actually arrive. And why not? “His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD” (Psa 112:7). Rumours do not shake him, nor does he quake when they are authenticated. For he is assured that his “times” are in the hand of the Lord (Psa 31:15). And therefore, is he kept in peace. In the light of all that is recorded of him, who can doubt that Elisha and his companions had been on their knees before the Throne of grace, and now calmly awaited events. That is the holy privilege of the saints in seasons of acutest stress and distress: To “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him” (Psa 37:7).

“And the king sent a man from before him” (2Ki 6:32). This man was dispatched post-haste ahead of Jehoram, either to announce his awful decision or to put it into actual execution. Had the king paused to reflect, he should have realized that it was one thing to form such a determination, but quite another to carry it out. Had not Benhadad, only a short time previously, sent a “great host” not only of footmen, but of “horses and chariots” against this servant of the Lord (2Ki 6:14)—only for them to discover their impotency against him! But when a soul (or a people) is abandoned of the Lord, he is given up to a spirit of madness, so that not only does God have no place in his thoughts, but he is no longer capable of acting rationally—rationality and spirituality are closely connected. “But ere the messenger came to him, he [Elisha] said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?” (2Ki 6:32).

“And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?” (2Ki 6:33). We confess we do not find it easy to ascertain the precise force of this verse, not even its grammatical meaning. The first sentence is clear, for the “while he yet talked” evidently refers to what Elisha was saying to the elders. The difficulty is to discover the antecedent of the “And *he* said”: the nearest is the “him” or Elisha; yet, certainly *he* would not say the proposed murder of himself (“this evil”) was “of the Lord” ordered by Him. The next is “the messenger”—but the prophet had given definite orders that *he* was not to be admitted, nor would this agree with what follows in 2 Kings 7:1, 2. We, therefore, regard the second sentence as recording the words of the king himself, who had followed immediately on the heels of his messenger—thus the more remote, but *principal*, antecedent of verses 30, 31: just as we understood “the man whom ye seek” as meaning Jehoram, rather than Elisha (2Ki 6:19).

But what did the king signify by “*this* evil is of the LORD”? (2Ki 6:33). We certainly do not concur with M. Henry and Scott that he referred to the siege and famine—for not only is the grammar of the passage against such a view, but it is in direct opposition to everything else which is recorded of this son of Jezebel. He did not believe in Jehovah at all, and therefore, his language must be regarded as that of derision and blasphemy. The context shows he was in a towering rage, that he regarded Elisha as being in some way responsible for the present calamity, and that he was determined to put a sudden end to his life. Fully intending to execute his murderous design, he now burst in on the prophet and said, “This evil is of the LORD.” Those were the words of contemptuous mockery: you profess to be a servant of an all-powerful Jehovah, let’s see what He can do for you now—behold me as His executioner if you please. “What should I wait for the LORD any longer?” (2Ki 6:33). Jehovah has no place in *my* thoughts or plan: the situation is hopeless, so I shall waste no more time, but slay you and surrender to Benhadad and take my chance.

“Then Elisha said” (2Ki 7:1). “Then” looks back to all that has been before us in the last ten verses of 2 Kings 6. “Then”: when “all the hosts of Syria” were besieging Samaria; “then”: when there was a great famine and things had come to such an extreme pass that the people were paying immense prices for the vilest of offals, and mothers were consuming their own infants. “Then”: when the king of Israel had sworn that the prophet should be beheaded this very day; “then”: when the king in a white heat of passion entered Elisha’s abode to carry out his murderous intention. “Then”—*what*? The prophet gave way to abject despair and broke forth in bitter lamentations of murmuring rebellion? No indeed. Then what? Elisha flung himself at the king’s feet and pleaded with him to spare his life? Very far from it: such is not the way the ambassadors of the King of kings conduct themselves in a crisis. Instead, “Then Elisha said, [calmly and quietly] Hear ye the word of the LORD” (2Ki 7:1). To what import?—that His patience is exhausted, that He will now pour out His wrath and utterly consume you? No, the very reverse; the last thing they could have expected him to say.

“Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for [as little as] a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” (2Ki 7:1). This brings us, third, to *the announcement* of the amazing miracle which was about to be wrought. In view of the next verse, it is quite clear that the prophet addressed himself to the king and those who had accompanied him. It was as though he said, I have listened to the derisive and insulting words which you have spoken of my Master; now hear ye that *He* has to say! And what was His message on this occasion? This: He is about to have mercy upon your kingdom. He is on the point of working a miracle within the next twenty-four hours—which will entirely reverse the present situation, so that not

only will the Syrians depart, but there shall be provided an abundant supply of food, which will fully meet the needs of your people; and that, without a blow being struck or your royal coffers being any the poorer.

Admire here the remarkable *faith* of Elisha. "Then": when things were at their lowest possible ebb, when the situation was desperate beyond words, when the outlook appeared to be utterly hopeless. Mark the implicit confidence of the prophet in that dark hour. He had received a message of good tidings from his Master, and he hesitated not to announce it. Ah, but put yourself in his place, my reader, and remember that he was a man "of like passions" with us; and therefore, liable to be cast down by an evil heart of unbelief. It is a great mistake for us to look upon the prophets as super-human characters. In this case—as in all parallel ones—God was pleased to place His treasure in an "earthen vessel," that the glory might be *His*. Elisha was just as liable to the attacks of Satan as we are. For all we know to the contrary and reasoning from the law of analogy, it is quite likely that the Enemy of souls came to him at that time with his evil suggestions and said, May you not be mistaken in concluding that you have received such a word as this from the Lord? Nay, you *are* mistaken—your own wish is father to the thought: you are deluded into imagining that such a thing can be.

Those who are experimentally acquainted with the conflict between faith and unbelief, who are frequently made to cry out, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24) will have little difficulty in following us in what has just been said. They who know something from first-hand acquaintance of the tactics of the Devil, and the methods of his assaults, will not deem our remarks above as far-fetched. Rather, will they concur that it is more than likely Elisha was hotly assailed by the Adversary at this very time. Would he not pose too as an angel of light, and preach a little sermon to the prophet, saying. A holy God is now acting in judgment righteously scourging the idolatrous Jehoram; and therefore, you must certainly be mistaken in supposing He is about to act in a way of mercy. At any rate, exercise prudence, wait a while longer lest you make a fool of yourself: it would be cruel to raise false hopes in the starving people! But if so, Elisha heeded him not, but being strong in faith, he gave glory to God. It was just such cases as this that the apostle had in mind when he mentioned the faith of "the prophets" in Hebrews 11:32.

Ah, my reader, Elisha was assured that what he had received was "the Word" of Him "that cannot lie" (Tit 1:2), and no matter how much opposed it was to common sense and to all outward appearances, he firmly took his stand upon it. The "faith of God's elect" (Tit 1:1) is no fiction but a glorious reality. It is something more than a beautiful ideal to talk about and sing of. It is a Divine gift, a supernatural principle, which not only overcomes the world, but survives the "fiery trial" (1Pe 4:12)—yea, issues therefrom refined. Elisha was not to put to confusion. That Divine "word"—though perhaps quite unexpected and contrary to his own anticipation—was faithfully and literally fulfilled; and remember that this is recorded for *our* learning and consolation. We, too, have in our hands the Word of Truth, but do we have it in our hearts? Are we really relying upon its promises, no matter how unlikely their accomplishment may seem to carnal reason? If so, we are resting upon a sure foundation, and we too shall have our faith vindicated and God will be glorified through and by us.

But let us look higher now than Elisha's faith in that Divine word to the One who gave it him. It was the Lord manifesting Himself as "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10) to those who were utterly unworthy. In their dire extremity, the Lord had mercy upon them and remembered they were the seed of Abraham; and therefore, He would not entirely destroy them. He turned an eye of pity on the starving city and promised them speedy relief from the awful famine. How truly wonderful is His mercy! He was saying, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hos 11:8). But that mercy rested on a righteous basis, there was a handful of salt in Samaria which preserved it from destruction—the prophet and "the elders." Rightly was Elisha styled by a later king, "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" (2Ki 13:14), for his presence in their midst was a better defence than a multitude of infantry and cavalry—a queen feared the prayers of Knox far more than any arm of flesh.

And may not what has just been pointed out provide a ray of hope for us in this, spiritually speaking, dark night? Of old Israel was reminded, "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" (Deu 4:7). Has not *that* been true of Britain the past four centuries as of no other people? God has shown us favours, granted us privileges—such as no other nation in the world has enjoyed. And we, like Israel of old, have evilly requited Him and abused His

great benefits. For years past, His judgments have been upon us; and like Israel again, we have sadly failed to bow to His rod and turn from our sins. And now we are passing through the greatest crisis of our history, and our people after still impenitent. But thank God we have a king and queen who are radically different from Jehoram and his mother Jezebel. If God was so reluctant to abandon Israel, may He not continue to show us mercy, and for the sake of the little "salt" still left in our midst, spare us from destruction? Time will tell, but we are not left without hope.

"Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" (2Ki 7:2). Here was the response that was made to Jehovah's word through His prophet: instead of being received with thanksgiving and tears of gratitude, it met with a contemptuous sneer. The courtier's language expressed the scepticism of carnal reason. Unbelief dared to question the Divine's promise—illustrative of the unregenerate's rejection of the Gospel. This man argued from what he could *see*: as no possible relief was visible, he scorned its probability, or rather certainty. "And he [Elisha] said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof" (2Ki 7:2). Let it be noted that the prophet wasted no breath in reasoning with this sceptic. It is not only useless, but most unbecoming for a servant of the Lord to descend to the level of such objectors. Instead, he simply affirmed that this man *should* witness the miracle but be unable to share in its benefits. God Himself will yet answer that sceptics of this age, as He did that one, with condign judgment. Such will be the doom of unbeliever: they shall *see* the redeemed feasted at the marriage supper of the Lamb, yet not partake thereof (Mat 8:11, 12). —A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

5d. Its Arrangement

Consider now Christ's relation to the covenant. 1. He is the very *substance* of it: "I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa 49:8); as His our "propitiation" (1Jo 2:1, 2) and "peace" (Eph 2:14), so He is our covenant. 2. He is the *Witness* of the covenant (Isa 55:3, 4) for He saw, heard and testified it all; and therefore, He is termed, "the faithful and true witness" (Rev 3:14). 3. He is "the *prince* of the covenant" (Dan 11:22 and compare 8:11, 25), called "Messiah the Prince" (Dan 9:25), because He is given the royal right to administer it. 4. He is "the *messenger* of the covenant" (Mal 3:1), acting as God's "Apostle" to us (Heb 3:1) and our Redeemer Representative before God. 5. He is the "*surety*" of the covenant—"testament" is the same Greek word (Heb 7:22, 26)—because He engaged Himself to discharge the obligations of His people, its covenantees. 6. He is "the *mediator* of a better covenant" (Heb 8:6), because He stands between and serves both parties—God and His people. 7. He is the *Testator* of the covenant (Heb 9:16, 17), because He has sealed it with His blood.

Consider its various and descriptive designations. 1. It is an "everlasting covenant" (Heb 13:20), because it was entered into before all worlds, and because its blessings shall be administered and enjoyed in perpetuity. 2. It is a "covenant of salt" (Num 18:19; 2Ch 13:5), because it is incorruptible, inviolable, perpetual; because its provisions seasoneth us and makes all our services savoury to God (compare Col 4:6). 3. It is a "covenant of...peace" (Isa 54:10)—for therein, Christ engaged to pacify the Divine Judge, remove the infirmity of His people, and effect a mutual reconciliation. 4. It is a "new covenant" (Jer 31:31)—for it secures for His people a new standing before God, makes them new creatures in Christ, and puts a new song in their mouths. 5. It is a "covenant...of life" (Mal 2:5)—for by its terms, life is promised, restored, and given more abundantly. 6. It is a "holy covenant" (Luk 1:72), manifesting the ineffable purity of God in all its arrangements. 7. It is a covenant "of promise" (Eph 2:12), both to Christ and His seed.

In view of what has just been pointed out, well may we adopt the language of Octavius Winslow and say, "This covenant must be *rich* in its provisions of mercy, seeing it is made by Jehovah Himself, the Fountain of all holiness, goodness, mercy and truth, whose very essence is 'Love.' It must be *glorious*, because the second Person in the blessed Trinity became its Surety. It must be *stable*, because it is eternal. It must meet all the circumstances of a necessitous Church, because it is 'ordered in all things.' It must be *sure*, seeing its administration is in the hands of an infinitely glorious Mediator, who died to secure it, rose again to confirm it, and ever liveth to dispense its blessings as the circumstances of the saints require." To which might be added, it must be *inviolable*, since the eternal God is its Author, and the precious blood of Christ has sealed it. And therefore, it should be "all my salvation, and all my desire" (2Sa 23:5), for what more could I ask or wish!

Returning now to the covenant *promises* which the Father made unto the Mediator. In addition to those considered in our last, Christ was assured of a "*seed*." "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed" (Isa 53:10). In the previous verses, we are shown what was required from Christ in the discharge of His covenant engagements. Here, we have revealed the reward which the Father bestowed upon Him because of His fidelity. In the last three verses of this wonderful chapter, we also behold the prophet replying to the Jews, who regarded the cross as the "stumblingblock," being scandalized at the idea of their Messiah suffering such an ignominious death. But it is here pointed out that Christ's crucifixion is not to be accounted an infamy to Him, because it was the very means ordained by God, whereby He propagated unto Himself a spiritual seed. He had Himself pointed out, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (Joh 12:24).

Observe well that in Isaiah 53:10, it was promised Him, "He shall see his seed" which, coming immediately after, "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" clearly implied His resurrection. Accordingly, this is more explicitly stated in what at once follows: "He shall prolong His days." The figure is used again in the next verse: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:11). "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (Joh 16:21), considering her sufferings to be more than recompensed by the happy issue of them. So the Redeemer deems

Himself richly rewarded for all His pains by the children which are His, as the result of His dying travail: He is “satisfied” (Isa 53:11) and “rejoiceth” (Luk 15:7; Mat 18:13) as each one of them is brought forth.

“This seed” which was promised Christ, occupies a prominent place in the great Covenant Psalm—the 89th. There we hear the Father saying, “I have made a covenant with my chosen [or “elect”—Isa 42:1], I have sworn unto David my servant, *Thy seed* will I establish for ever” (Psa 89:3, 4). And again, “I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever” (Psa 89:27-29). In the verses that follow, His “seed” are termed His “children,” and assurance is given that though they be wayward and the rod be visited upon their transgressions, yet God’s covenant faithfulness shall be seen in their preservation (Psa 89:31-36). In the Cross Psalm, it was declared, “A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation” (Psa 22:30). It was to be a perpetual seed: “His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun” (Psa 72:17).

Christ then was assured by the Father from the beginning of the success of His undertaking and promised a seed which should bear His image, serve Him, and show forth His praises. “I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth” (Isa 43:5, 6). Though they be born into this world in a state of unregeneracy, God promised they should be born again and savingly drawn to embrace Christ as their Lord and Saviour: “Thy people [said the Father to the Mediator—see verse 1] shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth” (Psa 110:3). Yet again, Christ is represented as saying, “Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me [quoted by the apostle of Christ in Hebrews 2:13] are for signs and for wonders in Israel, for the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion” (Isa 8:18).

As there are two parts of the covenant, so the elect were given to Christ in a twofold manner. As He was to fulfill the terms of the covenant, they were entrusted to Him as a *charge*; but in fulfilment thereof, the Father promised to Christ to bestow them upon Him as a *reward*. The elect are to be regarded first, as those who were beloved of the Father before time began. They are designated God’s “own elect” (Greek of Luke 18:7), which signifies both His delight with and singular propriety in them. He chose them before all others, He preferred them above all others, and set His heart upon them. As such, the Father gave them to Christ as God-man Mediator—“set up” in the Divine councils; and therefore, having a real subsistence—as a choice expression of His love for Him. Second, they are to be regarded as God foreviewed them under their defection in Adam, and as such, God gave them as a charge to Christ to be raised up from all the ruins of the fall, and also as a reward for His work on their behalf. The twofoldness of Truth needs ever to be borne in mind.

Viewed as *fallen*, the elect were given to Christ as a *charge* for whose salvation He was held responsible. They were committed to Him as “prisoners” (Isa 49:9), whose lawful discharge He must obtain. They were committed to Him as desperate patients, whom He must bind up and heal (Isa 61:1). They were committed to Him as strayed and *lost sheep* (Isa 53:6), whom He must seek out and bring into the fold (Joh 10:16). God placed His elect in the hands of the Mediator and made them His care. How graciously and tenderly He discharged His trust appears in that touching word, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa 40:11). It appears again in that wonderful word, “And when he hath found it [the lost sheep], he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing” (Luk 15:5). Finally, it was evidenced at the moment of His arrest: “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none” (Joh 18:8, 9).

On the fulfilment of His covenant engagement that people were given to Christ as His *reward*—as the fruit of His travail, as the trophies of His glorious victory over sin, Satan and death, as His crown of rejoicing in the day when all the inhabitants of the universe shall be assembled together, as His beloved and glorious Bride when the marriage of the Lamb is come. In contemplation of this, God made certain promises to the Surety concerning them. He promised to bestow upon them the gift of eternal life. “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, that cannot lie, *promised* before the world began” (Tit 1:1, 2). As the elect then had no actual existence, that promise must have been made in their name

to the Surety. That particular promise virtually included *all* the benefits which Christ procured for His people, for as “eternal death” contains the essence of all evils, so “eternal life” contains the essence of all blessings.

“The LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:3); “This is *the* promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1Jo 2:25)—how perfect is the harmony between the two Testaments! If we break up that promise into its component parts we may say that, first, God promised to *regenerate* His people or bestow upon them a spiritual nature which delights in His Law: “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb 8:10). Second, He promised to *justify* them, the negative part of which is to remit their transgressions: “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). Third, He promised to *sanctify* them: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you” (Eze 36:25). Fourth, He promised to *preserve* them: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jer 32:40). Fifth, He promised to *glorify* them: “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa 35:10).

Finally, God made promise *of the Holy Spirit* to Christ. What we are now to contemplate is admittedly one of the deep things of God; and therefore, requires to be handled with prayerful concern and godly caution. But if on the one hand, we are certain to err should we deviate one iota from the Scriptures; on the other hand, it is to the glory of God and His Christ and to the needful instruction of our souls that faith humbly receives *all* that is revealed to us in Holy Writ. Now Scripture teaches not only that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon Christ (Isa 11:1, 2) during the days of His earthly ministry, that God put His Spirit upon Him to furnish Him for His great work (Isa 42:1), that He was anointed with the Spirit in order to preach the Gospel (Isa 61:1) and work miracles (Act 10:38; Mat 12:28), but the oracles of Truth make it very clear that Christ received the Spirit in another manner and for a different purpose after His ascension to heaven—namely, that to the God-man Mediator has been given the *administration* of the Spirit’s activities and operations; and this, both in the sphere of grace Churchward, and in the sphere of providence worldward.

In John 7:39, we read that “Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified,” but He was both promised to Christ (Psa 45:7) and by Christ. Let us seek to attentively consider some of His statements concerning the Holy Spirit’s relation unto Himself. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send *in my name*” (Joh 14:26), the force of which is intimated in “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (Joh 16:23). Again, “But when the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the Father” (Joh 15:26)—which is parallel with Christ’s being “sent” by Him (Joh 3:17). And again, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (Joh 16:7). Such repetition argues both the importance of this truth and our slowness to receive it.

To the writer, three things are clear concerning the above passages. First, each was spoken by the God-man Mediator—for they were the utterances of the Word made flesh. Second, from John 7:39 and 16:7, it is apparent that the advent of the Spirit was dependent upon the ascension of Christ. Third, from His repeated “whom I will send unto you” (Joh 15:26), we learn that in this present era, the activities of the Spirit are regulated by the will of the Lord Christ. That the Spirit is at the economical disposal of the Redeemer was evidenced after His resurrection and before His ascension—for to the apostles He said, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (Joh 20:21); and then we are told, “And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (Joh 20:22 and compare Gen 2:7). And as He was on the point of leaving them, the Saviour said, “Behold, I *send* the promise of my Father upon you” (Luk 24:49)—which was duly accomplished ten days later.

In Acts 2, when Peter explained the supernatural phenomena of the day of Pentecost, he said, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having *received* of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, *he* hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Act 2:32, 33)—the glorified Saviour hath poured forth this effusion of the Spirit’s gifts. On which the Puritan Thomas Goodwin—after quoting Psalm 45:7 and explaining it by Acts 2:36—said on verse 33, “which ‘receiving’ is not to be only understood of His bare and single receiving the promise of the Holy

Spirit for us, by having power given Him to shed Him down upon them, as God had promised, though this *is* a true meaning of it; but further, that He had received Him first as poured forth on Himself, and so shed Him forth on them, according to that rule that whatever God doth unto us by Christ, He first doth it unto Christ” (Vol. 4, page 121). It was the Saviour’s outpouring of the Spirit’s gifts which demonstrated He had been “made both Lord and Christ” (verse 36).

From the passages quoted above, it seems plain that upon the completion of His covenant work, the Father bestowed the Spirit on Christ to administer from His mediatorial throne. In full accord with that, we hear the Lord Jesus saying from heaven, “These things saith he that *hath* the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 3:1)—that is, “hath” to administer the Holy Spirit in the plentitude of His power and the diversity of His manifestations—compare the seven-branched candlestick in Exodus 25:30, 31 and the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit to Christ in the days of His flesh (Isa 11:1, 2). On the words, “He that hath the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 3:1), Thomas Scott says, “that is, the Divine Saviour, through whom the Holy Spirit, in the variety and abundance of His precious gifts and graces *was communicated* to all the churches.” So again, in Revelation 5:6, we read, “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst...stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns [compare Matthew 28:18] and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth”—here it is Christ exercising His governmental power and administering the Spirit toward the world—as in Revelation 3:1, it was toward the Church. Thus, if on the one hand, none other ever suffered such ignominy as did the Mediator; on the other hand, none other ever has received or ever will such marks of honour as He has. —A.W.P.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

6b. Its Seasonableness

The leading principle which we sought to enunciate and illustrate in our last—namely, fruit suitable to the season—receives exemplification in that statement, “A word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Pro 15:23): A word of sympathy to one in trouble, of encouragement to the despondent, of warning to the careless. Hence, we find the minister of Christ exhorted, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2Ti 4:2)—by the “in season, out of season,” we understand, at stated times and as opportunity occurs. The same principle was exemplified by the Baptist when he said, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Mat 3:8)—praising God for His mercies at that time would have been unseasonable; rather was godly sorrow for the abuse of them called for. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh” (Ecc 3:4).

Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a godly person, but his fruit should be *seasonable*. A time of suffering calls for self-examination, confession, and the exercise of patience. A season of testing and trial requires the exercise of faith and courage. When blest with revivings and spiritual prosperity, holy joy and praise are becoming. It is written, “Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious...blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa 30:18)—wait for the time He has appointed for the development and manifestation of particular graces. Unseasonable graces are like untimely figs, which are never full flavoured. Most of us are too impatient. “No chastening for the *present* seemeth to be joyous, but grievous... nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are *exercised* thereby” (Heb 12:11)—exercised in conscience as to what has given occasion for the chastisement, exercising faith for the fulfilling of this promise, and patience while awaiting the same.

As we turn now to look at the characteristics which mark the three stages of the Christian life, it must be borne in mind, (1) We are not to understand that what is predicated of the “fathers” in nowise pertains to the “babes,” but rather that the particular grace ascribed abounds in the former more eminently. (2) That what is said of each of the three may, in different respects, belong to a single Christian, so that “young men” who are “strong” may in another way, be as weak as the “babes.” (3) We must not lose sight of God’s liberty in apportioning His grace as and when He pleases: He works not uniformly, and causes some of His people to make much more rapid progress than others during the earlier years of their Christian lives, while others who seem slow at the start overtake and pass them at a later stage.

“I write unto you, little children [“teknia”], because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1Jo 2:12). “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children [“paidia”], because ye have known the Father” (1Jo 2:13). This is the classical passage on the present aspect of our theme, though its force is somewhat obscured through the translators making no distinction between the two different Greek words they have rendered “little children.” The passage of 1 John 2:12 pertains to the whole of the “called” family of God—irrespective of growth attainment, for every believer has had his sins forgiven him for Christ’s sake. The word used there for “little children” is a term of *endearment*, and was employed by Christ in John 13:33 when addressing the apostles, and occurs again in this epistle in 1 John 2:28; 3:7, etc.

Only in 1 John 2:13 are believers graded into three distinct classes according to the degrees of their spiritual progress: “fathers,” “young men,” and “little children”—or preferably, “babes,” to mark the distinction from the word used in verse 12. That is the order of dignity and responsibility: had it been the order of *grace*, it had been “babes, young men and fathers.” As someone has said, “If Christ were to enter a Christian gathering for the purpose of showing forth His favour, He would commence with the youngest and feeblest one present; but if to judge the works of His servants, He would begin with the maturest saint.” For example, Christ appeared many times after His resurrection: He ended by manifesting Himself to the apostle Paul, but with whom did He begin?—with Mary Magdalene out of whom He had cast seven demons!

The same principle is illustrated in the parable of the "pence" (grace)—beginning with the eleventh-hour labourer; but reversed in the parable of the "talents," where *responsibility* is in view.

As we are writing on the subject of spiritual progress—or as most writers designate it, "growth in grace"—we propose to inverse the order of 1 John 2:13 and consider first the spiritual *babes*. If anyone should consider we are taking an unwarrantable liberty with the Word in so doing, we would appeal to Mark 4:28, where our Lord spoke of, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." And now as we seek to grapple more closely with our present task, we have to acknowledge we experience considerable difficulty in attempting to set forth with any measure of definiteness what it is which specially marks the spiritual "babe" in contrast from the "young men" and "fathers"; or if others prefer, that which distinguishes the "blade" from the "ear," and "the full corn in the ear." But if we cannot satisfy our readers, we trust that we may be kept from confusing any of them.

In view of the vastly superior conditions which obtained in the days of the apostles—illustrated by such passages as Acts 2:44, 45; 11:19-21; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11—it is not to be supposed that many of the features which marked that glorious period will be reproduced in a "day of small things" (Zec 4:10), such as we are now living in. The line of demarcation between the Church and the world was much more plainly drawn then than it is now; the contrast between lifeless and living professors more easily perceived, and so on. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the distinct stages of the Christian life and the different forms which believers occupied in the school of Christ, were then more plainly marked; and though the difference be one of degree rather than of kind, yet that very difference renders it the more difficult for us to describe or identify the several grades.

In his most excellent "Letters on Religious Subjects," John Newton has three pieces entitled, "Grace in the Blade," "Grace in the Ear," "Grace in the Full Corn." He began his second piece by saying, "The manner of the Lord's work in the hearts of His people is not easily traced, though the fact is certain and the evidence demonstrable from Scripture. In attempting to explain it, we can only speak in *general*, and are at a loss to form such a description as shall take in the immense variety of cases which occur in the experience of believers." It is just because so many preachers have failed to take into their account that "immense variety of cases," and instead, have pictured the experience of conversion as though it were cast in a *uniform* mould, that numbers of their hearers and readers have been much stumbled, fearing they were never truly converted because their experience differed widely from that described by the preacher.

George Whitefield (1714-1770) states, "I have heard of a person who was in a company with fourteen ministers of the Gospel, some of whom were eminent servants of Christ, and yet not one of them could tell the time when God first manifested Himself to their soul." Then he went on to say to his hearers and readers, "We do not love the pope, because we love to be popes ourselves, and set up our own experience as a standard to others. Those that had such a conversion as the Philippian jailor or the Jews on the day of Pentecost may say, You are not Christians at all because you had not the like terrible experience. 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, but whether it was productive of the new birth and whether Christ has been formed in your hearts"!

Some are likely to object to what is said above and say, Though the circumstantial of conversion may vary in different cases, yet the essentials are the same in all: the Law must do its work before the soul is prepared for the Gospel, the heart must be made sensible of its sickness before it will betake itself unto the great Physician. Even though that should be the experience of many of the saints, yet the Holy Spirit is by no means tied down to that order of things, nor do the Scriptures warrant any such restricted view. Take the cases of Peter and Andrew his brother and the two sons of Zebedee (Mat 4:18-22), and there is nothing in the sacred narrative to show that *they* went through a season of conviction of sin before they followed Christ! Nor was there in the case of Matthew 9:9. Zaccheus was apparently attracted by mere curiosity to obtain a sight of the Lord Jesus, and a work of grace was wrought in his heart immediately, and he "received him *joyfully*" (Luk 19:6)!

Let us not be misunderstood at this point. We are neither casting any reflection upon those ministers who preach the Law by which a knowledge of sin is obtained (Rom 3:20), nor disparaging the importance and necessity of conviction of sin. Rather, are we insisting that God is perfectly free to work as He pleases, and

that I have no Scriptural reason to doubt the reality of my conversion, simply because my heart was then melted by a sense of God's wondrous *love*, rather than awed by a discovery of His holiness or terrified by a realization of His wrath; and that I have no warrant to call into question the genuineness of another's conversion, merely because it was not cast in a certain mould. The all-important thing is whether the subsequent walk evidences that I have passed from death unto life. In Zechariah 12:10, "mourning" *follows*—and not precedes—a saving looking upon Christ! There are some who taste the bitterness of sin more sharply after conversion than they did before.

Now as the Holy Spirit is pleased to use different means in connection with the converting of souls, so also there is real variety in the experiences of those newly brought to a saving knowledge of the Truth. On the other hand, as there are certain essentials found in every genuine conversion—the turning from sin, self, the world unto God in Christ, receiving Him as our personal Lord and Saviour and then following Him in the path of obedience—so there are certain characteristics in babes in Christ which distinguish them from the "young men" and "fathers." And the very name by which they are designated more largely defines those characteristics. As infants or little children, they are largely creatures of impulse, swayed by their emotions more than regulated by judgment. Feelings play large part in their lives. They are very impressionable, easily influenced, and largely unsuspecting, believing readily whatever is told them by those who have their confidence.

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1Jo 2:13). *That* is the distinguishing mark which none other than that Holy Spirit has given of the spiritual infant. It is a statement which needs to be particularly taken to heart and pondered by some of our readers, for it plainly signifies that unless *we* "know the Father," we are not entitled to regard ourselves as being His children. In the natural life, the very first thing which babes and young children discover is an acknowledgement—in their infantile way—of their parents, aiming to call them by their names ("papa" and "mamma") in distinguishing them from others. And thus, it is also spiritually the distinguishing act of babes in Christ to acknowledge God to be their *Father*, and this they do by expressing, in their way, their attachment to Him, their delight in Him, and their dependence on Him, lisping out His name in their praises and petitions before the throne of grace.

What we have just pointed out is agreeable to such passages as these: "Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me" (Jer 3:19) "I am a father to [the spiritual] Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born...Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?...I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD" (Jer 31:9, 20). In the first formal instruction which the Lord Jesus gave to His young disciples, He bade them, "After this manner therefore pray ye: *Our Father* which art in heaven" (Mat 6:9). How can we approach Him with any confidence or freedom unless we view Him in this blessed relation? If we have been reconciled to Him by Jesus Christ, then God *is* our Father, and "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"! (Gal 4:6)—and that spirit causes its possessor to come in a holy familiarity and childlike manner to God, and evidences itself in desire to honour and please Him.

Not only would it be misleading to our minds for the young convert (even though old in years) to be likened unto a "little child" (Mat 18:2-5) unless there was a *real resemblance*, and thus, a propriety in employing this figure, but it would also be a strange departure from one of the well-established "ways" of God, namely, His having so wrought in the first creation as to strikingly foreshadow His works in the new creation, the natural having been made to adumbrate the spiritual. We see that principle and fact illustrated in every direction. As in the natural, so in the spiritual: there is a begetting (Jam 1:18), a conception or Christ being formed in the soul (Gal 4:19), a birth (1Pe 1:23), and that birth evidenced by a "cry" (Rom 8:15), and the newborn babe desiring "the sincere milk of the word" (1Pe 2:2)—so there are many features in common between the natural and the spiritual infant.

Little children are far more regulated by their affections than by their understanding, and the young Christian is much taken with the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit. He delights greatly in his own experience, and to hear the experience of others. As the natural child is timorous and easily scared, so the young Christian as quickly alarmed, as was evidenced by the fearing disciples on the storm-swept sea, to whom the Saviour said, "O ye of *little* faith." As the digestive system of a youngster is feeble, so the babe in Christ needs to be fed on "milk" rather than "strong meat" (Heb 5:12-14). "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (Joh 16:12). Owing to an

undeveloped understanding, babes in Christ are not “established” in the Faith: “Be no more *children*, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14).

“A young convert is much taken with his own importunity in prayer with his own enlargements and affections (they being very warm and lively), with the multitude of means and the much time he spends in the use of and observance of them; whereas, a believer of longer standing and greater measure of spiritual growth values those discoveries which the Holy Spirit gives him in prayer and inward converse with the Lord, of the Father’s free love, and the Son’s personal, particular, and prevalent intercession on his behalf: and he is more taken with those, than with his own fervour and supplications...The ‘babes’ in Christ are particularly affected with a sense and enjoyment of pardoning mercy and calling God ‘Father.’ Hence, the blessings of pardon of sin, peace with God, the spirit of adoption, and an advancement in and an increased spiritual perception of these precious realities, must be a growth in grace such as is quite suited to their spiritual stature and circumstances” (S. E. Pierce). —A.W.P.

OUR ANNUAL LETTER

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1Pe 4:11). Those words define the principal duty of Christ's servant: the Rule by which he must work, the enablement by which he is furnished, and the grand end he must ever keep in view—the glory of God. He is to speak not according to any human system, nor after his own fancies, but in undeviating harmony with the Word of God. If God is to be glorified, it must be by enforcing and opening up the teaching of Holy Writ, for God has magnified His Word above all His name (Psa 138:2)—that is, above any other revelation He has made of Himself. During our first pastorate, we wrote on the inside-page of our Bible, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deu 4:2). To which we then added Exodus 4:12; Isaiah 51:16; 55:11, and for many years, it was our practice to read them immediately before entering the pulpit.

But for the past ten years, we have been denied the holy privilege of preaching orally; and therefore, we are very thankful to find a place is given us in the above verse. As we seek to "minister" to God's people by means of our pen, we can only do so "as of the ability which God giveth" (1Pe 4:11), and that it is our privilege and duty to seek. Not to lean unto our own understanding, but to ask wisdom from Above: wisdom to discern "the present truth" (2Pe 1:12)—what is most seasonable today; wisdom to preserve the balance, to minister appropriately to such widely different classes of readers. Yet our aim must be the same now as when our voice was employed: "That God in all things may be glorified" (1Pe 4:11); that our writings may extol the Triune Jehovah, and be of such a tendency as to promote holiness in the lives of our readers; that self may be mortified and Christ exalted.

It is only by heeding the rules laid down in 1 Peter 4:11 that Christ's servant will be preserved from being either a self-seeker or a man-pleaser—two of the principal snares which beset him. If his message be according to the Divine Oracles, temptations to speculation or to adopt novelties will be nipped in the bud. If he labours according to "the ability which God giveth," he will, on the one hand, be kept in the place of humble dependence, ever seeking fresh supplies of grace; and on the other hand, he will do with his "might," whatsoever his "hand findeth to do" (Ecc 9:10). If he be regulated by this paramount motive, "that God in all things may be glorified" (1Pe 4:11), he will neither seek the smiles of men, nor fear their frowns. Instead of being in bondage to "what will people think and say of me," his only concern will be the approbation of the One he serves.

"That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 4:11). If that be kept conscientiously and constantly before the mind and heart of the minister of the Gospel, it will not only preserve him from self-seeking and men-pleasing, but it will also exert a disciplinary effect on his character and conduct. It will be a means of delivering him from slackness and slovenliness, from laziness and lethargy. He will not go into the pulpit unprepared, to preach a sermon which cost him no hard labour. And if his pen be employed, it will not scribble down the first things which enter his mind. Instead, he will "study to show himself approved unto God, a *workman* that needeth not to be ashamed." While others are sleeping, he will be pouring over the Word or pouring out his heart unto God. He will preach or write to the very best of his "ability." There is an old adage, "If a thing be worth doing, it is worth doing *well*," and surely, anything done unto the Lord and in His Name is entitled to our utmost endeavours.

"That God in all things may be glorified." Unless *that* be the editor's grand aim in the publishing of this magazine, then far better that it should now cease and he fade out into silence. The years are passing swiftly by and most of our life on earth is already behind us. The days in which we are living are much too solemn for trifling. Not only is there everything in the profane world which makes against holy living, but there is little now left in the professing world that fosters it. Judging from the many letters we receive, an increasing number of God's people are becoming more and more dependent upon the printed page for spiritual food. It comforts us to know that God's glory is bound up in the good of His people; and therefore, the most effectual way to minister unto *them* is to be governed by 1 Peter 4:11. As the private Christian can only glorify God as his motives and actions are regulated by the teaching of Holy Writ, so the public servant of God can only glorify Him as his ministry is devoted to an explaining and enforcing of the Divine Oracles. Thus our course is plain.

If the editor of this little magazine be governed by 1 Peter 4:11, then his course is not only plain, but his task is greatly simplified. If he had to ‘think up’ subjects as secular writers, then he might often be at a loss for a suitable and profitable theme for his pen; but with the inexhaustible Word of God to turn to, with its endless variety of spiritual riches available, with the Holy Spirit to instruct him, there is no need or excuse why he should ever ‘run out’ of material. Had any other textbook been ours, after penning so many thousands of pages on its contexts, we should indeed be worried over how to find something new for our readers. To the praise of God’s grace, we can say that, so far from feeling it a wearisomeness or strain, we have had more joy in preparing this year’s issues than ever before. God *does* hear the prayers of His people on our behalf!

As many of our readers have never seen the earlier volumes, we repeat here what has been said in the past, and ask the friends to kindly *refrain* from addressing us as “Rev.” Though an ordained minister of the Gospel for upwards of thirty years, we have never felt we could accept any such title. The word occurs but once in the Scriptures: “Holy and reverend is HIS Name” (Psa 111:9); and in view of that verse, it seems to us most impious, a relic of popery, to so address any worm of the earth. We condemn not our brethren who feel otherwise, but simply ask friends to please respect our scruple of conscience.

During the earlier years of publishing this magazine, when we were also active in oral ministry, preaching five or six times a week for years, we often inserted several articles in an issue from the pens of God’s servants of the past; and hence, it was necessary to append the name of each author. But since all doors have been closed against us—through our refusal to join any particular denomination and limit our activities thereto, instead of remaining “the Lord’s free man”—our energies have been undivided and more time became available for writing; until this year, every article in the “Studies” has been from our own pen. If we are spared, this will likely be the case, more or less in the future, so we shall no longer obtrude our initials at the close of each article. Will readers therefore please note that, henceforth, all unsigned articles are by the editor.

Throughout another year, the Lord has favoured us both with health and strength and freely supplied our every need. Though there is much lost ground to be recovered, we are thankful to say our 1944 circulation has shown a welcome increase. Once again, we close with a credit balance. Our principal trial now is, and will likely be, the difficulty of getting the magazine printed. Printers are short staffed, handicapped by the absenteeism of workmen, and tempted to do temporary work for the Government at high rates. We are always prompt in forwarding manuscript. We thank our readers for being patient, especially those abroad, and ask them to make *this* a definite matter of prayer. We hope to continue the present series of articles in 1945, and that the 1944 bound volume will be available by the end of January—at 5/6 post paid (\$1.25). Commending you all to God and the Word of His grace, Yours by Divine mercy. —A.W. and Vera E. Pink



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