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The Lord's Prayer—Part 1

After all that has been spoken and written by godly men on prayer, we need something better than what is human to guide us, if we are to perform aright this essential duty. How ignorant and sinful creatures are to come before the most high God, how they are to pray acceptably to Him and obtain from Him what they need, can only be discovered as the great Hearer of prayer is pleased to reveal His will to us. This He *has* done—not only by opening up for the very chief sinners a new and living way of access into His immediate presence, and by appointing prayer the chief means of intercourse and blessing between Himself and His people, but by graciously supplying a perfect pattern after which their prayers are to be modeled. “The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but the special rule of direction in prayer is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer” (Shorter Catechism).

From earliest times it has been called “the Lord's Prayer,” not because it is one that He Himself addressed to the Father, but as graciously furnished by Him to teach us both the manner and method of how to pray, and the matters for which to pray. It should therefore be highly esteemed by Christians, for Christ knew both their needs and the Father's good will toward them, and so He has mercifully supplied us with a simple yet comprehensive directory. Every part or aspect of prayer is included therein. Adoration, in its opening clauses; thanksgiving in the conclusion. Confession is necessarily implied, for that which is asked for supposes our weakness or sinfulness. Petitions furnish the main substance, as in all praying—intercession is involved in the first three petitions, and more definitely expressed in the last four, by them being in the plural number—“give *us*,” etc.

This prayer is found twice in the New Testament, being given by Christ on two different occasions—a hint for preachers to reiterate that which is of fundamental importance. The variations are significant. The language of Matthew 6:9 intimates that this prayer is given to us for a *model*, yet the words of Luke 11:2 indicate it is to be used by us as a *form*. Like everything in Scripture, this prayer is perfect, in its order, construction, and wording. Its order is adoration, supplication, and argumentation. Its petitions are seven in number. It is virtually an epitome of the Psalms; a most excellent summary of all prayer. Every clause in it occurs in the Old Testament, denoting that our prayers must be Scriptural if they are to be acceptable. “If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14): but we cannot know His will if we are ignorant of His Word.

It has been alleged that this prayer was designed only for the temporary use of Christ's first disciples, until such time as the new covenant was inaugurated. But both Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels years *after* the Christian dispensation had commenced, and neither of them give any intimation that it had become obsolete and no longer of service to Christians. It is contended that this prayer is not suitable for believers now, inasmuch as the petitions contained in it are not offered in the name of Christ and that they contain no express reference to His atonement and intercession. But this is a serious misconception and mistake, for by parity of reason, none of the Old Testament prayers, none of the Psalms, could be used by us! But the prayers of Old Testament believers were presented to God “for His name's sake,” and Christ was the angel of the covenant of whom it was said, “*My name is in Him*” (Exo. 23:21). The Lord's Prayer is not only to be offered in

reliance upon Christ's mediation, but it is that which He specially directs and authorizes us *to* offer.

In more recent times certain "students of Prophecy" have objected to the use of this prayer on dispensational grounds, arguing that it is exclusively a Jewish prayer, and legalistic in its tenor. But this is nothing more or less than a blatant attempt of Satan's to rob God's children of a valuable portion of their birthright. Christ did not give this prayer to Jews as Jews, but to His "disciples." It is addressed to "Our Father," and therefore is to be used by all the members of His family. It is recorded not only in Matthew, but also in Luke—the *Gentile* Gospel. Christ's injunction, after His resurrection, for His servants to teach believers "*Whatsoever* He had commanded" (Matt. 28:20), includes His command in Matthew 6:9. There is nothing whatever in this prayer *unsuited* to the Christian today, and everything in it is needed by him.

It has long been a controversial question, which has given rise to much acrimonious controversy, whether the Lord's Prayer is to be regarded as a form to be used, or a pattern to be imitated. The right answer to this question is, it is to be considered as *both*. In Matthew it is manifestly brought forward as an example or pattern of the prayer which was to obtain under the new economy. "After this manner pray ye." "With that reverence, humility, seriousness, confidence in God, concern for His glory, love to mankind, submission, moderation in temporal things and earnestness about spiritual things which it inculcates" (Thomas Scott). But in Luke's Gospel we find our Lord asserting "When ye pray, *say*" (11:2)—i.e., as a formula. It is the duty of Christ's disciples in their praying not only to always use it as a pattern, but sometimes to employ it as a form.

Unto those who object to the using of any *form* of prayer, let us remind them that God Himself often puts the very language into the mouths of His needy people. For example, "Take with you *words*, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hosea 14:2). Doubtless, we need to be much on our guard against merely *formal*, and still more so against a *superstitious* observance of the Lord's Prayer; nevertheless, we must as sedulously avoid going to the opposite extreme, and never employing it at all. In the opinion of this writer, it ought to be reverently and feelingly recited once at every public service, and used daily at family worship. That it has been perverted by some, whose too frequent use thereof seems to amount to the "vain repetition" which the Saviour prohibited, is no valid reason why we should be altogether deprived of offering it at the Throne of Grace, in the spirit which the Lord inculcated and in the very words He dictated.

"In every expression, petition, and argument of this prayer, we *see Jesus*: He and the Father are *One*. He has a 'Name' given Him which is above every name. He is the blessed and only Potentate, and His 'kingdom' ruleth over all. He is the 'living bread' which came down from Heaven. He had power on earth to 'forgive sins.' He is able to succour them that are 'tempted.' He is the angel that 'redeems from all evil.' The kingdom, power, and glory pertain unto Him. He is the fulfillment and confirmation of all Divine promises and gracious assurances. Himself 'the Amen, and faithful Witness.' Well did Tertullian term the Lord's Prayer, 'the Gospel abbreviated.' The more clearly we understand the Gospel of the grace of God, 'the Gospel of the glory of Christ,' the more shall we love this wonderful prayer, and glorying in the Gospel which is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' to them that believe, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable

as we offer the Divinely prescribed petitions and expect gracious answers” (Thomas Houston).—A.W.P.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

123. *The Apostle's Prayer: 11:20, 21.*

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (vv. 20, 21). Let us begin by considering the *connection* in which these verses have with what precedes: first with their wider context, and then with their more immediate. In them there is really a gathering up into a brief but comprehensive sentence of the whole of what had been previously set forth, except that the Apostle here *prays* there might be wrought in the Hebrews that unto which they had been *exhorted*. The substance of the whole doctrinal portion of the Epistle is included therein, and the Apostle now begs God to apply to the hearts of his readers the benefits and fruit of all the important instruction which he had presented to them. These verses, then, form a fitting conclusion, for what follows them is virtually a postscript.

Viewing our text in the light of its immediate context, we perceive a blessed exemplification of the fact that the Apostle practiced as he preached, for what he had required from his readers he is here seen doing for them. In verses 18, 19 he had besought the prayers of the Hebrews on *his* behalf, and now we find him supplicating the Throne of Grace on *their* behalf. What a blessed example the chief of the Apostles has left unto all whom Christ has called unto public service. If ministers desire the prayers of their people then let them see to it that *they* are not backward in praying for those God has committed to their charge. This is an essential part of the minister's functions. It is not sufficient that he faithfully preaches the Word: he must also fervently and frequently ask God to *bless* that Word unto those who heard him. O that all who are called to the sacred office may feelingly exclaim, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23).

The verses which are now before us are in the form of an apostolic benediction or prayer. In them is set forth, in a striking and appropriate manner, the Object to whom the prayer was offered, following which is the matter for which supplication was made. In this article we shall confine ourselves unto the former. The Person to whom the Apostle prayed is here described first by one of His titles, namely, "the God of peace"; and then by one of His works, the raising of Christ from the dead, and this in turn is ascribed unto the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Those who have followed us through this lengthy series of articles may perceive how aptly the Apostle reduces his grand exposition of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism unto these three chief heads: the God of peace, the risen Shepherd of the sheep, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.

"The God of peace." The varied manner in which God refers to Himself in Scripture, the different appellations He there assumes, is not regulated caprice, but is ordered by infinite wisdom; and we lose much if we fail to weigh diligently each one. It is not for the mere sake of variation in diction, but each distinguishing title is selected in strict accord with its thing. He is spoken of as "The God of patience and consolation" in Romans 15:5, because that is in keeping with the subject of the four previous verses. In Romans 16:27 He is addressed, "To God only wise," because the immediate context has made known the revelation of the mystery wherein His inscrutable wisdom had been veiled. Before considering the significance of "the God of peace," let it be pointed out that it is an en-

tirely Pauline expression, occurring nowhere in the writing of any other Apostle—another identifying mark of the penman of *this* Epistle. It is found in Romans 15:33 and 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 4:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Thessalonians 3:16, and here—seven times in all.

“The God of peace.” First, this title contemplates God in relation to *His people*, and not mankind in general; yet in His forensic character, that is, in His office of *judge*. It will be remembered that in that blessed passage where the two covenants are placed in antithesis and Sion is contrasted from Sinai, it is said, “But ye are come . . . to God the Judge of all” (Heb. 12:23), which is the climacteric feature of the Gospel. The face of the Supreme Judge is wreathed in smiles of benignity as He beholds His people in the face of His Anointed. But it was not always thus. On the morning of creation as God saw us in Adam, our federal head, He viewed us with complacency, as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). But alas! sin came in, a breach was made between the Creator and the creature, and a state of alienation, *mutual alienation*, ensued, for a holy God could not be at peace with sin.

It needs to be clearly recognised that from the beginning God has sustained *other* relationships to man than those of Creator and Benefactor. Adam, and the human race in him, were placed under law, and therefore became subject to Divine government. In consequence of this, God was his Lord, his King, his Judge. While he remained in loyal subjection unto the Divine authority, yielding obedience to the King’s laws, His favour was enjoyed, but when he transgressed, all was altered. Sin has not only defiled man, corrupting the whole of his nature, but it has brought him under the curse of the Divine Law, and has subjected him to the Divine wrath. Fallen man, then has to do with an offended Judge. This was speedily made evident unto the original rebel, for we read, “therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He *drove out* the man” (Gen. 3:23, 24).

Alas, how little is this most solemn aspect of the Truth preached today! Sin has not only vitiated our nature, it has alienated us from God: as it is written “alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18). Man has not only lost the image of God in which he was created, but he has forfeited the favour of God in which he was instated. In consequence of the Fall, there is it *mutual antagonism* between God and man. Sin has made a breach between them, so that all the harmony and concord which there was, both spiritual and judicial, has been completely destroyed. Not only is the carnal mind “enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). “the *wrath of God* is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). That God is alienated from the sinner and antagonistic to him, is as clearly taught in the Scriptures as is man’s enmity against God.

The One with whom fallen man has to do, is his outraged King and offended Judge, and His own Word leaves us in no doubt as to His *judicial* attitude toward the fallen creature. “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psa. 5:5). “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). “But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their *Enemy*, He fought against them” (Isa. 63:10). It was for this reason that none other than our blessed Redeemer said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him *which is able* to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matt. 10:28), which is to be understood not simply of God’s absolute power or omnipotency, but also and chiefly of His *judicial* power or rightful authority, as we are His prisoners and obnoxious to His judgments. Why is the modern pulpit so culpably silent upon these and similar passages?

God's holiness burns against sin, and His justice clamours for satisfaction. But is He not also of infinite mercy? Blessed be His name, He *is*! Nevertheless His mercy does not override and nullify His other perfections. Grace reigns, but it reigns "*through* righteousness" (Rom. 5:21), and not at the expense of it. When therefore God had designs of mercy toward His people—who sinned and fell in Adam, in common with the non-elect—His wisdom contrived a way whereby His mercy might be exercised consistently with His holiness, yea, in such a way, that His law was magnified and His justice satisfied. This grand contrivance was revealed in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant, which was entered into between God and the Mediator before the foundation of the world, but in view of the entrance of sin and the fall of the elect in Adam. Christ undertook to restore the breach which had been made, to effect a perfect reconciliation between God and His people, to make full satisfaction for all the harm which sin had done to God's manifestative glory.

Many, adopting the horrible heresy of the Socinians ("Unitarians"), will not allow that the reconciliation *is mutual*: but God has been reconciled to His people as truly as they to Him. As we have shown above, the Scriptures not only speak of enmity on *men's* part, but also of wrath on *God's* part, and that, not only against sin, but sinners themselves, and not the non-elect merely, but the elect too, for *we* "were by nature the children of wrath (yes, of "wrath" in addition to depravity!) even as others" (Eph. 2:3). Sin placed God and His people at judicial variance: they the parties offending, He the party offended. Hence, for Christ to effect perfect conciliation, it was required that He turn away the judicial wrath of God from His people, and in order to this, Christ offered Himself a propitiatory sacrifice to God, Himself bearing that wrath which was due to them.

This central truth in the Atonement, now so generally repudiated, was portrayed again and again in the Old Testament types. For instance, when Israel sinned so grievously in connection with the golden calf, we find Jehovah saying to Moses, "Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Exo. 32:10). But notice how blessedly the immediate sequel shows us the typical mediator interposing between the righteous anger of Jehovah and His sinning people, and turning away His wrath from them: see verses 11-14. Again we read in Numbers 16 that upon the rebellion of Korah and his company, the Lord said unto Moses "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment" (v. 45). Whereupon Moses said unto Aaron "Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an *atonement* for them; for there is *wrath* gone out from the LORD: the plague is begun." Aaron did so, and we are told, "he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was *stayed*" (vv. 46, 48).

Surely nothing could be plainer than the above examples, to which many others might be added. All through the patriarchal and Mosaic economies we find that sacrifices were offered for the specific purpose of averting God's righteous wrath, to appease His judicial displeasure, to turn away His anger, the effect of which being expressly termed a "reconciliation": see Leviticus 16:20; 2 Chronicles 29:24; Daniel 9:24. Most obviously the Israelites offered not their sacrifices to turn away their own enmity against God. Inasmuch, then, as those Old Testament sacrifices were foreshadowings of Christ's oblation, what a turning of things upside-down is it to affirm that the great end of Christ's work was to reconcile sinners to God, instead of to divert God's wrath from us. The testimony of the

New Testament is equally plain and emphatic: then let us bow to the same, instead of resisting and reasoning against it.

Of Christ it is said, “Whom God hath set forth *a propitiation* through faith in His blood, to declare (not His love or grace, but) His *righteousness*” (Rom. 3:25). Now a “propitiation” is that which placates or appeases by satisfying offended justice. The force of this verse is by no means weakened by the fact that the Greek word for “propitiation” is rendered “mercyseat” in Hebrews 9:5, for the mercyseat was a *blood-sprinkled* one. It was the place where the typical mediator applied the atoning sacrifice for the satisfying of God’s justice against the sins of His people. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word for “mercyseat” signifies “a covering,” and it was so designated for two reasons: first, because it covered the ark, hiding from view the condemning Law—the tables of stone beneath it; and second, because the blood sprinkled upon it covered the offenses of Israel from the eye of offended justice by an adequate compensation. Thus it fittingly portrayed the averting of deserved vengeance by means of a substitutionary interposition.

“For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10). Yes, when we were “enemies,” *God’s enemies*—obnoxious to His righteous judgment. This term denotes the relation in which we stood to God as the objects of His governmental displeasure and subject to the curse of His Law. But we were “reconciled,” that is, restored unto His favour, and that, not by the Spirit’s work in us subduing our enmity, but by “the death”—the propitiatory sacrifice—of God’s Son. That this statement refers to the turning away of God’s anger from us and the restoring us to His favour, is clear from the previous verse: “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Now to be “justified” is the same as God’s being reconciled to us, His acceptance of us into His favour, and not our conversion to Him. Being “justified by His blood” points to the procuring cause of our justification, and that blood was shed that we might be “saved from *wrath*.” God is now pacified toward us, because His wrath was exhausted upon our Surety and Substitute.

“That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16). “That He,” that is, the Mediator, the incarnate Son. “Might reconcile,” that is, restore to God’s judicial favour. “Both,” that is, elect Jews and elect Gentiles. “Unto God,” that is, considered as the moral Governor of the world, the judge of all the earth. “In one body,” that is, Christ’s humanity, “the body of His flesh” (Col. 1:22)—here designated “*one* body” to emphasise the *representative character* of Christ’s atonement, as He sustained the responsibilities and liabilities of all His people: it is the One acting on behalf of the many as in Romans 5:17-19. “Having slain the enmity thereby,” that is, God’s holy wrath, the hostility of His law. The “enmity” of verse 16 cannot possibly refer to that which existed between Jews and Gentiles, for *that* is disposed of in verses 14, 15. “Enmity” is here personified (“slain”) as “sin” is in Romans 8:3. Thus, Ephesians 2:16 signifies that all the sins of God’s people meeting on Christ, Divine justice took satisfaction from Him, and in consequence God’s “enmity” has ceased, and we are restored to His favour.

Let it not be thought that we are here inculcating the idea that Christ died in order to render God compassionate toward His people. Not so, the Father Himself is the Author of reconciliation: 2 Corinthians 5:19. The gracious *means* by which He designed to effect the reconciliation originated in His own love, yet the atonement of Christ was the right-

eous instrument of removing the breach between us. The term is entirely a *forensic* one, contemplating God in His office as Judge. It concerns our relationship to Him not as our Creator, or as our Father, but as our King. The reconciliation which Christ has effected wrought no change in God Himself, but it *has* in the administration of His government: His law now regards with approbation those against whom it was formerly hostile. Reconciliation means that transgressors have been restored to *the judicial favour* of God through Christ's having closed the breach which sin had made. It was the amazing love of God which gave Christ to die for us, and His atonement was in order to the removing of those legal obstacles which our sins had interposed against God's love flowing out to us in a way consistent with the honour of His justice.

The great controversy between God and His people has been settled. The fearful breach which their sins occasioned has been repaired. The Prince of Peace has silenced the accusations of the Law and removed our sins from before God's face. Peace has been made—not a peace at any price, not at the cost of righteousness flouted; no, an *honourable* peace. "The God of peace," then signifies, first, the judge of all is pacified; second, the King of Heaven has been reconciled to us; third, Jehovah, by virtue of His covenant promises, has received us to His favour—for while He continued offended, we could not receive any gifts of grace from Him. Just as surely as Christ turned away God's wrath from His elect, so does He in due time send the Holy Spirit into their hearts to destroy *their* enmity against God, this being a consequence of the former.

We trust that what is next to be before us will render yet more intelligible and forcible all that has been said above. "That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." Here is the grand *evidence* that God is pacified toward us. When God raised Christ from the dead, He showed that He was propitiated, that He had accepted the ransom which had been given for our redemption. Let it be carefully noted that in our present verse it was the Father who is said to raise Christ, and that, in His character of "the God of peace." We will consider these two things separately. There is an *order* preserved in the personal operations of the Godhead. Resurrection was a work of Divine power, and that Divine power belongs in common to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who being one and the same God concur in the same work. Yet They concur in a way proper to Them: in all Their personal operations it is ascribed to the Father, as the Fountain of working and Wellhead of all grace, who does all things *from* Himself, yet *by* the Son and Spirit.

In the grand mystery of redemption God the Father sustains the office of supreme Judge, and hence we read, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that *God* hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36 and cf. 10:36). So it is in our text: the raising of Christ is there viewed not so much as an act of Divine power, as of rectoral justice. It is God exercising His *judicial* authority which is emphasized, as is clear from the particular terms used. We are ever the losers if, in our carelessness, we fail to note each single variation of language. It is not who "raised again," but "*brought again* from the dead our Lord Jesus." The force of that expression may be ascertained by comparing Acts 16:35, 37, 39. The Apostles had been unlawfully imprisoned, and when, later, the magistrates bid them go forth, they refused, demanding an *official* delivery; and we are told "they came and *brought them out of prison*" — compare also John 19:4, 13 for the force of this term "brought."

When Christ was in the state of the dead, He was in effect a prisoner under the arrest of Divine vengeance; but when He was raised, then was our Saviour let out of prison, and

the word “brought again” suitably expresses that fact. Christ possessed the power to raise Himself—and considering His death and burial from another angle, He exercised that power; but in His official character as Surety, He lacked the necessary *authority*. The God of peace sent an angel to remove the stone from the sepulchre, not to supply any lack of power in Christ, but as the judge when he is satisfied sends an officer to open the prison doors. It was God Himself, as the Judge of all, who “delivered” Christ up for our offenses, and it was God who raised Him for our justification (Rom. 4:25). This was very blessed, for it evidences the perfect subjection of the Son to the Father even in the grave: He did not His might and break prison, but waited till God brought Him forth *honourably* from the dead.

Let us next observe the particular office Christ sustained when the God of peace brought Him again from the dead: “that great Shepherd of the sheep.” Note, not “the,” but “*that* great Shepherd,” because Paul was writing to those who were familiar with the Old Testament. “That Shepherd” signifies the One who was *promised* in such passages as “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom” (Isa. 40:11), “And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My Servant David: He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd” (Ezek. 34:23)—the Object of the faith and hope of the Church from the beginning. Into the hands of our blessed Redeemer, God placed His flock, to be justified and sanctified by Him. Let it be duly recognized that a shepherd is not the lord of the flock, but a *servant* to take charge of and care for it: “*Thine* they were, and Thou gavest them Me” (John 17:6) said Christ.

Christ is the “Shepherd of *the sheep*” and not of the “wolves” (Luke 10:3) or the “goats” (Matt. 25), for He has received no charge from God to save them—how the basic truth of *particular* redemption stares us in the face on almost every page of Holy Writ! There are three main passages in the New Testament where Christ is viewed in this particular character. He is “the good Shepherd” (John 10:11) *in death*, the “great Shepherd” *in resurrection*, and the “chief Shepherd” *in glory* (1 Peter 5:4). The “great Shepherd” of the sheep calls attention to the excellency of His person, while the “chief Shepherd” emphasises His superiority over all His undershepherds or pastors, the One from whom they receive their authority. How jealously the Holy Spirit guarded the glory of Christ at every point: He is not only the “Shepherd” but “*that great Shepherd*,” just as He is not only High Priest, but our “great High Priest” (Heb. 4:14), and not merely King, but “the King of kings.”

“Through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant” (Heb. 13:20). This is obviously an allusion to “As for Thee also, by the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water”—the *grave* (Zech. 9:11). What is said of Christ is often applied to the Church, and here what is said of the Church is applied to Christ, for *together* they form “one Body.” If, then, *He* was brought back from the dead through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, much more shall *we* be. To say that God brought again from the dead “that great Shepherd of the sheep” means, He was raised not as a private person, but as the public Representative of His people. “The blood of the Everlasting Covenant” was the meritorious cause; as it was “by His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place” (Heb. 9:12) and that we have “boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (10:19), so it was according to the infinite value of His atoning blood that both the Shepherd and His sheep are delivered from the grave.

As Christ (and His people) was brought into death by the sentence of the Law, so from it He was restored by the law's Administrator, and this according to His agreement with Him before the foundation of the world. This it is which gives additional meaning to the Divine title at the beginning of our verse: He is called "the God of peace" from that compact which He made with the Mediator, concerning which we read, "The counsel of *peace* shall be between Them Both" (Zech. 6:13); "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall *the covenant of My peace* be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10). The older commentators were about equally divided as to whether the final clause of our verse refers to that eternal agreement between God and the Mediator or to the new testament or covenant (Matt 26:28); personally, we believe that *both* are included. The new covenant (about which we hope to have more to say later in our Covenant articles) is proclaimed in the Gospel, wherein is made known the terms on which we personally enter into the peace which Christ has made, namely, repentance, faith, and obedience. The new covenant is ratified by Christ's blood, and it is "everlasting" because its blessings are eternal.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

75. *His Restoration.*

We continue to trace out the progress of David on his way back from Mahanaim to Jordan, and thence to Jerusalem. A number of incidents occurred which intimated the change in his fortunes. Many of those who forsook the king in the time of adversity now flocked around him in the day of his prosperity. Yet these were not all fair-weather friends; some had rendered him real service when the storm burst upon him; others, who had been hindered from so doing, had nevertheless remained loyal to him and now came to welcome him as he returned from exile. Each of these incidents possesses a charm all its own. At the close of last month's article we viewed the lovely magnanimity of our hero unto Shimei, the man who had cursed him; next we behold his wisdom and fidelity.

"And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace" (2 Sam. 19:24). This is very touching. Mephibosheth, it will be remembered, was the grandson of Saul, David's arch-enemy. For his father Jonathan's sake, Mephibosheth had received such kindness at the king's hands that he was accorded a place at his table (2 Sam. 9). Mephibosheth was practically a cripple, being lame on both his feet (2 Sam. 9:3 and cf. 4:4). In the day David's sore need, Mephibosheth had prepared an elaborate and serviceable present, and had ordered his servant to saddle an ass that he might ride unto the fugitive king. But instead of obeying orders, the servant, Ziba, had himself ridden to the king, offered the present as a gift from himself, and had then grievously slandered and lied about his master (2 Sam. 16:1-4). All through the time of his absence David had laboured under a misapprehension of the loyalty of Mephibosheth; but now the truth was to be revealed.

What is recorded about Mephibosheth here in 2 Samuel 19:24 clearly denoted his devotion to David in the hour of his rejection and humiliation. So real so great had been his grief at the sorry pass to which the king had been reduced, that Mephibosheth had utterly neglected his own person. Instead of seeking to feather his own nest, he had genuinely mourned David's absence. This is very beautiful, and is recorded for our learning, for everything in the Old Testament has a lesson for *us*, if only we have eyes to see and a heart to receive. The practical lesson in this incident for the believer today is found in those words of Christ's, "The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast" (Matt. 9:15)—it becomes us to *mourn* during the King's absence! Note how the Apostle rebukes the Corinthians because they were "full," "rich," and had "reigned as kings" (1 Cor. 4:8). "The king said unto him, Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?" (2 Sam. 19:25). First, let it be noted that David did not turn away from him in anger or disgust, refusing him a hearing. Probably the king was surprised to see him at all after the false impression that Ziba had conveyed to him. But the present condition of Mephibosheth must have made quite an impression, so the king gave him opportunity to explain and vindicate himself. An important lesson is this for us to heed. We must ever seek to be fair and impartial, and ready to hear *both* sides. It is obviously unjust to give credence received behind a person's back, and then refuse to hear his explanation face to face.

Mephibosheth gladly availed himself of the opportunity now given, and proceeded to make an unvarnished statement of the facts (vv. 26, 27). He employed the most respectful and affectionate language—an example we also do well to heed if placed under similar

circumstances, for nothing is gained, and our cause is rather weakened than strengthened if we hotly condemn our questioner or judge for being so ready to believe evil of us. “But my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes” (v. 27). Herein Mephibosheth expressed his confidence in David’s wisdom and justice. He was satisfied that once his royal master heard both parties and had time to reflect upon the merits of the case, he would not be imposed upon; and therefore he was not afraid to leave himself in David’s hands.

Next, Mephibosheth owned the utter unworthiness of himself and family, and acknowledged the signal grace that had been shown him. “For all of my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king, yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?” (v. 28). “This shows that Ziba’s suggestion was improbable: for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher, when he fared so easily, so happily, as he did?” (Matthew Henry). This was powerful reasoning. By the king’s clemency Mephibosheth had already been amply provided for: why, then, should he aspire unto the kingdom? It was not as though he had been slighted and left penniless. Having been adopted into the king’s family circle, it had been utter madness to deliberately court the king’s displeasure. But he would refrain from any further self-vindication.

“And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba *divide* the land” (v. 29). It seems strange that the commentators completely miss the force of this, considering that David was quite unconvinced by Mephibosheth’s defense, yea, themselves regarding it as weak and unsatisfactory. We feel, then, we must labour the point a little. First, the words of David on this occasion cannot possibly mean that his previous decision remained unaltered, that the verdict he had given in the past must stand. And for this simple but conclusive reason: David had given no such orders previously! If we turn back to the occasion when the servant had deceived the king, we find that he said, “Behold, thine are *all* that pertained unto Mephibosheth” (16:4).

But now: since David did *not* confirm here the order he had given in 16:4, how are we to understand his words? Was he so puzzled by the conflicting statements of Ziba and Mephibosheth that he knew not which to believe, and so suggested a *division* of the land as a fair compromise? Surely not; for that had been grossly unjust to both of them. What then? This: David said what he did not in any harshness, but in order to *test* Mephibosheth’s heart and draw out his affections. Obviously a false and mercenary Mephibosheth would have cried out, Yes, yes, that is a very satisfactory settlement! But not such was the language of the true and devoted Mephibosheth.

Have we not a similar case in the puzzling situation presented to Solomon by the two harlots? Both of those women gave birth to a child: one overlying and smothering hers, and then stealing the remaining one. When the two women appeared before the king, each claimed to be the mother of the surviving child. What did Solomon say? This, “*Divide* the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other” (1 Kings 3:25)—the very proposal David made unto Mephibosheth! And how did the suggestion work out? Why, the imposter was quite willing to the arrangement, but the actual mother of the living child at once cried out, “O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it” (v. 26). And so it was here, as the sequel shows.

“And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let *him* take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (2 Sam. 19:30). How clearly that evidenced the unfeigned and disinterested character of his love! All he wanted was David’s own company. Now that the king was restored, nothing else mattered. To be in David’s own presence meant far more to Mephibosheth than any houses or lands. A later incident confirms the fact that Mephibosheth had not been cast out of the king’s favour, for when seven of Saul’s descendants were slain as a satisfaction for his sin in the slaughter of the Gibeonites, it is expressly recorded that “The king spared Mephibosheth” (21:7)! And what of the wicked Ziba? He was allowed to go away unpunished, as Shimei had been, for David marked his appreciation of his restoration by the gracious remission of the injuries done to him.

“And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man” (2 Sam. 19:31, 32). This befriending of the king in the hour of his need came before us as pondered in the closing verses of chapter 17. There is no doubt that in ministering so freely to David and his men, Barzillai had done so at considerable risk to himself, for had Absalom prevailed there is little doubt that he had been made to suffer severely for his pains. It is touching to see him here, in his feebleness, taking such a journey to conduct his beloved monarch across the Jordan.

“And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem” (v. 33). Deeply did the king appreciate the loyalty, generosity, and welcome of his aged subject, and accordingly desired that he should participate in the feast which was to mark his restoration. But Barzillai had other thoughts. He felt, and rightly so, that one so near to death should be engaged in more serious and solemn exercise than festivities. Not but there is a time to feast as well as a time to fast, yet such was hardly a suitable occupation for a man so close to the brink of eternity. The aged should be done with carnal pleasures, and set their thoughts and affections on something more enduring and satisfying than the best this earth has to offer.

“But behold thy servant Chimham: let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good to thee” (v. 37)—apparently this was one of his sons or grandsons. Barzillai was no austere cynic who cherished a dog-in-the-manger attitude toward the rising generation. “They that are old must not begrudge young people those delights which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor oblige them to retire as *they* do” (Matthew Henry). If on the one hand those of experience should do what they can to warn and shield their juniors from carnal follies and the snares of this world, on the other hand they must guard against that extreme which would deprive the young of those lawful pleasures which they themselves once participated in. It is easy for some dispositions to develop selfishness and crabbiness under a supposed concern of protecting those under their charge. Such, we take it, is one of the lessons here inculcated in Barzillai’s response to the king’s invitation.

“And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee” (v. 38). David at once fell in with Barzillai’s suggestion, for he was anxious to repay his kindness. It is our duty to do what we can in assisting the children of those who befriended us when we were in need. It is beautiful to read how that when the aged David

was giving instruction to Solomon, he made special mention of the descendants of Barzillai: "But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at my table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother" (1 Kings 2:7). Nor was this all that David had done, as the sequel will show.

In his remarkable little work "Scripture Coincidences," J. J. Blunt points out how that Chimham is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, and in that incidental manner common to hundreds of similar allusions in the Word which so evidently bear the stamp of truth upon them. This argument for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures produces a stronger conviction than any external evidence. There is an exact coincidence observable by allusions to particular facts which demonstrates perfect consistency *without* contrivance or collusion. As we have seen, Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem, but what the king did for him, beyond providing a place for him at his table and recommending him to the care of Solomon, does not appear. Nothing further is said about him in the historical books of the Old Testament. But in Jeremiah 41 his name again appears. An account is there given of the murder of Gedaliah, the officer whom Nebuchadnezzar had left in charge of Judea as its governor, when he carried away captive the more wealthy of its inhabitants. The Jews, fearing the consequences of their crime, and apprehending the vengeance of the Chaldeans, prepared for flight: "And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of *Chimham*, which is by *Bethlehem* to go to enter into Egypt" (Jer. 41:17).

"It is impossible to imagine anything more incidental than the mention of this estate near Bethlehem, which was the habitation of Chimham; yet how well does it tally with the spirit of David's speech to Barzillai some four hundred years before! What can be more probable, than that David, whose birth-place was this very Bethlehem, and whose patrimony in consequence lay there, having undertaken to provide for Chimham, should have bestowed it in whole, or in part, as the most flattering reward he could confer, a personal, as well as a royal, mark of favour, on the son of the man who had saved his life, and the lives of his followers in the hour of their distress; and that, to the very day when Jeremiah wrote, it should have remained in the possession of the family of Chimham and be called after his own name" (J. J. Blunt).

"Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel. And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?" (2 Sam 19:40, 41). By the time that David had crossed the Jordan many of the elders and people of Israel came to bring back the king, only to discover they had been anticipated. The officers of Judah had taken lead in this, and had failed to notify the Ten Tribes of their intentions. The omission was strongly resented, for those of Israel felt they had been slighted, yea, that a serious reflection was cast upon their loyalty to the king.

"And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's cost? or hath he given us any gift? And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel" (vv. 42-43). Alas, what is poor human nature. If these Israelites were so desirous that the king should

be honoured, why be peeved because others had preceded them? O what mischief issues from pride and jealousy. How quick many are to take umbrage at the least seeming slight. How we need to watch against the workings of our own pride, and endeavour to avoid giving offence to the pride of others. But let us, in closing, contemplate a deeper significance possessed by the incidents which have been before us.

“But here again some glimpses may be discerned of the glorious character and kingdom of David’s Son and Lord. Being anointed by the Father to be His King upon His holy hill of Zion, He reigns over a willing people, who deem it their privilege to be His subjects. Once indeed they were rebels (and numbers of their associates perish in rebellion): but when they became sensible of their danger, they were fearful or reluctant to submit unto Him; till His ministers, by representing His tender love, and His promises of pardon and preferment, through the concurring influences of His Spirit, bowed their hearts to an humble willingness that He should reign over them; then He readily pardoned and accepted them—and upon no account will He cast out or cut off the greatest offender who cries for mercy. He will recompense those, who from love to Him, feed His servants; He will assign them a place in His holy city. Alas that it must be added, that while the King Himself is so plenteous in mercy, many of His professed subjects are envious and contentious with each other, and quarrel about the most trivial concerns, which prevent much good, and does immense mischief“ (Thomas Scott).—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

6. The Davidic.

From the Psalms we turn now to the Prophets, in which we find a series of Divine predictions based upon the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7. Before turning to some of the more important of these, let it be again pointed out that the *new* things of Christ's kingdom were portrayed under the veil of the *old*, that when the Holy Spirit made mention of Gospel times they necessarily partook of a Jewish colouring. In other words, existing things and institutions were employed to represent other things of a higher order and nobler nature, so that the fulfillment of those ancient predictions are to be looked for in the spirit and not in the letter, in substance and not in regards to actual form. Only as this clearly-established principle is held fast shall we be delivered from the carnalizing of the Jews of old, and the gross literalizing of dispensationalists of today.

Many pages might be written in amplification of what has just been said, and in supplying proof that it *is* "a clearly established principle." The Person, the office, and the work of Christ, as well as the blessings which He purchased and procured for His people, were very largely foretold in the language of Judaism. But the fact that the antitype is spoken of in the terms of the type should not cause us to confuse the one with the other: the Old Testament is to be interpreted in the light of the New—not only its types, but its prophecies also. When we read that "Christ our *Passover* is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7) we understand what is meant thereby. When we are told that Christians are the seed and children of *Abraham* (Gal. 3 and 4) we perceive the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarch that he should have a numerous seed. In the light of the Epistles we have no difficulty in recognising that a *spiritual* cleansing was denoted by "then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean" (Ezek. 36:25).

Take again the wondrous events of the day of Pentecost. Peter explained them by declaring, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:16-17). The Apostle did not mean that Joel's prophecy had received all exhaustive accomplishment in the phenomena of that particular day, for they were, in measure, repeated both in Acts 8 and 10; nevertheless, there *was* an actual fulfillment in the larger spiritual endowments then granted the Twelve. But let it be carefully noted it was *not a literal* fulfillment. The freer communications of the Spirit were foretold under the peculiar form of "visions" and "dreams," because such was the mode *when Joel lived* in which the more especial gifts of the Spirit were manifested. The promised gift of the Spirit was conferred, yet with a *new* mode of operation far higher than that of which the Old Testament Prophet was cognizant.

Let what has been said above be carefully borne in mind in connection with all that follows. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace; of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever" (Isa. 9:6,7). The relation between this illustrious passage and its context shows that the scope of the Holy Spirit in the whole was to intimate the character of Christ's kingdom. In the previous chapter the Prophet had spoken of dark and dismal days of trouble and distress, and then

he comforted and encouraged the hearts of true believers by announcing the good and grand things which the Messiah would provide. Three New Testament blessings are spoken of in Old Testament terms.

The first was that great light should spring up in a lost world: "The people that walk in darkness (without a written revelation from God) have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. 9:2). We are not left in any doubt as to the meaning of this, for the Holy Spirit has explained it at the beginning of the New Testament. In Matthew 4:14-16, we read that the Lord Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah," quoting this very verse. The following facts were thereby unequivocally established: that the prophecy of Isaiah 9 referred to no far distant "millennium," but to this Christian dispensation; that its accomplishment lies not in some remote era, but in the present: that it concerned not Jews as such, but "the Gentiles"; that the blessing foretold was not a carnal or material one, but a spiritual one.

The second blessing here announced was an enlargement, and rejoicing in the Lord: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Isa. 9:3). The "nation" is that "holy nation" of 1 Peter 2:9—compare Matthew 21:43. By means of the promulgation of the Gospel light (spoken of in the previous verse) the holy nation of the New Testament church would be multiplied, as the book of Acts records. Those who are supernaturally enlightened by the Spirit become partakers of a spiritual joy, so that they "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The clause "not increased the joy" signifies it is not a carnal happiness which is in view (such as the Jews dreamed of), but "they joy *before Thee*." Their lot in this world is "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10).

The third blessing is spiritual liberty and freedom: "For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire" (Isa 9:4, 5). As Gideon was an instrument in the hand of God for breaking the heavy yoke of oppression that Midian had placed on the neck of Israel, so Christ, upon His coming, would deliver poor sinners from the hands of all their enemies—sin, Satan, the world, and the curse of a broken Law, unto which they were in bondage: (cf. Luke 1:74, 75; 4:18).

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." The opening "For" shows the definite connection with the context, and announces Who it is that would secure those grand blessings for His people. "For unto us a child is born" refers not to the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but to the entire election of grace. The "government" upon His shoulder is no mere rule over Palestine, but is over the entire Universe, for all power is given unto Christ in Heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). Nor is His a temporary reign for a thousand years only, but "even forever" (Isa. 9:7). That which the throne and kingdom of the natural David dimly foreshadowed is now being cumulatively, and shall be increasingly, accomplished by the spiritual David on an infinitely higher plane and in a far grander way.

"And in that day there shall be a Root of *Jesse*, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall *the Gentiles* seek, and His rest shall be glorious" (Isa. 11:10). The theme of this blessed chapter is the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and the infinitely and eter-

nally glorious and delightful effects thereof. Its details are to be understood in accord with its main drift, so that its metaphors and similes are to be taken in their proper and figurative sense. To take them literally would be like taking the Levitical priesthood for the priesthood of Christ, whereas the former was only intended to represent the latter; it would be like taking the earthly Canaan for that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth now away. As its contents have been so grievously corrupted, we offer a few remarks thereon.

“And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1). Thus the opening words of the chapter indicate clearly enough that its language is *not* to be taken literally. The “rod” is the symbol of the rule and governing power of Christ, as in “The LORD shall send the *rod* of Thy strength out of Zion: *rule* Thou in the midst of Thine enemies” (Psa. 110:2). “And a Branch shall grow out of his roots” signifies Christ’s *fruitfulness* (cf. John 15:2), which fruitfulness is the result of the Spirit’s being given to Him without measure: Isaiah 11:2, 3. Next follows in verses 4, 5, a description of Christ’s ministry and the principles which regulated it—righteousness, equity, and faithfulness. Then we have a figurative description of the *effects* of His ministry in the conversion of sinners. They to whom the ministry of Christ is sent, that is, those to whom the Gospel comes in its saving power, are here likened to the beasts of the field.

We are so distorted and degraded by the Fall that we are fitly compared to wild beasts and creeping things (vv. 6-8). Yet these were to undergo such a transformation that God declares “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain” (v. 9). The whole of this is to be understood *spiritually*. A “mountain” is a local elevation of the land, and to be on a mountain is to be raised and exalted; so that conversion brings us to a state of elevation before God, conducting us from our low and depraved state by nature and elevating us into the holiness we have in Christ. Observe that this “mountain” is called, “My *holy* mountain,” being the same as that described in “the LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness” (Jer. 31:23) called the “habitation of justice” because the Mediator is there a “mountain of holiness” because He has made an end of all out sins.

But let it not be supposed that believers only reach this “holy mountain” when they arrive at Heaven. No, they are brought there experimentally in this life, or they will never reach Heaven in the next; for it is written “Ye *are* come unto mount Sion [Zion]” (Heb. 12:22). And *who* is it that are come thither? Those who by nature are likened by the Prophet to wolves and lambs, leopards and kids. In Acts 10 they are likened to “all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air” (v. 12), which makes it unmistakably clear that the language used by Isaiah is to be understood *spiritually and not literally*, as the dispensationalists vainly dream. Let us use the terms of Peter’s vision to interpret the figures of Isaiah 11, noting the fourfold classification.

The “fourfooted beasts of the earth,” that is, sheep and oxen, which are distinguished from the “wild beasts.” There is a difference between men, not in nature but in outward conduct—the consequence of disposition, civilization, or religious upbringing: some being more refined, moral, and conscientious than others. “That our *sheep* may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets” (Psa. 144:13) refers to this first class; and was it not actually the case in the time of the Apostles when thousands were converted? (Acts

4:4). A solemn portrayal of the “*wild* beasts” is found in Psalm 22, where the suffering Saviour exclaims, “Many bulls have compassed Me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring Lion” (vv. 12, 13). Was not Saul of Tarsus one of these wild bulls and ravening lions (see Acts 9:1; 22:4); and yet *grace tamed him*.

In Micah 7 we have a beautiful description of the third class, or “creeping things.” “The nations (Gentiles) shall see and be confounded at all their might” (v. 16). Yes, when grace works it *humbles*, so that we are ashamed at what we once boasted of as our righteousness, and confounded at our former self-sufficiency. “They shall lay their hand upon their mouth”—having no longer anything to say in self-vindication; “their ears shall be deaf” to anything Satan says against the Gospel. “They shall lick the dust like a serpent,” humbling themselves beneath the mighty hand of God; “they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth”—margin, like “creeping things!” Yes, the Gospel unearths us, making us to set our affection on things above. “They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of Thee”—when His holy Law is applied to their hearts. And what is the effect produced? Hear their blessed testimony: “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage” (Micah 7:18).

And what of the fourth class, the “fowls of the air”? Do we not see them beautifully portrayed in Ezekiel 17. The “cedar” was the tribe of Judah, and “the highest branch of it” (v. 3) was the royal house of David. The “tender branch” in verse 22 is Christ (cf. Isa. 53:2), of whom it was promised, “In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all *fowl* of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell” (Ezek. 17:23). But let us now notice, though it must be very briefly, the blessed *transformation* which is wrought when these creatures, so intractable by nature are converted unto God.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them” (Isa. 11:6). How wondrous the grace which brings the wolfish rebel into the mildness and meekness of the lamb! How mighty the power that changes the ferocity of the lion so that a child may lead it! Their enmity against God and His truth is subdued, and they are *brought down* to the feet of Christ. The more they grow in grace, the lower estimation they have of themselves. “And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox” (v. 7). The lion passes from the carnivorous to the graminivorous: take that literally and it amounts to little, understand it spiritually and it signifies a great deal—when born again we can no longer find satisfaction in creature things, but rather we long for heavenly food. “And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den” (v. 8)—this is victory over the Enemy: cf. Psalm 91:13, 14; Luke 10:19.

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain” (Isa. 11:9). Here is the perfect safety of the Lord’s people. Comparing again Psalm 144, the 13th verse of which we quoted above, what immediately follows? This, “that our oxen may be strong to labour: that there be no breaking in, nor going out” (v. 14). They are absolutely *safe* in this mystic fold: none of Christ’s sheep shall perish. And what is it that ensures their safety in God’s holy mountain? This, “*for* the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,

as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9)—not the material globe, but the spiritual “earth,” the Church. “*All* Thy children shall be taught of the LORD” (Isa. 54:13). It is the new covenant “earth” or family: “For *all* shall know Me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb. 8:11). “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious” (Isa. 11:10): and thus we have completed the circle—it is the antitypical David whose banner waves aver the whole election of grace.—A.W.P.

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is *no* new thing under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been *already* of old time, which was before us” (Eccl. 1:9, 10). How little is the plain testimony of these verses really believed today by many professing Christians, yea, how often is it contradicted both in pulpit and in pew by those who are thoroughly infatuated by what they style “the signs of the times.” If they hear or read of some wide-spread crime wave sweeping over a portion of the world, or some recently sprung-up cults of error which are fatally deceiving tens of thousands, or of a terrible epidemic of disease that is slaying large numbers of their fellows, they at once jump to the conclusion that nothing like it has ever happened before, and draw prophetic deductions from what they imagine is without precedent.

When the air is filled with rumours of war, and more so still when hostilities actually break forth, lovers of the sensational promptly quote Matthew 24:6-8 to show that the end of the age is upon us. If war be followed by famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places, then appeal is promptly made to Revelation 6, with loud assertions that that prediction is now in course of fulfillment. The sad state of Christendom—with its unfaithful pulpits, rapidly decreasing church attendance, waning Sunday Schools, the increase of sham conversions, the decay of vital godliness—is cited as clear proof that the coming of the Lord is certain to take place in our own lifetime. The fearful spread of lawlessness on every side, the blatant defiance of moral standards, the almost universal desecration of the Sabbath, are often said to be without parallel in human history. Nevertheless God’s Word expressly declares “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be *hath already been*” (Eccl. 3:15).

Human nature has been the same in every age. The history of the New Testament era has been, in all its essential features but a repetition of what occurred in Old Testament times. The prevalence of idolatry, the abounding of wickedness in every conceivable form, the frightfulness and frequency of wars, the failure of the masses to take to heart and profit from visitations of Divine judgment, the general refusal to heed the exhortations and expostulations of God’s servants, and the low spirituality which obtained amongst the Lord’s own people, are recorded in the Old Testament in letters of blood and tears. “The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty” (Psa. 74:20)—to a much greater extent than now obtains. “Help, LORD, for the godly man *ceaseth*; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa. 12:1)—the godly have ever been an insignificant remnant. “Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law” (2 Chron. 15:3): this was in Old Testament times.

It is true there is an ebb and flow of the tide. The book of Judges supplies a striking illustration of this. Over and over again in that book the following order is seen: Israel sinning against the Lord, His selling them into the hands of their enemies, their crying to Him for relief, His delivering of them, and then their lapsing back into wickedness. Identically the same order is observable throughout the long history of Christendom. Frequently, Israel sank very low, and then God granted a gracious revival, which was followed by backsliding and spiritual deadness. In the time of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Ezra, there were radical reformatations, but the effects of these soon spent themselves. In the days of David conditions were much better than under the reign of Saul, while under

Ahab things were much worse than in the days of Solomon. Sometimes the restraining hand of God was more evidently placed upon the lusts of man, while at others it was more manifestly removed. Sometimes His Word went forth in mighty power; at others His servants cried "who hath believed our report?"

It is striking to note that immediately following the Scripture with which we began this article we read, "There is no remembrance of former things" (Eccl. 1:11). That is the trouble with our present age. *Conditions in the past are largely unknown today.* A generation has arisen which does little or no serious reading, which are largely unacquainted with history, and unaware of the fact that present conditions are but a reduplication of those which have frequently obtained before. And "signs of the times" preachers trade upon their ignorance and credulity, making them suppose that much which is transpiring in the world is altogether extraordinary, that conditions now are such that they *cannot* go on much longer, that without any doubt the end of the age is upon us, and so on. But over against all such talk it stands written, "There is *no new thing* under the sun!"

It should prove an eye-opener to some of our readers to learn something of what has obtained in the past. Such an abundance of material is before us that we find it difficult to decide which portion of it to discard. It would cover far too much space were we to attempt a picture describing the outstanding features of each generation during the last eighteen centuries, so we will generalize the earlier ones, and enter into more detail upon those which followed the great Reformation of Luther. Here, too, we can only make a selection, dealing with the most prominent characteristics. As far as possible we shall avoid doing so in our own words, quoting from the writings of those who actually lived in those days, and giving book and page reference, so that any who wish to take the trouble of consulting a good public library, may verify for themselves.

"The Church's story from the close of the New Testament Canon to the era of the Patristic theologians must be gleaned from the revelations their writings afford of its condition in their own time. Who can doubt that then, as in the days of Israel's apostasy, there were many who feared the Lord and thought upon His name? But here I am speaking of the Church as a whole. Protestantism delights in attributing to the Romish apostasy the vices which disgraced the Church of Christendom during the Middle Ages; but in this regard the Church of Rome was merely the product and development of the much-vaunted "primitive Church" of the Fathers. Abundant proof of this will be found in the acts and words of some of the great and holy men who sought in vain to stem the evil tide. The facts are disclosed in various standard works: here of course a few characteristic extracts must suffice.

"The birth of Cyprian occurred about a century after the death of the last of the Apostles. Born and bred in Paganism, he was converted in middle age, and three years afterwards he became Bishop of Carthage. Ten years later he suffered Martyrdom in the Valerian persecution. The following words may indicate the condition of the Church in his time: 'Serious scandals existed even among the clergy. Bishops were farmers, traders, and money-lenders, and by no means always honest. Some were too ignorant to teach the catechumens. Presbyters made money by helping in the manufacture of idols.'

"In Cyprian's day 'the virgins of the Church' ['nuns' we call them now] were held in special honour on account of their reputed sanctity. What, then, passed for superior sanctity may be gleaned from the following words of that eminent and holy man: 'What have the virgins of the Church to do at promiscuous baths, there to violate the commonest dic-

tates of feminine modesty! The places you frequent are more filthy than the theatre itself; all modesty is there laid aside; and with your robes your personal honour and reserve are cast off.'

"Half a century before these words were written Clement of Alexandria had bewailed the low morality which prevailed among Christians, even at a time when, as he said, 'the wells of martyrdom were flowing daily.' Referring to then attendance at church he wrote: 'After having waited upon God and heard of Him, they leave Him there, and find their pleasure without in ungodly fiddling, and love-songs, and what-not—stage plays and gross revelries.'

"The 'conversion of Constantine' set free the Church to put her house in order, and pursue her mission to the world without hindrance from without. But her condition in those halcyon days may be judged by the fact that at a single visitation the great Chrysostom deposed no fewer than thirteen bishops for simony and licentiousness. Nor was this strange, having regard to the means by which men secured election to the Episcopal office. Here are Chrysostom's words: 'That some have filled the churches with murders, and made cities desolate when contending for *this position*, I now pass over, lest I should seem to say what is incredible to say.'

"He was equally unsparing in dealing with the vices of the lower orders of the clergy. The natural result followed. The 'historic Church' convened a packed council, which deprived him of his archbishopric, and he was banished to Nicea. Moved, however, by the indignant fury of the laity, the Emperor recalled him, and his return to Constantinople was like a public triumph. But his fearless and scathing denunciations of the corruptions and immoralities of Church and Court led to the summoning of another council, more skillfully arranged; and his second banishment was intended to be, as in fact it proved, a death sentence. He practically died a martyr—one of the first of the great army whose blood cries to God for vengeance upon the 'historic Church.'

"Nor were licentiousness and simony evils of recent growth in the Church; nor were they peculiar to the see of Chrysostom. In A.D. 370 an imperial edict was read in the churches of Rome, prohibiting clerics and monks from resorting to the houses of widows or female wards, and making them 'incapable of receiving anything from the liberality or will of any woman to whom they may attach themselves under the plea of religion; and (the edict adds) any such donations or legacies as they shall have appropriated to themselves shall be confiscated.'

"This edict, sweeping though its terms were, had to be confirmed and strengthened by another twenty years later. And here is the comment of Jerome on the subject: 'I blush to say it, heathen priests, players of pantomimes, drivers of chariots in the circus, and harlots are allowed to receive legacies; clergy and monks are forbidden to do so by Christian princes. Nor do I complain of the law (he adds), but I am grieved that we *deserve* it.' According to Jerome, so great was the evil that men actually sought ordination in order to gain easier access to the society of women, and to trade upon their credulity. He, at least, maintains no reserve about the vices of the clergy of his day. And the picture he draws of the state of female society among the Christians is so repulsive that, as a recent writer remarks, we would gladly believe it to be exaggerated, but (he adds), if the priesthood, with its enormous influence, was so corrupt, it is only too probable that it debased the sex which is always most under clerical influence.

“Of ‘Saint’ Cyril of Alexandria, Dean Milman writes: ‘while ambition, intrigue, arrogance, rapacity, and violence are proscribed as unchristian means; barbarity, persecution, bloodshed as unholy and unevangelical wickedness; posterity will condemn this orthodox Cyril as one of the worst of heretics against the spirit of the Gospel.’

“A kindly estimate this, of a man who was morally guilty of the murder of Hypatia, and who was a notorious mob leader, and the brutal persecutor of the Jews, whom he drove out of Alexandria by the thousands, giving up their houses to pillage. This turbulent pagan claims notice here only because he was the ruling spirit in the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 451), which dealt with the heresies of Nestorius. Cyril had hurled anathemas against him for refusing to acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the ‘Mother of God,’ and he procured his condemnation by means that would discredit the lowest political contest, including the free use of a hired mob. So disgraceful was the disorder which prevailed that the Emperor dissolved the Council with the rebuke: ‘God is my witness that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discover and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.’

“No one need suppose that a wider outlook would lead us to reverse the judgment to which these facts and testimonies point. A portly volume would not contain the evidence available to prove the utter apostasy of ‘the primitive Church of the Fathers.’ One more testimony, however, is all I will here adduce. In his early life Salvian of Marseilles was the contemporary of Jerome and Augustine, the greatest of all the Latin Fathers. A century had elapsed since ‘the conversion of Constantine.’ The ‘persecution’ which the Christians had most to fear from the State was due to their vices and crimes, and to the operation of penal laws of drastic severity, designed to prevent their lapsing back to paganism. Why was it, then, that God seemed to have forsaken the Church? Here is Salvian’s answer: ‘See what Christians actually are everywhere, and then ask whether, under the administration of a righteous and holy God, such men can expect any favour? What happens every day under our very eyes is rather an evidence of the doctrine of Providence, as it displays the Divine displeasure provoked by the debauchery of the Church itself.’

“The following are further extracts from the same treatise: ‘How can we wonder that God does not hearken to our prayers? . . . Alas! how grievous and doleful is what I have to say! The very Church of God, which ought to be the appeaser of God, is but the provoked of God. And a very few excepted who flee from evil, what is almost every assembly of Christians but a sink of vices? For you will find in the Church scarcely one who is not either a drunkard or a glutton, or an adulterer, or a fornicator or frequenter of brothels, or a robber, or a murderer. I put it now to the consciences of all Christian people whether it be not so . . . The Churches are outraged by indecencies . . . You may well imagine what men have been thinking about at church when you see them hurry off, some to plunder, some to get drunk, some to practice lewdness, some to rob on the highway.’

“In accounting for the growth of Christianity in early days, Gibbon the Infidel gives prominence to the morality of the Christians. And Tertullian declared that no one who transgressed the rules of Christian discipline and propriety was recognized as a Christian at all. And yet two centuries later, almost every assembly of Christians had become a ‘sink of vices.’

“There is no need in this connection to speak of the Church of the Middle Ages—the fiendish enemy and persecutor of all who feared the Lord and followed righteousness and

truth. The estimates formed of the number of the martyrs are unreliable; for though not one of those many millions is forgotten in Heaven, the records on earth are altogether faulty. This at least is certain, that for long ages God was on the side of the martyrs, and that the Church of Christendom was the most awful impersonation of the powers of Hell that earth has ever known" (From "Forgotten Truths" by Sir Robert Anderson, pp. 88-96).

Much of the profligacy which obtained among professing Christians in the early centuries of this era is to be attributed unto the decay of sound doctrine in the Church and the rise and spread of fundamental error, We give one quotation thereon: "There was another sort of heresies, and so of real apostasy from the mystery of the Gospel, whose authors and followers yet pretended an adherence unto and profession thereof. These may be reduced to two heads: (1) Concerning the Person; and (2) concerning the grace of Christ. Of the first sort, the principal and most prevalent was that of the Arians, in denying His Deity; the latter, that of the Pelagians, in opposing His satisfaction, merit, and grace.

"The first of these (in the fourth century) was poured out as a flood from the mouth of the old Serpent, and bore all before it like a torrent; the latter insinuated itself as poison into the very vitals of the Church. The first, as a burning fever, carried present death with it and before it; the latter, as a gangrene or heretical distemper, insensibly consumed the vital spirits of religion. In the first, we have a most woeful evidence of the instability of professors, and their readiness to forego the saving mysteries of the Gospel. For in little more than half an age after its first rise, the generality of Christians in the world, bishops, priests, and people, fell under the power of it, and in their public confessions renounced and denied the true eternal Deity of the Son of God. For having obtained the patronage of some emperors, as Constantius and Valens, and the suffrage of innumerable prelates, who jointly promoted this heresy by force and fraud—almost the whole world, as to outward profession, was for a season led into this apostasy, wherein some whole nations (as the Goths and Vandals) continued for sundry ages afterward. And for the latter, or Pelagianism, it secretly, subtly, and gradually so insinuated itself into the minds of men, that for the substance of it, it continues to be no small part of that religion which the generality of Christians do at this day profess" (John Owen, 1670, Vol. 17, p. 359). Arminianism is but a slightly refined Pelagianism.—A.W.P.

THE BLESSED MAN.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa. 1:1). We have been much impressed by the fact that the wondrous and precious Psalter opens with the word “Blessed,” and yet a little reflection shows it could scarcely begin with any other. As most of our readers are doubtless aware, “Psalms” means “Praises,” and the key note is here struck at the very outset, for it is only the “Blessed man” who can truly praise God, as it is *his* praises which are alone acceptable to Him. The word “Blessed” has here, as in so many places in Scripture (like Matt. 5:3-11), a double force. First and primarily, it signifies that the Divine benediction—in contrast from God’s curse, rests upon this man. Second and consequently, it denotes that he is a *happy* man.

“Blessed is the man,” not “blessed are they”: the singular number emphasises the fact that piety is strictly a personal and individual matter. Now it is very striking to observe that God has opened this book of Psalms by describing to us the one whose “praises” are alone acceptable to Him. In all that follows to the end of verse 3, the Holy Spirit has given us a portrait (by which *we* may honestly compare ourselves) of the man on whom the Divine benediction rests, the only man who can worship the Father “in spirit and in truth.” The outstanding features in this portrait of the “blessed” man may be briefly expressed in three words: his separation (v. 1), his occupation (v. 2), his fertilization (v. 3).

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” As most readers are doubtless aware, the best of the commentators (as Spurgeon’s “Treasury of David”) take as the leading thought of this verse, *the downward course of the wicked*: walking, then standing (a more fixed state), and ending by sitting—thoroughly confirmed in evil; tracing a similar gradation of deterioration in their “counsel,” “way” and “seat,” as also in the terms by which they are designated: “ungodly—sinners—scornful.” But personally, we do not think this is the thought of the verse at all, for it is *irrelevant* to the passage as a whole, and would destroy its unity. No, the Spirit is here describing the character and conduct of the “blessed man.”

How very significant it is to note—how searching for our hearts—the first characteristic of the “blessed man” to which the Spirit here called attention is his walk, a walk in separation from the wicked! Ah, my reader, it is *there*, and nowhere else, that personal piety begins. There can be no walking with God, no following of Christ, no treading of the way of peace, till we separate from the world, forsake the paths of sin, turn our backs upon the “far country.” “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” But notice exactly *how* it is expressed: it is not “who walketh not in the open wickedness” or even “the manifest folly,” but “walketh not in the *counsel* of the ungodly.” How searching that is! How it narrows things down!

The ungodly are ever ready to “counsel” the believer, seeming to be very solicitous of his welfare. They will warn him against being too strict and extreme, advising him to be broadminded and to “make the best of both worlds.” But the policy of the “ungodly”—i.e., of those who leave *God* out of their lives, who have not His “fear” before their eyes—is regulated by self-will and self-pleasing, and is dominated by what they call “common sense.” Alas, how many professing Christians regulate their lives by the advice and suggestions of ungodly friends and relatives: heeding such “counsel” in their business career, their social life, the furnishing and decorating of their homes, their dress and diet, the choice of school or avocation for their children.

But *not so* with the “blessed man.” He “walketh not in the counsel godly.” Rather is he afraid of it, no matter how plausible it sounds, apparently good the intention of those who proffer it. He shuns it, and says “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Why? Because Divine grace has taught him that he has something infinitely better to direct *his* steps. God has given him a Divine revelation, dictated by unerring wisdom, suited to his every need and circumstance, designed as a “lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.” His desire and his determination is to walk by the wholesome counsel *of God*, and not by the corrupt counsel of the ungodly. Conversion is the soul’s surrender to and acceptance of God as *Guide* through this world of sin.

The “blessed” man’s separation from the world is given us in three details. First he “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” that is, according to the maxims of the world. Eve is a solemn example of one who walked in the counsel of the ungodly, as is also the daughter of Herodius. On the other hand, Joseph declining the wicked suggestion of Potiphar’s wife, David refusing to follow the counsel of Saul to meet Goliath in his armour, and Job’s refusal to heed his wife’s voice and “curse God,” are examples of those who did not do so. Second “nor standeth in the way of sinners.” Here we have the *associations* of the blessed man: he fellowships not with sinners. No, rather does he seek communion with the righteous. Precious examples of this are found in Abram’s leaving Ur of the Chaldees, Moses turning his back on the honours and treasures of Egypt, Ruth’s forsaking Moab to accompany Naomi. Third “nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” The “scornful” may here be regarded as the ones who despise and reject the true Rest-giver. “The seat” here speaks of relaxation and delectation: to sit not in the scorner’s seat means that the blessed man takes not his ease nor seeks his joy in the *recreations* of the world. No; he has something far better than “the pleasures of sin”: “in *Thy* presence is fullness of joy”—as Mary found at the Lord’s feet.

“But his delight is in the Law of the LORD” (Psa. 1:2). The opening “But” points a sharp contrast from the last clause of the previous verse, and serves to confirm our interpretation thereof. The worldling seeks *his* “delight” in the entertainment furnished by those who scorn spiritual and eternal things. Not so the “blessed” man: his “delight” is in something infinitely superior to what this perishing world can supply, namely, in the Divine Oracles. “The Law of the LORD” seems to have been one of David’s favourite expressions for the Word: see Psalm 19 and 119. “The Law of the LORD” throws the emphasis upon its Divine authority, upon God’s *will*. This is a sure mark of those who have been born again. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God” (Rom. 8:7). To “delight in the law of the LORD” is a sure proof that we have received of the Spirit of Christ, for He declared “I *delight* to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:8). God’s Word is the daily bread of the “blessed” man—is it so with you?

The unregenerate delight in pleasing *self*, but the joy of the Christian lies in pleasing *God*. It is not simply that he is *interested* in “the Law of the LORD,” but he *delights* therein. There are thousands of people, like Russellites, and Christadelphians, and, we may add, in the more orthodox sections of Christendom, who are keen students of Scripture, who delight in its prophecies, types, and mysteries, and who eagerly grasp at its promises; yet are they far from delighting in the *authority* of its Author and in being subject to His revealed will. The “blessed” man delights in its *precepts*. There is a “delight”—a peace, joy, and satisfaction of soul—pure and stable, to be found in subjection to God’s will, which is obtainable nowhere else. As John tells us “His commandments are

not grievous” (1 John 5:3), and as David declares “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa. 19:11).

“And in His Law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). Thereby does he *evidence* his “delight” therein: where his treasure is, there is his heart also! Here, then, is *the occupation* of the “blessed” man. The voluptuary thinks only of satisfying his senses; the giddy youth is concerned only with sport and pleasure; the man of the world directs all his energies to the securing of wealth and honours; but the “blessed” man’s determination is to please God, and in order to obtain a better knowledge of His will, he meditates day and night in His holy Law. Thereby is light obtained, its sweetness extracted, and the soul nourished. His “meditation” herein is not occasional and spasmodic, but regular and persistent: not only in the “day” of prosperity, but also in the “night” of adversity; not only in the “day” of youth and strength, but in the “night” of old age and weakness.

“Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15:16). What is meant by “did *eat* them”? Appropriation, mastication, assimilation. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. It is as God’s Word is pondered by the mind, turned over and over in the thoughts, and mixed with faith, that we assimilate it. That which most occupies the mind and most constantly engages our thoughts, is what we most “delight” in. Here is a grand cure for loneliness (as the writer has many times proved): to meditate on God’s Law day and night. But real “meditation” in God’s Law is an act of obedience: “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written therein” (Josh. 1:8). The Psalmist could thus appeal to God—can you: “Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my *meditation*” (Psa. 5:1).

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa. 1:3). Here we have the “blessed” man’s *fertilization*. But notice very carefully, dear reader, what *precedes* this. There must be a complete break from the world—separating from its counsel or policy, from fellowshiping its votaries, and from its pleasures; and there must be a genuine subjection to God’s authority and a daily feeding upon His Word, before there can be any real fruitfulness unto Him. “He shall be like a tree.” This figure is found in numerous passages, for there are many resemblances between a tree and a saint. He is not a “reed” moved about by every wind that blows, nor a creeper, trailing along the ground. A tree is upright, and grows heavenward. This tree is “planted”: many are not, but grow wild. A “planted” tree is under the care and cultivation of its owner. Thus, this metaphor assures us that those who delight in God’s Law are owned by God, cared for and pruned by Him.

“Planted by the rivers of water.” This is the place of refreshment—rivers of grace, or communion, of renewing. Probably the more specific allusion is unto “and a Man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as *rivers of water* in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2). That refers to Christ, and tells us that just as a tree derives life and fruitfulness from the adjacent river, so the believer, by communion, draws from the fullness there is for him in Christ. “That bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” This is an essential character of a gracious man, for there are no fruitless branches in the true Vine. “In his season,” for all fruits do not appear in the same month, neither are all the graces of the Spirit produced simultaneously. Trial calls for faith, suffering for the exercise of patience, disappointment for meekness, danger for

courage, blessings for thanksgiving, prosperity for joy; and so on. This word “in season” is a timely one: we must not expect the fruits of maturity in those who are but babes.

“His leaf also shall not wither.” This means that his Christian profession is a bright and *living reality*. He is not one who has a name to live, yet is dead. No, his works evidence his faith. That is why “his fruit” is mentioned *before* “his leaf.” Where there is no fruit to God’s glory our profession is a mockery. Note how it is said of Christ that He was “mighty in *deed* and word” (Luke 24:19): the same order is seen again in “that Jesus began both to *do* and teach” (Acts 1:1). “And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” This necessarily follows, though it is not always apparent to the eye of sense. Not even a cup of water given in the name of Christ shall fail to receive its reward—if not here, certainly in the Hereafter. How far, dear reader, do you and I resemble this “blessed” man? Let us again press the *order* of these three verses. Just so far as we fall into the sins of verse 1 will our delight in God’s Law be dulled, and just so far as we are not in subjection to His will shall we be fruitless. But a complete separation from the world, and wholehearted occupation with the Lord will issue in fruit to His praise.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

2. *Its Grand Original.*

The decrees of God, His eternal purpose, the inscrutable counsels of His will, are indeed a great deep; yet this we know, that from first to last they have *a definite relation to Christ*, for He is the Alpha and the Omega in all covenant transactions. Beautifully did Spurgeon express it: "Search for the celestial fountain, from which the Divine streams of grace flow to us, and you will find Jesus Christ the well-spring in covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running across the margin of every page, and you shall see that from the beginning to the end one object was always in view—the glory of the Son of God." It therefore seems strange that many who see that election is the foundation of salvation, yet overlook the glorious *Head of election*, in whom the elect were chosen and from whom they receive all blessings.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:3, 4). Since we were chosen *in* Christ, it is evident that we were chosen *out of* ourselves; and since we were chosen *in Christ*, it necessarily follows that He was chosen before we were. This is clearly implied in the preceding verse, wherein the Father is expressly designated "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now according to the analogy of Scripture (i.e., when He is said to be "the God" of anyone) God was "the God" of Christ first, because He chose Him to that grace and union. Christ as man was predestinated as truly as we were, and so has God to be His *God* by predestination and free grace. Second, because the Father made a covenant with Him (Isa. 42:6). In view of the covenant made with them, He became known as "the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob"; so in view of the covenant He made with Christ, He became His "God." Third, because God is the Author of all Christ's blessedness: Psalm 45:2, 7.

"According as He (God) hath chosen us in Him" means, then, that in election Christ was made *the Head* of the elect. "In the womb of election He, the Head, came out first (adumbrated in every normal birth, A.W.P.), and then we, the members" (Thomas Goodwin). In all things Christ must have the "pre-eminence," and therefore is He "the Firstborn" in election (Rom. 8:29). In the order of *nature* Christ was chosen first, but in the order of *time* we were elected with Him. We were not chosen for ourselves apart, but *in Christ*, which denotes three things. First, we were chosen in Christ as the members of His body. Second, we were chosen in Him as the Pattern which we should be conformed unto. Third, we were chosen in Him as the final end, i.e., it was for Christ's glory, to be His "fullness" (Eph. 1:23).

"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; *Mine Elect*, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1): that this passage refers to none other than the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably plain from the Spirit's citation of it in Matthew 12:15-20. Here, then, is the Grand Original of election: in its first and highest instance election is spoken of and applied to the Lord Jesus! It was the will of the Eternal Three to elect and predestinate the second Person into creature being and existence, so that as God-man, "the Firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15), He was the subject of the Divine decrees, and the immediate and principal object of the love of the Co-essential Three. And as the Father hath life in Himself, so

hath He given to the Son—considered as God-man—to have life in Himself (John 5:26), to be a fountain of life, of grace and glory, unto His beloved Spouse, who received her being and wellbeing from Jehovah's free grace and everlasting love.

When God determined *to create*, among all the myriad creatures, both angelic and human, which rose up in the Divine mind, to be brought into being by Him, the man Christ Jesus was singled out of them, and appointed to union with the second Person in the Blessed Trinity, and was accordingly sanctified and set up. This original and highest act of election was one of pure sovereignty and amazing grace. The celestial hosts were passed by, and the Seed of the woman was determined upon. Out of the innumerable seeds which were to be created in Adam, the line of Abraham was selected, then of Isaac, and then of Jacob. Of the twelve tribes which were to issue from Jacob, that of Judah was chosen, God elected not an angel to the high union with His Son, but “one chosen out of the people” (Psa. 89:19). What shall those say who so much dislike the truth that the heirs of Heaven are elected, when they learn that Jesus Christ Himself is the subject of eternal election!

“Jehovah is the first cause and the last end of all things. His essence and existence are of and from Himself. He is Jehovah, the self-existing essence: the fountain of life, and essential blessedness—The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light to which no mortal eye can approach. And throughout a vast eternity the Eternal Three enjoyed boundless and incomprehensible blessedness in the contemplation of those essential perfections which belong to Father, Son, and Spirit, the everlasting Jehovah: who is His own eternity, and cannot receive any addition to His essential happiness or glory by any or all of His creatures. He is exalted above all blessing and praise. The whole creation before Him, and as viewed by Him, is less than nothing and vanity. If any should curiously inquire, what was God engaged in before He stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth? The answer is: the blessed, co-equal, and co-essential Three, Father, Son, and Spirit, had a mutual inbeing and society together, and were essentially blessed in that Divine eternal life, in the mutual interests or propriety they have in each other, in mutual love and delight—as also in the possession of one common glory.

“But as it is the nature of goodness to be *communicative of itself*, so it pleased the Eternal Trinity to purpose to *go forth into creature acts*. The ever blessed Three, to whom nothing can be added or diminished, the spring and fountain of whose essential blessedness arises from the immense perfections in the infinite nature in which They exist—in the mutual love they have to each other—and their mutual converse together—were pleased to delight in creature fellowship and society. The eternal Father predestinated His co-essential Son into creature being and existence, and from everlasting He wore the form and bore the personage of God-man. The creation of all things is attributed in Scripture to Divine sovereignty: ‘Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created’ (Rev. 4:11). Nothing out of God can move Him: or be a motive to Him; His *will* is His rule, His *glory* His ultimate end. ‘For of Him (as the first cause), and through Him (as the preserving cause), and to Him (as the final cause), are all things’: Romans 11:36.

“God in His actual creation of all, is the end of all. ‘The LORD hath made all things for Himself’ (Prov. 16:4), and the sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to Himself as their Creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon

Him, in regard of their being and well-being. He has the being of all things in His own will and power, and it was at His own pleasure whether He would impart it or not. 'Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15:18). He comprehends and grasps all things in His infinite understanding. As He hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as the drop of a bucket, so He hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust. His primitive decree and view, in the creation of Heaven and earth, angels and men, being His own glory, and that which gave foundation to it and was the basis to support it, was Jehovah's design to exalt His Son as God-man, to be the foundation and cornerstone of the whole creation of God. God had never gone forth into creature acts, had not the second Person condescended by the assumption of our nature to become a creature. Though this took place after the Fall, yet the decree concerning it was before the Fall. Jesus Christ, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts, was the first of all the ways of God" (S. E. Pierce).

Nowhere does the sovereignty of God shine forth so conspicuously as in His acts of election and reprobation, which took place in eternity past, and which nothing in the creature was the cause. God's act of choosing His people in Christ was before the foundation of the world, without the consideration of the Fall, nor was it upon the foresight and footing of works, but was wholly *of grace*, and all to the praise and glory of it. In nothing else is Jehovah's sovereignty so manifest: indeed the highest instance of it was in predestinating the second Person in the Trinity to be the God-man. That this came under *the decree* of God is clear, again, from the words of the Apostle: "Who verily (says he in speaking of Christ) was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20), and who is said to be laid "in Zion a chief cornerstone, *elect*, precious" (1 Peter 2:6). This Grand Original of election, so little known today, is of such transcendent importance that we dwell upon it a little longer, to point out some of the reasons why God was pleased to predestinate the man Christ Jesus unto personal union with His Son.

Christ was predestinated for higher ends than the saving of His people from the effects of their fall in Adam. First, He was chosen for God Himself to delight in, far more so and infinitely above all other creatures. Being united to the second Person, the Man Christ Jesus was exalted to a closer union and communion with God. The Lord of Hosts speaks of Him as, "the Man that is *My Fellow*" (Zech. 13:7), "Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). Second, Christ was chosen that God might behold the image of Himself and all His perfections in a creature, so that His excellencies are seen in Christ as in no other: "Who being the Brightness of His glory and the express Image of His person" (Heb. 1:3), which is spoken of the Person of Christ as God-man. Third by the union of the Man Christ Jesus with the everlasting Son of God, the whole fullness of the Godhead was to dwell personally in Him, He being "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15, 19).

The Man Christ Jesus, then, was chosen unto the highest union and communion with God Himself. In Him the love and grace of Jehovah shine forth in their superlative glory. The Son of God gave subsistence and personality to His human nature, so that the Son of God and His human nature are not merely one *flesh* as man and wife, nor one *spirit* only (as is the case between Christ and the Church: 1 Cor. 6:17), but one *person*, and hence this creature nature is advanced to a fellowship in the society of the blessed Trinity, and therefore to Him God communicates Himself without measure (John 3:34). Descending now to a lower plane, the Man Christ Jesus was also chosen to be an Head to an elect

seed, who were chosen in Him, given a super-creation subsistence, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings.

If God will love, He must have an object for His love, and the object must have an existence before Him to exercise His love upon, for He cannot love a non-entity. It must therefore be that the God-man, and the elect in Him, existed in the Divine mind as objects of God's everlasting love, before all time. In Christ the Church was chosen from everlasting: the one the Head the other His body; the one being the Bridegroom, the other His bride: the One being chosen and appointed for the other. They were chosen together, yet Christ first in the order of the Divine decrees. As, then, Christ and the Church had existed in the will, thoughts and purpose of the Father from the beginning, He could love them and rejoice in them. As the God-man declares, "Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me . . . for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:23, 24).

The Son of God being, before all time, predestinated to be God-man, was secretly anointed or set up as such, and His human nature had a covenant subsistence before God. In consequence of this, He was the Son of Man in Heaven before He became the Son of Man on earth; He was the Son of Man secretly before God before he became the Son of Man openly and manifestly in this world. Therefore did the Psalmist exclaim, "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" (80:17); and therefore did Christ Himself declare, "What and if ye shall see the *Son of Man* ascend up *where He was before*?" (John 6:62). "God, out of His eternal and infinite goodness of love, and purposing Christ to become a creature, and communicate with His creatures, ordained in His eternal counsel that Person in the God-head should be united to our nature and to one particular of His creatures, that so in the Person of the Mediator the true Ladder of Salvation might be fixed, whereby God might descend to His creatures and His creatures ascend unto Him" (Sir Francis Bacon).

"Christ was first elected as Head and Mediator, and as the Cornerstone to bear up the whole building; for the act of the Father's election in Christ supposes Him first chosen to this mediatory work and to be the Head of the elect part of the world. After this election of Christ, others were predestinated 'to be conformed unto His image' (Rom. 8:29), i.e., to Christ as Mediator, and taking human nature; not to Christ barely considered as God. This conformity being specially intended *in election*, Christ was in the purpose of the Father the first exemplar and copy of it. One foot of the compass of grace stood in Christ as the center, while the other walked about the circumference, pointing one here and another there, to draw a line, as it were, between every one of those points and Christ. The Father, then, being the prime cause of the election of some out of the mass of mankind, was the prime cause of the election of Christ to bring them to the enjoyment of that to which they were elected. Is it likely that God, in founding an everlasting kingdom, should consult about the members before He did about the Head? Christ was registered at the top of the book of election, and His members after Him. It is called, therefore, 'the book of the Lamb' " (S. Charnock).

That passage of Scripture which enters most fully into what we are here contemplating is the 8th chapter of Proverbs, at which we will now glance. There are many passages in that book wherein the "wisdom" spoken of signifies far more than a moral excellence, and something even more blessed than the personification of one of the Divine attributes. In not a few passages (1:20-32 for example) the reference is *to Christ*, one of whose titles

is “the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). It is as such He is to be regarded here in Proverbs, chapter 8. That it is a *Person* which is there in view is clear from verse 17, and that it is a *Divine* Person appears from verse 15; yet not a Divine Person considered abstractedly, but as the God-man. This is evident from what is there predicated of Him.

“The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old” (v. 22). The Speaker is Christ Himself, the alone Mediator between the Creator and His creatures. The words, “The Lord possessed Me *in* the beginning of His way” tend to hide what is there affirmed. There is no prefix in the original Hebrew, nothing there to warrant the interposed “in,” while the word rendered “beginning” signifies the first or chief. Thus it should be translated “the Lord possessed Me: the Beginning (or Chief) of His way, before His works of old.” Christ was the Firstborn of all God’s thoughts and designs, delighted in by Him long before the universe was brought into existence.

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (v. 23). “Our Redeemer came forth of the womb of a decree from eternity, before He came out of the womb of the virgin in time. He was hid in the will of God before He was made manifest in the flesh of a Redeemer. He was a Lamb slain in decree before He was slain upon the Cross—He was possessed by God in the beginning, or the Beginning of His way (Prov. 8:22, 23, 31), the Head of His works, and set up from everlasting to have His delights among the sons of men” (S. Charnock).

“When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no foundations abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth” (vv. 24, 25). Christ is here referring to His being “brought forth” in God’s mind, being predestinated into creature existence before the world was made. The first of all God’s intentions respected the union of the Man Christ Jesus unto His Son. The Mediator became the foundation of all the Divine counsels: see Ephesians 3:11 and 1:9, 10. As such the triune Jehovah “possessed” Him as a Treasury in which were laid up all His designs. He was then “set up” or “anointed” (v. 23) in His official character as Mediator and Head of the Church. As the God-man He had a virtual influence and was the Executor of all the works and will of God.

“Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him” (v. 30). It is not the complacency of the Father in the Son considered absolutely as the second Person, but His satisfaction and joy in the Mediator as He viewed Him in the glass of His decrees. It was as incarnate that the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), and it was with the foreordained God-man, who had a real subsistence before the Divine mind, that He was delighted in by Jehovah before the world was. In His eternal thoughts and primitive views, the Man that was His Fellow became the Object of God’s ineffable love and complacency. It was far more than that Jehovah simply *purposed* that the Son should become incarnate—His decree gave Christ a real subsistence before Him, and as such afforded infinite satisfaction to His heart.—A.W.P.