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NATIONAL OWNING OF GOD.

“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut. 32:3). Great indeed is the Lord, yea, “His greatness is unsearchable” (Psa. 145:3). Before Him “the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity” (Isa. 40:15, 17). “The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him!” (Job 26:11, 12, 14).

Listen to His own challenge: “To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa. 40:25, 26). Hear again His own affirmation, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me” (Isa. 45:5). “He is wise in heart and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in His anger . . . Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number” (Job 9:4, 5, 10).

“In His times He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Because God is so excellent and exalted His requirement is “ascribe ye greatness unto” Him. He requires that His majesty be recognized, His authority owned, His wisdom sought, His glory be made our supreme aim and endeavour. Our homage, our allegiance, our submission are His due. His claims upon us are paramount. He made us and can destroy us. We are entirely at His disposal, to be dealt with as He pleases. And none can say to Him, Nay.

“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” He is the One who “doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4:35). He is the One by whom “kings reign and princes decree justice” (Prov. 8:15). He alone can do us good, supply our needs, preserve our lives. He is the One before whom all must yet appear and give account of their stewardship. “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God”: those words were addressed unto a nation: it is an exhortation which is not confined to the regenerate but applies to all men at large. Let us point out some of the principal ways by which a nation ascribes greatness unto God—not only in words, but in a practical manner.

By owning His Word. It is in the Holy Scriptures that the character of the Lord God is most fully revealed and wherein His perfections are set forth. All the wisdom, morality, righteousness and benevolence which are to be found among men have issued from that Sacred Fount. If greatness is to be ascribed unto God then His Holy Word must be given the first place in the counsels of government, in the home and in the schools. Our children must be made acquainted with His ineffable holiness, His mighty works, His acts of judgment upon sin, that they may be warned against offending Him. Those who

honour His Word, He honours. When an African chief inquired of Queen Victoria the secret of Britain's greatness she pointed to the Bible lying on her table.

By revering His Sabbath. To ascribe greatness to our God is the first and chief design of this ordinance, for it is an acknowledgement of Him as the Maker of Heaven and earth. By keeping the Sabbath holy unto the Lord we own His proprietorship over our souls, our bodies and our time. Observe both the order and the reason in, "Ye shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:30)—those who desecrate the Sabbath only mock God when they pretend to worship Him. The Sabbath Day Psalm (92: see title) opens with, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praise unto Thy name, O Most High." They who keep the Sabbath "honour Him" (Isa. 58:13), knowing Him as "the LORD their God" (Ezek. 20:20).

By owning His Holiness. This is the principal jewel in the crown of His perfections. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is ineffably pure, without spot or blemish. His wisdom is a holy wisdom, His power is a holy power, His love is a holy love. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). "The LORD is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works" (Psa. 145:17). Therefore is He "angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. 7:11), and therefore sin must be put away from us if we are to enjoy His blessing—"your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 5:25). If we as a nation would ascribe greatness unto our God we must humble ourselves before Him, confess our sins, and reform our ways.

By acknowledging His judgments. Because God is holy He refuses to wink at sin, yet because He is merciful forgiveness is granted to those who repent and confess their sins. But where a people instead of forsaking their wickedness continue sinning with a high hand and brazen forehead, then the Lord pours out His indignation upon them. He will not be mocked with impunity but gives proof of His displeasure. Plagues are sent, peace is taken away, all the miseries of war are experienced. Nevertheless He will stay His hand if His rod is acknowledged. Even when Pharaoh said, "I have sinned against the LORD . . . entreat the LORD your God that He may take away from me this death" (Exo. 10:16, 17), the plague was stayed. If we would ascribe greatness unto our God we must acknowledge, "I know O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psa. 119:75).

By seeking His guidance. The first recorded failure of Israel in the Wilderness was, "They made haste, they forgot His works, they waited not for His counsel" (Psa. 106:13). The finest equipped army, the ablest leadership, the most thoroughly prepared plan of campaign are not sufficient to ensure success. Unless wisdom be given from above all human schemes and efforts are likely to come to nothing. Joshua was imposed upon by the Gibeonites because he "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (9:14). Greatness is ascribed unto the Lord God when our leaders confess their insufficiency and seek help from Above. David was an experienced and successful warrior, but observe how again and again he "enquired of the Lord" (1 Sam. 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23).

By relying on His Power. It is not sufficient to seek Divine guidance, there must also be dependence upon His power. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host" (Psa. 33:16). "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but victory is of the LORD" (Prov. 21:31). "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One" (Isa. 31:1). In the heyday of success

Napoleon said, "God is on the side of those with the biggest battalions," but he learned otherwise before the end of his career. We ascribe greatness unto our God when we trust in the might which He supplies.

By recognizing His Providences. Events do not happen by chance: the history of a nation, like the life of an individual, is ordered by the Lord. He is the One who sets up and casts down, gives and withholds. The weather is regulated by Him, the crops are determined by His good pleasure. It is nothing but atheism or infidelity to deny God's oversight of all the affairs of earth. If, then, greatness is to be ascribed unto our God, recognition must be made of His good hand and thanksgiving returned for all His mercies. "*Thine*, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, *and the victory*, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all" (1 Chron. 29:11).

In proportion as these seven things *have* characterized the national life of Great Britain, of her Colonies, of the U.S.A.—has greatness been ascribed unto the Lord God, and to the same degree has He honoured those who honoured Him. Conversely it is equally true that the measure in which these seven things *have not* marked our national life—as material interests, the love of pleasure, a pagan mode of life, the setting up of idols have crowded out that which was due unto Him—instead of His smile we have experienced His frown.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

25. *False Prophets*: Matthew 7: 15.

First a brief review of last month's article. This warning against false prophets or preachers of error forms an appendage to our Lord's teaching on the "strait gate" and "narrow way" in Matthew 7:13, 14. The danger from these false prophets appears in the character they assume—their "sheep's clothing" being thoroughly calculated to deceive the unwary. They are to be found in the circles of "the most orthodox" and pretend to have a fervent love for souls, yet they fatally delude multitudes concerning the way of salvation. It is because there has been so little instruction upon the relation of good works to salvation that people fall such easy victims to these emissaries of Satan. At one extreme there are those (like the Papists) who insist that salvation is procured *by works*—at the other extreme are those (boasting most loudly of their "soundness in the Faith") who affirm salvation may be secured *without works*. Rare indeed is it to find anyone today who occupies the middle and true position. That middle position shows that Divine grace does not set aside human responsibility, that the Gospel is no opposer of the Law, and that the "Finished Work" of Christ has not rendered unnecessary or non-imperative good works on the part of those who are to reach Heaven.

Are good works necessary in order to the obtaining of salvation? We answer—and are satisfied the Scriptures warrant our so doing—No and Yes. In order to solve that paradox or remove the seeming contradiction we must first define "good works," then explain carefully what is meant by "necessary" and last, but not least, show what is connoted and included in "salvation." To some of our readers it may appear that entering into such details as these is really a waste of time, as well as rendering complex and difficult that which is really simple and easy. Such people would answer our opening inquiry with a plain and emphatic "No," concluding nothing more was required. They would cite, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9), and say, that *ended* the matter. Yet it is one thing to quote a passage and another thing to have a right understanding of its terms. Nevertheless the language of Ephesians 2:8, 9 appears to be so unambiguous and decisive that there seems to be no need to enter upon a laborious study of the subject of which it treats. Why, then, do we insist upon pressing the inquiry any further?

Why? Because many of the saints are confused thereon and need to have expounded unto them "the way of God more perfectly." Why? Because there is a balance of Truth to be observed here as everywhere, and if one-half of it is ignored then the Truth is perverted and souls are deceived. Why? Because it is at this very point the "false prophets" get in most of their pernicious and destructive work and unless we are forewarned we are not forearmed. Why? Because it is required of the Christian minister that he should declare "all the counsel of God" and not only favourite portions thereof. Why? Because if on the one hand the exaltation of good works to an unwarrantable place is to repudiate the grace of God, on the other hand the excluding of good works from the place Scripture assigns them is to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Why? Because what the Word of God designates "good works" have well-nigh disappeared from Christendom and therefore there is an urgent need for pressing the same. Why? Because vast numbers of *professing* Christians are fatally deceived thereon, going down to Hell with a "lie in their right hand."

The first answer we returned to the question, Are good works necessary in order to the obtaining of salvation? was *No*. Let us now proceed to explain and amplify. Most emphatically we affirm that no descendant of Adam can possibly perform any works which *entitle him* to God's favourable regard. He can no more merit Heaven by his own performances than he could create a world. Sooner might the sinner build a ladder which would obtain for him access to the dwelling-place of the Most High than he could do any deeds of charity which earned for him an eternity of bliss. He enters this world a fallen and depraved creature and from earliest infancy he has defiled and befouled the garments of his soul. More readily, then, could he make white the skin of an Ethiopian than cleanse his garments from their stains without having recourse to the blood of Christ. The turning over of a new leaf will not erase the blots on the previous pages: if I could live sinlessly today that would not cancel the guilt of yesterday. I am a ten-thousand-talents debtor to God and have not a penny with which to discharge it and therefore unless His sovereign grace takes pity upon me and gives me everything for nothing there is no hope whatever for me.

No doubt all of our readers would subscribe heartily unto the last paragraph, saying, That is just what I believe; and possibly a few would add, I trust you will not bring in something further that jars against it. Ah, suppose we were writing upon the righteousness of God, and dwelt on His equity and justice. How glorious the contrast between the Lord and most of earth's potentates and authorities! They can be bribed or influenced unto dishonesty but God is no respecter of persons, giving to each his due, ever doing that which is right. But then I must point out *that* pertains to His office as *Judge* and His administration of the Law—but He is also sovereign and distributes His favours as He pleases, bestowing a single talent upon one, two on another, and yet five on another. At once the Arminian protests and says I have contradicted myself. Or, suppose I wrote upon the wondrous mercy and love of God, as displayed in creation, in Providence and in grace: that His goodness and lovingkindness is manifested on every side. But I must also point out that God is holy and hates sin and will yet consign to the everlasting burnings all who continue defying Him; and at once the Universalist says, NOW you have spoilt the whole thing.

Above we have said that the language of Ephesians 2:8, 9 appears to be so unambiguous and decisive there appears to be no need to enter upon a critical examination of its terms—the same may be said of John 3:16, with like disastrous consequences. Every verse of Scripture requires prayerful and careful consideration, without which no man may expect to rightly apprehend it. "By grace are ye saved" does not stand alone as an absolute statement but is immediately qualified by the clause "through faith," and thus the salvation there referred to is no more extensive than what is received through faith. This at once shows that "saved" is *not* used in this verse in its widest latitude. Faith itself is a part of God's "so-great salvation," yet faith is not received "through faith." Regeneration is also an essential part of salvation, yet so far from it coming to us through faith, faith is impossible till the soul is born again and Divinely quickened. Again, observe the restriction "by grace *are* ye saved," not "by grace are ye and shall ye be saved through faith." The tense of the verb necessarily limits the salvation here contemplated to that which the believer is in *present* enjoyment of—it does *not* include his future glorification and entrance into Heaven itself.

What has just been pointed out evidences the importance of showing what is connoted and included by the word “saved” or “salvation.” First it should be pointed out that it is not used with one uniform sense and scope throughout the New Testament. Sometimes it is employed with a wider signification, at others with a narrower. For instance, when we read, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth” (2 Thess. 2:13) the term “salvation” is to be understood in its widest latitude as comprehending all the benefits which pertain to redemption, all the gracious works of God toward and within us. But when we read, “Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9) the word “saved” must be regarded in a more restricted sense, for it is distinguished from our effectual call. “Salvation” is both relative and personal, legal and experimental, what God has done for His people and what He works in them: the former takes in election, adoption, justification, acceptance in the Beloved. The latter embraces their regeneration, sanctification, preservation, and glorification.

As we must not confound what God has done for His people and what He is now doing in them, so we must distinguish between the Christian’s having a right or title to salvation and his actual *possession* of salvation. Faith in Christ secures an interest in all the benefits of salvation, whether in this world or in the world to come but it does not convey a present participation in all of them. There is a salvation “in hope” (Rom. 8:24), which is a legal right to that which is yet future in realization: and there is a salvation which is “obtained” now (2 Tim. 2:10). There are certain benefits which the believer has not only a title to but which he as fully possesses now as he will in the future; such is his justification—he is as righteous now in the sight of the Divine Judge as he will be in Heaven—only then there will be a fuller enjoyment of it. Even now we are “the sons of God,” but it is not yet made manifest all that favour carries with it (1 John 3:2). Perfect sanctification is prepared by grace in election from all eternity, yet none of the elect now on earth are fully sanctified in their experience. Thus we must distinguish between what is the believer’s by title and that which is accomplished by degrees and made good to him in time.

Once more—we must learn to distinguish sharply between the various causes and means of salvation. The *original* cause is the sovereign will of God, for nothing can come into being save that which He decreed before the foundation of the world. The *meritorious* cause is the mediatorial work of Christ who “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12) for His people, purchasing for them all the blessings of it by His perfect obedience to the Law and His sacrificial death. The *efficient* cause is the varied operations of the Holy Spirit who applies to the elect the benefits purchased by Christ, capacitating them to enjoy the same and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The *ministerial* cause and means is the preaching of the Word (James 1:21), because it discovers to us where salvation is to be obtained. The *instrumental* cause is faith, by which the soul receives or comes into possession of and obtains an interest in Christ and His redemption. Such distinctions as these are not merely technicalities for theologians but are an essential part of the Faith once delivered unto the saints, and unless they apprehend the same they are liable to be deceived by any Scripture-quoting false Prophet who accosts them.

The Christian's title to salvation, that is, to salvation as a whole and complete as it lay in the womb of God's decree, is entirely by grace, for he has done and can do nothing whatever to earn the same. We are not saved *for* our faith, for since it also is the gift of God, wrought in us by the Spirit, it possesses no meritorious worth. We are saved by grace through faith because faith *lets in* salvation, being the hand which receives it. Yet there is no salvation without faith: no one is saved until he believes. It is by grace through faith we obtain deliverance from the curse of the Law and receive a title to everlasting life and righteousness. As Thomas Goodwin pointed out in his masterly exposition of Ephesians 2:8, "We are saved through faith as that which gives us the present *right*, or that which God doth give us as a Judge, when we believe, before faith hath done a whit of works; but we are led through sanctification and good works to the *possession* of salvation." It must not be lost sight of that Ephesians 2:8, 9 is at once followed by, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is sometimes said, because God has ordained it we *shall* walk in good works. That is true, but it is equally true we *must* do so if Heaven is to be reached.

Are good works necessary in order to the obtaining of salvation? Our answer was No and Yes. Perhaps the reader is now better prepared to follow us in such a seemingly paradoxical answer. Certainly no works are required from us in order to induce God to show us favour. Nor are they necessary in order to our justification, for they constitute no part of that righteousness which we have before God. Nor do they procure for us a title to Heaven. But it is a great mistake to suppose that because good works are not necessary for one particular end, they are not indispensable for any—that because they are not meritorious therefore they are useless. Not so. Good works *are* necessary. They are necessary in order to preserve us from that course and practice which conducts to Hell. They are necessary in order to the glorifying of God and the magnifying of His grace. They are necessary in order to keep us in the only way that leads to Heaven. They are necessary in order to communion with the thrice holy God. They are necessary in order to prove the quality of our faith and the genuineness of our profession. They are necessary in order to the making of our calling and election sure. They are necessary in order to silence the detractors of the Gospel.

As there is no pardon until we forsake our wicked ways (Isa. 55:7), no blotting out of our sins until we repent and turn unto God (Acts 3:19), so there is no entering into Life except by treading the only way that leads thereto, and that is the path of obedience. So long as the Christian remains in this world he is in the place of danger: deliverance from Hell is only the beginning of salvation, nor is it completed until Heaven is reached. Between justification and glorification there is a fight to be fought, enemies to be conquered, a victory to be won, and the prize is only for the victor. "Conversion is a turning into the right road; the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the first starting if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle: to him that overcometh the crown is promised. To start in the race is nothing, many have done that who have failed, but to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as *necessary* to a man's *salvation* as conversion" (C. H. Spurgeon).

In *what sense* are good works "necessary" unto salvation—necessary in order to final and complete salvation? First, they are requisite as the *way* in which that final salvation is

attained. As a destination cannot be reached without journeying to it, neither can Life be entered except through the strait gate and treading the narrow way—it is via the path of holiness that Heaven is reached. Second, they are requisite as part of the *means* which God has appointed: they are the means of spiritual preservation. The only alternative to good works are evil ones, and evil works slay their perpetrator—sin is destructive: “if ye live after the flesh ye shall die” (Rom. 8:13 and cf. Gal. 6:8). Third, they are requisite as a *condition* of the possession of full salvation. Not a condition like a stipulation in a bargain, but as a connection between two things. As food must be eaten for the body to be nourished, as seed must be sown in order to a harvest, so obedience, equally as repentance and faith, precede the crowning. Fourth, as an *evidence* of the genuineness of faith: the tree must manifest fruit.

Those who deny that good works are in any sense necessary to salvation appeal to the instance of the thief on the cross, arguing that in his case there was nothing more than a simple and single look of faith unto the Saviour. We might dispose of such an appeal by pointing out that his case is quite exceptional—for it is very rare that God at once removes to Heaven him who believes—and that it is not permissible to frame a rule from an exception. Instead, we meet the objector on his own ground and show that his assertion is erroneous. There was far more than a bare looking to the Saviour in his case. 1. He rebuked his companion: “dost not thou fear God?” (Luke 23:40). 2. He repented of his sins: “we indeed justly for we receive the due reward of our deeds” (v. 41)—he condemned himself, owning that death was his due. 3. He bore public witness to Christ’s sinlessness: “this Man hath done nothing amiss.” 4. In the face of a hostile mob, he testified to Christ’s Lordship and Kingship: “Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”

In his sermon on Ephesians 2:10 Thomas Manton says, “Our well-doing is the *effect* of salvation if you take it for our *first* recovery to God, but if you take it for full salvation or our *final* deliverance from all evil, good works go *before* it indeed, but in a way of order, not of meritorious influence. To think them altogether unnecessary would too much deprecate and lessen their presence or concurrence. To think they deserve it would too much exalt and advance them beyond the line of their due worth and value. The Apostle steered a middle course between both extremes. They are necessary but not meritorious. They go before eternal life not as a cause but as a way.” Let us now summarize it thus: God has made promise of salvation unto His people: Christ has purchased it for them: faith obtains title thereto: good works secure actual admission into the full and final benefits of redemption, and in order to empower, the Spirit renews the believer day by day.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

35. *His Exit.*

The departure of Elijah from this world was even more striking and remarkable than had been his entrance upon the stage of public action yet the supernatural character of his exit was but the fitting finale to such a meteoric course. No ordinary career was his and no commonplace end to it would have seemed suitable. Miracles had attended him wherever he had gone, and a miracle brought about his departure from this scene. He had ministered during stormy times—again and again did he call down Divine judgments upon the heads of evil doers—and at the last a “whirlwind” carried *him* away from this earth. In answer to his prayer “the fire of the Lord” had fallen upon Mount Carmel, and again on those who sought to take his life (2 Kings 1:12), and at the close “a chariot of fire and horses of fire” parted him asunder from Elisha. At the beginning of his dramatic career he declared, “The LORD God of Israel, before whom I stand” (1 Kings 17:1), and at its conclusion he was mysteriously rapt into His immediate presence without passing through the portals of death. Before looking more closely at that startling exit, let us briefly review his life, summarize its principal features and seek to mark its leading lessons.

The life of Elijah was not the career of some supernatural being who tabernacled among men for a brief season. He was no angelic creature in human form. It is true that nothing is recorded of his parentage, his birth, or early life, but the concept of any superhuman origin is entirely excluded by that expression of the Holy Spirit’s—“Elijah was a *man*, subject to like passions as we are” (James 5:17). He, too, was a fallen descendant of Adam harassed by the same depraved inclinations, subject to the same temptations, annoyed by the same Devil, meeting with the same trials and oppositions as both the writer and reader experience. He trusted in the same Saviour, walked by the same faith and had all his needs supplied by the same gracious and faithful God as it is our privilege to do. A study of his life is particularly pertinent today, for our lot is cast in times which closely resemble those which he encountered. Varied and valuable are the lessons which his life illustrated and exemplified—the chief of which we have sought to point out in this series of articles. Our present task is to summarize the leading points among them.

1. Elijah was a man who walked by faith and not sight and walking by faith is not a mystical or nebulous thing but an intensely practical experience. Faith does more than rest upon the bare letter of Scripture: it brings the living God into a scene of death and enables its possessor to endure by “seeing Him who is invisible.” Where faith is really in exercise, it looks beyond distressing and distracting circumstances and is occupied with Him who regulates all circumstances. It was faith in God which enabled Elijah to sojourn by the brook Cherith, there to be fed by the ravens. The skeptic supposes that faith is mere credulity or a species of religious fanaticism for he knows not of the sure foundation on which it rests. The Lord had told His servant, “I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there,” and the Prophet “judged Him faithful who had promised” and therefore he was not put to confusion. And that is recorded for our encouragement. Faith looks beyond the promise to the Promiser, and God never fails those who trust alone in Him and rely fully upon Him.

It was faith which had moved Elijah to sojourn with the desolate widow of Zarephath, when she and her son were at the point of starvation. To natural instincts it seemed cruel

to impose himself upon her, to carnal reason it appeared a suicidal policy. But Jehovah had said, "I have commanded a widow woman to sustain thee there" and the Prophet "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Ah, faith looks to and counts upon the living God with whom nothing is too hard. Nothing, my reader, honours God so much as faith in Himself, and nothing so dishonours Him as our unbelief. It was by faith that Elijah returned to Jezreel and bearded the lion in his den, telling Ahab to his face his impending doom and announcing the awful judgment which would surely seize upon his wife. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17): Elijah heard, believed, and acted. Yes, *acted*, for a faith without works is but a dead and worthless one. Obedience is nothing but faith in exercise, directed by the Divine authority, responding to the Divine will.

2. Elijah was a man who walked in manifest separation from the evil around him. Alas, the policy prevailing in Christendom today is walk arm in arm with the world, be a "good mixer" if you wish to win the young people. It is argued that we cannot expect them to ascend to the spiritual plane, so the only way for the Christian to reach and help them is by descending to theirs. But such reasoning as "let us do evil that good may come" finds no support in the Word of God but rather emphatic refutation and condemnation. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14), "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11) are the peremptory demands. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4)—as true in this twentieth century as in the first, for it is never right to do wrong. God has not called His people to "win the world to Christ"—rather does He require them, by their lives, to witness against it.

Nothing is more marked about Elijah than his uncompromising separation from the abounding evil all around him. We never find him fraternizing with the people of his degenerate day but constantly reproving them. He was indeed a "stranger and pilgrim" here. No doubt many considered him very selfish and unsociable and probably charged him with assuming an "I am holier than thou" attitude. Ah, Christian reader, you must not expect mere religionists, empty professors to appreciate your motives or understand your ways: "the world knoweth us not" (1 John 3:1). God leaves His people here to witness for Christ and the only way to do that is to walk with Christ. Therefore are we bidden, "let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13): we cannot walk with Christ except we be where His Spirit is—outside the apostate mass, apart from all that dishonours and disowns the Lord Jesus—and that inevitably involves "bearing His reproach."

3. Elijah was a man of marked elevation of spirit. Possibly that expression is a new one to some of our readers, yet its meaning is more or less obvious. That which we have reference to was symbolized by the fact that the Prophet is seen again and again "on the mount." The first mention of him (1 Kings 17:1) tells us that he was "of the inhabitants of Gilead," which was a hilly section of the country. His memorable victory over the false prophets of Baal was upon Mount Carmel. After his slaughter of them at the brook Kishon and his brief word to the king, we are told that, "Ahab went up to eat and drink," whereas Elijah "went up to the top of Carmel" (18:42) which at once revealed their respective characters. When the Lord recovered him from his lapse we read that he "went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (1

Kings 19:8). After he had delivered his message to Ahaziah it is recorded, “behold, he sat on the top of a hill” (2 Kings 1:9). Thus Elijah was markedly the man of the mount. Now there is a mystical or spiritual significance to that, apparent unto an anointed eye, which we have termed elevation of spirit.

By elevation of spirit we mean heavenly-mindedness, the heart being raised above the poor things of this world, the affections being set upon things above. This is ever one of the effects or fruits of walking by faith, for faith has God for its object, and He dwells on high. The more our hearts are occupied with Him whose throne is in Heaven the more are our spirits elevated above the earth. The more our minds are engaged with the perfections of Him who is altogether lovely the less will the things of time and sense have power to attract us. The more we dwell in the secret place of the Most High the less will the baubles of men charm us. The same feature comes out prominently in the life of Christ: He was pre-eminently the Man of the Mount. His first sermon was delivered from one. He spent whole nights there. He was transfigured upon “the holy mount.” He ascended from the mount of Olives. “They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles” (Isa. 40:31)—their bodies on earth, their hearts in Heaven.

4. Elijah was a mighty intercessor. Let it be pointed out that none but one who walks by faith, who is in marked separation from the evil around him and who is characterized by elevation of spirit or heavenly-mindedness, is qualified for such holy work. The prevalence of Elijah’s intercession is recorded not only for our admiration but emulation. Nothing is more calculated to encourage and embolden the Christian in his approaches to the Throne of Grace than to mark and recall how frail mortals like himself—unworthy and unprofitable sinners—supplicated God in the hour of need and obtained miraculous supplies from Him. God delights for us to put Him to the test, and therefore has He said, “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark. 9:23). Wondrously was that exemplified in the life of Elijah and so should it be in ours, too. But we shall never have power in prayer while we give way to an evil heart of unbelief, or fraternize with religious hypocrites or while we are absorbed with the things of time and sense. Faith, fidelity, and spirituality are necessary qualifications.

In answer to the intercession of Elijah the heavens were shut up for three years and a half, so that it rained not at all. This teaches us that the supreme motive behind all our supplications must be the glory of God and the good of His people—the chief lessons inculcated by Christ in the Family Prayer (Lord’s Prayer). It also teaches that there are times when the servant of God may request his Master to deal in judgment with his enemies. Drastic diseases call for drastic remedies. There are times when it is both right and necessary for a Christian to ask God to bring down His chastening rod on His backslidden and wayward people. We read that Paul delivered unto Satan certain ones who had made shipwreck of the faith that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20). Jeremiah called on the Lord to, “Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name” (10:25). The Lord Jesus interceded not only for “His own,” but also *against* Judas and his family (Psa. 109).

But there is a brighter side to the efficacy of Elijah’s intercession than the one contemplated in the preceding paragraph. It was in answer to his prayer that the widow’s son was restored to life (1 Kings 17:19, 22). What a proof was *that* that nothing is too hard for the Lord—that in response to believing supplication He is able and willing to

reverse what unto sight seems the most hopeless situation. What possibilities to trustful and importunate prayer does that present! Man's extremity is indeed God's opportunity—to show Himself strong on our behalf. But let it not be forgotten that behind the Prophet's intercession there was a higher motive than the comforting of the widow's heart: it was that his Master might be glorified—vindicated in the claims made by His servant. Ah, that is so important, though generally overlooked. Christian parents reading this article are most desirous that their children should be saved and pray daily for that end. Why? Is it only that they may have the comforting assurance *their* loved ones have been delivered from the wrath to come? Or is it that *God* may be honoured by their regeneration? The Lord will not heed merely carnal and selfish petitions,

It was in response to Elijah's intercession that the fire came down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. Here, too, his petition was based on the plea for the Lord to vindicate His great and holy name before the vast assembly of His vacillating people and the heathen idolaters: "let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel" (1 Kings 18:36). As we pointed out in an earlier article that "fire of the Lord" was not only a solemn type of the Divine wrath smiting Christ when bearing the sins of His people, but it was also a dispensational foreshadowment of the public descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost attesting God's acceptance of the sacrifice of His Son. Thus the practical lesson for us is to believingly pray for more of the Spirit's power and blessing, that we may be favoured with further manifestations of His presence with and in us. That we are warranted in so making request is evidenced by that word of our Lord's, "if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke 11:13). Pray for faith to lay hold of that promise.

So, too, it was in answer to the Prophet's intercession that the terrible drought was ended: "he prayed again and the Heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:18). The spiritual meaning and application of that is obvious. For many years past the churches have been in a parched and languishing condition. This is evident from the varied expedients they resorted to in the attempt to "revive" and strengthen them. Even where carnal means were not employed with the object of attracting outsiders, religious "specialists" in the form of "successful evangelists" or "renowned Bible teachers" were called in to aid in extra meetings—as sure a sign of the churches' ill health as the summoning of a doctor. But artificial stimulants soon lose their efficacy, and unless his health is restored by ordinary means leave the patient worse than before. So it has always been with the churches—until their dry and dead condition is apparent even to themselves. Yet, unless the end of the world is upon us, showers of blessing will yet descend (though possibly in different parts of the earth than formerly), and they will come (at their appointed time) in answer to some Elijah's prayer!

5. Elijah was a man of intrepid courage, by which we mean not a natural bravery but spiritual boldness. That distinction is an important one, yet it is rarely recognized. Few today seem capacitated to discriminate between what is of the flesh and what is wrought by the Spirit. No doubt the prevailing habit of defining Bible terms by the dictionary rather than from their usage in Holy Writ adds much to the confusion. Take for example the grace of spiritual patience—how often is it confounded with an even and placid temperament and because they possess not such a natural disposition, many of the Lord's people imagine they have no patience at all. The patience of which the Holy Spirit is the

Author is not a calm equanimity which never gets irritated by delays, nor is it that gentle graciousness which bears insults and injuries without retaliation or even murmuring—rather is *that* much closer akin to *meekness*. How many have been puzzled by those words “let us run with patience the race set before us” (Heb. 12:1)—but they create their own difficulty by assuming that “patience” is a passive rather than an active grace.

The “patience” of Christians is not a passive virtue but an active grace, not a natural endowment but a supernatural fruit. It signifies *endurance*: it is that which enables the saints to persevere in the face of discouragements, to hold on their way despite all opposition. In like manner, Christian “courage” is not a constitutional endowment but a heavenly endowment: it is not a natural quality but a supernatural thing. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth (a guilty conscience filling them with terror), but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). He who truly fears God is fearless of man. That spiritual courage or boldness has shone forth in many a weak, timid, shrinking woman. Those who would have trembled at the prospect of walking alone through a cemetery on a dark night, shrank not from confessing Christ when a fiery death was the certain sequel. The boldness of Elijah in denouncing Ahab to his face and in confronting single-handed his army of false prophets must not be attributed to his natural make-up but ascribed to the operations of the Holy Spirit.

6. Elijah was a man who experienced a sad fall, and this also is recorded for our instruction: not as an excuse for us to shelter behind but as a solemn warning to take to heart. Few indeed are the recorded blemishes on Elijah’s character, yet he did not attain to perfection in this world. Remarkably, as he was honoured by his Master, sin had not been eradicated from his being. Glorious indeed was the “treasure” which he bore about, nevertheless God saw fit to make it manifest that “*earthen* vessel” carried the same. Strikingly it was in his faith and courage he failed, for he took his eye off the Lord for a brief season and then fled in terror from a woman. What force does that give to the exhortation, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). We are just as dependent upon God for the maintenance of our spiritual graces as we are for the bestowment of them. But though he fell, Elijah was not utterly cast down. Divine grace sought him, delivered him from his despondency, restored him to the paths of righteousness, and so renewed him in the inner man that he was as faithful and courageous afterward as he had been formerly.

7. Elijah was a man who had a supernatural exit from this world. As this will be the subject of the closing article of this series we will not now anticipate our remarks thereon. The Lord graciously add His blessing to all that has been before us.—A.W.P.

CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

“Life” and “death,” “death” and “life,” sum up the Christian’s history: the former terms his standing and state in Adam; the latter, his standing and state in Christ. First he had life in Adam, and then he died in him. Second, he died with Christ, and is now alive in Him. His “death” in Adam affected first his standing before God—he became “alienated from His life” (Eph. 4:18) and fell under His wrath (Eph. 2:3). Second, his state was made to correspond with his standing: he became depraved and corrupt, devoid of any spiritual life in his soul. Third, the outcome of this is that his body returns to the dust. Contrariwise, having died to sin with Christ, the believer is now “alive unto God in Him” (Rom. 6:11). The Christian has first a *legal* resurrection, which concerns his standing: he is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10), instated into His favour and blessing (Gal. 3:13, 14). Second, and because of the former, the Christian’s state is brought into accord with his standing—a new nature, spiritual life is communicated to his soul—previously he was in Christ, now Christ is in him. The outcome of this is that his body will yet be raised in glory.

Above we have employed the expression “legal resurrection.” As this will be a term new to most of our readers, a word or two by way of definition and explanation are called for. Legal resurrection is the pronouncement of the Law, “life” being its reward to those who have fulfilled its requirements. Legal death is the Law’s capital-sentence. A man becomes legally dead the moment punishment is pronounced by the judge, though usually there is an interval of a few weeks before actual execution takes place. During that interval he could not marry, nor cast a vote, or be sued for any new debt he then contracted; any will made by him in that period would be invalid, because in the sight of the law he no longer exists. Legal death is a falling under the curse. Contrariwise, the “life” which the Law pronounces and bestows upon those whom it rewards is one of unmixed blessing—“the blessing, even *life* for evermore” (Psa. 133:3). Now just as the murderer is legally “dead” for some weeks before he is hanged or electrocuted, so the people of God received legal or primal “life” in Christ long before they are regenerated.

The Christian has “life” in Christ before he has life *from* Him. In Christ His people have met every claim of Divine justice, consequently there is now “no condemnation to them” (Rom. 8:1). Or, to state the same in its positive form: they are “made (legally constituted, as in the former clause) the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). As the inexorable doom of sin followed and rested upon all who were in Adam when he fell, so the inevitable reward of righteousness followed and rests upon all who are in Christ (Rom. 5:21). The atonement of the Lord Jesus was no mere expedient for getting rid of the doom of sin, but a satisfaction made unto God which met every requirement of His Law, entitling Him to its reward, and as a consequence thereof believers are made sharers of that “life” in which their Head came up from the grave, where all their sins were buried. For if it is true that Christ was “delivered for our offenses” it is no less a fact that He was “raised” again for our justification (Rom. 4:25).

It is most important that we should be quite clear as to the *ground* of our justification, for Socinians present justification in the risen Christ in such a way as to repudiate the very foundation of our faith and hope. Denying as they do the imputation of Christ’s perfect obedience to the account of all who believe in Him, they advance the conceit that it is the life of Christ *after* His resurrection and our participation of the same by the new birth which constitutes us righteous before God. It is true that it is in the risen Christ

believers are justified, because they *are* in Him and He *is* risen; but He is risen because “life” was what His righteousness, His perfect obedience to the Law entitled Him to, and believers are justified solely on the ground of His righteousness being reckoned to their account. “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17): the “gift of righteousness” *entitled them* to “reign in life” for as the wages of sin is death, so the reward of righteousness is life.

It remains for us now to point out that the relation between Christ and His people is *more* than a *legal* one: it is one of vital union and communion of nature, too. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead (in sins) shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:25, 26). That is said of Christ not in connection with His original place in the Godhead, but of Him as Mediator and in relation to His people. It is in that relation only that the Father has “*given to the Son to have life in Himself.*” It was not life for Himself alone, but life to share with and give to His people, as He Himself affirmed: “as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him” (John 17:2). It is similar to, in fact parallel with, that other word of the Saviour’s, “the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). Life communicated from Christ at the new birth, when they are vitally “joined” to Him and become “one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17).

Regeneration is the spiritual resurrection of the Christian. The new birth is no mere development of a spiritual germ with which each one is born. It is a lie of evolutionists that man is born with a spark of Divine life which needs only to be educated and cultivated for its fanning into a flame. Refutation of such an error is found in Christ’s declaration, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). Conversely, those who appropriate to themselves the sacrifice of Christ give evidence of spiritual life and that life is imparted to them at the new birth: “you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses” (Eph. 2:1). This Divine quickening is spoken of as a passing “from death unto life” (John 5:24). It is a miracle: a miracle of Divine grace and power. Clearly so, for resurrection, be it spiritual or corporeal is outside of man’s providence. No corpse can quicken itself, nor can all the doctors and scientists of the world re-animate one. Only the living God can speak the word which will call forth a Lazarus from the tomb and He alone can regenerate.

Now regeneration or spiritual resurrection is the consequence of Christ’s death and resurrection and His peoples’ interest therein. This is clear from John 3:3-16, though few perceive the coherence of the passage. The “Son of man *must* be lifted up” of verse 14 looks back to the, “Ye *must* be born again” of verse 7, the pressure of which made Nicodemus to say, “How can these things be?” Christ made him a twofold answer, consisting of recrimination (vv. 10-13) and explanation (vv. 14-17). That which Christ here pressed on Nicodemus was: No one could be born again or have eternal life but as the result of full satisfaction having been made to the claims of a holy and righteous God. The Holy Spirit could not regenerate except on the ground of Christ’s atoning death. It is not sufficiently realized that the work of the Spirit *in* God’s people is based directly upon the work of Christ *for* them. The Old Testament types make this plain: the “oil” (symbol of the Spirit’s work) was always placed upon the blood (Lev. 14:14-17). The Spirit comes *to us from* Christ (Acts 2:33).

“According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly *through* Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7)—our regeneration and being “made heirs” is founded upon our justification. Again—the Father “according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). The meaning of our being begotten “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” is most explicitly brought out by Paul in his prayer that the saints may know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to *usward* who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He *wrought in Christ* when He raised Him from the dead” (Eph. 1:19, 20). The words we have italicized are the key to the deeper meaning of this passage: that which was “wrought” by God to usward nearly two thousand years ago has been steadily *manifesting itself* ever since, and will continue to until the whole of the “*usward*” are “quickened” (2:1).

One other word on John 3:14-16. If these verses be interpreted in the light of their context and in harmony with other passages they cannot signify (as commonly supposed) that sinners are born again because they believe. Those dead in sin do not savingly believe in Christ crucified. In all things God must act on the sinner *before* the sinner will act toward God. To “believe on” Christ and to “come to” Him are essentially the same thing (John 6:35) and none can come to Him without the Father “drawing” (John 6:44), and that “drawing” is accomplished by regeneration. In John 3:14-16 our Lord was completing His answer to Nicodemus’ “How?” by showing that the way in which God’s regenerating power takes effect and acts upon and in the sinner is that of *faith*. Being “born of the Spirit” the sinner “believes on the Son”—the “believe” of John 1:12 is explained by the “which *were* born of God” in verse 13. So, too, the “believeth” in John 5:24 is accounted for by “is passed” (Greek “hath passed”) from death unto life. Faith does not procure life but *evidences* its presence—see further 1 John 5:1.

At his spiritual resurrection or regeneration the Christian is made partaker of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) so that new desires and affections are awakened within him. Those spiritual longings were expressed by the Apostle when he said, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death: if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10, 11). It is strange that so many miss the meaning of verse 11: surely Paul was not referring to the resurrection of his *body*, for no “if” is attached to *that* nor is it in anywise a matter of “attainment.” The whole context shows it was a *present* experience and not something future on which his heart was here set—that he had no doubt about the future of his body is clear from 2 Corinthians 4:14, etc. Paul was already “risen with Christ” legally (Col. 3:1) and what he now yearned for was to experience more of the power of this in his soul and the transforming effects thereof in his daily walk.

The Greek of Philippians 3:11 is, “If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead,” the dead here being the *unregenerate*. A similar allusion is made in Ephesians 5:14, “awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead,” which is addressed be it noted to *believers*: bestir yourselves, put on the new man, make evident your spiritual life, distinguish yourselves from the unregenerate. Go back to verse 10: “that I may know Him,” more intimately, “and the power of His resurrection,” that

His life may be communicated more freely to my soul. True, every increase of that life would bring him into sharper collision with the opposing powers of this world, yet so far from shrinking from that he desired further to know “the fellowship of His sufferings.” Though judicially “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20) Paul longed to be still more “made conformable unto his death” and thereby “attain unto” the out-resurrection from among the dead, that is, he might stand forth in sharp contrast and manifest distinction from the surrounding mass of spiritual corruption and decay—a living man in the midst of spiritual corpses, a light in the midst of dense darkness.

The above interpretation of Philippians 3:11 is obviously borne out by the verses which immediately follow. “Not as though I had already attained (the goal of my spiritual aspiration) either were already perfect (in my experience of the power of Christ’s resurrection), but I follow after (ever seeking a fuller manifestation), if I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (vv. 12-14). Paul was still conscious that in his flesh dwelt no good thing. He was still in weakness and nothingness, with the feeblest believer, struggling on in the strength of the Lord toward the prize which was not yet in his actual possession. But though not yet within his grasp, there was no uncertainty as to the issue, for he had been laid hold of by Jesus Christ for this very end and eventually He would change his vile body and make it “like unto His glorious body” (v. 21).

As in Adam the doom of sin is advancing by a slow but sure process unto the “second death” (Rev. 21:8), so in Christ the reward of righteousness is advancing surely to its consummation. Even now believers are the sons of God and if sons then heirs, but “it doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2). Christians have already received the “first fruits of the Spirit” the earnest and foretastes of what is coming, yet they are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” (Rom. 8:23). The new Life which they have received shall yet be clothed with a body suited to it and since Christ Himself is our Life (in every sense and application of that term), it must be a body fashioned like unto His glorious body, for “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:49). It is on the Resurrection morning that there will be “the (full) *manifestation* of the sons of God” and then shall appear their “glorious liberty” (Rom. 8:19, 21)—freed from every vestige of sin in spirit and soul and body!

We come now to the third resurrection of the Christian. This, too, he owes entirely to Christ: as his legal or representative resurrection was *in* Christ, as his spiritual or regenerative resurrection is *from* Christ, so his bodily resurrection is the *fruit* of His death and resurrection. “And *as* it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:27, 28). Since Christ expiated those sins, the “many” no longer lie under the doom of death and judgment, and therefore verse 28 goes on to assure us, “and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation.” Thus, so far as the original appointment goes, believers stand on the other side of death and condemnation. Accordingly, the Apostle says, “Behold, I show you a mystery: we (Christians) shall not all sleep” (1 Cor. 15:51)—“sleep” being the Scriptural name (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14, etc.), for

that in the case of believers, which in the case of unbelievers is termed “death.” In all outward appearance it is the same event to both, but in its doctrinal import it is *not* the *penal* result of sin to the saint.

The mortal body of a Christian with its defects, frailties and diseases, is unfit for the glorious destiny of the children of God: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). The believer’s body in this life is the same as is that of the unregenerate and runs its course exposed to the contingency of ordinary mortality. Should that course be run out before the coming of the Lord, this tabernacle will be dissolved, to await a blessed resurrection at His coming. But the original appointment of Hebrews 9:27 does not hold good against believers and so the Apostle declares, “we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Thus what is fundamental and necessary here is not death or physical dissolution but change—the latter being incidental only to those whose earthly career is run before the coming of the Saviour to effect the change. In its general character that “change” is a transformation from “mortality to immortality.” More definitely it is a transformation and conformity of our present body to that of Christ’s glorious one, for in this respect also we shall be “like Him” (1 John 3:2).

The transformation of this vile body into the likeness of Christ’s glorious body is the fitting issue and completion of our regeneration, when our *souls* were made alive spiritually. The essential difference between the “old man” and the “new man” is brought out in the strongest possible manner in the language of inspiration. There is not only the marked difference of moral characteristics but an *essential difference*. Paul traces this to their respective origins: “the first man Adam was made a living *soul*, the last Adam was made a quickening *spirit*. The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from Heaven” (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). Men in their natural descent from the first Adam share his nature or life; believers, in their preternatural union with the last Adam, share His nature or life. And it is to the words used to describe these two distinct natures that we direct attention, as showing that the difference is in *essence* as well as in character.

There is an expressiveness in the Greek which is difficult to transfer to the English: the first Adam was made “a living *soul*.” The Greek word is “*psuche*” and the word rendered “natural” in verse 44 is an adjective formed from *psuche*—*soulical*, if we may coin a term. The last Adam is “a quickening spirit” and therefore the life derived from Him is “spiritual.” The same two adjectives are found again in 1 Corinthians 2:14 which affirms that a man must be born again ere he can receive and know spiritual things. “There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body” (v. 44): in other words, there is a body suited to the nature or life which we inherit from Adam; and likewise a body suited to the nature or life derived from Christ. In order to perceive the force of this it is necessary to go back a step in the Apostle’s exposition of the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

In reply to the cavil of an objector, “How are the dead raised up? with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35), Paul refers to the established order of nature in the reproduction and perpetuation of vegetable life. When a seed is deposited in the ground in order to the production of a plant, first of all the seed itself must be decomposed before the germ or vital element which it contains can be developed. The seed itself does not come forth—“that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain” (v. 37)—the vital principle which it contained being liberated by the

decomposition of the seed, is developed in the new plant. The life contained in every kind of seed is developed in its own appropriate plant; wheat-life or nature, in the wheat plant; barley-life or nature, in the barley plant. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body" (v. 38). The same is true regarding the life or nature of animals: each by the wise appointment of the Creator becomes clothed with, or is developed in, its appropriate body. The *body* is in every case suited to the *nature*: "one flesh of man, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds" (v. 39).

According to this Divine law and order, the old Adam nature has its own proper body, and since he was made a living soul (psuche) the body is a natural (psuchical) one. But such a body is unsuited to the new nature derived from Him who is a quickening spirit, though this is not yet made manifest. To all appearances a child of God in this world is like any other man, because he has only the natural body. The new life which is "spirit" (John 3:6) is not only a stranger in a hostile world but is ill-accommodated by the body in which, for the present, it dwells. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened" (2 Cor. 5:4). We long to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven—a spiritual body adapted to the new life. At death, the natural body, so alien and unsuited to the new nature, is laid aside: at resurrection the new life is invested with a spiritual body, though it must be remembered that decay in the grave is not absolutely necessary to this transformation.—A.W.P.

DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

5. *Its Springs.*

8. *The resurrection of Christ.* It seems strange that so many receive more comfort at the Cross than they do at the empty grave of Christ, for Scripture itself hesitates not to say, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). A dead Saviour could not save: one who was himself vanquished by death would be powerless to deliver sin's slaves. Here is one of the chief defects of Romanism—its deluded subjects are occupied with a lifeless Christ, worshippers of a crucifix. Nor are Protestant preachers above criticism in this matter, for only too often many of them omit the grandest part of the Evangel by going no further than Calvary. The glorious Gospel is not fully preached until we proclaim a risen and victorious Redeemer (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Christ was "delivered (up to death) for our offenses and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25) and as the Apostle goes on to declare, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

What avail would it have been that Christ died for His people if death had conquered and overwhelmed Him? Had the grave held Him fast, He had been a prisoner still. But in rising from the tomb Christ made demonstration of His victory over sin and death: thereby He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9). Christ's sacrificial work was finished at the Cross, but proof was needed of its Divine acceptance. That proof lay with Him who was pleased to "bruise Him and put Him to grief" and by raising the Redeemer God furnished incontestable evidence that all His claims had been met. The death of Christ was the payment of my awful debt: His resurrection God's receipt for the same—it was the public acknowledgement that the bond had been cancelled. Christ's resurrection sealed our justification: it was necessary to give reality to the atonement and to provide a sure foundation for our faith and hope. Since God is satisfied, the trembling sinner may confide and securely repose upon the work of a triumphant Saviour.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea rather* that is risen again" (Rom. 8:34). Here the resurrection of Christ is presented as the believer's security against condemnation. But *how* does the former guarantee the latter? There is a causal connection between the two things. First, because Christ rose again not simply as a private person but as the Surety, the Head and Representative of all His people. It has not been sufficiently recognized and emphasized that the Lord Jesus lived, died and rose again as "the Firstborn among many brethren." As all whom the first Adam represented fell when he fell, died when he died, so all whom the last Adam represented died when He died and rose again when He arose. God "quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together" (Eph. 2:5, 6). "Risen with Christ" (Col. 3:1) is judicially true of every believer. The Law can no more condemn him: he has been fully and finally delivered from the wrath to come. Infallibly certain and absolutely secure is he by virtue of his legal union with the risen Saviour. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9), nor over me, for His deliverance was *mine*, the second death cannot touch me.

Second, because there is a vital union between Christ and His people. Said the Lord Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). Nothing could possibly be more plain or more decisive than that. Spiritual resurrection makes the believer one with Him who is "alive for evermore" so that he is forever beyond the reach of death. Well then may we exclaim with the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Regeneration or being begotten by God is the communication to the soul of the life of the risen Christ. A faint yet striking illustration of this is seen in our awakening each morning out of slumber. While our head sleeps every member of the body sleeps with it. But the head awakes and awakes first, and with that awakening each member awakens also—after the head, yet in union with it. Thus it is with the mystical Body of Christ—the Head was first quickened and then in God's good time His life is imparted to each of His members and before any member could perish the Head must die.

Third, because as Christ was our Surety here, so He is our Representative on high and as He endured our penalty so justice requires that we should enjoy His fullness. Accordingly we read, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever, Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21). Note well the coherence of this passage. It is in His character as "the God of peace" He thus acts. Having been pacified or propitiated God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus—not as a private person but in His official character, as the "Shepherd"—and that in fulfillment of covenant stipulation and promise. In consequence thereof, God makes perfect (or complete) in every good work the "sheep," preserving and sanctifying them by working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight, and this "through Jesus Christ," or in other words, by communicating to His members the grace, the life, the fullness, which is in their Head.

9. *The Exaltation of Christ.* There is a little clause, but one of vast purport, which the Apostle added to his, "yea rather that is risen again," namely, "who is *even* at the right hand of God" (Rom. 8:34). That brief sentence is frequently overlooked, yet is it one which also guarantees the safety and perpetuity of the Church. The ascension of Christ is as vital and cardinal a part of the Truth as is His death and resurrection and provides the same rich food for faith to feed upon. As it was not possible for death to hold Him, so it was not fitting for the earth to retain Christ. He who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death has been "highly exalted and given a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). The head which once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now, a royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow. Christ is now in Heaven as an ever-living Mediator, as a glorified High Priest over the House of God, as the sceptred King ruling with sovereign sway all things in Heaven and earth, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22). And Christ is entered Heaven in our nature, in our name, on our behalf.

The One who descended into the deepest depth has been elevated to the grandest glory. The crowning act of Christ's triumph was not when He issued forth a Victor from the tomb, but when He entered the courts of celestial bliss, when the everlasting doors

lifted up their heads and the King of Glory went in (Psa. 24:9). The raising of Christ was in order to His glorification. And it was in our nature He is exalted above all: the very hands which were nailed to the Cross now wield the sceptre of universal dominion. How well fitted then is such an One to succour and “save unto the uttermost!” As faith follows the descent of the Father’s Beloved to Bethlehem’s manger to Golgotha, to the sepulchre, so let it follow Him to the loftiest heights of dignity and bliss. This “same Jesus” who was rejected and degraded by Jew and Gentiles alike has been “crowned with honour and glory” (Heb. 2:9). The exaltation of Christ was a necessary part of His Mediatorship, for it is from on high He administers His kingdom and makes effectual application of redemption. The ascension of Christ is also an essential part of the Gospel.

“Who is even at the right hand of God.” First, this is the place of *honour and dignity*. When Bathsheba appeared before Solomon we are told that the king rose up to meet her and bowed himself unto his mother and sitting down on his throne he caused a seat to be set for her “on his right hand” (1 Kings 2:19) as a mark of special favour and honour. After the royal proclamation concerning Christ, “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows; all Thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made Thee glad,” it is added, “Kings’ daughters were among Thy honourable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir” (Psa. 45:7-9), indicating the place of privilege and honour which is reserved for the Lamb’s wife. “The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob (God of covenant relationship), the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus” (Acts 3:13)—this was His mediatorial glory in answer to His prayer in John 17:5. Christ has “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

Second, the “right hand of God” is the place of *supreme authority and power*. As we read in Exodus 15:6, “Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power.” “And set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23). Our Surety, then, was not only delivered from prison but exalted to universal dominion, “all power in Heaven and in earth” being conferred upon Him. Then how well suited is He to fight our battles, subdue our iniquities and supply our every need! Christ has been elevated high above all ranks of creatures, however exalted in the scale of being or whatever their titles and dignities—and all have been placed in absolute subjection to Him, as “under His feet” signifies. Thus the entire universe is under His control (“upholding all things by the word of His power”: Heb. 1:3) for the well-being of His people, so that no weapon formed against them can prosper. No wonder it is required “that all should honour the Son” even as “they honour the Father” (John 5:23).

Third, it is the place of all *blessedness*. Our bounties and benevolences are distributed by our “right hand” (Matt. 6:3). “At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa. 16:11)—one of the great Messianic Psalms. “It is spoken assuredly of such pleasures as Jesus Christ by way of prerogative enjoys *beyond* all the saints and angels, He being at God’s right hand so as none of them are. It was the peculiar encouragement that Jesus Christ had, not to be in Heaven only as a common saint, but to be in Heaven at

God's *right hand*; and to have pleasures *answerable*, far above all the pleasures of men and angels . . . God doth communicate and impart to Him to the utmost all His felicity, so far forth as that human nature is capable of" (Thomas Goodwin). Thus in the "joy" that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2) Christ has the "pre-eminence" as in all things else. In accord with this third meaning of the expression, Christ will "set the sheep on His right hand" saying to them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Fourth, this setting of Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high denotes the endowing of His humanity with capacity and ability, accordant with the exalted dignity conferred upon Him. It was not like an earthly king advancing his favourite to high honour, or even elevating his son to share his throne, but that God bestowed upon Christ superlative endowments (anointing Him with the oil of gladness "above His fellows," i.e., giving to Him the Spirit "without measure"), fitting Him to discharge such an office. This is clear from the immediate context of Ephesians 1:21, where prayer is made that we may understand God's "mighty power which He *wrought in Christ* when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (vv: 19, 20). This fitting of Christ for His exalted position appears in Revelation 5. There a mysterious book is held forth but none either in Heaven or earth was found worthy to open it till the Lamb appeared. And wherein lay His fitness? The Lamb as it had been slain, possessed "seven horns and seven eyes" (v. 6) perfect power and perfect intelligence.

"Who is even at the right hand of God." Here, then, is a further guarantee of the safety and perpetuity of the Church, and O what consolation and encouragement should it afford the tried and trembling believer! He went up "with a shout" (Psa. 47:5)—of conquest, leading captivity captive. His being seated in Heaven is proof that His work is finished and His sacrifice accepted (Heb. 10:11, 12). It was as the Head and Representative of His people Christ entered Heaven to take possession for them: "whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20). It is in our nature and name He has gone there, to "prepare a place" for us (John 14:2). Thus we have a Friend at Court, for "if anyone sin we have an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). His great authority, power, dominion and glory is being exercised on our behalf. The government of the universe is on His shoulder, for the well-being, security and triumph of His Church. Hallelujah! what a Saviour! God hath laid our help "upon One that is mighty" (Psa. 89:19).

10. *Christ's Intercession*. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). Here is the grand climax. First, Christ made a complete atonement for the sins of His people. Next He rose from the dead in proof that His sacrifice was accepted by God. Then He was advanced to the place of supreme honour and power in reward of His undertaking. And now He sues out or asks for His people the benefits He purchased for them. The inexpressible blessedness of this appears in the above order. How many who have been suddenly elevated from poverty to wealth, from ignominy to honour, from weakness to power—promptly forget their former associates and friends? Not so the Lord Jesus. Though exalted to inconceivable dignity and dominion, though crowned with unrivalled honour and glory, yet this made no difference in the affections of Christ toward His people left here in this world. His love for them is

unabated, His care of and concern for His Church undiminished. The good will of the Saviour unto His own remains unchanged.

The ascended Christ is not wrapped up in His own enthronement but is still occupied with the well-being of His people, maintaining their interests, seeking their good: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He knows they are weak and helpless in themselves and are surrounded by those desiring and seeking their destruction—therefore does He pray, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John 17:11); and He bases that request on the finished work by which He glorified God (v. 4). The plea which our great High Priest urges cannot rest upon *our* merit, for we have none. It is not in recognition of *our* worthiness, for we are destitute of such. Nor does our wretchedness furnish the reason which the Intercessor urges on our behalf, for that very wretchedness has been brought upon us by our sins. There are no considerations personal to ourselves which Christ can plead on our behalf. No, His all-sufficient sacrifice is the *only* plea, and that must prevail. Christ intercedes in Heaven because He died for us on earth (Heb. 9:24-6).

If left entirely to themselves believers would perish. Temptations and tribulations from without and corruptions from within would prove too strong for them and therefore does Christ make intercession on their behalf, that God would grant them such supplies of grace and pardoning mercy that they will be preserved from total apostasy. It is not that He prays they may be kept from sin absolutely but from a fatal and final departure from God. This is evident from the case of the eleven on the night of His betrayal: not one only but *all* of them "forsook Him and fled" (Matt. 26:56). It was the prevalence of His intercession which brought them back again. That was made more especially evident in the case of Peter. The Lord Jesus foresaw and announced that he would deny Him thrice (and lower than *that* it would seem a Christian cannot fall), yet He prayed that his faith should fail not: nor did it—it wrought by love and produced repentance.

That for which our great High Priest particularly asks is the continuance of our believing. Arminians seek to evade this by saying: Christ prays not for the perseverance of the saints in their faith, or that they who once believed should never cease from believing however wicked they may become but only for saints while they continue saints; that is, as long as they continue in faith and love God will not reject them. But the very thing Christ does pray for is, "that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32): for the continuance of a living faith, for where *that* is, there will be good works. And that for which Christ asks must be performed: not only because He is the Son of God (and therefore could ask for nothing contrary to the Father's will), but because His intercession is based upon His sacrifice: He pleads His own merits and sues only for those things which He has purchased for His people—the things to which they are entitled.

That for which Christ intercedes is clearly revealed in John 17: it is for the preservation, unification, sanctification and glorification of His people. The substance of His petitions is found in verse 11, where (in effect) He says: "Holy Father, Thou art concerned for each of these persons and hast been viewing them with unspeakable satisfaction from everlasting: Thou gavest them Me as a special expression of Thy love: My heart is set upon them and My soul delighteth in them because they are Mine by Thy free donation. As I am going to leave them behind Me and they are weak and defenseless in themselves, exposed to many enemies and temptations, I pray Thee keep them. Let

them have the Person of the Holy Spirit to indwell them: let Him renew their spiritual life and graces day by day: let Him preserve them in Thy sacred Truth.” That prayer will be fully answered when Christ will “present the Church to Himself a glorious Church” (Eph. 5:27).—A.W.P.

