

Studies in the Scriptures
January, 1937
The Spirit Transforming.

For the benefit of new readers we will give a brief digest of our previous exposition of 2 Corinthians 3:18, which is a verse that supplies a comprehensive summary of the Spirit's work in the believer. The "we all" are those that are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The "with open face" signifies with minds from which their enmity against God has been removed, with hearts that are reconciled to Him. "Beholding" is a *repeated* act of the soul, which is the effect of its having been supernaturally enlightened. "As in a glass" refers to the revelation which God has made of Himself in the Law and in the Gospel. The "glory of the Lord" connotes His character or moral perfections. "Are changed into the same image" tells of the transformation which is effected in the believer by the Spirit. The "from glory to glory" announces that this great change of the heart's reformation and conformation to the image of God is produced gradually.

When the Spirit deals with an elect soul, He first brings him face to face with God's Law, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). He reveals to him the perfections of the Law: its spirituality, its immutability, its righteousness. He makes him realise that the Law is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12) even though it condemns and curses him. He shows that the Law requires that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves; that it demands perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word, and deed. He convinces the soul of the righteousness of such a demand. In a word, the one with whom the Spirit is dealing beholds "the glory of the Lord"—His majesty, His holiness, His justice—in the glass of the Law. Only thus is the soul prepared and fitted to behold and appreciate the second great revelation which God has made of His moral perfections.

Next, the Spirit brings before the soul the precious Gospel. He shows him that therein a marvelous and most blessed display is made of the love, the grace, the mercy, and the wisdom of God. He gives him to see that in His eternal purpose God designed to save a people from the curse of the Law, and that, without flouting its authority or setting aside its righteous claims; yea, in such a way that the Law is "magnified and made honourable" (Isa. 42:21) through its demands being perfectly met by the believing sinner's Surety. He unveils to his wondering gaze the infinite condescension of the Father's Beloved, who willingly took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. And the Spirit *so* works in his heart that, though the Cross be a stumbling block to the Jew and foolishness unto the Greek, it appears to him to be the most wondrous, blessed, and glorious object in the universe; and by faith he thankfully rests the entire interests of his soul for time and eternity upon the atoning sacrifice which Christ offered thereon unto God.

Not only does the Spirit give that soul to behold "the glory of the Lord" as it shines first in the "glass" of the Law, and second in the "glass" of the Gospel, but He also causes him to be "*changed into the same image,*" that is, He begets within him corresponding principles and affections, to the one and to the other. In other words, He brings his heart to a *conformity* to the Law and to a *compliance* with the Gospel. He causes the believer to "set to his seal" (John 3:33) to the whole Truth of God. He brings him to a full acquiescence with the Law, consenting to its righteous claims upon him, and working in him a desire and determination to adopt the Law as his rule of life or standard of conduct.

So too the Spirit causes him to gladly embrace the Gospel, admiring the consummate wisdom of God therein, whereby the perfect harmony of His justice and mercy are blessedly exhibited. He brings him to renounce all his own works, and rest alone on the merits of Christ for his acceptance with God.

“Beholding as in a glass” is literally “in a mirror.” Now the mirrors to the ancients, unlike ours, were not made of glass, but of highly burnished metal, which reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness, corresponding to the metal. If the mirror was of silver, a white light would be the result; if of gold, a yellow glow would be suffused. Thus an opaque object reflected the rays of the sun, and so became in a measure luminous. Here the Apostle makes use of this as a figure of the Spirit’s transforming the believer. The Law and the Gospel display various aspects of “the glory of the Lord,” that is, of God Himself, and as anointed eyes behold the same, the soul is irradiated thereby and an answerable change is wrought in it.

As the soul by faith, with *broken* heart (and not otherwise), beholds the glory of the Lord, in the mirror of the *two* Testaments (and not in the New without the Old), he is by the continual operations of the Spirit in him (Phil. 1:6) “changed into the same image.” The views thus obtained of the Divine character excite answerable affections in the beholder. Rational argument may convince a man that God is holy, yet that is a vastly different thing from his heart being brought to *love* Divine holiness. But when the Spirit removes the veil of enmity and prejudice from the mind and enables the understanding to see light in God’s light, there is a genuine esteem of and delight in God’s character. The heart is won with the excellency of His moral perfections, and he perceives the rightness and beauty of a life wholly devoted to His glory. Thus there is a radical change in his judgment, disposition and conduct.

In the glass of the Law there shines the glory of God’s holiness and righteousness, and in the glass of the Gospel the glory of His grace and mercy, and as by the Spirit’s enablement the believer is beholding them, there is wrought in him a love for the same, there is given to him an answerable frame of heart. He cordially owns God as righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. He acknowledges that God is just in condemning him, and equally just in pardoning him. He freely confesses that he is as evil as the Law pronounces him to be, and that his only hope lies in the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb. Christ is now “The Fairest of ten thousand” to his soul. He desires and endeavours to *exercise* righteousness and truth, grace and mercy, in all his dealings with his fellows. Thus a personal experience of the transforming power of the Law and the Gospel brings its subject into a conformity to their temper and tendency.

This being “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord, is but another way of saying that the Law of God is now written on the heart (Heb. 8:10), for as we have said previously, the Law is a transcript of the Divine nature, the very image of God. As the Law was written in indelible characters on the tables of stone by the very finger of God, so at regeneration and throughout the entire process of sanctification, views and dispositions in accord with the nature of the Law become habitual in the heart, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, according to the measure of grace which He supplies. The genuine language of the soul now becomes, “How reasonable it is that I should love with all my heart such an infinitely glorious being as God, that I should be utterly captivated by His supernal excellency. How fitting that I should be entirely for Him and completely

at the disposal of Him who is Lord of all, whose rectitude is perfect, whose goodness and wisdom are infinite, and who gave His Son to die for me!”

This being “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord, is also the same as Christ being “formed” in the soul (Gal. 4:19). It is having in kind, though not in degree, the same mind that was in the Lord Jesus. It is being imbued with His Spirit, being brought into accord with the design of His mediatorial work, which was to honour and glorify God. In a word, it is being at heart the very disciples of Christ. This being “changed into the same image” of the glory of the Lord, is to be “*reconciled* to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). Previously, we were at enmity against Him, hating His sovereignty, His strictness, His severity; but now we perceive the surpassing beauty of His every attribute and are in love with His whole Person and character. No greater change than this can be conceived of: “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). This great change is to “come unto” God (Heb. 7:25), causing us to diligently seek daily supplies of grace from Him.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

109. *Covetousness*: 13:5.

In this 13th Chapter of Hebrews the Apostle makes a practical application of the theme of the Epistle. Having set forth at length the amazing grace of God toward His believing people by the provision He has made for them in the Mediator and Surety of the covenant, having shown that they now have in Christ the substance of all that was shadowed forth in the ceremonial law, a tabernacle, and the priesthood of Israel, we now have pressed upon us the responsibilities and obligations which devolve upon those who are the favoured recipients of those spiritual blessings. First, that which is fundamental to the discharge of all Christian duties is exhorted unto: the continuance of brotherly love (13:1). Second, instances are given in which this chief spiritual grace is to be exemplified: in Christian hospitality (v. 2), and in compassion for the afflicted (v. 3). Third, prohibitions are made against the two most radical lusts of fallen nature: moral uncleanness (v. 4) and covetousness (v. 5), for the indulgence of these is fatal to the exercise of brotherly love.

Having in last month's article dealt at length with the merciful provision which God has made for the avoidance of moral uncleanness—the ordinance of marriage—we now turn to the second great sin which is here dehorted against, namely, covetousness. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (v. 5). Here is an evil and its remedy set before us side by side, as was the case in the previous verse, though there the remedy is given before that which it counteracts. We will follow the order of our present text and consider first the vice which is here forbidden, before we contemplate the virtue which is enjoined: yet it will be helpful to keep them both in mind, for the latter casts light upon the former, enabling us to determine its exact nature as nothing else will.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness." The Greek word which is here rendered "covetousness" is literally "lover of silver," and the Revised Version renders our text "Be ye free from the love of money." Now while it be true that the love of money or worldly possessions is one of the principal forms of covetousness, yet we are satisfied that the translation of the Authorized Version is to be preferred here. The scope of the Greek verb is much wider than a lusting after material riches. This appears from the only other verse in the New Testament where this word occurs, namely, 1 Timothy 3:3, in a passage which describes the qualifications of a bishop: "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous." The very fact that a previous clause specifies "not greedy of filthy lucre" makes it clear that "not covetous" includes more than "not a lover of money."

A comment or two also requires to be made upon the term "conversation." This word is limited today unto our speech with one another, but 300 years ago, when the Authorized Version was made, it had a much more comprehensive meaning. Its latitude can be gathered from its employment in the Scriptures. For example, in 1 Peter 3:2 we read "while they behold your chaste conversation": note "behold" and *not* "hear"! The term then has reference to behaviour or deportment: "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15). It is not to be restricted to that which is external, but includes both character and conduct. The Syriac renders our word "mind," probably because both covetousness and contentment are mental states. "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27): this obvi-

ously means, Let your affections and actions correspond to the revelation of Divine grace you have received; conduct yourselves in such a manner that those around you will be impressed by the principles, motives, and sentiments which govern you.

So it is here in our text: let not covetousness rule your heart nor regulate your life. But exactly what is “covetousness”? It is the opposite of contentment, a being dissatisfied with our present lot and portion. It is an over-eager desire for the things of this world. It is a lusting after what God has forbidden or withheld from us, for we may crave, wrongly, after things which are not evil or injurious in themselves. All abnormal and irregular desires, all unholy and inordinate thoughts and affections, are comprehended by this term. To covet is to think upon and hanker after anything which my acquirement of would result in injury to my neighbour. “We *may* desire that part of a man’s property which he is inclined to dispose of, if we mean to obtain it on equitable terms; but when he chooses to keep, we must not covet. The poor man may desire moderate relief from the rich, but he must not covet his affluence, or repine even though he does not relieve him” (Thomas Scott).

Now some sins are more easily detected than others, and for the most part condemned by those professing godliness. But covetousness is only too often winked at, and some covetous persons are regarded as very respectable people. Many professing Christians look upon covetousness as quite a trifling matter, while the world applauds it as legitimate ambition, as business shrewdness, as prudence, etc. All sorts of excuses are made for this sin and plausible pretences argued in its favour. It is indeed a very subtle sin, which few are conscious of. In one of his sermons Spurgeon mentions a prominent man who had a great many people come to him to make confession, and this man observed that while different ones acknowledged all sorts of outrageous crimes, he never had one who confessed to covetousness. Few sought that this is one of the prevailing iniquities of their hearts, rather are they inclined to regard this vice as a virtue.

But the Holy Scriptures are very explicit on this subject. The Divine Law expressly declares, “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s house; thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s” (Exo. 20:17). “The covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth” (Psa. 10:3). To His disciples Christ said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). The votaries of Mammon are linked with “drunkards and adulterers,” and such are excluded from the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). The covetous are branded with the most detestable character of idolaters (Col. 3:5)—no doubt this is because they who are ruled by this lust *adore* their gold and put their *trust* in it, making a god of it. How we need to pray, “Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:36).

God’s Word also sets before us some fearfully solemn examples of the judgments which fell upon covetous souls. The Fall of our first parents originated in covetousness, lusting after that which God had forbidden. Thus the very frontispiece of Holy Writ exhibits the frightfulness of this sin. See what covetousness did for Balaam: he “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Peter 2:15)—the honours and wealth which Balak promised were too attractive for him to resist. See what covetousness did for Achan, who lusted after the forbidden silver and gold: he and his whole family were stoned to death (Josh. 7). Look at Gehazi: lusting after the money his master had refused, and in consequence, he and his seed were smitten with leprosy (2 Kings 5). Consider the awful case

of Judas, who for 30 pieces of silver sold the Lord of Glory. Remember the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). In view of these warnings shall we call this worst of iniquities "a little sin"? Surely it is something to be trembled at!

Covetousness is an inordinate desire of the heart after the creature; which is a fruit of man's apostacy from the Lord. No longer finding in God the supreme object of his soul's delight and confidence, fallen man loves and trusts in the creature (mere *things*) rather than the Creator. This takes on many forms: men lust after honours, wealth, pleasures, knowledge, for Scripture speaks of "the desires of the flesh *and of the mind*" (Eph. 2:3), and of "filthiness of the flesh *and spirit*" (2 Cor. 7:1). It is the very nature for the depraved heart to hanker after that which God has forbidden and to crave after what is evil, though this spirit may be developed more strongly in some than in others; at any rate, a larger measure of restraining grace is granted to one than to another. These irregular desires and inordinate thoughts are the firstborn of our corrupt nature, the first risings of indwelling sin, the beginnings of all transgressions committed by us.

"Thou shalt not covet" (Exo. 20:17). "The commandment requires moderation in respect of all worldly goods, submission to God, acquiescence in His will, love to His commandments, and a reliance on Him for the daily supply of all our wants as He sees good. This is right and reasonable, fit for God to command and profitable for man to obey, the very temper and felicity of Heaven itself. But it is so contrary to the desires of our hearts *by nature*, and so superior to the actual attainments of the best Christians on earth, that it is very difficult to persuade them that God requires such perfection, and still more difficult to satisfy them that it is indispensable to the happiness of rational creatures, and most difficult of all to convince them that everything inconsistent with this or short of it is sin; that it deserves the wrath of God, and cannot be taken away, except by the mercy of God through the atonement of Christ" (Thomas Scott).

The most common form of this sin is, of course, the love of money, the lusting after more and more of material riches. This is evident in getting, keeping, and spending. First, *in getting*. To acquire wealth becomes the dominant passion of the soul. An insatiable greed possesses the heart. This exists in varying degrees in different persons, and is demonstrated in numerous ways. That we may be quite practical let us mention one or two. Often this is manifested in a greedy and grasping effort after *unequitable profits* and by paying an *unjustly small wage* to employees, the chief design of its perpetrators being to amass fortunes for their descendants. Yet often these very men hold prominent positions in the churches and "make long prayers," while devouring widow's houses and grinding the face of the poor. Alas, how the Gospel is dishonoured and the sanctuary defiled by such sanctimonious wretches.

Again. Recently we read a faithful article wherein the writer took to task the lies and deceptions practised by many shopkeepers and their assistants in palming off upon the public various forms of merchandise by misrepresenting their quality and value; the writer concluding with a solemn emphasis upon "all *liars*, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). As he finished reading the same, the writer asked himself the question, And how far is a greedy grasping public to blame? Who is largely responsible for this commercial dishonesty? *Who tempt the tradesmen* to mark their wares as "great bargains," "prices much reduced"? Is it not the covetous purchasers? How many today are possessed with an insatiable craving after "bargains," buying things "cheap," without any conscientious consideration of the real worth of the arti-

cle: it is *that* which fosters so much fraud. Let the Christian buy only *what* he needs, and *when* he needs it, and so far as possible only from upright traders, and then he will be more willing to pay according to the value received.

Second, covetousness evidences itself *in keeping*. There is a miserliness which clings to money as a drowning man to a log. There is a hoarding up for self which is entirely reprehensible. "There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail" (Eccl. 4:8). Yes, there are those who are utterly unconcerned about their eternal interests, and labour day in and day out, year after year, in order to add to what they have already accumulated, and who begrudge purchasing for themselves the bare necessities of life. They continue to amass money utterly regardless of Christ's cause on earth or the poor and needy among their fellow-men. There are still those the language of whose actions is, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:18, 19).

Third, covetousness also manifests itself in *spending*. If there be those who are niggardly, there are others who are wastrels. If there be those who condemn the miser for his stinginess, often they are guilty in turn of reckless prodigality. That which ought to be saved for a rainy day is used to gratify a desire which covets some unnecessary object. But let us not be misunderstood on these points. Neither the possession nor the retention of wealth is wrong in itself, providing it be acquired honestly and preserved with a justifiable standing, convicted my conscience, and made me feel the corruptions of my heart. Man ever looks on the outward appearance—and as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul's *actions* fully conformed to the Law—but when the Spirit quickens a soul, he is made to realize that God requires "Truth in the *inward* parts" (Psa. 51:6) and cries "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10).

"Thou shalt not covet." That which is here forbidden is concupiscence, or those imaginations, thoughts, and desires, which precede the consent of the will. Herein we may perceive the exalted holiness of the Divine Law—far transcending all human codes—requiring *inward purity*. Herein, too, we may recognize one of the fundamental errors of Romanists, who, following the Pelagians, deny that these lustings are sinful until they are yielded to, and who affirm that evil imaginations only become sinful when the mind definitely assents to them. But the holy Law of God condemns that which *instigates unto* what is forbidden, condemns that which *inclines toward* what is unholy, and denounces that which inflames with cupidity. All irregular desires are forbidden. Corrupt imaginations and unlawful inclinations that *precede* the consent of the will are evil, being the seeds of all other sins.

Again we say, Herein God's Law differs from and is immeasurably superior to all of man's laws, for it takes note of and prohibits all the hidden desires and secret lustings of the heart. It is this Tenth Commandment which, above all others, discovers unto us our depravity and shows how very far short we come of that perfection which the Law requires. There is first an evil thought in the mind causing us to think of something which is not ours. This is followed by a longing after or wishing for it. There is then an inward delight by way of anticipating the pleasure that object will give; and then, unless restraining grace intervenes, the outward act of sin is committed—see James 1:14, 15. The first

evil thought is involuntary, due to the mind's being turned from good to evil, even though that evil be simply lusting after a new but unnecessary hat! The longing is caused by the heart's being enticed by the delight promised. Then the consent of the will is gained, and the mind plans how to gain the coveted object.

This concupiscence or evil lusting of the heart is called "the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). It is what the older theologians term "original sin," being the fountain of evil within, corrupting all our faculties. Discontent with our lot, envy of our neighbours, yea, even the very "*thought* of foolishness is SIN" (Prov. 24:9). How high is the standard set before us: "Let none of you *imagine* evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and *love* no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD" (Zech. 8:17). Does the Third Commandment interdict any blasphemous oath upon the lips? Then the Tenth Commandment prohibits any risings of the heart against God. Does the Fourth Commandment interdict all unnecessary work on the Sabbath? Then the Tenth Commandment condemns our saying "what a weariness is it." Does the Eighth Commandment interdict every act of theft? Then the Tenth Commandment prohibits our desiring anything which is our neighbour's.

But it is not until after a person is regenerate that he takes notice of the *inward* motions of sin and makes conscience of the state of his *heart*. Then Satan will seek to persuade that he is not responsible for involuntary thoughts (which come unbidden), that evil desires are beyond our control—infirmities which are excusable. But God says to him "*Keep thy heart* with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23), and makes him realize that every lusting after what He has forbidden or withheld is a species of self-will. Therefore we are accountable to *judge* the first inclination toward evil and *resist* the very earliest solicitations. The fact that we discover so much within that is contrary to God's holy requirements should deeply humble us, and cause us to live more and more out of self and upon Christ.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

61. *His Son Absalom.*

“And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him” (2 Sam. 15:1). The “after this” refers to what now followed upon David’s receiving back into his favour the son who had murdered a brother (14:33). If a spark of gratitude had burned in his breast, Absalom would now have sought to do all in his power toward forwarding the interests of his indulgent father. But alas, so far from strengthening the hands of his royal parent, he sets to work to dethrone him. Absalom was now in the position to develop his vile plan of deposing David. The methods he followed thoroughly revealed what a godless and unscrupulous scoundrel he was. The first thing here recorded of him at once intimated his utter contempt of God and manifested his affinity with the heathen.

Jehovah requires His people to conduct themselves differently from the idolatrous nations surrounding them, and therefore He gave, among others, this law for the regulation of Israel’s king: “But he shall not multiply *horses* to himself” (Deut. 17:16). It was in accord with this, that, when the King of Kings formerly presented Himself to Israel, He appeared “meek, and sitting upon *an ass*” (Matt. 21:5), so perfectly did He honour the Law in every detail. But Absalom was of a totally different type: arrogant, proud, self-willed. All the other sons of David rode upon mules (2 Sam. 13:29), but nothing less than “chariots and horses” would satisfy this wicked aspirant to the kingdom.

The “fifty men to run before him” was a symbol of *royalty*: see 1 Samuel 8:11; 1 Kings 1:5. In acting thus, Absalom took advantage of his father’s fond attachment and basely traded upon his weakness. Unauthorised by the king, yet not forbidden by him, he prepared an imposing retinue, which gave him a commanding status before the nation. Finding himself unchecked by the king, he made the most of his position to seduce the hearts of the people. By means of underhanded methods, Absalom now sought to turn toward himself the affection of his father’s subjects. From the employment of force (2 Sam. 14:30), he resorted to craftiness. As we have said before, these two are the leading characteristics of the Devil; the *violence* of the “lion” and the *guile* of the “serpent,” and thus it ever is with those whom he fully possesses.

“And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Sam 15:2-6).

A few explanatory comments are required upon some of the terms in the above verses. First, the “way of the gate” was the place of judgment, that is, of judicial assistance: see Genesis 19:1; 23:10, 18; 34:20; Ruth 4:1. “Thy matters” in verse 3 signifies “thy suit or cause” as in verse 4. The obvious intention of Absalom in stationing himself at this important centre was to ingratiate himself with the people. His “thy matters are good and right” to all and sundry alike, showed his determination to win them regardless of the re-

quirements of justice or the claims of mercy. His “there is no one deputed of the king to hear thee” was a dastardly attempt to create prejudice and lower the sovereign in their eyes. His “Oh that I were made judge in the land” revealed the lusting of his heart; neither pleasure nor pomp contented him—he must have *power* too. His embracing the common people (v. 5) was a display of (pretended) humility and geniality.

“So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (v. 6), upon which Thomas Scott well said, “He did not gain their hearts by eminent services, or by a wise and virtuous conduct. But he affected to look great, as heir to the crown, and yet to be very condescending and affable to his inferiors: he pretended a great reward to their interests, and threw out artful insinuations *against David’s administration*; he flattered everyone who had a cause to be tried, with the assurance that he had right on his side; that, if it went against him, he might be led to accuse David and the magistrates of injustice. Though Absalom knew not how to obey, and deserves to die for his atrocious crime, yet he exposed a vehement desire to be judge over all the land, and suggested that suits should not then be so tedious, expensive, and partially decided as they were. This he confirmed by rising early and by apparent application; though it was other people’s business, and not his own duty; and by such sinister arts, united with his personal attractions and address, he imposed upon multitudes all over the land to prefer so worthless a character to the wise, righteous, and pious David.”

Ere proceeding further let us pause and ask the question, What is there here for *our own souls*? This should ever be the principal concern of our minds as we read the Word of God. Its historical sections are full of important practical teaching: many valuable lessons may be learned therefrom if only we have hearts to receive them. Ah, *that* is the point on which so much turns. There must be a readiness and willingness on my part if I am to profit spiritually from what I peruse; and, for that, there must be *humility*. Only a lowly heart will perceive that *I* am likely to be attracted by the same baits which led to the downfall of others; that *I* am liable to the same temptations they met with, and that unless I guard the particular gate at which the Enemy succeeded in gaining an entrance into *their* souls, he will just as surely prevail over *me*. O for grace to heed the solemn warnings which are found in every incident we ponder.

Now look again at what is recorded here. “Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” Surely *that* is the sentence which should speak most loudly to us. It was not the open enemies of David that he wrought upon, but his subjects. It was not the Philistines whom he enlisted but the people of God whom he seduced. Absalom sought to sow the seeds of discontent in their minds, to alienate their affections from David, to render them disloyal to their king. Ah, is not the lesson plain? Is there not one who is ever seeking to seduce the subjects of Christ? Tempting them to revolt from allegiance to His sceptre, endeavouring to allure them into *his* service? Learn, then, dear friend, to look beneath the surface as you read the Holy Scriptures, to see through the historical details to the underlying principles that are therein illustrated, to observe the motives which prompted to action; and then *apply the whole to yourself*.

What had *you* done had you been one of those “men of Israel” whose hearts Absalom was seeking to divorce from David? The answer to that question would have turned entirely on one thing: was your heart satisfied with David? Of this tempter we read, “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him” (2 Sam. 14:25),

thus there was everything about his person to appeal to “the lust of the *flesh*.” And as we have seen, “Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him,” thus there was an appeal to “the lust of the *eyes*.” Moreover, he promised to further the temporal interests of all who had “a controversy,” that is, of all who considered they had a grievance and were being hardly dealt with: thus there was an appeal to “*the pride of life*” (1 John 2:16). Were those things more than sufficient to counterbalance the excellencies which David possessed?

Again we say, *Look beneath* the historical characters and discern those whom they typified! When Satan comes to tempt the subjects of the anti-typical David he assumes his most alluring character and dangles before us that which appeals either to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. But mark it well, dear reader, that Satan’s baits *have no attraction* for those who are in communion with and finding their joy in the Lord. And he knows that full well, and therefore does he seek to stir up enmity against Him. Satan knows he cannot cause a regenerate soul to dislike the *Person* of the Lord, so he endeavours to create dissatisfaction with *His government over us*. It was so in the type: “There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.” Ah, it is here we most need to be on our guard: to resist every effort of Satan’s to bring us to murmur at the Lord’s providences. But we must turn from the spiritual application back again to the historical.

And what of David during this time? He could hardly have been totally ignorant of the perfidy of his son; some tidings must have reached him of the treacherous plot now on foot to depose him. Yet there is no hint that he took any steps to thwart Absalom. How, then, shall we account for *his apathy*? At the close of last month’s article we dwelt upon the strange passiveness which characterized David during this stage of his checkered career, suggesting that the explanation proffered by Alexander MacLaren was a most likely one and apparently confirmed by the Scriptures, namely, that during this period the king suffered from a severe and protracted sickness. That helpful writer called attention to the fact that many of the best commentators regard the 41st and 55th Psalms as being composed by David at this time. Having already given his brief remarks upon the former, we will now reproduce those upon the latter; suggesting that Psalm 55 be read through at this point.

“The Fifty-fifth Psalm gives some very pathetic additional particulars. It is in three parts: a plaintive prayer and portraiture of the Psalmist’s mental distress (vv. 1-8); a vehement supplication against his foes, and indignant recounting of their treachery (vv. 9-16); and, finally a prophecy of the retribution that is to fall upon them (vv. 17-23). In the first and second portions we have some points which help to complete our picture of the man. For instance, his heart is ‘sore pained’ within him, the ‘terrors of death’ are on him, ‘fear and trembling’ are come to him and ‘horror’ has covered him. All this points, like subsequent verses, to his knowledge of the conspiracy before it came to a head.

“The state of the city, which is practically in the hands of Absalom and his tools, is described with bold imagery. Violence and strife in possession of it, spies prowling about the walls day and night, evil and trouble in its midst, and destruction, oppression, and deceit—a goodly company—flaunting in its open spaces. And the spirit, the brain of the whole, is the trusted friend whom he had made his own equal, who had shared his secretest thoughts in private, who had walked next to him in solemn processions to the temple. Seeing all this, what does the king do, who was once so fertile in resource, so decisive in counsel, so prompt in action? Nothing. His only weapon is prayer: ‘As for me, I

will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice.’

“He lets it all grow as it list, and only longs to be out of all the weary coil of troubles. ‘O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, I would flee far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. I would swiftly fly to my refuge from the raging wind, from the tempest.’ The languor of his disease, love for his worthless son, consciousness of sin, and submission to the chastisement through ‘one of his own house,’ which Nathan had foretold, kept him quiet, though he saw the plot winding its meshes round him. And in this submission patient confidence is not wanting, though subdued and saddened, which finds expression in the last words of this Psalm of the heavy laden, ‘Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee . . . I will trust in Thee.’ ”

Much of what Absalom said to those whose hearts he stole had, no doubt, a measure of truth in it. The disorders and sorrows of David’s house had borne heavily on the king: his energy flagged, his health was broken, and the influence of his throne proportionately weakened. Absalom saw the defects of his father’s government, and perceived that others saw them too, and quickly and meanly he took advantage of the situation, deprecating David and extolling himself. Yet David idolized Absalom, indeed, this was one of his chief failures, and bitterly was he now made to smart for cherishing such a viper in his bosom. He knew that Absalom was exalting himself. He knew that the calling of God was not with him, but with Solomon (2 Sam. 7:12; 12:25). He knew that Absalom was godless, that the flesh ruled him in all his ways; and yet, knowing all this, he interfered not to restrain him.

“And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron” (2 Sam. 15:7). We are not sure from what point these forty years date, but certainly not from the time of David’s coronation, for in such a case we would now have arrived at the closing year of his reign, which is obviously not the case—see 2 Samuel 21:1. Possibly it is to be dated from the time of his first anointing (1 Sam. 16:13). At any rate, that which is most germane to our present line of meditation is Absalom considered that his wicked plot was ripe for execution, hence he now proceeded to put the finishing touches to it. Nothing less than the kingdom itself was what he determined to seize.

“For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron” (2 Sam. 15:8, 9). Absalom’s duplicity and hypocrisy appear in all their hideousness. He cloaked his insurrection under the guise of offering sacrifice unto Jehovah (Deut. 23:21-23) in performance of a vow which he pretended to have made. He had no love for his parent and no fear for his God, for he dared to mock His worship with a deliberate lie. He cunningly imposed upon his poor father’s hopes that at last his wayward son was becoming pious. No doubt David had often prayed for him, and now he supposed that his supplications were beginning to be answered. How delighted he would be to hear that Absalom desired to “serve the Lord,” and therefore he readily gave his consent for him to go to Hebron.

“But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron” (2 Sam. 15:10). Let this be a warning to parents not to assume too readily that their children have experienced the new birth, but wait to see *the fruits* of the same. Instead of journeying to Heb-

ron in order to worship Jehovah, Absalom's purpose was to be acclaimed monarch over Israel. "Hebron" was not only the place where he was born (2 Sam. 3:2, 3) but it was also where David had commenced his reign (2 Sam. 5:1-3). These "spies" that he sent forth were either his own trusted "servants" (14:30) or those whose hearts he had stolen from David and on whom he could now rely to further his evil scheme. Those who would hear this proclamation "Absalom reigneth" might draw whatever conclusion they pleased—that David was dead, or that he had relinquished the reins of government, or that the Nation at large preferred his attractive son.

"And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing" (v. 11). No doubt these "two hundred men" were persons of rank and prominence, being summoned to accompany the king's son to a sacred feast. Absalom's object was to awe the common people and give them the impression that David's cause was now being deserted at headquarters. Thus these men unwittingly contended Absalom's evil devices, for their presence signified that they supported his treason. This is a fair sample of the methods employed by unprincipled politicians to further their selfish ends, getting many to join their ranks or party under a complete misconception of the leader's real policy.

"And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom" (v. 12). The man whose aid Absalom now sought was a renowned statesman, apparently no longer on friendly terms with David. He was a fit tool for the insurrectionist, though in the end God turned his counsel into foolishness. The sovereignty which God displays in His providences is as patent as it is awe-inspiring. As He graciously raises up those to befriend His people in the hour of their need, so He has appointed those who are ready to help the wicked in the furthering of their evil plans. As there was an Ittai loyal to David, so there was an Ahithophel to counsel Absalom.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

5. The Siniatic.

The moral law (the Ten Commandments), which formed so prominent and distinctive a feature of the Siniatic Covenant, was accompanied by much which was of an *evangelical* nature. This consisted not so much in the announcement of what was absolutely new, as in giving greater fullness, precision, and significancy, to what had been already revealed. It is true that this was communicated largely through the medium of symbols, yet the instruction imparted by them was at once most impressive and adapted to the condition of Israel. While in Egypt, they were not in a situation which admitted of any extension of means of worship. But now they were about to take their place as an independent nation, in a country of their own. The time had arrived for the formal appointment of those institutions and ordinances which the regulation of their religious life required. Moreover, this was rendered the more needful from the prominence of which the moral law was given, in that economy.

Designed to be subservient to the great purposes of the previous Covenant, it was requisite that the Law should be counterbalanced by a more full and instructive disclosure of the grand truths which that Covenant embraced, in order that the Law might not override and neutralise them. We must always bear in mind that the Abrahamic Covenant was in nowise superseded or placed in abeyance by the revelation given through Moses; it was still in unabated force. The law was, in reality, an "addition" to it and designed to more effectually secure its objects. It was therefore fitting that the grace and mercy made known to Abraham should receive such enlargement and illustration as might make the Law not a hindrance, but the handmaid, to the believing reception of its truth. The *grace* of the Abrahamic Covenant and the *law* of Moses had an important mutual relation. They threw light on one another, and in combination were designed to secure a common end.

It was, then, the Levitical institutions which supplied the enlarged instruction that the circumstances of the Nation now rendered necessary. First and foremost was the directions given for the public manifestation of the fellowship and intercourse with God which it was the privilege of Israel to enjoy. A sanctuary was to be erected, the pattern which was revealed to Moses in the mount, and the materials for which were to be supplied by the freewill offerings of the people—intimating that all must be regulated by the Divine will, but that only a free and spontaneous worship from them was acceptable. The tabernacle was at once a pledge that God dwelt in their midst, and a visible means of enjoying that communion with Him to which He had graciously admitted them: it was a perpetual memorial of it, and a help to train them to those more spiritual apprehensions of the worship of God which the Gospel alone has fully revealed and realised.

A priesthood was appointed, and one which presented a marked contrast from those which existed in other nations. Among the heathen, the priesthood was a distinct caste, a body of men standing apart from and even in antagonism to those for whom they officiated; and characterised by all the pride and tyrannical tendencies which caste distinctions engender. But the Hebrew priesthood belonged to *all* the people, representing in their Divine calling. One family alone, Aaron's, was permitted to enter the sacred precincts of the Lord's house and officiate for them. When the high priest entered the holy of holies he bore the names of all the tribes on his breastplate, and confessed all their transgressions. Thus the high honour of being permitted to draw nigh unto God was impressively

taught the people, the sanctity of His House was emphasised, and the hindrance which sin imposed was borne testimony to.

An elaborate system of sacrifices was enjoined. These were not only incorporated with the institutions of worship, but were explanatory of their importance and design. They were appointed to expiate the guilt of offences committed, with the express declaration that “the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls” (Lev. 17:11). A day was set apart annually for atonement to be formally made for the sins of the people (Lev. 16), and the elaborate services of it were so arranged as to concentrate therein, in the most impressive manner, the various lessons which the sacrifices inculcated. That those sacrifices could not, in themselves, take away sins, their frequent repetition indicated, and the fact that there were certain sins for which no sacrifices were provided, still further showed their limitation. Nevertheless, they assured faith that God was gracious, furnished a ground of hope, and supplied an inducement for them to unreservedly surrender themselves to their God, who was both righteous and merciful.

We are not prolonging these articles for the mere sake of filling up space, but with the special design of seeking to help those who have been deceived by “Dispensationalists,” and others who have been misled by unwarrantable conclusions drawn from Old Testament premises. What has been pointed out above should make it evident that they are quite wrong who suppose that the Mosaic economy was a pure Covenant of Works which gave no hope to transgressors. God never made a promulgation of Law to sinful men in order to keep them under mere law, without also setting before them the grace of the Covenant of Redemption, by which they might escape the wrath which the law denounced. The awful *curse* of Deuteronomy 27:26 must be magnified to the exclusion of the wondrous *blessing* of Numbers 6:24-27. The *justice* of the moral law was tempered by the *mercy* of the ceremonial law, and the “severity” of the Sinaiic Covenant was modified by the “goodness” of the Abrahamic Covenant being still administered.

“The legal and evangelical dispensations have been but different dispensations of the same Covenant of Grace and of the blessings thereof. Though there is now a greater degree of light, consolation, and liberty, yet if Christians are now under a kingdom of grace where there is pardon upon repentance, the Lord’s people under the Old Testament were (as to the reality and substance of things) also under a kingdom of *grace*” (James Fraser). “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same *spiritual* meat; and did all drink the same *spiritual* drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:1-4). In the light of that passage as a whole, being “baptized unto Moses” can only mean that he is there set forth as *the minister of grace*, the typical saviour who had led them out of Egypt.

The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the Levitical offerings, were really an amplification and explanation of the grace revealed in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. The place which the moral law held in the Mosaic economy and its relation to that grace is clearly defined in, “Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come” (Gal. 3:19). At Sinai God did not give the law as a message explaining how justification could be obtained by obedience thereto, for such obedience as it required was impossible to fallen man. In such a case, the Law had *not*

been “added” to the “promise,” but would be in direct opposition to it. The previous verse makes it clear that if the Law had been set up for such an end, it had completely disannulled the promise: “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham *by promise*” (v. 18).

So far, then, from the Mosaic economy canceling the Abrahamic promises, it was “added” thereto. Had that economy been one exclusively of works (as some of our moderns imagine), then the whole of Israel had been damned the first day it was instituted. Had it been a strict regime of law, untempered by mercy, then no pardon had been available (which flatly contradicts Leviticus 26:40-46), and in such a case the Siniatic Covenant could not have been reckoned among Israel’s *blessings* (Rom. 9:4). The word “added” in Galatians 3:19 proves that the dispensation of law was not established as a thing distinct by itself alone, but was an appendix to the grace of the Abrahamic Covenant. In other words, the moral law and the ceremonial law which accompanied it, were given with evangelical ends: to show sinners their *need* of Christ, and to indicate *how* He would meet that need.

Again, had the law been promulgated in Divine wrath, with the object of its issuing in naught but death, then it had been in the hand of an *executioner*, and not as Galatians 3:19 states “in the hand of a *mediator*,” whose office is to effect reconciliation. This it is which supplies the key to and explains that much disputed and little understood statement in the next verse, “Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one” (Gal. 3:20). “God is one” signifies that His purpose and design is *the same* in both the Abrahamic and Siniatic Covenants; in other words, the law was published with a *gracious* end in view. Therefore when the Apostle proceeds to ask the definite question, “Is the law then against the promises of God” (i.e. does it clash with or annul the gracious revelation made to Abraham), the emphatic answer is, “God forbid” (v. 21).

In last month’s article we affirmed that the Siniatic Covenant was a compact promising the Israelites as a people certain material and national blessings, on the condition of their rendering to God a general obedience to His law. Let it now be pointed out that something higher was required in order to *individual communion* with the Lord. This is clear from such a passage as “LORD, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa. 15:1-3). No loose or mechanical compliance with the requirements of the Law would suffice: God’s glory is inseparably bound up with the interests of righteousness, and there can be no righteousness where the heart is divorced from Him.

In like manner, we read again, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD” (Psa. 24:3-5). Here was described the character of the true worshippers of God, as contradistinguished from hypocrites. The “ascending into the hill of the Lord, standing in His holy place, and abiding in His tabernacle,” being but figurative language to express *spiritual* fellowship with the Most High. It is striking to note that both of these searching passages were delivered at a time when the Tabernacle service was about to be renewed (by Solomon) with increased splendour: plainly they were designed as a *warn-*

ing to the people that whatever regard was paid to the solemnities of public worship, it could avail them nothing, if there was not first practical righteousness in the offerer of it.

It is to be particularly observed that in the above passages it was not so much the righteousness of the law in general that the Psalmist pressed for, as that establishing of *the second table*, because hypocrites and formalists have so many ways of counterfeiting the works of the first table. The same principle was pressed by the Prophets again and again. "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son" (Psa. 50:16-20); and yet in their blindness and self-complacency they had dared to talk of God's statutes and prate about His Covenant. But no *outward* adherence to the worship of Jehovah could be accepted while the Divine commands were trampled underfoot.

Isaiah was still more severe in his denunciations. He encouraged those who feigned great respect for the temple, multiplying their offerings, treading the holy courts, keeping the feasts with much diligence, and making "many prayers"; yet he addressed them as the "rulers of Sodom" and as the "people of Gomorrah," and affirmed that their sacrifices and religious performances were nauseating to God, that His soul "hated" such pretensions, and that He would not hearken to their prayers because they oppressed the needy and ground down the fatherless and the widow (Isa. 1:10-17). There was no sincerity in their devotions: to pose as pious in the house of the Lord while iniquity filled their own dwellings was a grievous offence. Hence, he told them that their altar-gifts were "*lying offerings*" (so "vain oblations" of verse 13 should be rendered), and that the whole of their worship was an abomination in the sight of the Holy One.

In like manner we hear Jeremiah saying, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever" (7:3-7). Thus he exposed and condemned the blatant folly of those who trusted in the temple and its services for a blessing, when by their ungodliness and wicked works they had turned the temple into a resort of evil-doers. Ezekiel, too, rebuked religious hypocrites, and showed how God could be satisfied with nothing less than that reality which was evidenced by practical righteousness between man and man (chapters 18 and 33).

On the one hand, then, there was a godly remnant in Israel, who used the Law "lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8) by causing its spirituality and holiness to cast them back on the grace and promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, turning to God as their Redeemer and Healer. It is in such passages as Psalm 119 we find *their* experience described. There was a realisation of the excellence, the breadth, the height of the Divine Law; its suitability to man's condition, the blessedness of being conformed to its requirements, and the earnest longings of the pious heart after all that properly belongs to it. Those acknowledgements and aspirations are interspersed with confessions of backsliding, prayers for Divine mercy and restoring grace, and fresh resolutions are formed in dependence upon Divine aid to

resist and strive after higher attainments in the righteousness which the Law enjoins. In many other passages we find the consciousness of sin and moral weakness driving the soul to God for deliverance and help, especially in the appropriation of the gracious provision made in the sacrifices for expiation of guilt and restoration of peace to the troubled conscience.

On the other hand, there was a far greater number of the godless in Israel who made a wrong use of the Law, perverting the design of the Siniatic constitution, divorcing it from the Abrahamic Covenant. These shut their eyes to the depths and spirituality of the Law's requirements, for they were determined to attain unto a righteousness before God on a merely legal basis, and therefore they reduced the Decalogue to an outward performance of certain rules of conduct. This, of course, engendered a servile spirit, for where duties are not performed from high motives and grateful impulses, they necessarily become a burden and are discharged solely for the wages to be paid in return. Such a spirit actuated the Scribes and Pharisees who were "hirelings" and not sons. Moreover, such a degradation of the Law could only result in formality and hypocrisy. Finally, those who thus erred concerning the Law's place and spirit could neither look rightly for the Messiah nor welcome Him when He appeared.—A.W.P.

Union and Communion.

9. *Glory.*

It was our desire to have closed last month's article with some reflections constituting a "practical application" of the subject, but lack of space hindered us; we shall therefore introduce them at this stage, and they add a few more remarks about the future bliss of the righteous. Our desire is not only to enlighten the mind, but to affect the heart, so that our lives may be more fruitful to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. God has indeed been good in revealing so much concerning that everlasting bliss which awaits His people on High, yet the practical value of such knowledge to us is to be determined by *the effects* which it produces in our daily walk. Those who are going to behold the King in His beauty will surely strive after a closer conformity to His image in this life, and then, conscious of their deplorable lack of such conformity, will not only be filled with grief, but be kept humble in the dust before Him.

First, *a radical change of heart* is indispensable before any depraved member of Adam's fallen race can participate in the inheritance of the saints in light. Moreover, that change must take place before death, for at death each individual goes to "his *own* place" (Acts 1:25)—Heaven or Hell, for which either holiness or sin fits him. Nor does glorification (unlike regeneration) effect any radical change: instead, it is the *perfecting* of what has previously been wrought in a person. No one enters Heaven unless Heaven has first entered him. No one goes to be with Christ unless Christ has first dwelt in his heart. How could those who never had any spiritual love for Him find joy and satisfaction from spending an eternity in His immediate presence? If we have no relish for spiritual things in this life, if our hearts perceive not the supreme "beauty of holiness," then we would be completely out of our element in the dwellingplace of the Holy One, and where none but holy persons are found. Therefore "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The natural man has a settled aversion from God. The unregenerate are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18), and therefore do they deliberately choose a life that is "*without God* in the world" (Eph. 2:12). True, many of them (like millions of the heathen) assume a religious garb at certain seasons and engage in a round of religious exercises, yet both in heart and practice they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). Press upon such the claims of Christ, tell them He requires the throne of their hearts, seek to set before them the blessedness of a life of obedience to Him and the sweetness of communion with Him, and they will regard you as a fanatic and killjoy. At how great a moral distance, then, are all such souls from heavenly blessedness: either it must be changed to match their corruptions, or their hearts must be changed to suit its purity.

Reader, has *your* heart been so changed that fellowship with Christ is your chiefest delight? O the deceitfulness of the human heart! O the powerful infatuation of self-love! O the fatal delusions of Satan, that so many yet "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity" should suppose that God can be imposed upon by lip-service or by the labour of the hands. Alas, what multitudes imagine that a few drops of water sprinkled upon them during infancy secures an entrance into Heaven. What multitudes suppose that "joining a church" and financially supporting the minister is sufficient to ensure everlasting bliss. And what countless other thousands persuade themselves that a head knowledge and mouth profession of the Truth is all that is needed. Ah, my reader, thou canst not impose

upon God, and never shall you enter *His* kingdom unless thou be born again. Then let each of us seriously and solemnly examine himself.

Second, the soul in which that great change is wrought *eagerly pursues Heaven's blessedness* until it be attained. Perfect conformity to Christ, unbroken communion with Him, is now its supreme desire and quest: let a soul be regenerated and nothing short of this can satisfy it. The deepest longing of a renewed heart is "LORD, lift Thou up the light of *Thy* countenance upon us" (Psa. 4:6). The giddy crave worldly pleasures, the miser his gold, the ambitious earthly honours, but Christian experience is summed up in, "One thing have I *desired* of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple" (Psa. 27:4). That which is to afford him *eternal* joy and satisfaction is the object of the believer's *present* desire and delight: a visit from Christ, a smile from Him, a sip of His love, is what he is constantly asking for.

"As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15), which is the same as saying, I cannot be satisfied otherwise. But what does that word "satisfied" imply? Hunger is satisfied with food, thirst with water: that which was previously craved is now obtained, and *contentment* follows. Thus, satisfaction of soul necessarily implies a *previous longing* of soul after that which alone can satisfy, a working of earnest desire, a tireless seeking after that which continues to so largely elude us in this life. "With my soul have I *desired* Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early" (Isa. 26:9)—yes, "seek" after a conscious access to the Lord and a sight of His face, as earnestly, as diligently, as persistently, as the worldling does after carnal things. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I *follow after*, if that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). That word "attained" has a very small place in the theology of some who are lop-sided on grace. Yet the Apostle hesitated not to use it, realising that his spiritual longings called for a "following after" on his part.

Here, then, is another point at which we need to test ourselves. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of a soul being "satisfied" in the future if it had no *previous yearning*. In this life there is a restless longing and working of soul: in the life to come the goal is reached and rest (satisfaction) is attained. Thus, if I be seriously minded, if I am concerned about the hereafter, how it behooves me to ascertain whether there be within me a supreme desire, a spiritual appetite, a soul craving which this poor world cannot satisfy, and which stirs me up to seek after Christ now. Or does the language of the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, wherein she expresses her joy and bliss at the brief visits of her Beloved, and her loss and anguish at His departure, strike you as wild enthusiasm? If so, be sure that your heart has not within it that principle which finds its fruition in Heaven. We may ascertain our state by the *objects of our desires*. Make no mistake: that can never be your eternal blessedness for which now you have no relish. Christ will not receive into His presence those to whom it would be a burden.

Third, the knowledge of God and conformity to His image are in their very nature *satisfying* to a renewed soul, and even now *actually do so* in the measure in which they are attained by us. Mere *things* cannot satisfy, for they perish with the using of them. He who hopes to find satisfaction by multiplying his carnal pleasures, or by heaping together material things, is on as vain a quest as if he sought to make a sum by adding together

naught but cyphers. But that which shall one day fully satisfy, has in itself an aptness and power to satisfy even now. Happy the soul which has been let into the secret of where real satisfaction is to be found, and knows whither to turn his eyes and direct his efforts in the pursuit thereof. Thrice happy those who can say, Give me an experimental, living, efficacious sight of God, and I have enough: "show us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us" (John 14:8).

Let the weary wandering soul turn unto *God*: He will not mock thee with shadows as the world does. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Apart from Christ we cannot know God nor view Him with comfort; but the Gospel gives a lovely prospect of Him: the glory of God shines "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6), and the more faith beholds Him there, the more does the soul move toward satisfaction. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). A vital knowledge of God tends to holiness, and holiness to contentment. Nothing is more analogous to Heaven than the peace and serenity which issues from the believer's present enjoyment of God. He does not wholly conceal Himself from the saints, but favours them with an occasional glimpse of His smiling face, and the degree in which He vouchsafes this blessing brings Heaven into the soul: "They looked unto Him, and were lightened" (Psa. 34:5).

Fourth, but inasmuch as the soul's complete blessedness lies in the future, then his happiness in the meantime must largely consist *in hope*. It is the Divine promise that one day there shall be nothing to mar his fellowship with Christ that now supports the saint. It is the assurance that ere long his hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6), and that "no groans shall mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues," which comforts the oft cast-down soul. "If we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:25). Yes, it is the exercise of hope which encourages the weary pilgrim to continue plodding on, which nerves the Christian soldier *not* to give up the good fight of faith. It was hope which moved the soul to first seek unto God for mercy, and hope will make its possessor *continue seeking* unto Him till every longing receives its fruition.

Here is yet another point by which to test ourselves. Are our expectations of satisfaction centered in present or future things? They who have received the "firstfruits of the Spirit" cannot but earnestly groan after the harvest itself: "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). Have you, my reader, been the happy recipient of a bunch of the "grapes of Eschol"? If so, nothing that grows in this wilderness satisfies your palate, and your face will be eagerly turned to that fair Land of Promise of which that "bunch" was but the earnest. If you really have a "good hope through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16) then you will, in some measure at least, live upon things future and unseen. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5).

Fifth, if we honestly perceive any disposition of soul toward the holy glory of Heaven, any principle within which causes us to pant after God as the hunted hart does after the waterbrooks, then how diligently and zealously should we *seek after the strengthening* and developing of the same, and endeavour to bring our hearts into that temper suited thereto. If we are painfully conscious of how far short we fall of being conformed to the image of Christ, then we should stir up our souls to make more serious efforts after the same. If we are to spend an eternity in His presence, how we should strive after a grow-

ing knowledge of God, how we should seek to please and honour Him in all things. Then let us “follow on to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3), let us spend more time in the “secret place of the Most High,” let us make future things the subject of our meditation. (For much in the above paragraphs we are indebted to J. Howe).

Is it not worth some pains to attain unto the blessedness of Heaven? If athletes undergo such discipline and self-denial in order to obtain a corruptible crown, shall *we* murmur because the turning of our backs upon the world and the mortifying of the flesh are required of us if we are to attain unto an incorruptible crown? Christians are not called to lie upon flowery beds of ease, but to strive against sin, to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, to make the cultivation of personal holiness the great business of their present lives. Christ has left His people an example, that they should follow His steps, and His path is not a smooth one, nor did He please Himself. Christ had to “endure the Cross” before He was rewarded by the heavenly bliss into which He has entered (Phil. 2:8, 9), and unless we take up our cross (that is, live a life of self-sacrifice) Heaven will not be our portion and reward. “To him *that overcometh* will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21): that is the plainly revealed condition of celestial blessedness.

Once more we say, Can any present sacrifice be too great in view of the future joy? Consider again what the blessedness of the righteous shall consist of: it will be a complete freedom from all that is evil, and the eternal enjoyment of all that is good. When the full number of God’s elect have been openly called by the Spirit and vitally united to Shiloh, their living Head, then will take place the solemnization of the nuptials between the heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride. “The King’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework” (Psa. 45:13, 14), which was a prophetic statement that receives its fulfillment on the resurrection morning. At that time all her spots and blemishes will be eternally obliterated, and she will shine forth immutably holy, consummately righteous, inestimably pure; thus will she be a suitable Consort for her glorious Husband, being fully conformed to His image.

Then it is that Christ shall “present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This is the ultimate end of our redemption by Christ, the perfecting of our sanctification in the life to come. As Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together (Matt. 1:18), so the Church is contracted to Christ now, but the marriage is hereafter (Rev. 19:7). He will then take us Home to live with Himself and abide always in His immediate presence. “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (Song. 4:7) will be His greeting; “My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (5:10) will be her response. This presentation of the Church to Himself is Christ’s recompense for His sufferings: it is then that “He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied” (Isa. 53:1).

It is to be duly noted that the Church’s glory in Heaven is the fruit of Christ’s death. It is not merited by us but was purchased by Him. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (i.e., in a sacrificial death) that He might sanctify it...that He might present it to Himself a glorious church” (Eph. 5:25-27). So again, “That by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). The following dis-

tinctions may help. The electing grace of the Father is the original cause of our glorification. The atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause. Quickening by the Spirit is the efficacious cause. Personal holiness is what *fits* us, for it is the condition without which we cannot obtain eternal bliss (Heb. 12:14).

In Heaven our communion with Christ will reach its highest perfection, without any possibility of cessation or interruption. Heavenly communion will be our participation with Christ in all the benefits which flow from our union with Him. The glorified Head of the Church will share with His members the high honours which God has conferred upon Him. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20): yes, the saints will yet be brought to participate with Christ in His complete triumph over Satan. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3). Communion *is mutual enjoyment*, and Christ will not be satisfied till His blood-bought people be in the same condition as Himself: "That ye may eat and drink *at My table* in My kingdom" (Luke 22:30); yea, "To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with Me* in My throne" (Rev. 3:21). Then it is that He shall say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21)—an unalloyed and holy joy, a perfect and satisfying one.

The God-man is Lord of angels (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:4), and since His saints are joint-heirs with Christ, they must *share with Him* in His dominion over the celestial hosts. This is a bold statement, yet it is fully warranted by the teaching of Holy Writ; nor let it appear absurd, though it be so wonderful: if the Son of God condescended to take human nature upon Him, is it incredible that He should raise it to the highest creature dignity? Mark carefully the discrimination of language in the following passage, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and *in the midst of* the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain....And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels *round about* the throne and the beasts, and the elders" (Rev. 5:6, 11). The redeemed are *nearer* the Lamb and more intimately connected with Him than the others, for the angels are only in the outer circle.

Above all, we shall be eye-witnesses of the glory which belongs to Christ personally. "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4). Christ's glory will be beheld by us then to an extent we cannot now conceive: every faculty of soul and body will be refined to the highest degree, suited to the heavenly state, which will immeasurably increase our enjoyment of the beatific vision. The better the sight, the lovelier the object appears; the healthier the appetite, the more delicious the food tastes; the more musical the ear, the pleasanter the melody. So, the holier the soul, the more joyous Heaven's joys and the more glorious its glories. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom" (1 Kings 10:8), then those who shall sit in the immediate presence of the infinitely greater than Solomon will be superlatively happy.

In Heaven the Christian will have a constant and satisfying sight of the God-Man, who, as such, is the "Lord of Glory." In Him the Incomprehensible Three will shine forth in the uttermost display of Their manifestative glory before all the angels and saints. It is *that* which is the blessedness of Heaven, and which each saint shall forever behold, filling them with conceptions of glory as they can never express. The wicked will see Christ in the Day of Judgment, but they will not have an intuitive and supernatural sight of Him. In blessed contrast, it is by a *spiritual* faculty and light that the saints will see Him: it is

so now, as He is revealed in the glass of the Word. That spiritual faculty, elevated by the Holy Spirit, will so raise up the mind as to take in larger and larger views of Christ, swallowing up every thought in the contemplation and adoration of the same.

Our life in Heaven will consist in an ever-expanding vision of Christ's manifold glory, so that we shall be eternally admiring, rejoicing in it, having communion with Him over it, giving Him praise for it. The heart will be wholly absorbed in its apprehensions of all "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" which are now "hid" in Christ (Col. 2:3). We shall be completely lost to everything *but Him!* There will be such an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17) on our minds, poising them, as to preclude every wandering thought from Him. The heart will be eternally fixed on Christ as its centre. Thus there can be no possibility of sin ever again gaining entrance to our souls. Then will be completely realised that Divine promise, "They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light" (Psa. 36:8, 9).—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

12. *Its Means.*

One of the principal reasons why so many of the Lord's people have such vague and faulty conceptions of what the believer's sanctification really consists of, is because few of those who write or preach thereon take the trouble to deal with the subject in an adequate and systematic way. Important distinctions are ignored, diverse aspects are jumbled together, terms are not explained, and because little more than superficial generalizations are presented, nothing is definitely defined in the mind of the reader or hearer; or, only a single branch of the subject is understood by him. On the other hand, in our endeavour to present an orderly unfolding of this great truth, there is danger of confusing the reader's mind by the numerous divisions adopted. He is apt to conclude that the subject is too complex for him to grasp, or bewilder himself by supposing there are several different kinds of sanctification. Yet this ought not to be.

Such mistaken ideas will be avoided if our friends exercise due patience—a rare quality today!—and devote themselves to *studying* the subject with that diligence to which it is surely entitled, and with which their own peace and spiritual prosperity is so closely bound up. Any thing in this life which is of value can only be obtained by painstaking effort. That which is worth something is rarely acquired without labour, perseverance, and expense. Why, then, begrudge the putting forth of these where the securing of a better knowledge of Scripture is concerned? Truth has to be bought (Prov. 23:23): it is obtained only by those who are willing to pay the price. And it is for *their* help that we write, and not for those who value their souls so lightly that they are too lazy to *study*.

Now, as we have sought to show in previous articles, sanctification as a whole needs to be viewed from two chief viewpoints—the Divine and human: the Divine inworking and the human outworking; while we have also stressed the importance of distinguishing between its two principal aspects—the *positional* and the *practical*: the place and state into which the mysterious work of Christ has brought the believer before God, and *the response* this calls for from him, namely, the conduct which becomes him as a saint. But often the Divine and human elements are so closely interwoven that, when developing certain phases of our subject, it is scarcely possible to draw a sharp line between them. Take that aspect which was last before us: the instrument of our sanctification, namely, faith. Now faith is both something which is Divinely inwrought and humanly outworked. It is a Divine gift, yet it has to be exercised by its recipient. Believing is *my* act, though it is through the Spirit I am *enabled* therein. In like manner, it is not always practicable to separate between positional and practical holiness when tracing out certain phases of our theme.

In taking up the *means* of sanctification it is the *practical* holiness of the believer which is to be in view. Were we to cast this article into the form of a sermon, our text would be, “Sanctify them through Thy Truth” (John 17:17). A superficial reading of that verse would cause us to draw the inference that the Apostles were not then sanctified, or why should Christ pray for them *to be* sanctified? Yet a little reflection will show that such an inference is a false one, for the Eleven had separated from the world when they responded to the call of Christ, and as real believers in Him they were most certainly “sanctified by faith.” Then the question arises, Since they were already sanctified why did their great High Priest pray the Father *to* “sanctify” them? We raise this question for

the purpose of impressing the reader with the fact that sanctification *has* various phases or aspects, and that we must carefully distinguish between the same if we are either to understand the teaching of Scripture on the subject or our own experience in the light of that teaching.

What the Lord Jesus prayed for in John 17:17 was that the Spirit would *draw out* what He had already wrought in them, that He would graciously call into exercise and act the principle of holiness which He had communicated to them at their regeneration. It is quite clear from the previous verse that the Apostles *were already* sanctified, and, as holy persons, Christ now prayed that they might be kept in the way of holiness, preserved in the practice of it, and that the fruits thereof might abound in them. Thus, it was not for their initial sanctification that Christ supplicated the Father, nor for any further and fresh sanctification, but for the drawing out and manifestation of what was already theirs. And in connection therewith, *means* were to be employed: "Sanctify them *through Thy Truth: Thy word is Truth*" (John 17:17). This, then, should make quite clear the *place* which "means" have—a subordinate one and at *what stage* they enter into our sanctification—only in connection with the drawing forth of what has already been wrought in us.

At the time that our Lord here prayed, the Apostles knew and believed the Truth, yet—as it is with us today—it was in a poor manner and low degree. Their apprehensions of spiritual things were very imperfect, and often quite erroneous: they were dull scholars—slow to learn, and slower still to unlearn, as the Gospel records abundantly testify. Like we, they had need to pray, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." But they were yet to be filled with the Spirit and guided into all Truth (John 16:13). And thus it is, in measure, with the Christian, for "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). Little by little the believer's heart is brought increasingly under the influence of the Truth, and thereby is he raised to closer experimental communion with Christ. The result of this is that he has an ever-deepening desire to keep himself unspotted from the world, be brought into complete and cheerful submission to the whole will of God, and walk before Him unto all pleasing.

It was not the sanctification of the Apostles' *persons* that Christ prayed for, nor the sanctification of their *nature*, but rather of their *walk*. As to their persons, God had set them apart in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4); as to their nature, that had been sanctified when (at the new birth) a principle of holiness had been communicated to them; and neither the one nor the other admitted of any improvement. Now in connection with the sanctification of the walk—a term which includes much more than outward conduct—the Word is the great means employed by God, working effectually with and by it on the hearts of His people. By the Scriptures the Spirit continues to enlighten the understanding, convict the conscience, inflame the affections, and move the will. By them He conveys to us a fuller and clearer knowledge of the amazing grace of God and love of Christ toward us, and how it becomes us to act in return. Not that our hearts then become more sanctified, but they are more influenced by Divine things and exercised before God.

Many and varied are the Scriptures which treat of this particular branch of our subject: the place which the written Word has in the practical sanctification of the believer. From them we select the following: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever” (Psa. 19:7-9). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9). “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). “I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word” (Eph. 5:25, 26). “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:1, 2). But let us enter more into detail and show *wherein* the believer is sanctified by the Truth.

First, *by imparting to us a knowledge of God’s will*. That which He requires of us can be ascertained in no other way than through an acquaintance with the teachings of Holy Writ. It is for that reason God has given to us His Word: to set before us *His* standard of conduct, to make known to us what He hates and what He loves, to expose the sophistries of Satan and the vanities of the world; in short, to provide us with a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. “To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). The believer is sanctified experimentally just to the extent that he is brought under the illuminating and commanding influences of the Word of Truth. Personal holiness is our conformity to its requirements. Practical holiness is separation and abstention from evil, and association with and performance of that which is good; and only from the Scriptures can we fully discover what *is* evil and what *is* good.

From what has just been pointed out, it necessarily follows that all *human* rules and regulations for godly living are worthless, and the Christian must steadfastly refuse to be brought into bondage by them. Men have devised a great variety of prohibitions and observances in which *they* suppose holiness to consist, and by attending to the same have appeared to themselves and to others to have attained a very high degree of sanctity. The Pharisees were guilty of this, adding to the commandments of God their own traditions, such as the ceremonial washing of their hands and vessels in order to avoid moral defilement. The Romanists have followed in the same track, by inducing many of their deluded victims to retire entirely from the world to the “holy” (???) solitude of monasteries and convents, binding themselves to devote most of their time to the repetition of prayers and other “sacred” (?) exercises.

There has always been an element in Protestantism—those temperamentally disposed toward asceticism and mysticism—who have pursued this same will o’ the wisp. Supposing that the same would produce a greater deliverance from sin and secure a closer walking with God, they have submitted themselves to frequent fastings and other penances, taking upon them vows of poverty and celibacy, depriving themselves of the ordinary comforts and innocent recreations of life, and having sought to exist on the sparsest possible diet. The same principle is exemplified by the “Seventh Day Adventists” and modern “Holiness” cults who denounce all intoxicants as “evil” and the use of tobacco in any form as “filthy.” But as the Holy Spirit tells us in Colossians 2:20-23 these ordinances of “touch not, taste not, handle not” are but “the commandments and doctrines of men,

which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body," but, as it is added, "not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

The aesthetical austerities advocated in varying degrees by Keswick and other "Victorious Life" platforms, are little better than those of the poor Romanists, and we may say of the one what Luther said of the other, "they are nothing else than spiritual sorceries." How thankful should we be, then, that God Himself has placed in our hands a perfect *and complete* revelation of His will, an unerring standard by which we may measure all the plausible theorisings of "nice" and "good" men! "As we cannot serve God by doing what He has not commanded and still less by doing what He has forbidden (bringing ourselves into bondage to modern Pharisees—A.W.P.) so it is presumptuous to expect God's blessing upon means which, being introduced *as supplementary* to His ordinances, very plainly import that in this respect man is wiser than He is" (John Dick).

We have dwelt longer upon our first division because we were most anxious the reader should clearly perceive that the written Word is the chief means used by God in the practical sanctification of His people, for *it*—and it alone—imparts to us a knowledge of His will, discovering the things to be shunned and revealing the things which are to be followed. Just so far as we, in our quest after piety, substitute for the teachings of Holy Writ the sophistical reasonings and dictatorial edicts of men, shall we forsake the substance and vainly pursue the shadows. On the other hand, just so far as we abstain from what God has forbidden and perform what He has enjoined, are we really treading the Highway of Holiness. How it behooves us, then, to *test* our views and ideas by the Word of Truth!

Second, *by its influential considerations*. The Word of Truth not only defines our duties, but it also presents many considerations which are calculated to work powerfully upon our affections and wills. The Scriptures do more than set before us bare precepts, they exhibit them in all the loveliness *of example*, in the history of saints, and particularly in the life of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the precepts are accompanied by encouraging promises (2 Cor. 7:1)—the value of which is realised only so far as we are conscious of our weakness. When called upon to "purify our hearts" (James 4:8), we are ready to exclaim, How is it possible *for me* to cleanse myself from the pollutions of indwelling sin? In this state of despondency the Scriptures afford relief by assuring of supernatural grace: James 1:5; 4:6; 2 Corinthians 12:9. When bidden to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we are informed "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Third, *by strengthening faith*, for the Word is its appointed food: "nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6). There are many of God's dear children who long after and pray for an increase of their faith, but it is idle to do so while they continue to neglect the means provided for its nourishment. Trust in God will only be developed by feeding on His Word: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16). When the Devil challenged the faith of Christ, He set His people an abiding example by replying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Faith is strengthened by clearer apprehensions of the Truth. Hope brightens at the glorious prospect of life and immortality which the Gospel displays. Love grows warmer as the love of God is better known. All the graces of the Christian thrive under the beneficent influences of the Truth.

Fourth, *by making us better acquainted with Christ*. The more our minds are opened to take in the Truth concerning the Person and work of the Redeemer, the more is the soul perfumed therewith, and the more are its faculties influenced thereby. A deeper experimental knowledge of Christ enables us to rest upon Him more simply for the whole of our salvation. It is through the Truth that we become more firmly persuaded of the Father's love to us in His Son, whereby is "the heart established in grace" (Heb. 13:9). As our first believing of the Gospel had a most powerful effect upon the heart, so our continued apprehensions of other portions of the Truth produce beneficial results in the soul. It is because we shall have a perfect knowledge of Christ in Heaven that there we shall be perfectly holy.

Fifth, *by its sacred awe upon the soul*. "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner (critic) of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). There is a pungency to the Holy Scriptures possessed by no other writings; often the wicked are conscious of this, and therefore refuse to read them. But far more are the regenerate aware of it: to them their utterances are the voice of God Himself, and they "tremble at His Word" (Isa. 66:2). Its denunciations of sin, the exposure of its infinite enormity, the announcement of its eternal punishment, the exhibition which the Scriptures give of the Son of God dying upon the Cross in order to make an atonement for it, cause the believer to walk more and more softly before God. While the character of God as revealed in His Word—His majesty, His power, His holiness, His wrath—exerts both a restraining and constraining influence upon its readers.

It is this very quality of the Scriptures—to sanctify—which supplies the Christian with the surest witness of their Divine origin. "When ye received the Word of God . . . which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). Ah, it is not "the testimony of the Church" nor the witness of Christians, but *a personal acquaintance with their sanctifying power* which conveys certainty to the soul. It is well to heed the testimony of the Lord's people first, just as we take a medicine on the recommendation of others who have found it helpful; but we must not rest there. "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5): this is what supplies convincing proof—as it was with the Samaritans who came to Christ because of the testimony of the woman at the well, saying to her, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him *ourselves*" (John 4:42).

Alas, the great majority in Christendom receive the Scriptures on no better ground than the Turks believe the Alcoran—because it is the tradition of their fathers. O labour, my reader, for something better than that, and "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you *a reason* of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). In order for that the Scriptures must be read, "searched," *studied*, meditated upon; and, above all, received *by faith*. Note how "through sanctification of the Spirit *and* belief of the Truth" (2 Thess. 2:13) are linked together. The Truth has no power on us further than it is *believed* by us. The Word worketh not without an act on our part, as well as God's. Solemn is that warning, "The Word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2). Where faith is active the precepts awe and the promises cheer. When tempted to evil, faith says, Shall I thus requite Christ for dying in my stead.

It is at this very point that we may perceive the great and vital difference which exists between social respectability and real piety or practical sanctification. The one is produced by moral education, according to *natural* principles, without any spiritual knowledge or heart desire to please God. Many are upright, truthful, honest in commercial transactions, obedient to civil laws and restrained from outward wickedness, who yet have no true grace. But all real practical sanctification is inclined and regulated by the Scriptures. Only that is personal holiness when we submit and conform ourselves in heart and life to the will of God as it is revealed in His Word. "He that doeth Truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21): he tests himself by *this* rule and measures his conduct by *this* standard.—A.W.P.

A Morning Prayer.

O Lord, it is declared in Your Word, that man is like a thing of nought, his time passeth away like a shadow. We have to set our seal to this truth. For the night is past with us, and the morning come, and it is wholly owing to Thy will we remain in existence in a time state. We are in a measure made sensible of this, as we are admitted to live one day after another. We are more and more made sensible we have no existence in ourselves: it is wholly in Thee we have life, being, and existence. O that Thou wouldest make us more sensible of it. O that Thou wouldest deeply affect our minds herewith. Lord, grant us such a view hereof, as may lead us to entreat Thee so to teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We do again draw nigh unto Thee, O Lord our God, beseeching Thee to grant us audience with Thy Divine majesty. Help us to appear before Thee in the name and Person, righteousness and sacrifice, intercession and advocacy of Thine Anointed, the holy and immaculate Lamb. O Lord, we have nothing in ourselves but sin. We are all impurity, we can come before Thee no otherwise than we are. To us belong shame and confusion of face. We are in every, in the uttermost sense of the expression, lost, undone, sinful, guilty, and vile. It is that alone which sustains us, that it is declared in Thy Word concerning Thee, "That Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." It is the knowledge and belief of this which encourages us to come before Thee.

At Thy throne of grace, as the monuments of Thy sacred mercy, we desire to extol and praise Thy most holy name, that it hath pleased Thee to spare us the night past. We praise Thee for admitting us to continue in a time state to the present moment. O give us a real sense of the blessing and benefit of Thy preserving care and providence. It hath pleased Thee to exercise the same toward us to the present moment. We would lift up our hearts unto Thee, O Lord, in praise and thanksgiving for the same. Lord God, we find ourselves just as sinful and helpless in our selves as ever. Blessed be Thy name, Thou art the Lord our God, and Thy compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great, O Lord, is thy faithfulness. We would pray for such a sense of it on each of our minds, as might draw forth all our spiritual faculties to bless and magnify Thy holy name.

Thou art a covenant-keeping and covenant-performing God. Thou art always mindful of Thy covenant. O look on us, before Thee, as those who are interested in Thy covenant. O look upon us as fit objects and subjects for Thy majesty to exercise the tender mercies of Thy covenant on. We most certainly are, in ourselves, in our cases and circumstances, just exactly such as need the grace, mercy, and compassion, life, and salvation which is contained in the declaration of grace, in the promises of pardon, made known by it. We therefore cry out before Thee, O Lord, our God. We entreat Thee to behold us in Christ Jesus. O view us in Him. Lord, shine forth on us. Give us a sense of Thy covenant mercy. Grant us an enjoyment of Thy covenant salvation. Bless us in Christ Jesus: warm our hearts: raise up our minds: fill us with the gifts, graces, and consolations of the Holy Spirit.

O let our souls be under the mighty, all-constraining, all-conquering influence of Thine everlasting love this day. We would pray Thee to keep us this day from sinning against Thee. Lord, we are in ourselves, and when left to ourselves, like water which runneth apace. O succour us. O defend us. O be Thou near unto us this day, and uphold us with the right hand of Thy righteousness. Blessed God and Father, do Thou most gra-

ciously compassionate us. Let us have an evidence of it, by Thy taking each of our cases under Thine own particular notice and regard. O that we may be under the influence of the Holy Spirit this day. Lord Jesus Christ, be with our spirits. Lord Jesus, do Thou guide us with Thine eye. O keep us near Thyself. Suffer no iniquity to have dominion over us; save us from ourselves.

Save us, O Lord, from our constitutional sins, tempers, and corruptions. O let them be kept under, and subdued by the omnipotent power of Thy grace. Let us experience the power of Thy life and death in our mortal flesh: to the intent that we may live no longer to the lust of the flesh, but to the will of God. We beseech Thee, O Holy Spirit, to bring our minds and hearts under the mighty power of all-conquering grace. O Lord, let not sin, nor Satan, prevail against us. We would pray Thee to bless us in our bodies and souls, and grant that every blessing we shall enjoy this day, may savour of Heaven, and be received as so many pledges of Thy good-will and regard unto us. We pray Thee to sanctify all our blessings, and us to the use of them, to Thy praise and glory. So we request Thou wouldest keep us entirely dependent on Thee for the continuance of them. We leave ourselves with Thee, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen.—S.E. Pierce, 1820.