

Studies in the Scriptures The Spirit Assisting.

A child of God oppressed, suffering sorely, often driven to his wit's end—what a strange thing! A joint-heir with Christ financially embarrassed, poor in this world's goods, wondering where his next meal is coming from—what an anomaly! An object of the Father's everlasting love and distinguishing favour tossed up and down upon a sea of trouble, with every *apparent* prospect of his frail barque capsizing—what a perplexity! One who has been regenerated and is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit daily harassed by Satan, and frequently overcome by indwelling sin—what an enigma! Loved by the Father, redeemed by the Son, his body made the temple of the Holy Spirit, yet left in this world year after year to suffer affliction and persecution, to mourn and groan over innumerable failures, to encounter one trial after another, often to be placed in far less favourable circumstances than the wicked; to sigh and cry for relief, yet for sorrow and suffering *to increase*—what a mystery! What Christian has not felt the force of it, and been baffled by its inscrutability.

Now it was to cast light upon this pressing problem of the sorely tried believer that the 8th Chapter of Romans was written. There the Apostle was moved to show that “the sufferings of the present time” (v. 18) are *not inconsistent* with the special favour and infinite love which God bears unto His people. First, because by those sufferings the Christian is brought into personal and experimental fellowship with the sufferings of Christ (v. 17 and cf. Phil. 3:10). Second, severe and protracted as our afflictions may be, yet there is an immeasurable disproportion between our present sufferings and the future Glory (vv. 18-23). Third, our very sufferings provide occasion for the exercise of hope and the development of patience (vv. 24, 25). Fourth, Divine aids and supports are furnished us under our afflictions (vv. 26, 27) and it is *these* we would now consider.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26). Not only does “hope” (a sure expectation of God's making good His promises) support and cheer the suffering saint, leading him to patiently wait for deliverance from his afflictions, but the blessed Comforter has also been given to him in order to supply help to this very end. By His gracious aid the believer is preserved from being totally submerged by his doubts and fears. By His renewing operations the spark of faith is maintained, despite all the fierce winds of Satan which assail. By His mighty enabling the sorely harassed and groaning Christian is kept from sinking into complete skepticism, abject despair, and infidelity. By His quickening power hope is still kept alive, and the voice of prayer is still faintly heard.

And how is the gracious help of the Spirit *manifested*? Thus: seeing the Christian bowed down by oppression and depression, His compassion is called forth, and He strengthens with His might in the inner man. Every Christian is a living witness to the truth of this, though he may not be conscious of the Divine process. Why is it, my afflicted brother, my distressed sister, that you have not made shipwreck of your profession long ere this? What has kept you from heeding that repeated temptation of Satan's to totally abandon the good fight of faith? Why has not your manifold “infirmities” annihilated your faith, extinguished your hope, and cast a pall of unrelieved gloom upon the future? The answer is, because the blessed Spirit silently, invisibly, yet sympathetically and effectually *helped* you. Some precious promise was sealed to your heart, some comforting view of Christ was presented to your soul, some whisper of love was breathed

into your ear, and the pressure upon your spirit was reduced, your grief was assuaged, and fresh courage possessed you.

Here, then, is real light cast upon the problem of a suffering Christian, the most perplexing feature of that problem being how to harmonise sore sufferings with the love of God. But if God had ceased to care for His child, then He had deserted him, left him to himself. Very far from this, though, is the actual case: the Divine Comforter is given to help his infirmities. Here, too, is the sufficient answer to an objection which the carnal mind is ready to make against the inspired reasoning of the Apostle in the context: How can we who are so weak in ourselves, so inferior in power to the enemies confronting us, bear up under our trials which are so numerous, so protracted, so crushing? We could not, and therefore Divine grace has provided for us an all-sufficient Helper. Without His aid we had long since succumbed, mastered by our trials. Hope looks forward to the Glory to come; in the weary interval of waiting, the Spirit supports our poor hearts and keeps grace alive within us.

“Our infirmities”: note the plural number, for the Christian is full of them, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Frail and feeble are we in ourselves, for “*all* flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field” (Isa. 40:6). We are “compassed with infirmity” (Heb. 5:2) both within and without. When trials and troubles come we are often bewildered by them and faint beneath them. When opposition and persecution break out against us, because of our cleaving to the Truth and walking with Christ, we are staggered. When the chastening rod of our Father falls upon us, how we fret and fume. What a little thing it takes to disturb our peace, stifle the voice of praise, and cause us to complain and murmur. How easily is the soul cast down, the promises of God forgotten, the glorious future awaiting us lost sight of. How ready are we to say with Jacob, “All these things are against me,” or with David, “I shall now perish one day at the hand of Saul.”

The “infirmities” of Christians are as numerous as they are varied. Some are weak in faith, and constantly questioning their interest in Christ. Some are imperfectly instructed in the Truth, and therefore ill-prepared to meet the lies of Satan. Some are slow travelers along the path of obedience, frequently lagging in the rear. Others groan under the burden of physical afflictions. Some are harassed with a nervous temperament which produces a state of perpetual pessimism, causing them to look only upon the dark side of the cloud. Others are weighed down with the cares of this life, so that they are constantly depressed. Others are maligned and slandered, persecuted and boycotted, which to those of a sensitive disposition is well-nigh unbearable. “Our infirmities” include all that cause us to groan and render us the objects of the Divine compassion.

But “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” Here is a Divine revelation, for we had known nothing about it apart from the Scriptures. We are not left alone to endure our infirmities: we have a helper, a Divine Helper; One not far off, but with us; nay, *in* us. The Greek word here for “helpeth” is a striking one; it signifies to “take part with” or to “take hold with one.” It occurs in only one other passage, namely, “bid Mary therefore that she help me” (Luke 10:40), where the obvious thought is that Martha was asking for her sister’s assistance, to *share* the burden of the kitchen, that she might be eased. The Spirit “helpeth” the Christian’s infirmities not only by a sympathetic regard, but by personal participation, supporting him beneath them, like a mother “helps” her child when learning to walk, or a friend gives his arm to an aged person to lean upon.

In his comments on this clause Calvin says, "The Spirit takes on Himself a part of the burden by which our weakness is oppressed, so that He not only succours us, but lifts us up, as though He went under the burden with us." Oh how this should endear the blessed Spirit of God to us. We worship the Father, whence every mercy has its rise; we adore the Son, through whom every blessing flows; but how often we overlook the Holy Spirit, *by whom* every blessing is actually communicated and applied. Think of His deep compassion, His manifold succourings, His tender love, His might power, His efficacious grace, His infinite forbearance; all these challenge our hearts and should awaken praises from us. They *would* if we meditated more upon them.

The Spirit does not remove our "infirmities," any more than the Lord took away Paul's thorn in the flesh; but He enables us to bear them. Constrained by a love which no thought can conceive, moved by a tenderness no tongue can describe, He places His mighty arm beneath the pressure and sustains us. Though He has been slighted and grieved by us a thousand times, receiving at our hands the basest requital for His tenderness and grace, yet when a sword enters our soul or some fresh trouble bows us down to the ground, He again places beneath us the arms of His everlasting love and prevents our sinking into hopeless despair.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

103. The Establishing of Christianity: 12:27.

The Divine incarnation was not some sudden, isolated, and unexpected event. The advent of our blessed Lord, and with it the dawn of Christianity, marked a climax and consummation. The world was prepared through long processes for the coming of the One and the preaching of the other: from Eden to Bethlehem the centuries were preparing for the appearing of Immanuel. As the process of creation fitted the earth for man to live upon it, so all history paved the way for the birth of the God-man. The Holy Scriptures focused the Divine preparation in one race, yet all peoples shared in the process: outside of the elect nation God was at work, and all streams converged to a single centre. The march of events was both slow and complicated, yet eventually the stage was fully set and a suitable background made for the appearing of the promised Saviour.

“When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). This signifies much more than that the time appointed by the Father had now arrived when He would put an end to the Mosaic economy and replace the shadows and types by the substance and Antitype. It denoted that conditions were peculiarly suitable for the introduction of a new and enlarged dispensation, that everything was now ripe for the execution of God’s great purpose. All the foundations had been laid. The long night of preparation had now run its course. The chrysalis was ready to burst its bonds; the fields were white unto the harvest; the olive tree was ready for the grafting of other branches into it (Rom. 11). The “fullness of time” intimates both ripeness of opportunity and consummation of need. The advent of God’s Son to this earth and the proclamation of the Gospel far and wide, not only introduced a new era, it also marked the climax of the old.

In its relation to the immediate context this expression “the fullness of time” signifies that the Church on earth had been prepared for the coming of God’s Son by having now outgrown the conditions of her childhood and minority, making her feel the irksomeness of the bonds upon her and to long for the liberty of maturity. The legal economy was merely a “schoolmaster unto Christ,” and it had now served its purpose. The old economy had decayed and waxed old, and was “ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). Aged Simeon was a representative of that godly remnant who were “waiting for the Consolation of Israel,” for there was a Divinely prepared company that then “looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:25, 38). The favoured Nation as a whole had lost its liberty, being under the yoke of the Romans, and seemed on the point of relinquishing its mission; the need for the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies was real and pressing.

There was a remarkable combination of circumstances tending to prepare the world for the Gospel, and a fearful climax in the world’s need of redemption. The break up of old heathen faiths and the passing away of the prejudices of antiquity, disposed men for a new revelation which was spiritual, humane, non-provincial. The utter failure of Pagan religion from immorality, and of Pagan philosophy from its impotency to cure that immorality and the miseries it entailed, called loudly for some new Faith, which should be both sure and powerful. The century immediately preceding our Lord’s advent was probably the most remarkable in all history. Everything was in a state of transition—old things were passing away; the fruit of the ancient order was rotting upon the tree, though without yielding the seeds of a new order. There were strange rumours afloat of coming

relief, and singular hopes stirred the hearts of men that some Great One was about to appear and renovate the world.

“The fullness of time was come.” First, *the world had reached its climacteric of sin*. History has given a faithful record of the terrible moral conditions which obtained among men in the century that immediately preceded our Lord’s advent. At Rome, which was the metropolis of the world, the Court of Caesar was steeped in luxury and licentiousness. To provide amusement for his senators six hundred gladiators fought a hand to hand conflict in the public theatre. Not to be outdone, Pompey turned five hundred lions into the arena to engage an equal number of his braves, and “delicate ladies” sat applauding and gloating over the blood that flowed. Children were the property of the state, to be disposed of as was deemed best for the public interests. The aged and infirm were banished to an island in the Tiber. Marriage was wholly a matter of sensual caprice; divorce was so frequent, it was customary for women to count them by the number of rings worn on their fingers. About two thirds of the entire civilized world were slaves, their masters having absolute power over them.

Conditions in Greece were even worse. Sensual indulgence and every species of cruelty were carried to the highest pitch. Gluttony was an art. Fornication was indulged without restraint. Parents were at liberty to expose their children to perish from cold and hunger or to be eaten up by wild beasts; such exposure being practised frequently, and passed without punishment or censure. Wars were carried on with the utmost ferocity: if any of the vanquished escaped death, slavery of the most abject kind was the only prospect before them; and in consequence, death was considered preferable to capture. “The dark places of the earth were filled with the habitations of cruelty” (Psa. 74:20). The world had reached its climacteric of sin, and this provided a dark background from which could shine forth the Light. Oftentimes a disease cannot be treated until it “comes to a head.” In view of the above conditions, the world was ready for the appearing of the great Physician.

“The fullness of time was come.” *The world had reached its consummation of want*. It had been predicted of old that the Messiah should be “the Desire of all nations”: to this end there must be a complete exposure to the failure of all human plans for deliverance. This time had arrived when Christ was born. Never before had the abject misery and need of humanity been so apparent and so extensive. Philosophy had lost its power to satisfy men, and the old religions were dead. The Greeks and Romans stood at the head of the nations at the time our Lord appeared on earth, and the religious state of those peoples in that age is too well known to require any lengthy description of them. Polytheism and Pantheism were the popular concepts: innumerable deities were worshipped, and to those gods were attributed the most abominable characteristics. Human sacrifices were frequently offered upon their altars.

Judaism was also fully ripe for the accomplishment of Messianic prophecy. Sadduceeism had leavened the ruling classes and affected the nation with rationalism and skepticism. Phariseeism, which represented the ideas and ideals of the popular party, was too often only formal and hypocritical, and at best was cold and hard, “binding heavy burdens” and laying on men’s shoulders a load which they refused to touch with their fingers (Matt. 23:4). The nation was under the government of Rome, and were thoroughly discouraged. Was there, then, no eye to pity, no arm to save? Was God unmindful of the tragic condition of mankind? No, blessed be His name, the “fullness of time was come”:

a platform was then ready on which the glories of Divine grace might be exhibited, and now arose "the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2).

"The fullness of time was come." *The needed preparations were completed*, and the high-water mark was reached. Side by side with the preliminary movements in Israel, Divine providence had also been at work in heathendom, making ready the world for the dawn of Christianity. Political conditions were singularly favourable for the coming of the Gospel. Most of the then known earth was within the bounds of the Roman empire. Everywhere the Romans went good roads were made, along which went the soldier, and after him the merchant and scholar. In a short time commercial intercourse fused various peoples. Previously, old national distinctions had bound up religious prejudices, each country having its own gods, and any attempt to foist a foreign religion upon a nation was bitterly resented. But national barriers were now broken down by Roman prowess and international intercourse, and religious exclusiveness was greatly weakened. All of this facilitated the task of missionaries of the Cross. The Roman roads became highways for the evangelists, and Roman law afforded them protection.

Parallel with the growth of the Roman empire was the spread of Grecian culture. The Grecian tongue was the one most extensively used as the language of learning: all educated people were supposed to understand it. This was a most suitable medium by which the Christian messengers could speak to a great multitude of peoples, without enduring the tedious delay of learning new languages. In Syria, Egypt, Phrygia, and Italy, as well as Greece and Asia Minor, the heralds of Christ could make themselves understood everywhere by using the common tongue employed by all teachers of that day. Moreover this language was so delicately modulated as to surpass all other forms of speech in its capacity for expressing *new* ideas. It was therefore exactly what was needed for the setting forth of a new revelation to the world at large.

It was the same with Judaism. Now had arrived the time for the fulfillment of its mission: the giving to the world of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the realisation of the Hope which they presented. Judaism was to give birth to Christianity: out of the old soil the new order was to spring. The position of the Jews at that time wonderfully facilitated the spread of the Gospel, for they were already dispersed abroad everywhere. In the days of Augustus there were forty thousand Jews at Rome, and by the time of Tiberius double that number. The Jewish synagogues furnished a means of communication between Christian gospellers and the heathen world. A synagogue was to be found in almost every town throughout the Roman empire, and to it the evangelists first went; and thus a suitable language was provided for communicating with all peoples, and centres of work were to be found in every city.

In such a striking conjunction of favourable providences we cannot but behold and admire the controlling hand of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. They served to greatly lessen the severe shock with the displacing of the old order of things and the introduction of the new order was bound to bring, for the claims of Christ are of a very radical nature and His demands revolutionizing. Even so, the establishing of Christianity is spoken of as a *shaking* of "not the earth only, but also Heaven" (Heb. 12:26): though such language be figurative, nevertheless it refers to that which was intensely real and drastic. Our assertion that the last clause of verse 26 is *not* to be understood in a material sense (as is now widely supposed), calls for some further expository remarks thereon, particularly concerning its setting here, its original, and its connection.

At verse 25 the Apostle began an exhortation which was based upon what had been pointed out in verses 18-24, and which he re-enforces by additional considerations. The exhortation consists of a call to hear and heed God's message to us through Christ. God is the Author of Old and New Testaments alike: in the former He spoke through Moses and the Prophets; in the latter by the Son, His final Spokesman. The manifestation which God made in Christ and the message He has given us through Him completes the revelation of His will. This final message was declared neither by man nor angel, but by the only begotten Son. Then let us beware of treating *such* a revelation in a manner ill-fitting its high character. The superior dignity of the Messenger and the supreme importance of His message must ensure severer punishment to those who despise and reject Him.

The urgency of this call for us to hear Christ is intimated by pointing out that since those who had disregarded God's message through Moses escaped not, a far worse punishment must be the portion of those who turn a deaf ear unto Him speaking through the Son (v. 25). The superiority of God's revelation by the Son to the message given through Moses was evidenced by the phenomena which attended each, and the different effects which followed their appearing: the Voice "from Heaven" (by Christ) produced proportionately greater results than did the Voice which spake by Moses, "on earth." The Voice through each produced a "shaking," but that through the latter was far more extensive than that through the former (v. 26). In proof of this declaration the Apostle quoted and commented upon a striking prediction found in Haggai, the pertinency and scope of which we would now consider. For a better understanding thereof we will turn to its original setting.

In Chapter 1 Haggai *rebukes* the indifference of the Jewish remnant (who had returned to Palestine from the Babylonian captivity) for their neglect to rebuild God's house. This stirred them up to proceed therewith. In Chapter 2 the Prophet *comforts* them. The rebuilding of the temple had then proceeded far enough for it to be made manifest that in its *outward* glory it was far inferior to Solomon's. A great lamentation ensued, and the Prophet asks, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (2:3). The people greatly feared that Jehovah had deserted them, and to reassure them Haggai declared "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabal, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: according to the word that IS *covenanted* with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not" (2:5, 6); and then it was that he set before them the grand hope of the Messiah's appearing.

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in *this* place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts" (2:6-9). Here was a message of comfort to the sorrowing remnant of the Prophet's day, and from it the Apostle quotes in Hebrews 12.

The first thing we would note in the above prediction is the statement "*a little while* and I will shake," which makes it evident that the "shaking" *did not* look forward to the

final and universal convulsion of nature at the end of time; rather was the reference to that which preceded and was connected with the establishing of Christianity, which was comparatively an impending event in Haggai's day. Second, the "shaking" was not to occur in the material world, but in the political and religious realms, as is clear from the closing verses of this very Chapter. "I will shake the heavens, and the earth" (v. 21) is at once defined as "and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen" (v. 22)—this commenced shortly afterwards, for the axe lay at the root of the Persian empire. Third, there was the express promise that the glory of the temple built in Haggai's day should exceed that of Solomon's.

That third item needs to be very carefully weighed by us, for it is of great importance. *This* was the chief point of *comfort* in Haggai's prediction. His fellows were deeply distressed (see Ezra 3:12) at the comparative meanness of the house of God which they were erecting, but he assures them it should yet possess a glory that far excelled that of Solomon's. That greater glory was not a material one, but a *spiritual*: it was expressly said to be the coming to it of "the Desire of all nations." It was by the appearing of the Messiah that the *real* "glory" would accrue unto the second temple, and that must be while *it* still stood! Haggai's temple was enlarged and beautified by Herod three hundred years later, but the original structure was never destroyed, so that it continued one and the same "house"; and to *it* Christ came! The "little while," then of Haggai 2:6 was parallel with the "suddenly" of Malachi 3:1.

The fourth and last thing was "and in this place will I *give peace*, saith the LORD of hosts" (2:9). That also was *spiritual*: referring to the peace which Christ should make "through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20) between God and His people, and the amity which should be established between believing Jews and believing Gentiles (see Eph. 2:14-16) in the same worship of God. *This* was the principal Work of Christ: to put away sin (which was the cause of enmity and strife) and to bring peace. Finally, the manner in which all this was to be effected was by a great "shaking," not only in the midst of Israel, but also among the Gentiles. Observe carefully the "yet once" of Haggai 2:6: there had been a great "shaking" when the first covenant was instituted, but there would be a still greater at the establishing of the new covenant. Thus the "yet once" signifies, first, once more; and secondly, once for all—finally.

Now from the above prophecy of Haggai Paul quotes in Hebrews 12:26. The Apostle's object was a double one: to supply additional proof for the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and to give further point to the exhortation he had made in verse 25. Evidence is here given from the Old Testament to show that the voice of God speaking by Christ had produced far greater effects than His word had through Moses. The contrasts, then, between the old and new covenants, and the excelling of the latter over the former, may be summed up thus: the one was connected with Sinai, the other brings us unto Sion (Heb. 12:18-24); the one was inaugurated by Moses, the other by the Son; the one was God speaking "on earth," the other "from heaven"; the one "shook the earth," the other "heaven" itself (v. 26); the one is "removed" the other "remains" (v. 27); therefore, *HEAR the Son!*

How far astray, then, are those commentators who suppose that Haggai's prophecy refers to the final judgment at the Last Day, when the whole fabric of nature shall shake and be removed! First, such a terrifying event was altogether alien to the scope of Haggai's purpose, which was to *comfort* his sorrowing brethren. Second, such a prediction

had been entirely irrelevant to the Apostle's scope, for he was comparing not the giving of the Law with the Day of Judgment, but the giving of the Law with the promulgation of the Gospel by Christ Himself; for his whole design was to exhibit the preeminence of the Evangelical economy. Third, nor would such a dreadful doom be designated a "promise" (Heb. 12:26). Fourth, the Apostle clearly intimated that Haggai's prophecy was now fulfilled (v. 28). Finally, there is no reason whatever why we should regard the shaking of heaven and earth here as a *literal* one: it was *spiritual* things of which the Apostle was discoursing—such as issue in that unshakable kingdom which believers receive in this world.

Let us admire *the striking appropriateness* of Haggai's prophecy to the purpose the Apostle then had in hand. Haggai's prediction concerned the Person and appearing of Christ: "the Desire of all nations shall come." There it was announced that God would do greater works than He had performed in the days of Moses (Hag. 2:5-7). God shook Egypt before He gave the Law, He shook Sinai at the giving of it, He shook the surrounding nations (especially in Canaan) just after it. But in "a little while" He would do greater things. The Prophet's design was to fix the eyes of the Jews upon the *first advent of Christ*, which was their great expectation, and to assure them that their temple would then possess a glory far excelling that of Solomon's. Meanwhile, God would overthrow "the throne of kingdoms and destroy the strength of the heathen" (v. 22), as the forerunning signs of Christ's advent during the short season which intervened before His appearing.

How pertinent and well-suited, then, was Haggai's prophecy to the subject Paul was developing! That prediction had been fulfilled: Christ had come and made good its terms: conclusive proof of this is found in the *changing* of the verb—the Prophet's "I will shake" being altered to "I shake," for the Apostle regarded the "shaking" as present and *not future*. A "promise had been given that a greater work of Divine power, grace and glory should be wrought at the appearing of the Messiah than what took place in connection with the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law, and this was now accomplished. How clearly and how forcibly did this demonstrate the *preeminency* of the new covenant above the old: so far as the glory of the second temple excelled that of the first was Christianity superior to Judaism! Finally, how well did this "shaking" of Heaven intimate the permanency and finality of Christianity, for the shaking was in order that the unshakable might abide (Heb. 12:27).

It now remains for us to weigh *the comment* which the Apostle made upon this citation from Haggai: "And this word, Yet once more, *signifieth* the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27). Incidentally, let it be pointed out that here we have a helpful illustration of the province and task of *the teacher*: in expounding God's Word he not only compares passage with passage and defines the meaning of its terms, but he also indicates what legitimate *inferences and conclusions* may be drawn, what its statements *imply* as well as directly affirm. This is exactly what the Apostle does here: he *argues* that the word "once" (used by the Prophet) not only signified "once more," but that it also denoted the setting aside of the order of things previously existing.

There is a fullness in the words of Holy Writ which can only be discovered by prolonged meditation and careful analysis. The prophecy of Haggai had said nothing expressly about the "removing" of anything, yet what was not stated explicitly *was* contained therein implicitly. The Apostle insists that a "removing" was necessarily implied

in the terms of Haggai's prediction. The very fact that God had "shaken" the Mosaic economy to its very foundations—the preaching and miracles of Christ (and later by His Apostles) had caused thousands to leave it; the Lord's denunciation of the religious leaders and His exposure of their hypocrisy had undermined the confidence of the masses, while the rending of the temple veil by a Divine hand had clearly and solemnly signified the end of the Levitical system—was plain intimation that He was on the eve of setting the whole aside, and that, for the purpose of setting up something better in its place; what that something is, we must leave for our next.—A.W.P.

N.B. Had some of our twentieth century Christians been present, they would have taken issue with the Apostle and said, "Paul, you are taking undue liberties with the Word of God, which we cannot consent to. The Holy Spirit through Haggai spoke of a "shaking," whereas *you* change it to "removing." Had the Apostle replied, "I am simply pointing out what the Prophet's language clearly implies, drawing an obvious inference from his statement." The rejoinder would be, "We do not need to do any *reasoning* upon the Word. Moreover, any simple soul can see that shaking and removing are very different things, and had the Prophet *meant* the latter he would have said so, and not used the former." An expositor of Scripture often encounters such quibbling today: it is worse than ignorance, for it deceives not a few into supposing that such slavish adherence to the letter of Scripture (being occupied with its *sound*, instead of seeking its *sense*) is *honouring* the same.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

55. His Repentance.

“The emperor Arcadius and his wife had a very bitter feeling towards Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople. One day, in a fit of anger, the emperor said to one of his courtiers, ‘I would I were avenged of this bishop! Several then proposed how this should be done. ‘Banish him and exile him to the desert,’ said one. ‘Put him in prison,’ said another. ‘Confiscate his property,’ said a third. ‘Let him die,’ said a fourth. Another courtier, whose vices Chrysostom had reproved, said maliciously, ‘You all make a great mistake. You will never punish him by such proposals. If banished from the kingdom, he will feel God as near to him in the desert as here. If you put him in prison and load him with chains, he will still pray for the poor and praise God in the prison. If you confiscate his property, you merely take away his goods from the poor, not from him. If you condemn him to death, you open Heaven to him. Prince, do you wish to be revenged on him? Force him to commit sin. I know him; *this man fears nothing in the world but sin.*’ O that this were the only remark which our fellows could pass on you and me, fellow-believer” (From the Fellowship magazine).

We recently came across the above in our reading, and thought it would form a most suitable introduction to this article. What cause have we *to fear* SIN!—that “abominable thing” which God hates (Jer. 44:4), that horrible disease which brought death into the world (Rom. 5:12), that fearful thing which nailed to the Cross the Lord of Glory (1 Peter 2:24), that shameful thing which fouls the believer’s garments and so often brings reproach upon the sacred Name which he bears. Yes, good reason has each of us to *fear* sin, and to beg God that it may please Him to work in our hearts a greater horror and hatred of it. Is not this one reason why God permits some of the most eminent saints to lapse into outrageous evils, and place such upon record in His Word: that we should be more distrustful of ourselves, realising that *we* are liable to the same disgracing of our profession; yea, that we certainly shall fall into such unless upheld by the mighty hand of God.

As we have seen, David sinned, and sinned grievously. What was yet worse, for a long season he refused to acknowledge unto God his wickedness. A period of months went by ere he felt the heinousness of his conduct. Ah, my reader, it is the inevitable tendency of sin to deaden the conscience and harden the heart. Therein lies its most hideous feature and fatal aspect. Sin suggests innumerable excuses to its perpetrator and ever prompts to extenuation. It was thus at the beginning. When brought face to face with their Maker, neither Adam nor Eve evidenced any contrition; rather did they seek to vindicate themselves by placing the blame elsewhere. Thus it was with each of us whilst in a state of nature. Sin blinds and hardens, and nought but Divine grace can illumine and soften. Nothing short of the power of the Almighty can pierce the calloused conscience or break the sin-petrified heart.

Now God will not suffer any of His people to remain indefinitely in a state of spiritual insensibility: sooner or later He brings to light the hidden things of darkness, convicts them of their offences, causes them to mourn over the same, and leads them to repentance. God employs a variety of means in accomplishing this, for in nothing does He act uniformly. He is limited to no one measure or method, and being sovereign He acts as seemeth good unto Himself. This may be seen by comparing some of the cases recorded in the Scriptures. It was a sense of God’s awe-inspiring majesty which brought Job to re-

pent of his self-righteousness and abhor himself (Job 42:1-6). It was a vision of the Lord's exalted glory which made Isaiah cry out, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:1-5). A sight of Christ's miraculous power moved Peter to cry "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Those on the day of Pentecost were "pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37) by hearing the Apostle's sermon.

In the case of David, God employed *a parable* in the mouth of His Prophet to produce conviction. Nathan depicted a case where one was so vilely treated that any who heard the account of it must perforce censure him who was guilty of such an outrage. For though it is the very nature of sin to blind its perpetrator, yet it does not take away his sense of right and wrong. Even when a man is insensible to the enormity of his own transgressions, he is still capable of discerning evil in others; yea, in most instances it seems that the one who has a beam in his own eye is readier to perceive the mote in his fellow's. It was according to this principle that Nathan's parable was addressed to David: if the king was slow to confess his own wickedness, he would be quick enough to condemn like evil in another. Accordingly the case was spread before him.

In the parable (2 Sam. 12:1-4) an appeal is made to both David's affections and his conscience. The position of Uriah and his wife is touchingly portrayed under the figure of a poor man with his "one little ewe lamb," which was dear to him and "lay in his bosom." The one who wronged him is represented as a rich man with "exceeding many flocks and herds," which greatly heightened his guilt in seizing and slaying the one lone lamb of his neighbour. The occasion of the offence, the temptation to commit it, is stated as "there came *a traveler* unto the rich man": it was to minister unto *him* that the rich man seized upon the poor man's lamb. That "traveler" which came to him pictures the restless flesh, the active lusts, the wandering thoughts, the roving eyes of David in connection with Bathsheba. Ah, my reader, it is at *this* point we most need to be upon our guard. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Part of that task lies in our thoughts and repelling unlawful imaginations. True it is that we cannot prevent wandering thoughts from entering our minds nor evil imaginations from surging up within us, but we *are* responsible to resist and reject them. But this is what David failed to do: he *welcomed* this "traveler," he *entertained* him, he *feasted* him, and feasted him upon that which was *not lawful*—with that which belonged to another: pictured in the parable by the lamb belonging to his neighbour. And, my reader, it is when we give place to our sinful lusts, indulge our evil imaginations, feed our wandering thoughts upon that which is unlawful, that we pave the way for a sad fall. "Travelers" *will* come to us—the mind will be active—and our responsibility is to see that they are fed with that which is lawful: ponder Philippians 4:8 in this connection.

Nathan, then, traced the trouble back to its source, and showed what it was which occasioned and led up to David's fearful fall. The details of the parable emphasised the excuselessness, the injustice, the lawlessness, the wickedness of his crime. He already had wives of his own, why, then, must he rob poor Uriah of his! The case was so clearly put, the guilt of the offender so evidently established, the king at once condemned the offender, and said, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:5). Then it was that the Prophet turned and said to him, "*Thou* art the man." David did not flame forth in hot resentment and anger against the Prophet's accusation; he made no attempt to

deny his grievous transgression or proffer any excuses for it. Instead, he frankly owned, "I have sinned against the LORD" (v. 13). Nor were those words uttered mechanically or lightly as the sequel so clearly shows, and as we shall now see.

David's slumbering conscience was now awakened, and he was made to realise the greatness of his guilt. The piercing arrow from God's quiver, which Nathan had driven into his diseased heart, opened to David's view the awfulness of his present case. Then it was that he gave evidence that, though woeful had been his conduct, nevertheless, he was not a reprobate soul, totally abandoned by God. "The dormant spark of Divine grace in David's heart now began to rekindle, and before this plain and faithful statement of facts, in the name of God, his evasions vanished, and his guilt appeared in all its magnitude. He therefore was far from resenting the pointed rebuke of the Prophet, or attempting any palliation of his conduct; but, in deep humiliation of heart, he confessed, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' The words are few; but the event proved them to have been the language of genuine repentance, which regards sin as committed against the authority and glory of the Lord, whether or not it has occasioned evil to any fellow-creature" (Thomas Scott).

In order to fully obtain the mind of God on any subject treated of in His Word, Scripture has to be diligently searched and one passage carefully compared with another—failure to observe this principle ever results in an inadequate or one-sided view. It is so here. Nothing is recorded in the historical account of Samuel about the deep exercises of heart through which David now passed; nothing is said to indicate the reality and depth of his repentance. For *that* we must turn elsewhere, notably to the penitential Psalms. There the Holy Spirit has graciously given us a record of what David was inspired to write thereon, for it is in the Psalms we find most fully delineated the varied experiences of soul through which the believer passes. There we may find an unerring description of every exercise of heart experienced by the saint in his journey through this wilderness scene; which explains why *this* book of Scripture has ever been a great favourite with God's people: therein they find *their own* inward history accurately described.

The two principal Psalms which give us a view of the heart exercises through which David now passed are the 51st and the 32nd. The 51st is evidently the earlier one. In it we see the fallen saint struggling up out of "the horrible pit and miry clay." In the latter we behold him standing again on firm ground with a new song in his mouth, even the blessedness of him "whose sin is covered." But both of them are evidently to be dated from the time when the sharp thrust of God's lancet in the hand of Nathan pierced David's conscience, and when the healing balsam of God's assurance of forgiveness was laid by the Prophet upon his heart. The passionate cries of the sorely-stricken soul (Psa. 51) are really the echo of the Divine promise—the efforts of David's faith to grasp and appropriate the merciful gift of pardon. It was the Divine promise *of* forgiveness which was the basis and encouragement of the prayer *for* forgiveness.

It is to be noted that the title affixed to the 51st Psalm is "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the Prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." Beautifully did Spurgeon point out in his introductory remarks, "When the Divine measure had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt, he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his psalmody while he was indulging in the flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accom-

paniment of sighs and tears.” Great as was David’s sin, yet he repented, and was restored. The depths of his anguish and the reality of his repentance are evident in every verse. In it we may behold the grief and the desires of a contrite soul pouring out his heart before God, humbly and earnestly suing for His mercy. Only the Day to come will reveal how many sin-tormented souls have found from this Psalm—“all blotted with the tears in which David sobbed out his repentance” found a path for backsliders in a great and howling desert.

“Although the Psalm is one long cry for pardon and restoration, one can discern an order and progress in its petitions—the order, not of an artificial reproduction of a past mood of mind, but the instinctive order in which the emotion of contrite desire will ever put itself forth. In the Psalm all begins (v.1), as all begins in fact, with the grounding of the cry for favour on ‘Thy loving-kindness,’ ‘the multitude of Thy tender mercies’; the one plea that avails with God, whose love is its own motive and its own measure, whose past acts are the standard for all His future, whose own compassions, in their innumerable numbers, are more than the sum of our transgressions, though these be ‘more than the hairs of our head.’ Beginning with God’s mercy, the penitent soul can learn to look next upon its own sin in all its aspect of evil” (A. Maclaren).

The depth and intensity of the Psalmist’s loathing of self is clearly revealed by the various terms he uses to designate his crime. He speaks of his “transgressions” (vv. 1, 3) and of his “iniquity” and “sin” (vv. 2, 3). As another has forcibly pointed out, “looked at in one way, he sees the separate acts of which he had been guilty—his lust, fraud, treachery, murder; looked at in another, he sees them all knotted together in one inextricable tangle of forked, hissing tongues, like the serpent-locks that coil and twist around a Gorgon head. No sin dwells alone; the separate acts have a common root, and the whole is matted together like the green growth on a stagnant pond, so that, by whatever filament it is grasped the whole mass is drawn towards you.”

A profound insight into the essence and character of sin is here exhibited by the accumulated synonyms. It is “transgression,” or as the Hebrew word might be rendered, “rebellion”—not merely the breach of an impersonal law, but the revolt of a subject’s will against its true King; disobedience to God, as well as contravention of a standard. It is “iniquity”—perversion or distortion—acting unjustly or dealing crookedly. It is “sin” or “missing the mark,” for all sin is a blunder, shooting wide of the true goal, whether regard be had for God’s glory or our own well being and happiness. It is pollution and filth, from which nothing but atoning blood can cleanse. It is “evil” (v. 4), a vile thing which deserves only unsparing condemnation. It is a fretting leprosy, causing him to cry “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (v. 7).

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (v. 4). In these words David gives evidence of the sincerity of his contrition and proof that he was a regenerate man. It is only those possessing a spiritual nature that will view sin in the presence of God. The evil of all sin lies in its opposition to God, and a contrite heart is filled with a sense of the wrong done unto Him. Evangelical repentance mourns for sin because it has displeased a gracious God and dishonoured a loving Father. David, then, was not content with looking upon his evil in itself, or in relation only to the people who had suffered by it. He had been guilty of crimes against Bathsheba and Uriah, and even Joab whom he made his tool, as well as against all his subjects; but dark as those crimes were, they assumed their true character only when seen as committed *against God*.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (v. 5). Many have been puzzled by this verse in the light of its setting, yet it should occasion no difficulty. Certainly it was not said by David in self-extenuation; rather was it to emphasise his own excuseless guilt. From the second half of Verse 4 it is plain that he was vindicating God: *Thou* hadst nothing to do with my sin; it was all *mine* own—out of the proneness unto evil of my depraved nature. It was not Thou, but my own evil lusts, which tempted me. David was engaged in making *full* confession, and therefore did he acknowledge the defilement of his very nature. It was to humble himself, clear God, and magnify the Divine grace, that David said Verse 5.

In the clear light of Psalm 51 we cannot doubt the reality, the sincerity, nor the depth of David’s repentance and broken-hearted contrition. We close, then, with a brief quotation from Thomas Scott: “Let not any vile hypocrite, who resembles David in nothing but his transgressions, and who adds the habit of allowed sin to all other aggravations, buoy up his confidence with *his* example; let him first imitate David’s humiliation, repentance, and other eminent graces, before he thinks himself, or requires others to consider him, as a backslider.”—A.W.P.

Divine Providence.

The providence of God is His care of and provision He makes for His creatures, with His supervision and superintendence of them. The providence of God in His government of the world is a subject of deep importance to the Christian, for by proper views thereof he will learn to see God's activities in the daily works of His hands. The depravity of the human heart, especially as it is evidenced in "vain philosophy," makes a veil out of the physical laws by which God usually conducts His government, a veil which *hides* Him in His own workings. But the Scriptures represent all physical laws as having their *efficacy* from the *immediate agency* of Almighty power, and view God as working in His providence as truly as He wrought in His works of creation. Yet, though Christians assent to this truth, nevertheless they are prone to overlook it *in exercise*, and thereby to be deprived in great measure of that poise of mind and comfort of heart which a deep and constant improvement of this doctrine is calculated to impart.

Nothing is more strengthening to faith, stabilising to the mind, and tranquilizing to the heart of a Christian, than for him to be enabled to discern *the Father's hand* guiding, shaping, controlling all that enters his life; and not only so, but that He is also *governing* this world, and all persons and events in it. Alas, we are living in an age of terrible skepticism, when most of what happens is attributed to natural causes, while God is more and more banished from the world in the consideration of His creatures. Now it is not only a fact that God *governs* the world in a general sense, but He also regulates *all* its affairs, controls all creatures in it, "working all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). Fully is this truth brought before us in the Scriptures, not only in specific statements, but by innumerable exemplifications and demonstrations.

At such a time as this, when Truth is fallen in the streets, and error abounds on every hand, the believer is supported by the knowledge that it is the sovereign will of God here-sies *should* enter and many be perverted by them. Without *this* view of Divine providence there is no real consolation for the Christian, as he considers the awful ravages which error has made and the sad state poor Christendom is now in. Philosophy combines with agnosticism, superstition with idolatry, to oppose the Lord's Anointed, while "religion" is now as corrupt as the general morals of the masses. The increasing worldliness of the "churches" (?), the spiritual deadness which prevails even where the Truth is largely maintained, the absence of genuine conversions, combine to disturb and distress; but "The Lord God omnipotent *reigneth*" (Rev. 19:6), supplies a sure resting place for the heart, for this means that even God's opposers are executing His secret counsels.

God is not shaken by the situation which now confronts our view, nor does the pride, blatancy, and blasphemy of His enemies occasion Him any uneasiness. To the contrary "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psa. 2:4). It is written "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain" (Psa. 76:10), but only FAITH can receive this grand Truth and enjoy in the heart the precious fruits thereof. That Divine "restraint" of man's "wrath" is exercised in God's providence or government of this world, and this is what we wish the reader to be occupied with (D.V.) in what follows. God is not perturbed by anything that is now taking place in this world—either in its political, social, or religious sphere; nor should we be. The helm is still in *His* hand; and Satan himself cannot so much as touch a hair of our heads without His direct permission.

The *advantages* of a clear grasp of this foundation Truth of Divine providence are many. First, it delivers the Christian from being carried away by the tide of public opinion. Few things have a greater tendency to lead Christians into error than its apparent success. People in general judge of a cause by its seeming success, and often Christians are greatly influenced by this pernicious principle. Opinions spread by infection, rather than by a *thorough investigation* of the evidence. But an accurate acquaintance with the ways of Providence, as revealed in Scripture, is calculated to deliver from this prejudice. *There* we discover that God has often granted much "success" to His *enemies*, and by it they were hardened in their rebellion. Mere success is *no proof* of Truth, and lack of success is neither evidence of error nor of God's displeasure.

Second, a proper acquaintance with the grand truth of Divine Providence should also be of real help in guarding us against having recourse to artifice and craft, in the propagation of the Truth. The Apostle Paul, in spite of all his zeal for the Gospel, *disdained all worldly wisdom* in his efforts to advance its progress: he commended the Truth to every man's *conscience* in the sight of God. Then let *us stick* to the means of God's ordering and rigorously eschew all human inventions. Temptations to compromise, to lower the standard, to bring in fleshly devices so as to "draw the young people," are multiplying today. While in Glasgow, recently, the writer seriously offended "a Christian brother" because we asked a personal favour that there should be no special "solo" sung the night we preached in his Hall. Even though it appeared that Christianity were in real danger of being banished from the earth, that *would not* justify our attempting to assist it by worldly methods, carnal devices, or any means which God has not appointed. We are to fight the Lord's battles with the weapons which He has put into our hands, and leave the "success" to Him! All the ingenuity of man can not and will not extend the Gospel one inch beyond the limits which our sovereign God has assigned. It is at *this* point faith is so often tested: faithful preaching being sparsely attended, "churches" with worldly attractions crowded.

Third, a proper acquaintance with this blessed doctrine of Divine Providence provides consolation amid so much that distresses. The more a true believer ponders the character of the times in which his lot is cast, the more is his heart saddened. The affairs of this world appear to be completely under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, but in the grand truth of God's government there is real comfort and solid support for the heart. From it we learn that even the very opposition which is made to the kingdom of Christ is part of the plan of Divine wisdom, and will be overruled for the glory of God and of His Son. It is true that "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19), yet *not* in the sense that God has relinquished its *government*. The wrath of Satan shall be obliged to praise God, and any device of it which has not that tendency, He will "restrain" and not suffer to be manifested.

Two or three years ago we published a series of most excellent papers on the Book of Esther by the late Alexander Carson, which God was pleased to bless to quite a number. In His goodness there has recently come into our hands another volume from his pen, entitled "History of Providence as manifested in Scripture; or facts of Scripture illustrative of the government of God" (1854). As we have personally enjoyed its perusal so much, we desire others to have the same opportunity. It is too lengthy for us to reproduce verbatim, but we trust our selections from it will edify our friends. The first one immediately follows this introductory word.—A.W.P.

The Providence of God.

1. *The Entangled Ram.*

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son” (Gen. 22:13). This was a very extraordinary occasion; and, as the nature of the case did not allow Abraham to be provided with a beast for a sacrifice, we might have expected that God would provide one for him by a miracle. He could as easily have caused a ram to come of himself from any part of the adjacent country, as He had formerly brought the animals to Noah in the ark. But not so; He did not choose to do the thing by miracle. He furnished the sacrifice by His *providence*. “A ram caught in the thicket by his horns.” What could be more purely accidental than this? Was there any thing wonderful that a ram should happen to be entangled in the brambles where he was feeding? What could be more natural? Why should it be thought that Providence was concerned in the matter? It is, indeed, a very trifling thing, and a fact easily to be accounted for. But *why* did it happen on *this* occasion? Why was not the ram caught yesterday? Or why did it happen before tomorrow? Why was it on this day—in this hour—in this minute? A day sooner, or a day later, would not have answered the purpose. The ram must be caught, and held inextricably fast, at the moment that Abraham needed him.

Why was the ram caught here? Had it been at a distance, or out of the view of Abraham, it might as well not have been caught at all. It is caught at this moment, at this very spot where it is needed. Why was the caught beast a ram, and not a deer, or some other horned animal? Because such an animal would not have answered for the sacrifice that was to be offered. Why was it not a he-goat? Because, though such an animal was a suitable sacrifice in some circumstances, a ram was most suitable on the present occasion. Why was it a male, and not a female? Because, though in some circumstances female animals were employed in sacrifice, yet a male is that usually employed for a good typical purpose. This, then, is the work of *God*, as much as even the creation of the world. It is a miracle of Providence, and shows us how to read the book of Providence. We ought to see the hand of God in the most trifling things. Nothing is too great for His Providence to effect: nothing is so small as to be below His attention. This fact teaches us also that what God *requires* from us for His worship, He will *supply* to us by His Providence.

2. *Hagar Expelled.*

“Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac” (Gen. 21:10). In her design of expelling Hagar from the house of Abraham, Sarah was excited and influenced by her own private feelings and interest alone. She uttered her own sentiments in her own language. Yet she uttered the Truth of God, in God’s words, in a figure. What she said with respect to Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac and herself, was all providentially adapted to express the Gospel in an allegory. The Spirit of God by Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, expounds this transaction in this sense. The word of Sarah, with respect to her own private affairs, are quoted as the words of inspiration with respect to the nature of the Gospel: “Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman” (Gal. 4:30). Here the words of Sarah are expounded as referring to the Gospel, as fully as if they had no primary reference. It is not said, “What saith Sarah?” But “What saith the Scripture?”

The words employed providentially by Sarah in her own affairs are, in another point of view, the words of Scripture with reference to the way of salvation. In the inscrutable wisdom of God, the words are the words of Sarah and of God—of Sarah, in her own sense, of the Spirit, as a symbolic expression of the Gospel. Men who receive the Truth of God no further than they can comprehend the nature of the thing testified, cannot believe that the allegorical meaning taken out of the expression by Paul was really in the design of the Holy Spirit when the words were used by Sarah, and recorded by Moses. They view the historical document as merely casually adapted to illustrate the point in hand, and, as such, ingeniously employed by the Apostle. But these men wrest the Scriptures, and deny the palpable testimony of the Holy Spirit. Paul does not use the historical fact as casually adapted to illustrate the Gospel, but expressly expounds it as the testimony of the Spirit in the ancient Scriptures—"What saith the Scriptures?" It is used as an argument to convince, and not as an illustration to explain. "Tell me," says he, "ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?" Is not this proof from the law? After this introduction he proceeds to relate the history in its allegorical meaning. "For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Gal. 4:27-31).

What a wonderful combination of *providential* events was necessary to fit this history to the shadowing of the Gospel! Abraham must have a wife, a free woman; he must also have a wife who was a slave. He must have a son by this slave, and a son in a peculiar manner by his wife. The slave and her son must be cast out; and not only excluded from the inheritance, but from a residence in the family. The wife must express, with regard to her own affairs, in her own language, language that the Holy Spirit adapts to an allegorical declaration of the Gospel. This surely is Divine wisdom. And this both illustrates and proves the inspiration of the Scriptures. The very words of Scripture, with respect to historical details and circumstances which, in themselves, have no direct concern with the Gospel, are adapted, in the most wonderful manner to express a secondary meaning, known at the time only to the Holy Spirit. The unfeeling demand of Sarah, with respect to her domestic concerns, is, from another point of view, the language of the Spirit figuratively expressing the nature of the Gospel. (Alexander Carson).

Welcome Tidings.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23). As we have stated in these pages before, this is the editor's favourite passage. It has come before us now as we take up our pen to write our annual report of the Lord's goodness and grace upon us.

The Lord's mercy is manifold, hence the use of the plural number here. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are "not consumed," first, by the condemnation of the Law—our Surety having been made a curse for us. Second, "not consumed" by the reigning power of sin—Divine grace subduing its fatal ragings. Third, "not consumed" by Satan, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour—Divine power protecting and preserving us. Fourth, "not consumed" by the trials and sorrows of this life—Divine love keeping the head of faith just above the flood which threatens to overwhelm.

The reason why we are not consumed is "because His compassions (note again the plural number!) fail not." Sometimes the compassions of those nearest and dearest to us "fail." Often the compassion of friends and acquaintances—especially when most needed—"fail." There are seasons when our own compassion fails—when we are our own worst enemies. But the compassions of the Lord "fail not." Hallelujah! Having loved us with an everlasting love, He loves us unto the end. Here, dear tried, fellow-pilgrim, is a welcome pillow to rest upon. No matter what the future may hold, how tight a corner you may be driven into, how lamentable your failures and desperate your case, the Lord's compassions will "fail not."

"They are new every morning." The compassion of our fellows soon wears out, but that of Jehovah is like Himself, having "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Each day that dawns brings with it fresh proofs of the unfailing compassions of Him with whom we have to do; in view of which we are constrained to exclaim "great is Thy faithfulness." Yes, "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Many fresh proofs of this have we received during the past twelve months, which more than once or twice have made us ashamed of our own wretched unbelief. A few out of the many tokens of the Lord's goodness will be recorded in what follows.

First, we would mention that God was pleased to speak loudly to a number of friends through our Annual Letter in the December 1935 issue, when we stated that unless more of the readers co-operated and endeavoured to introduce us to new readers there was grave danger we should soon have to cease publishing. Though the number on our mailing-list is still below what it was twelve months ago, yet we are thankful to say that through the efforts of those who appreciate this monthly messenger, we have been brought into contact with quite a number of the Lord's people, who are now enjoying with us some of the riches of His amazing grace. We trust that *others* will be stirred up to do what they can in making known this magazine unto those likely to value it. It is sent to many who are not in a position to contribute anything, but those who *are* able are expected to gladly send in at least 3/6 (one dollar) per year, which is what it actually costs to send to each person for twelve months.

"I just read your Annual Letter in the December issue. I was so touched, the tears prevented me finishing it, until I had gone into my bedroom and prayed for you" (Brother in Missouri). "Your Annual Letter causes me some concern; no other publication is so exclusively filled with the finest of wheat as the 'Studies,' and there would be so much dis-

appointment when (and if) it is discontinued" (A Preacher). "What will we do, who have been with you from the beginning, should you drop the Studies? To me it would be quite a calamity. You have fed us with meat; to turn us adrift with the frothy shallow stuff that is being poured out on all sides today, is a prospect far from pleasant" (Friend in Australia). While God grants us health, messages, the financial means (we take not a penny from the magazine for our own labours—our own needs are provided for) and *a sufficient number of readers* to justify publishing, we shall continue.

"The Studies have been such a blessing in my life that I am concerned very much to hear the circulation is falling off" (Scotland). "The copies that I have received have been wonderfully helpful to me, and I pray that this work may continue" (Alabama). "I have been blessed another year through your good work in the Studies" (Wales). "Studies are a great help and inspiration to me. I find so much real soul food in them" (California). "I have enjoyed and been blessed in the reading of Studies" (Lawyer). "My wife joins me in heart-felt thanks for the Studies. We are particularly grateful for the articles on 'The Spirit leading'" (Sussex). "Your publication was much blessed to my soul during the past year" (Iowa). "Your articles on Divine Chastisement have been a source of great blessing to us" (Australia).

"We unite in thanking you for your magazine. We enjoy them so much, but O they make me tremble often, yet I thank God for it—it is much needed in my life" (Canada). "Your articles on the Spirit have done much to open my eyes: this subject is so little known today" (Washington). "I have thanked God from a full heart for His long-suffering goodness and mercy to me, and write to say what a great blessing your Studies are to me, especially the articles on Sanctification. The patient method you have of explaining the meaning of words and phrases is of much help" (England).

"I have been much refreshed by your Studies. I am sure you cannot have much time left to yourself, according to the high standard of the articles" (Scotland). "Yours are truly *Studies*: one cannot simply read them. I ponder them with a pencil in one hand and my Bible in the other" (California). "I thoroughly appreciate your articles. As we realise the responsibility of having to do with the thrice Holy God, how we need to be searched by Him" (Herts.). "Poverty of words prevent my expressing how much the Studies have meant to me" (New York). "The bound volumes of Studies are among my most cherished possessions: I read them again and again" (England).

"In these days when Romanist idolatry, superstition and blasphemy, Protestant indifference and apathy, with worldwide unconcern in spiritual things are so prevalent, it is indeed like an oasis in a desolate desert to receive and prayerfully peruse such sound religious periodicals as your own. Your expositions of Scripture are evangelically sound, and calculated by the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit to be spiritually edifying and comforting" (Australia). "We as a family have certainly in the past, and are now, greatly indebted to God, who has wrought mightily through you for our instruction, warning, and cheer. We thank you, and pray God will increase your usefulness. We have been miraculously preserved from error as well as from apostacy largely by your teaching; recognising God's hand in bringing it to us as He commanded the ravens to feed Elijah" (Michigan). "Your writings have been sent to me in answer to a desire that has been in my heart since a child, for explanation of some parts of Scripture that I could not take in. The articles on David have been a great blessing to me" (Bedridden from Paralysis).

"I find your articles most instructive and beneficial in every way. To read them is to know real heart-searching. I must admit being brought to my knees in tears, for they do not spare one. There is nothing sentimental or artificial about their composition. They are an inspiration to holiness of life" (Australia). "How do I praise Him for having brought me under your teaching. How my spiritual life has been strengthened as the blessed Holy Spirit has led you to exalt His Person and Work. I used to read 'victorious life' literature, but it remained for your teaching to show me that a life of victory is only obtainable by implicit obedience to God's Word" (Ohio).

"Your articles on the Covenant are filled with much blessing to any student of the Word" (Preacher). "Your articles on the Covenants are unfolding precious truth" (Pennsylvania). "I have derived great comfort of mind in meditating upon the riches of God's truth which you have so fearlessly, so clearly, so convincingly presented to the glory of God and the comfort of believers in Christ Jesus; so I believe the Spirit has borne witness with me that these things are true. I thank God for such a gift as He has bestowed upon you. Surely in this dark age your ministry is sorely needed" (Preacher in New York).

"Let me assure you again that your magazine has been of much profit to me. I have also been able to take from the Studies not a few sermons and give them to the people here" (Missionary in Central America). "In reading your Studies I find greater illumination than from any other literature or preaching. I often wonder why it is that preachers and teachers of the Bible are able to give so little help on the Scriptures [they are too lazy to *study*—A.W.P.]. I have looked for the Truth a long time, and I am certain that because of your teachings I am in closer harmony with God" (Ukrainian Brother). "This year I was much blessed, and enjoyed reading about the work of the blessed Holy Spirit. May the Lord enable you to be led always by His Spirit, through the Word, in everything" (Brother in Syria).

We trust the above extracts, which might be greatly multiplied, will provoke hearty praise and thanksgiving to our gracious God. Those who send us part of their tithes to be used in sending this magazine to "the poor of the flock" must feel grateful to the Lord for so signally blessing these pages to many who are cut off from all preaching services. It is sent to some in Aged People's Homes, to those in the prairies of Canada, the bush of Australia, the lonely Islands of the sea. We beg for continuation of your daily prayers for God's blessing to remain on the editor and his wife and their labours for Him. Gifts have come in freely, so that as we write there is no shortage of funds; but we do so long for an enlarged circulation. With hearty Christian love to all fellow-sinners redeemed by precious Blood. Yours by God's abounding Mercy.—Arthur W. and Vera E. Pink.

Union and Communion.

8. *Experimental.*

Having sought to describe at some length the nature or character of the intimate and precious experimental communion which it is the right and privilege of the believer to have with the everlasting Lover of his soul, we will now pass on to consider the *maintenance* of the same. The Lord has graciously provided full and adequate means for this, and it is entirely our own fault if we fail to avail ourselves of them. Neglect of those means produces the same effects upon the spiritual life as neglect of natural means does upon the physical and mental. The body cannot thrive if the laws of health be despised; the mind cannot be developed if its education and discipline be ignored; and the soul cannot be preserved in a healthy state if those things which make for our well-being be slighted. God's blessing rests upon *the use of* those means of His appointing, but He places no premium on slothfulness; and if we are indifferent and careless, then we must expect to be lean and sickly, joyless and fruitless.

Each of us needs to honestly face and seriously answer this question. *How highly* do I *really* value communion with Christ? I am deeply concerned about my temporal prospects; I give much thought to my earthly circumstances; I am at great pains to obtain a living in the world, so that I may have a roof over my head and food and raiment. I am anxious to have a few close friends, and do all in my power to maintain good-will with them. I seek to do my duty by my family. Yes, all well and good; all right in their place. But *their* place is a subordinate one: *Christ* has the FIRST claims upon me. Do I *realise* this? Am I acting accordingly? Am I making it my chief concern to cultivate closer communion with Him? Am I—amidst all the problems, frictions, trials of this life—making *Him* my principal Confident, Counselor, Helper? Is it *He* I am most seeking to please, honour and glorify? If not, is it not high time that I did so?

Do I not owe far, far more to the Lord Jesus than to all my earthly associates and friends, yea, than to my nearest and dearest relatives? And is He not desirous of my treating Him *as the* "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother?" Has He not invited me to the most intimate dealings with Him? Is it not my privilege, yea, my bounden duty, *to* give Him the *first* place, each day, in my affections, my thoughts, my plans? Has He not supplied the utmost encouragement for me to cast *all* my care upon Him? Has He not given me promises exactly suited to every circumstance, every difficulty, every need, I may get into? Has He not plainly revealed the *means* which will promote my fellowship with Him? Has He not shown me that neither the presence of indwelling sin nor its breakings forth into activity, need make communion with Him a practical impossibility?

But alas, what vile ingrates we are! what incorrigible wretches! How often have we given the Lord cause to say, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13)? None but Christ can satisfy the heart, yet we are terribly slow in really believing it. We grasp at shadows, pursue phantoms, seek to feed on ashes, and then wonder why we are so miserable. God will not long allow His people to rest in *things*, or find contentment in their circumstances. He it is who both gives and takes away, who gratifies or thwarts our wishes. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out of it; therefore, there is nothing in the world which deserves a single anxious thought from us, for we shall soon be at the end of our journey through it.

None but Christ will be sufficient for us when we are called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and none but Christ can do us any real good now: what we need is to really *believe* that truth. And does not God take abundant pains to prove the truth of it to us? He removes this and withholds that, because He sees that our hearts are too much set upon them. We imagine that a certain thing would be very pleasant and profitable, and fancy that we cannot do without it; if we could but obtain it, we promise ourselves much satisfaction from it. If God grants it to us, do we not find that it is *not* what we expected? We dream dreams, build air castles, live in many a fancied paradise, only to be bitterly disappointed. God's purpose in those disappointments is to wean us from the world, to make us sick of it, to teach us that all down here is but "Vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14).

O my reader, it would make much for our peace and blessedness if we committed the management of the whole of our affairs into the hands of Christ. We need to continually pray Him to save us from having any will of our own, to work in us complete subjection to and satisfaction with His holy will. By nature we are full of restlessness, covetousness, discontent—never satisfied with what we do have, ever lusting after what we do not have. But by grace we may live more happily than a prince, even though we possess nothing more down here than bare food and raiment: yea, *shall* do so if we seek and find all our satisfaction in Christ alone. Here is the key to the extraordinary history of Paul and Silas, Bunyan and Rutherford, Madame Guyon and many others. Why were they so contented and joyful while lying—some of them for many years—in prison? No doubt God favoured them with a double portion of His grace and comfort, yet the real explanation is that their hearts were completely absorbed with Christ.

Now the gracious provisions which the Lord has made for the maintaining of personal and experimental communion with Himself are revealed, first, in the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly in what is recorded therein of His dealings with Israel; and we lose much if we fail to give our best attention thereto. There we see the Lord taking unto Himself a peculiar people out of all the nations of the earth; that which moved Him thereto was His own sovereign grace, for there was nothing in them, more than in others, to commend them to His favour. They were a poor and afflicted people, enslaved, in cruel bondage to the Egyptians. They were an unbelieving and stiff-necked people, slow to appreciate the mercy of God toward them, and slower still to walk worthily of His goodness unto them. They were a self-willed, and murmuring people, for after the Lord had wrought marvelously for them, each fresh testing they encountered found them full of distrust and grumbling. Nevertheless, the Lord patiently bore with their waywardness and ultimately brought them into the promised inheritance.

First, the Lord manifested His unfathomable *love* for them. He showed that, when there was none other eye to pity them in their low estate, *His* did; and that when there was no other arm to save them, *His* would. He heard their cries as they groaned under the lash of their cruel taskmasters; was moved with compassion toward them, and sent a deliverer. Second, He manifested His all-mighty *power*, working such wonders on their behalf as were never witnessed on earth before or since. Pharaoh withstood Him, but he and his hosts were swallowed up in the Red Sea as though they had been so many impotent ants. Wondrously did the Lord work, baring His arm, exhibiting His strength, and demonstrating that with Him all things are possible. Such displays of God's love unto and of His might on behalf of Israel, was well calculated to draw their hearts unto Him, establish

their confidence in Him, and lead them to covet the high privilege of communion with Him. Such was the case: nor were they disappointed, as Exodus 15 shows.

Third, the Lord undertook to graciously act as their Guide, Protector, and Provider. On their journey unto the promised land, a wilderness had to be crossed: but they were not left to their own poor resources—the Lord Himself cared for them. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night conducted them across the trackless desert. A supply of angel's food was given for the sustenance of their bodies: this fell within their own camp, so that no arduous journey was required to obtain it, and no charge was made for it. An unfailing supply of fresh water was provided for them by the living stream which gushed from the smitten rock. Infallible assurance was given that while they remained in obedience to God no enemy should stand before them, that *He* would fight their battles for them. No sickness came upon them, their feet did not swell, nor did their clothes become old and worn. Full proof did they have that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Psa. 33:12).

The Lord was pleased to reveal Himself on the most intimate terms. Their leader, Moses, was permitted to speak with Him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend; yea, it is recorded that "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel *saw* the God of Israel. . . and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand (in judgment): also they saw God, and *did eat and drink*" (Exo. 24:9-11) at perfect ease in His presence. Furthermore, God graciously acted as the Legislator of the nation, giving them a complete set of laws which covered every aspect of their life, social, political, and religious. No other people were so wondrously provided for: "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD" (Psa. 147:19, 20). Those commandments were not grievous, but just, merciful and spiritual, and were designed for the good and well-being of His dear people. In keeping of them there is great reward.

Finally, complete provision was made for Israel's *failures*. Those laws were not given to sinless creatures, and Divine wisdom devised a method whereby an erring people might continue in communion with Himself, and this in such a way that both His justice would be satisfied and His amazing grace evidenced. This method was a series of oblations and ablutions, sacrifices and cleansings. A priesthood was appointed to serve for God on behalf of the people, and an high priest as their special representative before Him. Peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings (Lev. 3-5) were appointed to cover the varied offences of individuals, while atonement was made for all the iniquities of the whole nation on one particular day in the year (Lev. 16). Most blessed of all was the provision made for those who had been defiled by contact with death: here the value of sacrificial atonement was *applied* to them. Obviously the blood of a slain animal could not be preserved, so its "ashes" were laid up, placed in a vessel, and running water put therein, and then sprinkled upon the one needing cleansing (Num. 19).

Full provision, then, was made for the removing of everything unsuited to the holy presence of the Lord. The appointed means were at hand for His people to approach Him without tarnishing the purity of His sanctuary. In the above type (Num. 19) "water" was *not* a figure of the Word, rather was it *the means* for applying the death of the atoning sacrifice. As long as a child of God continues in this sin-cursed world, where everything is defiling and under the sentence of death, and as long as the evil nature remains in him,

will pollution be contracted and offenses be committed; and therefore will he need a daily pardon. Therefore, in addition to the general remission of sins which he received at his conversion, he requires a constant application to his conscience—by the Spirit—of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The blood of the lamb was *shed* once for all at the Cross, but it is *sprinkled* on the believer (i.e., the efficacy of it is applied to him) as often as he needs and his faith appropriates it.

The above type is such a beautiful one that we cannot forbear dwelling on it a little longer. The sacrificial animal was to be a *red* heifer (Num. 19:2)—the color of guilt (Isa. 1:18); yet it must be “without spot or blemish.” It had to be one on which a yoke had never been bound, for Christ came to be the Sacrifice of His people of His own free will. It had to be led forth “without the camp” (cf. Heb. 13:11). It was slain before the priest, but not by the priest himself: so our Saviour was slain by others. The heifer was burned and its ashes mixed with pure water. Now when an Israelite became ceremonially defiled, he was excluded both from the tabernacle and the congregation. But here was the gracious provision made to *restore* him and maintain him in communion with God. Those ashes mixed with water were sprinkled upon him: so it is by the Spirit’s re-application of the blood of Christ that those out of communion with the Lord are restored.

Now to His Old Testament people God gave a wondrous manifestation of His love, a full exhibition of His all-sufficiency and readiness to meet their every need, a complete revelation of His will for them in all the details of their daily lives, and then made a most gracious provision to meet their failures and maintain them in fellowship with Himself. Thereby God showed that He was infinitely worthy of their love, confidence, and obedience. But it is in the New Testament that we find the *fullest* occasion for the drawing out of our hearts unto Him, the revelation of the means which He has provided for our personal and experimental communion with Himself, and of the provisions He has made for the maintaining of the same. He has done far, far more for us than He ever did for the nation of Israel: they had but the shadows and the types, whereas He has given us the substance and the antitype. Abundant cause, then, is there for the assuring of our hearts and the drawing out of them in adoring gratitude and praise.

We have received a more signal proof of God’s love than did the Hebrews: instead of providing an animal to shelter us from the avenging angel, He gave His own precious Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. He has granted us a more remarkable exhibition of His power: instead of swallowing up Pharaoh and his hosts in death, He has triumphantly brought Christ out of death. So, too, the provisions He has made for us while here in this wilderness-world far excels theirs. We have His completed Word for a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, and the Spirit Himself indwelling to guide and govern our wills. Far more intimately has God revealed Himself to us than ever He did to Israel: “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” (2 Cor. 4:6). Even more perfect provision has been made for our failures than was for theirs, for Christ Himself has gone, “into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24), and there “He ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Heb. 7:25).

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life (For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); That which we

have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:1-4). We will not give an exposition of these verses, but ask the reader to note well *the order* of truth presented in them. Verse 4 speaks of fullness of joy; and of what is that the outcome? Verse 3 tells us: it is based upon "fellowship" with the Father and His Son; and in what does that fellowship consist? Verses 1, 2 tell us: in a personal, intimate, experimental knowledge of Christ Himself—seeing, hearing, *handling* Him—you only "handle" one close by your side, and one who is dear to you.

It is in intimate fellowship with Christ that real communion with Him consists. It is by the mind being daily engaged with the knowledge-passing love of Christ—meditating thereon, believingly—that the heart is drawn out unto Him. The Christian should seek, above all else, to be occupied with Christ's *love* for him, to value that love far above his own enjoyment of it—the one being the cause, the other but the effect of it. We should esteem Christ's love beyond all the benefits and blessings that flow from it. We should labour to apprehend, from the Scriptures, the freeness, the eternity, the immutability of that love. It is our contemplation of His *love* which admits us into the freest and fullest heart-communion with Him. *That* was the source and spring of Christ's own joy and blessedness—His occupation with the Father's love to Him: note how often He dwelt upon it: John 3:35; 5:20; 15:9; 17:26. The Father's love was precious to Christ, and Christ's should be unto us.

Now all our *enjoyment* of Christ's love is the fruit of knowing and resting in the same, just as it is the true spiritual *knowledge* of Christ which makes way for the exercise of faith in Him. Our deepest need is to know Christ as He is *exactly suited to us*—as the tender mother is suited to her wailing child, as the physician is suited to a suffering patient, as a firm anchor is suited to a storm-tossed ship, as a guide is suited to a traveler who knows not the way, as food is suited to a starving man. Christ, dear reader, is exactly suited to the Christian: suited to everything which concerns him, suited to his every need, his every problem and trial, his every state or case. O to *live on* Christ exactly as He is revealed in the Word. O to *bring in* Christ continually: to make Him our closest Confident, our constant Counselor, our All in all. He is received into our minds by spiritual meditation in our hearts.

As another has said, "I simply address the Lord Jesus, inwardly in my mind, saying Lord Jesus, look upon me, take notice of all within me, exercise Thy compassion upon me, exactly as my necessities require. Keep, O keep me; bless, O bless, me; defend me for Thy mercies' sake, from sin, the world, and Satan; let me be content to be nothing; do Thou be my all. I call this *communion*. If this be so, then I find it to be more or less my constant practice; because as I cannot live but I must feel sin, so I cannot live but I must look to Jesus for salvation from it, and call on Him to exercise His grace and pity towards me, so long as I am the subject of it. Indeed, I think the greatest communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the Spirit, in this present state, is, and doth principally consist in a total renunciation of self, and in a real and actual dependence on the Lord; and the more *simple* this dependence, so much the better."

The *helps* to the promotion of an increased knowledge of, communion with, and joy in Christ, are the reading of the Word—regarding the same as a series of love letters from

Him to me personally—spiritual meditation upon what I have read, turning the same into simple prayer. But our space is exhausted.—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

10. *Its Rule.*

Having considered the distinct acts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the Church, we must now carefully enquire as to the Rule by which all true holiness is determined, the Standard by which it is weighed and to which it must be conformed. This is also of deep importance, for if we mistake the line and plummet of holiness, then all our efforts after it will be wide of the mark. On this aspect of our subject there also prevails widespread ignorance and confusion today, so that we are obliged to proceed slowly and enter rather lengthily into it. If one class of our readers sorely needed—for the strengthening of their faith and comfort of their hearts—a somewhat full setting forth of the perfect sanctification which believers have in Christ, another class of our readers certainly require—for the illumination of their minds and the searching of their conscience—a setting forth in detail of the Divinely-provided “Rule.”

In previous articles we have shown that *holiness is the antithesis of sin*, and therefore as “sin is the transgression (a deviation from or violation of) the Law” (1 John 3:4), holiness must be *a conformity to the Law*. As “sin” is a general term to connote all that is evil, foul, and morally loathsome, so “holiness” is a general term to signify all that is good, pure, and morally lovely. Holiness, like sin, has its root in *the heart*: external actions are virtuous or vicious, praiseworthy or blameworthy, as they express the desires, designs, and choices of the heart. As all sin is a species of *self-love*—self-will, self-pleasing, self-gratification—so all holiness consists of disinterested or *unselfish love*—to God and our neighbour. 1 Corinthians 13 supplies a full and beautiful delineation of the nature of holiness: substitute the term “holiness” for “charity” (or love) all through the Chapter. As sin is the transgressing of the Law, so love is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:10).

The spirituality and religion of man in his original state consisted in a perfect conformity to the Divine Law, which was the law of his nature (for he was created in the image and likeness of God), with the addition of positive precepts. But when man lost his innocence and became guilty and depraved, he fell not only under the wrath of God, but also under the dominion of sin. Consequently, he now needs both a Redeemer, and a *Sanctifier*; and in the Gospel *both* are provided. Alas that so often today only a half Gospel, a mutilated Gospel, is being preached—whereby sinners are made “twofold more the children of Hell” than they were before they heard it! In the Gospel a way is revealed for our obtaining both pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. The Gospel presents Christ not only as a Deliverer from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10), but also as the Sanctifier of His Church (Eph. 5:26).

In His work of sanctifying the Church Christ *restores His people unto a conformity to the Law*. Before supplying proof of this statement, let us carefully observe *what it is* which the Law requires of us. “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40). Christ here summed up the Ten Commandments in these two, and *every* duty enjoined by the Law and inculcated by the Prophets is but a deduction or amplification of these two, in which *all* are radically contained. Here is, first, the duty required—love to God and our

neighbour. Second, the ground or reason of this duty—because He is the Lord *our* God. Third, the measure of this duty—with all the heart.

The grand reason why God, the alone Governor of the world, ever made the Law, requiring us to love with all our hearts, was because it is, in its own nature, infinitely just and fitting. The Law is an external and unalterable Rule of Righteousness, which cannot be abrogated or altered in the least iota, for it is an unchanging expression of God's immutable moral character. To suppose that He would ever repeal or even abate the Law—when the grounds and reasons of God's first making it remain as forcible as ever, when that which it requires is as just and meet as ever, and which it becomes Him as the moral Ruler of the universe to require as much as ever—casts the highest reproach upon all His glorious perfections. Such a horrible insinuation could have originated nowhere else than in the foul mind of the Fiend, the arch-enemy of God, and is to be rejected by us with the utmost abhorrence.

To imagine God repealing the moral Law, which is the rule of all holiness and the condemner of all sin, would be supposing Him to release His creatures from giving unto Him the full glory which is His due, and allowing them to hold back a part of it at least. It supposes Him releasing His creatures from that which is right and allowing them to do that which is wrong. Yea, such a vile supposition reflects upon God's very goodness, for so far from it being a boon and benefit to His creatures, the repealing or altering the Law, which is so perfectly suited to their highest happiness, would be one of the sorest calamities that could happen. If God had rather that Heaven and earth should pass away than that the least jot or tittle of the Law should fail (Matt. 5:18), how steadfastly should we resist every effort of Satan's to rob us of this Divine rule, weaken its authority over our hearts, or prejudice us against it.

In the light of what has been pointed out, how unspeakably horrible, what vile blasphemy, to imagine that the Son Himself should come from Heaven, become incarnate, and die the death of the Cross, with the purpose of securing His people a rescinding or abating of the Law, and obtain for them a lawless liberty. What! Had He so little regard for *His Father's* interests and glory, for the honour of His Law, that He shed His precious blood so as to persuade the great Governor of the world to slacken the reins of His government and obtain for His people an impious license? Perish the thought. Let all who love the Lord rise up in righteous indignation against such an atrocious slur upon His holy character, and loathe it as a Satanic slander—no matter by whom propagated. Any Spirit-taught reader must surely see that such a wicked idea as the affirming that Christ is the One who has made an end of the Law, is to make Him the friend of sin and the enemy of God!

Pause for a moment and weigh carefully the implications. How could God possibly vindicate the honour of His great name were He to either repeal or abate that law which requires love to Him with all our hearts? Would not this be clearly tantamount to saying that He had previously required more than was His due? Or, to put it in another form, that He does not now desire so much for His creatures as He formerly did? Or, to state the issue yet more boldly; should God (since the Cross) relinquish His *rights* and freely allow His creatures to despise Him and sin with impunity? Look at it another way: to what purpose should Christ die in order to secure an abatement from that Law? What need was there for it? or what good could it do? If the Law *really* demanded too much, then justice required God to make the abatement; in such case the death of Christ was needless. Or if

the Law required what *was* right, then God could not in justice make any abatement, and so Christ died in vain.

But so far from Christ coming into this world with any such evil design, He expressly declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19). This is the very thing He condemned the Pharisees for all through this chapter. They, in effect, taught this very doctrine, that the Law *was* abated, that its exacting demands *were* relaxed. They affirmed that though the Law did forbid some external and gross acts of sin, yet it did not reprehend the first stirrings of corruption in the heart or lesser iniquities.

For instance, the Pharisees taught that murder must not be committed, but there was no harm in being angry, speaking reproachfully, or harbouring a secret grudge in the heart (Matt. 5:21-26). That adultery must not be committed, yet there was no evil in having lascivious thoughts (vv. 27-30). That we must not be guilty of perjury, yet there was no harm in petty oaths in common conversation (vv. 33-37). That friends must not be hated, yet it was quite permissible to hate enemies (vv. 43-47). These, and such like allowances, they taught were made in the Law, and therefore were not sinful. But such doctrine our Saviour condemned as erroneous and damning, insisting that the Law requires us to be as perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (v. 48), and declaring that if our righteousness exceeded not that of the scribes and Pharisees we could not enter the kingdom of Heaven (v. 20). How far, then, was our holy Lord from abating God's Law, or lessening our obligations to perfect conformity to it!

The fact of the matter is (and here we will proceed to adduce some of the proofs for our statement at the beginning of the fourth paragraph), that Christ came into the world for the express purpose of giving a practical demonstration, in the most public manner, that God is worthy of all that love, honour, and obedience which the Law requires, and that sin *is* as great an evil as the punishment of the Law implies, and thereby declared God's righteousness and hatred of sin, to the end that God might be just and yet the Justifier of every sincere believer. This Christ did by obeying the precepts and suffering the death-penalty of the Law in the stead of His people. The great design of the incarnation, life and death of our blessed Lord was to maintain and magnify the Divine government, and secure the salvation of His people in a way that placed supreme honour upon the Law.

The chief object before the beloved Son in taking upon Him the form of a servant was *to meet the demands* of the Law. His work here had a prime respect to the Law of God, so that sinners should be justified and sanctified without setting aside its requirements or without showing the least disregard to it. First, He was "made under the Law" (Gal. 4:4)—amazing place for the Lord of glory to take! Second, He declared, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy Law is *within My heart*" (Psa. 40:7, 8)—enshrined in his affections. Third, He flawlessly obeyed the commands of the Law in thought, and word, and deed: as a child He was subject to His parents (Luke 2:51); as Man He honoured the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), and refused to worship or serve any but the Lord His God (Luke 4:8). Fourth, when John de-

murred at baptising Him, He answered "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15)—what a proof of His *love* for the Lawgiver in submitting to His ordinance! What proof of His *love* for His people in taking His place alongside of them in that which spake of death!

The truth is that it was God's own infinite aversion to the repeal of the Law, as a thing utterly unfit and wrong, which was the very thing which made the death of Christ needful. If the Law might have been repealed, then sinners could have been saved without any more ado; but if it must not be repealed, then the demands of it must be answered by some other means, or every sinner would be eternally damned. It was because of this that Christ willingly interposed, and "magnified the Law and made it honourable" (Isa. 42:21), so securing the honour of God's holiness and justice, so establishing His law and government, that a way has been opened for Him to pardon the very chief of sinners without compromising Himself to the slightest degree. "As many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse . . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:10, 13).

Christ loved His *Father's* honour far too much to revoke His Law, or bring His people into a state of insubordination to His authority; and He loved *them* too well to turn them adrift from "the perfect Law of liberty." Read carefully the inspired record of His life upon earth, and you will not discover a single word falling from His lips which expresses the slightest disrespect for the Law. Instead we find that He bade His disciples do unto men whatsoever we would that they should do unto us *because* "this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). In like manner Christ's Apostles urged the performance of moral duties by the authority of the Law: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: *for* he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law" (Rom. 13:8); "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: *for* this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise" (Eph. 6:1, 2). The Apostle John exhorted believers to love one another as "an old commandment which ye had from the beginning" (1 John 2:7). And, as we shall yet show at length, the Law is the great means which the Spirit uses in sanctifying us.

Here, then, is a "threefold cord" which cannot be broken, a threefold consideration which "settles the matter" for all who submit to the authority of Holy Scripture. First, God the Father honoured the Law by refusing to rescind it in order that His people might be saved at less cost, declining to abate its demands even when His own blessed Son cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." God the Son honoured the Law by being made under it, by perfectly obeying its precepts, and by personally enduring its awful penalty. God the Spirit honours the Law by making quickened sinners see, feel, and own that it is "holy, and *just*, and good" (Rom. 7:12) even though it condemns them, and that, before ever He reveals the mercy of God through Jesus Christ unto them; so that the Law is magnified, sin is embittered, the sinner is humbled, and grace is glorified all at once!

There are some who will go with us this far, agreeing that Christ came here to meet the demands of the Law, yet who insist that the Law being satisfied, believers are now entirely freed from its claims. But this is the most inconsistent, illogical, absurd position of all. Shall Christ go to so much pains to magnify the Law in order that it might now be dishonoured by us! Did He pour out *His* love to God on the Cross that *we* might be relieved from loving Him! It is true that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to

every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4)—for "righteousness" (for our *justification*), yes; but not for our sanctification. Is it not written that "he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6), and did not Christ walk according to the rule of the Law? The great object in Christ's coming here was to conform His people to the Law, and not to make them independent of it. Christ sends the Spirit to write the Law in their hearts (Heb. 8:10) and not to set at nought its holy and high demands.

The truth is that God's sending His Son into the world to die for the redemption of His people, instead of freeing them from their obligations to keep the Law, binds them the more strongly to do so. This is so obvious that it ought not to require arguing. Reflect for a moment, Christian reader, upon God's dealings with us. We had rebelled against the Lord, lost all esteem for Him, cast off His authority, and practically bid defiance to both His justice and His power. What wonder, then, had He immediately doomed our apostate world to the blackness of darkness forever? Instead, He sent forth His own dear Son, His only Begotten, as an Ambassador of peace, with a message of good news, even that of a free and full forgiveness of sins to all who threw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, and who took His easy yoke upon them.

But more: when God's Son was despised and rejected of men, He did not recall Him to Heaven, but allowed Him to complete His mission of mercy, by laying down His life as a ransom for all who should believe on Him. And now He sends forth His messengers to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, inviting His enemies to cease their rebellion, acknowledge the Law by which they stand condemned to be holy, just and good, and to look to Him through Jesus Christ for pardon as a *free gift*, and to yield themselves to Him entirely, to love Him and delight themselves in Him forever. Is not this fathomless love, infinite mercy, amazing grace, which should melt our hearts and cause us to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" which is indeed "our reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1)?

O my Christian reader, that God out of His own mere good pleasure, according to His eternal purpose, should have stopped thee in thy mad career to Hell, made thee see and feel thy awful sin and guilt, own the sentence just by which thou wast condemned, and bring thee on thy knees to look for free grace through Jesus Christ for pardon, and through Him give up thyself to God forever. And that now He should receive thee to His favour, put thee among His children, become your Father and your God, by an Everlasting Covenant; undertake to teach and guide, nourish and strengthen, correct and comfort, protect and preserve; and while in this world supply all thy need and make all things work together for thy good; and finally bring thee into everlasting glory and blessedness. Does not *this* lay thee under infinitely deeper obligations to LOVE the Lord thy God with all thine heart? Does not *this* have the greatest tendency to animate thee unto obedience to His righteous Law? Does not *this* engage thee, does not His love constrain thee, to seek to please, honour and glorify Him?—A.W.P.