

**February, 1936**  
**Studies in the Scriptures**  
**The Spirit Assuring.**

“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). Because they had been eternally predestinated unto the adoption of sons (Eph. 1:4, 5), because they were actually given to Christ under that character in the Everlasting Covenant (John 17:2, Heb. 2:13), at God’s appointed time the Holy Spirit is sent unto their hearts to give them a knowledge of the wondrous fact that they have a place in the very family of God and that God is their Father. This it is which inclines their hearts to love Him, delight in Him, and place all their dependence on Him. The great design of the Gospel is to reveal the love of God to His people, and thereby recover their love to God, that they may love Him again who first loved them. But the bare revelation of that love in the Word will not secure this, until “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

It is by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit that the elect are recovered from the flesh and the world unto God. By nature they love themselves and the world above God; but the Holy Spirit imparts to them a new nature, and Himself indwells them, so that they now love God and live to Him. This it is which prepares them to believe and appropriate the Gospel. The effects of the Spirit’s entering as the Spirit of adoption are liberty, confidence, and holy delight. As they had “received” from the first Adam “the spirit of bondage”—a legalistic spirit which produced “fear”; their receiving the Spirit of adoption is all the more grateful: liberty being the sweeter because of the former captivity. The Law having done its work in the conscience, they can now appreciate the glad tidings of the Gospel—the revelation of the amazing love and grace of God in Jesus Christ. A spirit of love is now bred in them by the knowledge of the same.

The blessed fruit of receiving the Spirit of adoption is that there is born in the heart a childlike affection toward God and a childlike confidence in Him: “Whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The Apostle employs in the original two different languages, “Abba” being Syrian and “Father” being Greek, the one familiar to the Jews, the other to the Gentiles. By so doing he denotes that believing Jews and Gentiles are children of one family, alike privileged to approach God as their Father. “Christ, our peace, having broken down the middle wall of partition between them; and now, at the same mercyseat, the Christian Jew and the believing Gentile both one in Christ Jesus, *meet*, as the rays of light converge and blend in one common centre—at the feet of the reconciled Father” (O. Winslow).

As the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit bestows upon the quickened soul a filial spirit: He acts in unison with the Son and gives a sense of our relationship as sons. Emancipating from that bondage and fear which the application of the Law stirred up within us, He brings into the joyous liberty which the reception of the Gospel bestows. O the blessedness of being delivered from the Covenant of Works! O the bliss of reading our sentence of pardon in the blood of Immanuel! It is by virtue of our having received the Spirit of adoption that we cry “Father! Father!” It is the cry of our own heart, the desire of our soul going out unto God. And yet *our* spirit does not originate it: without the immediate presence, operation, and grace of the Holy Spirit we neither would nor could know God as our “Father.” The Spirit is the Author of everything in us which goes out after God.

This filial spirit which the Christian has received is evidenced in various ways. First,

by a holy *reverence* for God our Father, as the natural child should honour or reverence his human parent. Second, by *confidence* in God our Father, as the natural child trusts in and relies upon his earthly parent. Third, by *love* for our Father, as the natural child has an affectionate regard for his parent. Fourth, by *subjection to* God our Father, as the natural child obeys his parent. This filial spirit prompts him to approach God with spiritual freedom, so that he clings to Him with the confidence of a babe, and leans upon Him with the calm repose of a little one lying on its parent's breast. It admits to the closest intimacy. Unto God *as his "Father"* the Christian should repair at all times, casting all his care upon Him, knowing that He careth for him (1 Peter 5:7). It is to be manifested by an affectionate subjection (obedience) to Him "as dear children" (Eph. 5:1).

"The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of God, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and who is sent by Them to shed abroad the love of God in the heart, to give a real enjoyment of it, and to fill the soul with joy and peace in believing. He comes to testify of Christ; and by taking of the things which are His, and showing them to His people, He draws their heart to Him; and by opening unto them the freeness and fullness of Divine grace, and the exceeding great and precious promises which God has given unto His people, He leads them to know their interest in Christ; and helps them in His name, blood, and righteousness, to approach their heavenly Father with holy delight" (S.E. Pierce).

John Gill observes that the word "Abba" reads backwards the same as forwards, implying that God is the Father of His people in adversity as well as prosperity. The Christian's is an inalienable relationship: God is as much his "Father" when He chastens as when He delights, as much so when He frowns as when He smiles. God will never disown His own children or disinherit them as heirs. When Christ taught His disciples to pray He bade them approach the mercyseat and say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." He Himself, in Gethsemane, cried, "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36)—expressive of His confidence in and dependency upon Him. To address God as "Father" encourages faith, confirms hope, warms the heart, and draws out its affections to Him who is Love itself.

Let it next be pointed out that this filial spirit is subject to the state and place in which the Christian yet is. Some suppose that if we have received the Spirit of adoption there must be produced a steady and uniform assurance, a perpetual fire burning upon the altar of the heart. Not so. When the Son of God became incarnate, He condescended to yield unto all the sinless infirmities of human nature, so that He hungered and ate, wearied and slept. In like manner, the Holy Spirit deigns to submit Himself unto the laws and circumstances which ordinarily regulate human nature. In Heaven the man Christ Jesus is glorified; and in Heaven the Spirit in the Christian will shine like a perpetual star. But on earth, He indwells our hearts like a flickering flame; never to be extinguished, but not always bright, and needing to be guarded from rude blasts, or why bid us "quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19)?

The Spirit, then, does not grant the believer assurance irrespective of his own carefulness and diligence. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights *burning*" (Luke 12:35): the latter being largely determined by the former. The Christian is not always in the enjoyment of a child-like confidence. And why? Because he is often guilty of "grieving" the Spirit, and then, He withholds much of His comfort. Hereby we may ascertain our communion with God and when it is interrupted, when He be pleased or displeased with us—by the motions or withdrawals of the Spirit's consolation. Note the order in Acts 9:31, "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit"; and

again in Acts 11:24, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit." Hence, when our confidence toward "the Father" is clouded, we should search our ways and find out what is the matter.

Empty professors are fatally deluded by a false *confidence*, a complacent taking for granted that they are real Christians when they have never been born again. But many true possessors are plagued by a *false diffidence*, a doubting whether they be Christians at all. None are so inextricably caught in the toils of a false confidence as they who suspect not their delusion and are unconscious of their imminent danger. On the other hand, none are so far away from that false confidence as those who tremble lest *they* be cherishing it. True diffidence is a distrust of *myself*. True confidence is a leaning wholly upon *Christ*, and *that* is ever accompanied by utter renunciation of myself. Self-renunciation is the heart-felt acknowledgment that my resolutions, best efforts, faith and holiness, are nothing before God, and that Christ must be my All.

In all genuine Christians there is a co-mingling of real confidence and false diffidence, because as long as they remain on this earth there is in them the root of faith and the root of doubt. Hence their prayer is "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). In some Christians *faith* prevails more than it does in others; in some *unbelief* is more active than in others. Therefore some have a stronger and steadier assurance than others. The presence of the indwelling Spirit is largely evidenced by our frequent recourse to the Father in prayer—often with sighs, sobs, and groans. The consciousness of the Spirit of adoption within us is largely regulated by the extent to which we yield ourselves unto His government.—A.W.P.

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

#### 98. *The Inferiority of Judaism: 12:20, 21.*

The Divine Law was, for the substance of it, originally written in the hearts of mankind by God Himself, when their federal head and father was created in His own image and likeness. But through the Fall it was considerably marred, as to its efficacious motions in the human heart. The entrance of sin and the corruption of our nature largely silenced its authoritative voice in the soul. Nevertheless, its unchanging demand and dread penalty were secured in the consciences of Adam's depraved posterity. The law is so inlaid with the principles of our moral nature, so engrafted on all the faculties of our souls, that none has been able to completely get from under its power. Though the wicked find it utterly contrary to their desires and designs, and continually threatening their everlasting ruin, yet they cannot utterly cast off its yoke: see Romans 2:14, 15. Hence it is that, even among the most degraded and savage tribes, a knowledge of right and wrong, with some standard of conduct, is preserved.

Not only was the impression of the Divine Law upon the human heart largely—though not totally—defaced by Adam's apostasy, but from Cain unto the Exodus succeeding generations more and more flouted its authority, and disregarded its requirements in their common practice. Therefore, when God took Israel into covenant relationship with Himself and established them into a national Church, He *restored to them His Law*, in all its purity, majesty, and terror. This He did, not only to renew it as a guide unto all righteousness and holiness, as the only rule of obedience unto Himself and of right and equity amongst men, and also to be a check unto sin by its commands and threatenings, but principally to declare in the Church *the eternal establishment of it*, that no alteration should be made in it, but that all must be fulfilled to the uttermost before any sinner could have any acceptance with Him.

As the Law was the original rule of obedience between God and mankind, and as it had failed of its end through the entrance of sin, the Lord had never revived and proclaimed it in so solemn a manner at Sinai, had it been capable of any abrogation and alteration at any time. Nay, He then gave many *additional evidences of its perpetuity and abiding authority*. It was solely for the promulgation of His Law that the presence of God appeared on the mount, attended with such dreadful solemnity. The Ten Commandments were the *only* communication which God then gave directly unto the people themselves—those institutions which *were* to be repealed at a later date (the ceremonial laws) were given through Moses! Those Ten Commandments were spoken directly unto the whole nation with a Voice that was great and terrible. Later, they were written by His own finger on tables of stone. Thus did God confirm His Law and evidenced it was incapable of dissolution—how it has been established and fulfilled the Epistle to the Romans makes known.

The *different forms* which the Lord's appearances took in Old Testament times were always in accord with each distinct revelation of His mind and will. He appeared to Abraham in the shape of a man (Gen. 18:1, 2), because He came to give promise of the Seed of blessing and to vouchsafe a representation of the future incarnation. To Moses He appeared as a flame in a bush which was not consumed (Exo. 3), because He would intimate that all the fiery trials through which the Church should pass would not consume it, and that because *He* was in it. To Joshua He appeared as a man of war, with drawn sword in His hand (Josh. 5:13), because He would assure him of victory over all his ene-

mies. But at Sinai His appearing was surrounded by terrors, because He would represent the severity of His Law, with the inevitable and awful destruction of all those who lay not hold of the promise for deliverance.

The *place* of this glorious and solemn appearing of the Lord was also full of significance. It was neither in Egypt nor yet in Canaan, but in the midst of a great howling desert. Only those who have actually seen the place, can form any adequate conception of the abject dreariness and desolation of the scene. It was an absolute solitude, far removed from the habitation and converse of man. Here the people could neither see nor hear anything but God and themselves. There was no shelter or place of retirement: they were brought out into the open, face to face with God. Therein He gave a type and representation of the Great Judgment at the last day, when all who are out of Christ will be brought face to face with their Judge, and will behold nothing but the tokens of His wrath, and hear only the Law's dread sentence announcing their irrevocable doom.

Sinai was surrounded by a barren and fruitless wilderness, wherein there was neither food nor water. Accurately does that depict the unregenerate in a state of sin: the Law brings forth nothing in their lives which is acceptable to God or really beneficial to the souls of men. The Mount itself produced nothing but bushes and brambles, from which some scholars say its name is derived. From a distance that vegetation makes an appearance of some fruitfulness in the place, but when it be more closely examined it is found that there is nothing except that which is *fit for the fire*. Thus it is with sinners under the Law. They seem to perform many works of obedience, yea, such as they trust in and make their boast of; but when they are weighed in the Divine balance, they are found to be but thorns and briars, the dead works of those whose minds are enmity against God. Nothing else can the Law bring forth from those who are out of Christ: "*From Me is thy fruit found*" (Hosea 14:8) is His own avowal.

Nor was there any water in the desert of Horeb to make it fruitful. Pause, my reader, and admire the "wondrous works" (Psa. 145:5) of God. When we are given eyes to see, we may discern the Creator's handiwork as plainly in the desolate wastes of Nature as in the fertile field and gardens, as truly in the barren and forbidding mountains as in the fruitful and attractive valleys. He whose fingers had shaped the place where His Son was crucified as "a place of *a skull*" (Matt. 27:33), had diverted from the desert of Horeb all rivers and streams. That water upon which the people of God then lived, issued from the smitten rock (Exo. 17:6), for it is only through Christ that *the Holy Spirit is given*: see John 7:28, 39, Acts 2:33, Titus 3:5, 6. They who reject Christ have not the Spirit: see Romans 8:9, Jude 19.

We may further observe that the appearing of the Lord God at the giving of the Law was on the top of a high mountain, and not in a plain: this added to both the glory and the terror of it. This gave a striking adumbration of the Throne of His majesty, high over the people, who were far below at its base. As they looked up, they saw the mount above them full of fire and smoke, the ground on which they stood quaking beneath their feet, the air filled with thunderings and lightnings, with the piercing blasts of the trumpet and the voice of the Lord Himself falling on their ears. What other thought could fill their minds than that it was "a fearful thing" to be summoned to judgment before the ineffably Holy One? O that the preachers of our day could say with him who had experienced the reality of Sinai in his own soul, "Knowing therefore *the terror of the Lord*, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

The Lord's appearing on Mount Sinai was only a *temporary* one—in contrast from His “dwelling” in Zion (Isa. 8:18). This shadowed-forth the fact that the *economy* there instituted was but a transient one—though the *Law* there promulgated is eternal. Those, then, who turn unto Sinai for salvation are left entirely unto themselves. “God dwells no more on Sinai. Those who abide under the law (as a covenant A.W.P.) shall neither have His presence nor any gracious pledge of it. And all these things are spoken to stir us up to seek for an interest in that blessed Gospel-state which is here proposed to us. And thus much we have seen already, that without it there is neither relief from the curse of the law, nor acceptable fruit of obedience, nor pledge of Divine favour to be obtained” (John Owen, whom we have again followed closely in the above paragraphs).

Before turning to the final lines in the graphic picture which the Apostle gave of the appearing of the Lord at Sinai, let us again remind ourselves of his principal *design* in the same. The immediate end which the Apostle had before him, was to persuade the Hebrews to adhere closely to the Gospel, his appeal being drawn from the evident fact of the superlative excellency of it to the Law. In particular, he was here enforcing his former exhortations unto steadfastness under afflictions, to an upright walk in the ways of God, to the following of peace with all men, and to persevere diligently that they failed not of the grace of God. This he does by pointing out that ancient order of things *from which they had been delivered*, for such is the force of his openings words “ye are *not* come unto” etc. (Heb. 12:18).

“For they could not endure that which was commanded” (v. 20). Having mentioned in the preceding verses seven things which their fathers came unto at Sinai, the Apostle now describes *the effects* which those startling phenomena produced upon them. The first was, the people “entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more” (v. 19), the reason being “for they could not endure” it. The display of God's terrible majesty, the distance from Him they were required to maintain, and the high spirituality of the Law then promulgated, with its fearful penalty attending the least infraction of it, completely overwhelmed them. So it is still: a view of God *as a Judge*, represented in fire and blackness, will fill the souls of *convicted* sinners with dread and terror. No matter how boldly and blatantly they have carried themselves, when the Spirit brings a transgressor to that Mount, the stoutest heart will quake.

When God deals with men by the Law, He shuts them up to Himself and their own conscience. As we pointed out in an earlier paragraph, God gave the Law to Israel neither in Egypt nor in Canaan, but in a desert, a place of absolute solitude, remote from the commerce of men. There the people could neither see nor hear anything but God and themselves. There was no shelter or place of retirement: they were brought out into the open, face to face with Him with whom they had to do. So it is now: when God has designs of mercy toward a sinner, when He takes him in hand, He brings him out of all his retreats and refuges, and compels him to face the just demands of His Law, and the unspeakably dreadful manner in which he has hitherto disregarded its requirements and sought to hear not its accusations.

When the Law is preached to sinners—alas in so many places today that which gives “the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20) is entirely omitted—it usually falls upon the ears of those who promptly betake themselves to various retreats and reliefs for evading its searching and terror-producing message. They seek refuge in the concerns and amusements of this life in order to crowd out serious and solemn thoughts of the life to come.

They listen to the bewitching promises of self-pleasing, "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). Or, they put far forward in their minds the "evil day" and take security in resolutions of repentance and reformation before death shall come upon them. They have many other things to engage their attention than to listen to the voice of the Law; at least, they persuade themselves it is not yet necessary that they should seriously hearken thereto.

But when God brings the sinner to the Mount, as He most certainly will, either here or hereafter, all these pretenses and false comforts vanish, every prop is knocked from under him: to hide away from his Judge is now impossible. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the *refuge* of lies, and the waters shall overflow the *hiding place*" (Isa. 28:17). Then it is that the sinner discovers "for the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it" (Isa. 28:20). He is forced out into the open: he is brought face to face with his Maker: he is compelled to attend unto the voice of the Law. There is neither escape nor relief for him. His *conscience* is now held to that which he can neither endure nor avoid. He is made to come out from behind the trees, to find his fig-leaves provide no covering (Gen. 3:9-11).

As the stern and inexorable voice of the Law enters into his innermost being, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), the poor sinner is paralyzed with fear. The sight of the Divine Majesty on His throne overwhelms him: the terms and curse of the Law slay his every hope. Now he experiences the truth of Romans 7:9, 10, "For I was alive (in my own estimation) without the law once: but when the commandment came (applied in power to the conscience by the Spirit) sin revived (became a living, raging, cursed reality) and I died (to all expectation of winning God's approval). And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Like Israel before Sinai, the sinner *cannot endure* the voice of the Law. The Law commands him, but provides no strength to meet its requirements. It shows him his sins, but it reveals no Saviour. He is encompassed with terror and sees no way of escape from eternal death.

That is the very office of the Law in the hands of the Holy Spirit. To shatter the sinner's unconcern, to make him conscious of the claims of the holy God, to convict him of his lifelong rebellion against Him, to strip him of the rags of his self-righteousness, to slay all hope of self-help and self-deliverance, to bring him to the realization that he is *lost*, utterly undone, *sentenced to death*. "Which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: For they could not endure that which was commanded" (Heb. 12:19, 20). When the Holy Spirit applies the Law, in power, the sinner's own conscience is obliged to acknowledge that his condemnation is *just*. And there the Law leaves him: wretched, hopeless, terror-stricken. Unless he flies for refuge to Christ he is lost forever.

Reader, suffer us please to make this a personal issue. Have *you* ever experienced anything which corresponds, in substance, to what we have said above? Have you ever heard the thunderings and felt the lightnings of Sinai in your own soul? Have you, in your conscience, been brought face to face with your Judge, and heard Him read the fearful record of your transgressions? Have you received by the Law such a knowledge of sin that you are painfully conscious that every faculty of your soul and every member of your

body is defiled and corrupt? Have you been driven out of every refuge and relief and brought into the presence of Him who is ineffably holy and inflexibly just, who “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7)? Have you heard that dread sentence “*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*” (Gal. 3:10)? Has it brought you down into the dust to cry, “I am lost: utterly lost, hopelessly lost; there is *nothing* I can do to deliver myself”? The ground must be ploughed before it can receive seed, and the heart must be broken up by the Law before it is ready for the Gospel.

In addition to the other terror-producing elements connected with the institution of Judaism, the Apostle mentions two other features. “And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart” (Heb. 12:20). To increase the reverence which was due to the appearing of Jehovah on Sinai, the people were required to keep their distance at the base of the mount, and were strictly forbidden an approach beyond the bounds fixed to them. This command was confirmed by a penalty, that every one who transgressed it should be put to death, as a disobedient rebel, devoted to utter destruction. This restriction and its sanction was also designed to produce in the people awe and terror of God in His giving of the Law.

That to which the Apostle referred is recorded in Exodus 19:12, 13, “Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live.” As Owen well suggested, the prohibition respecting the cattle of the Israelites not only made the more manifest the absolute inaccessibleness of God in and by the Law, but also seemed to intimate the uncleanness of *all* things which sinners possess, by virtue of their relation to them. Everything that fallen man touches is defiled by him, and even “the *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 15:8).

The punishment of the man who defiantly touched the Mount was death by stoning, that of a beast by stoning or being thrust through with a dart. In either case they were slain at a distance: no hand *touched* the one who had offended. This emphasised the heinousness of the offence and the execrableness of the offender: others must not be defiled by coming into immediate contact with them—at what distance ought we to keep ourselves from everything which falls under the curse of the Law! How the whole of this brings out the stern *severity* of the Law! “If even an irrational animal was to be put to death in a manner which marked it as unclean—as something not to be touched—what might rational offenders expect as the punishment of their sins? and if the violation of a *positive* institution of this kind involved consequences so fearful, what must be the result of transgressing the *moral* requirements of the great Lawgiver?” (John Brown).

“And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb. 12:21). The Apostle now turns from the people themselves, and describes the effect upon their leader of the terror-producing phenomena that attended the institution of Judaism. Here was the very man who had dared, again and again, to confront the powerful monarch of Egypt and make known to him the demand of God, and later announced to his face the coming of plague after plague. Here was the commander-in-chief of Israel’s hosts who had boldly led them through the Red Sea. He was a holy person, more eminent in grace than all others of his time, for he was “very meek, above all the men which were



upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Now if *such* a man was overcome with dread, how terrible must be the severity and curse of the Divine Law!

Furthermore, let it be carefully borne in mind that Moses was no stranger to the Lord Himself: not only was he accustomed to receive Divine revelations, but he had previously beheld a representation of the Lord’s presence at the bush. Moreover, he was the Divinely-appointed intermediary, the mediator between God and the people at that time. Yet none of these privileges exempted him from an overwhelming dread of the terror of the Lord in the giving of the Law. What a proof is this that the very best of men cannot stand before God on the ground of their own righteousness! How utterly vain are the hopes of those who think to be saved by Moses (John 9:28)! Surely if there be anything in all the Scriptures which should turn us from resting on the Law for salvation, it is the horror and terror of Moses on Mount Sinai.

“And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake” (Heb. 12:21). The fact that there is no record given in the Old Testament of this particular item, occasions no difficulty whatever unto those who believe in the full inspiration of Holy Writ. Nor is there any need for us to have recourse unto the Romish theory of “unwritten tradition,” and suppose that a knowledge of the terror of Moses had been orally preserved among the Jews. That which had not been chronicled in the book of Exodus, was here revealed to the Apostle by the Holy Spirit Himself, and was now recorded by him for the purpose of accentuating the awfulness of what occurred at Sinai; and this, that the Hebrews should be increasingly thankful that Divine grace had connected them with so different an order of things.

The scope and design of the whole of our passage should now be obvious to the reader. The purpose of the Apostle was to show again how inferior Judaism was to Christianity. This he here does by taking us back to Sinai, where Judaism was formally instituted by the appearing of Jehovah at the giving of the Law, and where the Mosaic economy was established by a covenant based thereon. All the circumstances connected with its institution were in most striking accord with the leading features and characteristics of that dispensation. At that time the nation of Israel was in a waste, howling wilderness, standing in speechless terror at the foot of the Mount. There Jehovah manifested Himself in His awful holiness and majesty, as Lawgiver and Judge; the people at a distance fenced off from Him. How profoundly thankful should Christians be that *they* belong to a much more mild and gracious order of things!

Sinai was “the mount that might be touched” (Heb. 12:12)—a symbol of that order of things which was addressed to the outward senses. The “blackness and darkness” which covered it was emblematic of the *obscurity* of spiritual things under the Mosaic economy, a thick veil of types and shadows hiding the substance and reality now revealed by the Gospel. The people being fenced off at the base of the Mount denoted that under Judaism they had no way of approach and no access into the immediate presence of God. The thunderings, lightnings and fire, expressed the wrath of God against all who transgress His righteous Law. The “tempest” was a sign of the instability and temporariness of that dispensation, in contrast from the peace which Christ has made and the permanent and eternal order of things which He has brought in. The utter consternation of Moses gave clear proof that *he* was not the perfect and ultimate Mediator between God and men. All of which plainly intimated the need for something else, something better, something more suited unto lost sinners.—A.W.P.

## The Life of David.

### 50. *His Kindness Repulsed.*

"I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Psa. 119:96). The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this verse, "I have seen an end of all things about which I have employed my care; but Thy commandment is very large." The Syriac version reads, "I have seen an end of all regions and countries (that is, I have found the compass of the habitable world to be finite and limited), but Thy commandment is of vast extent." The contrast drawn by the Psalmist is between the works of the creature and the Word of the Creator. The most perfect of worldly things are but imperfect; even man, at his best estate, is "altogether vanity" (Psa. 39:5). We may quickly see "the end" or "the bound" of man's works, for the profoundest product of human wisdom is but shallow, superficial, and having its limits; but it is far otherwise with the Scriptures of Truth.

"But Thy commandment is exceeding broad." The Word partakes of the perfections of its Divine Author: holiness, inerrancy, infinitude, and eternity, are numbered among its wondrous qualities. God's Word is so deep that none can fathom it (Psa. 36:6), so high that it is established in Heaven (Psa. 119:89), so long that it will endure forever (1 Peter 1:23), so exceeding broad that none can measure it, so full that its contents will never be exhausted. It is such a rich storehouse of spiritual treasure, that no matter how many draw upon it, the wealth thereof remains undiminished. It has in it such an inconceivable vastness of wisdom, that no single verse in it has been fully fathomed by any man. No matter how many may have previously written upon a certain chapter, the Spirit can still reveal wonders and beauties in it never before perceived.

We are now to go over again the same passage which was before us last month, but this time it is to be considered from an entirely different viewpoint. Perhaps some explanatory remarks are called for at this point, that none of our readers may be confused. There are many portions of the Word that are not only capable of several legitimate applications, but which *require* to be pondered from distinct and separate angles. Oftentimes the same incident which manifests the goodness and grace of God also exhibits the depravity and sin of man. Many parts of the life of Samson furnish most striking prefigurations of Christ, yet at the same time we see in them the grievous failures of Samson himself. The same dual principle is exemplified in the lives of other characters prominent in the Old Testament. Instead of being stumbled thereby, let us rather admire the wisdom of Him who has brought together things so diverse.

Moses erred sadly when, instead of trustfully responding promptly unto the Lord's call for him to make known His request unto Pharaoh, he gave way to unbelief and voiced one objection after another (Exo. 3 and 4): nevertheless in the same way we may perceive a lovely exemplification of the self-diffidence of those called upon to minister in Divine things, and their personal sense of unfitness and utter unworthiness. The two things are quite distinct, though they are found in one and the same incident: the personal failure of Moses, yet his very failure supplying a blessed type of humility in the true servant of God. That which is found in 2 Samuel 10 affords a parallel: the action of David in expressing his condolence to the king of the Ammonites supplies a beautiful type of Christ sending forth His servants with a message of comfort for sinners; yet, as we shall see, from a *personal* viewpoint, David's conduct was to be blamed.

The same thing is seen again in connection with Jonah. We have the Lord's own au-

thority for regarding him as a type or “sign” of Himself (Matt. 12:39, 40), and marvelously did that Prophet foreshadow the Saviour in many different details. But that in no wise alters or militates against the fact that, as we read the personal history of Jonah, we find some grievous sins recorded against him. Let it not seem strange, then, if our present exposition of 2 Samuel 10 differs so radically from our treatment of it last month: there is no “contradiction” between the two articles; instead, they approach the same incident from two widely separated angles. Our justification for so doing lies in the fact that the incident is described in identical terms in 1 Chronicles 19 yet its context there is *quite different* from 2 Samuel 10.

On this occasion, instead of admiring the lovely typical picture which 2 Samuel 10 sets forth, we shall examine the personal conduct of David, seeking to take to heart the lessons and warnings which the same inculcates. “And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father” (2 Sam. 10:1, 2).

In seeking to get at the practical teaching of these verses, the first question which needs to be pondered is, *why* did David send his servants with a message of comfort to the king of Ammon? What was the motive which prompted him? It is no sufficient answer to reply, The kindness of his heart; for that only changes the form of our inquiry to, *Why* should he determine to show kindness unto the head of this heathen tribe? And how are we to discover the answer to our question? By noting carefully the context: this time, the context of 1 Chronicles 19; which is the same as the *remoter* context in 2 Samuel 10 for 1 Chronicles 18 is parallel with 2 Samuel 8. And what do we find there? David engaging in warfare, subduing the Philistines (2 Sam. 8:1), the Moabites (v. 2), Hadadezer (v. 3), the Syrians (v. 5), placing garrisons in Edom, and setting in order the affairs of his kingdom (vv. 15-18).

After engaging in so much fighting, it appears that David now desired a season of rest. This is borne out by what we are told in the very first verse of the next chapter: “And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. *But David tarried still* at Jerusalem” (2 Sam. 11:1). Thus, in the light of the immediate context, both before and after what is recorded in 2 Samuel 10 and 1 Chronicles 19, it seems clear that David’s sending a message of comfort to Hanun after the death of his father, was a diplomatic move on his part to secure peace between the Ammonites and Israel. In other words, reduced to first principles, it was an attempt to promote amity between the ungodly and the godly. The Lord *blew upon this move*, and caused it to come to naught.

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that *the friendship* of the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:4). Yes, we may know it in theory, but alas, how often we disobey it in practice. God requires His people to be separated from the world, to be strangers and pilgrims therein, to have no close familiarity with its subjects, to refuse all “yokes” with them. And is not that both right and necessary? What fellowship can there be between those who love His Son and those who hate Him? between those who are subject to His sceptre and those who are in league with Satan? Yet, self-evident as is this principle, how slow many of us are to conform our *ways* to its requirements! How prone

we are to flirt with those who are the enemies of God.

But if *we* are careless and disobedient, *God* is faithful. In His love for us, He often causes worldlings to *repulse* our friendly advances, to wrongly interpret our kindly overtures, to despise, mock and insult us. If we will not keep on *our* side of the line which God has drawn between the Kingdom of His Son and the kingdom of Satan, then we must not be surprised if He employs the wicked to drive us out of *their* territory. Herein lies the key, my reader, to many a painful experience which often perplexes the Christian. Why does a righteous God suffer me to receive such unjust and cruel treatment from those I wish to be “nice to?” God permits that “enmity” which *He* has placed between the seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the woman to burst out against the latter, because they were becoming too intimate with the former.

It is not only that God rebukes us for disregarding the line which He has drawn between the world and the Church, but that it is our spiritual profit which He designs to promote. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Yes, Christian reader, and that “*all things*” includes the present aloofness of some unsaved people who were once very friendly towards you; that “*all things*” includes the coldness of Christless relatives, the unkind attitude of neighbours, the unfriendliness of those who work side by side with you in the office, store, or workshop. God sees the *danger*, if you do not! Because of His love for you, He prevents your becoming drawn into alliances with those whose influence would greatly hinder your growth in grace. Then instead of chafing against the attitude of your fellows, thank the Lord for *His* faithfulness.

Against what has been said above it may be objected, But you surely do not mean that, in his separation from the world, the Christian must be unsociable and live like a hermit; or that God requires us to be uncivil and morose toward our fellow-creatures. No, dear reader, *that* is not our meaning. We are required to be “pitiful” and “courteous” (1 Peter 3:8), and to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Moreover, the Christian must be very watchful against assuming an “I am holier than thou” attitude toward his fellow-men. Nevertheless, there is a real difference between a respectful and kindly conduct toward the unsaved, and an undue intimacy with them—making close friends of them.

It may be further objected, But in David’s case, it was proper and needful for him to act as he did, for verse 2 expressly states that Hanun’s father had shown kindness to him. Then would it not have been rebukable ingratitude if David had failed to make some suitable return? Exactly what was the nature of that “kindness” which Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had shown David, Scripture does not inform us: and therefore speculation is useless. But if David had *sought* some favour from him, as he did from Achish, the son of the king of Gath (1 Samuel 27:1-7), then he was guilty of turning aside from the high calling and privileged place of one whose dependency should be on the living God alone. When such is the case, when we place our confidence in man and lean upon the creature, we must not be surprised if God rebukes and foils our carnal hopes.

There is a principle involved here which it is important for us to be clear upon, but the application of which is likely to exercise those who are of a tender conscience. How far is it permissible for the Christian to receive favours from unbelievers? Something depends upon the relation borne to him by the one who proffers them; something upon the motive

likely to be actuating the profferer; something upon the nature of what is proffered. Obviously, the Christian must never accept anything from one who has no right to tender it—a dishonest employee, for example. Nor must he accept anything which the Word of God condemns—such as an immodest dress, a ticket to the theatre, etc. Firmly must he refuse any favour which would bring him *under obligation* to a worldling: it is at *this* point that Satan often seeks to ensnare the believer—by bringing him under the power of the ungodly through becoming indebted to them.

But though we are not informed of how and when Nahash had befriended David, the Holy Spirit *has* placed on record an incident which reveals the character of this king: “Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel” (1 Sam. 11:1, 2). Why, then, should David now show respect unto the memory of one who had evidenced himself such a cruel enemy of the people of God! It could not be any *spiritual* principle which actuated Israel’s king on this occasion. A clear word for our guidance concerning those who are the open enemies of God is given us in, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?”! (2 Chron. 19:2).

But not only should the evil character of Nahash have restrained David from showing respect to his memory, but *the race* to which he belonged ought to have been a separating barrier. He was an Ammonite, and as such under the interdict of the Lord, because that Nation had refused to meet the Children of Israel “with bread and with water in the way, when they came forth out of the land of Egypt,” and they together with the Moabites (because they had hired Balaam against them) were debarred from entering into the congregation of the Lord, even to their tenth generation (Deut. 23:3, 4). But more: concerning both the Ammonites and the Moabites God expressly prohibited, “Thou shalt *not* seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever” (Deut. 23:6). David, then, disobeyed a plain command of God on this occasion.

As to whether or not David was personally acquainted with that particular Divine statute, we cannot say. Probably the only thought in his mind was to diplomatically time his effort to secure peace between the two nations. But God blew upon his political scheme, and in so doing gave warning unto His people throughout all generations that, only disappointment and vexation can be expected from their attempts to court the friendship of the ungodly. “And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?” (2 Sam. 10:3). Treacherous minds always suspect other people of perfidy. Beware of those, my reader, who are ever ready to think the worst of others and place an evil construction on the most innocent actions.

“Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away” (v. 4). And why did God allow those princes to wrongly interpret David’s kindness, and their king to heed them and now insult David by thus disgracing his ambassadors? Because He had far different designs than His servant. These men had filled up “the measure” of their iniquity (Gen. 15:16, Matt. 23:32): their hearts were ripe for ruin, and therefore were they hardened to their destruction (2 Sam. 11:1). God had not forgotten what is recorded in 1

Samuel 11:1, 2, though it had taken place many years before. His mills “grind slowly,” yet in the end, “they grind exceeding small.”—A.W.P.

## The Divine Covenants.

### 4. *Abrahamic.*

What was before us last month is of fundamental importance: not only to aright understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant itself, but also for a sound interpretation of much of the Old Testament. Once it be clearly recognised that *the type merges into the antitype*, that believers in Christ are Abraham's "children" (Rom 4:16, Gal. 3:7), citizens of the free and heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26, Eph. 2:19, Rev. 21:2, 14), the "Circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16, Eph. 2:12, 13), the "comers unto Mount Zion" (Heb. 12:22), it will be found that we have a reliable guide for conducting us through the mazes of prophecy, without which we are sure to lose ourselves in inextricable confusion and uncertainty. This was common knowledge among the saints in days gone by, but alas a generation succeeded them boasting they had new light, only to plunge themselves and their followers into gross darkness.

The promises of God to Abraham and his seed were never made to his natural descendants, but belonged to those who had a like faith with him. It could not be otherwise, "For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). *All* the "promises" (not "prophecies") of God are made *in Christ*: that is, all the *blessings* promised are placed in the hands of the Mediator, and none who are out of Christ can lay claim to a single one of them. All who are out of Christ, are out of God's favour, and therefore the Divine threatenings, and not the promises are *their* portion. Here, then, is our reply to those who complain "You apply to the Church all the good things of the Old Testament, but the bad ones you relegate to the Jews." Of course we do: the *blessings* of God pertain to all who are in Christ; the *curses* of God to all—Jews or Gentiles—who are out of Christ.

Thus, the *unbelieving* descendants of Jacob were as much excluded from the Abrahamic promises as were the posterity of Ishmael and Esau; whereas those promises belonged as really and truly to *believing Gentiles* as they did to Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. But alas this basic truth, so clearly revealed in Scripture, is repudiated by "Dispensationists," who are perpetuating the error of those who opposed Christ in the days of His flesh. When He spoke of the *spiritual* freedom which He could bestow, His unregenerate hearers exclaimed, "*We* be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). When He made mention of His Father, the carnal Jews answered "Abraham is *our* father," to which the Saviour replied "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Alas, alas, that so many of our moderns know not *who are* "Abraham's children."

The vital importance of what we sought to present in last month's article will appear still more evident when it be pointed out that believers in Christ have *a joint-heritage with Abraham*, as well as a common standing before God. But many will at once object to this, That cannot be: why, the inheritance of Abraham and his seed was an *earthly* one—it was the land of Canaan which God promised them! Our first answer is, Such was the firm belief of those who crucified the Lord of Glory; such is still the conviction of all the "orthodox" Jews on earth today—Jews who despise and reject the Christ of God. Are *they* safe guides to follow? To say the least, professing Christians who share this view are not in very good company! The very fact that this idea is so widely entertained among Jews who have not the Spirit of God, should raise a strong suspicion in those claiming to have spiritual discernment.

Our second answer is that, If the inheritance of Abraham *was* an “earthly” one, namely, the land of Canaan, then most certainly *the Christians’ inheritance* is an earthly one too, for we are all joint-heirs with Abraham. Are you, my reader, (no matter what you may have received from “deep students of Prophecy”) prepared to settle this question by the plain teaching of Holy Scriptures? If you are, it may quickly be brought to a simple issue: “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, *and heirs* according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). What could be clearer than that: “If children, then heirs” (Rom. 8:17)—if children of God, then heirs of God; and in like manner, if “children” of Abraham, then “heirs” of and with Abraham. There is no legitimate escape from that obvious conclusion.

In the last verse of Galatians 3 the Apostle drew the unavoidable inference from the premises which he had established in the context. Let us return for a moment to Galatians 3:16, and then observe what follows. There the plain statement is made “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made,” and, as we fully proved in last month’s article, the reference is to his *spiritual* “seed”; but as though to remove all possible uncertainty, the Holy Spirit has added “And to thy seed, which is *Christ*”—Christ mystical as in 1 Corinthians 12:12 and Colossians 1:24: that is, Christ Himself and all who are united to Him. Thus there is no room left for a shadow of doubts as *to whom* the Abrahamic promises belonged—his carnal seed being expressly excluded in the “he saith not, and to seeds, as of many.”

“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal. 3:17). The only difficulty lies in the words “in Christ.” Inasmuch as “the covenant” here mentioned was confirmed only four hundred and thirty years before the Law (at Sinai) the reference *cannot be* to the Everlasting Covenant—which *was* “confirmed” by God in Christ ere the world began (Titus 1:2, etc.). Hence we are obliged to adopt the rendering given by spiritual and able scholars “the covenant that was confirmed before God *concerning* Christ”—just as “eis Christon” is translated “*concerning* Christ” in Ephesians 5:32 and “eis auton” is rendered “*concerning* Him” in Acts 2:25. Here, then, is a further word from God that His covenant with Abraham concerned *Christ*, that is *Christ mystical*

Now the special point that the Apostle was labouring in Galatians 3 was that the promises given by God to Abraham (which were solemnly “confirmed” by His covenant-oath) were given centuries before the Siniatic economy was established; and that inasmuch as God is faithful so that His Word cannot be broken (v. 15), then there could be nothing in connection with the giving of the Law that would to the slightest degree invalidate what He was pledged to bestow: “The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” Be it observed that *here* “the promise” is in the singular number, the reason for this being that the Apostle was about to confine himself to one particular promise, namely that which respected the *Inheritance*.

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise” (Gal 3:18). The “inheritance” was given to Abraham by God long before the Law. The question now before us is *what was* the “Inheritance” which God gave to Abraham? Easily answered, replies some one: Genesis 12:7 and 13:15, etc., tell us it was “the land of Canaan,” and when God said “this land” He means that, and noth-



ing else. Not quite so fast, dear friend. When a young believer reads Exodus 12 with its varied details of the slaying of the lamb, and the promise of shelter beneath its blood, and wonders what is the *spiritual* significance thereof, by far his best course is to turn to the New Testament, and prayerfully search for the answer. Eventually he will find that answer in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "Christ *our* Passover is sacrificed for us."

When the young believer reads Leviticus 16, describing the elaborate ritual which the high priest of Israel was required to observe on the annual day of atonement, and is concerned to discover the *spiritual* meaning of the same, the 9th of Hebrews will give him much light thereon. In like manner, those reading the historical account in Genesis 14 of Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, bringing forth bread and wine and blessing Abraham, to whom the patriarch paid tithes, may learn from Hebrews 7 that Melchizedek supplied a striking fore-shadowment of the Lord Jesus in His official character. Now let us point out two things which are common to all these examples. First, the New Testament teaching thereon in nowise reduces those important Old Testament incidents to mere allegories: it neither repudiates their historicity nor evacuates their liberality. Second, but the New Testament *does* reveal that those Old Testament events possessed a *higher* meaning than their "literal" significance, that the historical was but a shadowing forth on earth of that which has its reality or antitype in Heaven.

Why not, then, apply this *same* principle to God's promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed? Since believers in Christ are Abraham's children and "*heirs* according to the promise," then it clearly follows that *they* are interested in ALL that was said or promised to *him*. It is a great mistake to regard certain of the Abrahamic promises as being simply of a temporal kind and restricted to his natural descendants, and that others were of a celestial character and pertain to his spiritual seed. The fact is that the outward and the temporal never existed by itself nor for itself, but was appointed as an adumbration of the spiritual and eternal, and as a *means* for the obtaining thereof. The outward and the temporal must be *consistently* viewed throughout as the shell and shadow of the spiritual and eternal.

Nor is the establishing of this important principle left in any doubt as it applies to the subject of the inheritance of Abraham and his seed. In the 11th of Hebrews we find the patriarchs themselves *identifying their* prospects of a future inheritance *with ours*. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a *strange* country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he *looked* for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them *afar off*, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*. For they that say *such* things declare plainly that they *seek* a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an *heavenly*: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (vv. 9-10, 13-16). How clear it is from these verses that they looked *beyond* the "literal" purport of the promises, unto a heavenly and eternal inheritance, namely, to the *same* described in 1 Peter 1:4.

We are not now concerned with considering the immediate ends which were served by the *natural* descendants of Abraham occupying the *earthly* Canaan—a consideration parallel with the *temporal* advantages enjoyed by those who lived under the "literal" ex-

ercise of the Aaronic priesthood. What ever be or be not the future of Palestine in relation to the Jews, even though they again occupy it for a thousand years, certain it is that the promise of God that Abraham and his seed should have “the land of Canaan for an *everlasting* possession” (Gen. 17:8) has not, will not, and cannot be fulfilled in his natural posterity, for that land, in common with the whole earth, is to be *destroyed*! No, rather are we now concerned with the spiritual and antitypical meaning thereof.

Our third answer, then, to the oft-made affirmation that the inheritance of Abraham and his seed was an *earthly* one, is, that it is repudiated by Scripture itself. Was the inheritance of Moses an “earthly” one? No indeed, for of him we read, “Esteeming the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the *recompense of the Reward*” (Heb. 11:26). Was the inheritance of David an “earthly” one? No indeed, for after his kingdom was established, he declared, “Hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with Thee, and a *sojourner, as all my fathers were*” (Psa. 39:12); and again, “I am a *stranger in the earth*” (Psa. 119:19). The “land of Canaan” is no more to be understood in a carnal way than the “seed” of Abraham is to be regarded as his natural posterity. The land of Canaan was no more given to the Jews after the flesh than the “*blessing of Abraham*” (namely, the Holy Spirit—Gal. 3:14) has come upon them.

“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, *or to his seed*, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13). Observe two things: first, it was promised that Abraham should not be merely “the heir of Palestine,” but “of the world”; and second, this promise was made to Abraham *and* “to his seed,” which “seed is defined in verse 12 as those who “walk in the steps of that faith” which their “father Abraham” had. In perfect harmony with this our Lord declared, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit (possess, have dominion over, enjoy) *the earth* (Matt. 5:5)—if “literalists” have cast such a shadow over this verse that some readers find it hard to understand, then we suggest that they ponder it in the light of 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 and 1 John 5:4! In concluding this important article we feel that we cannot do better than give the spiritual Calvin’s comments on Romans 4:13, which are a refreshing contrast from the carnalizing of “Dispensationalists.”

“Since he now speaks of eternal salvation, the Apostle seems to have somewhat unseasonably led his readers to ‘the world’; but he includes generally under this word ‘world,’ *the restoration* which was expected through Christ. The chief thing was indeed the restoration of life; it was yet necessary that the fallen state of the whole world should be repaired. The Apostle, in Hebrews 1:2, calls Christ the Heir of all the good things of God; for the adoption which we obtain through His favour restores to us the possession of the inheritance which we lost in Adam; and as under the type of the land of Canaan, not only the hope of a heavenly life was exhibited to Abraham, but also the full and complete blessing of God, the Apostle rightly teaches us that *the dominion of the world* was promised to him. Some taste of this the godly have in the present life; for how much soever they may at times be oppressed with want, yet as they partake with a peaceable conscience of those things which God has created for their use, and as they enjoy through His mercy and goodwill His earthly benefits no otherwise than as pledges and earnest of eternal life, their poverty does in no degree prevent them from acknowledging heaven and the earth, and the sea, *as their own possessions*.

“Though the ungodly swallow up the riches of the world, they can yet call nothing as

their own; but they rather snatch them as it were by stealth; for they possess them under the curse of God. It is indeed a great comfort to the godly in their poverty, that though they fare slenderly, they yet steal nothing of what belongs to another, but receive their lawful allowance from the hand of their heavenly Father, until they enter on the full possession of their inheritance, when all creatures shall be made subservient to their glory; for both heaven and earth shall be renewed for this end,—that according to their measure they may contribute to render glorious the Kingdom of God.” It will repay the reader to re-read the above and meditate thereon as a helpful opening-up of Romans 4:13, with its application to us.—A.W.P.

N.B. We follow this article by another which we have entitled “The Typical Canaan,” that was too lengthy to insert in the above. It is a quotation from a deeply-taught servant of God.

### **The Typical Canaan.**

The earthly Canaan was neither designed by God, nor from the first was it understood by His people to be the ultimate and proper inheritance which they were to occupy; things having been spoken and hoped for concerning it which plainly could not be realised within the bounds of Canaan.

The inheritance was one which could be enjoyed only by those who had become the children of the resurrection, themselves fully redeemed in soul and body from all the effects and consequences of sin,—made more glorious and blessed, indeed, than if they had never sinned, because constituted after the image of the heavenly Adam. And as the inheritance must correspond with the inheritor, it can only be man's original possession restored,—the earth redeemed from the curse which sin brought on it, and, like man himself, rendered exceedingly more beautiful and glorious than in its primeval state,—the fit abode of a Church made like, in all its members, to the Son of God.

The occupation of the earthly Canaan by the natural seed of Abraham was a type, and no more than a type, of this occupation by a redeemed Church of her destined inheritance of glory; and consequently everything concerning the entrance of the former on their temporary possession, was ordered so as to represent and foreshadow the things which belonged to the Church's establishment in her permanent possession. Hence, between the giving of the promise, which, though it did not terminate in the land of Canaan, yet included that, and through it prospectively exhibited the better inheritance, a series of important events intervened which are capable of being fully and properly examined in no other way than by means of their typical bearing on the things hereafter to be disclosed respecting that better inheritance.

If we ask, why did the heirs of promise wander about so long as pilgrims, and withdraw to a foreign region before they were allowed to possess the land, and not rather, like a modern colony, quietly spread, without strife or bloodshed, over its surface, till the whole was possessed? Or, why were they suffered to fall under the dominion of a foreign power, from whose cruel oppression they needed to be redeemed, with terrible executions of judgment on the oppressor, before the possession could be theirs? Or why, before that event also, should they have been put under the discipline of law, having the covenant of Sinai, with its strict requirements and manifold obligations of service, superadded to the covenant of grace and promise? Or why, again, should their right to the inheritance itself have to be vindicated from a race of occupants who had been allowed for a time to keep possession of it, and whose multiplied abominations had so polluted it, that nothing short of their extermination could render it a fitting abode for the heirs of promise?

The full and satisfactory answer to all such questions can only be given by viewing the whole in connection with the better things on a higher dispensation,—as the first part of a plan which was to have its counterpart and issue in the glories of a new creation, and for the final results of which the Church needed to be prepared, by standing in similar relations, and passing through like experiences, in regard to an earthly inheritance. No doubt, with one and all of these were connected reasons and results for the time then present, amply sufficient to justify every step in the process, when considered simply by itself. But it is only when we take the whole as a glass, in which to see mirrored the far greater things which from the first were in prospect, that we can get a comprehensive view of the mind of God in appointing them, and know the purposes which He chiefly contemplated.

For example, the fact of Abraham and his immediate descendants being appointed to wander as pilgrims through the land of Canaan, without being allowed to occupy any part of it as their own possession, may be partly explained, though in that view it must appear somewhat capricious, by its being considered as a trial to their own faith, and an act of forbearance and mercy toward the original possessors, whose iniquities were not yet full. But if we thus find grounds of reason to explain why it *may* have been so ordered, when we come to look upon the things which happened to them, as designed to image other things which were afterwards to characterize the relation of God's people to a higher and better inheritance, we see it was even *necessary* that those transactions should have been so ordered, and that it would have been unsuitable for the heirs of promise, either entering at once on the possession, or living as pilgrims and expectants, anywhere, but within its borders. For thus alone could their experience fitly represent the case of God's people in Gospel times, who have not only to wait long for the redemption of the purchased possession, but while they wait, must walk up and down as pilgrims in the very region which they are hereafter to use as their own, when it shall have been delivered from the powers of evil who now hold it in bondage, and purged from their abominations. Hence, if they know aright their relation to the world as it now is, and their calling as the heirs of promise, they must sit loose to the things of earth, even as the patriarchs did to the lands of their sojourn,—must feel that it can not be the place of their rest so long as it is polluted, and that they must steadfastly look for the world to come as their proper home and possession.

And thus also the whole series of transactions which took place between the confirmation of the covenant of promise with Jacob, and the actual possession of the land promised, and especially of course the things which concerned that greatest of all the transactions, the revelation of the Law from Sinai, is to be regarded as a delineation in the type, of the way and manner in which the heirs of God are to obtain the inheritance of the purchased possession. Meanwhile, apart from these later transactions, there are two important lessons which the Church may clearly gather from what appears in the first heirs of promise, and which she ought never to lose sight of:—First, that the inheritance, come when and how it may, is the free gift of God, bestowed by Him, as sovereign Lord and Proprietor, on those whom He calls to the fellowship of His grace. Second, that the hope of the inheritance must exist as an animating principle in their hearts, influencing all their procedure. Their spirit and character must be such as become those who are the expectants as well as heirs of that better country, which is an heavenly: nor can Christ ever be truly formed in the heart, until He be formed as “the hope of glory” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1865).

## Union and Communion.

### 6. *Saving.*

That which unites the believer to Christ may (for the purpose of simplification) be likened to a golden chain, a chain possessing a number of distinct links, yet inseparably welded together. The first of these links we denominated "mystical," having reference to our original uniting to Christ, when the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. The second link we denominated "federal," having reference to our covenant-oneness with Christ, wherein He served as our Surety, we having a representative or legal being in Him. The third link we denominated "vital," having reference to the Spirit's quickening us, whereby we became livingly united to our Head in Heaven. Now, this wondrous chain is let down still lower, for the fourth link in it is formed by our personally cleaving unto Christ. This is a union *unto* Christ, as the previous ones were *in* Him.

In last month's article we pointed out that it is by means of the vital union that our mystical and federal oneness with Christ is made manifest. Not until the Holy Spirit has brought us from death unto life can we have any experimental knowledge of the Father's love and the Son's work for us. In like manner, it is not until we have a *saving* union with Christ by our believing in Him, that we have any personal evidence we have been vitally joined to Him. In other words, we are only able to apprehend the outworking of God's eternal purpose *in the inverse order* to His execution of it: He proceeds from cause to effect, but we have to work back from effect to cause. Or, to use the terms of our illustration: as we grasp the lowest link in the chain *that* brings into our view the one next above it.

Thus, the whole of this article will supply answer to a question which may have been raised in exercised readers by the last one, namely, *How* may I ascertain whether or not spiritual life has actually been communicated to *my* soul? O how urgently it behooves each one of us to earnestly and prayerfully examine ourselves on this all-important matter. Before developing the distinctive theme of this article, and as a suitable introduction thereto, let us offer one or two observations by way of determining the above matter. First, where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual *sensibility*: "senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). Just as our natural senses recognize and feel the difference between cold and heat, so the spiritual senses of a quickened soul perceive and feel the difference between good and evil, sin and holiness. If there be spiritual life within, the soul cannot but be sensible of and groan under the burden of sin.

What we have just alluded to is something radically different from those prickings of conscience and pangs of fear which the unregenerate are sometimes conscious of. They may be alarmed at the condemnation of sin, but they are not grieved and horror-stricken at its pollution. They may be terrified of Hell, yet never horrified at displeasing God. They are mortified if a fellow-creature discovers them in a lie, but they make no conscience of it Godwards. Second, where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual *hunger and thirst*: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word" (1 Peter 2:2). Those who have been born again have a strong intuition that none but Christ can meet their deep need. Third, if there be spiritual life, there must be spiritual *activity*. This will be enlarged upon as we proceed.

It may surprise some of the more critical readers that we have drawn a sharp distinction between vital union and saving union, for many suppose they are one and the same, that the moment a sinner is born again he is actually saved. Not so: regeneration and sal-

vation are quite distinct, though the one necessarily makes way for the other. We are not “saved” until we personally “*believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31). But as saving faith is a spiritual act, one who is spiritually dead cannot perform it. The Spirit quickens the soul in order to capacitate it unto a saving faith in Christ. Note carefully the order in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “God hath from the beginning chosen you *to* salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth”: the “sanctification of the Spirit” is His impartation of life, whereby He separates us from those who are dead in sins, and this *precedes* our “belief of the Truth.”

It is the Spirit’s quickening of us into newness of life which lays the foundation for feeling our deep need of Christ and casting ourselves upon Him. Until the sinner be regenerated, there can be no repentance unto life, no believing unto salvation, no hope which maketh not ashamed. As the union which exists between a man’s soul and his body is absolutely necessary in order for him to think and reason, speak and perform such actions as are in keeping with his natural life; so a vital union between the soul and Christ is indispensable in order to enable us to perform any spiritual functions. No vital act of faith can be put forth by us until a vital principle has been communicated to us: notice the order in “whosoever (1) liveth and (2) believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou *this*?” (John 11:26)—how few *do* believe that the impartation of spiritual life precedes faith.

“Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God” (John 3:3), still less is he capable of entering it. Until a supernatural work of grace has been wrought upon his heart, fallen man is utterly incapable of discerning the nature of God’s kingdom, the superlative excellency of it, or the way of entrance into it. “No man can come to Me,” said Christ, “except the Father which hath sent Me draw him” (John 6:44), and that Divine “drawing” consists first in his being brought out of spiritual death and made “a new creature” in Christ. When that miracle of grace takes place, the subject of it is still *the same person* he was before, but he has been “renewed” by a principle of spiritual life being infused into him from above, and now he has new desires and aspirations, which issue in a new experience and conduct.

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:11, 12). When Christ appeared unto the Jewish nation, the great majority in it “despised and rejected” Him. But here and there was one who “received Him”: received Him as the Sent One of God, received Him as the Lord of their hearts and lives, received Him as the all-sufficient Saviour. And why *did* those “receive” Christ? Was it because *their* wills were less stubborn than their fellows? Not at all. Our question is answered in the explanatory verse which immediately follows: “Which (those who “received Him”) *were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*.” What could be clearer: those who receive Christ are *previously* born of God.

No sinner believes savingly in Christ until he has been convicted of his lost condition and made to feel his dire need of a Saviour, and that is not until God has “begun a good work *in* him” (Phil. 1:6). No man will truly come to Christ until he has been quickened by Christ. Nor does that statement conflict in anywise with his own words “Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life” (John 5:40). If the unregenerate *would* come to Christ, there is life for them. They ought to come: they are freely invited to come: but

they “will not,” and no argument or persuasion of man can induce them to do so. Were God to do nothing more than send the Gospel to the unsaved, in every instance it would fall on deaf ears and unresponsive hearts. “Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned” (Jer. 31:18): we had to be turned *by* God before ever we turn *to* Him.

The trouble with so many today is that their theology is derived from their experiences, instead of from the Scriptures. They prefer to follow the testimony of their senses, instead of the teaching of God’s Word. The first thing of which the Christian became conscious was *his* sense of need, *his* realization that he was a lost sinner, *his* crying unto God for mercy, *his* turning to Christ. And because he was *not conscious* of the quickening work of the Spirit within him *before* he was ever awakened and convicted, he is very slow to allow the reality of it. But this ought not to be: “to the Law and to the Testimony” must be the final court of appeal. Were we not alive physically (in the antenatal state) long before we had any consciousness of our existence? So it is spiritually: there must be life, before there can be the consciousness of that life.

A supernatural Object requires a supernatural faith, and this the natural man is utterly incapable of putting forth. He must, then, have imparted to him a spiritual life ere he can savingly believe on the Lord Jesus. “This faith is not merely a natural act of the mind, assenting to the truth of the Gospel, as it assents to any other truth upon reliable testimony; but it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is *such* a persuasion of the truth as calls forth exercises suitable to the nature of its object. It is a cordial approbation of the Saviour, heartily consenting to His offers, an acceptance of Him in His entire character, as Prophet, Priest, and King” (J. Dick). Saving faith is the heart going off all others and cleaving to Christ alone.

Now Christ’s design in quickening us is that we should turn to and put our trust in Him, for we are not *saved* until we do so. “For by grace are ye saved *through faith*” (Eph. 2:8). True, we are not saved because of our faith; yet, we cannot be saved without it. Rightly did Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, affirm, “Faith in its place is as necessary as the blood of Christ is in its place.” “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever *believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is “unto all and upon all them that *believe*” (Rom. 3:22), and it is not upon them until they do. Christ is a “propitiation through *faith* in His blood” (Rom. 3:25), for His blood avails none but those who *plead* it. To the Hebrew Christians Paul wrote, We are “of them that *believe to the saving of the soul*” (Heb. 10:39).

Let us not confuse things that differ. Though it be true that the elect were saved in the purpose of God before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9), and that they were saved representatively when their Head rose again from the dead (Eph. 2:6), yet they are not saved personally and actually until they “come unto the knowledge of the Truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Trusting in Christ obtains something more than a *knowledge* of our salvation: it brings salvation itself to us. Surely there is no salvation actually bestowed where an individual’s sins have not yet been “remitted,” and no one’s sins are remitted until he has believed (Acts 10:43). Nor is this making a saviour of faith: Christ is the Saviour, but faith must lay hold of Him for salvation. Nothing but food will save a starving man from death, yet food untouched will serve him nothing. It is not his *eating* which saves him, yet the food *must* be eaten if he is to be saved!

While it be true, on the one hand, that faith does not give us a being in Christ, but



rather is our cleaving to Him an evidence and effect *of* our being in Him; yet, on the other hand, faith does *unite* us to Christ, as is clear from His own words: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall *believe* on Me through their word; *that* they all *may be one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one of Us” (John 17:20, 21). Moreover, do we not read, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*” (Eph. 3:17): it is faith which gives Him a real subsistence in the soul. Here, then, is the principal difference between what was before us in last month’s article and the present aspect of our subject: in the forming of the vital union we were *passive*, but in the making of the saving union we are *active*. Here is the order: “That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12).

Having been “apprehended” or “laid hold of” by Christ (through His quickening Spirit), we now apprehend Him. We cannot lay hold of Him, until He has first laid hold of us. But having been laid hold of by Christ, the soul now draws near to Him, joins itself to Him, appropriates Him by faith as its very own. And from *this* union there follows our justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. The *federal* union was necessary so that the demands of the law might be met by our Surety. The *vital* union was necessary so that a principle of life, grace, holiness, might be imparted to the soul, qualifying its recipient to perform spiritual acts and live a spiritual life. The *believing* union is necessary so that we may personally receive the salvation of God and have His receipt for it written in our own hearts.

Our believing in Christ is the sequel to His “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever” (Hosea 2:19), for faith is it which ties the marriage-knot between us, for there must be a personal consent on our part. In the Gospel Christ offers Himself to us, and saving faith is our acceptance of Him. Saving faith, therefore, presupposes a turning from all others—from the seductions of the world and from trusting in my own righteousness—and yielding myself to Christ as my only Lord. It is a willingness to receive Christ on His own terms. It is turning our backs upon our idols, and saying with Ruth, “Entreat me not to leave Thee, or to return from following after Thee: for whither Thou goest, I will go; and where Thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and Thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Since a mediator is not a mediator of one, but requires the mutual consent of both parties, so there must be a personal acceptance of Christ as Mediator on our part. This makes the union *reciprocal*. As a woman, by her free consent, accepts a man for her husband, so the believer accepts Christ as his only Lord and Saviour.

This union also has been variously designated by the older writers—for alas! most modern writers seem to know little or nothing of this wondrous and blessed subject. Some of them call it the “voluntary” union, in order to distinguish it from the previous ones, which are quite involuntary on our part; and because this one is consummated by an act of our own wills. Some call it the “fiducial” or “believing” union, because it is brought about by faith, defining more definitely the nature of our voluntary act. Others call it the “conjugal” union, because it signifies our acceptance of Christ as our loving Lord or Husband. We have preferred to designate it the *saving* union, because a section of our readers need to have this aspect of the Truth pressed upon their notice; and also because it seems to express more than the other terms do.

The manner in which this saving union is brought about may be illustrated from the meaning of the names borne by the first three sons of Jacob. Reuben signifies “See! the Son.” It is as such the Gospel sets forth Christ, and its call is, “*Behold* the Lamb of God,

which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), for it is only as we are favored with spiritual and believing views of Him that spiritual blessings flow into the soul. Simeon signifies “Hearing,” and it is only as we hear the voice of Christ Himself speaking to us through the Gospel that peace comes to our conscience and joy fills the heart. Levi signifies “Joined”: as we see the Son responsively and hear Him believably, we become *connected with Him*. It was well put by Witsuis when he said, “Faith in its actings is the echo or repercussion of the Divine voice speaking to the soul.”

It is only the quickened soul which sees, hears, and receives Christ in a spiritual way. A distressed child’s cleaving to and hanging upon its beloved father with entreaties and expectations of succor, are in consequence of a relation and union between them *prior* to those actings. So it is with the elect sinner: having been joined to Him by the Spirit, he now looks to Christ, lays hold of, embraces, and cleaves unto Him; and thus his saving union is effected. As a woman accepts the marriage proposal of her wooer by yielding herself and all her future interests into his care, so the believer is able to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have *committed unto Him* against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). And again, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song. 2:16)—His by my own consent and acceptance.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8:35). Separation necessarily implies a joining together, for nothing can be “separated” but what was first united. Union with Christ is by the Spirit on His part, and by faith on our part; and both of them are made known *by love*, and this it is which makes the union indissoluble. The Spirit is given to us as the great proof and fruit of Christ’s love to us, and He sheds abroad God’s love in our hearts. The faith which lays hold of Christ for salvation is a “faith which worketh *by love*” (Gal. 5:6), for it is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). And nothing can unclasp those mutual embraces. The believer is now united to Christ by his affections, for he loves what Christ loves and hates what He hates. “A Christian is held by his heart rather than by his head” (Thos. Manton).

Vital union takes place at regeneration: in it we were entirely passive, and at the time thereof had no knowledge at all of it. Saving union takes place when the awakened sinner receives Christ as He is offered to him in the Gospel: in it he is active, and has a definite consciousness of what he is doing. As the Israelite of old gave a personal consent to God’s gracious provision by laying his hand on the head of his sacrifice (Lev. 1:4), so the believer rests upon Christ as an all-sufficient Sacrifice for all his sins. Saving union takes place when the returning prodigal falls into the arms of his loving Father in Christ (Luke 15:20); when the fugitive, chased by the avenging law (Num. 35:11, 12) crosses the threshold of the City of Refuge (Heb. 6:18); when the sin-sick soul is able to stretch forth the hand of faith and receive healing from Christ by personal contact with Him (Mark 5:27-29).—A.W.P.

### **A Prayer for the Nation.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, it is by Thee kings reign, and princes decree justice. Thou hast been very gracious to the people of this Isle. Thy Church in this land has long been Thy peculiar care. Many mercies Thou hast bestowed on us. Many deliverances Thou hast wrought for us, which ought to be remembered by us to Thy praise and glory. Thou hast sent and long continued Thy blessed and everlasting Gospel amongst us. Notwithstanding all our heinous, aggravated, and detestable crimes, which are more and more increasing, and which we as a nation groan under, yet such is Thy goodness, Thou dost spare us as a nation, nor doth Thy whole displeasure arise. Thou hast contended with us by various afflictive providences, yet in all Thou art saying, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city." O Thy patience and forbearance towards us, as a nation, is beyond the very uttermost of our conceptions.

We would desire to be found with such as mourn and sigh for the abominations of the times. Pour out Thy Spirit on the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, as the Spirit of prayer and supplication. O turn from Thy fierce wrath towards us, that we perish not. O turn us from our national impieties, that they become not our national ruin. O consider us as a people on whom Thy name is called. Let it yet be manifest that Thou art in the midst of us; leave us not. O Thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, exercise for Thy great name's sake, Thy mercy towards and upon the people of this land. Have respect to Thy Church and people throughout Great Britain. Be with all Thy ministers and Truth-bearers. Many of them are under the cross: Lord, sanctify it unto them. Lord, do Thou bear them up, and powerfully sustain them.

Have respect unto Thy churches. They are in a low state, as it respects Gospel truth, order, and discipline. O revive them, and revive Thy work amongst them. Have respect to Thine both collectively and individually. Do Thou in Thy good pleasure unto Thy Zion, do Thou build up the walls of Jerusalem. Lord, remember Thine ancient people the Jews, and Thy promises concerning them. Hasten the time for the accomplishing of Thy good Word and grace respecting them. Look upon them, that they may look on Thee, and to Thee. Then they shall mourn as one that mourneth for an only son; then they shall be converted unto Thee. Lord, bring in with them the fullness of the Gentiles, and let both be one fold under Thee, the one shepherd, Jesus, the Conqueror. Turn sinners from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Grant this, O Lord Jesus Christ, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.—S.E. Pierce, 1820.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 8. *Its Procurer.*

It has been pointed out in the earlier papers of this series that the Scriptures present the believer's sanctification from several distinct points of view, the chief of which are, first, our sanctification in the eternal purpose of God, when in His decree He chose us in Christ "that we should be *holy* and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). That is what is referred to at the beginning of Hebrews 10:10, "by the which *will* we are sanctified." This is our sanctification by God the Father (Jude 1), which was considered by us in the 7th article, under the Author of our sanctification. Second, there is the *fulfilling* of that "will" of God, the accomplishing of His eternal purpose by our actual sanctification through the sacrifice of Christ. That is what is referred to in "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12). This is our sanctification by God the Son, and is what we are now considering. Third, there is the *application* of this sanctification to the individual by the Holy Spirit, when He separates him from those who are dead in sins by quickening him, and by the new birth imparting to him a new nature. This is our sanctification by God the Spirit.

Fourth, there is the *fruit* of these in the Christian's character and conduct whereby he is separated in his life and walk from the world which lieth in the Wicked one, and this is by the Holy Spirit's working in him and applying the Word to him, so that he is (in measure—for now we see "through a glass darkly") enabled to apprehend by faith his separation to God by the precious blood of Christ. Yet both his inward and outward life is far from being perfect, for though possessing a new and spiritual nature, the flesh remains in him, unchanged, to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Those around him know little or nothing of the inward conflict of which he is the subject: they see his outward failures, but hear not his secret groanings before God. It is not yet made manifest what he shall be, but though very imperfect at present through indwelling sin, yet the promise is sure "when He shall appear, *we shall be like him*" (1 John 3:2).

Now though in this fourth sense our *practical* sanctification is incomplete, this in no wise alters the fact, nor to the slightest degree invalidates it, that our sanctification in the first three senses mentioned above is entire and eternal, that "by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Though these three phases of the believer's sanctification are quite distinct as to their development or manifestation, yet they are blessedly combined together, and form our one complete acceptance before God. That which we are here considering has to do with the *objective* side of our subject: by which we mean that it is something entirely *outside of ourselves*, resulting from what Christ has done for us. It is that which we have in Christ and by Christ, and therefore it can be received and enjoyed by *faith alone*. O what a difference it makes to the peace and joy of the soul once the child of God firmly grasps the blessed truth that a perfect sanctification is his present and inalienable portion, that God has made Christ to be unto him sanctification as well as righteousness.

Every real Christian has already been sanctified or set apart *as holy unto God* by the precious blood of the Lamb. But though many believers are consciously and confessedly "*justified by His blood*" (Rom. 5:9), yet not a few of them are unwittingly dishonouring that blood by striving (in their desires after holiness of life) to *offer God* "entire consecration" or "full surrender" (as they call it) *in order to get sanctified*—so much "living sacrifice" they present to God for so much sanctification. They have been beguiled into the

attempt to lay *self* on some imaginary “altar” so that their sinful nature might be “consumed by the fire of the Spirit.” Alas, they neither enter into *God’s* estimate of Christ’s blood, nor will they accept the fact that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and *desperately* wicked” (Jer. 17:9). They neither realise that God has “made Christ to be sanctification unto them” or that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7).

It is greatly to be regretted that many theologians have confined their views far too exclusively to the *legal* aspect of the atonement, whereas both the Old Testament types and the New Testament testimony, with equal clearness, exhibit its efficacy in *all* our relations to God. Because we are in Christ, *all* that He is for us must be ours. “The blood of Christ cleanses us from *all sin*, and the believer does not more truly take his place in Christ before the justice of God as one against whom there is *no charge*, than he takes his place in Christ before the holiness of God as one upon whom there is *no stain*” (James Inglis in “Waymarks in the Wilderness” to whom we are indebted for much in this and last month’s article). Not only is the believer “*justified* by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), but we are “*sanctified* (set apart, consecrated unto God, fitted and adorned for His presence) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). It is *this* blessed aspect of sanctification which the denominational Creeds and writings of the Puritans almost totally ignored.

In the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly the question is asked, “What is sanctification?” To which the following answer is returned: “Sanctification is a work of God’s grace, whereby, they whom God hath before the foundation of the world chosen to be holy, are in time through the powerful operation of His Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin and rise unto newness of life.”

Now far be it from us to sit in judgment upon such an excellent and helpful production as this Catechism, which God has richly blest to thousands of His people, or that we should make any harsh criticisms against men whose shoes we are certainly not worthy to unloose. Nevertheless, we are assured that were its compilers on earth today, they would be the last of all to lay claim to any infallibility, nor do we believe they would offer any objection against their statements being brought to the bar of Holy Scripture. The best of men are but men at the best, and therefore we must call no man “Father.” A deep veneration for servants of God and a high regard for their spiritual learning, must not deter us from complying with “*Prove all things*; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The Bereans were commended for testing the teachings even of the Apostle Paul, “And searched the Scriptures daily *whether* those things were so” (Acts 17:11). It is in this spirit that we beg to offer two observations on the above quotation.

First, the definition or description of sanctification of the Westminster divines is altogether *inadequate*, for it entirely *omits* the most important aspect and fundamental element in the believer’s sanctification: it says nothing about our sanctification *by Christ* (Heb. 10:10; 13:12), but confines itself to the work of the Spirit, which is founded upon that of the Son. This is truly a serious loss, and affords another illustration that God has not granted light on *all* His Word to any one man or body of men. A fuller and better answer to the question of, “What is sanctification?” would be, “Sanctification is, first, that act of God whereby He set the elect apart in Christ before the foundation of the world

that they should be holy. Second, it is that perfect holiness which the Church has in Christ and that excellent purity which she has before God by virtue of Christ's cleansing blood. Third, it is that work of God's Spirit which, by His quickening operation, sets them apart from those who are dead in sins, conveying to them a holy life or nature, etc."

Thus we cannot but regard this particular definition of the Larger Catechism as being defective, for it commences at the middle, instead of starting at the beginning. Instead of placing before the believer that complete and perfect sanctification which God has made Christ to be unto him, it occupies him with the incomplete and progressive work of the Spirit. Instead of moving the Christian to look away from himself with all his sinful failures, unto Christ in whom he is "complete" (Col. 2:10), it encourages him to look within, where he will often search in vain for the fine gold of the new creation amid all the dross and mire of the old creation. This is to leave him without the joyous assurance of knowing that he has been "perfected forever" by the one offering of Christ (Heb. 10:14); and if he be destitute of *that*, then doubts and fears must constantly assail him and the full assurance of faith allude every striving after it.

Our second observation upon this definition is, that its wording is *faulty and misleading*. Let the young believer be credibly assured that he will "more and more die unto sin and rise unto newness of life," and what will be the inevitable outcome? As he proceeds on his way, the Devil assaulting him more and more fiercely, the inward conflict between the flesh and the spirit becoming more and more distressing, increasing light from God's Word more and more exposing his sinful failures, until the cry is forced from him, "I am vile; O wretched man that I am," what conclusion *must* he draw? Why this: if the Catechism-definition be correct then I was sadly mistaken, *I have never been sanctified at all*. So far from the "more and more die unto sin" agreeing with *his* experience, he discovers that sin is more active within and that he is more alive to sin now, than he was ten years ago!

Will any venture to gainsay what we have just pointed out above, then we would ask the most mature and godly reader, Dare you solemnly affirm, as in the presence of God, that *you* have "more and more died unto sin?" If you answer, Yes, the writer for one would not believe you. But we do not believe for a moment that you would utter such an untruth. Rather do we think we can hear you saying, "Such has been my deep *desire*, such has been my sincere *design* in using the means of grace, such is still my daily *prayer*; but alas, alas! I find as truly and as frequently today as I ever did in the past that, "When I would do good, evil is present with me; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7). Ah, there is a vast difference between what *ought* to be, and that which actually *obtains* in our experience.

That we may not be charged with partiality, we quote from the "Confession of Faith" adopted by the Baptist Association, which met in Philadelphia 1742, giving the first two sections of their brief chapter on sanctification: "They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit in them through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are also (a) further sanctified, really and personally, through the same virtue, (b) by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; (c) the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, (d) and the several lusts thereof *more and more weakened* and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. 2. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life;

there abideth still *some remnants* of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war.”—*italics ours*.

Like the previous one, this description of sanctification by the Baptists leaves something to be desired, for it makes no clear and direct statement upon the all-important and flawless holiness which every believer has *in Christ*, and that spotless and impeccable purity which is *upon* him by God’s imputation of the cleansing efficacy of His Son’s sacrifice. Such a serious omission is too vital for us to ignore. In the second place, the words which we have placed in italics not only perpetuate the faulty wording of the Westminster Catechism, but also convey a misleading conception of the present condition of the Christian. To speak of “some remnants of corruption” still remaining in the believer, necessarily implies that by far the greater part of his original corruption has been removed, and that only a trifling portion of the same now remains. But something vastly different from *that* is what every true Christian discovers to his daily grief and humiliation.

Contrast, dear reader, with the “some remnants of corruption” remaining in the Christian (an expression frequently found in the writings of the Puritans) the honest confession of the heavenly-minded Jonathan Edwards: “When I look into my heart and take a view of its wickedness, it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than Hell. And it appears to me that, were it not for free grace, exalted and raised up to the infinite height of all the fullness of the great Jehovah, and the arm of His grace stretched forth in all the majesty of His power and in all the glory of His sovereignty, I should appear sunk down in my sins below Hell itself. It is affecting to think how ignorant I was when a young Christian, of the bottomless depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy, and filth left in my heart.” The closer we walk with God, the more *conscious* will we be of our utter depravity.

Among the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (Episcopalian) there is none treating of the important doctrine of sanctification! We believe that all the Reformation “standards” (creeds, confessions, and catechisms) will be searched in vain for any clear statement upon the perfect holiness which the Church has in Christ or of God’s making Him to be, imputatively, sanctification unto His people. In consequence of this, most theological systems have taught that while justification is accomplished the moment the sinner truly believes in Christ, yet is his sanctification only then begun, and is a protracted process to be carried on throughout the remainder of this life by means of the Word and ordinances, seconded by the discipline of trial and affliction. But if this be the case, then there must be a time in the history of every believer when he is “justified from all things” and yet *unfit* to appear in the presence of God; and before he *can* appear there, the process must be completed—he must attain what is called “entire sanctification” and be able to say “I have no sin,” which, according to 1 John 1:8, would be the proof of self-deception.

Here, then, is a real dilemma, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; and yet, according to the doctrine of “progressive sanctification,” until we *can* say (though it be inarticulately in the moment of death) we are not meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. What an awful thought it is, that Christ may come any hour to those who realise that the process of sanctification within them is *incomplete*. But more: not only are those who have no complete sanctification unfit for eternal glory, but it would be daring presumption for them to boldly enter the Holiest now—the “new and living way” is not yet available for them, they cannot draw near “with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” What wonder, then, that those who believe this doctrine are plunged into perplexity, that

such a cloud rests over their acceptance with God. But, thank God, many triumph over their creed: their hearts are better than their heads, otherwise their communion with God and their approach to the throne of His grace would be impossible.

Now in blessed contrast from this inadequate doctrine of theology, the glorious Gospel of God reveals to us a *perfect* Saviour. It exhibits One who has not only made complete satisfaction to the righteous Ruler and Judge, providing for His people a perfect righteousness before Him, but whose sacrifice has also fitted us to worship and serve a holy God acceptably, and to approach the Father with full confidence and filial love. A knowledge of the truth of justification is not sufficient to thus assure the heart: there must be something more than a realization that the curse of the Law is removed—if the conscience be still defiled, if the eye of God rests upon us as unpurged and unclean, then confidence before Him is impossible, for we feel utterly unfit for His ineffable presence. But forever blessed be His name, the precious Gospel of God announces that the blood of Christ freely meets *this* exigency also.

“Now where remission of these (sins) is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:18, 19). The same sacrifice which has procured the remission of our sins, provides the right for us to draw nigh unto God as acceptable worshipers. “By His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12). Now that which gives the One who took our place *the right* to enter Heaven itself, also gives *us* the right to take *the same* place. That which entitled Christ to enter Heaven was “His own blood,” and that which entitles the feeblest believer to approach the very throne of God “with boldness,” is “the blood of Jesus.” Our title to enter Heaven *now*, in spirit, is precisely the same *as Christ’s* was!

The same precious blood which appeased the wrath of God, covers every stain of sin’s guilt and defilement; and not only so, but in the very place of that which it covers and cleanses, it leaves its own excellency; so that because of its infinite purity and merit, the Christian is regarded not only as guiltless and unreprouable, but also as *spotless and holy*. O to realise by faith that *we* are assured of the same welcome by God *now* as His beloved Son received when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. God views us *in Christ* His “Holy One,” as possessing a holiness as perfect as is the righteousness in which we are accepted, both of them being as perfect as Christ Himself. “In us, as we present ourselves before Him through Christ, God *sees no sin*! He looks on us in the face of His Anointed, and there He sees us purer than the heavens” (Alex. Carson).—A.W.P.

God willing this article will be completed in the next issue. It is only fair we should point out that on *this* aspect of our subject, namely, the believer’s perfect sanctification in and by Christ, the writings of those known as Plymouth Brethren are much to be preferred above others.



### Help Sought.

*“When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (Psa. 61:2).* Yes, Lord! I would make this my morning, noon, and evening petition, that the great Glorifier of Jesus would gently lead me to Him who is a rock, and whose work is perfect. I know, Lord, in theory, and can even reason upon it in seasons of coolness, that Thy strength and Thy security never fail; the failure is in me and my unbelief. And it is only when I lose sight of Thee and Thy promises, that I am tossed about with doubts and misgivings. If Christ be out of sight, and thwarting dispensations arise, Oh! how soon is my poor forgetful heart ready to exclaim with the Church of old, “I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.” Then come on the reasonings of flesh and blood; and then arises the question whether my interest in the Lord Jesus and His salvation be sure. And then my poor heart goes forth, like the dove of Noah from the ark, having lost sight of Christ, and can find no resting-place for the sole of my foot. Oh! Lord the Spirit, in all such seasons, do Thou “lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”

If Thou, blessed Leader of the Lord’s distressed ones, wouldst be my Pilot when those storms are beating upon me, I should soon be blown upon the firm landing-place of Jesus’ security. Oh! how should I ride out the storm even when the tempest was highest, as long as God the Holy Spirit enabled me to cast the anchor of faith upon this eternal Rock of Jesus. Oh! lead me then, Thou sovereign Lord, continually to an all-precious Christ. Open the door of communication, and keep it constantly open, between Christ and my soul. Faith will find a soft and quiet bed to sleep on, in the arms of Jesus, and no noise of wars shall break the soul’s rest while reposing on Him; for so the promise runs: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.” Oh! then once again, I send up the earnest cry of my soul, let it be continually answered in mercy: “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (Robert Hawker, 1820).

“When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I’d rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every rough and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I’d stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.”