

**The Spirit Working Faith.**

The principal bond of union between Christ and His people is the Holy Spirit; but as the union is mutual, something is necessary on our part to complete it, and this is faith. Hence, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts “by faith” (Eph. 3:17). Yet, let it be said emphatically, the faith which unites to Christ and saves the soul is not merely a natural act of the mind assenting to the Gospel, as it assents to any other truth upon reliable testimony, but is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is such a persuasion of the truth concerning the Saviour as calls forth exercises suited to its Object. The soul being quickened and made alive spiritually, begins to act spiritually. “The soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith” (John Flavell).

It is a great mistake to define Scriptural terms according to the narrow scope and meaning which they have in common speech. In ordinary conversation, “faith” signifies credence or the assent of the mind unto some testimony. But in God’s Word, so far from faith—saving faith, we mean—being merely a natural act of the mind, it includes the concurrence of the will and an action of the affections: it is “with the heart,” and not with the head, that “man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). Saving faith is a cordial approbation of Christ, an acceptance of Him in His entire character as Prophet, Priest, and King; it is entering into covenant with Him, receiving Him as Lord and Saviour. When this is understood, it will appear to be a fit instrument for completing our union with Christ, for the union is thus formed by *mutual* consent.

Were people to perceive more clearly the implications and the precise character of saving faith, they would be the more readily convinced that it is “the gift of God,” an effect or fruit of the Spirit’s operation on the heart. Saving faith is a coming to Christ, and coming to Christ necessarily presupposes a forsaking of all that stands opposed to Him. It has been rightly said that “true faith includes in it the renunciation of the flesh as well as the reception of the Saviour; true faith admires the precepts of holiness as well as the glory of the Saviour” (J.H. Thornwell, 1850). Not until these facts are recognised, enlarged upon, and emphasized by present-day preachers is there any real likelihood of the effectual exposure of the utter inadequacy of that *natural* “faith” which is all that thousands of empty professors possess.

“Now He which *stablisheth* us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2 Cor. 1:21). None but God (by His Spirit) can “stablish” the soul in all its parts—the understanding, the conscience, the affections, the will. The ground and reason why the Christian believes the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God is neither the testimony nor the authority of the Church (as Rome erroneously teaches), but rather the testimony and power of the Holy Spirit. Men may present arguments which will so convince the intellect as to cause a consent, but establish the soul and conscience so as to assure the heart of the Divine authorship of the Bible, they cannot. A spiritual faith must be imparted before the Word is made, *in a spiritual way*, its foundation and warrant.

The same blessed Spirit who moved holy men of old to write the Word of God, works in the regenerate a faith which nothing can shatter that that Word *is* the Word of God. The stablishing argument is by the power of God’s Spirit, who causes the quickened soul to see such a Divine Majesty shining forth in the Scriptures that the heart is established in this first principle. The renewed soul is made to feel that there is such a pungency in that

Word that it must be Divine. No born-again soul needs any laboured argument to convince him of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures: he has *proof within himself* of their Heavenly origin. Faith wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit is that which satisfies its possessor that the Scriptures are none other than the Word of the living God.

Not only does the blessed Spirit work faith in the written Word—establishing the renewed heart in its Divine veracity and authority—but He also produces faith in the personal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The imperative necessity for this distinct operation of His was briefly shown in a previous article upon “The Spirit Comforting,” but a little further word thereon will not here be out of place. When the soul has been Divinely awakened and convicted of sin, it is brought to realise and feel its depravity and vileness, its awful guilt and criminality, its utter unfitness to approach a holy God. It is emptied of self-righteousness and self-esteem, and is brought into the dust of self-abasement and self-condemnation. Dark indeed is the cloud which now hangs over it; hope is completely abandoned, and despair fills the heart. The painful consciousness that Divine goodness has been abused, Divine Law trodden under foot, and Divine patience trifled with, excludes the expectation of any mercy.

When the soul has sunk into the mire of despair, no human power is sufficient to lift it out and set it upon the Rock. Now that the renewed sinner perceives that not only are all his past actions transgressions of God’s Law, but that his very heart is desperately wicked—polluting his very prayers and tears of contrition, he feels that he must inevitably perish. If he hears the Gospel, he tells himself that its glad tidings are not for such an abandoned wretch as he; if he reads the Word he is assured that only its fearful denunciations and woes are *his* legitimate portion. If godly friends remind him that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, he supposes they are ignorant of the extremities of his case: should they urge him to believe or cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ, they do not mock him in his misery, for he now discovers that he can no more do this of himself than he can grasp the sun in his hands. All self-help, all human aid, is useless.

In those in whom the Spirit works faith, He first blows down the building of human pretensions, demolishes the walls which were built with the untempered mortar of man’s own righteousness, and destroys the foundations which were laid in self-flattery and natural sufficiency, so that they are entirely shut up to Christ and God’s *free grace*. Once awakened, instead of fondly imagining I am the man whom God will save, I am now convinced that I am the one who must be damned. So far from concluding I have any ability to even help save myself, I now *know* that I am “without strength” and no more able to receive Christ as my Lord and Saviour than I can climb up to Heaven. Evident it is, then, that a mighty supernatural power is needed if I am to come to Him who “justifieth the ungodly.” None but the all-mighty Spirit can lift a stricken soul out of the gulf of despair and enable him to believe to the saving of his soul.

To God the Holy Spirit be the glory for His sovereign grace in working faith in the heart of the writer and of each Christian reader. Thou hast attained unto peace and joy in believing, but has thou thanked that peace-Bringer?—“the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13). All that “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8) and that peace which “passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7) to whom is it ascribed?—the *Holy Spirit* it is particularly appropriated unto Him: “Peace and joy *in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 14:17 and cf. 1 Thess. 1:6). Then render unto Him the praise which is His due.—A.W.P.

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## The Epistle to the Hebrews.

### 87. *Divine Chastisement: Hebrews 12:5.*

It is of first importance that we learn to draw a sharp distinction between Divine punishment and Divine chastisement—important for maintaining the honour and glory of God, and for the peace of mind of the Christian. The distinction is very simple, yet it is often lost sight of. God's people can never by any possibility be *punished* for their sins, for God has already punished them at the Cross. The Lord Jesus, our blessed Substitute, suffered the full penalty of all our guilt, hence it is written "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Neither the justice nor the love of God will permit Him to again exact payment of what Christ discharged to the full. The difference between punishment and chastisement lies not in *the nature of* the sufferings of the afflicted: it is most important to bear this in mind. There is a threefold distinction between the two.

First, *the character* in which God acts. In the former, God acts as *Judge*; in the latter as *Father*. Sentence of punishment is the act of a judge, a penal sentence passed on those who are charged with guilt. Punishment can never fall upon a child of God in this judicial sense, because his guilt was all transferred to Christ: "Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree." But while the believer's sins cannot be punished, while the Christian cannot be condemned (Rom. 8:33), yet he may be *chastised*. The Christian occupies an entirely different position from the non-Christian: he is a member of the family of God. The relationship which now exists between him and God is that of Parent and child; and as a son he must be disciplined for wrong-doing. Folly is bound up in the hearts of all God's children, and the rod is necessary to rebuke, to subdue, to humble.

The second distinction between Divine punishment and Divine chastisement lies in *the recipients* of each. The objects of the former are His enemies; the subjects of the latter, His children. As the Judge of all the earth God will yet take vengeance on all His foes; as the Father of His family God maintains discipline over all His children. The one is judicial, the other parental. A third distinction is seen in *the design* of each: the one is retributive, the other remedial. The one flows from His anger, the other from His love. Divine punishment is never sent for the good of sinners, but for the honouring of God's Law and the maintenance of His government. Divine chastisement is sent for the *well-being* of His children: "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He *for our profit*, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:9, 10).

The above distinctions should at once rebuke the thoughts which are so generally entertained among Christians. When the believer is smarting under the rod, let him not say, God is now punishing me for my sins. **That** can never be; *that* is most dishonouring to the blood of Christ. God is *correcting* thee in love, not smiting in wrath. Nor should the Christian regard the chastening of the Lord as a sort of necessary evil to which he must bow as submissively as possible. No, it proceeds from God's goodness and faithfulness and is one of the greatest blessings for which we have to thank Him. Chastisement evidences our Divine sonship; the father of the family does not concern himself with those on the outside: but those within he guides and disciplines to make them conform to his will. Chastisement is designed for our good, to promote our highest interests. Look beyond the rod to the All wise hand that wields it!

Unhappily there is no word in the English language which is capable of doing justice to the Greek term here. "Paideia" which is rendered "chastening" is only another form of "paidion" which signifies "young children," being the tender word that was employed by the Saviour in John 21:5 and Hebrews 2:13. One can see at a glance the direct connection which exists between the words "disciple" and "discipline": equally close in the Greek is the relation between "children" and "chastening"—*son training* would be better. It has reference to God's education, nurture and discipline of His children. It is the Father's wise and loving correction which is in view.

It is true that much chastisement is the rod in the hand of the Father correcting His erring child, but it is a serious mistake to confine our thoughts to this one aspect of the subject. Chastisement is by no means always God's scourging of His refractory sons. Some of the saintliest of God's people, some of the most obedient of His children, have been and are the greatest sufferers. Oft times God's chastenings, instead of being retributive, are corrective. They are sent to empty us of self-sufficiency and self-righteousness; they are given to discover to us hidden transgressions, to teach us the plague of our own hearts. Or again; chastisements are sent to strengthen our faith, to raise us to higher levels of experience, to bring us into a condition of greater usefulness. Still again; Divine chastisement is sent as a preventative, to keep under pride, to save us from being unduly elated over success in God's service. Let us consider, briefly, four entirely different examples.

*David.* In his case the rod was laid upon him for grievous sins, for open wickedness. His fall was occasioned by self-confidence and self-righteousness. If the reader will diligently compare the two songs of David recorded in 2 Samuel 22 and 23, the one written near the beginning of his life, the other near the end, he will be struck by the great difference of spirit manifested by the writer in each. Read 2 Samuel 22:22-25, and you will not be surprised that God suffered him to have a fall. Then turn to Chapter 23, and mark the blessed change. At the beginning of verse 5 there is a heart-broken confession of failure. In verses 10-12, there is a God-glorifying profession, attributing victory unto the Lord. The severe scourging of David was not in vain.

*Job.* Probably he tasted of every kind of suffering which falls to man's lot: family bereavements, loss of property, grievous bodily afflictions, came fast, one on top of another. But God's end in them all was that Job should benefit therefrom and be a greater partaker of His holiness. There was not a little of self-satisfaction and self-righteousness in Job at the beginning; but at the end, when he was brought face to face with the thrice Holy One, he "abhorred *himself*" (42:6). In David's case the chastisement was retributive; in Job's, corrective.

*Abraham.* In him we see an illustration of an entirely different aspect of chastening. Most of the trials to which he was subject were neither because of open sins nor for the correction of inward faults. Rather were they sent for the development of spiritual graces. Abraham was sorely tried in various ways, but it was in order that faith might be strengthened, and that patience might have its perfect work in him. Abraham was weaned from the things of this world, that he might enjoy closer fellowship with Jehovah and become "the friend" of God.

*Paul.* "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7). This "thorn" was sent not

because of failure and sin, but as a preventative against pride. Note the “lest” both at the beginning and end of the verse. The result of this “thorn” was that the beloved Apostle was made more conscious of his weakness. Thus chastisement has for one of its main objects the breaking down of self-sufficiency, the bringing us to the end of ourselves.

Now in view of these widely different aspects—chastisements which are retributive, corrective, educative, and preventative—how incompetent are we to *diagnose*, and how great is the folly of pronouncing judgment concerning others! Let us not conclude when we see a fellow-Christian under the rod of God that he is necessarily being taken to task for his sins. Let us now consider *the spirit* in which Divine chastisements are to be received. “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb. 12:5).

Not all chastisement is sanctified to the recipient of it. Some are hardened thereby; others are crushed beneath it. Much depends on the spirit in which afflictions are received. There is no virtue in trials and troubles in themselves; it is only as they are blest by God that the Christian is profited thereby. As Hebrews 12:11 informs us, it is those who are “*exercised*” under God’s rod that bring forth “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” A sensitive conscience and a tender heart are the needed adjuncts.

In our text the Christian is warned against two entirely different dangers: despise not, despair not. These are two extremes against which it is ever necessary to keep a sharp look-out. Just as every truth of Scripture has its balancing counterpart, so has every evil its opposite. On the one hand there is a haughty spirit which laughs at the rod, a stubborn will which refuses to be humbled thereby. On the other hand there is a fainting which utterly sinks beneath it and gives way to despondency. Spurgeon said, “The way of righteousness is a difficult pass between two mountains of error, and the great secret of the Christian’s life is to wend his way along the narrow valley.” Let us then ponder separately the two things which the Christian is here warned against: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him.”

“The Greek word for ‘despise’ is no where used in the Scripture, but in this place. It signifies to ‘set lightly by,’ to have little esteem of, not to value any thing according to its worth and use. The Hebrew word means ‘to reprobate, to reject, to despise.’ We render the Apostle’s word by ‘despise,’ which yet doth not intend a despising that is so formally, but only interpretatively. Directly to despise and condemn or reject the chastisements of the Lord is a sin that perhaps none of His sons or children do fall into. But not to esteem of them as we ought, not to improve them unto their proper end, not to comply with the will of God in them, is interpretatively to despise them” (John Owen). As the point now before us is one which is of great practical importance to afflicted Christians, we will describe a number of ways in which God’s chastisements may be “despised.”

First, *by callousness*. There is a general lack of regard unto *God’s* admonitions and instructions when troubles and sufferings come upon Christians. Too often they view them as the common and inevitable ills which man is heir unto, and perceive not that *their Father* hath any special hand or design in them. Hence they are stoically accepted in a fatalistic attitude. To be stoical under adversity is the policy of carnal wisdom: make the best of a bad job is the sum of its philosophy. The man of the world knows no better than to grit his teeth and brave things out: having no Divine Comforter, Counselor, or Physician, he has to fall back upon his own poor resources. But it is inexpressibly sad when we find the child of God conducting himself as does a child of the Devil.

This is what is dehorted against in our present text: “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.” Observe well the personal emphasis—“*thou*”: no matter how thy fellow-creatures act when the clouds of providence frown upon them, see well to it that *thou* comportest thyself as becometh a son of God. Take to heart the caution here given. Stout-heartedness and stiff-neckedness is to be expected from a rebel, but one who has found grace in the eyes of the Lord should humble himself beneath His mighty hand the moment He gives any intimation of His displeasure. Scorn not the least trials: each has instruction wrapped up in it. Many a child would be spared the rod if he heeded the parent’s *frown*! So it is spiritually. Instead of hardening ourselves to endure stoically, there should be a melting of heart.

Second, *by complaining*. This is what the Hebrews did in the wilderness; and there are still many murmurers in Israel’s camp today. A little sickness, and we become so cross that our friends are afraid to come near us. A few days in bed, and we fret and fume like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. We peevishly ask, Why this affliction? what have I done to deserve it? We look around with envious eyes, and are discontented because others are carrying a lighter load. Beware, my reader: it goes hard with murmurers. God always chastises twice if we are not humbled by the first. Remind yourself of how much dross there yet is among the gold. View the corruptions of your own heart, and marvel that God has not smitten you far more severely.

This is what is dehorted against here: “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.” Instead of complaining, there should be a holy submitting unto the good will of God. There is a dreadful amount of complaining among Christians today due to failure to nip this evil weed in the bud. Grumbling at the weather, being cross when things are lost or mislaid, murmuring because some one has failed to show us the respect which we consider ourselves entitled unto. *God’s hand* in these things—for nothing happens by chance under His government: everything has a meaning and message if our hearts are open to receive it—is lost sight of. That is to “despise” His rod when it is laid but gently upon us, and this it is which necessitates heavier blows. Form the habit of heeding His *taps*, and you will be less likely to receive His *raps*.

Third, *by criticisms*. How often we question the usefulness of chastisement. As Christians we seem to have little more spiritual good sense than we had natural wisdom as children. As boys we thought that the *rod* was the least necessary thing in the home. It is so with the children of God. When things go as we like them, when some unexpected temporal blessing is bestowed, we have no difficulty in ascribing all to a kind Providence; but when our plans are thwarted, when losses are ours, it is very different. Yet, is it not written, “I form the light, *and* create darkness: I make peace, *and* create evil: I the LORD do all these things” (Isa. 45:7).

How often is the thing formed ready to complain “Why has Thou made me *thus*?” We say, I cannot see how *this* can possibly profit my soul: if I had better health, I could attend the house of prayer more frequently; if I had been spared those losses in business, I would have more money for the Lord’s work! What good can possibly come out of this calamity? Like Jacob we exclaim, “All these things are against me.” What is this but to “despise” the rod? Shall thy ignorance challenge God’s wisdom? shall thy shortsightedness arraign omniscience? O for the grace to be as a “weaned child” (Psa. 131:2).

Fourth, *by carelessness*. So many fail to mend their ways. The exhortation of our text

is much needed by all of us. There are many who *have* “despised” the rod, and in consequence they have *not* profited thereby. Many a Christian has been corrected by God, but in vain. Sickness, reverses, bereavements have come, but they have not been sanctified by prayerful self-examination. O brethren and sisters, take heed. If God be chastening, “consider your ways” (Hag. 1:5), “ponder the path of thy feet” (Prov. 4:26). Be assured that there is some reason for the chastening. Many a Christian would not have been chastised half so severely had he diligently inquired as to the cause of it.

“Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24); “show me wherefore Thou contendest with me” (10:2), express the attitude we should take whenever God’s hand is laid upon us. We are bidden “*hear ye* the rod” (Micah 6:9), that is, to pay a due regard to God’s voice in our trials and afflictions, and to correct that in our lives with which He is displeased. In chastisement God is to be viewed not only as a Father, but also as a Teacher: valuable lessons are to be learned therefrom if we cultivate a teachable spirit. Not so to do, failure to improve them unto their proper design and to comply with the will of God in them, is to “despise” His loving reproofs. But we must turn now to the second half of our verse.

“Nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb. 12:5). This word presupposes that we have not “despised” God’s chastening, but *have heeded it*—inquired as to the cause and reason of it, and have discovered He is evidencing that He is displeased with us. The learned tell us that the word for “rebuked,” both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, signifies “a reproof by rational conviction”: the conscience has been pricked, and God has discovered unto the heart that there is something in our ways—which before we took no notice of—which has convinced us of the needs-be for our present afflictions. He makes us to understand *what it is* that is wrong in our lives: we are “rebuked” in our conscience. Our response should be to humble ourselves before Him, confess the fault, and seek grace to right it; and in order to this we are cautioned against “fainting” in our minds. Let us mention several forms of this particular evil of “fainting.”

First, *when we give up all exertion*. This is done when we sink down in despondency. The smitten one concludes that it is more than he can possibly endure. His heart fails him; darkness swallows him up; the sun of hope is eclipsed, and the voice of thanksgiving is silent. To “faint” means rendering ourselves unfit for the discharge of our duties. When a person faints, he is rendered motionless. How many Christians are ready to completely give up the fight when adversity enters their life. How many are rendered quite inert when trouble comes their way. How many by their attitude say, God’s hand is heavy upon me: I can do nothing. Ah, beloved, “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). “Faint not when thou are rebuked of Him”: go to the Lord about it; recognise *His* hand in it. Remember thine afflictions are among the “all things” which work together for good.

Second, *when we question our sonship*. There are not a few Christians who, when the rod descends upon them, conclude that they are not sons of God after all. They forget that it is written, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa. 34:19), and that, we must “through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). One says, “But if I were His child, I should not be in this poverty, misery, shame.” Listen to Hebrews 12:8. “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Learn, then, to look upon trials as proofs of God’s love—purging, pruning, purifying thee. The father of a family does not concern himself much about those on the

outside of his household: it is they who are within whom he guards and guides, nurtures and conforms to his will. So it is with God.

Third, *when we give way to unbelief*. This is occasioned by our failure to seek God's support under trials, and lay hold of His promises—"weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5). Sure are we to "faint" if we lose sight of the Lord, and cherish not His words of consolation. David was encouraging himself against unbelief when he took upon himself to task and said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance" (Psa. 42:5): if only *that* attitude be maintained by us, we shall be preserved from sinking when troubles come upon us.

Fourth, *when we despair*. When unbelief dominates the heart, despondency soon becomes our portion. Some indulge the gloomy fancy that they will never again get from under the rod in this life; ah, it is a long lane that has no turning! Perhaps a reader says, "But I have prayed and prayed, and yet the dark clouds have not lifted." Then comfort yourself with the reflection: it is always the darkest hour which precedes the dawn. Perhaps another says, "I have pleaded His promises, but things are no better with me: I thought God delivered those who called upon Him; I *have* called, but He has not delivered, and I fear He never will." What! child of God, speak of thy Father thus? You say, He will never leave off smiting because He has smitten so long; rather conclude, He has now smitten so long, I must soon be delivered. Fight hard, my brother, against this attitude of despair, lest your complaining or gloominess stumble others. Despise not; faint not. May Divine grace preserve both writer and reader from either of these sinful extremes.—A.W.P.

N.B. For several of the leading thoughts in the above article, we are indebted to a sermon by the late C.H. Spurgeon.

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## The Life of David.

### 39. *His Bringing up the Ark.*

As we have seen in the preceding articles, after his coming to the throne of Israel and his victories over the Philistines, David evidenced a godly concern for the holy Ark, which had been so grievously and so long neglected. Zealous of the Divine glory, he had resolved to establish a place where Jehovah's worship should be celebrated and where the symbol of His presence should be securely housed. Accordingly, he gathered all the leaders of Israel together to bring the sacred coffer to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1). But, alas, instead of heeding the Divinely-given instructions for such an occasion and placing the Ark upon the shoulders of the Levites, he followed the evil example of the heathen and placed it upon a new cart. In so doing he ignored the plainly-revealed will of God, and substituted a human device. The work which David undertook was indeed a good one, his motive was pure, and his design was praiseworthy, but it was executed in a wrong way. He introduced into the Divine worship that for which he had no "Thus saith the Lord."

David did not inquire whether *God* had any will in the matter and ask, Whereon shall the holy Ark be placed? rather did he confer with flesh and blood. It was at *that* point he made his fatal mistake, and it is this which we need to take carefully to heart. Instead of consulting the Holy Scriptures, he sought counsel of men. It is true that he "consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader" (1 Chron. 13:1), but as Job 32:9 tells us "great men are not always wise," and so it proved on this occasion. Instead of reminding David of the instructions which the Lord had given through Moses (Num. 4:5, 6, 15), they, apparently, advised him to follow the way of the uncircumcised (1 Sam. 6:7, 8). By so doing, David spoilt his fair enterprise, and incurred the displeasure of God. A good beginning had a bad ending because of departure from the Divinely-prescribed rules of procedure.

The above incident has been recorded for our learning, especially for those of us who are engaged in the Lord's service. It points a solemn warning. It shows the imperative need for zeal to be rightly directed, for there is "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2); this is, a zeal to further the cause of God and bring glory unto His name, which is not regulated by that knowledge which His Word supplies. In our fervency to extend the kingdom of Christ, to spread His Gospel, to point souls unto Him, we are apt to forget His precepts, and do *His* work in *our* way. The danger is very real, and in this restless age of great activity not a few are being ensnared by this very evil. Many are so eager about the quantity of their service, they pay too little attention to the quality of it: they are anxious to be active in the Master's vineyard, but they do not sufficiently consult His guide-book as to *how* their activities must be conducted.

David's well-meant effort turned out a failure. The Lord manifested His displeasure. David accompanied by a large number of musicians, went before the Ark, playing "on all manner of instruments" (2 Sam. 6:5). But when Nachon's threshingfloor was reached, the oxen drawing the cart on which the sacred chest reposed, stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it. "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (v. 7). A tragic check was this unto the joyous procession—one which should have produced deep heart-searchings and penitential confession of failure. Has not God said, "Provoke Me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt" (Jer. 25:6). Therefore, when He *does* afflict, ought we not to inquire as to wherein we have "provoked" Him!

Though the displeasure of God was plainly manifested, yet it did not at first produce the proper effect. “And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah” (2 Sam. 6:8). Apparently a measure of self-complacency was at work in David’s heart over the important service he was engaged in—for honouring the Ark which had been neglected for so long. Now that things had gone contrary to *his* expectations, he was disconcerted, peeved, “displeased,” or as the Hebrew word really signifies, “angry.” His anger was not a righteous indignation against Uzzah for his affronting God, but because his own plans had gone awry. His own pride was wounded: the drastic cutting off of Uzzah by Divine judgment would not advance *him* in the eyes of his subjects; rather was he now humiliated before them. But the fault was his own, and he ought to have manfully shouldered the blame, and not acted like a peeved child.

“And David was displeased, (“angry”) because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah” (v. 8). When the rod of God descends upon us, we are but adding sin to sin if we become enraged thereby: this is “despising” the chastening of the Lord, which is expressly forbidden (Heb. 12:5). “And he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day” (v. 8), which, as the margin tells us, signifies “the *breach* of Uzzah.” Thus did David memorialize the stroke of God as a warning for posterity to beware of rashness and irreverence. A solemn contrast may be seen here from what is recorded in 2 Samuel 5:20, where David changed the name of “the valley of Rephaim” unto “Baalperazim”—“the place of *breaches*”—because “the LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies.” In the one he was celebrating God’s goodness, in the other he was solemnizing God’s judgment.

The conduct of David on this occasion was very deplorable, for it is highly reprehensible to be angered by any of the Lord’s dealings. But in the light of such warnings, *our* petulance is far worse. David ought to have humbled himself beneath the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6), confessed his failure and corrected his fault (Prov. 28:13), and owned God’s righteousness in thus taking vengeance on his inventions (Psa. 99:8). By so doing he would have put the blame where it belonged, have set a good example before others, and vindicated the Lord. Instead, his pride was hurt, his temper was inflamed, and blessing was missed. Alas, how often has writer and reader failed in a similar manner. How rarely have we heeded that injunction, “Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires” (Isa. 24:15): one way of doing which is to judge ourselves unsparingly and own the need of the flames to purge away our dross.

“And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?” (2 Sam: 6:9). The transition is very easy from sudden zeal and joy to fretfulness and dejection. We are, naturally, creatures of extremes, and the pendulum quickly swings from earnestness to indolence, from jubilation to commiseration. He who dares one day to face singlehanded the four hundred prophets of Baal, next day flees from the threat of Jezebel. He who feared not to draw his sword in the presence of armed soldiers, trembled before a maid. They who sang so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured a little later when their food-supplies gave out. Few maintain an even keel amid the varying tides of life. A measure of servile fear now possessed David, and he would not venture to bring the Ark any nearer his own immediate residence, lest he too should be destroyed. That holy vessel of the tabernacle which had been the object of his veneration, now became an occasion of dread.

With the death of Uzzah a fear came over David. This exemplifies an important principle: fear always follows where faith is not in exercise. Said the prophet, “I will

trust, and not be afraid” (Isa. 12:2). When the timorous disciples awoke the Saviour because of their storm-tossed ship, He said, “Why are ye fearful, O ye *of little faith?*” (Matt. 8:26). When a spirit of trembling seizes the heart it is a sure sign that faith is at a low ebb. The promise is, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: *because he trusteth in Thee*” (Isa. 26:3). Thus, the fear of David on this occasion is easily accounted for: his faith was eclipsed. Learn this valuable lesson, dear reader: as soon as you are conscious of sinking of heart, uneasiness, or alarm, cry unto the Lord for a strengthening of your faith. Say with the Psalmist, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee” (Psa. 56:3).

There is another important principle exemplified by David’s attitude on this occasion: his faith was inoperative because his *walk* was not according to the revealed will of the Lord. It is true that faith is the gift of God, and that, unaided, we cannot call it into operation after it is received. Every exercise of faith, every increase thereof, is to be ascribed unto the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. But let it not be forgotten that *He* is the Holy Spirit, and will not put a premium upon wrong-doing. When our ways are contrary to the Rule which we are to walk by, the Spirit is grieved. When we act in self-will, and then refuse to judge ourselves under the mark of God’s displeasure, His blessed operations are withheld. Fearfulness is a sign that faith is inactive, and inactive faith is an evidence that the Spirit is grieved; and that, in turn, denotes that our walk is displeasing to God. Learn, then, dear reader, to “Consider your ways” (Hag. 1:5) when conscious that faith is at a low ebb: clean out the choked channel and the waters will flow freely again.

“And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?” (2 Sam. 6:9). Does it not seem strange that David should ask such a question when the Lord had given clear and definite instructions as to *how* the Ark should be conducted from place to place? Stranger still, sadder far, that he would not make right the wrong which he had committed. But alas, it is not easy to condemn ourselves when we have departed from God’s ways: even though the providential smile of the Lord be changed into a frown, we are loth to humble ourselves before Him. How this reveals the “desperate wickedness” which still remains in our hearts, and how the realization of this ought to remove pride far from us, cause us to marvel increasingly at God’s longsuffering with us, and make us more patient toward our erring brethren.

“So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite” (2 Sam. 6:10). Instead of correcting his fault, we now see David forsaking his own mercy (Jonah 2:8). The Ark was the symbol of the Lord’s manifest presence, and *that* should be the one thing above all others desired and cherished by the saint. Moses was deeply conscious of this when he said, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exo. 33:15). Ah, but to enjoy the manifest presence of God we must be in the path of obedience: “he that hath My commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself to him” (John 14:21). Was it not because he felt he was out of the way of subjection to God’s revealed will that caused David to now abandon his purpose of bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem? It was a guilty conscience which made him “afraid of the Lord.”

There is a fear of God which is becoming, spiritual, excellent; but there is also a fear of God which is hurtful, carnal, worthless: the one is servile, the other filial. There is a slavish fear which springs from hard thoughts of God, and there is a holy and laudable

fear which issues from lofty thoughts of His majesty. The one is a terror produced in the mind by apprehensions of evil, the other is a reverential awe of God which proceeds from right views of His infinite perfections. The one is fear of wrath, such as Adam had in Eden, when he was afraid and hid himself; and such as the demons have, who “believe and tremble” (James 2:19). The other is a fear of displeasing One who is gracious, like children have to dear parents. The one is our treasure, the other our torment; the one drives from God, the other draws to God; the one leads to despair, the other to godly activities (Heb. 11:7). The one is the product of a guilty conscience, the other is the fruit of an enlightened understanding.

There is a natural fear and there is a spiritual fear of God. The one hates Him, like a slave his cruel master; the other loves God, as a child respects and reveres his father. The one dreads God because of His power and wrath; the other venerates God because of His holiness and sovereignty. The one engenders to bondage, the other conduces to worship. Perfect love casts out the former (1 John 4:18), appropriating God’s promises leads to the furtherance of the latter (2 Cor. 7:1). When we are walking with God in the light of His Word, a filial fear directs our ways; but when we depart from His statutes and a guilty conscience torments us, then a servile fear possesses our hearts. Hard thoughts are entertained of God, and we dread His anger. The soul is no longer at ease in His presence, and instead of viewing Him as our loving Father, we shrink from Him and regard Him as a hard Master. Such was the condition of David at this time. Alarmed by the Divine judgment upon Uzzah, he was afraid to have anything more to do with the Ark.

“But David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite” (2 Sam. 6:10). That was David’s loss; but, as we shall see, it was Obededom’s gain. The Ark was both the symbol of God’s manifested presence in the midst of Israel and a notable type of the Person of the Lord Jesus. In placing of the Ark in the house of Obededom, following the unbelief of David, there was a prophetic hint given of the Gentiles receiving what Israel failed to appreciate—so marvelously does God overrule even the failures of His people. Obededom was a Gittite, and the “Gittites” were *Philistines* (Josh. 13:3), the inhabitants of Gath (1 Chron. 20:5); yet many of them were devoted to the person and interests of David (2 Sam. 15:18-21). Thus it was dispensationally: “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews): but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).

“And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months” (2 Sam. 6:11). After the awful death of Uzzah, and the fear of David to having anything further to do with the Ark, it had scarcely been surprising had this Gittite refused to shelter the sacred coffer. As a Philistine, it is likely that he was acquainted with the trouble it had caused in the temple of Dagon (1 Sam. 5:2-4), and of the plague it brought upon the Ashodites (1 Sam. 5:6). Anxious enough were they to get rid of the Ark (1 Sam. 6), yet now we find one of their countrymen providing a home for it in his own house. Doubtless he had been truly converted unto the Lord, and therefore esteemed whatever pertained to His worship. It is beautifully significant that his name “Obed” means *servant*, and here we find him rendering a true service unto God.

“And the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household” (2 Sam. 6:11). Need we be surprised at this? God will be no man’s debtor: as He declared, “Them that honour Me I will honour” (1 Sam. 2:30). It is ever so. After Laban had received the fugitive Jacob

into his family, he acknowledged, “I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake” (Gen. 30:27). When His servant was befriended by Popithar, we read, “The LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake” (Gen. 39:5). Through giving shelter unto God’s prophet the widow of Zarephath was rewarded by having her son restored to life (1 Kings 17:23). How much more may we be sure of receiving God’s rich blessing when His dear Son—to whom the Ark pointed—is given the throne of our hearts.

“And the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household” (2 Sam. 6:11). By the indwelling Spirit the Lord has promised to manifest Himself to the believer. The presence of the Lord in our lives and in our homes is the limitless source, if we will, of Divine blessing. The blessing will depend upon our *servant* attitude to that Presence or Spirit. If we take the place of a true “Obed,” surrendering ourselves to His sway, the Lord will make our way prosperous. If in all things we give Christ the pre-eminence, so far from being the losers thereby, we shall be immeasurably the gainers, both now and hereafter. O may He who moved Obed to take in the Ark, open our hearts to receive Christ in all His fulness.—A.W.P.

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## The Divine Covenants.

### 2. *The Adamic (continued).*

We are now to consider the *seal* which the Lord God made upon the covenant into which He entered with the federal head of our race. This is admittedly the most difficult part of our subject, and for that reason, the least understood in most circles today. So widespread is the spiritual ignorance which now prevails that, in many quarters, to speak of “the seal” of a covenant is to employ an unintelligible term. And yet the “seal” is an intrinsic part and an essential feature in the various covenants which God made. Hence, our treatment of the Adamic covenant would be quite inadequate and incomplete did we fail to give attention to one of the objects which is given a central place in the brief Genesis record. Mysterious as that object appears, light is cast on it by other passages. O that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to guide us into the truth thereon.

“And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). First of all, let it be said emphatically that we regard this verse as referring to two real and *literal* trees: the very fact that we are told they were “pleasant to the sight” obliges us to regard them as tangible and visible entities. In the second place, it is equally obvious from what is said of them that those two trees were *extraordinary* ones, peculiar to themselves. They were placed “in the midst of the garden,” and from what is recorded in connection with them in Genesis 3, it is clear that they differed radically from all the other trees in Eden. In the third place, we cannot escape the conclusion that those literal trees were vested with a *symbolical significance*, being designed by God to give instructions to Adam, in the same way as others of His positive institutions now do unto us.

“It hath pleased the blessed and almighty God, in every economy of His covenants, to confirm, by some sacred symbols, the certainty of His promises and at the same time to remind man in covenant with Him of his duty” (H. Witsius). Examples of that fact or illustrations of this principle may be seen in the *rainbow* by which God ratified the covenant into which He entered with Noah (Gen. 9:12, 13), and *circumcision* which was the outward sign of confirmation of the covenant entered into with Abraham (Gen. 17:9, 11). From these cases, then, we may perceive the propriety of the definition given by A.A. Hodge, “A seal of a covenant is an outward visible sign, appointed by God as a pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings promised in the covenant.” In other words, the “seal” of the covenant is an external symbol, ratifying the validity of its terms, as the signatures of two witnesses “seal” a man’s will.

Now as we have shown in previous articles, the language of Genesis 2:17 not only pronounced a curse upon the disobedient partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but by necessary implication it announced a blessing upon the obedient non-eating thereof. The curse was *death*, with all that that involved and entailed; the blessing was a continuance and confirmation in all the felicity which man in his pristine innocency enjoyed. In His infinite condescension the Lord God was pleased to *confirm* or “seal” the terms of His covenant with Adam—contained in Genesis 2:17—by a symbolic and visible emblem ratifying the same; as He did to Noah by the rainbow, and to Abraham by circumcision. With Adam, this confirmatory symbol consisted of “the tree of life” in the midst of the garden.

A “seal,” then, is a Divine institution of which it is the design *to signify the blessings*

promised in the covenant, and to give assurance of them to those by whom its terms have been fulfilled. The very name of this symbolic (yet real) tree at once intimated its design: it was “the tree *of life*.” Not, as some have erroneously supposed, that its fruit had the virtue of communicating physical immortality—as though anything material could do *that*; such a gross and carnal conception is much more closely akin to the Jewish and Mahometan fables, than to a sober interpretation of spiritual things. No, just as its companion was to Adam “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”—of “good” while he preserved his integrity, and of “evil” as soon as he disobeyed his Maker; so this other tree was both the symbol and pledge of that spiritual life which was inseparably connected with his obedience.

“It was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam, assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker, upon condition of his perseverance in his state of innocency and obedience” (M. Henry). So far from it being a natural means of prolonging Adam’s physical life, it was a sacramental pledge of endless life and felicity being secured to him as the unmerited reward of fidelity. It was therefore an object for *faith* to feed upon—the physical eating to adumbrate the spiritual. Like all other “signs” and “seals,” this one was *not* designed to *confer* the promised blessing, but was a Divine pledge given to Adam’s faith to encourage the expectation thereof. It was a visible emblem to bring to remembrance that which God had promised.

It is the fatal error of Romanists and other ritualists that “signs” and “seals” actually convey grace of themselves. Not so: only as faith is operative in the use of them are they means of blessing. Romans 4:11 helps us at this point: “And he received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Unto Abraham circumcision was both a sign and a seal: a “sign” that he had previously been justified, and a “seal” (pledge) that God would make good the promises which He had addressed to his faith. The rite, instead of conferring anything, only confirmed what Abraham already had. Unto Abraham himself circumcision was the guarantee that the righteousness of faith which he had (before he was circumcised) should come upon or be imputed unto believing Gentiles.

Thus as the “rainbow” was the confirmatory sign and seal of the covenant-promises God had made to Noah, as “circumcision” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises God made to Abraham, so the “tree of life” was the sign and seal of the covenant-promises He had made to Adam. It was appointed by God as the pledge of His faithfulness, and as an earnest of the blessings which continued fidelity would secure. Let it be expressly pointed out that, in keeping with the distinctive character of this present antitypical dispensation—when the Substance has replaced the shadows—that though baptism and the Lord’s Supper are Divinely appointed ordinances, yet they are *not* “seals” unto the Christian. The “seal” of “the new covenant” is *the Holy Spirit Himself*: see 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30! The gift of the blessed Spirit is the earnest or guaranty of our future inheritance.

The references to the “tree of life” in the New Testament confirm what has been said in the above paragraphs. In revelation 2:7 we hear the Lord Jesus saying, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of

God.” Those words express a promise of *eternal life*—the perfection and consummation of holiness and happiness—couched in such terms as obviously allude to Genesis 2:9. This is the *first* of seven promises made by Christ to the overcomer of Revelation 2 and 3, showing this immutable gift (eternal life) is the foundation of all the other inestimable blessings which Christ’s victory has secured as the inheritance of those who by His grace are faithful unto death. Each victorious saint shall eat of “the tree of life”: that is, be unchangeably established in a state of eternal felicity and bliss.

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24). This is the passage which carnal literalists have wrested to the perversion of the symbolical and spiritual significance of the “seal” of the covenant. By God’s words “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,” they conclude that the property of that tree was to bestow *physical* immortality. We trust the reader will bear with us for mentioning such an absurdity, yet, inasmuch as it has obtained a wide hearing, a few words exposing its fallacy seem called for.

It was not the mere eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was able of *itself* to impart any knowledge; rather was it that by taking of its fruit contrary to God’s command, Adam and Eve obtained experimental acquaintance with the knowledge of evil *in themselves*, i.e., by experiencing the bitterness of God’s curse, as previously, through their obedient abstinence, they had a personal knowledge of good, i.e., by experiencing the sweetness of God’s blessing. In like manner, the mere eating of the tree of life could no more bestow physical immortality than feeding upon the heavenly manna immortalized the Israelites in the wilderness. Both of those trees were symbolical institutions, and by the sight of them Adam was reminded of the solemn yet blessed contents of the covenant of which they were the sign and the seal.

To suppose that the Lord God was apprehensive that our fallen parents would now eat of the tree of life and continue forever their earthly existence, is the very height of absurdity, for His sentence of death *had already* fallen upon them! What, then, did His words connote? First, had Adam remained obedient to God, he had been confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness—spiritual life would become his alienable possession; the Divine pledge of which was this sacramental tree. But now that he had broken the covenant, he had forfeited all right to its blessings. It must be carefully borne in mind that by his fall Adam lost far more than physical immortality. Second, God banished Adam from Eden “lest” the poor, blinded, deceived man, now open to every error, should suppose that by eating of the tree of life, he might regain what he had irrevocably lost.

“So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). Unspeakably solemn is this: thereby our first parent was prevented from profanely appropriating what did not belong to him, and thereby he was made the more conscious of the full extent of his wretchedness. His being *driven out from* the presence of the tree of life, and the guarding of the way thereto by the flaming sword, plainly intimated his irrevocable doom. Contrary to the prevailing idea, the writer

believes that Adam was eternally lost. He is mentioned only once again in Genesis, where we read “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in *his own* likeness” (Gen. 5:3). He is solemnly *missing* from the witnesses of faith in Hebrews 11! He is uniformly presented in the New Testament as the fountain-head of *death*, as Christ is of “life”: Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

In its deeper significance, the tree of life was an emblem and type of Christ. “The tree of life signified the Son of God, not indeed as He is Christ and Mediator (that consideration being peculiar to *another* covenant), but inasmuch as He is the life of man in every condition, and the fountain of all happiness. And how well was it spoken by one who said that it became God from the first to represent, by an outward sign, *that Person* whom He loves, and for whose glory He has made and does make all things; that man even then might acknowledge Him as such. Wherefore Christ is called ‘the Tree of Life’ (Rev. 22:2). What indeed He now is by His merit and efficacy, as Mediator, He would have always been as the Son of God; for, as *by Him* man was created and obtained an animal life, so, in like manner, he would have been transformed by Him and blessed with a heavenly life. Nor could He have been the life of the sinner, as Mediator, unless He had likewise been the life of man in his holy state, *as God*; having life in Himself, and being life itself” (H. Witsius).

Here, then, we believe was the first symbolical foreshadowment of Christ, set before the eyes of Adam and Eve in their sinless state; and a most suitable and significant emblem of Him was it. First, its very name obviously pointed to the Lord Jesus, of whom we read, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Those words are to be taken in their widest latitude, *all* life is resident in Christ—natural life, spiritual life, resurrection life, eternal life. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21) declares the saint: he lives *in* Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), he lives *on* Christ (John 6:50-57), he shall for all eternity live *with* Christ (1 Thess. 4:17). Second, the position it occupied: “in the midst of the garden” (Gen. 2:9). Note how this detail is emphasized in Revelation 2:7, “in the midst of the paradise of God,” and “in the midst of the street” (Rev. 22:2), and compare “in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb” (Rev. 5:6). Christ is *the Centre* of Heaven’s glory and blessedness.

Third, in its sacramental significance. In Eden the symbolic tree of life stood as the seal of the covenant, as the pledge of God’s faithfulness, as the ratification of His promises to Adam. So of the Antitype we read, “For all the promises of God in Him (Christ) are yea, and in Him (Christ) Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Cor. 1:20). Yes, it is in Christ that all the promises of the everlasting covenant are sealed and secured. Fourth, its attractiveness: “pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (Gen. 2:9). Superlatively is that true of the Saviour: to the redeemed He is “Fairer than the children of men” (Psa. 45:2), yea, “altogether lovely” (Song. 5:16). And when the believer is favoured with a season of intimate communion with Him, what cause has he to say “His fruit was sweet to my taste” (Song. 2:3). Fifth, from the symbolic tree of life the apostate rebel was excluded (Gen. 3:24), likewise from the antitypical Tree of Life shall every finally impenitent sinner be separated: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction *from the presence* of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:9).

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). Here is the final

mention of the tree of life in Scripture—in marked and blessed contrast from what is recorded in Genesis 3:22-24. There we behold the disobedient rebel, under the curse of God, Divinely excluded from the tree of life; for under the old covenant no provision was made for man's restoration. But here we see a company under the new covenant, pronounced "blessed" by God, having been given the spirit of obedience, that they might have right to enjoy the Tree of Life (Christ) for all eternity. That "right" is threefold: the right which Divine promise has given them (Heb. 5:9), the right of personal meetness (Heb. 12:14), and the right of evidential credentials (James 2:21-25). None but those who, having been made new creatures in Christ, *do* His commandments, will enter the heavenly Jerusalem and be eternally regaled by the Tree of Life.—A.W.P.

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## Union and Communion.

### 1. *Divine Union.*

That which we shall seek to contemplate in this article is the revelation which God has made of Himself in His inspired Word. This ineffable subject is one which we must ever approach with bowed heads and reverent hearts, for the ground which we are to tread is indeed holy. The subject is transcendently sacred, for it is concerned with the infinite and majestic Jehovah. It is one of surpassing importance, for it is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and faith. For any real light thereon, we are entirely shut up to what God has made known of Himself in His Word. Neither observation, science or philosophy can, in this exalted sphere, advance our knowledge one iota. We can know no more thereon except what is set forth in Holy Writ, and that must be approached with the deepest humility and reverence, with the earnest prayer, “that which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32).

It is not sufficient to think of God as He may be conceived of in our imagination, instead, our thoughts of Him must be formed by what He has revealed of Himself in His Word. Man, unaided, cannot rightly conceive of God: all speculation concerning Him is utterly vain, yea, profane. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. If the “judgments” of God are “unsearchable” and if His “ways” are “past finding out,” how much more so must God Himself be! Even creation cannot fully teach us what God is, because no work is able to perfectly express the worker thereof. The heathen have creation spread before them, but what do they know of *God*! The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, sought to delve deeply into the marvels and mysteries of “Nature,” but with all their boasted wisdom the Deity was to them “the unknown God”!

It is of vast importance to the souls of God’s believing people that they should have clear, spiritual, and Divine knowledge of the true and living God: without a scriptural acquaintance of the same, we are left without the very supports which are indispensable to found our faith upon. It is impossible to over-emphasise the momentousness of our present theme, for the truth thereon will alone direct us in worshipping God aright. If a person has erroneous thoughts of Deity, then he worships a false god and renders homage to a fictitious being, the figment of his own imagination. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3): that is unspeakably blessed; it is likewise unspeakably solemn—the man who knows not the “only true God” is destitute of eternal life!

Now as we turn to and examine the Holy Scriptures we are at once impressed with their repeated and uniform emphasis upon the *unity* of God. In contrast from the polytheism (many gods) of the heathen, we read, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is *one* LORD” (Deut. 6:4), and, as we have seen above, “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the *only* true God.” There can be but one infinite, self-existent Spirit, who reveals Himself as the great “I am,” from whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. To think of two, or more, independent and supreme Beings, would be to suppose a contradiction in terms, an utter impossibility. There can be but one *God*, with sovereign authority over all the works and creatures of His hands, having but one plan and a single administration. Such is indeed the teaching of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

But as we continue our examination of what God has revealed of Himself in His Holy Word, it is not long before we reach that which is profoundly mysterious, for side by side

with its continuous emphasis on the *unity* of God it also reveals *three* distinct Divine Persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Here we come to an infinite depth which we have no means of sounding, for while the Scriptures are unmistakably clear in their presentation of three Divine Persons, nevertheless they are equally express in denying that there are three Gods. Though no attempt whatever is made in Scripture to explain this mystery, it is unmistakable in affirming it: in affirming that God is an absolute Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; and all who refuse to bow to and acknowledge this ineffable truth must be eternally damned.

The incomprehensible nature of the truth which is now before us, so far from providing a valid motive for its rejection, supplies a most powerful argument for its being formally received. For if this truth be so sublime and mysterious, that even when revealed, it infinitely surpasses the feeble grasp of our finite powers, then it is very evident that it could never have been invented by men! What human wisdom cannot comprehend, human policy could never have proposed. It *must* have had some higher projector, and therefore the conclusion is unavoidable: in God alone we behold an adequate cause. “This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa. 28:29).

The first great truth, then, which is presented to faith—the foundation of everything—is the fact of the one living, eternal, and true God; and this we know not by any discovery of reason, but because He has Himself revealed it to our hearts through His Word. The next great truth is that the one living and true God has revealed Himself to us under the threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and this we know upon the same authority as the first. Both of these sublime truths are above reason yet their very transcendency so far from stumbling us, is a necessary condition of our confidence in the Scriptures and our faith in Him who is there revealed. Had the Scriptures professed to present a revelation of God which had no heights beyond our powers to scale, and no depth too deep for mental acumen to fathom, the writer for one would promptly spurn them as the invention of man. Personally, I would no more worship a God that my intellect could measure, than I would an idol which my hands had manufactured.

“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and *become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2, 3). A hard lesson for proud man to learn is that, yet it *must be* learned (by grace) if any entrance is to be had into the things of God. It is at *this* point we may perceive one of the radical differences between the regenerate and unregenerate: *faith receives* what reason is unable to grasp. “Great God, I desire to fall down under the deepest self-abasement, in the consciousness of my own nothingness and ignorance before Thee! I bless the Lord for that degree of information He hath been pleased to give of Himself, while here below. It is enough! O for grace, ‘to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ Colossians 2:2, 3” (Rob. Hawker, 1810)—such is the language of every renewed heart.

Though the doctrine or truth of the Divine Trinity is properly speaking a “mystery,” that affords no ground whatever for it to be disparaged by us. Some people seem to suppose that by the term “mystery,” reference is made to something of which they can at best form only a vague notion, that it pertains to the sphere of half-perceived shadows, in

relation to which certainty is impossible, and that it has no *practical* connection with the solid elements of knowledge and real life. This is a great mistake. The word “mystery” in Scripture is applied to that which cannot be discovered by human reason, or arrived at by any speculation, but which can only be made known by *Divine revelation*, and which can only be perceived so far as God has been pleased to unveil it. Just so far as spiritual “mysteries” *have been* disclosed by God, they become part of the real and solid knowledge of those by whom that revelation is humbly received.

It is in the Gospel that the three Persons in the Godhead are most clearly revealed, and Their respective activities in the saving of the elect are most fully made known. “The Gospel represents *God the Father* as sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: as righteous Governor of the world: as giving laws to His creatures; as revealing His wrath against all transgressions. He is represented as being injured and offended by our sins, and concerned to maintain the honour of His majesty, of His Law and government, and sacred authority. He is represented as having designs of mercy towards a sinful, guilty, ruined world; and as contriving and proposing a method of recovery. He is represented as one seated on a throne of grace, reconciling the world unto Himself by Christ, ordering pardon and peace to be proclaimed to any and all who will return to Him in the way prescribed.

“The Gospel represents *God the Son* as being constituted Mediator by His Father, that in and by Him He might open a way to accomplish His designs of mercy towards a guilty world, consistent with the honour of His majesty, of His holiness and justice, of His Law and government. His Father appointed Him to the office, and He freely undertook it. His Father sent Him into this world to enter upon the difficult work, and He willingly came: ‘He was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ Here He lived, and here He died, in the capacity of a Mediator. He arose, He ascended into Heaven, and sits now at His Father’s right hand, God-man Mediator, exalted to the highest honour; made Lord of all things, and Judge of the world. And now we are to have access to God by Him, as our Mediator, High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate, who has made complete atonement for sins in the days of His abasement, and has now sufficient interest in the court of Heaven.

“The Gospel represents *God the Holy Spirit* as being sent of the Father as prime Agent, and by the Son as Mediator, in the character of an enlightener and sanctifier, in order to bring sinners effectually to see and be made sensible of their sin, guilt, and ruin; to believe the Gospel, to trust in Christ, and to return home to God through Him. It is His office to dwell in believers; to teach and lead them; to sanctify, strengthen, comfort, and keep them through faith unto salvation.

“The Father is God by nature, and God by office. The Son is God by nature, and Mediator by office. The Spirit is God by nature, and Sanctifier by office. The Father as Governor, Law-Giver, and Avenger, has all power in Heaven and earth, in and of Himself: Matthew 11:25. The Son as Mediator derives all His authority from the Father: Matthew 11:27. The Holy Spirit acts as being sent by them Both: John 14:16. The Father maintains the honour of the Godhead and of His government, displaying His grace while ordaining that sin should be punished, the sinner humbled, and brought back to God and into subjection into His will. Sin is punished in the Son as Mediator, standing in the room of the guilty. The sinner is humbled and brought into subjection to God’s will by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Son and the Spirit honour the Father as supreme Governor, and all join in the same design to discountenance sin, humble the sinner, and glorify grace”

(Joseph Bellamy, 1780).

By affirming that the three Divine Persons are more clearly revealed in the Gospel than elsewhere, it is *not* to be understood that the Old Testament saints were left in ignorance of this blessed and foundation truth. That could not be, or otherwise it had been impossible for them to know God, or to worship Him intelligently and acceptably. God must be *revealed* before He can (in any measure) be known, and He must be *known* in the distinctions of His Persons, before He can be loved and adored. Those who find it hard to conceive of the Old Testament saints possessing a clear evangelical knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity, create their own difficulty by supposing the Gospel is peculiar to the New Testament dispensation. This is a serious mistake. Hebrews 4:2 declares, “For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto *them*”—that is, unto Israel in the wilderness: see the closing verses of Hebrews 3. To go back further still, Galatians 3:8 tells us, that God, “preached before *the Gospel* unto Abraham.”

The glorious truth of the three Persons in the Godhead is to be found as definitely and as frequently in the Old Testament as it is in the New. On the very first page of Holy Writ it is recorded, “And God said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness” (Gen. 1:26): how clearly do the plural pronouns there reveal the fact that there is *more* than one Person in the Godhead! Nor is Genesis 1:26 by any means the only passage in the Old Testament where the plural pronoun is used of God. After Adam had fallen, we find Him saying, “Behold, the man is become as one of *Us*, to know good and evil” (Gen. 3:22)—probably that was the language of irony: God’s answer to the Serpent’s lie in 3:5. Again, in response to the impiety of those who had said, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen 11:4), the Lord said, “Go to, let *Us* go down, and there confound their language” (Gen. 11:7).

Once more, in that marvelous vision granted unto Isaiah, wherein he saw the Lord “seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple,” before whom the seraphim veiled their faces, the Prophet “heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?” (Isa. 6:8). Very wonderful is that “*I*” and “*Us*,” intimating the Divine unity in Trinity, and the trinity in Unity. It is striking to note that the employment of this plural pronoun in connection with the Godhead, as it is consecrated by the Spirit of truth in use with the Persons in the Divine Essence, is employed by *Each* of Them to each other. By the Father in Genesis 1:26—cf. Ephesians 3:9, the Father being the *Creator* “by Jesus Christ”; by the Son in Genesis 11:7, for to Him all *judgment* is committed (John 5:22); by the Spirit in Isaiah 6:8, see Acts 28:26 and cf. 13:2!

The Hebrew *noun* is in the plural number in each of these verses: “Remember now thy *Creators* in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1); “For thy *Makers* are thine Husband” (Isa. 54:5); “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their *Kings*” (Psa. 149:2); “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the *Holy Ones* is understanding” (Prov. 9:10)—according to the rule of Hebrew parallelism, it is obvious that “*Holy Ones*” is exegetical of “*Jehovah*.” Surely there is more than a hint of the Divine Trinity in the benediction of Numbers 6:24-26, “*The LORD* bless thee, and keep thee: *the LORD* make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: *the LORD* lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Also in the “*Holy, holy, holy*” of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3. In Isaiah 48:16 we hear the Messiah saying, “Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that

it was, there am I: and now the (1) Lord GOD, and (2) His Spirit, hath sent (3) Me.” “So *the Spirit* took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of *the LORD* filled the house. And I heard *Him* speaking unto me out of the house; and *the Man* stood by me” (Ezek. 43:5, 6). While the Prophet was adoring the manifest glory of God, the Spirit conducted him into the inner chamber, while beside him stood the One who had been instructing him—”The Man”: see 40:3. Thus the Prophet had a vision of the three Persons in the Godhead, manifesting in different ways Their presence with him.

A plurality of Persons in the Godhead was also indicated in such passages as, “Then *the LORD* rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the LORD* out of heaven” (Gen. 19:24); “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand” (Psa. 110:1); “And *the LORD* said unto Satan, *The LORD* rebuke thee” (Zech. 3:2). “Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith *the LORD* of hosts: *the Word* that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *My Spirit* remaineth among you” (Hag. 2:4, 5). The first Person in the sacred Trinity was known to the Old Testament saints as *the Father*: from a number of passages we select the following, “But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father” (Isa. 64:8). The second Person in the Trinity was revealed as *the Son*: “The LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son” (Psa. 2:7), and also as *the Word*: “By *The Word of the LORD* were the heavens made” (Psa. 33:6) and cf. Genesis 15:1 and 1 Kings 19:9 where the essential and personal “Word” is in view. The third Person in the Trinity was revealed as *The Holy Spirit*: “The Spirit of the LORD” (1 Sam. 16:13).

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show *Us* what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that *We* may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare *Us* things for to come” (Isa. 41:21, 22). A truly remarkable passage is that; with it may be compared, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and *We* will come unto him, and make *Our* abode with him” (John 14:23). “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15): the “high and lofty *One*”—one in the inseparable unity of the Divine Essence; “that inhabiteth eternity”—thus distinguished from all creatures; “dwelling in the high and lofty place”—true of the Father (1 Kings 8:27), of the Son (Jer. 23:24—see v. 6), of the Spirit (Psa. 139:7, 8); *indwelling His people*—true of the Father (2 Cor. 6:16, 18), of the Son (Col. 1:27), of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

The title “Jehovah”—applied to the Father (Psa. 110:1), the Son (Jer. 23:6), and the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2)—is *always* in the *singular* number, having no plural form, being expressive of the Unity of the Divine nature. Yet we frequently find it employed with the plural “Elohim” (God), and with plural pronouns and verbs—a thing which could never have been done consistent with the laws of grammar, except for the purpose of proving thereby, what all the parts of Scripture concur in, that Jehovah though but One in the essence of the Godhead, is nevertheless existing at the same time in a plurality or trinity of Persons. That the great God should subsist in a way *entirely different* and perfectly distinguished from all His creatures in a trinity of Persons in the unity of His essence should not stagger us, but should bow our hearts before Him in adoring wonder and worship.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). This very verse

which is quoted so much by “Unitarians,” in their hatred of the blessed truth which we are here endeavouring to set forth, would be quite meaningless were there no Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. It is self-evident that there is no need whatever for any *Divine revelation* to teach us that *one is one*: had this text meant nothing more than that, it had been superfluous information. But inasmuch as “Elohim” (God) is in the plural number, it *was* necessary for the Deity to make known unto His people that the three Divine Persons are but *one* “Lord” or Jehovah. That Israel apprehended (in some measure, at any rate) this mystery of the great One in Three, is strikingly manifested by the fact that when Aaron made the single golden calf, the people addressed it in the *plural* number: “These be thy *gods*, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exo. 32:4)!—  
A.W.P.

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## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 3. *Its Necessity.*

It is our earnest desire to write this article not in a theological or merely abstract way, but in a *practical* manner: in such a strain that it may please the Lord to speak through it to our needy hearts and search our torpid consciences. It is a most important branch of our subject, yet one from which we are prone to shrink, being very unpalatable to the flesh. Having been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa. 51:5), our hearts *naturally* hate holiness, being opposed to any experimental acquaintance with the same. As the Lord Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19), which may justly be paraphrased "men loved sin rather than holiness," for in Scripture "darkness" is the emblem of sin—the Evil One being denominated "the power of darkness" as "light" is the emblem of the ineffably Holy One (1 John 1:5).

But though by nature man is opposed to the Light, it is written, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). To the same effect the Lord Jesus declared "Blessed are the pure in heart: for *they* shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). God will not call unto nearness with Himself those who are carnal and corrupt. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3): what concord can there be between an unholy soul and the thrice holy God? Our God is "glorious in holiness" (Exo. 15:11), and therefore those whom He separates unto Himself must be suited to Himself, and be made "partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12:10). The whole of His ways with man exhibit this principle, and His Word continually proclaims that He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee" (Psa. 5:4).

By our fall in Adam we lost not only the favour of God, but also the purity of our natures, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and sanctified in our inner man. There is now a spiritual leprosy spread over all our nature which makes us loathsome to God and puts us into a state of separation from Him. No matter what pains the sinner takes to be rid of his horrible disease, he does but hide and not cleanse it. Adam concealed neither his nakedness nor the shame of it by his fig-leaf contrivance; so those who have no other covering for their natural filthiness than the externals of religion rather proclaim than hide it. Make no mistake on this score: neither the outward profession of Christianity nor the doing of a few good works will give us access to the thrice Holy One. Unless we are washed by the Holy Spirit, and in the blood of Christ, from our native pollutions, we cannot enter the kingdom of glory.

Alas, with what *forms* of godliness, outward appearances, external embellishments are most people satisfied. How they mistake the shadows for the substance, the means for the end itself. How many devout Laodiceans are there who *know not* that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). No preaching affects them, nothing will bring them to exclaim with the prophet, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God" (Ezra 9:6). No, if they do but preserve themselves from the known guilt of such sins as are punishable among men, to all other things their conscience seems dead: they have no inward shame for anything between their souls and God, especially not for the depravity and defilement of their natures: of *that* they know, feel, bewail nothing.

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from

their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). Although they had never been cleansed by the Holy Spirit, nor their hearts purified by faith (Acts 15:9), yet they esteemed themselves to be pure, and had not the least sense of their foul defilement. Such a generation were the selfrighteous Pharisees of Christ’s day: they were constantly cleansing their hands and cups, engaged in an interminable round of ceremonial washings, yet were they thoroughly ignorant of the fact that *within* they were filled with all manner of defilement (Matt. 23:25-28). So is a generation of church-goers today; they are orthodox in their views, reverent in their demeanour, regular in their contributions, but they make no conscience of the the state of their hearts.

That sanctification or personal holiness which we here desire to show the absolute necessity of, lies in or consists of three things. First, that internal change or renovation of our souls whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. Second, that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God in all duties of obedience and abstinence from evil, issuing from a principle of faith and love. Third, that directing of all our actions unto the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. This, and nothing short of this, is evangelical and saving sanctification. The heart must be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God’s nature and will: its motives, desires, thoughts and actions require to be purified. There must be a spirit of holiness working within so as to sanctify our outward performances if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom “there is no darkness at all.”

Evangelical holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in pure thoughts, impulses and affections of the soul, chiefly in that disinterested love from which all good works must flow if they are to receive the approbation of Heaven. Not only must there be an abstinence from the execution of sinful lusts, but there must be a loving and delighting to do the will of God in a cheerful manner, obeying Him without repining or grudging against any duty, as if it were a grievous yoke to be borne. Evangelical sanctification is that holiness of heart which causes us to love God supremely, so as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, for life or death; and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

This entire sanctification of our whole inner and outer man is absolutely indispensable. As there must be a change of *state* before there can be of *life*—“make the tree good, and his fruit (will be) good” (Matt. 12:33)—so there must be sanctification before there can be glorification. Unless we are purged from the pollution of sin, we can never be fit for communion with God. “And there shall in no wise enter into it (the eternal dwellingplace of God and His people) any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev. 21:27). “To suppose that an unpurged sinner can be brought into the blessed enjoyment of God, is to overthrow both the law and the Gospel, and to say that Christ died in vain” (J. Owen, Vol. 2: p. 511). Personal holiness is equally imperative as is the forgiveness of sins in order to eternal bliss.

Plain and convincing as should be the above statements, there is a class of professing Christians who wish to regard the justification of the believer as constituting almost the whole of his salvation, instead of its being only one aspect thereof. Such people delight to dwell upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they evince little or no concern about personal holiness. On the other hand, there are not a few who in their reaction from a onesided emphasis upon justification by grace through faith alone, have gone to the

opposite extreme, making sanctification the sum and substance of all their thinking and preaching. Let it be solemnly realised that while a man may learn thoroughly the Scriptural doctrine of justification and yet not be *himself* justified before God, so he may be able to detect the crudities and errors of “the Holiness people,” and yet be completely unsanctified himself. But it is chiefly the first of these two errors we now desire to expose, and we cannot do better than quote at length from one who has most helpfully dealt with it.

“We are to look upon holiness as a very necessary *part of* that *salvation* that is received by faith in Christ. Some are so drenched in a covenant of works that they accuse us of making good works needless to salvation, if we will not acknowledge them to be necessary, either as *conditions to procure* an interest in Christ, or as *preparatives to fit us* for receiving Him by faith. And others, when they are taught by the Scriptures that we are saved by faith, even by faith without works, do begin to disregard all obedience to the law as not at all necessary to salvation, and do account themselves obliged to it only in point of gratitude; if it be wholly neglected, they doubt not but free grace will save them nevertheless. Yea, some are given up to such strong Antinomian delusions, that they account it a part of the liberty from bondage of the law purchased by the blood of Christ, to make no conscience of breaking the law in their conduct.

“One cause of these errors that are so contrary one to the other, is, that many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by ‘salvation’ but to be delivered from Hell, and to enjoy heavenly happiness and glory; hence they conclude that, if good works be a *means of* glorification, and precedent to it, they must also be precedent means of our whole salvation, and that, if they be not a necessary means of our *whole* salvation, they are not at all necessary to glorification. But though ‘salvation’ be often taken in Scripture *by way of eminency* for its perfection in the state of heavenly glory, yet, according to its full and *proper* signification, we are to understand by it all that freedom from the evil of our natural corrupt state, and all those holy and happy enjoyments that we receive from Christ our Saviour, either in this world by faith or in the world to come by glorification. Thus, justification, the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us, the privilege of adoption (deliverance from the *reigning* power of indwelling sin. A.W.P.) are *parts of* our ‘salvation’ which we partake of in this life. Thus also, the conformity of our hearts to the Law of God, and the fruits of righteousness with which we are filled by Jesus Christ in this life, are a *necessary part of* our ‘salvation.’

“God saveth us from our sinful uncleanness *here*, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:29, Titus 3:5), as well as from Hell hereafter. Christ was called Jesus, i.e., a Saviour: because He saves His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Therefore, deliverance from our sins *is part of* our ‘salvation,’ which is begun in this life by justification and sanctification, and perfected by glorification in the life to come. Can we rationally doubt whether it be any proper part of our salvation by Christ to be quickened, so as to be enabled to live to God, when we were by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and to have the image of God in holiness and righteousness restored to us, which we lost by the Fall; and to be freed from a vile dishonourable slavery to Satan and our own lusts, and made the servants of God; and to be honoured so highly as to walk by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? and what is all this but holiness in heart and life?

“Conclude we, then, that holiness in this life *is absolutely necessary to salvation*, not

only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity—as part of the end itself. Though we are not saved by good works as *procuring* causes, yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of saving grace, ‘which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them’ (Eph. 2:10). It is, indeed, one part of our salvation to be delivered from the bondage of the covenant of works; but the end of this is not that we may have liberty to sin (which is the worst of slavery) but that we may fulfill the royal law of liberty, and that ‘we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter’ (Rom. 7:6). Yea, holiness in this life is such a *part of* our ‘salvation’ that it is a *necessary means* to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory: for without holiness we can never see God (Heb. 12:14), and are as unfit for His glorious presence as swine for the presence-chamber of an earthly king.

“The last thing to be noted in this direction is That holiness of heart and life is to be sought for earnestly *by faith* as a very necessary part of our ‘salvation.’ Great multitudes of ignorant people that live under the Gospel, harden their hearts in sin and ruin their souls forever, by trusting on Christ for such an *imaginary* ‘salvation’ as consisteth not at all *in holiness*, but only in forgiveness of sin and deliverance from everlasting torments. They would be free from the *punishments* due to sin, but they love their lusts so well that they hate holiness and desire not to be saved from the *service* of sin. The way to oppose this pernicious delusion is not to deny, as some do, that trusting on Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith, but rather to show that *none do* or can trust on Christ for *true* ‘salvation’ except they trust on Him *for holiness*. Neither do they heartily desire true salvation if they do not desire to be made holy and righteous in their hearts and lives. If ever God and Christ gave you ‘salvation’ *holiness will be one part of it*; if Christ wash you not from the filth of your sins, you have no part with Him (John 13:8).

“What a strange kind of salvation do they desire that care not for holiness! They would be saved and yet be altogether dead in sin, aliens from the life of God, bereft of the image of God, deformed by the image of Satan, his slaves and vassals to their own filthy lusts, utterly unmeet for the enjoyment of God in glory. Such a salvation as that was never purchased by the blood of Christ; and those that seek it abuse the grace of God in Christ, and turn it into lasciviousness. They would be saved by Christ, and yet be *out of* Christ in a fleshly state; whereas God doth free none from condemnation but those that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; or else they would divide Christ, and take a part of His salvation and leave out the rest; but Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13). They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love, in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment. But let them not be deceived, God is not mocked. *They understand not what true salvation is*, neither were they ever yet thoroughly sensible of their lost estate, and of the great evil of sin; and that which they trust on Christ for is but an imagination of their own brains; and therefore their trusting is gross presumption.

“True Gospel-faith maketh us come to Christ with a thirsty appetite that we may drink of living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (John 7:37, 38), and cry out earnestly to Him to save us, not only from Hell, but from sin, saying, ‘Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good’ (Psa. 143:10); ‘Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned’ (Jer. 31:18); ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’ (Psa. 51:10). This is the way whereby the doctrine of salvation by grace doth necessitate us to holiness of life, by constraining us to seek for it by faith in Christ, *as a*

*substantial part of that 'salvation' which is freely given to us through Christ" (Walter Marshall, 1692).*

The above is a much longer quotation than we usually make from others, but we could not abbreviate without losing much of its force. We have given it, not only because it is one of the clearest and strongest statements we have met with, but because it will indicate that the doctrine we are advancing is no novel one of our own, but one which was much insisted upon by the Puritans. Alas, that so few today have any real Scriptural apprehension of what *Salvation* really is; alas that many preachers are substituting an imaginary "salvation" which is fatally deceiving the great majority of their hearers. Make no mistake upon this point, dear reader, we beg you: if your heart is yet unsanctified, you are still unsaved; and if you pant not after personal holiness, then you are without any real desire for *God's* salvation.

The Salvation which Christ purchased for His people includes both justification and sanctification. The Lord Jesus saves not only from the guilt and penalty of sin, but from the power and pollution of it. Where there is genuine longing to be freed from the love of sin, there is a true desire for *His* salvation; but where there is no practical deliverance from the service of sin, then we are strangers to His saving grace. Christ came here to "Perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:72-75). It is *by this* we are to test or measure ourselves: *are we* serving Him "in holiness and righteousness?" If we are not, we have not been sanctified; and if we are unsanctified, we are none of His.—  
A.W.P.

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### Spiritual Oneness.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:20, 21). There appears to be considerable confusion in the minds of many today as to the meaning of “that they all may be one,” so much so that some of God’s dear children are in danger of espousing a view which is very dishonouring to Christ. What ever be the real and full meaning of this petition in our Lord’s high priestly prayer, it certainly must not be interpreted in any such manner as to repudiate His own words to the Father in John 11:42 “And I knew that Thou hearest Me always.” Yet, those who constantly emphasise the differences which exist among God’s people come perilously near to committing this very sin.

Now it is obvious at the outset that, in order to understand this petition of Christ’s, attention needs to be carefully directed unto the following points: first, *for whom* was He here praying? second, what was *the precise character* of the “oneness” for which He here prayed? Once these questions are rightly answered, much uncertainty and mistaken conception will be cleared away. Nor is it at all difficult to discover the right answers to these inquiries: they call for no protracted searching, but lie right on the surface itself; and once they are pointed out, the simplest believer should have no difficulty in perceiving their correctness. It is our desire herein to call attention to what is quite plain, and very satisfying to the hearts of those who desire their thoughts to be formed by what God has revealed in His Word, rejecting those human ideas which are contrary thereto.

First, then, for whom was our Lord praying when He asked “that they all may be one?” Let us begin with the negative answer: Christ was *not* here supplicating for the union or unity of Christendom. It seems strange then there should be any need for us to make this assertion, yet for generations past not a few have deplored the divisions in “the professing Church” as being contrary to that upon which the Saviour here set His heart; and zealous efforts have been made to unify discordant elements under the idea they were promoting the accomplishment of His desire. But such “zeal” was “not according to knowledge” and therefore we need not be surprised at the absence of God’s blessing upon such labours; rather should the lack of His benediction at once make us suspicious of the Scripturalness of their enterprises.

“I pray for them: *I pray not for the world*, but for them which Thou hast given Me” (John 17:9). There is no ambiguity about these words, no excuse for not understanding their purport: they plainly enough define the objects Christ had before Him when interceding with the Father. Neither the profane world, nor the professing world, came within the scope of His high priestly requests: as He declared by the Spirit of prophecy centuries beforehand, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, *nor take up their names into My lips*” (Psa. 16:4). Solemn indeed is this: Christendom, as such, never has been the object of Christ’s intercession: His petitions are limited unto those which the Father “gave Him” before the foundation of the world. So it was in the type: on the breastplate of Aaron were inscribed not the names of the nations of Canaan, but only the twelve tribes of Israel.

It should be clear, then, from what has been pointed out above, that the divisions of Christendom, the conflicting systems and parties which claim to be Christian, in no wise clashes with this request of the Redeemer’s “that they all may be one,” nor is the present

“strife of tongues” in the religious realm any proof that His prayer yet remains unanswered. Far from it, for the simple but sufficient reason that *it was not for the oneness of Christendom* that the Lord Jesus here prayed. We say again, that once this simple and introvertible fact be grasped much uncertainty and error disappears like the morning mists before the rising sun. If the divisions of Christendom were a hundred times more marked and bitter than they are now, that would in no wise conflict with Christ’s petition; and if all those breaches were closed and the whole of Christendom united in belief and practice, that would not to the slightest degree evidence the fulfillment thereof.

Secondly, exactly *what was* the “oneness” for which Christ here prayed? Again we will begin with the negative: certainly not for any external or organized oneness. Christ was not here supplicating for any visible or ecclesiastical union or unity, such as many have supposed is the great desideratum. It is to be deplored that there should be any need for us to assert this, yet, for many years past there have been those who decried the sectarian differences in Christendom as being opposed to what Christ so much desired; and various devices have been resorted to for breaking down the separating walls in the belief that this would secure the answer to the Saviour’s prayer. But this is as far from the truth as is the idea that the Lord was here praying for Christendom as a whole.

“That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (John 17:21). There is nothing dark or uncertain in this language; it clearly signifies the nature of that “oneness” for which Christ is interceding. It was a spiritual and Divine oneness, such as existed between Himself and the Father; a mystical and invisible union. This is brought out with equal explicitness in an earlier verse of the same chapter: “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, *as we are*” (John 17:1). Thus, that union and communion among the elect for which Christ prayed, had for its pattern or similitude, the union and communion which existed between the Mediator and the Father, and that is neither a material nor external one.

“That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (v. 21). It is failure to understand this last clause which has led many to an erroneous interpretation of the whole verse. It has been supposed that the divided state of Christendom is the principal hindrance in the way of the world’s acceptance of the Gospel, and that if only the spirit of sectarianism could be banished from the earth, unbelief would be at an end. Such day-dreamers seem to have forgotten that at the beginning of this dispensation there *was* a manifested unity among all those who bore the name of Christ: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32)—yet that was very far from effecting any change in the world’s attitude toward God and His Christ.

Let it be carefully noted Christ did not say “that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe *in Me,*” but “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” And *when* will “the world,” (i.e., that “world” for which He prays not in verse 9) believe that Christ is the One sent by the Father? when will the ungodly be convicted of the verity of His claims? The only possible answer is In the last great day, when before an assembled universe Christ shall present His people “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Then will the enemies of the Lord have such outward proof of

the union and communion subsisting between Himself and the Church as no longer to disbelieve the truth of it: only they will not believe and be saved, but instead believe and be damned.

That union and unity between His people for which the great High Priest prayed was not a visible one, but an invisible; not a material, but a spiritual one. It is a union in grace now, and a union in glory hereafter. It was not the unity of churches, but the unity of *the Church* for which our Lord supplicated the Father. Nor has His prayer remained unanswered all these nineteen centuries. No, indeed. All His blood-bought people *are* welded together in a way and to a degree which no other company is or can be; as it is written “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are *all one* in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)—note not “shall be,” but “*are all one* in Christ Jesus.”

Nor is the union of the redeemed *only* a mystical one during this present era: even now there is a oneness among all the truly regenerate on everything that is vital and fundamental. All real Christians believe firmly in the Divine inspiration and authority of Scriptures, in the unity and trinity of the Godhead, in the Deity and sinless humanity of Christ, in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice as the alone ground of their acceptance with God, in His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the prevalency of His intercession, of His returning in glory and final judgment of the wicked. Yes, on “the foundations” of the faith, *all* God’s people take their firm stand, and for this He should be fervently praised. Instead of dwelling so much upon minor things—concerning which God’s children, most probably, never will all see eye to eye down here—we should be occupied with the major things which we all enjoy in common.

What so many have clamoured for is neither union nor unity, but uniformity—absolute likeness in belief and practice. But such a desire ignores one of the principle characteristics in all God’s works, instead of uniformity, there is endless variety in all creatures of His hands. There are no two minds alike, no two faces, no two voices; nay, no two blades of grass. True, there are many species having one common genus; many different sounds or notes which combine in harmony; behind incidental variations there is an underlying unity. So it is in the spiritual realm. The eleven Galileans were equally the Apostles of the Lamb and were loved alike by Him; they all followed, trusted in, and loved the same Lord and Saviour, yet each had a distinct individuality, and no two of them were alike in all things.

Whatever blame may or may not rest upon men for the existence of the various evangelical denominations in Christendom, let not the superintending hand of God therein be lost sight of. In our readiness to criticise former leaders—which charity requires us to believe were at least equally devoted to the Lord and as anxious to conform to His Word as we are—we need to be much on our guard lest we be found quarreling with Divine providence. While it be true that a measure of failure marks whatever God entrusted to men, yet let it not be forgotten that “*Of Him* and through Him, and to Him, *are all things*: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). We are either very ignorant of history or superficial readers thereof, if we fail to perceive the guiding hand of God and His “manifold wisdom” in the appointing and blessing of the leading evangelical denominations.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification” (1 Cor. 14:10). Yes, and while those different voices may not all

sound the same note, yet if they be pitched to the same key, they harmonize. The present writer is not prepared to hold a brief in defence of every peccadillo in any denomination, system or company of professing Christians; on the other hand, he desires to freely recognize and gladly own whatever is of God in all of them. Though himself unattached ecclesiastically, and a partisan of no single group, he wishes to have Christian fellowship with any and all who love the Lord and whose daily walk evidences a sincere desire to please Him. We have lived long enough and traveled sufficiently to discover that no one "church," company, or man, has all the truth, and as we grow older we have less patience with those who demand that others must adopt *their* interpretation of Scripture on all points.

There should be a happy medium between sectarian narrowness and the world's "broadmindedness," between deliberately compromising the Truth and turning away from some of the Lord's people because they differ from us on non-essentials. Shall I refuse to partake of a meal because some of the dishes are not cooked as I like them? Then why decline fellowship with a brother in the Lord because he is unable to pronounce correctly my favourite shibboleth? It is not without reason that "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" is immediately preceded by "forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2, 3). Probably there is as much if not more in me that my brother has to "bear" with, as there is in him which grates upon me. As good old Matthew Henry said, "The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds over lesser ones."

In conclusion, let us anticipate an objection. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). More has been built upon this verse than it will legitimately sustain. The next two verses show plainly the scope of this exhortation: it was a word against party strifes which alienated brethren belonging to the same local church. To be "perfectly joined together" in this verse signifies a union in faith and love, and nothing further than a *general* and fundamental oneness of judgment can fairly be gathered from it. Where there is, by grace, an agreement in all vital things, there should be a charitable bearing with differences of lesser importance. The Lord mercifully preserve both writer and reader from aiding Satan and doing his work by fomenting division. "Hast *thou* faith? *have it to thyself before God*. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Rom. 14:22).—A.W.P.

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