

April, 1936
Studies in the Scriptures
The Spirit Witnessing.

The Holy Spirit who dwelleth in Christ, the great and eternal Head of His people, dwelleth also in all the living members of His mystical Body, to conform them to Him and to make them like Him in their measure. He it is who takes possession of every quickened soul, dwelling in them as the Spirit of life, of grace, of holiness, of consolation, of glory. He who made them alive *in* the Lord, now makes them alive *to* the Lord. He gives them to know the Father in the Son, and their union with Christ. He leads them into communion with the Father and the Son, and fulfills all the good pleasure of His will in them and the work of faith with power (2 Thess. 1:11). In the carrying on of His “good work” in the soul—commenced in regeneration, and manifested in conversion to the Lord—the Spirit is pleased to act and perform the office of Witness: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

Now the office of a “witness” is to bear testimony or supply evidence for the purpose of adducing proof. The first time this term occurs is in the Epistle to the Romans in 2:15, “Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also *bearing witness*, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing.” The reference is to the Heathen: though they had not received from God a written revelation (like the Jews had), nevertheless, they were His creatures, responsible creatures, subject to His authority, and will yet be judged by Him. The grounds upon which God holds them accountable are, first, the revelation which He has given them of Himself in creation, which renders them “without excuse” (Rom. 1:19, 20); and second, the work of His Law written in their hearts, that is, their rationality or “the light of nature.” But not only do their moral instincts instruct them in the difference between right and wrong, and warn them of a future day of reckoning, but their conscience also bears witness—it is a Divine monitor within, *supplying evidence* that God is their Governor and Judge.

But while the Christian ever remains a creature accountable to his Maker and Ruler, he is also a child of God, and, normally (that is, while he is sincerely endeavouring to walk as such), his renewed conscience bears witness to—supplies evidence of—the fact; we say “renewed conscience,” for the Christian has been renewed throughout the whole of his inner man. The genuine Christian is able to say, “We trust we have a good conscience, in all things *willing* to live honestly” (Heb. 13:18)—the bent of his heart is for God and obedience to Him. Not only is there a desire to please God, but there are answerable *endeavours*: “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and men” (Acts 24:16). When these endeavours are carried on there is inward assurance of our state: “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience” (2 Cor. 1:12).

Thus, the Christian’s sincerity is evidenced by his conscience. It is true that there is also “another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin” (Rom. 7:23); yet *that* is his grief, and not his joy; his burden and not his satisfaction. It is true that “to will is present with him; but how to perform that which is good (how to attain unto what he ardently desires and prays for) he finds not” yea, the good that he loves to do, he often does not; and the evil which he hates, he often falls into (Rom. 7:18, 19). Even so; yet, blameworthy and lamentable though such things be, it in nowise alters the fact that the one whose experience it is, can call God

Himself to witness that he wishes with all his heart it were otherwise; and his own conscience testifies to his sincerity in expressing such a desire.

It is most important that the Christian should be quite clear as to *what it is* his own “spirit” or conscience bears witness to. It is *not* to the eradication of evil from his heart, nor is it to any purification of or improvement in his carnal nature—any one whose conscience bears witness to *that*, bears witness to *a lie*, for “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). So long as the Christian remains on earth, “the flesh (the principle of sin) lusteth against the Spirit”—the principle of grace (Gal. 5:17). Moreover, the more our thoughts are formed by the Word, the more do we discover how full of corruption we are; the closer we walk with God, the more light we have, and the more are the hidden (unsuspected) things of darkness within discovered to our horrified gaze. Thus, the Christian’s assurance that he is a regenerate person by no means signifies he is conscious that he is more and more dying to the presence and activities of indwelling sin. God does not intend that we should be in love with ourselves.

That which the renewed conscience of the Christian bears witness to is the fact that he is a child of God. Side by side with the sink of iniquity which indwells the believer—of which he becomes increasingly conscious, and over which he daily groans—is the spirit of adoption which has been communicated to his heart. That filial spirit draws out his heart in love to God, so that he craves after the conscious enjoyment of His smiling countenance, and esteems fellowship with Him high above all other privileges. That filial spirit inspires confidence toward God, so that he pleads His promises, counts on His mercy, and relies on His goodness. That filial spirit begets reverence for God, so that His ineffable majesty is held in awe. His high authority is respected, and he trembles at His Word. That filial spirit produces subjection to God, so that he desires to obey Him in all things, and sincerely endeavours to walk according to His commands and precepts.

Now here are definite marks by which the Christian may test himself. True, he is yet very far from being what he *should* be, or what he *would* be could his earnest longings only be realised; nevertheless, is not his present case very different from what it once was? Instead of seeking to banish God from your thoughts, is it not now the desire of your heart for your mind to be stayed upon Him, and is it not a joy to meditate upon His perfections? Instead of giving little or no concern as to whether your conduct honoured or dishonoured the Lord, is it not now your sincere endeavour to please Him in all your ways? Instead of paying no attention to indwelling sin, has not the plague of your heart become your greatest burden and grief? Well, then, these very things *evidence* you are a child of God. They were not in your nature, so they must have been implanted by the Holy Spirit. Those graces may be very feeble, yet their *presence struggling* amid corruptions—are marks of the new birth.

If with honesty of purpose, lowliness of heart, and prayerful inquiry, I find myself breathing after holiness, panting after conformity to Christ, and mourning over my failures to realise the same, then so far from it being presumption for me to conclude I am a child of God, it would be willful blindness to refuse to recognise the work of the Spirit in my soul. If my conscience bears witness to the fact that I honestly desire and sincerely endeavour to serve and glorify God, then it is wrong for me to deny, or even to doubt, that God has “begun a good work” in me. Take note of your health, dear reader, as well as of your disease. Appropriate to yourself the language of Christ’s Spouse, “I sleep, but

my heart waketh" (Song. 5:2)—grace is to be owned amid infirmities; that which is a cause for humiliation must not be made a ground for doubting.

But notwithstanding the evidences which a Christian has of his Divine sonship, he finds it no easy matter to be assured of his sincerity, or to establish solid comfort in his soul. His moods are fitful, his frames variable. Grace in the best of us is but small and weak, and we have just cause to mourn the feebleness of our faith, the coldness of our love, and the grievous imperfections of our obedience. But it is at this very point the blessed Spirit of God, in His wondrous grace and infinite condescension, helps our infirmities: He adds *His* witness to the testimony of our renewed conscience, so that (at times) the conviction is confirmed, and the trembling heart is assured. It is at such seasons the Christian is able to say, "My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1).

The question which most deeply exercises a genuine saint is not, have I repented, have I faith in Christ, have I any love for God? but rather, are my repentance, faith and love *sincere and genuine*? He has discovered that Scripture distinguishes between repentance (1 Kings 21:27) and repentance "not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7:10); between faith (Acts 8:13) and "faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5), between love (Matt. 26:49) and "love in sincerity" (Eph. 6:24); and only by the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit can any soul discern between them. He who bestowed upon the Christian repentance and faith must also make him to *know* the things which are freely given to him of God (1 Cor. 2:12). Grace can only be known by grace, as the sun can only be seen in its own light. It is only by the Spirit Himself that we can be truly assured we have been born of Him. But we must leave till our next paper (D.V.) the most important branch of this subject.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

100. *The Superiority of Christianity: 12:22-24.*

“But ye are come unto” etc., (v. 22). These words do not, in fact cannot, mean that in some mystical sense believers are “in spirit” projected into the future, to something which will only be actualised in “the millennium.” The Greek verb has a specific significance in this Epistle, as may be seen by a careful reference to 4:16, 7:25, 11:6: “to come unto” here means *to approach as worshippers*. In the verses now before us we are shown the high density and honour of that spiritual worship which is the privilege of Christians under the Gospel dispensation. When they meet together in the name of the Lord Jesus, as His people, and with a due observance of His holy institutions, they “are come unto,” have access to, the eight privileges here enumerated: they draw nigh by faith to Heaven itself, to the antitypical holy of holies. But this is possible only to *spiritual* worshippers.

They who are strangers to experimental spirituality soon grow weary even of the outward form of worship, unless their eyes are entertained with an imposing ritual and their ears regaled by appealing music. This is the secret of the pomp and pageantry of Romanism—now, alas, being more and more imitated by professing Protestants; it is to attract and charm religious worldlings—Ritualists quite obscure the simplicity and beauty of true Gospel worship. Man in his natural estate is far too carnal to be pleased with a worship in which there is nothing calculated to fire the imagination and intoxicate the senses by means of tangible objects. But they who worship in spirit and in truth can draw nigh to God more joyously in a barn, and mingle their praises with the songs of Heaven, than if they were in a cathedral.

How vast is the difference between that spiritual adoration which issues from renewed hearts and that “form of godliness” which is associated with altars and candles, choirs and surpliced ministers! Only that is acceptable to God which is produced by the Holy Spirit through sinners washed in the blood of the Lamb. Under grace-magnifying and Christ-exalting preaching, the spiritual senses of real Christians are exercised; as they behold the Saviour’s glories in the glass of the Gospel, as they hear His voice, they have an inward impression of His presence, they taste afresh of His goodness, and His name is to them as ointment poured forth, perfuming their spirits. In this joyous frame, their hearts are drawn Heavenwards, and their songs of praise mingle with those of the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion” (Heb. 12:22). David, after having taken Mount Zion from the Jebusites, made it the place of his residence, so that it became “the city of the great king.” There he reigned and ruled, there he issued his laws, and thence he extended the sway of his peaceful sceptre over the whole of the holy land. From that circumstance, Mount Zion became the great type of the kingdom of God, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head and Sovereign. As David ruling upon Mount Zion in the palace built there as his royal seat, issuing his commands which were obeyed all over the land, so our blessed Redeemer has been exalted according to God’s promise “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6 and cf. Heb. 2:9); and there sitting as King in Sion, issues His mandates and sways His peaceful sceptre over the hearts of His obedient people.

“And unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22). Most of the older writers understood these terms to refer to the Church, but we think this is a mistake, for the Church is referred to, separately, in a latter clause. As pointed out in last

month's article, we regard this language as signifying Heaven itself, as the residence of God and the eternal abode of His people. "The living God" is the true and only God, the triune Jehovah, the Fountain of all life, the One who is "from everlasting to everlasting," without beginning or end: this title is given to each of the eternal Three—Matthew 16:16, 1 Timothy 4:10, 2 Corinthians 6:16, cf. 1 Corinthians 3:15. As "Zion" was the seat of David's throne, so "Jerusalem" was the dwelling place of Jehovah in the midst of His covenant people. "Jerusalem" signifies "the Vision of Peace," and in Heaven the "sons of peace" (Luke 10:6) will behold the glory of God in the face of the Prince of Peace.

"And to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22). This is the third great privilege enjoyed by the true worshipers under the Christian economy: having mentioned the place to which Divine grace has brought believers, the Holy Spirit now described the *inhabitants* of the heavenly Jerusalem. The angels, who are worshippers of God and His Christ, are perhaps mentioned first because they are in closer proximity to the Throne, because they are the original denizens of Heaven, and because they are greatly in the majority. The reference is, of course, to the holy angels who kept their first estate and sinned not when some of their fellows apostatised. They are "the elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21), and although they have not been redeemed by the atoning blood of the Lamb, it appears highly probable that they were *confirmed* in their standing by the incarnation of the Son, for God has united in Christ both elect men and elect angels (Eph. 1:10), that He might be "the Head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).

"Ye are come unto . . . an innumerable company of angels." This sets before us a further contrast between that which characterises Christianity, and what obtained under the Mosaic economy—that is, so far as the Israelitish nation as a whole was concerned. It is clear from several passages that "angels" were connected with the giving of the Law, when Judaism was formally instituted. We read "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints: from His right hand went a fiery law for them" (Deut. 33:2); and again, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai" (Psa. 68:17). But while many "thousands" of the heavenly hosts attended Jehovah upon Sinai, this was very different from the "innumerable company" with which we are connected, namely the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of Revelation 5:11. And even to the many thousands of angels at Sinai the Nation *did not* "come": instead, they were fenced off at the foot of the mount.

Redeemed sinners who have fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit, are of one spirit with all the heavenly hosts, for there is a union of sentiment between them. Christians have been brought into a state of amity and friendship with the holy angels: they are members of the same family (Eph. 3:15), are united under the same Head (Col. 2:10), and joined together in the same worship (Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:9-14). We are "come unto" them *by a spiritual relation*, entering into association with them, sharing the benefits of their kind offices, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). The angels are "*fellow servants*" with believers "that have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 19:10). Wondrous fact is this that sinners of the earth, while here in this world, have communion with the angels in Heaven, for they are constantly engaged in the same worship of God in Christ as we are: thus there is perfect oneness of accord between us.

As we pointed out in last month's article, the Church's spiritual union with the holy

angels—being united together in one spiritual society and family—is due to the atoning work of Christ, who by putting away the sins of His people has restored the breach made by Adam’s fall and “reconciled *all* things unto Himself” (Col. 1:20). Hence we believe that in the verse now before us there is not only a contrast drawn between Judaism and Christianity, but that its ultimate reference is to the immense difference brought in between the offence of the first Adam and the righteousness of the last Adam. Upon the transgression of Adam we read “So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). There God made His “angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire” (Heb. 1:7) to execute His vengeance against us; but now these same angels are our associates in worship and service.

God is “the LORD of hosts” (Psa. 46:7), myriads of holy celestial creatures being in an attendance upon Him—“*an innumerable company of angels*”: how this should help us to realise the majesty and grandeur of that Kingdom into which Divine grace has brought us. In this expression we may also discern a word to encourage our trembling hearts in connection with our wrestling against the “hosts of wicked spirits” (Eph. 6:12): numerous as are the forces of Satan assailing us, an “*innumerable company of angels*” are defending us! This was the blessed truth by which Elisha comforted his fearing servant “they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16). “When the thought of Satan and his legions brings fear, we ought to comfort ourselves with the assurance that more in number and greater in power are the loving and watchful angels, who for Christ’s sake regard us with the deepest interest and affection” (A. Saphir).

Before turning to the next item a word should be said in refutation of the blasphemous error of Romanists concerning our relation to angels. They teach that we are “come unto” the angels with our prayers, which is one of their empty superstitions—there is not a word in Scripture to countenance such an idea. Though it be true that the angels are superior to us in dignity and power, yet in communion with God we are their equals—“*fellow servant*” (Rev. 22:9), and, as Owen pointed out, “Nothing can be more groundless than that fellow-servants should worship one another”—the worshipping of angels is *condemned* in Colossians 2:18 and Revelation 22:8, 9. Well did Owen also point out, “It is the highest madness for any one to pretend himself to be the head of the church, as the pope does, unless he assume also to himself to be the head of all the angels in Heaven,” for we belong to the same holy society.

“To the general assembly” (Heb. 12:23). This expression occasions some difficulty, for in the first place it is not quite clear as to what the Spirit specifically alludes unto. In the second place, the Greek word (*pangueris*, a compound one) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, so that we are not able to obtain any help from its usage in other passages. In the third place, it is not very easy to decide whether this clause is to be linked with the one immediately preceding or with the one following it. In its classical usage the Greek word was employed in connection with a public convocation, when all the people were gathered together to celebrate a public festival or solemnity. Most of the commentators link this word with what follows: “To the general assembly and church of the first-born” understanding the reference to be unto the (“general”) union of believing Jews and believing Gentiles in one Body. Personally, we think this is a mistake.

First, such language would be tautological, (needless repetition) for if the “general assembly” points to the middle wall of partition being broken down, and converted Jews

and Gentiles being joined together in one Body, *that* would be “the Church.” Second, the denomination “church of the firstborn” takes in *the totality* of God’s elect and redeemed people of all ages. Third, there is no “and” between the “innumerable company of angels” and the “general assembly,” as there is in every other instance in these verses where a *new* object is introduced. Personally, we regard this third expression as in apposition (the placing together of two nouns, one of which explains the other) to the former, thus: “unto an innumerable company of angels—the general assembly.” There are various ranks and orders among the angels: principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, seraphim and cherubim, and the “general assembly” of them would be the solemn convocation of all the angelic hosts before the throne of God—compare “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: *the judgment* (a special convocation) was set, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:10).

No doubt this amplifying expression (of the “innumerable company of angels”) also emphasises another contrast between the privileges of Christianity and that which obtained under Judaism. Perhaps the contrastive allusion is a double one. First, from the general assembly of Israel at Sinai, when the whole of the nation was then formally assembled together—in fear and trembling. Second, to the general assembly of all the male Israelites three times in the year at the solemn feasts of the Old Testament Church (Exo. 34:23, Deut. 16:16) which was called “the great congregation” (Psa. 22:25; 35:18, etc.)—in joy and praise. But each of these were on earth, by men in the flesh; whereas Christians, in their worship, unite with all the holy hosts of Heaven in blessing and adoring the Triune God.

“And church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:23): that is, to the entire company of God’s redeemed. “This is that church whereunto all the promises do belong; the church built on the rock, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail; the spouse, the body of Christ, the temple of God, His habitation forever. This is the church which Christ loved and gave Himself for, which He washed in His own blood, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27). This is the church, out of which, none can be saved, and whereof no one member shall be lost” (J. Owen).

This is the only place in the New Testament where the election of grace is designated “the Church of the firstborn ones” (plural number in the Greek). Why so here? For at least three reasons. First, so as to identify the Church with Christ *as* the “Heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2). The prominent idea associated with the “firstborn” in Scripture is *not* that of priority, but rather excellency, dignity, dominion, and right to the inheritance. This is clear from “Reuben, thou art my firstborn, . . . the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power” (Gen. 49:3); and again; “I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa. 89:27). For the “firstborn” and the “inheritance” see Genesis 27:19, 28, 29 and cf. Hebrews 12:16; Deuteronomy 21:16; 1 Chronicles 5:1. Second, this title intimates the Church’s glory is superior to that of the celestial spirits: redeemed sinners and not fallen angels are God’s “firstborn ones.” Third, this points a further contrast from Judaism: Israel was God’s “firstborn” (Exo. 4:22) among the nations of the earth; but the Church is His “firstborn” among the inhabitants of Heaven!

The Church is raised to the highest created dignity: superior privileges and a nobler

dignity of sonship pertains to its members than to the holy angels. This is solely due to their union with Christ, the original "Firstborn": Psalm 89:26, 27; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 1:6. Christians have been made "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6), which comprises the whole right of the inheritance. The entire election of grace, by God's gratuitous adoption, are not only members of His family, but "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), and thus given an inalienable title to the heavenly inheritance. This was equally true of the saints of all generations from the foundation of the world, yet a much clearer and fuller revelation thereof has been made under this Christian economy: "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, *as it is now* revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph. 3:5).

"Which are written in Heaven" (Heb. 12:23), announcing that they are genuine Christians—in contrast from mere professors, whose names are recorded only upon the church-scrolls of earth. Just as the registering of men's names on the rolls of corporations, etc., assures them of their *right* to the privileges thereof (for example, to vote—which we believe is something that no child of God should do), so our names being written in Heaven is the guaranty of our title to the celestial heritage. It was to this Christ referred when He said, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). The Apostle Paul also speaks of those "whose names are in the Book of Life" (Phil. 4:3): that Book of Life (cf. Rev. 3:5 and 13:8) is none other than the roll of God's elect, in His eternal and immutable designation of them unto grace and glory. "Written in Heaven" points another contrast from Judaism: the names of Jews (as such) were only written upon the synagogue scrolls.

"And to God the Judge of all" (Heb. 12:23). The reference here is not (as some recent writers have supposed) unto the Person of Christ, but rather unto God the Father in His rectoral office as the high Governor of all. Does this seem to spoil the harmony of the passage? had we not much preferred it to read "and to God our Father"? No, coming to "God the Judge of all" in nowise conflicts with the other privileges mentioned: it is a vastly different thing to be brought before a judge to be tried and sentenced as a criminal, from having a favourable access to him as our occasions and needs may require. Such is the meaning here: we are come not only to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the Church, but also the supreme *Head* of the heavenly society—the Author and End of it.

"And to God the Judge of all," that is, the Majesty of Heaven itself. It was God as Judge who appointed Christ to death, and it was God as Judge who accepted His sacrifice and raised Him from the dead. To God as "Judge" believers have been reconciled and by Him they were justified (Rom. 8:33). Concerning Christ our Exemplar, we read "when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him *that judgeth righteously*" (1 Peter 2:23). The Apostle reminded the saints that "it is a righteous thing with God (as "Judge") to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thess. 1:6). Now it was as Judge that God ascended His awful tribunal at Sinai, and *that* the people could not endure: but Christians draw nigh to Him with holy boldness because His Law has nothing against them—the requirements of His justice were fully met by Christ. How great is the privilege of that state which enables poor sinners, called by the Gospel, to approach the Judge of all upon His "bench" or throne without fear! Only by *faith* is this possible.

"And to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). It is blessed to note that this comes immediately after mention of "the Judge of all"—to show us the saints had

nothing to fear from Him, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ" (Rom. 8:1). The reference is to the Old Testament believers, who have passed through death: that New Testaments saints are "come" to *them* is clear from Ephesians 2:19. Of course that "made perfect" is relative and not absolute, for their resurrection and full glorification is yet future. As Owen defined it: first, they had reached the end of the race wherein they had been engaged, with all the duties and difficulties, temptations and tribulations connected therewith. Second, they were completely delivered from sin and sorrow, labour and trouble, which in this life they had been exposed to. Third, they had now entered their rest and reward and were, according to their present capacity, in the immediate presence of God and perfectly happy.

"And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 12:24): His personal name is used here because it is *in this* character He *saves* His people from their sins—compare our exposition of 9:15-17. Here again a contrast is drawn from that which obtained under the old covenant. Moses was the middle person between Israel and God: chosen by the people (Exo. 20:19, etc.) and appointed by Him to declare His mind unto them; unto him they were all baptised (1 Cor. 10:2). But Moses was merely a man, a fallen descendant of Adam: he delivered God's Law to the people, but was incapable of magnifying and making it honourable by a perfect personal obedience. Nor was he that "surety" of the covenant unto God for the people, as Christ was; he did not confirm the covenant by offering himself as a sacrifice to God, nor could he give the people an interest in heavenly privileges. How far short he came of Christ!

By being brought into "Sion," Christians are come to all the mercy, grace and glory prepared in the new covenant and presented in the promises of it. Herein lies the supreme blessedness and eternal security of the Church, that its members are taken into *such* a covenant that they have a personal interest in the Mediator of it, who is able to save them unto the uttermost. This is the very substance and essence of Christian faith, that it has to do with *the Mediator of the new covenant*, by whom alone we obtain deliverance from the old covenant and the curse with which it is accompanied. It is both the privilege and wisdom of faith to *make use* of this "Mediator" in all our dealings with God: He it is who offers to God our prayers and praises and brings down the favour of God upon His people.

"And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:24). The blood of Christ is referred to thus in allusion unto the various sprinklings of blood Divinely instituted under the old covenant, the three most signal instances of which are recorded in Exodus 12:22; 24:6-8; Leviticus 16:14, the principal reference here being to Exodus 24, where the old covenant was thus ratified. All of those instances were eminent types of the redemption, justification and sanctification of the Church by the blood of Christ. The specific thing denoted by the "sprinkling" (in contrast from its "shedding") is *the application to believers* of its virtues and benefits. The more the Christian exercises repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, the more will he experience the peace-speaking power of that precious blood in his conscience. The blood of Christ "speaketh" to God as a powerful Advocate: urging the fulfillment of the Mediator's part of the Everlasting Covenant, His perfect satisfaction to Divine justice, the full discharge from condemnation purchased for His people.

The contrast here is very impressive: the blood of Abel called for vengeance (Gen. 4:10), whereas the blood of Christ calls for blessing to be bestowed on those for whom it

was shed. Even the blood of the wicked if unrighteously shed, calls to God for it to be recompensed. But Abel was a saint, the first martyr, and *his* blood cried according to the worth that was in him, for “precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (Psa. 116:15). If then the blood of a saint speaks so forcibly to God, how infinitely more powerfully must the blood of “*the King of saints*” (Rev. 15:3) plead! If the blood of a single member of Christ’s Body so speaks to God, what will the blood of the Head Himself! Moreover, Abel’s blood only cried to God “from the ground,” where it was shed, but Christ’s blood speaks in Heaven itself (Heb. 9:12).—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

52. *His terrible sin.*

In the Psalms of David two very different characters come before us again and again. In some of those Psalms there is expressed the sorrows of one who is consciously *righteous*, suffering the reproaches of the wicked, yet assured of strength in God, and looking forward to that fullness of joy which is at His right hand. In other Psalms we hear the sobbing of a *convicted* conscience, a heart deeply exercised over personal transgression, seeking after Divine mercy, and being granted a blessed sense of the infinite sufficiency of Divine grace to meet his deep need. Now, those two characters in the Psalms correspond to the two principal stages in David's life as portrayed, respectively, in the 1st and 2nd books of Samuel. In 1st Samuel we see him brought from obscurity unto honour and peace, upheld by God in righteousness amid the persecution of the wicked. In the latter we behold him descending from honour, through sin, into degradation and turmoil, yet there learning the amazing riches of Divine grace to bear with and pardon one who fell into such deep mire.

Solemn indeed is the contrast presented of David in the two books of Samuel: in the former he is conqueror of the mighty Goliath: in the latter he is mastered by his own lusts. Now the sins of God's servants are recorded for our instruction: not for us to shelter behind and use for palliating our own offences, but for us to lay to heart and seek with all our might to avoid. The most effectual means against our repeating their sins is to keep from those things which lead up to or occasion them. In last month's article we pointed out that David's fearful fall was preceded by three things: the laying aside of his armour at the very time it was his duty to gird on the sword; the indulging in slothful ease in the palace, when he should have been enduring hardness as a soldier on the battlefield; the allowing of a wandering eye to dwell upon an unlawful object, when he should have turned it away from beholding vanity.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). Prayer of itself is not sufficient: we have not fully discharged our duty when we have asked God to lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. We must "watch," be on alert, noting the direction of our desires, the character of our motives, the tendency of things which may be lawful in themselves, the influence of our associations. It is our *inner man* which we most need to watch: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Then, if we are faithful and diligent in "watching," out of a sense of our personal weakness and insufficiency, it is in order to "pray," counting on the help of our gracious God to undertake for us. To "pray" *without* "watching" is only to mock God, by seeking to shelve our responsibility.

Prayer was never designed by God as a substitute for personal effort and diligence, but rather as an adjunct thereto—to seek Divine grace for enabling us to be dutiful and faithful. "Continue in prayer, *and watch* in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). Not only does God require us to "watch" *before* we pray, but we are also to "watch" immediately after. And again we say, that which we most need to watch is *ourselves*. There is a traitor within our own breast, ever ready and desirous of betraying us if allowed the opportunity of so doing. Who had thought that such an one as David would ever experience such a fearful fall as he had! Ah, my reader, not even a close walk with God, or a long life of eminent piety, will eradicate or even change the sinful nature which still abides in the saint. So long as we are in this world we are never beyond the reach of temptation, and

nought but watchfulness and prayer will safeguard us from it.

Nor is it easy to say how low a real child of God may fall, nor how deeply he may sink into the mire, once he allows the lusts of the flesh their free play. Sin is insatiable: it is never satisfied. Its nature is to drag us lower and lower, getting more and more daring in its opposition to God; and but for His recovering grace it would carry us down to Hell itself. Look at Israel: unbelieving at the Red Sea, murmuring in the wilderness, setting up the idolatrous calf at Sinai. Look at the course of Christendom as outlined in Revelation 2 and 3: beginning by leaving her first love, ending by becoming so mixed up with the world that Christ threatened to spew her out of His mouth. Thus it was with David: from lazing on his bed to allowing his eyes to wander, from gazing on Bathsheba to committing adultery with her, from adultery to murder, and then sinking into such spiritual deadness that for a whole year he remained impenitent, till an express messenger from God was needed to arouse him from his torpor.

“And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child” (2 Sam. 11:5). Sooner or later the man or woman who deliberately defies God and tramples His laws underfoot finds from painful experience that “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). It is true that the final punishment of the wicked is in the next world, and it is true that for years some daring rebels appear to mock God with impunity; nevertheless, His government is such that, even in this life, they are usually made to reap as they have sown. The pleasures of sin are but “for a season” (Heb. 11:25), and a very brief one at that; nevertheless “at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:32). Make no mistake on that point, dear reader; “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). It did so with David and Bathsheba, for now the day of reckoning had to be faced.

The penalty for adultery was death: “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:10). Bathsheba now had good cause to fear the righteous wrath of her husband, and the enforcing of the dread sentence of the law. David, too, was faced with serious trouble: the one with whom he had had illicit intercourse was pregnant, and her own husband had been away from home for some time. The hidden works of darkness must soon be forced into the light for when Uriah returned the unfaithfulness of his wife would be discovered. This would give him the right to have her stoned, and though David, by virtue of his high position as king, might escape a similar fate, yet it was likely that his guilt would be proclaimed abroad and a general revolt be stirred up against him. But sad as was the predicament in which David now found himself, still sadder was the measures he resorted to in seeking to extricate himself.

Before taking up the doleful details in the inspired narrative, let us first seek to obtain a general idea of what follows—asking the reader to go over 2 Samuel 11:6-21 ere continuing with our comments. There was no thirsting for Uriah’s blood on the part of David: it was only after all his carnal efforts had failed to use Uriah in covering his own sin, that the king resorted to extreme measures. Another before us has pointed out the awful parallel which here obtains between David and Pilate. The Roman governor thirsted not for the blood of the Saviour, rather did he resort to one expedient after another so as to preserve His life; and only after those had failed, did he give his official sanction to the crucifying of the Lord Jesus. Alas that the sweet Psalmist of Israel should here find him-

self in the same class with Pilate, but the flesh in the believer is no different from the flesh in the unbeliever, and when allowed its way it issues in the same works in both.

But the analogy between David and Pilate is even closer. What was it that caused David to sacrifice Uriah in order to shield himself? It was his love of the world, his determination to preserve his place and reputation among men at all costs. Love of his fair name in the world, resolved that under no circumstances would he be branded as an adulterer, so whatever stood in the way must be removed. He contrived various expedients to preserve his character, but these were baffled; so just as the lust of the eye led him to adultery with Bathsheba, now the pride of life goaded him to the murder of her husband. And was it not the same with Pilate? He had no murderous designs against Christ, but he put his own credit in the eyes of men before everything else: he was Caesar's friend—the world's friend—and rather than risk any breach in that friendship, Jesus must die.

"And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David" (2 Sam. 11:6). It was not unto the Lord that David now turned: *He* seems not to have been in his thoughts at all. Nor is He when sin has gained the ascendancy over the saint. Alas that we are so slow, so reluctant, to put things right with God—by sincere repentance and humble confession—when we have displeased and dishonoured Him. No, David was far more anxious to conceal his crime and escape the temporal consequences of it, than he was to seek the forgiveness of the Lord his God. This too is recorded for our instruction. It is written, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper" (Prov. 28:13), and there is no exception to that rule—O that Divine grace would cause each of us to lay it to heart and *act upon it*. Only God knows how many of His own people are now under His chastening rod, are lean in their souls and joyless in their hearts, because of failure at this very point.

Refusal to put things right with God and our fellows, by confessing our sins to the One and (so far as lies in our power) making restitution to the other, gives Satan a great advantage over us. A guilty conscience estranges the heart from God, so that it is no longer able to count upon His protection; the Spirit is grieved and withholds His grace, so that the understanding is unable to see things in His light. The soul is then in such a state that Satan's lies are acceptable to it, and then the whole course of conduct is more or less regulated by him. Carnal scheming takes the place of seeking wisdom from on High, stealth and trickery supplant openness and honesty, and self-interests absorb all the energies instead of seeking the glory of God and the good of others. This comes out very plainly in the deplorable sequel here: all of David's actions now show that he was actuated by Satan rather than dominated by the Holy Spirit.

"And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered" (2 Sam. 11:7). Having been summoned back from the scene of fighting, Uriah was given an audience with David under the pretence of supplying his royal master with an accurate account of how the hostilities were proceeding. In reality, those inquiries of the king were merely a blind to cover his real desire in having sent for Bathsheba's husband. Seemingly, David wished to convey to Uriah the impression that he had more confidence in *his* word concerning the progress of the war than of any one else in Israel. But it is quite clear from what follows that David had called Uriah home for a very different purpose. How little *we* know of the motives of those who ask us questions, and how it behooves us to heed that exhortation "*put not your trust in princes*" (Psa. 146:3).

“And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet” (2 Sam. 11:8). This makes clearer the secret design of the king in summoning Uriah to Jerusalem. David was determined to spare himself the shame of its becoming known that he was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba, and the only way in which that could be avoided was by getting her husband back to spend a night or two at home, so that the child might be fathered on him. “And Uriah departed out of the king’s house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king” (v. 8). David was anxious that the one whom he designed to act as a cloak for his own sin should feel free to enjoy to the full the brief furlough now granted him. Again we say, how ignorant we often are of the subtle designs of some who may express good will toward us by their presents.

“But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house” (v. 9). How often the best-laid schemes of men meet with disappointment. It was so with Abraham’s attempt in getting Sarah to pose as his sister; it was so with Jonah’s efforts to avoid preaching to the Ninevites; it was so here. David was balked: he had failed to estimate aright the stirring qualities of the man he was dealing with. Uriah was not the one to give way to self-indulgence while his brethren were enduring the hardships of a military campaign. And should not this speak loudly to our hearts? Are the days in which *we* are living such that Christians are justified in seeking ease and fleshly gratification?

“And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?” (2 Sam. 11:10). Instead of commending Uriah for his noble unselfishness, the king half reproved him. But David could not approve his conduct without condemning his own. Ah, my reader, they who criticise those who *live as* “strangers and pilgrims” in this scene (and they are few in number in this degenerate generation), calling them “strict,” “strait-laced,” “extremists,” “puritanic,” do but give themselves away. They who practice self-denial are thorns in the sides of those who wish to “make the most of both worlds” by pandering to their carnal desires.

“And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing” (v. 11). What a rebuke was this! The Lord and His people in the open fields, engaging the foes of Israel; David at home in his palace, enjoying his ease and indulging the desires of nature. How those noble words of Uriah should have melted David’s heart! How they should have smitten his conscience for having yielded so vilely to his sinful passions and for so grievously wronging, in his absence, such a loyal subject! But alas, where the heart is no longer concerned for *God’s* glory, it is incapable of receiving correction or rebuke from a fellow-creature. David was filled with pride of reputation and the fear of man, and was determined to make Uriah serve for him as a screen from the public eye.

“And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow” (v. 12). When the heart is fully set upon doing evil, it refuses to be daunted by difficulties: if one method of obtaining the coveted end fails, it will try another. Alas that the same persistent determination does not characterize us when we are seeking that which is good: how easily we are discouraged then! Patience is a virtue, but it is prostituted to a base end when used in an evil course.

Thus it was now: David refused to admit defeat, and hoped that by keeping Uriah in Jerusalem a little longer, his base desire might be realised.

“And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk” (2 Sam. 11:13). To what awful lengths can sin carry a saint once he enters upon the downward path. The plan which David now resorted to was horrible indeed, deliberately endeavouring to make the faithful Uriah break his vow in verse 11. How sad to now see David the tempter of Uriah unto drunkenness—hoping that while his blood was heated, he would go home to his wife. But again he failed: “And at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, *but went not down to his house*” (v. 13). How this baffling of his plans should have aroused David’s sleeping conscience, for, manifestly, God’s providences were working *against* him. Worse was yet to follow: this we must leave for our next, D.V.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

4. *The Abrahamic.*

The grand *promises* of the Abrahamic Covenant, as originally given to the patriarch, are recorded in Genesis 12:2, 3, 7. The covenant itself was solemnly *ratified* by sacrifice, thus making it inviolable, in Genesis 15:9-21. The “seal” and “sign” of the covenant, circumcision, is brought before us in Genesis 17:9-14. The covenant was *confirmed* by Divine oath in Genesis 22:15-18, which provided a ground of “strong consolation” (Heb. 6:17-19). There were not two distinct and diverse covenants made with Abraham (as the older Baptists argued), the one having respect to spiritual blessings and the other relating to temporal benefits. The covenant was one, having a special spiritual object, to which the temporal arrangements and inferior privileges enjoyed by the nation of Israel were strictly subordinated, and necessary only as a means of securing the higher results contemplated.

It is true that the contents of the covenant were of a *mixed* kind, involving both the natural descendants and the spiritual “seed” of Abraham, its promises receiving a minor and major fulfillment. There was to be a temporary accomplishment of those promises to his natural offspring here on earth, and there was to be an eternal realisation of them to his spiritual children in Heaven. Unless this twofoldness of the contents of the covenant be steadily borne in mind, it is impossible to obtain a right and clear view of them. Nevertheless it is highly essential that we distinguish sharply between the two, lest we fall into the error of others who insist that the spiritual blessings belonged not only to the natural seed of Abraham, but to the offspring of Christians as well. Spiritual blessings cannot be communicated by carnal propagation.

Nothing could more clearly establish what has just been pointed out than, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the *seed* of Abraham, are they all CHILDREN: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9:6-8). All of Abraham’s descendants did not participate in the spiritual blessings promised to him, for to some *of them* Christ said, “Ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24), which was shadowed forth in the fact that Ishmael and Esau were excluded from even the temporal privileges enjoyed by the offspring of Isaac and Jacob. Nor do all the children of Christians enter into the spiritual privileges promised to Abraham, but only those which were eternally chosen unto salvation; and *who they are* cannot be known until they *believe*: “Know ye therefore that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7).

Let us point out in the next place that Abraham’s covenant was strictly *peculiar to himself*, for neither in the Old Testament nor in the New is it ever said that the covenant with Abraham was made on behalf of all believers, or that it is given to them. The great thing that the covenant secured to Abraham was that he should *have a seed*, and that God would be *the God* of that seed; but Christians have no Divine warrant that He will be the God of their “seed,” nor even that they shall have any children at all. As a matter of fact, many of them have no posterity, and therefore they cannot have the covenant of Abraham. The covenant of Abraham was as peculiar to himself as the one God made with Phinehas, “And he shall have it, *and his seed* after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Num. 25:13), and as the covenant of royalty which God made with David *and his seed* (2 Sam. 7:12-16). In each case a Divine promise was given *securing a*

posterity, and had no children been born to those men, then God had broken his covenant.

Look at the original promises made to Abraham, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2, 3). Has God promised every Christian that He will make *of him* a "great nation"? or that He will make *his* "name great"—celebrated like the patriarch's was and is? or that in *him* "all the families of the earth be blessed"? Surely there is no room for argument here: the very asking of such questions answers them. Nothing could be more extravagant and absurd than to suppose that any such promises as these were made *to us*.

If God fulfills the covenant with Abraham and his seed to every believer and his seed, then He does so in accord with the terms of the covenant itself. But if we turn to and carefully examine its contents, it will at once appear that they were not to be fulfilled in the case of all believers, in addition to Abraham himself. In that covenant God promises that Abraham should be "a father of many nations," that "kings shall come out of thee," that "I will give thee *and to thy seed* after thee, *the land* wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:5-8). But Christians are not made the fathers of many nations; kings do not come out of them: nor do their descendants occupy the land of Canaan, either literally or spiritually. How many a godly believer has had to mourn with David, "*although my house be not so with God*; yet He hath made with *me* an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all *my* salvation" (2 Sam. 23:5).

The covenant established *no spiritual relation* between Abraham and his offspring, still less does it establish a spiritual relation between every believer and his babes. Abraham was not the *spiritual* father of his own natural offspring, for spiritual qualities cannot be propagated by carnal generation. Was he the spiritual father of Ishmael? Was he the spiritual father of Esau? No indeed; instead, Abraham was "the father of *all them that believe*" (Rom. 4:11). So far as his natural descendants were concerned, Scripture declares that Abraham was, "the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also *walk in the steps of that faith* of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:12). What could be plainer? Let us beware of *adding* to God's Word. No theory or practice, no matter how venerable it be or how widely held, is tenable, if no clear Scripture can be found to warrant and establish it.

The question may be asked, But are not Christians *under* the Abrahamic Covenant? In the entire absence of any word in Scripture affirming that they *are*, we answer, *No*. The "blessing of Abraham" has indeed "come on the (believing) Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:14), and what this "blessing" is, the very same verse tells us, namely "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit *through faith*." That "blessing" consists not in creating spiritual relations between believers and their infant offspring, but is *for themselves*, in response to the exercise of their faith. Plainer still is Galatians 3:9 in defining for us *what* the "blessing of Abraham" is which has come upon the Gentiles: "So then they which be of faith are *blessed with faithful Abraham*." And again, "Know ye therefore that they which are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham" (v. 7)—the only *spiritual* "children" of Abraham are such as have FAITH.

We must now turn to and consider *the seal* of the covenant. "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their

generations. This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be *a token* of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant" (Gen. 17:9-14).

In seeking to ascertain the significance of the above passage, we cannot do better than throw upon it the light of the New Testament. There we are told, "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also" (Rom. 4:11). The first observation we would make upon this verse is that it definitely establishes the *unity* of the Abrahamic Covenant, for in Romans 4:3 the Apostle had quoted from Genesis 15—where the word "covenant" occurs for the first time in connection with Abraham; and now he refers us to Genesis 17, thereby intimating it is one and the same covenant in both chapters. The main difference between the two chapters is that the one gives us more the Divine side (ratifying the covenant), the other the human side—the "keeping of" the covenant, or obedience to the Divine Command.

The next thing we would observe is that circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had." Again we would say, Let us be on our guard against *adding* to God's Word, for nowhere does Scripture say that circumcision was a "seal" to any one but to Abraham himself; and even in his case, so far was it from communicating any spiritual blessing, it simply confirmed what was already promised to him. As a "seal" from God, circumcision was a Divine pledge or guaranty that from him should issue that "Seed" which would bring blessing to all nations, and that, on the same terms as justifying righteousness had become his—by faith alone. It was not a seal of his faith, but of that righteousness which, in due time, was to be wrought out by the Messiah and Mediator. Circumcision was not a memorial of any thing which had already been actualised, but an earnest of that which was yet future, namely, of that justifying righteousness which was to be brought in by Christ.

But did not God enjoin that all the males of Abraham's household, and in those of his descendants, should also be circumcised? He did, and in that very fact we find definite confirmation of what has just been said above. What did circumcision "seal" to Abraham's servants and slaves? Nothing. "Circumcision neither signed nor sealed the blessings of the covenant of Abraham to the individuals to whom it was by Divine appointment administered. It did not imply that they who were circumcised were accounted the heirs of the promises, either temporal or spiritual. It was not applied to mark them individually as heirs of the promises. It did not imply this even to Isaac and Jacob, who are by name designated heirs with Abraham. *Their* interest in the promises was secured *to them* by God's expressly giving *them* the covenant, but was *not* represented in their circumcision. Circumcision marked no character, and had an individual application to no man but Abraham himself. It was the token of this covenant; and as a token or sign, no doubt applied to every promise in the covenant, but it did not designate the individual

circumcised as having a personal interest in these promises. The covenant promised a numerous seed to Abraham; circumcision, as the token of that covenant, must have been a sign of this; but it did not sign this *to any other*. Any other circumcised individual, except Isaac and Jacob, to whom the covenant was given by name, might have been *childless*.

“Circumcision did not impart to any individual that any portion of the numerous seed of Abraham should descend through *him*. The covenant promised that all nations should be blessed in Abraham—that the Messiah should be his descendant. But circumcision was no sign *to any other* that the Messiah should descend from him,—even to Isaac and Jacob this promise was peculiarly given, *and not implied in their circumcision*. From some of Abraham’s race, the Messiah, according to the covenant, must descend, and circumcision was a sign of this: but this was not signed by circumcision to any one of all his race. Much less could circumcision ‘sign’ this to the strangers and slaves who were not of Abraham’s posterity. To such, even the temporal promises were not either ‘signed’ or sealed by circumcision. The covenant promised Canaan to Abraham’s descendants, but circumcision could be no sign of this to the strangers and slaves who enjoyed no inheritance in it” (Alex. Carson, 1860).

That circumcision did *not* “seal” anything to any one but to Abraham himself, is established beyond shadow of doubt by the fact that circumcision was applied to those who had *no personal interest* in the covenant to which it was attached. Not only was circumcision administered by Abraham to the servants and slaves of his household, but in Genesis 17:23 we read that he circumcised *Ishmael*, who was expressly excluded from that covenant! There is no evading the force of that, and it is impossible to reconcile it with the views so widely pervading upon the Abrahamic Covenant. Furthermore, circumcision was not submitted to voluntarily, nor given with reference to faith, it was *compulsory*, and that in every instance: “He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, *must* needs be circumcised” (Gen. 17:13)—those refusing, being “cut off from his people” (v. 14): how vastly different was *that* from Christian baptism!

It may be asked, If, then, circumcision “sealed” nothing to those who received it, except in the one case of Abraham himself, then *why* did God ordain it to be administered to all his male descendants? First, because it was the mark He selected to distinguish from all other nations that people from whom the Messiah was to issue. Second, because it served as a continual reminder that from the Abrahamic stock the promised “Seed” would spring—hence, soon after He appeared, circumcision was set aside by God. Third, because of what it typically foreshadowed. To be born naturally of the Abrahamic stock gave a title to circumcision and the earthly inheritance, which was a figure of their title to the Heavenly inheritance of those born of the Spirit. The servants and slaves in Abraham’s household “bought with money,” beautifully adumbrated the truth that those who enter the kingdom of Christ are “bought” by His blood.

It is a mistake to suppose that baptism has come in the place of circumcision. As that which supplanted the Old Testament sacrifices was the one offering of the Saviour, as that which superseded the Aaronic priesthood was the High Priesthood of Christ, so that which has succeeded circumcision is the *spiritual* circumcision which believers have in and by *Christ*: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11)—how simple! how satisfying! “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are

risen with Him" (v. 12) is *something additional*: it is only wresting the Scriptures to say these two verses mean "Being buried with Him in baptism ye are circumcised." No, no; verse 11 declares the Christian circumcision is "made *without* hands," and baptism is administered *by* hands! The circumcision "made without hands in putting off (judicially, before God) the body of the sins of the flesh" has taken the place of the circumcision made *with* hands. The circumcision *of Christ* has come in the place of the circumcision of the Law. Never once in the New Testament is baptism spoken of as the "seal" of the *new covenant*, rather is *the Holy Spirit* the seal: see Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

To sum up. The grand design of God's covenant with Abraham was to make known that through him should come the One who would bring blessing to all the families of the earth. The promises made to him were to receive a lower and a higher fulfillment, according as he was to have both natural and spiritual children—for "*kings* shall come out of thee" (Gen. 17:6) compare Revelation 1:6! for "thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:17) compare Colossians 2:15, Romans 8:37, 1 John 5:4! Abraham is called a "father" neither in a federal nor in a spiritual sense, but because he is the head of the faith-clan, the prototype to which all believers are conformed. Christians are not "under" the Abrahamic Covenant, though they are "blessed with him" by having their faith counted unto righteousness. Though New Testament believers are not under the Abrahamic Covenant, they are, because of their union with Christ, heirs of its spiritual inheritance.

It only remains for us now to point out wherein the Abrahamic Covenant adumbrated the Everlasting Covenant. First, it proclaimed the international scope of the Divine mercy: some out of all "nations" were included in the election of grace. Second, it made known the ordained stock from which the Messiah and Mediator was to issue. Third, it announced that faith alone secured an interest in all the good God had promised. Fourth, in Abraham's being the "father" of all believers was shadowed forth the truth that Christ is the Father of His own spiritual seed (Isa. 53:10, 11). Fifth, in Abraham's call from God to leave his own country and become a sojourner in a strange land, was typed out Christ's leaving Heaven and tabernacling upon earth. Sixth, as the "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) Abraham foreshadowed Christ as "the Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). Seventh, in the promise of Canaan to his seed we have a figure of the Heavenly Inheritance which Christ has procured for his people.

N.B. It seems a sad tragedy that the people of God are so divided on the subject of baptism. Though the editor has strong conviction on the subject, for fourteen years he has refrained from pressing (or even presenting) them in this magazine—mainly because of its inter-denominational character. But it seemed impossible to deal faithfully with the Abrahamic Covenant without making some slight reference thereto. We have sought to write temperately in the above article, avoiding harsh expressions and needless reflections. We trust the reader will kindly receive it in the spirit in which it is written; weighing all before God. If he disagrees with what has been said, please bear with us. We do not expect to return to the subject.—A.W.P.

Union and Communion.

8. *Practical.*

Our practical union and communion with Christ grows out of our having cleaved to Him for salvation. A union to Christ by faith is designed by God to issue in a practical conformity to the image of His Son. We are “delivered out of the hand of our enemies” (sin, Satan, the world, the curse of the law, the wrath of God) in order that we might “serve (be in subjection to and obey) Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). God does not save us in order that we may henceforth indulge in the lusts of the flesh without fear of fatal consequences; but He brings us to Christ in order that we should take His “yoke” upon us, and live for His pleasure and glory. Our initial salvation is but a means to an end: to melt our hard hearts, that out of gratitude we may gladly render Him love’s obedience, and be the monuments and witnesses of His transforming power.

The union which exists between the Redeemer and the redeemed is not a simple, but a compound one: that which binds us to Him is not a single strand, but made up of several combined together. In a previous article we likened the bond of union between the believer and Christ to a golden chain, possessing a number of distinct links, yet inseparably welded together. That chain is let down all the way from God Himself, through Christ, to each of His people on earth. As the hand of faith lays hold of each separate link, the one immediately above it is revealed in turn. In this series of articles we have followed that chain, link by link, as it descended from above; but in our actual experience, *we*, of necessity, apprehend them in their inverse order—grasping first the lowest link and then ascending higher. From the position we now occupy, we can only discern the higher links by means of the lower. Let us try to make this fact yet plainer.

It is only by means of our *practical* union with Christ that we have personal evidence of our *saving* union with Him—if I am not in personal subjection to Him, walking with Him in the path of obedience to God’s revealed will, then I have no Scriptural warrant for supposing that *my* sins have been pardoned. Again; it is only by means of our saving union with Christ that we obtain evidence of our vital oneness with Him—if I have not forsaken all other claimants to my heart, surrendered to Christ’s Lordship, and put my whole trust in His sacrifice for my acceptance with God, then I have no Scriptural warrant to conclude that I have ever been born again. Once more; it is only by means of our vital union with Christ that we obtain evidence of our federal and mystical oneness with Him—if I cannot clearly perceive (by means of new sensibilities, new desires, new purposes and efforts) that I have passed from death unto life spiritually, then I have no Scriptural warrant to believe that Christ acted as *my* Surety.

From what has just been pointed out it should be quite evident that we are now treating of *the most important aspect* of our many-sided subject—the most important so far as the peace of our souls is concerned, and that we were fully justified in devoting a further article to its specific consideration. To be deceived at *this* point is a most serious thing, for it is very liable to have *fatal* consequences. If it is only by means of *practical* union and communion with Christ that I can rightly determine whether or not I have any *saving* union with Him, then how it behooves me to seriously and carefully inquire in to my present *practical relations* to the Lord Jesus, and make sure whether I have really taken His yoke upon me, whether I am truly in subjection to His will and am being conformed to His holy image; whether it is my natural inclinations or His exhortations which are really

regulating my daily life.

Now taking them in their deepest meaning and fullest scope, all the exhortations of Christ (expressing His claims upon us and His will for us) may be summed up in two words: “*Come unto Me*” and “*Abide in Me*.” The first of these calls is what we have to comply with in order to become *savingly* united to Christ; the second is what we must heed if *practical* union with Him is to be secured and maintained. As to what is signified and included in the sinner’s “coming to” Christ, we sought to show in a series of articles thereon in the 1933 “Studies.” To “come to” Christ implies the turning of our backs upon all that is opposed to Him, the abandoning of every idol and all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in full surrender and trustful confidence. To “come to” Christ denotes the turning of the whole soul to a whole Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King: it is the mind, heart, and will being supernaturally drawn to Him so as to love, trust and serve Him.

“Coming to” Christ is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for, or coming forward and taking the evangelist’s hand, or signing some “decision” card, or uniting with some “church,” or any other of the “many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29) of men. Before any one will or can truly come to Christ, the understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken. The things of this world have the first place in the affections of the natural man: the pleasing of self is his paramount concern. Christ is too holy to suit the natural man’s love of sin; His claims are too exacting to please his selfish heart; His terms of discipleship (Luke 14:26, 27) too severe to suit his fleshly ways. The unregenerate *will not* submit to His Lordship.

Christ must be crowned Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. He will brook no rival. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him: whatever pertains to the flesh must be renounced. The “cross” is the badge of Christian discipleship: not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice controlling the heart. We must come to Christ as Prophet, to be instructed by Him; as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon; as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ is a going out of self, so as no longer to rest on anything in self. It is the will bowing to His Lordship, accepting His yoke, taking up the cross, and following Him without reserve. O how very few really do this! To the great majority Christ has to say “*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life*” (John 5:40).

Now as a Scriptural “coming to Christ” is a vastly different thing from how it is represented from the majority of church-pulpits and mission-platforms today, so “Serving Christ” is something entirely different from the popular idea which now prevails. That we are saved to serve is a truth writ large in the Word: “Ye turned to God from idols, to *serve* the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). But serving God *does not mean* that, primarily and mainly, we are called upon to be “*personal* workers” and “soul winners”: we are to serve *Christ*, not our fellows. What is a *servant*? He is one that is in subjection to a master: he is one who sinks his own desires and ideas, and carries out the orders of the one who employs him. A “servant” is one who is in the place of subjection, of obedience, regulating his conduct according to the will of another. And *that* is what Christian service consists of: submitting to the authority of Christ, doing His bidding, walking according to His commandments, seeking to please Him in all things—whether He appoints us to plow the ground, mine coal, scrub floors, or preach the Word.

Now *that* is exactly what *practical union* with Christ consists of: it is being taken into His blessed *service*: walking together with Him in the path of obedience to God, with our hearts, minds and wills one with His. Practical union with Christ is but the *wearing of* the yoke which we *took upon us* when we came to Him for salvation. As the married life is the actual carrying out of the solemn vows by the husband and wife at the time of their wedded union, so the Christian life is the maintenance of that relationship which was entered into by the soul when it surrendered to the claims of Christ. At conversion we passed through the “strait gate” of full surrender to Christ, henceforth to tread the “narrow way” that leadeth unto Life for the rest of our earthly pilgrimage. Having come to Christ our duty and our privilege now is to “abide in Him,” for only thus will we discharge our responsibilities, promote our wellbeing, and glorify Him.

The very essence of the Christian life is *to continue as we began*: all spiritual declension, all backsliding, is due to failure at this point. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in Him*” (Col. 2:6). It is in His essential character as *the Lord* that the world refuses to “receive” Christ Jesus. Like Pharaoh of old, the unregenerate still say “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” (Exo. 5:2). Like the Jews during the days of His flesh, the unconverted declare “We *will not* have this one to *reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). But those who are drawn to Him by the Father (John 6:44) throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, and give themselves up to be ruled by Him. Christ is “the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*” (Heb. 5:9). Having surrendered to His claims and received Christ Jesus as “the Lord,” the Christian is now to submit to His sceptre: just so far as we do so, is a practical union with Him maintained by us.

“To whom coming, as unto a living Stone” (1 Peter 2:4). Let it be duly noted that this is predicated of the Lord’s people, and that it is not simply said they “came” to Christ, but “to whom *coming*”! We are to “come to Christ” not once and for all, but frequently, daily; in other words, we are *to continue as we began*. Christ is the only one who can minister to our deepest needs, and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from “His fullness” (John 1:16); in our weakness we must turn to Him for strength; in our ignorance, we must apply to Him for wisdom. In our falls into sin, we must seek from Him a fresh cleansing. *All* that we need for time and eternity is stored up for us in Christ. If we have backslidden, let us “repent and do the *first works*” (Rev. 2:5)—cast ourselves upon Christ anew, as self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness, renewing our covenant to serve and obey.

“Abide in Me, and I in you” (John 15:4): we must cultivate fellowship with Christ—by subordinating our hearts, minds and wills to Him—if He is to have fellowship with us; for a holy Christ will not commune with any who follow a course of unholiness. The same order is laid down again in the next verse, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that (1) abideth in Me and (2) I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.” Very searching is this: we need to lay it to heart, and translate into earnest daily prayer. Then the Lord added, “If ye abide in Me and *My words abide in you*” (v. 7). Here we are told *how* our practical union with Christ is maintained, namely, by our cherishing His words in our hearts, meditating upon them in our minds, submitting to them with our wills, being regulated by them in our actions. Thus, we “abide” in Christ by being in subjection to Him, by obeying Him.

“If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My

Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). How blessedly this illustrates His declaration "when He putteth forth His own sheep, *He goeth before them*" (John 10:4), and again, "leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps." Christ requires nought from His followers but what He first submitted to Himself. Christ subordinated Himself in all things to God: submitting Himself to God, committing Himself to God. He did not seek His own glory, do His own will, save His own life, plead His own cause, or avenge His own wrong. Self was never a consideration with Him: His only concern was obedience to the Father's commandments, the promotion of the Father's glory, abiding in the Father's love. "I delight *to do Thy will*, O My God" (Psa. 40:8) summed up His life.

Christ walked in perfect unison with God. He was of one mind and heart with Him. He had no separate interest from His Father, and no separate joy. His declaration "I and My Father are one" applied as truly to His human walk on earth as it did to the unity of the Divine nature. Whatever touched the Father, equally and in the same way affected Him. "The zeal of *Thine* house," He said, "hath eaten *Me* up." He pleased not Himself, but as it is written "The reproaches of them that reproached *Thee*, fell on *Me*." There was perfect harmony of sentiment, unity of desire, oneness in aim between Him and the Father. At the beginning it was "I must be about My Father's business." In Gethsemane it was "Father, Thy will be done." At the finish it was "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And to His people He says, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in *My* love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in *His* love."

It was by the keeping of God's commandments that Christ abode in the Father and the Father in Him. Of course, that mutual indwelling never could, through all His perfect life-long obedience, become more full and complete, in principle and essence, than it was before the incarnation. But to His human consciousness, and in His human experience, the sense of that fellowship must have grown more intense and more precious, as His doing of God's will went on and on to its terrible yet triumphant close. Among the things that the man Christ Jesus learned about obedience through the things which He suffered, must have been the fact that subjection to God carried with it a mighty power to promote and intensify the indwelling of God in man and man in God. And though He learned the griefs and pain which such obedience as He had undertaken to render involved, yet He learned too of its compensating pleasure and joy of abiding in the Father's love.

Let, then, *our* keeping of God's commandments be, in our measure (by the Spirit helping us), like Christ's. In our case, like His, submission to the Divine authority may involve a bitter cup to be drunk and a heavy cross to be borne; for, like Him, we have to learn obedience *by suffering*. But let the obedience we thus learn be of the same sort as His: the giving up of our own wills, always, everywhere. Then, and only then, shall we find how "good and perfect and acceptable is the will of God" (Rom. 12:2). We abide in Christ, then, when our will is merged in His will, when His thoughts become our thoughts, when our ways are His. It is only as we enter in a practical way into His mind and heart, that He enters, experimentally, into ours. This is the secret of rest and repose, of peace and joy, of fruitfulness and usefulness.

That our practical union with Christ, our "abiding" in Him, consists of and is maintained by *obedience*, is also clear from "And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in Him" (1 John 3:24). There can be no such mutual indwelling if there is on our part disobedience to the Divine commandments. A course of sinning is

altogether incompatible with communion with the Holy One. To abide in Christ is to have our wills merged in His, as His was in the Father's. Thus it is a combination of outward movement and inward repose: the feet acting, the hands busy, yet the heart resting in Him. It is to think, feel, and act as Christ does with regard to God and His Law, sin and righteousness, holiness and grace; to entertain the same sentiments with reference to all things.

It only remains for us to glance at another aspect of practical union, and that is, as it concerns *our dealings with the Lord's people*. As the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people is evidenced by their practical communion with Him, so the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christians is to be manifested by a *practical* communion with them. There is a blessed union existing between the saints, as saints, which nothing can sever. They have been made partakers of the same new and spiritual birth; they are partakers of the same heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); they are partakers of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1). One God is their Father, one Christ is their Lord, one Spirit is their Comforter. They are members of one body, and they have one hope of their calling. Therefore are they exhorted to be "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). So eminently was that unity evidenced at the beginning we read, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). How should it be otherwise, seeing that "They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

But alas, what an entirely different state of affairs do we now behold in Christendom: we will not say among the Lord's own people, but among those bearing His name. What division, what strife, what jealousy! What sectarian walls and barriers exclude some of Christ's sheep from other members of His flock! "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7) is the Divine injunction. That does not mean "receive" into church-fellowship (the Roman saints were already in *that* relationship: Rom. 12:4-8), but "receive" each Christian brother and sister *into your hearts*, so that you interest yourself in their welfare, and do all in your power to promote their temporal and eternal interests. But today, Baptists, for the most part, will "receive" none but a "Baptist," the Presbyterians none but a "Presbyterian," those known as the "Brethren" none but one who is "identified" with them. That is one reason why—as a protest against sectarianism—the writer remains unattached.

O what a lack of brotherly kindness, tender sympathy, and Christian affection now obtains. Instead of bearing each other's burdens, some seem most pleased when they can add to them. O for grace to sink our petty differences, and seek a practical union and communion with the whole family of God; loving those whom the Lord loves, and walking in affection with those whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. But this too often calls for self-denial and self-sacrifice—not sacrificing God's Truth, not sacrificing any Christian principle, but mortifying our carnal pride which loves to have the pre-eminence. O for grace to "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. 50:4), to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15), to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12). If we do not, Christ will yet say to us, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye *did it not to Me*" (Matt. 25:45).

What a word is this, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his

neighbour: FOR we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). What a *motive* is here presented for Christians being truthful toward their fellow-Christians! By lying to one another they *injure* the union and communion which the members of the mystical Body of Christ have with each other in Him! As another has said “If I lie to my brother, I do the same thing spiritually, as if I used my right hand to stab my left, or as if I used my eye to thrust my leg into a dirty ditch.” What high and holy ground is this! O what a spirit of loving communion there should be—*manifested* in a PRACTICAL way—between those who are united to Christ their common Head, and in Him to one another. The Lord be pleased to grant all-needed grace to both writer and reader to act accordingly.—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

8. *Its Procurer.*

There is a perfect sanctification in Christ which became ours the moment we first believed in Him—little though we *realised* it at the time. There will also be perfect *conformity* to this *in us*, an actual making good thereof, when we shall be glorified and enter that blessed realm where sin is unknown. In between these two things is the believer's present life on earth, which consists of a painful and bewildering commingling of lights and shadows, joys and sorrows, victories and defeats—the latter *seeming* to greatly preponderate in the cases of many, especially so the longer they live. There is an unceasing warfare between the flesh and the spirit, each bringing forth "after its own kind," so that groans ever mingle with the Christian's songs. The believer finds himself alternating between thanking God for deliverance from temptation and contritely confessing his deplorable yielding to temptation. Often is he made to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24). Such has been for upwards of twenty-five years the experience of the writer, and it is still so.

Now just as in the commercial world there are a multitude of medical charlatans announcing sure remedies for the most incurable diseases, and filling their pockets at the expense of those who are foolish enough to believe their fairy-tales; so there are numerous "quacks" in the religious world, claiming to have a cure for indwelling sin. Such a paragraph as we have just written above would be eagerly seized by these mountebanks, who, casting up hands and eyes of holy horror, would loudly express their pity for such "a needless tragedy." They would at once affirm that such an experience, so largely filled with defeat, was because the poor man has never been "sanctified," and would insist that what he needed to do was to lay his all on the altar and "receive the second blessing," the "baptism of the Spirit," or as some call it "enter into the victorious life" by fully trusting Christ for victory.

There are some perverters of the Gospel who, in effect, represent Christ as only *aiding* sinners to work out a righteousness of their own: they bring in Christ as a mere make-weight, to supply their deficiency, or they throw the mantle of His mercy over their failures. Some of the religious quacks we have referred to above would be loud in their outcry against such a travesty of the grace of God in Christ, insisting that we can be justified by nought but His blood. And yet *they* have nothing better to set before their dupes when it comes to "perfect sanctification" or "full salvation through fully trusting Jesus." Christ they say will *aid* us in accomplishing what we have vainly attempted in our own strength, and by fully trusting Him we now shall find easy what before we found so arduous. But *God's* Word supplies no warrant to expect sinless perfection in this life, and such teaching can only tend to fatal deception or bitter disappointment.

Those we have referred to above generally separate justification and sanctification both in fact and in time. Yea, they hold that a man may pass through the former and yet be devoid of the latter, and represent them as being attained by two distinct acts of the soul, divided it may be by an interval of years. They exhort Christians to seek sanctification very much as they exhort sinners to seek justification. Those who attain to this "sanctification" they speak of as being inducted into a superior grade of Christians, having now entered upon "the *higher* life." Some refer to this experience as "the second blessing": by the first, forgiveness of sins is received through faith in the Atonement; by the second, we receive deliverance from the power (some add "the presence") of sin by

trusting in the efficacy of Christ's Name—a dying Saviour rescues from Hell, an ever-living Saviour now delivers from Satan.

The question may be asked, But ought not the Christian to “present his body a living sacrifice unto God?” Most assuredly, yet *not* for the purpose of *obtaining* sanctification, nor yet for the improving or purifying of “the flesh,” the sinful nature, the “old man.” The exhortation of Romans 12:1 (as its “therefore” plainly shows—the “mercies of God” pointing back to 5:1, 2; 6:5, 6; 8:30, etc.) is a call for us to live in the power of what *is* ours in Christ. The presenting of our bodies “a living sacrifice to God” is the practical recognition that we *have been* sanctified or consecrated to Him, and we are to do so *not* in order to get our bodies sanctified, but in the gracious assurance that they are already “*holy*.”

The Christian cannot obtain a right view of the truth of sanctification so long as he separates that blessing from justification, or while he confines his thoughts to a progressive work of grace being wrought within him by the Holy Spirit. “But ye are washed, but ye *are* sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11): observe that we are “sanctified” just as we are “justified”—in the Name of Another! “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18): when we receive the “forgiveness” of our sins, we also receive “an inheritance among them *which are* sanctified by faith.” The prayer of Christ “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17), is fulfilled as we obtain a spiritual *knowledge of* the Truth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not by self-efforts, by any “consecration” of our own, by attempts to “lay our all on the altar” that we enter into what Christ has procured for His people, but *by faith's appropriation* of what God's Word sets before us.

In Christ, and in Him alone, does the believer possess a perfect purity. Christ *has* consecrated us to God by the offering of Himself unto Him for us. His sacrifice has delivered us from defilement and the ensuing estrangement, and restored us to the favour and fellowship of God. The Father Himself views the Christian as identified with and united to His “Holy One.” There are no degrees and can be no “progress” in *this* sanctification: an unconverted person is absolutely unholy, and a converted person is absolutely holy. God's standard of holiness is not what the Christian becomes by virtue of the Spirit's work in us here, but what Christ is as seated at His own right hand. Every passage in the New Testament which addresses believers as “saints”—holy ones—refutes the idea that the believer is not yet sanctified and will not be so until the moment of death.

Nor does the idea of a progressive sanctification, by which the Christian “more and more dies unto sin,” agree with the recorded experience of the most mature saints. The godly John Newton (author of “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” etc.) when speaking of the expectations which he cherished at the outset of his Christian life, wrote, “But alas! these my golden expectations have been like South Sea dreams. I have lived hitherto a poor sinner and I believe I shall die one. Have I, then, gained nothing? Yes, I have gained that which I once would rather have been without—such accumulated proof of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of my heart as I hope by the Lord's blessing has, in some measure, taught me to know what I mean when I say, ‘Behold I am vile!’ I was ashamed of myself when I began to serve Him, I am more ashamed of myself now, and I expect to be most ashamed of myself when He comes to receive me to Himself. But oh! I

rejoice in Him, that He is not ashamed of me!" Ah, as the Christian grows in grace, he grows more and more *out of love with himself*.

"And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the LORD" (Exo. 28:36-38). These verses set before us one of the most precious typical pictures to be found in the Old Testament. Aaron, the high priest, was dedicated and devoted exclusively to the Lord. He served in that office on the behalf of others, as their mediator. He stood before God as the representative of Israel, bearing their names on his shoulders and on his heart (Exo. 28:12, 29). Israel, the people of God, were both represented by and *accepted in* Aaron.

That which was set forth in Exodus 28:36-38 was not a type of "the way of salvation" but had to do entirely with the approach unto the thrice holy God of His own sinning and failing people. Though the sacrifices offered on the annual day of atonement delivered them from the curse of the law, godly individuals in the nation must have been painfully conscious that *sin* marred their very obedience and defiled their prayers and praises. But through the high priest their service and worship was acceptable to God. The inscription worn on his forehead "Holiness to the Lord," was a solemn appointment by which Israel was impressively taught that holiness became the House of God, and that none who are unholy can possibly draw near unto Him. In Leviticus 8:9 the golden plate bearing the inscription is designated "the holy crown," for it was set over and above all the vestments of Aaron.

Now Aaron foreshadowed Christ as the great High Priest who is "over the House of God" (Heb. 10:21). Believers are both represented by and accepted in Him. The "Holiness to the Lord" which was "*always*" upon Aaron's head, pointed to the essential holiness of Christ, who "*ever* liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). Because of our legal and vital union with Christ, *His* holiness is *ours*: the perfections of the great High Priest is the measure of our acceptance with God. Christ has also "borne the iniquity of our holy things"—made satisfaction for the defects of our worship—so that they are not laid to our charge; the sweet incense of His merits (Rev. 8:3) rendering our worship acceptable to God. By Him not only were our sins put away and our persons made acceptable, but our service and worship is rendered pleasing too: "To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5).

Here, then, is the answer to the pressing question, How can a moral leper be fitted for the presence of God? We need a perfect holiness as well as a perfect righteousness, in order to have access to Him. The Holy One cannot look upon sin, and were we to approach Him in a way wherein He could not look upon us as being perfectly holy, we could not draw nigh unto Him at all. *Christ* is the all-sufficient answer to our every problem, the One who meets our every need. The precious blood of Jesus has separated the believer from all evil, removed all defilement, and made him nigh unto God in all the acceptableness of His Son. How vastly different is this from that conception which limits sanctification to our experiences and attainments! How infinitely better is God's way to man's way, and how far are His thoughts on this above ours!

Now it is in the New Testament Epistles that we are shown most fully the reality and

substance of what was typed out under Judaism. First, we read, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:11). Christ is both our sanctification and our sanctifier. He is our sanctifier, first, by His blood putting away our sins and cleansing us from all defilement. Second, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, for whatever He doth, He does it *as* "the Spirit of Christ" who procured Him (Psa. 68:18 and Acts 2:33) for His people. Third, by communicating a holy life unto us (John 10:10): the whole stock of grace and holiness is in His hands, He communicating the same unto His people (John 1:16). Fourth, by appearing in Heaven as our representative: *He* being "Holiness to the Lord" (Exo. 28:36) *for us*. Fifth, by applying and blessing His Word to His people, so that they are washed thereby (Eph. 5:26). He is our sanctification because the Holiness of His nature, as well as His obedience, is imputed to us (1 Cor. 1:30).

"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). The Christian will never have right thoughts on this subject until he perceives that his sanctification *before God* was accomplished at Calvary. As we read, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you *holy* and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Col. 1:21, 22). By His work at the cross, Christ presents the Church unto God in all the excellency of His perfect sacrifice. In these passages it is not at all a question of any work which is wrought *in* us, but of what Christ's oblation has secured *for* us. By virtue of His sacrifice, believers have been set apart unto God in all Christ's purity and merits, a sure title being accorded them for Heaven. God accounts us holy according to the holiness of Christ's sacrifice, the full value of which rests upon the least instructed, the feeblest, and most tried Christian on earth.

So infinitely sufficient is Christ's oblation for us that "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). As we read again, "Ye are *complete* in Him" (Col. 2:10), and this, because His work was complete. *All* true believers are in the everlasting purpose of God, and in the actual accomplishment of that purpose by the Lord Jesus, perfectly justified and perfectly sanctified. But all believers are not *aware* of that blessed fact; far from it. Many are confused and bewildered on this subject. One reason for that is that so many are looking almost entirely to human teachers for instructions, instead of relying upon the Holy Spirit to guide them into the truth, and searching the Scriptures for a knowledge of the same. The religious world today is a veritable "Babel of tongues," and all certainty is at an end if we turn away from the Word (failing to make *it* our *chief* study) and lean upon preachers. Alas, how many in professing Protestantism are little better off than the poor Papists, who receive unquestioningly what the "priest" tells them.

It is only as we read God's Word, mixing faith therewith (Heb. 4:2) and appropriating the same unto ourselves, that the Christian can enter into *God's* thoughts concerning him. In the sacred Scriptures, and nowhere else, can the believer discover what God has made Christ to be unto him and what He has made him to be in Christ. So too it is in the Scriptures, and nowhere else, that we can learn the truth about *ourselves*, that in the flesh (what we are by nature as the depraved descendants of fallen Adam) there "dwelleth *no* good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Until we learn to distinguish (as God does!) between the "I" and the "sin which dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:20) there can be no settled peace. Scripture knows nothing of the sanctification of "the old man," and as long as we are hoping for any improvement in him, we are certain to meet with disappointment. If we are to "wor-

ship God in the Spirit, and *rejoice* in Christ Jesus” we must learn to have “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

“Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). The precious blood of Christ has done more than simply make expiation for their sins: it has also set them apart to God as His people. It is that which has brought them *into fellowship* with the Father Himself. By the shedding of His blood for us, Christ made it consistent with the honour and holiness of God to take us as His peculiar people; it also procured the Holy Spirit who has (by regeneration) fitted us for the privileges and duties of our high calling. Thus, Christ has sanctified His people both objectively and subjectively. We are “sanctified with His own blood,” first, as it was an *oblation* to God; second, as its *merits* are imputed to us; third, as its *efficacy* is applied to us.

Christ’s blood “cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) in a threefold way. First, Godwards, by blotting out our sins and removing our defilement from His view (as Judge). Second, by procuring the Holy Spirit, by whom we receive “the *washing* of regeneration” (Titus 3:5). Third, by our consciences being “purged” *as faith lays hold of* these blessed facts, and thus we are fitted to “serve the living God”! (Heb. 9:14). Herein we may perceive how God puts the fullest honour on His beloved Son, by making Him not only the Repairer of our ruin and the triumphant Undoer of the Serpent’s work (1 John 3:8), but also giving us His own perfect standing before God and communicating His own holy nature unto His people—for a branch cannot be in the true Vine without partaking of its life.

In the Person of Christ God beholds a holiness which abides His closest scrutiny, yea, which rejoices and satisfies His heart; and whatever Christ is before God, He is for His people—“whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered” (Heb. 6:20), “*now* to appear in the presence of God *for us*” (Heb. 9:24)! In Christ’s holiness we are meet for that place into which Divine grace has exalted us, so that we are “made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). This is not accomplished by any experience, separated by a long process from our justification, but is a blessed fact since the moment we first believed on Christ. We are in Christ, and how can any one be *in Him*, and yet not be perfectly sanctified? From the first moment we were “joined to the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:17), we are “*holy* brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1). *This* is what the Christian’s faith needs to lay hold of and rest on, upon the authority of Him that cannot lie. Nevertheless, the best taught, the most spiritual and mature Christian, apprehends the truth but feebly and inadequately, for now “we see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12).

True, there *is* such a thing as a growth *in the knowledge of* our sanctification, that is, providing our thoughts are formed by the Word of God. There is an experimental entering into the practical enjoyment of what God has made Christ to be unto us, so that by faith therein our thoughts and habits, affections and associations are affected thereby. There is such a thing as our apprehending the glorious standing and state which Divine grace has given us in the Beloved, and exhibiting the influence of the same upon our character and conduct. But *that* is not what we are *here* treating of. That which we are now considering is the wondrous and glorious fact that the Christian was as completely sanctified in God’s view the first moment he laid hold of Christ by faith, as he will be when every vestige of sin has disappeared from his person, and he stands before Him glo-

rified in spirit and soul and body.

But the question may be asked, What provision has God made to meet the needs of His people sinning *after* they are sanctified? This falls not within the compass of the present aspect of our subject. Yet briefly, the answer is, The ministry of Christ on high as our great High Priest (Heb. 7:25) and Advocate (1 John 2:1); and their penitently confessing their sins, which secures their forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). The sins of the Christian mar his communion with God and hinder his enjoyment of His salvation, but they affect not his standing and state in Christ. If I judge not myself for my sinful failures and falls, the chastening rod will descend upon me, yet, wielded not by an angry God, but by my loving Father (Heb. 12:5-11).

We are not unmindful of the fact that there is not a little in this article which worldly minded professors may easily pervert to their own ruin—what truth of Scripture is not capable of being “wrested”? But that is no reason why God’s people should be *deprived* of one of the choicest and most nourishing portions of the Bread of Life! Other articles in this series are thoroughly calculated to “preserve the balance of truth.”—A.W.P.



We wish to take this opportunity of thanking many Christian friends for their *prayers* and kindly efforts to secure new readers. The Lord has graciously granted much encouragement during the last three months [written by Brother Pink in 1936]. Our circulation is still below one thousand, so we trust that those who are interested in the continuance of these “Studies” will neither cease praying daily nor relax their efforts to make the Magazine known to others likely to welcome and be helped by its contents. Only those who are willing to *take the time* to promote their soul’s interest would profit, for our articles are not designed for hurried and superficial reading. The best method is *not* to read right through each issue singly, but to take the *two* cover-page articles together, then the two on Hebrews, then the two on David, and so on [still a very good suggestion—60 years later!] May the Lord bless us and make us an increasing blessing to His dear people both by pen and mouth.—A.W.P.

Gradual Conquest.

“I will not drive them (the Canaanites) out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. *By little and little* I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land” (Exo. 23:29, 30). Thus it is with the children of God. If they had not enemies without and within, and oppositions in their way, there are some dangerous “beasts” that would be ready to “increase” upon them.

For instance, there is a beast which is called *pride*, that might grow upon you if you had no enemies to fight with, and while (experimental—A.W.P.) sanctification is incomplete. Hence, a thorn in the flesh was given to Paul that he might not be exalted above measure. Is not the thorn in the flesh well ordered that prevents confidence in the flesh? There is a beast called *security*, that might grow upon you. But now there are enemies on all hands of you, to prevent your falling asleep, to keep you watching and waking, and constantly on your guard. There is a beast called *presumption*, that might grow upon you, and make you think you were able to go forward to Heaven upon your own legs and in your own strength, if you found no such enemies in the way. There is another beast called *worldly-mindedness*, that might grow upon you, if you had no adversaries and adversities to vex you, and wean you from the world. You would be in danger of saying, It is good to be here. But now the wars and battles in your way to Heaven make you say with your heart, O! it is better to be there.

There is a beast, a filthy brute beast, called *sensuality*, that might grow upon you, believer, that might make you lukewarm and formal in all your duties, as well as carnal and light in the intervals of duties. But the sight of your spiritual enemies on the field will make you see a need to be spiritual, zealous, earnest, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. There is also a filthy dumb beast which is called *forgetfulness*, that would certainly grow upon you, and be very dangerous to your soul and spiritual welfare, if your enemies were all destroyed. Therefore God says, “Slay them not, lest My people forget” (Psa. 59:11). If the execution were quick and hasty, the impressions of it would not be deep and durable. Swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; therefore, when we think that God’s judgments upon the nations of our spiritual enemies come on but very slowly, we must conclude that God hath wise and holy ends in that gradual procedure. “Slay them not, lest My people forget”—extract from a sermon by Ralph Erskine, 1760.

Yes, Christian reader, God has a good reason for permitting the lusts of the flesh to rage, at times, within you. All His ways are marked by infinite wisdom, even though very often we are unable to discern it. So it is here. How often has a saint wondered why God has withheld that victory over indwelling sin, for which he has prayed so long and so earnestly. There is a needs-be for failure as well as victory, for sorrow as well as joy. In the dust before Him is our proper place, and if we leave it, He suffers us to be *tripped up* by Satan, to fling us back there! Moreover, as Mr. Erskine points out, our graces must be *exercised* if our “enemies” are to be prevented from having dominion over us. One day we shall perceive more clearly why God permitted us to experience so many falls, and to “go halting” all our days; and *why* it was that “by little and little” He vanquished our spiritual foes.—A.W.P.