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Studies in the Scriptures
The Spirit Assisting.

It is a great infirmity or weakness for the Christian to faint in the day of adversity, yet such is often the case. It is a sad thing when, like Rachel of old weeping for her children, he “refuses to be comforted” (Jer. 31:15). It is most deplorable for all when he so gives way to unbelief that the Lord has to say to him, “How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). Terrible indeed would be his end if God were to leave him entirely to himself. This is clear from what is said in Mark 4:17, “when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended,” or as Luke says, “Which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (8:13). And *why* does the stony-ground hearer apostatise? Because he is *without* the assistance of the Holy Spirit! Writer and reader would do the same if no Divine aid were forthcoming!

But thank God, the feeble and fickle believer is not left to himself: “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26). That “help” is as manifold as our varied needs; but the Apostle singles out one particular “infirmity” which besets all Christians, and which the blessed Spirit graciously helps: “for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.” How this Divine declaration should humble us into the dust: so depraved is the saint that in the hour of need he is incapable of asking God aright to minister unto him. Sin has so corrupted his heart and darkened his understanding that, left to himself, he cannot even discern *what* he should ask God for. Alas, that pride should so blind us to our real condition and our deep, deep need.

In nothing do the saints more need the Spirit's presence and His gracious assistance than in their addresses of the Throne of Grace. They know that God in His Persons and perfections is the Object of their worship; they know that they cannot come unto the Father but by Christ, the alone Mediator; and they know that their access to Him must be by the Spirit (Eph. 2:18). Yet such are their varying circumstances, temptations, and wanderings, so often are they shut up in their frames and cold in their affections, such deadness of heart is there toward God and spiritual things, that at times they know not what to pray for as they ought. But it is *here* that the Spirit's love and grace is most Divinely displayed: He helpeth their infirmities and maketh intercession for them!

One had thought that if ever there is a time when the Christian would really *pray*, earnestly and perseveringly, and would know what to ask for, it should be when he is sorely tried and oppressed. Alas, how little we really know ourselves. Even a beast will cry out when suffering severe pain, and it is *natural* (not spiritual!) that we should do the same. Of degenerate Israel of old God said, “they have not cried unto Me with their *heart*, when they *howled* upon their beds” (Hosea 7:14): no, *relief* from their sufferings was all they thought about. And by nature *our* hearts are just the same! So long as we are left to ourselves (to try us and manifest what we are: 2 Chron. 32:31), when the pressure of sore trial comes upon us, we are concerned only with *deliverance* from it, and not that God may be glorified or that the trial may be sanctified to our souls.

Left for himself, man asks God for what would be curses rather than blessings, for what would prove to be snares rather than helps to him spiritually. Have we not read of Israel that, “They tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust” (Psa. 78:18); and again, “He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul” (Psa. 106:15)!

Perhaps someone replies, But they were not regenerate souls. Then have we not read in James, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye *ask amiss*, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (4:3). Ah, my reader, this is a truth which is very unpalatable to our proud hearts. Did not Moses "ask" the Lord that he might be permitted to enter Canaan (Deut. 3:26, 27)? Did not the Apostle Paul thrice beseech the Lord for the removal of his thorn in the flesh? What *proofs* are these that "we *know not* what we should pray for as we ought!"

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." This being so, surely the least that we can do is to *seek* His aid, to definitely ask Him *to* undertake for us. Alas, how rarely we do so. As intimated above, when the pressure of trouble first presses upon us, usually it is *nature* which cries out for relief. At other times the soul is so cast down that even the voice of natural "prayer" is stifled. Often there is so much rebellion at work in our hearts against the providential dispensations of God toward us that we feel it would be mockery to seek *His* face; yea, we are ashamed to do so. Such at least has been the experience of the writer more than once, and that not long ago, though he blushes to acknowledge it. O the infinite patience and forbearance of our gracious God.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." And why? First, because we are so blinded by *self-love* that we are unable to discern what will be most for God's glory, what will best promote the good of our brethren (through some of the dross being purged out of us), and what will advance our own spiritual growth. O what wretched "prayers" (?) we put up when we are guided and governed by *self-interests*, and what cause do we give the Lord to say "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). Alas, how often we attempt to make God the Servant of our carnal desires. Shall we ask our heavenly Father for worldly success! Shall we come to Him who was born in a stable and ask Him for temporal luxuries or even comforts!

Why is it that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought"? Second, because our minds are so discomposed by the trial and the suffering it brings, and then we have to say with one of old, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (Psa. 77:4): so you see, dear "brother, and companion in tribulation" (Rev. 1:9) that *you* are not the first to experience spiritual dumbness! But it is most blessed to link with this such a promise as "For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:12). *Why* is it that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought"? Third, because oftentimes our tongues are tied as the result of leanness of our souls. It is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34), and if the Word of Christ be not dwelling in us "richly" (Col. 3:16), how can we expect to have the right petition to present to God in the hour of our need!

"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," but He does so silently and secretly, so that we are not conscious of His assistance at the time He renders it. That gracious and effectual help is manifested to us by *the effects* which it has produced in us; though so perverse are our hearts and so great is our pride, we often attribute those effects to our own will-power or resolution. Have we suddenly, or even gradually, emerged from the slough of despond? It was *not* because *we* had "come to our senses" or "regained our poise," rather was it solely due to the Spirit's renewing us in the inner man. Has the storm within us—which God's crossing of our will occasioned—been calmed? It was because the Spirit deigned to subdue our iniquities. Has the voice of true prayer again issued from us? It was because the Spirit had made intercession for us.

Lord God the Spirit, to whom Divine honour and glory belongeth, equally as to the Father and the Son, I desire to present unto Thee unfeigned praise and heartfelt thanksgiving. O how deeply am I indebted to Thee: how patiently hast Thou borne with me, how tenderly hast Thou dealt with me, how graciously hast Thou wrought in me. Thy love passeth knowledge, Thy forbearance is indeed Divine. O that I were more conscientious and diligent in seeking not to slight and grieve Thee.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

104. *The Kingdom of Christ: 12:28.*

We hope that we made clear in the preceding articles the general idea contained in the citation from the Old Testament which the Apostle made in Hebrews 12:26, namely, that under the proclamation of the Gospel there would be a more radical and far-reaching effect produced, than was the case at the giving of the Law, thereby manifesting the superiority of one over the other. The more specific meaning of Haggai's prediction (2:6) was that the *Jewish* church and state would be dissolved, for both the ecclesiastical and civil spheres of Judaism ("Heaven and earth") were "shaken." Its wider significance comprehended the convulsions which would be produced in *heathendom* (the "sea" of Hag. 2:6, and cf. vv. 21, 22). The great design of God in the Divine incarnation was the setting up of *Christ's kingdom*, but before it could be properly established, there had to be a mighty shaking in order that the shadows in Judaism might give place to the substance, and that sinners among the Gentiles be made spiritual.

The appearing of the Messiah introduced and necessitated a total dissolution of the entire Judaic economy: the Levitical institutions being fulfilled in Christ, they had now served their purpose. This was solemnly signified by the Divine rending of the temple veil, and forty years later by the total destruction of the temple itself. But in the meanwhile it was difficult to persuade the Hebrews that such was the case, and therefore did the Apostle clinch the argument he had made in 12:18-24 and the exhortation he had given in verse 25 by quoting a proof-text from their own Scriptures. Haggai's language that the Lord would "shake the heavens" referred, as we have seen, *not* the starry heavens or celestial planets, but to the Judaical constitution under the ceremonial law—called the "heavens" because they typed out heavenly things! Ultimately God would "shake" and remove all dominions, thrones and powers which were opposed to the kingdom of Christ—as, for example, He later did the Roman empire.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb. 12:28). The design of the Holy Spirit in the whole of this passage (12:18-29) was to enhance in the Hebrews' estimation the supremacy and excellency of Christ's kingdom, which His Gospel has "brought to light," and which has given believers the right and assurance of, for it was *to make way for* the establishment of Christ's kingdom that those mighty "shakings" occurred. Paul insists that God's "shakings" were in order to "remove" that which hindered the manifestation and development of Christ's kingdom. Here, then, is further proof that, so far from Haggai's prophecy looking forward to the universal convulsion of nature at the last day, it has already had its fulfillment: believers *now* actually obtain the fruit of that "shaking," for they "receive" the unshakable kingdom, namely the kingdom of Christ which cannot be moved. We trust this is now so plain to the reader that further effort on our part to establish the same is unnecessary.

But not only did the prophecy of Haggai announce the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and the necessary setting aside of the one for the other, but it also clearly intimated *the finality* of the Christian dispensation. This is plain from the words of Hebrews 12:27 "yet once more." According to modern dispensationalists, Paul *should* have said, "yet *twice* more," for their view is that just as the Mosaic dispensation was followed by the Christian, so the Christian will be succeeded by a revival and glorified Judaism in "the Millennium." But "*once* more" means only once, and then *no* more. Christianity is the *final* thing which God has for this earth. The *last* great dispensational change was

made when the Gospel was given to all the world: hence Peter could say, “the *end* of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7), for God has now spoken His last word to mankind. Hence also John said, “It *is* the *last* hour” (1 John 2:18), which had not been true if another dispensation is to follow the one we are now in.

“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (v. 27). Here the Apostle *explains* Haggai’s “Yet once it is a little while (cf. the “now” of Heb. 12:26) and I will shake the heavens” etc. (2:6). When Paul refers to the things shaken and removed “as of things that are *made*,” (Heb. 12:27) he was far from adding a superfluous clause: it emphasised again the contrast he was drawing. The phrase “as of things that are made” is elliptical, needing the added words “made (by hands)” to bring out its sense. Everything connected with Judaism was made by human hands: even the tables of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, God commanded Moses to “hew” (Exo. 34:1), while the tabernacle and all connected with it were to be “made” accordingly to “the pattern” God showed him (Exo. 25:8, 9). In sharp and blessed contrast, the immaterial and spiritual things of Christianity are “*not* made with hands” (2 Cor. 5:1), but are “made *without* hands” (Col. 2:11).

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God” (Heb. 12:28). The Apostle here draws an inference from what had just been pointed out concerning the shaking and removing of Judaism and the establishing of Christianity. First, here is a great privilege into which Christians have entered, namely, *a spiritual state* under the rule of Jesus Christ—whom God anointed and set as king upon His holy hill of Zion (Psa. 2:6)—here called a “kingdom.” Second, the essential character of this kingdom, in contrast from all others, namely, its immoveability—its finality and permanency. Third, the way of the believer’s participation of it: we “receive” it. “This kingdom, then, is the rule of Christ in and over the Gospel-state of the church, which the Apostle hath proved to be more excellent than that of the Law” (John Owen). This kingdom we must now consider.

At the beginning of human history God’s kingdom was realised on this earth, so that there was no need to pray “Thy kingdom come.” God’s kingship was established in Eden, and all the blessings that flow from subjection to His dominion were then enjoyed. The supremacy of God was gladly and spontaneously acknowledged by all His creatures. But sin entered, and a radical change ensued. Man repudiated the kingship of God, for by transgressing His commandments Adam rejected His sovereignty. By so doing, by heeding the suggestions of the Serpent, the “kingdom of Satan” (Matt. 12:26) was set up in this world. Shortly afterwards, God established His mediatorial kingdom. Abel being its first subject.

Since the Fall there have been two great empires at work on this earth: the “world” and the “kingdom of God.” Those who belong to the former own not God; those who pertain to the latter, profess subjection to Him. In Old Testament times the Israelitish theocracy was the particular sphere of God’s kingdom on earth, the domain where His authority was manifested in a special way (Judg. 8:23, 1 Sam. 12:12, Hosea 13:9, 10, etc.). But subjection to Him, even there, was, on the part of the Nation as a whole, but partial and brief. The time soon came when Jehovah had to say to His servant, “They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not *reign over* them” (1 Sam. 8:7). Then it was that the Lord appointed human kings in Israel as *His representatives*, for

while the Siniatic covenant (Exo. 19:6) continued in force Jehovah remained their King—it was the “*King* which made a marriage feast for His Son” (Matt. 22:2)! Though Saul, David, and his successors bore the regal character, and thus partly *obscured* the Divine government, yet it was *not abolished* (see 2 Chron. 13:8). The throne on which Solomon sat was called “The throne of the kingdom of the Lord” (1 Chron. 28:5).

Through Israel’s Prophets God announced that there should yet be a more glorious display of His government than had been witnessed by their fathers of old, and promised that His dominion would take a more *spiritual* form in the establishing of the Messianic kingdom. This became the great theme of the later predictions of the Old Testament, though the nature and character of what was to come was necessarily depicted under the figures and forms of those material things with which the people were familiar and by those objects of Judaism which were most venerated by them. The setting up of the spiritual and immovable kingdom of Christ was the issue and goal of all the Prophets declared: see Luke 1:69, 70 and cf. Daniel 2:44. “The LORD reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself: the world (i.e. the “world to come” of Heb. 2:5, the *new* “world” brought in by Christ) also is stablished, that it *cannot be moved*” (Psa. 93:1, which is parallel with “we receiving a kingdom which *cannot be moved*” (Heb. 12:28).

But though it had been clearly revealed through the Prophets that the Lord Messiah should be a King and have a universal empire, yet the bulk of Abraham’s natural descendants entertained a grossly mistaken conception of the true design of Christ’s appearing and the *real nature* of His kingdom, and this mistake produced a most pernicious influence upon their tempers and conduct when the gracious purpose of His advent was fulfilled. The sense which *they* affixed to the Messianic prophecies was one that flattered their pride and fostered their carnality. Being ignorant of their *spiritual needs* and puffed up with a false persuasion of their peculiar interests in Jehovah’s favour on the ground of their fleshly descent from Abraham (John 8:39, 41), the lowly life and holy teaching and claims of the Lord Jesus were bitterly opposed by them (John 8:48, 59; Luke 19:14).

Though God had made many announcements through Israel’s Prophets that the Messiah should occupy the regal office, yet clear intimation was given that *He* would be very different from the monarchs of earth (Isa. 53:2). Though the Messiah’s dominion and reign had been described under material symbols, yet was it made plain that *His* kingdom would *not* be “of this world.” Through Zechariah it was announced, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; *lowly*, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (9:9). How different was *that* from the imposing splendour assumed by earth’s sovereigns! What a contrast was His ass from their magnificent chariots and state-coaches! How plainly did the poverty and meanness of Christ’s regal appearance intimate that *His* kingdom was *not* of a temporal kind! The Maker of Heaven and earth, the Lord of angels, disdained such things as are highly esteemed among men.

The fatal mistake made by the Jews respecting *the true nature* of the kingdom of the Messiah lay at the foundation of all the opposition with which they treated Him, and of their own ultimate ruin. How it behooves *us*, then, to prayerfully seek *right* views of Christ’s kingdom, and to resist everything which tends to secularize His holy dominion, lest by corrupting the Evangelical Economy we dishonour the blessed Redeemer, and be finally punished as enemies of His government. As the main cause of the Jews’ infidelity was their erroneous notion of a *temporal* kingdom of the Messiah, so the principal source

of the corruption of Christianity has been the attempt made by Rome and her daughters to turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a temporal one by uniting church and state and seeking to extend it by earthly means.

In John's Gospel (which gives the *spiritual* side of things more than do the first three Gospels, being specially written to and for believers), there is a most significant word after the account of our Lord's regal entry into Jerusalem on the back of an ass: "These things *understood not* His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him" (John 12:16). So prejudiced were the Apostles by the erroneous teaching of the Pharisees, that even they did not rightly apprehend *the nature of Christ's kingdom till after* His ascension. They, too, were looking for a *material* kingdom, expecting it to appear in external pomp and glory; and hence they were at a complete loss to apprehend those Scriptures which spoke of Christ's kingdom as of a mean and lowly appearance. Well did Matthew Henry say, "The right understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, of its powers, glories, and victories, would prevent our misinterpreting and misapplying of the Scriptures that speak of it."

Alas, how blind men still are as to *what* constitutes the true *glory* of Christ's kingdom, namely, that it is a spiritual one, advanced by spiritual means, for spiritual persons, and unto spiritual ends. "To subdue hearts, not to conquer kingdoms; to bestow the riches of His grace to poor and needy sinners, not, like Solomon, to heap up gold and silver and precious stones; to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, not to spread ruin and desolation over countless provinces [as did Caesar, Charlmagne, Napoleon—A.W.P.]; to be surrounded with an army of martyrs, not an army of soldiers; to hold a court where paupers, not princes, are freely welcome" (J. C. Philpot). Only those favoured with true spiritual discernment will be able to perceive *what* the real honours and glories of the Lamb consist of.

The Mediatorial King must of necessity have a kingdom: even at His birth He was proclaimed as "Christ *the Lord*" (Luke 2:11), and the first inquiry made of Him was "where is He that is born *King of the Jews*?" (Matt. 2:2). Christ's Kingship and kingdom follow from a twofold cause. First, his sovereignty *as God* is essential to His Divine nature, being underived, absolute, eternal, and unchanging. Second, His sovereignty *as Mediator* is derived, being given to Him by the Father as the reward of His obedience and sufferings. It has two distinct aspects: first, in its wider and more general application it embraces all the universe; second, in its narrower and more specific administration it is restricted to the Church, the election of grace. In addition to these distinctions, it is important to note Christ never affirmed that the setting up of His kingdom on this earth was in any way dependent upon the attitude of the Jews toward Him: no, the eternal purpose of God was never left contingent upon the conduct of worms of the dust. "When the Jews refused Jesus as the Messiah, He did not say that the founding of the kingdom would be postponed until His second coming, but He did say the kingdom should be taken from them and given to the Gentiles!" (W. Masselink, "Why the Thousand Years?"). "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? *Therefore* say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:42, 43). Moreover, every passage in the Epistles which speak of Christ's kingdom as a *present* reality, refutes the theory that His kingdom has been postponed until His second advent: see Colos-

sians 1:13, Revelation 1:9—Christ's kingdom existed in the days of John, and he was *in it!* Christ is *now* "the Prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). He has already been "*crowned* with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9).

In the consequence of the entrance of sin, God has set up a kingdom in antagonism to the kingdom of Satan. It is essentially different from the kingdoms of the world, in its origin, nature, end, method of development and continuance. It is essentially a kingdom of righteousness, and its central principle is the loyalty of heart of its subjects to the King Himself. It is not a democracy, but an absolute monarchy. The special agency for the extension of it is the organized churches of Christ with their regular ministry. By His providential operations, the Lord Jesus is working in every sphere and causing all the historic movements of peoples and nations; civilised and uncivilised, to further its interests and advance its growth; though at the time of such movements this is hidden from carnal sense. Its consummation shall be ushered in by the return of the King, when His servants shall be rewarded and His enemies slain.

"There is but one kingdom or spiritual realm in which Christ reigns forever, and which in the end shall be eternally glorious in the perfect glory of her King; yet in Scripture there are three distinct names used to set forth the excellencies and the blessedness of that realm in various aspects, namely, the Kingdom, the Church, and the City of God" (A.A. Hodge). Of the three terms, the word "kingdom" is the most flexible and has the widest range in its New Testament usage. It designates, first, a *sphere* of rule, a realm over which the government of Christ extends. It signifies, second, a *reign* or the exercise of royal authority. It denotes, third, the *benefits* or blessings which result from the benevolent exercise of Christ's regal authority. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink"—the reign of Christ does not express itself in that kind of activity; "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17)—*these* are the characteristics of His realm.

That Christ's kingdom is of an altogether *different* nature and character from the kingdoms of this world is clear from His own teaching: "But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be *among you*: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your *minister*: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be *servant* of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but *to minister*, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). And again, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36): observe He did not say "My kingdom is not *in* this world," but "*not of it*." It is not a provincial thing, nor a political institution; it is not regulated by territorial or material considerations, nor is it governed by carnal policy; it is not made up of unregenerate subjects, nor is it seeking mundane aggrandizement. It is purely a *spiritual* regime, regulated by *the Truth*. This is seen from the *means* He used at its first establishment, and His appointments for its support and enlargement—not physical force, but gracious overtures.

Some men who are fond of drawing innumerable distinctions and contrasts under the guise of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," draw a sharp line between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ. But this is clearly confuted by "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5), and again "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15 and cf. 12:10). Its spiritual nature is plainly seen from Jehovah's statement "they have rejected Me, that I should

not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7): His throne and sceptre was an *invisible* one. In like manner when the Jews said of Christ “We will not have this Man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14), they intimated that they were unwilling to surrender their hearts to His moral sway. So too when Paul said, “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but *the power*. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Cor. 4:19, 20) he obviously meant, “the spiritual power thereof felt in your hearts.”

The reign of Christ has a twofold application. First, He sustains the relation of a gracious Sovereign to His redeemed people, ruling them in love, maintaining their interests, supplying their needs, restraining their foes; training them for His service now and for the glory awaiting them in Heaven. Second, He is the moral Governor over the world, for however unconscious they may be of His operations, all men are controlled by Him and their schemings and actions over-ruled by His own ends. Even earth’s potentates are obliged to obey His secret will: “*by Me* kings reign, and princes decree justice” (Prov. 8:15): “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov. 21:1). His government over the world, yea, over the entire universe, is administered by a wisely adapted series of means, appointed and directed by Him.

It is important to recognise this twofold scope of Christ’s reign. To the Father He said, “As Thou hast given Him power over *all flesh*, that He should give eternal life to *as many as Thou hast given Him*” (John 17:2). The kingdom of Christ as it is spiritual and inward is peculiar to the elect, but His kingdom as it is judicial and outward is universal. The two things are distinguished again in Psalm 2: “Yet have I set My king upon My *holy hill of Zion*” (v. 6), and “Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee *the heathen* for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession” (v. 8). Christ is not only “King of saints” (Rev. 15:3), but He is also “King of nations” (Jer. 10:7). He reigns over all mankind, and those who do not submit themselves to Him as Redeemer, shall yet stand before Him as Judge. “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa. 2:9): this speaks of the judiciary acts of His power. Joseph in Egypt typed out the same: the power of all the land was made over to him (Gen. 41:43) but his brethren had a special claim upon his affections.

Now this kingdom of Christ, considered in its spiritual and inward aspect, believers are said to “receive,” that is, they participate in its privileges and blessings. As Christ’s kingdom is “not of the world” but “heavenly” (2 Tim. 4:18), so its subjects are not of the world but heavenly. From the Divine side, they enter by means of the Spirit’s quickening, for “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). From the human side, they enter when they throw down the weapons of their rebellion and take Christ’s yoke upon them, for “except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). It was when we transferred our allegiance from Satan to Christ that it could be said the Father “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son” (Col. 1:13). They who have received the Gospel into an honest and good heart have been admitted into and made participants of the kingdom of Christ.

“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved” (Heb. 12:28). In seeking to define more closely the “we receiving,” let us remember the threefold meaning of the term “kingdom.” First, it signifies that we are admitted into that *realm* or sphere

where Christ is owned as Supreme. Second, it signifies that we have surrendered to the *reign* or sceptre of Christ, for Him to rule over our hearts and lives. Third, it signifies that we now participate in the *blessings* of Christ's government. This word "receiving" also denotes that we have this kingdom *from Another*: "walk worthy of God, who hath *called you unto* His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12); "hath not God *chosen* the poor of this world rich in faith, and *heirs* of the kingdom?" (James 2:5); "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you* from the foundation of the world" (Matt: 25:34); all bring out this thought.

In affirming that this is a kingdom "which cannot be moved" the Apostle emphasised once more the great superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and also showed wherein the kingdom of Christ differs from all the kingdoms of earth, which are subject to commotions and convulsions. This "kingdom which cannot be moved" is but another name for "those things which cannot be shaken" that "remain" of verse 27: it is the substance and reality of what was typed out under the Mosaic economy. "We have received a kingdom that shall never be moved, never be removed, nor give way to any new dispensation. The canon of Scripture is now perfected, the Spirit of prophecy is ceased, the mystery of God is finished: He hath put His last hand to it. The Gospel-church may be made more large, more prosperous, more purified from contracted pollution, but it shall never be altered for another dispensation; they who perish under the Gospel, perish without remedy" (Matthew Henry).—A.W.P.

The Life of David

56. *His Forgiveness.*

The inward experience of a believer consists very largely of growing discoveries of his own vileness and of God's goodness, of his own excuseless failures and of God's infinite forbearance, with a frequent alternation between gloom and joy, confession and thanksgiving. Consequently, the more he reads and meditates upon the Word, the more he sees how exactly suited it is to his case, and how accurately his own checkered history is described therein. The two leading themes of Scripture are *sin and grace*: throughout the Sacred Volume each of these is traced to its original source, each is delineated in its true character, each is followed out in its consequences and ends, each is illustrated and exemplified by numerous personal examples. Strange as it first sounds, yet it is true that, upon these two, *sin and grace*, do turn all the transactions between God and the souls of men.

The force of what has just been said receives clear and striking demonstration in the case of David. Sin in all its hideousness is seen at work within him, plunging him into the mire; but grace is also discovered in all its loveliness, delivering and cleansing him. The one serves as a dark background from which the other may shine forth the more gloriously. Nowhere do we behold so unmistakably the fearful nature and horrible works of sin than in the man after God's own heart, so signally favoured and so highly honoured, yet failing so ignominiously and sinking so low. Yet nowhere do we behold so vividly the amazing grace of God as in working true repentance in this notorious transgressor, pardoning his iniquity, and restoring him to communion. King Saul was rejected for a far milder offence: ah, *he* was not in the covenant! O the awe-inspiring sovereignty of Divine grace.

Not only has the Holy Spirit faithfully recorded the awful details of David's sin, He has also fully described the heart-affecting repentance of the contrite king. In addition thereto, He has shown us how he sought and obtained Divine forgiveness. Each of these is recorded for our learning, and, we may add, for our comfort. The first shows us the fearful tendency of the flesh which still indwells the believer, with its proneness to produce the vilest fruit. The second makes known to us the lamentable work which we make for ourselves when we indulge our lusts, and the bitter cup we shall then be obliged to drink. The third informs us that grievous though our case be yet it is not hopeless, and reveals the course which God requires us to follow. Having already considered the first two at some length, we will now turn to the third.

As it is in the Psalms that the Spirit has recorded the exercises of David's broken heart, so it is therein we learn of how he obtained the Divine pardon for the aggravated offences. We will begin by turning to one of the last of the "penitential" Psalms, which we believe was probably penned by David himself. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD" (Psa. 130:1). There are various "depths" into which God suffers His people, at times, to fall: "depths" of trial and trouble over financial losses, family bereavements, personal illness. There are also "depths" of sin and guilt, into which they may plunge themselves, with the consequent "depths" of conviction and anguish, of darkness and despair—through the hidings of God's face—and of Satanic opposition and despondency. It is these which are here more particularly in view.

The design of the Holy Spirit in this 130th Psalm was to express and represent in the person and conduct of the Psalmist the case of a soul entangled in the meshes of Satan,

overwhelmed by the conscious guilt of sin, but relieved by a discovery of the grace of God, with its deponent upon and participation of that grace. We quote the helpful paraphrase of J. Owen in its opening verses, "O Lord, through my manifold sins and provocation I have brought myself into great distresses. Mine iniquities are always before me, and I am ready to be overwhelmed with them, as with a flood of waters; for they have brought me into the depths, wherein I am ready to be swallowed up. But yet, although my distress be great and perplexing, I do not, I dare not, utterly despond and cast away all hopes of relief or recovery. Nor do I seek unto any other remedy, way, or means of relief, but I apply myself to Thee, Jehovah, to Thee alone. And in this my application unto Thee, the greatness and urgency of my troubles make my soul urgent, earnest, and pressing in my supplication. Whilst I have no rest, I can give Thee no rest; oh, therefore, attend and hearken unto the voice of my crying!"

When the soul is in such a case—in "the depths" of distress and despondency—there is no relief for it *but in God*, fully unburdening the heart to Him. The soul cannot rest in such a state, and no deliverance is to be obtained from any creature helps. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for *in Thee* the fatherless (the grief-stricken and helpless) findeth mercy" (Hosea 14:3). In God alone is help to be found. The vain things which deluded Romanists have invented—prayers "to the Virgin," pennances, confession to "priests," fastings, masses, pilgrimages, works of compensation—are all "cisterns which hold no water." Equally useless are the counsels of the world to sin-distressed souls—to try a change of scenery, diversion from work, music, cheerful society, pleasure, etc. There is no peace but in the God of Peace.

Now in his very lowest state the Psalmist *sought help* from the Lord, nor was his appeal in vain. And this is what *we* need to lay hold of when in similar circumstances: it is recorded to this very end. Dear Christian reader, however deplorable may be your condition, however dire your need, however desperate your situation, however intolerable the load on your conscience, your case *is not hopeless*. David cried, and was heard; he sought mercy, and obtained it; and the Divine promise to you and me is "Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). David was not the only one who cried unto God out of "the depths." Think of the Prophet Jonah: following a course of self-will, deliberately fleeing from God's commandment, then cast into the sea and swallowed by the whale: yet of him too we read, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou *heardest* my voice" (Jonah 2:2).

It was his hope in the plenitude of Divine grace that moved David to seek unto the Lord. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth *wait*, and in His word do I *hope*" (Psa. 130:3-5). In the third verse he owns that he could not stand before the thrice Holy One on the ground of his own righteousness, and that if God were to "mark iniquities," that is, impute them unto condemnation, then his case was indeed hopeless. In the 4th verse he humbly reminds God that there *was* forgiveness with Him, that He might be revered and adored—not trifled with and mocked, for Divine pardon is not a license for future self-indulgence. In the 5th verse he hopefully waits for some "token for good" (Psa. 86:17), some "answer of peace" (Gen. 41:16) from the Lord.

But it is in the 51st Psalm that we find David most definitely and most earnestly suing for God's pardon. The same intensity of feeling expressed in the use of so many words for sin is revealed also in his reiterated synonyms for pardon. This petition comes from his lips again and again, not because he thought to be heard for his much speaking, but because of the earnestness of his longing. *Such* repetitions are signs of persistence of faith, while those which last, like the prayers of Baal's priests "from morning till the time of evening sacrifice," indicate only the supplicant's doubts. The "vain repetition" against which the Lord warned, is not a matter of repeating the same form of request, but of mechanically multiplying the same—like the Romanist with his "pater noster's"—and supposing there is virtue and merit in so doing.

David prayed that his sins might be "blotted out" (v. 1), which petition conceives of them as being recorded against him. He prayed that he might be "washed" (v. 2) from them, in which they are felt to be foul stains, which require for their removal hard scrubbing and beating—for such is, according to some of the commentators, the force of the Hebrew verb. He prayed that he might be "cleansed" (v. 7), which was the technical word for the priestly cleansing of the leper, declaring him clear of the taint. There is a touching appropriateness in this last reference, for not only lepers, but those who had become defiled by contact with a dead body, were thus purified (Num. 19); and on whom did the taint of this corruption cleave as on the murderer of Uriah? The prayer in the original is even more remarkable, for the verb is formed from the word for "sin," and if our language permitted it, would be rendered "Thou shalt *un-sin* me."

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). His sin had made manifest his weakness and sensuality, but his remorse and anguish evidenced that above and beyond all other desires was his abiding longing after God. The petitions of this Psalm clearly demonstrate that, despite his weakness and Satan's victory over him, yet the root of the Divine matter was in David. In asking God to *create* in him a clean heart, David was humbly placing himself on a level with the unregenerate: he realised too his own utter inability to quicken or renew himself—God alone can create either a new heart or a new earth. In asking for a right spirit, he was owning that God takes account of the state of our souls as well as the quality of our actions: a "*right* spirit" is a loving, trustful obedient, steadfast one, that none but God can either impart or maintain.

In the midst of his abased confessions and earnest cries for pardon, there comes with wondrous force and beauty the bold request for restoration to full communion: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (v. 12). How that request evidenced a more than ordinary confidence in the rich mercy of God, which would efface all the consequences of his sin! But note well *the position* occupied by this petition: it *followed* his request for pardon and purity—apart from *those*, "joy" would be nought but vain presumption or insane enthusiasm. "And uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (v. 12). First, he had prayed "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (v. 11)—an obvious reference to the awful judgment which fell upon his predecessor, Saul; here, assured that the previous petition is granted, and conscious of his own weakness and inability to stand, he asks to be supported by that One who alone can impart and maintain holiness.

Ere passing on to consider the gracious answer David received, perhaps this is the best place to consider the question, Was he justified in asking God *for* forgiveness? Or to put it in a form which may better satisfy the critical, Are we warranted in supplicating God for the pardon of our sins? For there are those today who insist that *we* occupy a different

and superior relation to God than David did. It will no doubt surprise some of our readers that we raise such a question. One would naturally think it was so evident that we *ought* to pray for forgiveness, that none would question it; that such a prayer is so well founded upon Scripture itself, is so agreeable to our condition as erring believers, and is so honouring to God that we *should* take the place of penitent supplicants, acknowledging our offences and seeking His pardoning mercy, that no further proof is required. But alas, so great is the confusion in Christendom today, and so much error abounds, that we feel obliged to devote one or two paragraphs unto the elucidation of this point.

There is a group, more or less influential, who argue that it is dishonouring to the blood of Christ for any Christian to ask God to pardon his sins, quoting “*Having forgiven you all trespasses*” (Col. 2:13). These people confuse the impetration of the Atonement with its application, or in less technical terms, what Christ purchased for His people, with the Holy Spirit’s making good the same to them in the court of their conscience. Let it be clearly pointed out that, in asking God for forgiveness, we do *not* pray as though the blood of Christ had never been shed, or as though *our* tears and prayers could make any compensation to Divine justice. Nevertheless, renewed sins call for renewed repentance: true, we do not then need another Redeemer, but we *do* need a fresh exercise of Divine mercy toward us (Heb. 4:16), and a fresh application to our conscience of the cleansing blood (1 John 1:7, 9).

The saints of old prayed for pardon: “For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psa. 25:11). The Lord Jesus taught His disciples *to pray* “Forgive us our debts” (Matt. 6:12), and that prayer is assuredly for Christians today, for it is addressed to “*our Father!*” In praying for forgiveness we ask God to be gracious to us for *Christ’s* sake; we ask Him *not* to lay such sins to our charge—“enter not into judgment with Thy servant” (Psa. 143:2); we ask Him for a gracious *manifestation* to us of His mercy to our conscience—“Make me *to hear* joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice” (Psa. 51:8); we ask Him for the comforting proofs of His forgiveness, that we may again have “the joy of His salvation.”

Now it is in the 32nd Psalm that we learn of the answer which “The God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10) granted unto His erring but penitent child. In his introductory remarks thereon Spurgeon said, “Probably his deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song.” The word “Maschil” at its head, signifies “Teaching”: “The experience of one believer affords rich instruction to others, it reveals the footsteps of the flock, and so comforts and directs the weak.” At the close of the 51st Psalm David had prayed, “O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (v. 15): here the prayer has been heard, and this is the beginning of the fulfillment of his vow.

“*Blessed* is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psa. 32:1, 2). In the former Psalm David had begun with the plaintive cry for mercy; here he opens with a burst of praise, celebrating the happiness of the pardoned penitent. There we heard the sobs of a man in the agonies of contrition and abasement; here we have an account of the blessed issue. There we had the multiplied synonyms for sin and for the forgiveness which was desired; here is the many-sided preciousness of forgiveness *possessed*, which runs over in various yet equivalent phrases. The one is a psalm of wailing; the other, to use its own words, a “song of deliverance.”

The joy of conscious pardon sounds out in the opening "*blessed* is the man," and the exuberance of his spirit rings forth in the melodious variations of the one thought of forgiveness in the opening words. How gratefully he draws on the treasures of his recent experience, which he sets forth as the "taking away" of sin—the removal of an intolerable load from his heart; as the "covering" of sin—the hiding of its hideousness from the all-seeing Eye of the blood of Christ; as the "imputing not" of sin—a debt discharged. How blessed the realisation that his own forgiveness would encourage other penitent souls—"For *this* shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee" (Psa. 32:6). Finally, how precious the deep assurance which enables the restored one to say, "Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance" (v. 7)!

Here, then, is hope for the greatest backslider, if he will but humble himself before the God of all grace. True sorrow *for* sin is followed by the pardon *of* sin: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "Is it possible that such a backslider from God can be recovered, and admitted afterwards to comfortable communion with Him? Doubtless it is: 'for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption,' and He will never cast out one humble penitent believer, whatever his former crimes have been, nor suffer Satan to pluck any of His sheep out of His hand. Let then those who are fallen return to the Lord without delay, and seek forgiveness through the Redeemer's atoning blood" (T. Scott).—A.W.P.

Union and Communion.

8. *Experimental.*

Christ Himself is mine! *Christ Himself* is thine, dear Christian reader. O that our poor finite hearts could apprehend a little of what that means. Think for a moment of *whom He is*: the Brightness of God's glory, the express Image of His Person; Immanuel, God manifest in flesh. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. What then cannot He do! All power in Heaven and earth is His. Think too of *what He has done* for His people: He became poor that we might become rich, He came to earth that we might go to Heaven, He died that we might live. What must be His love for us! Think of His *present relationship* to us: His righteousness is imputed to our own account, His blood is our purity before God, His fullness is ours to draw upon (John 1:16), His Spirit indwells us; He is our great High Priest on high, ever living to make intercession for us.

Christ is the "*Friend* that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18: 24). He would have us *come to Him continually* (1 Peter 2:4) with all our wants, cares, sins, and sorrows; He is able to lift our hearts above them all. None outside Christ is worth a serious thought. O to bask in the sunshine of His conscious presence, to rejoice in His love, to dwell upon the perfect righteousness He has wrought out for us, to be daily occupied with the sufficiency of His atoning blood, to find in Him all that we need for time as well as for eternity. O to *live upon* Christ continually, no matter what you feel or experience in yourself. Let nothing hinder you, my brother, my sister, from keeping up an unbroken communion with your precious Lord and Saviour. This is your right, your privilege, your portion.

Nothing should hinder the Christian from experimental communion with Christ. He should turn *everything* he experiences with regard to circumstances, temptations, sins, friends and enemies, into seeking unto Christ, and finding in *Him* the opposite of all that grieves him in *them*. O to live freely, fully, wholly, on Christ. We shall do so in Heaven, why not do so on earth! Only as the heart is fixed steadfastly on Him is peace and joy our conscious portion. It is only by living *out of* our wretched selves that we can enjoy the Person, the work, the fullness of the Lord Jesus. This is the secret of true happiness, and only so far as we find our happiness in Him is practical holiness promoted. His eye is ever upon us, why is not ours ever upon Him? He is the Sum of perfection, the "Altogether Lovely" One. Whilst we view Him in His peerless excellency, our souls cannot but be enamoured of Him.

The greatest loss and misery which can befall us this side of eternity is to be looking off from Christ. None other can do us any real good. But the trouble is in our own proud, legal, self-righteous, deceitful hearts. We are not content to be *nothing* in ourselves, and for Christ to be *everything*. WE want to be something, spiritual "Somebodies." We want to experience something within which will feed our pride and give us satisfaction. We want to feel that we are *better* than when we first came to the Saviour as hopelessly lost, utterly undone, woe-begone, despairing sinners. We may not be quite conscious of this subtle working of pride, but that is what it is, nevertheless. All the fitness He requireth is to feel my need of Him, is as true now as when I first fell at His feet owning myself to be a foul leper.

The whole of practical godliness is summed up in the *denial* or repudiation of SELF. We cannot make Christ our all in all till self be loathed and renounced--by which we mean *all* that pertains to self, good, bad, and indifferent. But this is only possible by the exercise of *faith*, for faith consists in going outside of ourselves to Christ for everything--

for strength, for wisdom, for holiness, for peace, for joy. The whole of our salvation is in Him. O to be able to truly say, "My soul shall make her boast *in the LORD*" (Psa.. 34:2) not in my "consecration," not in my growth in grace, not in my knowledge of spiritual mysteries, not in my "service," not in my "victory over sin," not in my spiritual attainments, not in the number of souls I have "won"; but IN THE LORD. O to be done with *religious self*!

Having sought, then, to show again wherein experimental communion with Christ consists, and dwelt upon the means and maintenance thereof, we must now turn to the darker side of our subject and consider the interruption and severance of the same. And in this connection we cannot do better than devote the remainder of this chapter to a careful examination of our Lord's words in Revelation 2:4, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." As an assembly is but the aggregate of its members and officers, the rebuke to the Ephesian church applies directly unto individual Christians who are in the condition here described. It is one in which *the heart* is not so deeply affected as it once was with the love of God in Christ, nor is there now such devotion toward nor delight in Him; and in consequence, there is a feebler resistance to sin and slackening pursuit of holiness.

It is to be carefully noted that the charge which is here preferred by Christ is not "thou hast *lost* thy first love" (as it is frequently misquoted), but "thou hast *left* thy first love," which is a more definite act, and emphasizes the failure of responsibility. The sad state here depicted signifies a decay in grace, a declension in spirituality, a waning of affection, with the resultant loss of relish for Divine things, growing carelessness in the use of means, and formality in the performance of duty. It is a state of heart that is here in view, which may or may not be accompanied by outward backsliding. The fine gold has become dim. Christ no longer holds the first place in the soul's affections. Some are conscious of this decay in love, while others aware of it draw the erroneous conclusion they have never sincerely loved Christ at all.

Genuine Christians may find their love for Christ languishing. Just as the body will soon be chilled if, on a winter's day, it leaves the fireside, so the soul's ardour and fervour will quickly wane if the things of time and sense are allowed to crowd out close communion with Christ. But though grace may decay, it is never utterly destroyed; hence the error of speaking about "losing" our first love. The "seed" of God (1 John 3:9) remains in His people even when they backslide: it did in David, and in Peter. There is a vital principle communicated in regeneration which is indestructible. So, then, though the Christian's love may suffer a sad abatement, it is never totally extinguished: the acts and fruits of it may be few, its measure may greatly diminish, but the root of it is still present.

That we may the better understand this spiritual disease (and thus be fortified against Satan's lies) let us point out *what it is not*. First, not every distemper or ailment which the renewed heart perceives and mourns over, is a leaving of our first love. Every act of known sin is not apostasy, nor even a degree of it; as every rise of bodily temperature after a meal is not a fever. There are infirmities and failures in the most spiritual saints. As said an old writer, "Alas for the generation of the just, if every vain thought, idle word, or distempered passion, were a decay of love." Nothing is so uncertain as to judge ourselves by particular acts, for in every act love does not put forth itself so strongly as at other times. Some obstructions of love there may be for the present, which the soul takes notice of and retracts with sorrow, but still we hold on our course.

Second, every abatement or absence of transports of soul and mountain-top elations, is not a leaving of first love. At conversion there are strong joys and liftings up of soul upon our first acquaintance with God in Christ, but such an experience is not sustained, nor meant to be so. A healthy person will regularly relish his food, yet he must not expect it to produce such sensations of pleasure as does the first meal to a starving man. At conversion our love shows itself in sensitive expressions, for as yet it is not dispersed and diffused in the several channels of obedience; but when the Christian learns how many ways he is to express his love to God, he may have a true zeal and affection for Him, and become "rooted and grounded" in love, without those ravishments of soul which he experienced when first realising that his sins were all pardoned and that he was accepted in Christ.

Third, nor must the Christian conclude that his love has decayed because he no longer experiences those conscious goings forth of heart to God as he had *in special seasons*, when God granted him a high day in His courts. There are occasions when God feasts the soul so that it is constrained to say, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and with fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips" (Psa. 63:5). There are times when we are favoured with rich experiences of God's love, to which all the pleasures of the creature are no ways comparable. Such are very great mercies, but they are never intended for us to try our state by. A settled calm, a quiet peace of soul, is an even greater mercy than occasional transports of joy. If we preserve our relish for spiritual things it is a surer proof of our standing in grace than in any spasmodic or sporadic raptures.

Though Christians ought not to lightly or rashly judge themselves guilty of a decay in their love, yet on the other hand they should not readily acquit themselves of it, for it is a great evil. The highest degree of love does not answer to the infinite worthiness of Christ, nor to what we owe Him for having rescued us from Hell and secured for us an eternity with Himself in Heaven. But when a believer falls from that measure of love whereunto he had already attained, it is the more grievous, because to now seek his happiness in things, to settle down with a measure of contentment in his backslidden state, is tantamount to saying that he had formerly loved Christ too much, and had been more earnest and diligent in seeking to please Him than was necessary. Thereby he condemns his former love and disesteems Christ as not worthy to be loved with *all* his heart, mind, and strength. Moreover, as love decays, so do all our other graces, with their fruits and works. Nor will Christ, who is jealous of His peoples' affection, ignore their growing coldness, but will make them smart for their sin and folly.

It is not without reason then that Christians are exhorted to "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). The healthy Christian is still apt to remit something of his delighting himself in the Lord, and his constant duty to honour Him in all things; and at no point does he need to be more upon his guard than in *the preserving of his love*. There is much of self-pleasing in us, love of our own ease and carnal gratification, much lusting after the things of this world, and such a continual opposition of the flesh to the Spirit which ever seeks to draw off from God and heavenly things, that we cannot be sufficiently watchful against everything which has a tendency to quench that spiritual fire which should always be burning in our hearts. Unless we daily heed that exhortation, "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23) we shall quickly lapse into that careless and cold state which is the case with the great majority of professing Christians. How

much we need to pray for one another “the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2 Thess. 3:5).

Many who have left their first love *are little sensible of* the sad fact. One reason for this is that spiritual ailments are not laid to heart till they openly appear in their effects and fruits. A believer may be active in external duties while his love has become cold; the life of his duties may be decayed, though the duties themselves be not left off--as the Pharisees were scrupulous in tithing mint and cummim, but omitted “the love of God” (Luke 11:42). A correct outward deportment is no proof that the affections are still warm toward Christ. As the glory of God is seen leaving the temple of Ezekiel by degrees--first from the holy place, then to the outer court, then to the city, then resting on one of its encircling hills; so it is when Christians grow cold to God. The Lord no longer has the throne of the heart, then secret prayer is neglected, then family worship declines, then public duties become irksome, and then sin begins to lead us into practices dishonouring to Christ; and all because we did not observe and judge the *first declinings*.

Now *the decay of love* is seen in two things: first, in the diminishings of its degree. That love which we are required to give unto the Lord consists in valuing and esteeming Him above all else; and this is to be manifested by us in a constant care to please Him, a fear to offend Him, a desire to enjoy Him, a steady delighting in Him. When any of these are abated, as to any considerable degree, then our love is chilling or growing cold. Where love is healthy and the favour of God is highly valued, there is a sincere effort made “that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col. 1:10). But when the heart grows more or less indifferent whether our conduct is honouring to God, and we are more set upon gratifying the flesh, then love is decayed. While His fear be truly upon us we will say, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

Now there is in the Christian a yearning to enjoy God in Christ, and a strong tendency of heart toward Him argues a healthy love. When we cannot regard ourselves as happy apart from Him and count all else as dung and dross (Phil. 3:7-9), when we desire a sense of His love and are deeply affected by a lack thereof, we cry “my soul followeth hard after Thee” (Psa. 63:8). The Christian longs for sanctifying grace, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and the perpetual vision of Christ hereafter. But as these desires decrease, so there is a diminishing in the degree of our love. The soul esteems communion with God above all else: “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psa. 4:7); “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches” (Psa. 119:14). But when we mourn not for the absence of the light of God’s countenance shining upon us, when we cease to esteem His Word more than our necessary food, then our love is waning.

Second, the decay of love is evidenced by the intermission of its acts or effects, for when the heart grows cold and listless it becomes unfruitful. Let us consider some of the principal workings of love *Godward*. These are seen in our thinking and speaking of Him: “I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches” (Psa. 63:6); “my meditation of Him shall be sweet” (Psa. 104:34). As the wicked are described as those who seldom think upon Him (Psa. 10: 4), contrariwise, it is the pleasure of a renewed soul to be much occupied with God’s perfections. But when our hearts and minds swarm with vain imaginations and idle dreamings, and thoughts about God are repelled as unwelcome guests, love has decayed. The less our love for God, the less we shall think

upon and speak of Him. Again; where love is vigorous, communion with God in prayer and holy duties is ardently desired and earnestly sought: "Seven times a day do I praise Thee" (Psa. 119:164). But when communion is neglected, and a sense of God's presence is not our main object in the use of means, He has to say, "My people have forgotten Me days without number" (Jer. 2:32).

Consider the effects of love with respect to *sin*. When the sense of our deep obligations to Christ are warm upon the heart, we are constrained to strive against sin, to resist the lustings of the flesh, and turn with loathing from the temptations of Satan. When overtaken by a fault we bewail it, as she who loved much, wept much (Luke 7:47). The more vigorous our love for God, the stronger our hatred of all which is opposed to Him. But when the conscience has lost its tenderness, evil imaginations are tolerated without remorse, the heart is no longer diligently kept, nor the tongue bridled; then spiritual decay has set in. When a believer makes light of the things which once deeply distressed him, when he grows careless and vain, is venturesome upon temptations and snares, and ceases to groan over his corruptions, then he has left his first love.

Consider the effects of love with regard to the *duties of obedience*. Where it retains its strength love works self-denial, so that the impediments of obedience are more easily overcome. Love begrudges not some expense for the one beloved, and will serve God whatever it costs (2 Sam. 24:24). But when every trifle is made an excuse, and that which God requires is deemed too much and exacting, love has waned; an unwilling heart is soon turned out of the way. Again; love makes actions easy and pleasant, and says "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3); therefore when obedience has become a burden and the doing of God's will a hard task, the affections must have cooled off. Finally, love puts life into duties: "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11); without this, His worship is performed perfunctorily, sin is confessed without remorse, and praise is offered without any spiritual melody in our hearts.

In conclusion, let us mention some of *the causes* of love's decay. The evil times in which we live, is one: "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many waxes cold" (Matt. 24:12). But though it be hard to maintain our spiritual fires when the world is pouring cold water on them, yet the darker the night the more brightly should real Christians shine. Again; multiplied privileges cloy. The Israelites wearied even of Heaven's manna: "a full stomach loatheth a honey comb." When we were first acquainted with the things of Christ and communion with God, we were greatly enamoured, but now they no longer charm. But this should not be: while healthy, the babe wearies not of the breast. Again; neglect and carelessness. The Christian life is a race, a wrestling, a warfare; it calls for diligence and pains. If we neglect prayer, meditation, watchfulness against the encroachments of the world, love will quickly wane. Again, allowed sins: neglect is like not blowing the fire hid in the ashes, sinning is like pouring on oil. To dally with the pleasures of sin soon brings a deadness upon the heart.

N.B. For much in the latter part of the above, we are indebted to a sermon by the Puritan Manton.

The Divine Covenants.

5. The Siniatic.

In approaching the study of the Siniatic Covenant several things need attending to. First, it is to be viewed in connection with all that had preceded it (particularly the earlier "covenants"), rather than regarded as an isolated transaction: only thus can its details be seen in their proper perspective. Second, it is to be pondered in relation to the eternal purpose of God, and the gradual and progressive unfolding thereof which He gave unto His people: there was something more in it than what is merely temporal and evanescent. Third, the full light of the later communications from God must not be read back into it; nevertheless, the direct references to the Mosaic dispensation in the New Testament are to be carefully weighed in connection therewith.

Let us start, then, by considering what had preceded the Siniatic Covenant. Confining ourselves to that which relates the closest to our present inquiry, let us remind ourselves that under the preceding covenant God had made it known that the promised Messiah and Redeemer should spring from the line of Abraham. Now, clearly, that necessitated several things. The existence of Abraham's descendants as *a separate people* became indispensable, so that Christ's descent could be undeniably traced, and the leading promise of that covenant clearly verified. Moreover, the isolation of Abraham's descendants, Israel, from the heathen, was equally essential for the preservation of the knowledge and worship of God in the earth, until the fullness of time should come, and a higher dispensation succeed. In pursuance of this, to Israel were committed the living oracles, and amongst them the ordinances of Divine worship were authoritatively established.

It was not until the large family of Jacob had developed (seventy-five souls: Acts 7:14) that the Abrahamic Covenant, in its *natural* aspect, began to bud toward fulfillment. There was then a fair prospect of their progressive increase, yet some considerable time would be required before they could attain their augmentation in numbers which would justify their political organization as a separate nation and put them into a condition to occupy the promised inheritance. In order for that, the providence of God gave them a temporary settlement in Egypt, which was greatly to their advantage. A season in the midst of the most learned nation of antiquity afforded the Israelites an opportunity of obtaining instruction in many important branches of knowledge, of which they took advantage, as their subsequent history shows: while the fact that "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34) kept the two nations apart religiously, so that to a considerable extent the Hebrews were preserved from idolatry. Later, the cruel bondage they experienced there, made them glad to leave.

In Egypt, the descendants of Abraham had multiplied so extensively that by the time of the great Exodus there were probably at least two million souls. If, then, they were to be organised into a nation, and be brought into proper subjection to God, it was necessary that He should make a full revelation of His will for them, giving them laws and precepts for the regulation of all phases of their corporate and individual lives; and, above all, prescribe the nature and requirements of the Divine worship. This is what Jehovah graciously did at Sinai. There, God gave Israel a full declaration of His claims upon them and what He required of them, providing a "Constitution" which had in view naught but their own good and the glorifying of His great name; the whole being ratified by a solemn covenant. This was a decided advance on all that had gone before, and marked another step forward in the unfolding of the Divine plan.

But at this point we are faced with a formidable difficulty, namely, the remarkable *diversity* in the representation found in the later Scriptures respecting the tendency and bearing of the Law on those who were subject to it. On the one hand, we find a class of passages which represent the Law as coming expressly from Israel's Redeemer, conveying a benign aspect and aiming at happy results. Moses extolled the condition of Israel as, on this very account, surpassing that of all other people: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD *our* God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all *this Law*, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:7, 8). The same sentiment is echoed in various forms in the Psalms. "He showeth His word unto Jacob, *His statutes* and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (147:19, 20). "Great peace have they which *love Thy law*: and nothing shall offend them" (119:165).

But on the other hand, there is another class of passages which appear to point in the very opposite direction. In these the Law is represented as a source of trouble and terror—a bondage from which it is true liberty to escape. "The Law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4:15); "the strength of sin is the Law" (1 Cor. 15:56). In 2 Corinthians 3:7, 9 the Apostle speaks of the law as "the ministration of *death*, written and engraven in stones," and as "the ministration of *condemnation*." Again, he declares, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under *the curse*" (Gal. 3:10). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with *the yoke of bondage*. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:1-3).

Now it is very obvious that such diverse and antagonistic representations could not have been given of the law in the *same* respect, or with the same regard to its direct and *primary* aim. We are obliged to believe that *both* these representations are true, being *alike* found in the Volume of Inspiration. Thus it is clear that the Scriptures require *us* to contemplate the Law from more than one point of view, and with regard to *different* uses and applications of it. *What* those different viewpoints are, and *what* the varied uses and applications of the Law, will (D.V.) be pointed out by us later on. For the present, we confine ourselves unto a consideration of the place which the Law holds in the *Mosaic* economy. This is surely the only logical order to follow, for it is the happier class of representation which are found in the Pentateuch, occupying the foreground; while the others come in afterward, and must be noticed by us subsequently.

"The *national covenant* with Israel was here (Exo. 19:5) meant; the charter upon which they were incorporated, as a people, under the government of Jehovah. It was an engagement of God, to give Israel possession of Canaan, and to protect them in it: to render the land fruitful, and the nation victorious and prosperous, and to perpetuate His oracles and ordinances among them; so long as they did not, as a people, reject His authority, apostatize to idolatry, and tolerate open wickedness. These things constitute a forfeiture of the covenant; as their national rejection of Christ did afterwards. True believers among them were *personally* dealt with according to the Covenant of Grace, even as true Christians now are; and unbelievers were under the Covenant of Works, and liable to condemnation by it, as at present: yet, *the national covenant* was not strictly either the one or the other, but had something in it of the nature of each.

“The national covenant *did not* refer to the final salvation of individuals: nor was it broken by the disobedience, or even idolatry, of any number of them, provided this was not sanctioned or tolerated by public authority. It was indeed *a type* of the covenant made with true believers in Christ Jesus, as were all the transactions with Israel; but, like other types, it ‘had not the very image,’ but only ‘a shadow of good things to come.’ When therefore, *as a nation*, they had broken this covenant, the Lord declared that He would make ‘a *new* covenant with Israel, putting His law,’ not only in their hands, but ‘in their inward parts’; and ‘writing it,’ not upon tables of stone, ‘but in their hearts; forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more’ (Jer. 31:32-34; Heb. 8:7-12, 10:16, 17). The Israelites were under a dispensation of mercy, and had outward privileges and great advantages in various ways for salvation: yet, like professing Christians, the most of them rested in these, and looked no further. The outward covenant was made with the Nation, entitling them to outward advantages, upon the condition of outward national obedience; and the Covenant of Grace was ratified *personally* with true believers, and sealed and secured *spiritual* blessings to them, by producing a holy disposition of heart, and spiritual obedience to the Divine Law. In case Israel kept the covenant, the Lord promised that they should be to Him ‘a peculiar treasure.’ ‘All the earth’ (Exo. 19:5) being the Lord’s, He might have chosen any other people instead of Israel: and this implied that, as His choice of them was gratuitous, so if they rejected His covenant, He would reject them, and communicate their privileges to others; as indeed He hath done, since the introduction of the Christian dispensation” (Thomas Scott).

The above quotation contains the most lucid, comprehensive, and yet simple analysis of the Siniatic Covenant which we have met with in all our reading. It draws a clear line of distinction between God’s dealings with Israel as a nation, and with individuals in it. It shows the correct position of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and the Adamic Covenant of Works in relation to the Mosaic dispensation. All were born under the condemnation of the federal head (Adam), and while they continued unregenerate and in unbelief, were under the wrath of God; whereas God’s elect, upon believing, were treated by Him then, as *individuals*, in precisely the same way as they are now. Mr. Scott brings out clearly the character, the scope, the design, and the limitation of the Siniatic Covenant: its character was a supplementary combination of law and mercy; its scope was national; its design was to regulate the temporal affairs of Israel under the Divine government; its limitation was determined by Israel’s obedience or disobedience. The *typical* nature of it—the hardest point to elucidate—is also allowed. We advise the interested student to re-read the last four paragraphs.

Much confusion will be avoided and much help obtained if the Siniatic economy be contemplated *separately* under its two leading aspects, namely, as a system of religion and government designed for the immediate use of the Jews during the continuance of that dispensation; and then as a scheme *of preparation* for another and better economy, by which it was to be superseded when its temporal purpose had been fulfilled. The first design and the immediate end of what God revealed through Moses was to instruct and order the life of Israel, now formed into a nation. The second and ultimate intention of God was to prepare the people, by a lengthy course of discipline, for the coming of Christ. The character of the Siniatic Covenant was, in itself, neither purely evangelical nor exclusively legal: Divine wisdom devised a wondrous and blessed co-mingling of righteousness and grace, justice and mercy. The requirements of the high and unchanging

holiness of God were clearly revealed; while His goodness, kindness and longsuffering were also as definitely manifested. The moral and ceremonial law, running together side by side, presented and maintained a perfect balance, which only the corruption of fallen human nature failed to reap the full advantage of.

The covenant which God made with Israel at Sinai required outward obedience to the letter of the law. It contained promises of *national* blessing if they, as a people, kept the law; and it also announced national calamities if they were disobedient. This is unmistakably clear from such a passage as the following: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers: And He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee" (Deut. 7:12-16).

In connection with the above passage, notice, first, the definite reference made to God's "*mercy*," which proves that He *did not* deal with Israel on the bare ground of exacting and relentless law, as some have erroneously supposed. Second, observe the reference which the Lord here made unto His oath to their fathers, i.e., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; which show that the Siniatic Covenant was based upon, and not divorced from, the Abrahamic—Israel's occupation of Canaan being the "letter" fulfillment of it. Third, if, as a nation, Israel rendered unto their God the obedience to which He was entitled as their King and Governor, then He would love and bless them—under the Christian economy there is no promise that He will love and bless any who live in defiance of His claims upon them! Fourth, the specific blessings here enumerated were all of a temporal and material kind. In other passages God threatened to bring upon them plagues and judgments (Deut. 28:15-65) for disobedience. The whole was a compact promising to Israel certain outward and national blessings on the condition of their rendering to God a general outward obedience to His Law.

The *tenor* of the covenant made with them was, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exo. 19:5, 6). "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an Enemy unto thine enemies, and an Adversary unto thine adversaries" (Exo. 23:20-22). Nevertheless, *a provision of mercy was made* where true repentance for failure was evidenced: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also

My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham. . . . These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (Lev. 26:40-42, 46).

The Siniatic Covenant in no way interfered with the Divine administration of either the Everlasting Covenant of Grace, (toward the elect) nor the Adamic Covenant of Works (which all by nature lie under); it being in quite another region. Whether *the individual* Israelites were heirs of blessing under the former, or under the curse of the latter, in no wise hindered or affected Israel’s being *as a people* under this national regime, which respected not inward and eternal blessings, but only outward and temporal interests. Nor did God in entering into this arrangement with Israel mock their impotency or tantalise them with vain hopes, any more than He does so *now*, when it still holds good that “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). Though it be true that Israel miserably failed to keep their national engagements and brought down upon themselves the penalties which God had threatened, nevertheless, the obedience which He required of them *was not* obviously and hopelessly impracticable: nay, there were bright periods in their history when it *was* fairly rendered, and the fruits of it were manifestly enjoyed by them.—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

Its Rule.

We trust it has now been clearly proved to the satisfaction of every *Truth-loving* reader that the great object in Christ's coming here was to magnify the Law and satisfy its righteous demands. In His fulfilling of the Law and by His enduring its penalty, the Lord Jesus laid the foundation for the conforming of His people to it. This is plainly taught us in, "For what the Law could not do (namely, justify and sanctify fallen sinners—neither remit the penalty, nor deliver from the power of sin), in that it was weak through the flesh, (unable to produce holiness in a fallen creature, as a master musician cannot produce harmony and melody from an instrument that is all out of tune) God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: *that* (in order that) the righteousness of the Law (its just requirements) might be *fulfilled in us*" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

This was the design of God sending His Son here. "That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him (be in subjection to Him) without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75). "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should *live unto righteousness*" (1 Peter 2:24). These and similar passages are so many different ways of saying that Christ "became obedient unto death" in order that His people might be recovered to obedience unto God, that they might be made personally holy, that they might be conformed to God's Law, both in heart and life. Nothing less than this would or could meet the requirements of the Divine government, satisfy God's own nature, or glorify the Redeemer by a triumphant issue of His costly work.

Nor should it surprise any to hear that nothing short of heart-conformity to the Law could satisfy the thrice Holy One. "The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh *on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). We have read the Old Testament Scriptures in vain if we have failed to note what a prominent place this basic and searching truth occupies: any one who has access to a complete Hebrew-English concordance can see at a glance how many *hundreds of* times the term "heart" is used there. The great God could never be imposed upon or satisfied with mere external performances from His creatures. Alas, alas, that *heart religion* is rapidly disappearing from the earth, to the eternal undoing of all who are strangers to it. God has never required less than the hearts of His creatures: "My son, give Me thine *heart*" (Prov. 23:26).

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy *soul* diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy *heart* all the days of thy life" (Deut. 4:9). "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your *heart*, and be no more stiff-necked" (Deut. 10:16, and cf. Jer. 9:25, 26). "Keep thy *heart* with *all* diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and *rend your heart*, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful" (Joel 2:12, 13). The regenerate in Israel clearly *recognised* the high and holy demands which the Law of God made upon them: "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the *inward parts*" (Psa. 51:6); and therefore did they pray, "Search me, O God,

and know my *heart*: try me, and know my *thoughts*: and see if there be any wicked way *in* me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23, 24).

Now as we pointed out in our last, the Lord Jesus affirmed that the full requirements of the Law from us are summed up in, “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt. 22:37, 39). It was to restore His people to this that Christ lived and died: to recover them *to God*, to bring them back into subjection to *Him* (from which they fell in Adam), to recover them to the Lawgiver. Christ is the Mediator between God and men, and by Christ is the believing sinner brought *to God*. When He sends His ministers to preach the Gospel it is “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan *unto God*” (Acts 26:18). “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us *to Himself* by Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18). To the saints Paul wrote “Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). Of Christ it is written “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come *unto God* by Him” (Heb. 7:25); and again, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us *to God*” (1 Peter 3:18)—to the God of the Old Testament, the Lawgiver!

Let us consider *how* Christ recovers His people unto a conformity to the Law, *how* He restores them unto the Lawgiver. Since that which the Law requires is that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, it is evident, in the first place, that we must have *a true knowledge of God Himself*: this is both requisite unto and implied in the having our affections set upon Him. If our apprehensions of God be wrong, if they agree not with the Scriptures, then it is obvious that we have but a false image of Him framed by our own fancy. By a true knowledge of God (John 17:3) we mean far more than a correct theoretical notion of His perfections: the demons have *that*, yet they have no *love* for Him. Before God can be loved there must be a spiritual knowledge of Him, a heartfelt realisation of His personal loveliness, moral excellency, ineffable glory.

By nature none of us possess one particle of genuine love for God: so far from it, we *hated* Him, though we may not have realised the awful fact, and had we done so, would not have acknowledged it. “The carnal mind is *enmity* against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7): those are equivalents, convertible terms. Where there is enmity toward God, there is insubjection to His Law; contrariwise, where there is love for God, there is submission to His Law. The reason why there is no love for God in the unregenerate is because they have no real knowledge of Him: this is just as true of those in Christendom as it is of those in heathendom—to the highly privileged and well-instructed Jews Christ said, “Ye neither *know* Me, nor My Father” (John 8:19). A miracle of grace has to take place in order to this: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *to give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6); “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, *that we may know Him that is true*” (1 John 5:20).

This true knowledge of God consists in our spiritually perceiving Him (in our measure) to be just such an One *as He actually is*. We see Him to be not only Love itself, the God of all grace and the Father of mercies, but also Supreme, infinitely exalted above all creatures; Sovereign, doing as He pleases, asking no one’s permission and giving no account of His actions; Immutable, with whom there is no variableness or shadow in turning; ineffably Holy, being of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity.

uity; inflexibly Just, so that He will by no means clear the guilty; Omniscient, so that no secret can be concealed from Him; Omnipotent, so that no creature can successfully resist Him; the Judge of all, who will banish from His presence into everlasting woe and torment every impenitent rebel. THIS is the character of the true God: do you *love* HIM, my reader?

Second, *a high esteem for God* is both requisite unto and is implied in loving Him. This high esteem consists of exalted thoughts and a lofty valuation of Him, from the sight and sense we have of His own intrinsic worthiness and excellency. To the unregenerate He says, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Psa. 50:21), for their concepts of God are mean, low, derogatory. But when the Spirit quickens us and shines upon our understandings we discern the beauty of the Lord, and admire and adore Him. We join with the celestial hosts in exclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." As we behold, as in a glass, His glory, we see how infinitely exalted He is above all creatures, and cry, "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?" (Exo. 15:11), yea, we confess "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. 73:25).

Now this high estimate of God not only disposes or inclines the heart to acquiesce, but to *exult* in His high prerogatives. From a consciousness of His own infinite excellency, His entire right thereto, and His absolute authority over all, occupying the throne of the universe, He presents Himself as the Most High God, supreme Lord, sovereign Governor of all worlds, and demands that all creatures shall be in a perfect subjection to Him; deeming those who refuse Him this as worthy of eternal damnation. He declares, "I am the Lord, and beside Me there is no God: My glory will I not give to another: thus and thus shall ye do, because I am THE LORD." As it would be the utmost wickedness for the highest angel in Heaven to assume any of this honour to himself, yet it perfectly becomes the Almighty so to do; yea, so far above all is He, that God is worthy of and entitled to infinitely more honour and homage than all creatures together can possibly pay to Him.

When the eyes of our hearts are open to see something of God's sovereign majesty, infinite dignity, supernal glory, and we begin to rightly esteem Him, then we perceive how thoroughly right and just it is that such an One *should* be held in the utmost reverence, and esteemed far above all others, and exulted in: "Sing unto the LORD all the earth" (Psa. 96:1). A spiritual sight and sense of the supreme excellency and infinite glory of the Triune Jehovah will not only rejoice our hearts to know that He *is* King of kings, the Governor of all worlds, but we are also thankful and glad that *we* live under His government, and are *His* subjects and servants. We shall then perceive the grounds and reasons of His Law: how infinitely right and fit it is that we *should* love Him with all our hearts and obey Him in everything; how infinitely unfit and wrong the least sin is, and how just the threatened punishment. We shall then also perceive that all the nations of the earth are but as a drop in the bucket before *Him*, and that we ourselves are less than nothing in *His* sight.

Third, *a deep and lasting desire for God's glory* is both requisite unto and is implied in our loving Him. When we are acquainted with a person who appears very excellent in our eyes and we highly esteem him, then we heartily wish him well and are ready at all times to do whatever we can to promote his welfare. It is thus that love to God will make

us feel and act toward *His* honour and interests in this world. When God is spiritually beheld in His infinite excellency, as the sovereign Governor of the whole world and a sense of His infinite worthiness is alive in our hearts, a holy benevolence is enkindled, the spontaneous language of which is, "Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name" (Psa 96:7, 8). "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth" (Psa. 57:5). As self-love naturally cause us to seek the promotion of our *own* interests and self-aggrandisement, so a true love to God moves us to put *Him* first and seek His glory.

This holy disposition expresses itself in earnest longings that God would glorify Himself and honour His great name by bringing more of our fellow-creatures into an entire subjection to Himself. The natural longing and language of true spiritual love is, "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." When God is about to bring to pass great and glorious things to the magnifying of Himself, it causes great rejoicing: "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad . . . He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Psa. 96:11, 13). So too when God permits anything which, as it seems to us, tends to bring reproach and dishonour upon His cause, it occasions acute anguish and distress: as when the Lord threatened to destroy Israel for their stiffneckedness, Moses exclaimed "What will become of *Thy* great name? What will the *Egyptians* say!"

From this disinterested affection arises a free and genuine disposition to give ourselves entirely to the Lord forever, to walk in His ways and keep all His commandments. For if we really desire that *God* may be glorified, *we* shall be disposed to *seek* His glory. A spiritual sight and sense of the infinite greatness, majesty, and excellency of the Lord of lords, makes it appear to us supremely fit that we should be wholly devoted to Him, and that it is utterly wrong for us to live to ourselves and make our own interests our last end. The same desire which makes the godly earnestly long to have God glorify Himself, strongly prompts them to live unto Him. If we love God with all our hearts, we shall serve Him with all our strength. If God be the highest in our esteem, then His Honour and glory will be our chief concern. To love God so as to *serve Him*, is what the Law requires; to love self so as to *serve it*, is rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven.

Fourth, *delighting ourselves in God* is both requisite unto and is implied in our loving Him. If there be a heartfelt realisation of God's personal loveliness and ineffable glory, then the whole soul must and will be attracted to Him. A spiritual sight and sense of the perfections of the Divine character draw out the heart in fervent adoration. When we "delight in" a fellow-creature, we find pleasure and satisfaction in his company and conversation; we long to see him when absent, rejoice in his presence, and the enjoyment of him makes us happy. So it is when a holy soul beholds God in the grandeur of His being, loves Him above all else, and is devoted to Him entirely—*now* he delights in Him supremely. His delight and complacency is as great as his esteem, arising from the same sense of God's moral excellency.

From this delight in God springs longings after a fuller acquaintance and closer communion with Him: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory . . . because Thy lovingkindness is better than life . . . my soul followeth hard after Thee" (Psa. 63:1-3, 8). There is at times a holy rejoicing in God

which nothing can dim: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: YET I will *rejoice in the LORD*, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17, 18). From this delight in God arises a holy disposition to renounce all others and to live wholly upon Him, finding our satisfaction in Him alone: "O LORD our God, other lords beside Thee *have had* dominion over us: but by Thee only *will we* make mention of Thy name" (Isa. 26:13), "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8). As the proud man seeks contentment in creature honours, the worldling in riches, the Pharisee in his round of duties, so the true lover of God finds his contentment in God Himself.

That these four things are a true representation of the nature of that love which is required in the first and great commandment of the Law, upon which chiefly hang all the Law and the Prophets, is manifest, not only from the reason of things, but from this: that *such* a love lays a sure and firm foundation for all holy *obedience*. Only that love to God is of the right kind which effectually influences us to keep His commandments: "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5). But it is evident from the very nature of things that such a love as this *will* effectually influence us so to do. As self-love naturally moves us to set up self and its interests, so *this* love will move us to set up God and His interests. The only difference between the love of saints in Heaven and of saints on earth is one of *degree*.

Having shown that the great object in Christ's coming to earth was to magnify the Law (by obeying its precepts and suffering its penalty), and that by so doing He laid a foundation for the recovering of His people to the Lawgiver, it now remains for us to consider more specifically *how* He conforms them to the Law. This, as we have just seen, must consist in His bringing them to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and by causing them to love God with all their heart. This He accomplishes by *the sending forth of His blessed Spirit to renew them*, for "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). It is the special and supernatural work of the Spirit in the soul which distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate.

In the cover-page articles of the 1934 issues we showed at length that the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is an orderly and progressive one, conducting the soul step by step in the due method of the Gospel: quickening, illuminating, convicting, drawing to Christ, and cleansing. That order can be best perceived by us *inversely*, according as is realised in our conscious experience, tracing it backward from effect to cause. (5) Without the Spirit bringing us to Christ there can be no cleansing from His blood. (4) Without the Spirit working in us an evangelical repentance there can be no saving faith or coming to Christ. (3) Without Divine conviction of sin there can be no godly sorrow for it. (2) Without the Spirit's special illumination there can be no sight or sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, wherein it consists—opposition to God, expressed in self-pleasing. (1) Without His quickening us we can neither see nor feel our dreadful state be-

fore God: spiritual life must be imparted before we are capable of discerning or being affected by Divine things.

It is by the Spirit we are brought from death unto life, given spiritual perception to realise our utter lack of conformity to the Divine Law, enabled to discern its spirituality and just requirements, brought to mourn over our fearful transgressions against it and to acknowledge the justice of its condemning sentence upon us. It is by the Spirit we receive a new nature which loves God and delights in His Law, which brings our hearts into conformity to it. The *extent* of this conformity in the *present* life, and the harassing difficulty presented to the Christian by the realisation that there is still so much in him which is *opposed* to the Law, must be left for consideration in our next (D.V.).—A.W.P.

Duty Faith.

“We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have, of the way in which the Apostles, under the immediate direction of our Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the Apostles were, has led to the grossest errors among both Romanists and Protestants. Therefore, that for ministers in this present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and on the other to deny the doctrine of special redemption.”

The above are two of the “articles of faith” (quoted by us in full) of an English denomination which still has considerable membership and influence. With almost all their other Articles of Faith we are in hearty accord, as with their marked separation from the world, and the simplicity of their worship. Nor have we one particle of sympathy with the delusive errors of creature ability or general redemption, rather do we unhesitatingly brand them both as lies of the Devil. In his unregenerate state, fallen and depraved man is so completely the slave of sin and the captive of Satan, that he is altogether unable to deliver himself or take one step toward that deliverance; yea, his heart is so corrupt and his mind so at enmity against God, that he has *no desire* to be brought out of darkness into His marvelous light. Not until the Holy Spirit performs a miracle of grace upon the soul, does its possessor have any spiritual appetite or aspirations; and that miracle He performs only in those for whom Christ died—God’s elect.

Now if we resort to human *reasoning* it will logically follow that it is quite useless to exhort the unregenerate to turn unto God or come unto Christ; yea, to exhort those who are utterly incompetent to respond, will appear to be most inconsistent and the height of absurdity. But, my reader, the things of God cannot be encompassed by human *reason*, and the moment we attempt to measure them by the line of *our* “logic,” we open the door for Satan to deceive by his subtleties. He will tell us that if the Lord our God be *one* Lord then He cannot be a *plurality* of Persons, and that if we hold to three Divine Persons we are most “inconsistent” in affirming the unity of God. Satan will tell us that if God be *Love* then He will never banish any of His creatures to everlasting woe, and that if we hold to eternal punishment of the wicked we are altogether “inconsistent” in believing in the Divine benevolence.

What, then are we to do? This: *repudiate all reasoning* upon spiritual things as utterly worthless, and believe with the simplicity of a child whatever God’s Word teaches. The Apostles held firmly the revealed truth of a glorious and victorious Messiah, and they could not “harmonize” with that fact a humiliated Messiah that would be crucified: the two things appeared to be altogether “inconsistent” and contradictory. But to them Christ said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). *That*, my reader, should be a lasting warning to us of the utter inadequacy of human logic and philosophizing upon Divine things! We must turn from the vain reasonings of the Unitarian, and while holding fast to the Unity of the Divine nature, we must *also* believe there are three co-equal Persons in the Godhead. We must turn from the vain reasonings of the Universalist, and while holding fast to the love of God, we must *also* be-

lieve in the eternal punishment of His enemies. And *why*? Because Holy Scripture teaches *both*!

In like manner, we must turn from the vain reasonings (as in the above Articles of Faith) of the hyper-Calvinist, and while holding fast to the total depravity and the spiritual inability of the natural man, we must *also* believe in his moral responsibility and accountability to God. It is the bounden duty of God's servants to tell the unregenerate that the reason why they cannot repent evangelically is because their hearts are so wedded to their lusts; that the reason why they cannot come to Christ is because their sins have fettered and chained them; that the reason why they hate the Light is because they love the darkness. But so far from this excusing them, it only *adds* to their guilt; that so far from rendering them objects of pity it exposes them as doubly deserving of damnation. It is the preacher's business to show *wherein* spiritual inability consists: not in the lack of soul faculties, but in the absence of any love for Him who is infinitely lovely. Far be it from us to *extenuate* the wicked unbelief of the unregenerate!

The compilers of the above Articles of Faith were very largely influenced by a piece written by William Huntington in 1791, "Excommunication: and the Duty of all men to believe weighed in the balance." We have space to quote only one paragraph: "When Peter said, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts 3:19), He that is exalted to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, sent His Spirit and Grace with the Word to work repentance and conversion in His own elect. And though *they* spoke the Word, promiscuously to all, yet *He* only spake it to His own. It was sent with the power of the Spirit. It never was sent with the Spirit of Faith to any but His own: 'When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (Acts 13:48). This is the life-giving commandment of the everlasting God, in the mouth of Zion's King. But what effect has it, or what power attends it, from the mouth of Mr. Ryland or the mouth of Mr. Fuller, when they make it the rule of a dead man's duty? Just as much as the adjuration of the sons of Sceva the Jew, when they abused the name of the Lord Jesus in commanding the spirit, who left the man and mastered them; and so these labour for the unconverted till they get into the gall of bitterness themselves Ye might just as well go to the gates of the grave and tell the sleeping dust it is their duty to come forth as Lazarus did. Mr. Ryland may just as well do the one as the other."

What a confused jumble is that! Confounding the Word of Power (Heb. 1:3) on the lips of Christ, with the Word of Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18, 19) in the mouths of His servants. What *the Lord* does, is none of our business. The commission He has given His *servants* is to preach the Gospel to every creature, and they certainly have not fully obeyed until they bid their hearers "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). *Whom* God quickens, is His own affair; *ours* is to faithfully warn the unsaved, to show wherein their sins consists (enmity against God), to bid them to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, to call upon them to repent (Acts 17:30), to proclaim the One who receives all who come to Him in faith. In allowing that Peter "spoke the Word promiscuously *to all*" Mr. Huntington pulled down what he laboured so hard to build up.

To affirm that the ministry of the Apostles (recorded in the Acts) furnishes no precedent for God's servants today, is as foolish, as "inconsistent," and unwarrantable, as it would be to say that Acts 6 supplies no present rule for deacons to be governed by! The physical condition of those in the cemetery is vastly different from the moral state of the

unregenerate still upon the earth. The former cannot sin, cannot reject Christ; the latter *can* and do. The former cannot read their Bibles or call upon God for mercy; the latter should! It is because the natural man possesses the same faculties of soul as does the regenerate that he is an *accountable* creature, responsible to use them *for* God instead of *against* Him.—A.W.P.

