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SPIRITUAL NURSES.

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1 Thess. 2:7). What a delightful figure did the Apostle here employ, and how blessedly it depicts the ditties of the minister’s office in connection with one section of those who are committed to his charge. Unto those who are but babes in Christ he sustains the relationship of a nurse. What wisdom, what tenderness, what patience this calls for. His infantile charges are to be fed with the pure milk of the Word. Care has to be taken that they get plenty of *rest*, and not pressed into “service” for which they are utterly unfit. How beautifully this is brought out in Isaiah 40:11, where we behold the Good Shepherd carrying the “lambs” in His arms. What a lesson is there pointed for all His undershepherds to deal with the little ones as such, nourishing and tending to them.

But there comes a time when we *outgrow* the need for nurses, and it is just as harmful for those reaching the age of adolescence to be treated as though they were still in the nursery, as it would be if infants were forced to attempt tasks suited only to adults. We never tire of calling attention to some of the many ways in which the natural adumbrates the spiritual, for simple and obvious though this is, yet it is surprising how often the lessons to be learned therefrom are overlooked. During the first few months of our earthly existence we were entirely dependent upon the ministrations of others, being quite incapable of doing anything for ourselves. Even when learning to walk, other hands had to support us. But would it not be pathetic if such were the case with us *now*?

It is lamentable when a boy in his teens is still tied to his mother’s apron strings; yet is it not equally deplorable for those who have been Christians many years to be tied to their minister’s apron strings? Yet how often we witness this very thing. There is a certain class who seem to be afraid, or at any rate unwilling, to think for themselves—to search the Scriptures for themselves, and act accordingly—and we suspect that in many cases the preacher is as much to be blamed as they are. It is true that he is their teacher, and as such he should possess a wider and deeper knowledge of spiritual things than they have. Yet is it not his duty to instruct them—to familiarize themselves with God’s Word, and thus become qualified to “*Prove* all things: hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21)? In other words, the preacher is not to be a nurse unto them all their lives.

It has long been our conviction that the preacher who is really of greatest service to his people is the one who makes them most independent of creature help and casts them back directly upon God Himself. For souls to run to their pastor every time they are in trouble, or look to him to solve all their spiritual problems, is virtually to give him the same place in their lives as the deluded Papists accord their “priests.” This is not only to rob God of His glory, but also retards their spiritual progress. It is with God Himself I most need to deal, and any man who comes between me and the Lord is really a hindrance, no matter how good his intentions may be. Moreover, the preacher is human, and therefore liable to err: but God is omniscient and never misdirects. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask *of God*” (James 1:5).

Some time ago we had a letter from one of our readers to say she was much perturbed over the matter of baptism, and asking us to communicate our own views thereon. We answered by saying that while we rejoiced to learn she was exercised upon this important ordinance, yet we were disappointed that *our* opinion had been asked for. We stated that

if we gave it, it could not be of any real value to her: that she had the same Bible to consult that we had, and urged her to prayerfully study the New Testament and act thereon—taking no man's word or advice. We knew that what we had said would be a real test, and that if she belonged to that hyper-sensitive class which is so numerous today, she would be offended. But committing the matter to the Lord, we counted upon Him to be so overruling that He would be glorified and she satisfied.

Our inquirer thanked us for our letter, saying, "I absolutely concur with you that it would not help me for you to answer my question regarding immersion. I must search the Word prayerfully, and be entirely obedient to that light God gives me . . . You must agree it is hard for a young Christian to know *what* the Word teaches (humanly speaking) when one spiritual man of God teaches that it says one thing, and another apparently equally spiritually-minded man teaches from the Word the opposite." To which we replied, "Yes, my dear friend, I freely grant that it is far from easy to ascertain what God's Word teaches while we practically shut ourselves up to hearing or reading what is now being given out by those claiming to be 'Bible Teachers'; yea, I go so far as to say that it is impossible—nothing but confusion can be the result."

Sooner or later there comes a time in the lives of most real Christians when those words, "Cease ye from man" (Isa. 2:22) are applied to their hearts in Divine power. This will not mean that they now refuse to hear God's servants or read their writings, but that they will no longer place the same blind confidence in their teachers as the Papists do in their priests. Instead, they will emulate the Bereans, who did not mechanically accept what they heard even from the lips of the Apostles, but "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). This is what our young friend did, and in her last letter she was able to tell us that the Lord had made clear her duty and she had been Scripturally baptized. How happy she was that her faith stood not "in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). She added, "I can perceive well how the man who throws me back upon the Lord Himself helps me the most." Spiritual nurses have their place, but they become a snare when we fail to outgrow their need.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

12. *The Law and Oaths: Matthew 5:33-37.*

The subject which is now to engage our attention is hardly one that is likely to appeal very strongly to the average reader, probably because it treats of matters which rarely engage his mind. Yet the very fact that the Lord Jesus gave the same something more than a passing notice in His first formal sermon should indicate to us that it is one which we cannot afford to ignore. The Son of God did not waste time on trivialities nor make public deliverances on technicalities devoid of practical value. No, rather did He concern Himself with vital matters that directly affected the glory of God and concerned the eternal welfare of immortal souls. It is therefore a slighting of His honour and impugning of His wisdom if we refuse to attentively weigh and prayerfully consider His teaching on the subject of Oaths. Nor is this the only occasion on which He brought it to the notice of His congregations: as we shall see, in Matthew 23 He returned to the theme and spoke at greater length thereon.

Some one has said, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," but such a silly statement savors more of insanity than perspicuity and prudence. Blissful ignorance is often highly dangerous, and in connection with the things of God, fatal. "My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6) said the Lord of old. True, knowledge itself will not always deter from sin, but often it serves as a salutary restraint. It is much to be feared that millions of the present generation, who are guilty of the crimes which Christ here condemned, are totally ignorant of their great wickedness in this matter. Nothing is more prevalent today, among all classes, than cursing and swearing, and it is high time that both the pulpit and the press sound a loud and solemn warning thereon.

The deep importance of our subject may further be intimated by pointing out that it is essentially bound up with a right understanding and observance of the third of the Ten Commandments. It is therefore basic and vital, for the curse of God rests upon all transgressors of His Law. If the reader will take the trouble to examine a good concordance on the words "oaths," "swear," and "vow," he may be surprised to find how many scores of passages there are speaking thereof. Finally, when it is seen that the rightful taking of an oath is an act of *worship*, we may then more clearly perceive the momentousness and value of our present inquiry, for it deeply concerns us all to be Scripturally regulated on anything which has to do with the worship of God, and it behooves us to spare no effort in seeing to it that our worship be performed in a manner which will meet with Divine approval and acceptance.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication, be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:33-37). At this time we propose to make only a few expository and explanatory remarks on our passage, and then devote the remainder of our space unto a topical treatment of the whole subject.

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." It is almost ludicrous to see what shifts many of the commentators have put themselves to in their efforts to identify

this statement of Christ's with one or more of the Mosaic statutes, ending with the confession that His actual words cannot be found anywhere in the Old Testament, and supposing that He here epitomized the teaching of the Law thereon. Such confusion is inexcusable and such an explanation most unwarrantable. The fact is that our Lord does not here refer to the Divine precepts at all, but instead to the Jews' perversion of them. He pursues identically the same order in these verses as He had followed in the preceding sections. First, He mentions the pharisaic corruption of the Divine Law, and then sets forth the character of that righteousness which He requires from the citizens of His kingdom on the matter under discussion.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain" (Exo. 20:7). Here is the original and fundamental law concerning oaths, with which we may also link, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name" (Deut. 6:13). Thus an oath was a solemn appeal to the dread name of Jehovah, which, by awaking the spirit of the swearer to a consciousness of the awe-inspiring presence and cognizance of the Most High, gave all its sanctity and power to it. And then, when anyone *had* so sworn, there was the solemn warning that the Lord would not hold him guiltless that took His Name in vain. Thus it is quite clear that Israelites were permitted to swear by the Name of the Lord, but having once done so they must not change their minds nor in any way fail to keep their promise.

It is striking to note that when the Psalmist delineated the character of him who was fitted to "abide in the Lord's tabernacle" and "dwell in His holy hill" (i.e. commune with God and enjoy His presence forever), that one of the marks specified is, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psa. 15:1, 4): that is, who at no cost will go back upon his sworn word. It is therefore obvious from these passages that the Mosaic law had a strong tendency to check the practice of oath-taking and to restrict the same unto solemn occasions. The interested reader may also consult such passages as Exodus 22:11, 12; Leviticus 5:1, 19:12; Numbers 5:19-21.

But the Jewish doctors had found ways of perverting the Divine statutes, and the Pharisees had perpetuated and added to their corruptions. From the language used by Christ on this occasion we have no difficulty in ascertaining the nature of their errors and evil practices. First, it is clear from Matthew 5:33 that they had unwarrantably *restricted* the Mosaic precepts upon oaths to the single prohibition against perjury. They drew the wicked inference that there was no evil in any oath, at any time, provided a man did not foreswear himself. Thus they opened wide the door for men to multiply oaths on any matter and every trivial occasion.

Not only was perjury severely condemned by the Mosaic law, but any vain and *needless* use of the Name of God in our ordinary communications was strictly prohibited. No man ought voluntarily to take an oath unless it be in a matter of controversy and the contention cannot be settled without it: "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife" (Heb. 6:16). But the Pharisees had so wrested the Law, they taught that so long as men swore truthfully as to matters of fact and performed their vows in case of promise, all was well. They seem to have had no conscience of swearing *lightly*. In order for an oath to be lawful, it requires not only that the affirmation be true and the vows performed, but that such a mode of affirmation or vowing be *necessary*.

Second, it is equally plain from Christ's words in Matthew 5:34-36 that the Jews had wrested the Third Commandment by inventing the idea of swearing *by the creature*. Aiming to ingratiate themselves with men by pandering to their corruptions—for it is ever the way of all false teachers to accommodate the Truth to the blindness and lusts of their dupes—the Scribes devised a means whereby men might swear without the guilt of perjury although they swore ever so falsely; and this was to swear not by the Name of God, but by the heavens or the earth, by Jerusalem or the temple. They made a distinction between oaths: according to them, some were binding, others were not—the obligation of an oath depending upon the nature of the object by which the person swore (Matt. 23:16).

It is not difficult to see why such a device was resorted to by the leaders, or why it should be so popular with their followers. The Law was very definite, "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God and serve Him, and shalt swear *by His Name*" (Deut. 6:13). To swear in the Name of the Lord was not only ordained for the placing of a solemn bridle upon fallen man's proneness to lying, but also to restrain the act itself unto serious matters and important occasions. Hence, this invention of swearing by some inanimate object removed the very awe with which an oath should be invested and surrounded. Yet one can readily perceive how easily those hypocrites could cloak their wickedness—pretending such veneration for God that His name must not be used by the people. Philo taught, "It is a sin and a vanity presently to run to God or the Maker of all things, and to swear *by Him*: it is lawful to swear by our parents, by heaven, and the stars."

Third, it is equally obvious from our Lord's words in Matthew 5:37 that the Jews had been encouraged and permitted to make use of oaths *lightly* and commonly in their ordinary conversation. This would logically and inevitably follow upon the second evil to which we have just referred, for such a device was not only dishonest and demoralizing in itself, but it was sure to bring about an utter disregard of the Third Commandment, for since such oaths (where the Name of God was omitted) would be lightly esteemed, men would be inclined to resort unto oaths upon almost any matter or occasion. "With the exception of oaths by the gold of the temple and by the sacrifices of the altar—which, for some selfish or superstitious reason, they held to be binding—they appear to have thought that to swear by any created thing was a very little consequence, involved no obligation, and might be done in common conversation without sin" (J. Brown).

"But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King" (vv. 34, 35). In these verses and in the two which immediately follow our Lord protests against the erroneous teachings and corrupt practices of the Scribes and Pharisees. Let it be clearly understood that all of the things prohibited by our Saviour in this Sermon were in themselves, and also by virtue of the Law of God, antecedently *evil* and unlawful. Most certainly He is not here pitting Himself against any of the Mosaic precepts: rather was He restoring them to their *original place*, purity and power. It was the pharisaic veil of religious hypocrisy which Christ rent asunder, exposing the corruptness of their traditions and denouncing the soul-ruining sins into which the great body of the people had been drawn.

Let any of the immediately preceding sections of this Sermon be considered, and it will at once be found that the particulars there mentioned by Christ were things which were wrong in themselves, and declared so in the positive law of God. Was it not gross wickedness to be angry with a brother without cause, and to call him "Raca and fool"?

Was it not exceedingly sinful to look upon a woman so as to lust after her? In like manner, what is here prohibited by Christ in His, “Swear not at all,” is not the legitimate taking of an oath in law courts, nor even between man and man so as to end a controversy; but rather that which was directly opposed to the Mosaic statutes, yet practiced and supported by the false interpretations of the Law by the Pharisees.

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all.” This injunction of Christ’s supplies another example of the need for careful interpretation of the language of Scripture. Not a few good men have been misled here by the mere sound of words, failing to ascertain their real sense. By taking the prohibition absolutely, instead of relatively, they have certainly erred. This verse also shows us the importance of comparing Scripture with Scripture, for it is quite clear not only from the Old Testament, but from many passages in the New, that in certain circumstances and when they are ordered by the rules of God’s Word, oaths *are lawful*, yea necessary—we shall discuss this at more length next month (D.V.). But we do not have to go outside the bounds of our present passage to find that Christ did not intend His prohibition to be taken without any limitations. He Himself qualified it, first, by forbidding us to swear by any creature; and second, by reprehending all oaths in our ordinary conversation.

Had His, “Swear not at all,” meant that He here forbade all oaths, in any form and under every circumstance, it was needless to add anything more, and in such a case what is found in the next two verses would simply be a multiplying of words to no purpose. Instead, Christ proceeded to amplify and explain His prohibition, and at the same time expose the sophistry of the Pharisees’ devices and show wherein lay the sinfulness of the same. They had invented a method of swearing which they supposed would clear the oath-taker from incurring the guilt of breaking the Third Commandment, and that was to swear by some creature, instead of doing so in the sacred Name of the Lord God. *This* it was which Christ was here reproofing, and in so doing He once more revealed to us the exceeding “breadth” of the Divine commandments (Psa. 119:96).

“Swear not at all: neither by Heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King” (Matt. 5:34-35). Here Christ made it plain that by no subtle subterfuge can men escape the solemn responsibility of an oath. Though they may omit mentioning the fearful name of God, yet let them know that His is the Name of Creator and Owner of all things, and therefore it is invoked in all the works of His hands. If men swear by “Heaven,” as the Pharisees recommended, let them duly bear in mind that *that* is God’s “throne,” and so it is really Himself that they summon as a witness to their integrity. If men swear by “the earth” that is God’s “footstool,” and he who swears by it, swears by the God whose footstool it is; if by “Jerusalem,” that was the Capitol, the seat of His worship.

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black” (v. 36). A swearing by any creature necessarily implies an appeal unto God Himself, because of its relation to Him. The whole universe is the Lord’s, and therefore to swear by any part of it, is a reference unto its august Maker and Ruler. If we swear by our “head,” that, too, has been given us by God, and is His far more than it is ours. God has made it and has the sole disposing of it—a statement easily proven—for you are incapable of changing the colour of a single hair on it! An oath by your head, if it has any meaning at all, is an oath to the universal Proprietor. Every oath, because it *is* an oath, is an ultimate reference to Deity. Man’s inability to really change the colour of his hair is here

brought in by Christ to demonstrate that he has no power over his head. If, then, man has no power over the least creature (a hair!) then how unlawful and ridiculous it is for him to swear by any creature!

“But let your communication, be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (v. 37). In these words Christ makes further amplification of His “Swear not at all,” and lays down an important rule which is binding upon all. “Your communication” means your everyday dealings with your fellows, particularly your common speech or conversation. Thousands of things are true, which yet it would be profaning the Name of God to swear to. Christ was not here referring to judicial transactions at all, but to the ordinary intercourse of men with each other. “He did not censure His followers from what was said before a magistrate, but for what passed in their ordinary communications: that is, light and unnecessary oaths. This was a sin so prevalent among the Jews that even Christians who were called from among them stood in need of being warned against it: James 5:12” (Andrew Fuller).

“Swear not at all . . . but let your communications be Yea, yea; Nay, nay.” In its particular application to His own people, Christ here struck at the root of the special evils He was now condemning, by demanding from His followers veracity in every word. It was as though He said, I not only forbid you to swear falsely, but to swear at all—in your common speech. What need should there be for *you* to swear?—you who are disciples of Him who is “the Truth”! As the followers of the Holy One, you must speak the truth in every utterance of your lips. Your character and conduct is to be such that all acquainted with you have the assurance that your word is your bond. If your communications are “yea” in the promise and “yea” in the performance, then there will be no need for you to appeal to God in witness of your veracity. Alas that the standard now set by the vast majority of professing Christians is so very far beneath this, and that the word of many of them is often worth less than that of those who make no profession at all. “Whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil”: that is, anything savouring of an oath, or even extravagant avowals in our ordinary conversations, are sinful in the sight of God.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

94. *His Fervent Praise.*

“And Gad came that day to David and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded” (2 Sam. 24:18, 19). Here we behold David’s trustful and thankful acceptance of the mercy vouchsafed him. He received not the grace of God in vain, but complied promptly with His revealed will. To unbelief it would seem too good to be true that God’s displeasure was now appeased; but faith laid hold of the Prophet’s word, knowing that an “altar” spoke of propitiation and acceptance. And this is ever the way with those who have truly repented of their sins and humbled themselves before the Lord. Satan may seek to persuade them that they have transgressed beyond the hope of forgiveness, but sooner or later the heart of the Christian will turn again to the Antitypical Altar, and overcome the Adversary with the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11).

How different, for the moment, was the attitude of Ornan: “And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him *hid* themselves” (1 Chron. 21:20). This is in direct contrast, and presents to us a most important truth. On the one hand, the case of Ornan terror-stricken with the sight of the destroying angel, tells us that no flesh can stand naked, as in its own resources, before the Lord. On the other hand, David here exemplified the fact that penitent sinners may confidently draw near to Him in the power of simply believing in His wondrous grace. At this time the greatness of God’s mercy had not been revealed to Ornan: he knew nothing of the “altar” that was to be set up in his threshingfloor, and therefore, as nakedly a creature in the sight of God—as Adam before Him in such a case—he hid himself.

But David *had* had revealed to him the remedy, which mercy rejoicing against judgment had provided, and therefore he hesitated not. Though shamed and humbled, he immediately responded to Gad’s message, and “went *up*”—significant word (cf. Gen. 13:1, etc.)—delivered from the mire into which he had fallen. The angel’s “sword,” *still unsheathed*, had no alarms for him now, for he goes to the very place where he stood (1 Chron. 21:16)! Is not this remarkable? the very spectacle which filled Ornan with fear, had no terror for David. Believing, he was neither ashamed nor confounded. Consequently we see in his action here no disturbance of the flesh, but all is quietness and assurance as he rested on the Word of God. What a lesson is there here for our needy hearts. Alas, what cowards we are! What trifles we allow to frighten us. O for more confidence in the living God, more reliance upon His promises—less occupation with what intimidates the flesh.

“And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground” (1 Chron. 21:21). Let us not lose sight of the blessed humility of David here—ever a prominent spiritual grace in his character and conduct. Does the reader perceive to what we now call attention? It is this: David did not treat with Ornan mediately, through one of his underlings, but *directly*. Was not this in perfect keeping with the “sackcloth?” He still took the place of humility. Ah, dear friends, it is the emptied vessel which God fills. Rightly did Matthew Henry declare, “Great men will never be less respected for their humility, but the more.” Those who are self-important and pompous only display their littleness and meanness.

“And Araunah [Ornan] said, wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To *buy* the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people” (2 Sam. 24:21). Here we behold David as the *righteous* one. Though he was a king, and though he had received commandment from the Lord to build an altar at this particular place, nevertheless he insisted upon making fair payment to this man, even though a Gentile. This is ever a mark of true spirituality: those who walk with God, are honourable in dealing with their fellowmen. “Owe no man anything” (Rom. 13:8) is a necessary application of, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Neither high office nor pressure of circumstances can justify one in taking an unfair advantage of another. Nothing lower than “in all things willing to *live honestly*” (Heb. 13:18) must be the Christian’s standard. Those who attended Christ most closely during the days of His public ministry, neither imposed upon the kindness of others nor begged favours, but *bought* their food (John 4:8).

“And Araunah [Ornan] said unto David, let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood” (2 Sam. 24:22). The language of 1 Chronicles 21:23 is yet more definite: “Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I *give* thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I *give it all*.” What noble generosity was this! But we prefer to look at Araunah’s liberality from the Divine side—when anyone befriends us, we should ever discern *the Lord’s* prompting such kindness. But what we would particularly emphasize now is that here we have another illustration of the principle that when God works, he always works at *both ends* of the line. He who wrought in David a readiness to comply with His request, was the Same as now moved Araunah to meet him more than half way. If He sends Elijah to Zarephath, He makes a widow willing to share her portion with him. There is great encouragement in this if faith lays hold of the same. If God continues to grant us messages, He will continue to prepare hearts to receive them.

“All these things did Araunah [Ornan], as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee” (2 Sam. 24:23). Some have drawn the conclusion from these words that Araunah [Ornan] himself was of royal stock, for the Jebusites were the original owners of Zion (2 Sam. 5:6-9), but there is nothing else in Scripture to support this view. Rather do we understand our verse to signify that Ornan acted with royal generosity. A most laudable contention it was between a good king and a good subject. Since it was to David, and since it was for the Lord, Araunah would not sell, but *give*. On the other side, David, since it was for the Lord, would not take, but *pay*. So far from his words, “The LORD thy God accept thee” denoting that he was not himself a believer in and worshipper of Jehovah (as if an idolater had been permitted to dwell on mount Zion!) they evidence that Araunah was possessed of faith and spiritual intelligence.

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24). Here again we should view things from the standpoint of the Divine workings. God’s moving Araunah [Ornan] to act so magnanimously afforded David an opportunity to display his devotedness to the Lord. A gracious heart will not serve God with that which costs him nothing, nor will he deem that true piety which involves no

sacrifice. This is the fruit of *faith*. Carnal nature begrudges everything, and says with Judas, "To what purpose is this waste?" but faith will not withhold from God its Isaac (Heb. 11:17). It is also the fruit of *love*, which deems nothing too good for the Lord—witness the woman with her precious spikenard. The denial of self and the mortification of his lusts are the unfailing marks of a genuine saint. How these words of David need to be laid to heart in this flesh-pleasing age!

"So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver" (2 Sam. 24:24). As usual, infidels have called attention to the "discrepancy" in 1 Chronicles 21, where we are told, "So David gave to Ornan [Araunah] for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight" (v. 25). But two different things are in view. Samuel mentions David buying the threshingfloor and the oxen, whereas Chronicles refers to his purchase of "the place," which probably signifies the whole of his land—which afterwards become the extensive site for the Temple. It is to be noticed that for the former David paid in "silver," which speaks of *redemption*; whereas for the latter he gave "gold," the emblem of *Divine glory*. Spiritually speaking, we do not learn the value of the "gold," until we are experimentally acquainted with the "silver." The amount of the gold was twelve times as great as that of the silver, showing this was for the complete number of Israel's tribes, and typifying the entire Body of Christ.

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings" (2 Sam. 24:25). This supplies the final line to our typical picture, for here we behold David as the accepted worshipper. "Accepted" we say, for 1 Chronicles 21 tells us that the Lord, "answered him from Heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (v. 26), which announced that his sacrifice had been received on High (cf. Lev. 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38, 39; 2 Chron. 7:1-3). Thus does the God of all grace delight to honour those who confide in Him, by granting tokens of His approbation. But note well the *strength* of David's faith and the heartiness of his thanksgiving: he offered on that altar not only burnt offerings, but peace offerings as well. Now the "peace offering" spoke of *communion*, for (while the burnt offering was wholly consumed upon the altar) *this* was shared in by God, all the males of the priesthood, and that of the offerer himself (Lev. 7:6, 15)—each had their portion.

"And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof" (1 Chron. 21:27). "So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel" (2 Sam. 24:25). What a remarkable *ending* is this to the Second Book of Samuel! The atoning sacrifice appeasing the just displeasure of God, the erring one restored to full communion with Him, and the discovery made to David of the place where the Temple was to be built and the worship of Israel subsequently to be carried on. Sorrow was turned into joy for all who had their portion of the peace offerings that day. What thoughts must then have occupied their hearts as they partook of that sacrifice according to Divine appointment: they feasted on the very offering which God had accepted. Second Samuel, then, closes by showing us David *in full fellowship with the Lord*. What a blessed foreshadowment of Eternity! How it reminds us of the closing words of the parable of the Prodigal Son: "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry" (Luke 15:23)!

In addition to the two historical accounts furnished us by 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, Psalm 30 (composed very shortly afterwards) throws further light on the exercises of David's heart at that time. As C. H. Spurgeon pointed out in his introductory re-

marks upon Psalm 30, "A Psalm and Song at the Dedication of the House of David; or rather, A Psalm: a Song of Dedication for the House. By David." It is "A Song of *faith* since the house of Jehovah, here intended, David never lived to see. A Psalm of *praise*, since a sore judgment had been stayed and a great sin forgiven." The translation and punctuation of the title to this 30th Psalm is definitely settled for us by David's own words in 1 Chronicles 22: "Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God (referring to Araunah's threshingfloor) and this the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (v. 1).

"I will extol Thee, O LORD; for Thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me" (Psa. 30:1). This Psalm is a "song" and not a complaint. An experimental realization of the joy of deliverance contrasted from previous anguish, is its characteristic note. The "foes" to which David refers are to be understood as evil spirits as well as Satan's serfs among men: they are ever ready to rejoice at the falls, griefs, and chastisements of those who fear God. For having recovered him from his fall and thus saving him from utter embarrassment before his enemies, David praised God.

"O LORD my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (vv. 2, 3). It is beautiful to see how David referred to Him according to His covenant title, for as we pointed out last month, it was in His covenant faithfulness that Jehovah caused the desolating pestilence to cease. David's, "I cried unto Thee" tells of the acuteness of his distress: he was too agitated to *pray*, yet he poured out his soul unto Him who understands the language of inarticulate groans. So desperate had been his plight, and so signal the Lord's intervention in mercy, David felt as one who had been recovered from the dead.

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For His anger endureth but a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (vv. 4, 5). It was not only in mercy but in holiness God had acted, as His bidding David to erect an altar clearly evidenced. Does not the Psalmist teach us here a much-needed lesson? How often we praise the Lord for His goodness, His longsufferance, His restoring grace; but how rarely we bless Him for His *holiness*, which is chief among His perfections! David found cause for rejoicing in the brevity of the Divine judgment: the plague had lasted but a few hours, but His favour is life everlasting. What a mercy it is that His chastisements (even if continued to the end of our earthly course) are but "for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17), in contrast from the eternity of bliss which awaits His beloved.

"And in my *prosperity* I said, I shall never be moved, LORD, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled" (Psa. 30:6, 7). How clearly this confirms the exposition we gave, tracing back David's folly in numbering the people to the *pride* of his heart. Here is plainly revealed to us the secret of his sad fall. It is true that he had not attributed the success of his arms to anything in himself, or his men, but rather had freely ascribed the victories to the Lord's favour (2 Sam. 22:1, 48-50), yet he fondly imagined that God had made his kingdom invincible, one that would never be overthrown. And the Lord had hidden His face, as He always does when we forsake the place of conscious weakness and dependency upon Him. And poor David was "troubled"—brought to confusion and dismay, for no "mountain," however firm, can yield a saint satisfaction when the smile of Jehovah's countenance is concealed from him. What a warning is there here for us against cherishing a sense of carnal security!

“I cried to Thee, O LORD: and unto the LORD I made supplication” (Psa. 30:8). “Prayer is the unfailing resource of God’s people. If they are driven to their wits’ end, they may still go to the mercy-seat. When an earthquake makes our mountain tremble, the throne of grace still stands firm, and we may come to it” (C. H. Spurgeon). On a former occasion at Ziklag, when David was deeply distressed, for the people had spoken of stoning him, he had “encouraged himself in the LORD” (1 Sam. 30:6); so now he sought for refuge in God, and the Divine faithfulness failed him not. Not in vain do believers commit themselves into the hands of the Lord.

“What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy truth? Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be Thou my Helper” (Psa. 30:9, 10). The intensity of David’s sufferings are plainly discovered to us here. Outwardly he was clothed in sackcloth, but that was a feeble expression of his inward anguish. As the king of Israel, it had specially devolved upon him to honour the Divine statutes, but he had broken them, and caused his subjects to do so too. Just retribution had fallen upon his kingdom. Plaintively does he plead with Jehovah: would his death promote God’s cause on earth? would it issue in Divine adoration? Let then mercy rejoice against judgment.

“Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto Thee forever” (vv. 11, 12). Here is further proof (if any be needed) that this 30th Psalm treats of the same period of David’s life as is before us in 2 Samuel 24. And a grand finale do its closing verses supply. David had begged God to be gracious unto him, and He was gracious. Such wondrous mercy made “glory” vocal with the voice of ceaseless thanksgiving, for GLORY is to be the dwellingplace of redeemed and rescued sinners—those who have, like David, proven for themselves the greatness and sufficiency of the Lord’s mercies. “I will give thanks unto Thee forever”: such will be our employ in Glory, and all because of the *Sacrifice*. Verses 11 and 12 are true of Christ Himself, and therefore of the members of His Body also.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

11. *Its Opposition.*

Wherever the doctrine of election is Scripturally presented it meets with fierce opposition and bitter declamation. It has been so throughout the entire course of this Christian era, and that, among all races and classes of people. Let the high prerogatives of God be set forth, let the sovereignty of His grace be proclaimed, let men be told they are but clay in the hands of the Divine Potter to be shaped into vessels of wrath or vessels of mercy as seems good in His sight, and at once there is an uproar and outcries of protest. Let the preacher insist that the fallen creature has no claim whatever upon his Maker, that he stands before Him as a convicted felon, and is entitled to nothing but everlasting judgment. And let him declare that all of Adam's progeny are so utterly depraved that their minds are "enmity against God" and therefore in a state of inveterate insubordination, that their hearts are so corrupt they have no desire for spiritual things, their wills so completely under the domination of evil they cannot turn unto the Lord, and he will be denounced as a heretic.

But this should neither surprise nor stagger the child of God. As he becomes more familiar with the Scriptures, he will find that in every generation the faithful servants of God have been hated and persecuted, some for proclaiming one part of the Truth, some for another. When the sun shines on a dunghill, an odious stench is the consequence; when its rays fall upon the stagnant waters of a swamp, diseases are multiplied. But is the still to be blamed? Certainly not. So when the Sword of the Spirit cuts to the root of human pride, reveals man to be a fallen and foul being, reduces him to an impotent creature—laying him in the dust as a bankrupt pauper, and declares him to be entirely dependent upon the discriminating pleasure of a sovereign God—there is a storm of opposition evoked, and a determined effort is made to silence such flesh-withering teaching.

The method which is usually followed by those who reject this truth is one of *misrepresentation*. The doctrine of election is so grand and glorious that any opposition at all to it is perverted. Those who hate it can neither look upon nor speak of it as it really deserves. Election is treated by them as though it did not include a designation to faith and holiness, as though it were not a conforming of them unto the image of Christ; yea, as though the elect of God might continue to commit all manner of wickedness and yet go to Heaven; and that the non-elect, no matter how virtuous they be, or how ardently they long for and strive after righteousness, must assuredly perish. False inferences are drawn, grotesque parodies exhibited, and unscrupulous tactics are employed to create prejudice.

By such devilish efforts do the enemies of God seek to distort and destroy this blessed doctrine. They besmirch it with mire, seek to overwhelm it with things odious, and present it to the indignant gaze of men as something to be repudiated and abominated. A monster of iniquity is thus created and christened "Election," and then presented to the world as something to be cast out as evil. Thereby multitudes have been cheated out of one of the most precious portions of Divine Truth, and thereby some of God's own people have been sorely perplexed and harassed. That the avowed opponents of Christ should revile a doctrine taught by Him and His Apostles is only to be expected; but when those who profess to be His friends and followers join in denouncing this Truth, it only serves to demonstrate the cunning of that old serpent, the Devil, who is never more pleased than when he can persuade nominal Christians to do his vile work for him. Then, by God's grace, let not the reader be moved by such opposition.

The vast majority of these opposers have little or no real understanding of that which they set themselves against. They are largely ignorant of what the Scriptures teach thereon, and are too indolent to make any serious study of the subject. Whatever attention they do pay to it is mostly neutralized by the veil of prejudice which obstructs their vision. But when such persons examine the doctrine with sufficient diligence to discover that it leads only to holiness—holiness in heart and in life—then they redouble their efforts to do away with it. When professing Christians unite with election's detractors, charity obliges us to conclude that it is because of failure to properly understand the doctrine. They take a one-sided view of this truth: they view it through distorted lenses: they contemplate it from the wrong angle. They fail to see that election originated in everlasting *love*, that it is the choosing of a company to eternal salvation, who otherwise would have inevitably perished, and that it makes that company a willing, obedient, and holy people.

We shall not now attempt to cover the whole range of objections which have been brought against the doctrine of election. Our discussion would be incomplete if we totally ignored them. The workings of unbelief are always endless in number. The child of God needs to be occupied with something more profitable. Yet we feel that we should at least consider briefly the ones which the enemy supposes are the most forceful and formidable. Not that our object is to try and convince them of their errors, but rather with the design of seeking to help fellow-*believers* who may have been shaken if not stumbled thereby. Our business is not to refute error, but (under God) to establish our readers in the Truth. In order to do this, it is sometimes needful to expose the wiles of Satan, show how baseless are the most insidious of his lies, and seek to remove from the Christian's mind any injurious effect they may have had upon him.

Before starting on this unwelcome task let it be pointed out that any lack of ability on our part to refute the calumnies of opponents is no proof that their position is impregnable. As the renowned Butler pointed out long ago in his masterly "Analogy," "If a truth is established, objections are nothing. The one, (i.e. Truth), is founded upon our knowledge, and the other on our ignorance." Once it is established that two and two make four, no quibbling or juggling with figures can disprove it. "We should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not," said that master of logic, Paley. Once we see anything to be clearly taught in Holy Writ, we must not allow either our own prejudices or the antagonism of others to shake our confidence in or adherence to it. If we are satisfied that we have a, "thus saith the Lord," to rest upon, it matters nothing if we be unable to show the sophistry in the arguments brought to bear against it. Be assured that God is true, even if that involves our accounting every man a liar.

The bitterest enemies against the doctrine of election are *the Papists*. This is exactly what might be expected, for the truth of election can never be made to square with the dogma of human merits—the one is diametrically opposed to the other. Every man who loves himself and seeks salvation by his own works, will loathe sovereign grace, and seek to load it with contempt. On the other hand, those who have been effectually humbled by the Holy Spirit and brought to realize that they are utterly dependent upon the discriminating mercy of God will have no hankering after, nor patience with a system which sets the crown of honour upon the *creature*. History bears ample testimony that Rome detests the very name of Calvinism. "From all sects there may be some hope of obtaining converts to Rome *except Calvinism*," said the late "Cardinal" Manning. And he

was right, as our own degenerate age bears full witness, for while no regenerated Calvinist will ever be fatally deceived by the wiles of the Mother of Harlots, yet thousands of "Protestant" (?) Arminians are annually rushing to her arms.

It is an irrefutable fact that as Calvinism has met with less and less favour in the leading Protestant bodies, as the sovereignty of God and His electing love have been more and more crowded out of their pulpits, that Rome has made increasing progress, until to-day she must have both in England and in the U.S.A. a greater number of followers than any single evangelical denomination. But saddest of all is that the vast majority of those now occupying so-called Protestant pulpits are preaching the very things which further Rome's interests. Their insistence upon the freedom of fallen man's will to do good must fill the papist leaders with delight—in the Council of Trent she condemned all who affirmed the contrary. To what extent the leaven of Popery has spread may be seen in that "Evangelical Protestants" (?) who oppose the doctrine of election are now employing the self same objections as were used by the Italian doctors four hundred years ago.

But to come now to some of the objections: first, such a doctrine is *utterly unreasonable*. When it suits her purpose, Rome makes a big pretense of appealing to human reason, but at other times she demands that her children close their mental eyes and accept blindly whatever their unholy "mother" is pleased to palm upon them. Yet Rome is by no means the only offender at this point: multitudes of those who regard themselves as Protestants are guilty of the same thing. So, too, almost always, the first response of those who make *no* religious profession, when they have this truth presented to their notice, is to exclaim, "Such a concept does not appeal to me at all. If there is a God, and if He has anything at all to do with our present lives, I believe He will give us all an equal chance, balance our good deeds against our bad, and be merciful unto us. To say that He has favourites among His creatures, and that He fixed the destiny of everyone before his birth, strikes me as outrageous."

Our first reply to such an objection is that, it is quite beside the point. The only matter which needs deciding at the outset is, What do the Scriptures say? If election be clearly taught therein, *that* settles the matter for the child of God—settles it once and for all. Whether he understands it or not, he knows that God cannot lie, and that His Word is "true from the beginning" (Psa. 119:160). If his opponent will not allow this, then there is no common ground on which they can meet, and it is utterly futile to discuss the matter with him. Under no circumstances must the Christian allow himself to be drawn away from his stand on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ, and descend to the treacherous ground of human reason. Only on that high plane can he successfully withstand the onslaughts of Satan. Re-read Matthew 4 and observe how Christ vanquished the Tempter.

The Holy Word of God does not come to us craving acceptance at the bar of human reason. Instead, it demands that human reason surrender itself to its Divine authority and receive uncomplainingly its inerrent contents. It emphatically and repeatedly warns men that if they despise its authority and reject its teachings, it is to their certain eternal undoing. It is by that Word each of us shall be weighed, measured, judged, in the Day to come; and therefore it is the part of human wisdom to bow to and thankfully receive its inspired

declarations. The supreme act of right reason, my reader, is to submit unreservedly unto Divine wisdom, and accept with childlike simplicity the revelation which God has graciously given us. Any other, any different attitude thereto, is utterly unreasonable—the

derangement of pride. How thankful we should be that the Ancient of Days condescends to instruct us.

Our second reply to the above objection is that in a written revelation from Heaven we should fully expect to find much that transcends the grasp of our poor earth-bound minds. What were the use of God communicating to us only that which we already knew? Nor are the Scriptures given to us as a field on which reason may be exercised: what they require are *faith and obedience*. And faith is not a blind, unintelligible thing, but confidence in its Author—an assurance that He is too wise to err, too righteous to be unjust—and therefore He is infinitely worthy of our trust and subjection to His holy will. But not only is God's Word addressed to faith, there is much in it which is contrary to nature, much that is most mysterious, much that leaves us wondering. Faith must be tested—to prove its genuineness. And God delights to honour faith: though His Word be not written to satisfy curiosity, and though many questions are not there fully answered, yet the more faith be exercised, the fuller is the light granted.

God Himself is profoundly mysterious. "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!" (Job 26:14); "How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). We must therefore expect to find in the Bible much that strikes us as strange: things "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16). The creation of the universe out of nothing, at the mere fiat of the Almighty, is beyond the grasp of the finite mind. The Divine incarnation transcends human reason: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16): that Christ should be conceived and born of a woman who had known no contact with man, cannot be accounted for by human reason. The resurrection of our bodies, thousands of years after they had gone to dust, is inexplicable. Is it not, then, most unreasonable to reject the truth of election because human reason cannot fathom it!

Second, it is *highly unjust*. Rebels against the Supreme sovereign hesitate not to charge Him with unrighteousness because He is pleased to exercise His own rights, and determine the destiny of His creatures. They argue that all men should be dealt with on the same footing, that all should be given an equal opportunity of salvation. They say that if God shows mercy unto one and withholds it from another, such partiality is grossly unfair. To such an objector we reply in the language of Holy Writ: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:20, 21). And there we leave him.

But some of the Lord's own people are disturbed by this difficulty. First, then, we would remind them that God is "light" (1 John 1:5), as well as "love." God is ineffably holy, as well as infinitely gracious. As the Holy One He abhors all evil, and as the moral Governor of His creatures it becomes Him to eternally manifest His hatred of sin. As the Gracious One He is pleased to bestow favours upon the undeserving, and to give an everlasting demonstration that He is "the Father of mercies." Now in election *both* of these designs are unmistakably accomplished. In the preterition and condemnation of the non-elect, God gives full proof of His holiness and justice, by visiting upon them the due reward of their iniquities. In the foreordination and salvation of His chosen people, God makes a clear display of the exceeding riches of His grace.

Suppose that God had willed the destruction of the entire human race: then what? Had that been unjust? Certainly not. There could be no injustice whatever in visiting upon criminals the penalty of that Law which they had defiantly broken. But what had then become of God's *mercy*? Had nothing but inexorable justice been exercised by an offended God, then every descendant of fallen Adam had inevitably been consigned to Hell. Now on the other hand, suppose God had decided to open wide the floodgates of mercy, and carry the *whole* human race to Heaven: then what? The wages of sin is death—eternal death. But if every man sinned, and none died, what evidence would there be that Divine justice was anything more than an empty name? If God had saved all sinners, would not that necessarily inculcate light views of sin? If all were taken to Heaven, should we not conclude that this was due us as a right?

Because all are guilty, are the hands of Divine mercy to be tied? If not, if mercy may be exercised, then is God obliged to wholly renounce His justice? If God is pleased to exercise mercy upon some, who have no claim thereto, cannot He also show Himself to be a just judge by inflicting upon others the punishment to which they are entitled? What wrong does a creditor do if he releases one and enforces his demands on another? Am I unjust because I bestow charity on a beggar, and decline doing so to his fellow? Then is the great God less free to impart His gifts where He pleases? Before the above objection can have any force it must be proven that every creature (because he is a creature) is *entitled* to everlasting bliss, and that even though he falls into sin and becomes a rebel against His Maker, God is morally *obliged* to save him. To such absurdities is the objection necessarily reduced.

"If eternal felicity be due to every man without exception, surely temporal felicity must be their due likewise: if they have a right to the greater, their claim to the lesser can hardly be doubted. If the Omnipotent is bound, on penalty of becoming unjust, to do all He can to make every individual happy in the next life—He must be equally bound to render every individual happy in this. But are all men happy? Look around the world and say Yes if you can. Is the Creator therefore unjust? none but Satan would suggest it: none but his echoes will affirm it. The Lord is a God of truth, and without iniquity: just and right is He . . . Is the constituted order of things mysterious? impenetrably so. Yet the mysteriousness of God's dispensations evinces not the injustice of the Sovereign Dispenser, but the shallowness of human comprehension, and the shortness of human sight. Let us then, by embracing and revering the Scriptural doctrines of predestination and providence, give God credit for being infinitely wise, just, and good; though for the present His way is in the deep, and His footsteps are not known" (A. Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages").

Finally, let it be pointed out that God *never refuses mercy* to anyone who humbly seeks it. Sinners are freely invited to forsake their wicked ways and sue unto the Lord for pardon. The Gospel feast is spread before them: if they refuse to partake thereof, if instead they loathe and turn away from it with disdain, is not their blood on their own heads? What sort of "justice" is it which requires God to bring to Heaven those who hate Him? If God has performed a miracle of grace in you, my reader, and begotten in *your* heart a love for Him, be fervently thankful for the same, and disturb not your peace and joy by asking why He has not done the same for your fellow-transgressors.—A.W.P.

THE HOLY SABBATH.

7. *Its Christianization.*

From the beginning God determined that the ruination of the old creation should be followed by the producing of a new creation, with a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new Sabbath rest, unto His own glory by Jesus Christ. The renovation of all things by the Mediator was Divinely foretold (Acts 3:21): it was to be a “time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). From the Epistles we learn that this renovation of all things has been accomplished by Christ: “old things are passed away,” etc. (2 Cor. 5:17)—the old covenant, the old order of worship, the Judaical Sabbath. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in Heaven and which are on earth; in Him” (Eph. 1:10): only those things pertaining to the Mosaic economy remain which are useful to our living unto God, and they abide not on their old foundation, but on a *new disposition of them in Christ*: cf., 1 Corinthians 9:21.

Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath: it remains, yet it has undergone a decided renovation. As the incarnation of God’s Son affected the chronology of the world (for all civilized time is, by common consent, dated from the year of His birth!), so His death and resurrection terminated the old covenant and ratified the new, and this necessarily resulted in a change of the weekly day of rest. Last month we pointed out that the *first* day of the week as now being the one Divinely appointed for Sabbath observance was, first, adumbrated in the Old Testament types, where “the *eighth* day” is so conspicuous. Second, that it was clearly intimated by what is recorded in the New Testament: the first day being that of our Lord’s resurrection and the day of meeting with His disciples. Third, that it was so celebrated by the early Church: Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.

We are now to consider, fourth, that this change was *conclusively demonstrated in Hebrews 4*. We will first call attention to the fact itself as there stated, and then endeavour to indicate and elucidate the course of the Apostle’s argument in that chapter. In Hebrews 4:8 it is expressly affirmed, “for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of *another* day.” What this other “day” is, may be unequivocally ascertained from the context: it is the Holy Sabbath—“God did rest the seventh day from all His work” (v. 4). So, too, immediately after mentioning “another day” (i.e. another or different one from the “seventh”) the Apostle went on to say, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (v. 9). In proof of this and also to identify this “*another* day” he declared, “For He (not “they,” but “He,” which is Christ) that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His” (v. 10).

What has just been pointed out is quite simple and easy to understand, but in order to grasp the force of the Apostle’s argument we need to gird up the loins of our minds and attend very closely to his chain of reasoning. First, we must observe that here in chapter 4 he is *continuing* what he had said in chapter 3. There he gave an exhortation unto faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:1-6), and this he enforced by a quotation from Psalm 95, which contained a pointed exhortation and a solemn warning taken from the case of those who fell under Divine wrath because they were guilty of the sin contrary to the duties of faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:7-11). This he at once follows by making application of the warning unto the Hebrews, and by expounding certain expressions in this quotation which he had made from the Psalmist (3:12-18).

Because the words of Psalm 95 contain not only a warning applicable to New Testament saints, and more especially because those words also had interwoven in them a

prophecy (note “promise” in Heb. 4:1) concerning the rest of God in Christ by the Gospel and our duty thereon, Paul proceeded to enlarge upon and confirm his exhortation in 3:12, 13, still using the language of Psalm 95 for that end. First, he propounds the duty which he aimed to press on the Hebrews (4:1, 2). Second, he established the foundation of his exhortation, by showing that the “rest” mentioned by David was still future when he wrote Psalm 95 (Heb. 4:3). Third, he enters into a careful discussion of and differentiates between the various “rests” of God (vv. 4-10). Fourth, he concludes by returning to and repeating his original exhortation (v. 11).

Let it be clearly grasped at this stage that the Apostle’s design in Hebrews 4:4-11 was to *confirm* what he had laid down in verses 1-3, which we paraphrase thus: There is under the Gospel a promise of entering into the rest of God left or remaining unto believers, and they *do enter* into that rest by mixing the promise of it with faith. It was the more necessary to press this upon the Hebrews: that notwithstanding their ancient and present enjoyment of the land of Canaan, yet their fathers fell short of entering into God’s rest because of their unbelief, and that now they (their children) were under a new trial or test, a new rest being proposed unto them in the promise. This he proves by a testimony out of Psalm 95, whereof he had previously treated in Hebrews 3.

Now the application of Psalm 95 to the case of the Hebrews was liable to a serious objection: the “rest” mentioned there by David seemed to be one *long since past*. If that *were* the case, then these Hebrews could have no new or fresh concern in it, and therefore could be in no danger of coming short of it. It was to remove such an objection, and to confirm what he had previously advanced, that the Apostle occupied himself in what follows, and this he does by a direct appeal to Psalm 95, showing from the proper signification of its words, from the time when it was written, and from the persons there addressed, that no other “rest” was there intended than what was here being proposed by him unto them, namely, the rest of God and His people in the Gospel.

The general argument insisted upon by the Apostle to support his design and establish his purpose, consists in an enumeration of all the various “rests” of God and His people mentioned in the Old Testament. From the consideration of them all, he proves that no other rest could be intended by the language of David in Psalm 95 than the rest of the Gospel, whereinto all who believe do now enter. This he arrives at, most logically, by a process of *elimination*. First, the rest “promised” (Heb. 4:1) in Psalm 95 was neither the rest of God from the works of creation, nor the Sabbath rest which ensued thereon (Heb. 4:4-6). Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan, which Joshua brought the people into (Heb. 4:7, 8). No, it was a spiritual rest which remained or subsisted for believers to enjoy now (vv. 8-10). We are now prepared to enter into detail.

In verse 3, three things are laid down. First, an assertion, which comprises the whole intendment of the Apostle in this passage: “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” Second, a proof of that assertion from the words of the Psalmist: “As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest,” or as the Psalm reads, “They should not enter into My rest” (95:11). Third, an elliptical entrance into a full confirmation of his assertion and the due application of his proof produced unto what he had designed: “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Now that “rest” which believers enter through faith in Christ (cf. John 16:33) is first and primarily the spiritual rest of God, and is not to be restricted unto the eternal rest in Heaven, though

that will be the fruition of it. God rests in Christ (Isa. 42:1) and in His people (Zeph. 3:17).

“As I have sworn in My wrath, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:3), or “that they should not enter into My rest.” How did those words contain a *confirmation* of what has been affirmed in the preceding clause? Two ways. First, by an axiom of logic. It is a well-known rule that unto immediate contraries contrary attributes may be certainly assigned, so that he who affirms the one at the same time denies the other, and he who denies that one affirms the other. For instance, if I say it is “day,” I also affirm it is *not* “night.” If, then, those who believed not entered not into God’s rest, then it logically follows that those who believe *do* enter into it. Second, theologically: according to the analogy of faith—every threatening also includes a promise, and every promise has also the nature of a threat in it.

“Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (v. 3). In those words the Apostle began his answer to an anticipated objection against what he had asserted of the Gospel rest. Now all “rest” presupposes *labour*, consequently each several “rest” of God must have some work preceding it. So it was, first, with His rest in Genesis 2:2 that was preceded by the six days of creation. This the Apostle at once refers to in verse 4, “For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” Now as Owen so convincingly pointed out, God’s rest here is not spoken of absolutely, with respect to Himself only, but rather with reference to an appointed rest that ensued thereon for His creatures to rest in with Him, for this is the Apostle’s scope all through this passage. Hence he refers us back to the whole passage from which he quotes (Gen. 2:2, 3): and there we learn that God not only rested on the seventh day, but “blessed” it for the rest of man. Thus he first treats of the Sabbath in relation to the state of man under the law of nature.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:5). The “in this” has reference to Psalm 95, which he is here expounding and applying to the case of the Hebrews. The word “again” emphasizes the fact that the Apostle is now alluding to the *second* “rest” of God and the proposal He made unto His People of their entering into it. At the finish of His work, God rested the seventh day and blessed it for a day of rest unto His creatures. And “again,” on another occasion, He spoke of “My rest.” What that “other occasion” was, Psalm 95 tells us: it was when Israel was in the Wilderness (Psa. 95:8). God had finished another series of miraculous works when He brought His people out of Egypt and conducted them through the Red Sea. Then He took them into covenant relationship with Himself (at Sinai), renewed the Law, and set before them the rest of Canaan. That a spiritual rest was then proposed unto Israel is clear from the Apostle’s changing the Psalmist’s, “they should not enter into My rest” (95:11) to, “If they shall enter”—the exclusion of some definitely implied the entrance of others into God’s rest if they complied with His terms.

At the risk of being wearisome, but for the benefit of those desiring to really understand this passage, we will here summarize the force of the Apostle’s reasoning so far as we have yet gone. God’s rest was tendered unto and entered into by some (*viz.*, believers) from the foundation of the world. It must therefore be another rest which the Psalmist (so long after) spoke of, and which the descendants of Abraham were afresh invited to enter into, as later in his discussion the Apostle more clearly proves. And they who deny any Sabbath rest from *the beginning* remove all foundation for Paul’s discourse: had there

been no rest from the foundation of the world what need for him to prove that the “rest” mentioned in Psalm 95 was *not* the original one, if there had been none such? The very object of the Apostle in again referring to Psalm 95 was to show that the “rest” mentioned by David was not that which was appointed from the beginning of the world, but a much *later* one.

What that second and later “rest” was, we have defined in the last paragraph but one, as the rest of Canaan—not merely external relief from their wilderness wandering, but an entrance into the spiritual rest of God. Ere proceeding further we give proof of this, for we will take nothing for granted. There was a rest of God under the Mosaic economy. The prayer about it was, “Arise, O LORD, into *Thy rest*, Thou and the ark of Thy strength” (Psa. 132:8)—the ark being the symbol and pledge of God’s presence and rest. This “rest” of God followed upon the completion of His mighty works in bringing Israel into Canaan. After the establishment of His worship therein, He said of it, “This is *My rest* forever: here will I dwell” (Psa. 132:14)!

God having entered into His rest in like manner as formerly (upon the finishing of His glorious work), two things ensued thereon. First, the people were invited and encouraged to enter into the rest of God. This the Apostle treats of in Hebrews 3 and 4: their entrance into that rest being conditioned upon their faith and obedience. Although some of them came short of it, because of their unbelief, yet others entered into it under the leadership of Joshua. Second, this rest, both of God and of His people, was expressed by appointing a day of rest which was a token and pledge of God’s present rest in His instituted worship, and was designed as a means in the solemn observance of that worship to further their entrance into His rest eternally. Hence the seventh day was to Israel a special sign that He was their God and they His people.

While it is true that the Day appointed in connection with this second rest of God was the same as the first one, viz., the seventh, yet it was now established upon new considerations and unto new ends. The time for the change of the day of rest was not yet come, for the work of God in bringing Israel into covenant-relationship with Himself, conducting them into Canaan, and instituting His worship among them, was but preparatory to yet another work and rest. The Covenant of Works, to which the original Sabbath was annexed, being not yet abolished (but only modified), therefore the Day of rest was not then changed.

Now to proceed. The Apostle goes on to show that Psalm 95 prophetically intimated that there was yet to be a *third* rest of God—which His people were to enter into—an especial rest under the Messiah, which he here proposed unto the Hebrews and exhorted them to enter into (Heb. 4:11). In this third state there was to be a particular condition of rest, distinct from and superior to each of those which had gone before. To the constitution thereof, three things were required: some signal work of God completed, whereon He entered into His rest. Second, a spiritual rest ensuing therefrom, for them that believe to enter into. Third, a new day of rest to express this rest of God, and to be a pledge of our entering therein. These things we now further inquire into.

“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief” (v. 6). Here the Apostle draws a conclusion which is incisive, but observe carefully it is based on the principle that a promise is included in every conditional threatening, for unless the word of the Psalmist, “they should not enter into My rest” may also be (deductively) understood as, “if they shall en-

ter,” that is, they shall providing they meet the conditions, there would be no force whatever in saying, “that some *must* enter.” They who entered not in because of unbelief or “disobedience” were the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt. The rest of Canaan which they missed was typical of the present rest of believers in Christ.

“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, after so long a time; as it is said, *Today* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (v. 7). In this verse the Apostle confirms what he had just affirmed about a new rest and a new Day of Rest remaining for the people of God to enter into, and which rest he proposes unto them. After the institution of the Sabbath rest at the beginning, and after the proposal of the rest of Canaan to Israel in the Wilderness, God, in addition (“Again”), limited or designed and determined another particular rest and “day,” which was neither of the former, namely, that of *the Gospel*. It is to be carefully noted that in this verse the Apostle expressly *changes his terms*: God had “limited” or “defined” not only a “certain” or “particular” rest, but a DAY, because, it was Paul’s design to show that God had determined not only another (a third) “rest,” but also *another* “day” as a pledge of this new rest.

The force of his argument in verse 7 is taken from *the time when* this “day” was limited or determined. Had those words of David (in Psa. 95) been uttered by Moses just before Israel entered the typical rest of Canaan, they might have been thought to pertain thereunto and to have contained in them an exhortation unto Israel as that season. But instead, it was “after so long a time,” namely, 500 years after Moses, that God gave this message through the Psalmist. Consequently it *must* have related and referred to some other “rest” than Canaan, and some other “day” than the Jewish Sabbath. Therefore, there is still a promise remaining of entering into this (third) rest of God, unto which we must take heed that we come not short of it by unbelief and disobedience.

“For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of *another day*” (v. 8). In this verse the Apostle removes a possible objection and gives further confirmation of his argument, by a particular application of it unto the point before him. That which he still insists upon is, his principal assertion from the words of David, namely, the rest prepared and proposed in the Gospel unto believers. To this the Hebrews might object: Although the people who came out of Egypt entered not into the promised rest of God, yet the next generation did so under Joshua—why then propose this rest unto us, and warn against our danger of missing it? This objection is conclusively set aside by showing that God in David proposed “*another day*” of rest unto Israel centuries *after* Joshua, and as no new Sabbath was appointed in David’s time, his words must be understood prophetically. Hence there *was* a rest proposed unto the Hebrews (and so us) and “another day” to memorialize it.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] unto the people of God” (v. 9). The Apostle here shows, in a brief summary, what had been conclusively established in his whole disquisition: three things indubitably followed. First, that a Divine and spiritual rest remains for the people of God to enter into and enjoy with Him. Second, that a Sabbath day to memorialize it, and be a means of entering into that rest, abides under the Gospel. Third, that it must of necessity be “*another day*,” a different one from that which obtained under the old covenant. It is to be duly noted that the Apostle did not say “there awaiteth” or “there is yet to be a Sabbath keeping,” but “there remaineth.” The reference is not to something future, but what is present. This word is used in the same sense when applied negatively to the system of sacrifices: “There *remaineth* no more sacrifice for

sins” (Heb. 10:26). How striking that this occurs in Hebrews! The Levitical priesthood has been set aside, the temple is no more, Judaism is abolished: but a Sabbath remains!

We wish to call special attention to the fact that in verse 9 Paul again deliberately *changed his terms*. The word for “rest” here in verse 9 is an entirely different one from that used in verses 1, 3, 5, 8, 10. It is “Sabbatismos” which speaks for itself: the R.V. has, “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” It was a word coined by the Apostle to express the whole sense of that with which he was treating: that is, to denote both the rest itself and the appointment of “another day” as a token of it—it signifies our rest in God and the Day which is the pledge of it. And this Sabbatismos remaineth—the word “remaineth” signifies to be left after others have been withdrawn (as the primitive and Judaical Sabbaths have), to continue unchanged, as the Christian Sabbath will unto the end of the world. Here, then, is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God: “there *remaineth* therefore a Sabbath keeping.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous, for this is addressed to the “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1). Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says there is no Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the New Testament Scriptures. We must leave for next month the closing verses of this most important passage.—A.W.P.

A TENDER HEART.

Because thine heart was tender" (2 Kings 22:19). We have already considered the circumstances and significance of these words last month. Let us now proffer a few remarks upon how a tender heart may be *preserved*. This is a matter of great importance, for though such a most desirable possession be obtained as a sovereign gift from God, yet it can only be *retained* by much diligence on our part. This should scarcely need any arguing, yet hyper-Calvinists are likely to demur, supposing that an insistence upon Christian responsibility is the same thing as crying up creature ability. But does not the natural shadow forth the spiritual here, too? Is it not a fact with which we are all familiar that the more "tender" any object or creature be, the more care and cultivation it requires?

"Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). This must put an end to all quibbling on the part of objectors: where God speaks there must be an end of all strife. And diligence, great and constant diligence, is required on our part if a tender heart is to be preserved. How? In what directions? First, by guarding against everything which is hostile to it. To be more specific: it is sin which hardens the heart. In exact proportion as sin obtains dominion over us, do we steal ourselves against God. And it is just here that our accountability comes in: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). Thought we cannot impart a tender heart, we can certainly impair one. "Harden not your hearts" was the Lord's call to His people of old, and to us also today; and if we are to comply therewith we must fear, hate, and resist *sin*.

Sin is insidious. Scripture speaks of "the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). If we are not on our guard, it will steal upon us unawares; unless we are wide awake and alert to the danger, sin will overcome us like the fumes of a deadly gas. That is why the Lord bids us "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). Yes, watch as well as pray, and pray as well as watch. We all know what happened to Peter because he failed so to do, and his case is recorded as a solemn warning for us. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. 4:14, 15). Notice carefully how the same prohibition is iterated and re-iterated again and again in these verses. It is the first approach of sin we most need to resist. It is by making conscience of its earliest stirrings within that a tender heart is preserved.

Every Christian will readily allow that sin is insidious, but it is one thing to recognize this in theory and quite another to be regulated by it in practice. All will agree that one of the most effective means of victory over sin is to steadfastly refuse its first advances; yet the fact remains that few do so. It is at this very point we must take our stand if a tender heart is to be retained. But how? By guarding against carnality. Things indifferent become a snare if they are not kept within due bounds. That which is lawful is not always expedient. An immoderate use of the creature will bind chains upon us which are not easily snapped. Inordinate affection for those nearest to us will sap true spirituality. Beware, then, of setting your love too much upon mere *things* or creatures.

Nothing will keep the heart tender so much as cultivating the spirit of filial awe. Alas that this is now so rarely insisted upon. "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13). Necessarily so, for God is ineffably holy, and where He is revered sin is loathed. "By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6), for two cannot walk together except they be agreed. The more concerned I am not to displease my Master, the more shall I eschew that which He forbids. "Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day

long” (Prov. 23:17), for “Happy is the man that feareth *always*” (Prov. 28:14). We must strive to be in the fear of God not only in the first hour of devotion, but throughout the day. The more we live in the conscious realization that the eyes of the Holy One are upon us, the more will our hearts be kept truly tender.—A.W.P.

