

Volume 20—Studies in the Scriptures—April, 1941
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My Commandments” (Exo. 20:4-6). Though this Second Commandment be closely related to the first, yet there is a clear distinction between them, which may be expressed in a variety of ways. As the First Commandment concerns the choice of the true God as our God, so the Second tells of our actual profession of His worship; as the former fixes the Object so this fixes the mode of religious worship. As in the First Commandment Jehovah had proclaimed Himself to be the true God, so here He reveals His nature and how He is to be honoured.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.” This Commandment strikes against a desire, or we should say a *disease*, which is deeply rooted in the human heart, namely, to bring in some aids to the worship of God, beyond those which He has appointed—material aids, things which can be cognized by the senses. Nor is the reason for this far to seek: God is incorporeal, invisible, and can be realized only by a *spiritual* principle, and that principle being dead in fallen man, he naturally seeks that which accords with his carnality. But how different is it with those who have been quickened by the Holy Spirit. No one who truly knows God as a living reality needs any images to aid his devotions, none who enjoy daily communion with Christ requires any pictures of Him to help him to pray and adore—he conceives of Him by faith and not by fancy.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness.” It is a manifest straining of this precept to make it condemn all statuary and paintings: it is not the ingenuity of making but the stupidity in the worshipping of them which is condemned, as is clear from the “thou shalt not bow down thyself to them,” and from the fact that God Himself shortly afterwards ordered Israel to “make two cherubim of gold of beaten work” for the mercy-seat (Exo. 25:18) and later the serpent of brass. Since God is a spiritual, invisible and omnipotent Being, to represent Him as of a material and limited form is a falsehood and an insult to His majesty. Under this most extreme corruption of mode—image worship—all erroneous modes of Divine homage are here forbidden. The legitimate worship of God must not be profaned by any superstitious rites.

This Second Commandment is but the negative way of saying, “God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). If it be asked, What are *the duties here required*? The answer is: “The receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has instituted in His Word (Deut. 32:46, 47; Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 6:13, 14); particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ (Phil. 4:6; Eph. 5:20); the reading, preaching and hearing of the Word (Deut. 17:18, 19; Acts 15:21; 2 Tim. 4:2, etc.); the administration and receiving of the sacraments (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-30); church government and discipline (Matt. 18:15, 17; 16:19; 1 Cor. 5); the ministry and maintenance thereof (Eph. 4:11, 12, etc.); religious fasting (1 Cor. 8:5), swearing by the name of God (Deut. 6:13), and vowing unto Him (Isa. 19:21; Psa. 76:11); as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship (Acts 16:16, 17, etc.); and according to each one’s place and

calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry (Deut. 7:5; Isa. 30:22)”—Westminster Confession of Faith. To which We would simply add, there is required of us a diligent preparation before we enter upon any holy exercise (Eccl. 5:1) and a right disposition of mind in the act itself. For example, we must not hear or read the Word just to satisfy curiosity, but that we may learn how better to please God.

In the forbidding of images God by parity of reason prohibits all other modes and means of worship not appointed by Him. Every form of worship, even of the true God Himself, which is contrary to or diverse from what the Lord has prescribed in His Word, and which is called by the Apostle “will Worship” (Col. 2:23), together with all corruptions of the true worship of God and all inclinations of heart unto superstition in the service of God are reprehended by this Commandment. No scope whatever is here permitted the inventive faculty of man: Christ condemned the religious washing of the hands, because it was a human addition to the Divine regulations. In like manner this Commandment denounces the modern passion for ritualism (the dressing up of simplicity in Divine worship), as also the magical virtues ascribed to or even the special influences of the Lord’s Supper, still more so the use of a crucifix. So also it condemns a neglect of God’s worship, the leaving undone the service which God has commanded.

The Scriptures have set us bounds for worship, to which we must not add and from which we must not diminish. In the application of this principle we need to distinguish sharply between the substantial and the incidentals of worship. Anything which men seek to impose upon us as a part of Divine worship, if it be not expressly required of us in the Scriptures—such as bowing the knee at the name of Jesus, crossing ourselves etc.—is to be abominated. But if certain circumstances and modifications of worship are practiced by those with whom we meet, even though there be no express Scripture for them, they are to be submitted unto by us, providing they are such things as tend to decency and order and distract not from the solemnity and devotion of spiritual worship. That was a wise rule inculcated by Ambrose: “If thou wilt neither give offense nor take offense, conform thyself to all the lawful customs of the churches where thou comest.” It is a grievous breaking of this Commandment if we neglect any of the ordinances of worship which God has appointed. So, too, if we engage in the same hypocritically, with coldness of affection, wanderings of mind, lack of holy zeal, or in unbelief, honouring God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him.

This Commandment is enforced by three reasons. The first is drawn from the Person who denounces judgment upon those who break it: He is described by His relationship—“thy God,” by the might of His power, for the Hebrew word for “God” here is “the Strong One”—able to vindicate His honour and avenge all insults thereto, by a similitude taken from the state of wedlock, wherein unfaithfulness results in summary punishment—He is a “jealous God.” It is the Lord speaking after the manner of men, intimating that He will not spare those who mock Him. “They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger . . . they have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God” (Deut. 32:16-21).

Second, a sore judgment is threatened: “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” “Visiting” is a figurative expression, which signifies that after a space of time, in which God appears to have taken no notice or to have forgotten, He then shows by His providences that He *has* observed the evil ways and doings of men, “Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not My soul be avenged

on such a nation as this” (Jer. 5:9, and cf. 32:18; Matt. 23:34-36). This was designed to deter men from idolatry by an appeal to their natural affections. “The curse of the Lord righteously rests not only on the person of an impious man, but also on the whole of his family” (Calvin). It is a terrible thing to pass on to children a false conception of God, either by precept or by example. The penalty inflicted corresponds to the crime: it is not only that God punishes the child for the offenses committed by the parents, but that He gives them over unto the same transgressions and then deals with them accordingly, for the example of parents is not sufficient warrant for us to commit sin.

Third, there is a most blessed encouragement to obedience, in the form of a gracious promise: “Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My Commandments.” To the same effect He assures us. “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him” (Prov. 20:7). Love for God is evidenced by a keeping of His Commandments. Papists contend that their use of images is with the object of promoting love, by keeping a visible image before them as an aid; but God says it is because they *hate* Him. This promise to show mercy unto thousands of the descendants of those who truly love God, does not express a universal principle, as is clear from the cases of Isaac having a godless Esau and David an Absalom. “The Legislator never intended to establish in this case such an invariable rule as would derogate from His own free choice . . . When the Lord exhibits one example of this blessing, He affords a proof of His constant and perpetual favour to His worshippers” (Calvin). Observe that here, as elsewhere in Scripture (Jude 14, for example), God speaks of “thousands” (*and not* “millions,” as men so often do) of them that love Him and who manifest the genuineness of their love by keeping His Commandments. His flock is but a “little” one (Luke 12:32). What cause for thanksgiving unto God have those born of pious parents, who treasure up not wrath for them, but prayers!—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

18. *Serving God*: Matthew 6:24.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Those who have read attentively the last few articles of this series will scarcely need for us to point out the relation of this verse to the context. Its connection is obvious almost at a glance. All through this part of His Sermon, Christ was separating the precious from the vile, drawing a sharp line between the true and the false. He had discriminated between the two worshippers—the genuine and the hypocrite. He had distinguished between the two treasures—earthly and heavenly. He had differentiated between the two eyes or wisdoms—the single and the evil. Now He opposes the two masters—setting God over against mammon. Herein He teaches the ministers of His Word a most important lesson: that of drawing so clearly the line of demarcation between the regenerate and unregenerate, the possessor and the mere professor, that each hearer may have no difficulty in knowing which side of the line he belongs to. It is the general lack of such searching ministry, the substituting of superficial generalities, which is bolstering up formalists and encouraging multitudes in a vain hope.

But there is a yet closer link of connection between our present verse and those more immediately preceding it. As we pointed out in the introductory paragraphs of the December, 1940, article, from verse 19 to the end of chapter 6 our Lord’s design was to turn the hearts of His hearers from a spirit of covetousness to setting their affections upon the things of time and sense: first He delivered the prohibition and commandment, and then amplified and enforced the same by a variety of cogent reasons. Those reasons so far as we have yet seen may be summed up thus: make not material things your chief good, because earthly treasure is of a perishing nature: moth, rust, and thieves of various kinds depleting it in spite of all precaution. Because earthly treasure captures the heart: men argue that it need not do so, but the Son of God declares it *will* (v. 21). Because its pursuit ends in darkness: people suppose that wealth brings light or happiness, but instead it ends in darkness and misery (vv. 22, 23). Because it will enslave us: if God is not our Master, the world and its representative, mammon, will be.

More immediately, verse 24 may be regarded as Christ’s refutation of a second objection which the carnal heart of man is fond of making against the commandments He had laid down in verses 19, 20. There He had forbidden the treasuring up of worldly riches and had commanded the seeking of heavenly treasure. First, He had anticipated the objection, If there be such an urgent necessity of laying up treasure in Heaven and abstaining from the laying up of treasures on earth, why is it that the vast majority of men, including the shrewdest and best educated, bend their energies to the seeking of earthly treasure rather than heavenly? He bids His hearers to marvel not nor be stumbled by this, seeing that the unregenerate lack a sound or single eye and therefore are incapable of judging aright of the true riches. Here in our text He refutes the common persuasion that it is possible for us to seek *both*, and lay up for ourselves treasures on earth and treasure in Heaven as well. Men think to compound with God and the world, dividing their affections and energies between them—but Christ here exposes the utter fallacy of such an idea and the impossibility of such a course.

Once again we must bear in mind the fact that our Lord was addressing Himself more immediately to His Jewish hearers and reprehending their false conceptions of His kingdom. They en-

tertained certain vague notions of happiness in a future regime under the Messiah, but their minds were mainly engrossed with dreams of carnal prosperity, supposing that the expectation of worldly aggrandisement and spiritual happiness were quite consistent. Our Lord informs them of their mistake: they needed to “repent” of this also—undergo a radical change of mind. But it is not the Jews only who are infected with this delusion: it is common to the Gentiles also. In every age there are multitudes who fondly hope that though they seek their happiness in earthly objects, yet it is possible for them, at the same time, to secure the enjoyment of heavenly felicity. The hypocrite has ever argued that it is well to have two strings to one’s bow, but Christ here exposes this cheat and demonstrates the impossibility of the human heart being divided between God and the world.

He who has his eye partly on God and partly on self, who desires and endeavours to grasp both worlds, deceives his own soul. Such an one is in danger of losing both, and if he does not, he will certainly miss the kingdom of God. Our minds must be fixed supremely upon God in Christ, and the world sought only in strict subserviency to Him. Our hearts must be given to the Lord, wholly and without reserve, and the eyes of our soul be fixed upon Him alone. Here, then, is the reason why spiritual blindness must inevitably be our portion unless both our eyes are fixed steadfastly on an Heavenly Object: a man’s affections cannot be divided: if he attempts to love the things of the world as well as love God, he will certainly fail of the latter, for “the friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). The serving of two masters is absolutely opposed to the single eye, for the eye will be at the master’s hand: “Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as, the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that He have mercy upon us” (Psa. 123:1, 2).

The endeavour to lay up for ourselves both treasure upon earth and treasure in Heaven is an utter impossibility, for “no man can serve two masters.” But to seek both earthly and heavenly riches is an attempt to serve two masters, to wit, God and mammon: and therefore no man can seek them both. Proof of this is here set forth by Christ by *the effect* of such attempts to serve, in contrary affection, and behaviour: “For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.” The conclusion therefore is unmistakable: “ye cannot serve God and mammon.” To “serve God” is the same thing as to “lay up treasure in Heaven,” for by a Divine appointment true happiness is to be found only there, and He who has made this appointment has also ordained certain means by which we may attain unto this happiness. He who makes the attainment of this happiness, by the appointed means, the chief object in life, is the servant of God—for he does the will of God. Contrariwise, to “serve mammon” is the same thing as to “lay up treasure on earth.”

“No man can serve two masters.” The force of our Lord’s declaration is more apparent in the Greek than it is here in the English. First, the word “serve” does not signify to do an occasional act of obedience, but to be a bondservant, a slave, the property of his master, constantly and entirely subject to his will. No one can thus *serve* two masters. The same Greek word occurs in, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). It is also found in, “but now we are delivered from the law (as a covenant of works), being dead to that wherein we were held, that we

should serve in newness of spirit” (Rom. 7:6). Second, there are two different words in the Greek which both mean “other,” but the one signifies another of the same kind or order, while the second denotes another of an entirely different genus or sort. When Christ here declared “no man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the *other*,” He employed the latter term—signifying a master diametrically opposed to the other. Therefore it is evident that no one can be devoted unto two different and opposing masters.

“A man may be a servant to two masters in succession, although they should be of very different and directly opposite characters—the one in profession, the other in reality. A man may serve two masters unequally—occasionally doing an act of service to the one, while he usually, habitually, serves the other. A man may serve two or more masters, if they are all on one side, all subordinate to one another: a soldier may serve his king, and at the same time his commanding officer, and his inferior officers, for in obeying them, he is obeying his prince; but no man can be at the same time, in reality, habitually the servant of two masters who are hostile to each other, and whose interests are entirely incompatible. In this sense our Lord says, ‘Ye cannot serve God and mammon’ ” (Jay).

“No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one,” that is, the master commanding him: disliking that he should be his master, and displeased with his orders, “and love the other,” that is, the master in whom he takes delight and with whose orders he is well pleased. “Or else he will hold to the one and despise the other,” which words are an amplification and application of the former clause, showing how it is made manifest that a servant hates one master and loves the other. His holding to—leaning toward and cleaving unto—the one declares his love unto him; that is, he applies himself to respecting his master’s pleasure and doing his commandments. And his “despising the other” denotes his hatred—seen in his having no regard to his master’s will. Thus our Lord shows the impracticability and impossibility of any man seeking to serve two opposing masters from the contrary affections and behaviour exercised by the servant.

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon is a Syriac word which denotes “riches,” or as men term them, the good things of this world. But it is evident that the word is used as a personification: one can scarcely be said to *serve* inanimate things. Moreover the figure used here is that of “two *masters*,” and as mammon is here opposed to God, we must understand it to signify the god of riches, the Prince of this world and the love of the world—its treasures and pleasures—which is really the service of Satan. As, then, it is impossible to serve “two masters,” how much less two gods! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). The influence which material riches exert upon men’s minds and affections, leading them to seek happiness in them and moving them to devote their time and energies to the acquiring of the same, indicate the fearful power of this prince or master, and their yielding to that influence is the “service” which multitudes render unto him. How utterly incompatible then, is the obtaining of heavenly happiness and the means thereto, and the seeking of earthly happiness and the efforts put forth to secure the same.

“Their orders are diametrically opposed. The one commands you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight; the one to be humble, the other to be proud; the one to set your affection on things above, the other to set them on the things that are on the earth; the one to look at the things unseen and eternal, the other to look at the things seen and temporal; the one to have your conver-

sation in Heaven, the other to cleave to the dust; the one to be careful for nothing, the other to be all anxiety; the one to be content with such things as you have, the other to enlarge your desires as Hell; the one to be ready to distribute, the other to withhold; the one to look at the things of others, the other to look only at one's own things; the one to seek happiness in the Creator, the other to seek happiness in the creature. Is it not plain there is no serving two such masters? If you love the one, you must hate the other; if you cleave to the one, you must despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Jay).

From our text we may perceive clearly what it is to *serve God*. This is a thing much spoken of, but little known, and practiced still less. To serve God is to "love" Him and to "hold to" or "cleave unto" Him. Alas, how very few out of the present-day multitudes who profess to serve God manifest these marks! Love to God consists not of words and lip patronage, but *in deed and in truth*. And it is to be carefully noted that in this verse Christ insists God must be loved not only as Father, but as He is a Lord and "Master," that is, commanding us. It is in His Word, especially in the preceptive parts thereof, that His will and pleasure is made known. It is there He has revealed the service which He requires at our hands, and if our service be sincere and genuine, we must love God in His right of commanding, even though He should bestow no reward upon us. The Lord God has Himself expressly joined these two things together: "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me *and* keep My Commandments" (Exo. 20:6). David exemplified this principle very clearly in Psalm 119: "I will delight in Thy Commandments, which I have loved" (v. 47 and see vv. 16, 54, 97, 127, 140, 159, 167).

Moreover our text makes it crystal clear that if we are to serve God acceptably it must be a *whole-hearted* service that we render to Him. He is a jealous God and will brook no rival. He is a holy God, and will tolerate no idols in the secret chambers of our souls. His demand is stated in unmistakable language: "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5), and nothing short of that will satisfy Him. Let it be duly noted that the Lord Jesus insisted on no less in Matthew 22:37. He who serves God must serve Him singly, and his eye must be "single." God requires all our affections and will not permit us to divide them between Him and the world. Caleb could say, "I *wholly* followed the Lord my God" (Josh. 14:8)—can we? David declared, "I will keep Thy precepts with my *whole* heart" (Psa. 119:69)—is such our resolution? Or must the Lord say of us, "They have *not* wholly followed Me" (Num. 32:11)?

Furthermore, our text makes it plain that if we "serve" God acceptably we must "hold to," or "cleave unto" Him, and thereby *testify* our love. What is meant by cleaving to Him? This is answered for us in Luke 15, where we are told of the prodigal son that he "joined himself to a citizen of that country" (v. 15), which means that he resigned and gave himself up to his service; so to cleave unto God is for a man to resign himself unto His service, obeying all His commands and embracing all His promises, not suffering himself to be drawn away from any Divine precept, either by unbelief or disobedience, even though all the world should set itself against him. This was the policy of David: "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies, O Lord . . . Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:31, 6). On the contrary, when a man leans unto his own understanding, follows the corrupt desires of his heart, gives place to self-pleasing, or takes "the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2), he departs from and despises

the Lord, and if that be the general trend of his conduct it is clear that he hates God, no matter what he professes by his lips to the contrary: see Titus 1:16.

From what has been before us we may clearly perceive the gross blindness and superstitious ignorance of the world. How many there are in this so-called Christian land and day of enlightenment who think that if they repeat the Lord's prayer and the Apostles' creed they serve God well, let their lives be ever so worldly and carnal. But Christ here teaches us that in order to serve God acceptably, we must cleave unto Him both in the affections of our hearts and in activities of obedience of our lives. Thus did Abraham, the father of all them that believe, for when God called him to leave the land of his nativity, he "went out not knowing whither he went"; and when the Lord bade him slay his well-beloved Isaac, he promptly proceeded to do so. Alas, Christendom is filled with Atheists, for to hate and despise God is rank atheism, and all who withdraw their hearts from God, setting themselves to seek the things of this world to the neglect of obedience to the Divine Commandments, are here accounted by Christ the despisers and haters of God, which is the very worst form of atheism.

From the fact that God and mammon are here opposed as two "masters" we may learn that "mammon," that is, earthly riches, is a great *lord* in the world, and therefore does Christ warn us against the same. If it be asked, How can riches be a master or god? the answer is, they are not so in themselves, being merely creatures, but the corrupt hearts of men make an idol of such unto themselves, setting their love and delight upon *them*, and trusting in them more than in God: for this reason is covetousness called idolatry (Col. 3:5), and the covetous person an idolater (Eph. 5:5). Whatever a man sets his heart upon, making it his true happiness, that is his lord and god. Proof that men do set up riches in their hearts as idols and so become servants unto that which should serve them, appears in the following facts: they neglect the service of God for lucre and take greater delight in earthly things than in heavenly graces: they derive more satisfaction from them than Divine ordinances: their loss of earthly goods produces greater vexation and sorrow than all the Divine promises produce comfort.

Herein we may perceive the dreadful state into which Christendom has fallen, for the vast majority in it are plainly worshippers of mammon. They are far more eager and diligent in their quest after worldly gain than they are for personal piety and conformity to the image of Christ. A spirit of covetousness possesses State and church alike. Greedy landlords (and landladies), profiteering merchants, the cornering of commodities, on the one hand—discontented labourers, ever demanding higher wages, and more and more of the luxuries of life, on the other. The rich hoarding up wealth and the poor insisting that it be divided among them, are sad witnesses to the idolatry which now reigns supreme in the hearts of men. And God's professing people are infected with the same evil spirit: the denying of self and living as strangers and pilgrims here is a thing of the past, as their extravagantly-furnished homes and richly laden tables only too plainly attest. And worst of all, the rising generation of preachers, with their motor-cars and elaborately furnished parsonages and manses, are giving a lead to this wicked self-indulgence and mammon worship.

Is there any wonder, then, that the judgments of an angry God are now falling so heavily upon us? Judgment began first at the house of God: a grieved Spirit withdrew, and His power and unction are now noticeably absent from the preaching of the Word. But instead of God's people humbling themselves beneath His mighty hand, repenting of and forsaking their sins, they have

in large measure “lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton” (James 5:5). Read Amos 6:1, 3-6 and see if the extravagance of Israel has not been duplicated in Christendom: and as God’s wrath was poured out on them, so it is now being poured out on us. Many scores of church buildings and hundreds of the homes of rich and poor alike, have been reduced to rubble and ashes. Why? Why has God so visited us? Because He will not be mocked with impunity. For the last fifty years Christendom has attempted to serve both God and mammon: and having sown the wind, God is now making us reap the whirlwind. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

16. *On Carmel.*

“Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a Prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men” (1 Kings 18:22). The righteous are bold as a lion: undeterred by difficulties, undismayed by the numbers which are arrayed against them. If God be for them (Rom. 8:31) it matters not who be against them, for the battle is His and not theirs. True, there were “a hundred men of the Lord’s Prophets” hidden away in a cave (1 Kings 18:13), but what were they worth to His cause? Apparently they were afraid to show their faces in public, for there is no hint that they were present here on Carmel. Out of the four hundred and fifty-one prophets assembled on the mount that day, Elijah only was on the side of Jehovah. Ah, my readers, Truth cannot be judged by the numbers who avow and support it: the Devil has ever had the vast majority on his side. And is it any otherwise today? What percentage of present-day preachers are uncompromisingly proclaiming the Truth, and practicing what they preach?

“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God” (vv. 23, 24). The time had now arrived when things must be brought to a head: Jehovah and Baal brought face to face, as it were, before the whole nation. It was of the utmost importance that the people of Israel should be roused from their atheistic indifference and that it should be incontrovertibly settled who was the true God, entitled to their obedience and worship. Elijah therefore proposed to put the matter beyond dispute. It had already been demonstrated by the three years’ drought, at the word of the Prophet, that Jehovah could withhold rain at His pleasure, and that the prophets of Baal could not reverse it or produce either rain or dew. Now a further test shall be made, a trial by fire, which came more immediately within their own province, since Baal was worshipped as the lord of the sun, and his devotees consecrated to him by “passing through the fire” (2 Kings 16:3). It was therefore a challenge which his prophets could not refuse without acknowledging they were but impostors.

Not only was this trial by fire one which forced the prophets of Baal out into the open and therefore made manifest the emptiness of their pretensions, but it was one eminently calculated to appeal to the minds of the people of Israel. On how many a glorious occasion in the past had Jehovah “answered by fire!” That was the sign given to Moses at Horeb, when “the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed” (Exo. 3:2). This was the symbol of His presence with His people in their wilderness wanderings: “The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light” (Exo. 13:21). Thus it was when the Covenant was made and the Law was given, for “Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace” (Exo. 19:18). This, too, was the token He gave of His acceptance of the sacrifices which His people offered upon His altar: “there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces” (Lev. 9:24). So it was in the days of David: see 1 Chronicles 21:26. Hence the descent of supernatural fire from Heaven on

this occasion would make it manifest to the people that the Lord God of Elijah was truly the God of their fathers.

“The God that answereth by fire.” How strange! Why not “the God that answereth by water?” That was what the land was in such urgent need of. True, but before the rain could be given, something else had to intervene. The drought was a Divine judgment upon the idolatrous country and God’s wrath must be appeased before His judgment could be averted. And this leads us to the deeper meaning of this remarkable drama. There can be no reconciliation between a holy God and sinners save on the ground of atonement, and there can be no atonement or remission of sins except by the shedding of blood. Divine justice must be satisfied: the penalty of the broken law must be inflicted—either on the guilty culprit or upon an innocent substitute. And this grand and basic truth was unmistakably set before the eyes of that assembled host on Mount Carmel. A bullock was slain, cut in pieces, and laid upon wood, and He who caused fire to descend and consume that sacrifice avouched Himself to be the true and *only* God of Israel. The fire of God’s wrath must fall either on the guilty people or on a sacrificial substitute.

As we have pointed out above the descent of fire from Heaven on the vicarious victim (1 Chron. 21:26) was not only the manifestation of God’s holy wrath, consuming that upon which sin was laid, but it was also the public attestation of His acceptance of the sacrifice, as it ascended to Him in the smoke as a sweet-smelling savour. It was therefore an evident proof that sin had been dealt with, atoned for, put away, Divine holiness now being vindicated and satisfied. Therefore it was that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended, appearing as “cloven tongues like as *of fire*” (Acts 2:3). In his explanation of the phenomena of that day, Peter said, “This same Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth *this*, which ye now see and hear”; and more, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:32, 33, 36). The gift of the Spirit as “tongues like as of fire” evidenced God’s acceptance of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, testified to His resurrection from the dead, affirmed His exaltation to the Father’s throne.

“The God that answereth by fire.” Fire, then, is the evidence of the Divine presence (Exo. 3:2): it is the symbol of His sin-hating wrath (Mark 9:43-49): it is the sign of His acceptance of an appointed and substitutionary sacrifice (Lev. 9:24): it is the emblem of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3) who enlightens, inflames and cleanses the believer. And it is by fire that He shall yet deal with the unbeliever, for when the despised and rejected Redeemer returns, it will be “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess. 1:8, 9). And again it is written, “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:41, 42). Un-speakably solemn is this: alas that the unfaithful pulpit now conceals the fact that “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). O what a fearful awaking there will yet be, for in the last day it shall appear that “whosoever was not found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life was cast into the Lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God.” It will thus be seen that the test submitted by Elijah was a threefold one: it was to center around a slain sacrifice; it was to evidence the efficacy of prayer; it was to make manifest the true God by the descent of fire from Heaven, which in its ultimate significance pointed to the gift of the Spirit as the fruit of an ascended Christ. And it is at these same three points, my reader, that every religion—*our* religion—must be tested today. Does the ministry you sit under focus your mind upon, draw your heart unto, and demand your faith in the atoning death of the Lord, Jesus Christ? If it fails to do so, you may know it is *not* the Gospel of God. Is the One your worship a prayer-answering God? If not, either you worship a false God, or you are not in communion with the true God. Have you received the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier? If not, your state is no better than that of the heathen.

It must, of course, be borne in mind that this was an extraordinary occasion, and that Elijah’s procedure supplies no example for Christ’s ministers to follow today. Had not the Prophet done according to Divine commission, he had acted in mad presumption, tempting God, by demanding such a miracle at His hands, placing the Truth at such hazard. But it is quite clear from his own statement that he acted on instructions from Heaven; “I have done all these things at Thy Word” (1 Kings 18:36). That, and nothing else but *that*, is to regulate the servants of God in all their undertakings: they must not go one iota beyond what their Divine commission calls for. There must be no experimenting, no acting in self-will, no following of human traditions—but rather a doing of all things according to God’s Word. Nor was Elijah afraid to trust the Lord as to the outcome. He had received his orders, and in simple faith had carried them out, fully assured that Jehovah would not fail him, and put him to confusion before that great assembly. He knew that God would not place him at the front of the battle, and then desert him. True, a wondrous miracle would have to be wrought, but *that* occasioned no difficulty to one who dwelt in the secret place of the Most High.

“And the God that answereth by fire, *let Him be God*”: let Him be accounted and owned as the true God. Let Him be followed, served, and worshipped as such. Since He has given such proof of His existence, such demonstrations of His mighty power, such manifestations of His character, such a revelation of His will, all unbelief, indecision, and refusal to give Him His rightful place in our hearts and lives is utterly inexcusable. Then let Him be your God, by surrendering yourself to Him. He does not force Himself upon you, but condescends to present Himself to you. He deigns to offer Himself to your acceptance, bids you choose Him by an act of your own will. His claims upon you are beyond dispute. It is for your own good that you should make Him your God—your supreme Good, your Portion, your King. It is your irreparable loss and eternal destruction if you fail to do so. Heed, then, that affectionate invitation of His servant: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is *your reasonable service*” (Rom. 12:1).

“And all the people answered and said, it is well spoken” (1 Kings 18:24). They were agreed that such a proposal should be made, for it struck them as an excellent method of determining the controversy and arriving at the truth as to who was the true God and who was not. This would be

a demonstration to their senses, the witnessing of a miracle. The word which Elijah had addressed to their conscience had left them silent, but an appeal to their reason was at once approved. Such a supernatural sign would make it evident that the sacrifice had been accepted of God, and they were eagerly anxious to witness the unique experiment. Their curiosity was all alive, and they were keen to ascertain whether Elijah or the prophets of Baal should obtain the victory. Alas, such is poor human nature: ready to witness the miracles of Christ, but deaf to His call to repentance, pleased with any outward show that appeals to the senses, but displeased with any word that convicts and condemns. Is it thus *with us*?

It is to be noted that Elijah not only gave his opponents choice of the two bullocks, but also conceded to them the stage for the first trial that they might, if they could, establish the claims of Baal and their own power, and thus settle the dispute without any further action: yet knowing full well they would be foiled and confused. In due course the Prophet would do, in every respect, what they had done, so that there should be no difference between them. Only one restriction was placed upon them (as also on himself) namely, "put no fire under" (v. 23) the wood—so as to prevent any fraud. But there was a deeper principle involved, one which was to be unmistakably demonstrated that day on Carmel—man's extremity is God's opportunity. The utter impotency of the creature must be felt and seen before the power of God could be displayed. Man has first to be brought to the end of himself ere the sufficiency of Divine grace is appreciated. It is only those who know themselves to be undone and lost sinners who can welcome One who is mighty to save.

"And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made" (vv. 25, 26). For the first time in their history these false priests were unable to insert the secret spark of fire among the sticks which lay upon their altar. They were compelled, therefore, to rely on a direct appeal to their patron deity. And this they did with might and main. Round and round the altar they went in their wild and mystic dance, breaking rank now and again to leap up and down on the altar, all the while repeating their monotonous chant, "O Baal hear us, O Baal hear us"—send down fire on the sacrifice. They wearied themselves with going through the various exercises of their idolatrous worship, keeping it up for three whole hours. Is the reader inclined to bestow upon them a pitying smile? If so, we would ask, Are you quite sure that *you* worship God "in spirit and truth?"

But not withstanding all their zeal and all their importunity with Baal, "there was no voice nor any that answered." What a proof that idols are but "the work of *men's* hands. They have a mouth, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have hands, but their hands handle not; feet have they, but they walk not . . . they that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusteth in them" (Psa. 115:4-8). "No doubt Satan could have sent fire" (Job 1:9-12), and would, if he might have done it; but he could do nothing except what is permitted him" (Thomas Scott). Yes, we read of the second beast of Revelation 13 that "he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from Heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (v. 13). But on this occasion, the Lord would not suffer the Devil to use his power, because there was an open trial between Himself and Baal.

“But there was no voice nor any that answered.” The altar stood cold and smokeless, the bullock unconsumed. The powerlessness of Baal and the folly of his worshippers was made fully apparent. The vanity and absurdity of idolatry stood completely exposed. No false religion, my reader, is able to send down the Holy Spirit, or grant supernatural answers to prayer. Tested at these three vital points, they one and all fail, as Baal’s worship did that memorable day on Mount Carmel.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

7. *Its Complement.*

Let us begin by defining our term: the "complement" of a thing is that which gives it completeness. In contemplating the natural condition of Adam's children we obtain but a one-sided and misleading view if we confine our attention to their spiritual helplessness. That they *are* morally impotent, that they are totally depraved, that they are thoroughly under the bondage of sin, has been amply demonstrated in the preceding articles; but *that* does not supply us with a *complete* diagnosis of their present state before God. Though fallen man be a wrecked and ruined creature, nevertheless he is still accountable to his Maker and Ruler. Though sin has darkened his understanding and blinded his judgment, he is still a rational being. Though his very nature is corrupt at its root, this does not exempt him from loving God with all his heart. Though he is "without strength," yet he is not "without excuse." And why so? Because side by side with fallen man's inability is *his moral responsibility*.

It is at this very point that the people of God, and especially His ministers need to be much on their guard. If they appropriate one of the essential parts of the doctrine of Scripture but fail to lay hold of the equally essential supplementary part, then they will necessarily obtain a distorted view of the same. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any *two-edged* sword" (Heb. 4:12). The word emphasized in the above quotation is of paramount importance, though its significance seems to be discerned by few today. *Truth is twofold*. Every aspect of Truth presented in the Word is balanced by a counterpart aspect; every element of doctrine has its corresponding element; every precept its corresponding obligation. These two sides of the Truth do not cross each other, but run parallel with one another: they are not contradictory, but complementary. The one aspect is just as essential as the other, and *both* must be retained by us if we are to be preserved from dangerous error. It is only as we hold firmly to "all the counsel of God" that we are delivered from the fatal pitfalls of false theology.

God Himself has illustrated this duality of Truth by communicating the same to us in the form of the *two* Testaments, the Old and the New, the contents of which, broadly speaking, exemplify those two summarizations of His nature and character: "God is light" (1 John 1:5), "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This same fundamental feature is seen again in the two principal communications which God has made, namely, His Law and His Gospel. That which characterizes the Divine revelation in its broad outlines, also holds equally good in connection with its details: promises are balanced by precepts, the gifts of grace with the requirements of righteousness, the bestowments of abounding mercy with the exactions of inflexible justice. Correspondingly, the duties placed upon us answer to this twofold revelation of the Divine character and will: as Light and the Giver of the Law, God requires the sinner to repent and the saint to fear Him; as Love and the Giver of the Gospel, the one is called upon to believe and the other to rejoice.

The doctrine of man's accountability unto and his responsibility before God is set forth so plainly, so fully, and so constantly throughout the Scriptures, that he who *runs* may read it, and only those who deliberately close their eyes thereto can fail to perceive its verity and force. The entire volume of God's Word testifies to the fact that He requires from man right affections and right actions, and that He judges and treats him according to the same. "So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12): and this, that the rights of God may be enforced upon moral agents. In the Day of the Revelation of His righteous judgment God "will ren-

render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:5, 6), and then will be fulfilled that word of Christ's, "he that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Men are responsible to employ in God's service the faculties He has given them (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 12:48). They are responsible to improve the opportunities God has afforded them (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 19:41, 42).

Thus it is clear that—in keeping with the Word of God as a whole and of all His ways both in creation and providence—the doctrine of man's inability or impotency has a complementary and balancing doctrine, namely, *his responsibility*; and it is only by maintaining both, and that in their due proportions, we shall be preserved from distorting the Truth. But alas, man is a creature of extremes, and his tendency unto lopsidedness is tragically evidenced all through Christendom. The religious world is divided into opposing parties which contend for bits of the Truth and reject others. Where can be found a denomination which preserves a due balance in its proclamation of God's Law and God's Gospel? In the presentation of God as light and God as love? In an equal emphasis upon His precepts and His promises? And where shall we find a group of churches or even a single church, which is preserving a due proportion in its preaching upon man's inability and man's responsibility?

On every side today we behold the sad spectacle of men in the pulpits pitting one part of the Truth against another, over-stressing one doctrine and omitting its complement, setting those things against each other which God has joined together or confounding what He has separated. So important is it that God's servants should preserve the balance of Truth, so disastrous are the consequences of a one-sided ministry, that we feel impressed to devote the remainder of this article to pointing out of some of the more essential balancing doctrines which must be preserved if God is to be duly honoured and His people rightly edified; leaving our remarks upon human responsibility and our efforts to throw light upon the problem raised by the doctrine of man's impotency unto later articles.

First, let us consider *the causes and the means of salvation*. There are no less than seven things which do concur in this great work, for all of them are said, in one passage or another, to "save" us. Salvation is ascribed to the love of God, to the atonement of Christ, to the mighty operations of the Spirit, to the instrumentality of the Word, to the labours of the preacher, to the conversion of a sinner, to the ordinances or "sacraments." Alas that the views thereof entertained today by the majority of professing Christians are so superficial, so cramped, so inadequate. Yea, so great is the ignorance which now prevails that we had better furnish proof texts for each of these seven concurring causes lest we be charged with holding error on so vital a subject.

Salvation is ascribed to God the Father: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9)—because of His electing love in Christ. To the Lord Jesus: "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)—because of His merits and satisfaction. To the Holy Spirit: "He hath saved us by the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)—because of His almighty efficacy and operations. To the instrumentality of the Word: "the engrafted Word which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21)—because it discovers to us grace whereby we may be saved. To the labours of the preacher: "in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16)—because of their subordination to God's work. To the conversion of a sinner in which repentance and faith are exercised by us: "Save yourselves from this untoward genera-

tion”—by the repentance spoken of in verse 38 (Acts 2:40): “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). To the ordinances or sacraments: “baptism doth also now save us (1 Peter 3:21)—because it seals the grace of God to the believing heart.

Now these seven things must be considered in their *order* and kept in their place, otherwise incalculable harm will be done. For instance, if we elevate a subsidiary cause above a primary one then all sense of real proportion is lost. The love and wisdom of God is the bosom cause, the first mother of all the rest of the causes which conduce to our salvation. Next is the merit and satisfaction of Christ, which is the result of that eternal wisdom and love of God, and which is also the foundation of all that follows. The omnipotent operations of the Holy Spirit work in the elect those things which are necessary for their participation in and an application of the benefits purposed by God and purchased by Christ. The Word is the chief means employed in conversion, for faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). As the result of the Spirit’s operations and His application of the Word we are brought to repent and believe. In this it is the Spirit’s general custom to employ the ministers of Christ as His subordinate agents. Baptism and the Lord’s supper are to *confirm* repentance and faith in us.

Not only must these seven concurring causes of salvation be considered in their proper order and kept in their due place, but they must not be confounded with one another so that we attribute to a later one what belongs to a primary one. We must not attribute to the ordinances that which belongs to the Word: the Word is appointed for conversion, the ordinances for confirmation. A charter of indenture is first offered and then sealed (ratified) when the parties are agreed: “then they that (1) gladly received the Word were (2) baptized” (Acts 2:41). Nor must we ascribe to the ordinances that which belong to conversion. Many depend upon their outward hearing of the Word or partaking of the Lord’s Supper: “we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence and Thou has taught in our streets” (Luke 13:26). But sound conversion and not frequenting the means of grace is our title to pardon and life—“Be doers of the Word” (James 1:22).

Again—we must not ascribe to conversion what belongs unto the Spirit: our repentance and faith are indispensable for the enjoyment of the privileges of Christianity, yet these graces spring not from mere nature but are wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Nor must we ascribe to the Spirit that honour which belongs to Christ, as if our conversion were meritorious, or that the repentance and faith wrought in us deserved the benefits we become possessed of. No, that honour pertains to the Lamb alone, who merited and purchased all for us. Neither must we ascribe unto Christ that which belongs unto the Father, for the Mediator came not to take us from God but to bring us to Him: “Thou hast redeemed us to God” (Rev. 5:9). Thus all things pertaining to our salvation must be ranged in their proper place, and we must consider what is peculiar to the love of God, the merit of Christ, the operations of the Holy Spirit, the instrumentality of the Word, the labours of the preacher, the conversion of a sinner, and to the ordinances.

Unless we observe the true order of these cause, and rightly predicate what pertains unto each, we fall into disastrous mistakes and fatal errors. If we ascribe all to the mercy of God so as to shut out the merit of Christ we exclude God’s great design in the Cross—to demonstrate His righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26). On the other side, if we cry up the atonement of Christ so as to lessen our esteem of God’s love, we are apt to form the false idea that He is all wrath and needed blood to induce Him, whereas Christ came to demonstrate His goodness (2 Cor. 5:19). If we ascribe that to the merits of Christ which is proper to the work of the Spirit we confound things

that are to be distinguished, as if Christ's blood could take us to Heaven without a new nature being wrought in us. If we ascribe our conversion to the exercise of our own strength we wrong the Holy Spirit. If upon pretended conversion we neglect the means and produce no good works, we err fatally.

Not only must these seven things not be confounded, but they must not be separated from one another. We cannot rest upon the grace of God without the atonement and merits of Christ, for God does not exercise His mercy to the prejudice of His justice. Nor can we rightly take comfort in the sacrifice of Christ without regeneration and true conversion wrought in us by the Spirit, for we must be vitally united to Christ before we can partake of His benefits. Nor must we expect the operations of the Spirit without the instrumentality of the Word, for of the Church it is said that Christ (by the Spirit) "might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). Nor must we conclude that we are regenerated by the Spirit without repentance and faith, for these graces are evidences of the new birth. Nor must the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper be slighted, otherwise we dislocate the method by which God dispenses His grace.

Second, *Christ must not be divided*, either in His natures or His offices. There may be an abuse of the orthodox assertion of His Deity, for if we reflect exclusively on that and neglect His great condescension in becoming flesh, then we miss the chief intent of His incarnation—to bring God near to us in our nature. On the other hand, if we altogether consider Christ's humanity and overlook His Godhead, then we are in danger of denying His super-eminent dignity, power and merit. Man is always disturbing the harmony of the Gospel and setting one part against another. Unitarians deny that Christ is God and so impeach His atonement, pressing only His doctrine and example. But carnal professors reflect only upon Christ's redemption as the means of our atonement with God, and so overlook the necessary doctrine of His example, of Christ's appearing in order to be a pattern of obedience in our nature—so often pressed in Scripture: John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6. Let us not put asunder what God has joined together.

So with Christ's offices. His general office is but one, to be Mediator or Redeemer, but the functions which belong to it are three: prophetic, priestly, and royal—one of which concerns His mediation with God, the other His dealings with us. We are to reflect on Him in both parts: "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3:1). The work of an Apostle has to do with men, that of a high priest with God. But some are so occupied with Christ's mediation with God that they give little thought to His dealings with men; others so consider His relation to men they overlook His mediation with God. Nay, in His very priesthood some are so concerned with His sacrifice that they ignore His continual intercession, and so fail to appropriate what a comfort it is to present our requests by such a worthy hand to God; yet both are acts of the same office.

Great harm has been done by so crying up the sacrifice and intercession of Christ so that His doctrine and government have been made light of. This is one of the most serious defects today in a considerable section of Christendom which prides itself on its orthodoxy: they look so much to the Saviour that they have scarcely any eyes for the Teacher and Master. The whole religion of many professors now consists of depending upon Christ's merits and trusting in His blood, without any real concern for His Laws, by believing and obeying of which we are interested in the fruits of His righteousness and sacrifice. But the Word of God sets before us an entirely dif-

ferent sort of religion and does not make one office of the Redeemer disturb another. None find true *rest* for their souls until they take Christ's *yoke* upon them: He is the Saviour of none unless He is first their Lord.

The Scriptures of Truth set forth Christ under such terms as not only intimate privilege to us, but bespeak duty and obedience as well. "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36): He is Lord or supreme Governor as well as Christ the anointed Saviour; not only a Saviour to redeem and bless, but a Lord to rule and command. So "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Here again the compound terms occur, because of His double work—to require and to give: Christ is such a Prince that He is also a Saviour, and such a Saviour that He is also a Prince, and as such He must be apprehended by our souls. Woe be unto those who divide what God has conjoined. Yet again—"Christ is the Head of the Church and He is the Saviour of the Body" (Eph. 5:23). On the one side, as Christ saves His people from their sins, so He does also govern them; and on the other side, His dominion over the Church is exercised in bringing about its salvation.

The carnal portions of the religious world snatch greedily at comforts but have no heart for duties, they are all for privileges but want nothing of obligations. This libertine spirit is very natural to all of us: "Let us break Their bonds asunder and cast away Their cords from us" (Psa. 2:3). It was thus with men when Christ was in their midst: "We will not have this Man *to reign over us*" (Luke 19:14): had He presented Himself unto them simply as a Redeemer He had been welcome, but for a Sovereign over them they had no desire. Christ is wanted for His *benefits*, such as pardon, eternal life and everlasting glory—but the unregenerate cannot endure His strict doctrine and righteous laws—submission to His sceptre is foreign to their nature.

On the other hand there are some who so cry up the mediation of Christ with men that they ignore His mediation with God. Some are so absorbed with the letter of His doctrine that they overlook the necessity of the Holy Spirit to interpret the same to them and apply it to their hearts. Men are such extremists that they cannot magnify one thing without deprecating another: they rejoice in the Spirit's inditing the Scriptures, but they deprecate His equally important work in opening hearts to receive them (Acts 16:14). Others so urge Christ as Lawgiver that they neglect Him as the Fountain of Grace. They are all for His doctrine and example, but despise His atonement and continued intercession. It is this taking of the Gospel piecemeal, instead of as a whole, which has wrought such damage and corrupted the Truth. O for heavenly wisdom and grace to preserve the balance and to preach a full Gospel!—A.W.P.

THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

“Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). As we have previously intimated, this was not a broadcast invitation, addressed indefinitely to the careless and giddy masses, but rather is it a gracious call unto those seriously seeking peace of heart and yet are still bowed down with a conscious load of guilt. It is addressed to those who long for rest of soul, but who know not how it is to be obtained nor where it is to be found. Unto such Christ says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” But He does not leave it at that: He goes on to explain Himself. In a previous article it was pointed out that in verse 28 our Lord makes the bare affirmation that He is the Giver of rest, and in what follows He specifies the terms upon which He dispenses it—conditions which must be met by us if we are to obtain the same. Though the rest be freely “given,” yet only to those who comply with the revealed requirements of its Bestower.

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). In those words Christ made known the conditions which we must meet if we are to obtain the rest of soul that He graciously bestows. First, we are required to take His yoke upon us. Now the “yoke” is a figure of subjection. The force of this figure may be easily perceived if we contrast in our mind oxen running loose and wild in the field, and then harnessed to a plow where their owner directs their energies and employs them in his service. Hence we read that, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lam. 3:27), which means that unless youths are disciplined, brought under subjection and taught to obey their superiors, they are likely to develop into sons of Belial—intractable rebels against God and man. When the Lord took Ephraim in hand and chastised him, he bemoaned himself that he was like “a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke” (Jer. 31:18), which was a sad confession for him to have to make.

The natural man is born “like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12)—completely unmanageable, self-willed, determined to have his own way at all costs. Having lost his anchorage by the Fall, man is like a ship which is entirely at the mercy of the winds and waves. His heart is unmoored and he runs hither and thither to his own destruction. Hence his imperative need for the yoke of Christ if he is to obtain rest for his soul. In its larger sense, the yoke of Christ signifies complete *dependence*, unqualified *obedience*, unreserved *submission* unto Him. The believer owes this to Christ both as his rightful Lord and as his gracious Redeemer. Christ has a double claim upon him. First, he is the creature of His hands: He gave him being, with all his capacities and facilities. But more—He has *redeemed* him, and thereby acquired an additional claim upon him. The saints are the purchased property of Another, and therefore does the Holy Spirit say to them, “Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

“Take My yoke upon you,” by which Christ connoted: surrender yourself to My Lordship, submit to My rule, let My will become yours. As Matthew Henry rightly pointed out, “We are here invited to Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, to be saved, and *in order to this*, to be ruled and taught by Him.” As the oxen are yoked in order to submit to their owner’s will and to work under his control, so those who would receive rest of soul from Christ are here called upon to yield to Him as their King. He died for His people that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, “but *unto Him* which died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15). Our holy Lord re-

quires absolute submission and obedience in all things both in the inward life and the outward, even to “the bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Alas that this is so little insisted upon in a day when the high claims of the Saviour are whittled down in an attempt to render His Gospel more acceptable to the unregenerate.

Different far was it in the past, when those who occupied the pulpit kept back nothing that was profitable for their hearers, and when God honoured such faithful preaching by granting the unction of His Spirit, so that the Word was applied in effectual power. Take the following as a sample: “No heart can truly open to Christ that is not made willing, upon due deliberation to receive Him with His cross of sufferings and His yoke of obedience: ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me . . . Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me’ (Matt. 16:24; 11:29). Any exception against either of these is an effectual barrier to union with Christ. He looks upon that soul as not worthy of Him that puts in such an exception: ‘he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me’ (Matt. 10:38). If thou judgeth not Christ to be worthy of all sufferings, all losses, all reproaches, He judges thee unworthy to bear the name of His disciple. So, for the duties of obedience—called His ‘yoke’—he that will not receive Christ’s yoke can neither receive His pardon nor any benefit by His blood” (John Flavel, 1689).

“Take My yoke upon you”: it is to be carefully noted that this yoke is not laid upon us by another, but one which *we* are to place upon ourselves. It is a definite act on the part of one who is seeking rest from Christ and without which His rest cannot be obtained. It is a specific act of mind: an act of conscious surrender to His authority—henceforth to be ruled only by Him. Saul of Tarsus took this yoke upon him when, convicted of his rebellion (kicking against the pricks) and conquered by a sense of the Saviour’s compassion, he said, “Lord, what wouldest *Thou* have me to do?” To take Christ’s yoke upon us signifies the setting aside of my own will and completely submitting to His sovereignty, the acknowledging of His Lordship in a practical way. Christ demands something more than lip service from His followers, even a loving obedience to all His commands, for He has declared, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven” And again—“Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:21, 24).

“Take My yoke upon you.” As our “coming” to Christ necessarily implies the turning of our backs upon all that is opposed to Him—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him” (Isa. 55:7): so the taking of His “yoke” upon us presupposes our throwing off the yoke we had worn formerly, namely, the yoke of sin and Satan, the yoke of self-will and self-pleasing. “O LORD our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us”; confessed Israel of old: then they added, “but by *Thee only* will we make mention of Thy name” (Isa. 26:13). Thus the taking of Christ’s yoke upon us denotes a change of Masters, a conscious and cheerful change on our part: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God . . . Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:13, 16).

“Take My yoke upon you.” It may sound very much like a paradox to bid those who labour and are heavy laden and who come to Christ for “rest” to bid them take a “yoke” upon them. Yet in reality it is far from being the case. Instead of the yoke of Christ bringing its wearer into bondage, it introduces him into a real liberty, the *only* genuine liberty there is. Said the Lord Jesus to those who believed in Him, “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). That is His unchanging order. First, there must be a “continuing in His Word”—that is, an actual and constant walking in the same. As we do this He makes good His promise, “and ye shall know the Truth”—know it in an experimental way, know its power, its blessedness. The consequence is, “and the Truth shall make you free”—free from prejudice, from ignorance, from folly, from self-will, from the grievous bondage of Satan, from the power of sin. Then it is that the obedient disciple discovers that the Divine Commandments are “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). Said David, “I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:45).

By means of the yoke two oxen were united together in the plow. The “yoke,” then, is a figure of practical union. This is clear from, “Be ye not uncleanly yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). Here the Lord’s people are forbidden to enter into any intimate relations or associations with unbelievers, prohibited from marrying, forming business partnerships, or having any religious union with them. As 2 Corinthians 6:14 intimates, the “yoke” speaks of a union which issues in a close communion. And this is also what is in view in the text we are now considering. Christ invites those who come to Him for rest to enter into a practical union with Him so that they may enjoy holy fellowship together. Thus it was with one of old concerning whom we read, “and Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:24). But “can two walk together except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)? No, they cannot: they must be joined together in sameness of aim and unity of purpose—that of glorifying God.

“Take My yoke upon you” said Christ. He does not ask us to wear something He has not Himself worn. O the wonder of this! alas that our hearts are so little affected thereby. “Let this mind be *in you* which was *also in Christ Jesus*: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8). Yes, the One who was equal with God “made Himself of no reputation.” He who was the Lord of glory took upon Him “the form of a servant.” The very Son of God was “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal. 4:4). “Even Christ pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3): as He declared, “I came down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38). This, then, was the “yoke” to which He gladly submitted: complete subjection to the Father’s will, loving obedience to His commands. And here He says, “Take My yoke upon you”—do as I did, making God’s will yours: His precepts the regulator of your life.

“Take My yoke upon you.” John Newton pointed out that this is threefold. First, *the yoke of His profession*, which is a putting on of the Christian uniform and owning the banner of our Commander. So far as faith is in exercise, this is no irksome duty—rather it is a delight. Those who have tasted for themselves that the Lord is gracious are so far from being ashamed of Him and of His Gospel that they are desirous and ready to tell all who will hear of what God has done

for their souls. It was thus with Andrew and Philip (John 1:41, 43): and it was thus with the woman of Samaria (John 4:28, 29). As another has said, "Many young converts in the first warmth of their affections have more need of a bridle than of a spur in this concern." No Christian should ever be afraid to show his colours, nevertheless, he should not flaunt them before those who detest the same. We shall not go far wrong if we heed that injunction, "Be ready to give an answer to every man that *asketh you* a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). It is only when, like Peter, we follow Christ "afar off," that we are in danger of denying our discipleship before others.

Second, *the yoke of His precepts*. "These the gracious soul approves and delights in: but still we are renewed but in part. And when the commands of Christ stand in direct opposition to the will of man or call us to sacrifice a right hand or a right eye; though the Lord will surely make those who depend upon Him victorious at the last, yet it will cost them a struggle—so that, when they are sensible how much they owe to His power working in them, and enabling them to overcome, they will, at the same time, have a lively conviction of their own weakness. Abraham believed in God, and delighted to obey, yet when he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, this was no easy trial of his sincerity and obedience: and all who are partakers of his faith are exposed to meet, sooner or later, with some call of duty little less contrary to the dictates of flesh and blood' (John Newton).

Third, *the yoke of His dispensations*: that is, His dealings with us in Providence. If we enjoy the favour of the Lord, it is certain that we shall be out of favour with those who hate Him. He has plainly warned us of this: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). It is useless to suppose that, by acting prudently and circumspectly, we can avoid this. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). It is only by the unfaithfulness, by hiding our light under a bushel, by compromising the Truth, by attempting to serve two masters, that we can escape "the reproach of Christ." He was hated by the world and has called us unto fellowship with His sufferings. This is part of the yoke He requires His disciples to bear. Moreover, whom the Lord loves, He chastens. It is hard to bear the opposition of the world, but it is harder still to endure the rod of the Lord. The flesh is still in us and resists vigorously when our wills are crossed, nevertheless, we are gradually taught to say with Christ, "the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

"And learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart." Once again we call attention to the deep importance of observing our Lord's *order* here. As there is no taking of His yoke until we "come" to Him, so there is no learning of Him (in the sense here meant) until we have taken His yoke upon us—that is, until we have surrendered our wills to His and submit to His authority. It is far more than an intellectual learning of Christ which is here in view, namely, an experimental, effectual, transforming learning. By pains-taking effort any man may acquire a theological knowledge of the Person and doctrine of Christ: he may even obtain a clear and admiring concept of His meekness and lowliness; but that is a vastly different thing from learning of Him in such a way as to be "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18), which is what our Lord here alluded unto. To *thus* "learn" of Him we must be completely subject to Him and in close communion with Him, daily drinking in His spirit.

“Learn of Me.” And what is it, blessed Lord, that I most need to be taught of You? How to do that which will make me an object of wonderment and admiration in the religious world? How to obtain such wisdom that I shall be able to solve all mysteries? How to accomplish such great things in Thy name that I shall be given the pre-eminence among my brethren? No indeed: nothing whatever resembling this, for “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). What, then, Lord? This: “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” These are the graces I most need to cultivate: these are the fruits which the Heavenly Husbandman most highly values. Of the former grace it is said, “even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price” (1 Peter 3:4): and of the latter the Lord has declared, “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15). Do we really believe these Scriptures? Do our prayers and strivings indicate that we do so?

“For I am meek.” What is meekness? We may best discover the answer by observing the connections in which the word occurs in other verses. For example, we read, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). In view of what precedes, and follows, this has reference to the mildness and gentleness of the spirit of Moses under unjust opposition, who instead of returning evil, prayed for the healing of Miriam! So far from being weakness (as the world supposes), meekness is the strength of the man who can rule his own spirit under provocation, subduing his resentment under wrong, refusing to retaliate. In 1 Peter 3:4 the “meek and quiet spirit” has to do with the subjection of a wife to her husband (vv. 1-5), her chaste conversation (or behaviour) which is to be “coupled with fear” (v. 2), even as Sarah “obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (v. 6). It is inseparably connected and associated with gentleness: “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1); “gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2). In 1 Corinthians 4:21 the “spirit of meekness” is placed in sharp contrast from the Apostle using “the rod.”

Thus we may say that “meekness” is the opposite of self-will and self-assertiveness. It is pliability, yieldedness, offering no resistance, being as clay in the hands of the Potter. When the Maker of Heaven and earth exclaims, “I am a worm, and no man” (Psa. 22:6), He had reference not only to the unparalleled depths of shame into which He descended for our sakes, but He also alluded unto His lowliness and submission to the Father’s will. A “worm” has *no power of resistance*, not even when it is trodden upon: so there was nothing whatever in the perfect Servant which opposed to the slightest degree the will or dispensations of God. Thus, this beautiful grace, like all other moral excellencies, was found in its purest form in our glorious Exemplar. Behold in Him the majesty of meekness, when He stood like a lamb before her shearers dumb, committing Himself to the righteous Judge. Contrast Satan, who, in the fierceness of self-assertiveness, is represented as “the great red Dragon”; whereas the Lamb stands as the symbol of Him who, though the most exalted of beings, is the meekest and gentlest.

The meekness of Christ appeared in His readiness to become the Covenant-head of His people, in His willingness to assume our nature, in His being subject to His parents during the days of His childhood, in His submitting, to the ordinance of baptism—to the wonderment of John the Baptist; in His entire subjection to the Father’s will, in the whole course of His obedience. When He was reviled. He reviled not again. When He was smitten and spat upon, He made no retaliation. He counted not His life dear unto Himself, but freely laid it down for others. How the pon-

dering of these things should melt our hearts before Him. How they should condemn and fill us with shame. How they should drive us to our knees. How they should show us how little we *have* learned of Him. That which we most need to learn of Him is not how to become great and self-important, but how to deny self, how to mortify self-will, how to become tractable and gentle, how to be *servants*—not only His servants, but the servants of our brethren.

“For I am meek and lowly in heart.” As meekness is the opposite of self-will and self-assertiveness, so lowliness is the reverse of self-esteem and self-righteousness. Lowliness is self-abasement, yea, self-effacement. It is more than a refusing to stand up for our own rights: it is taking our place in the dust. Though so great a Person, yet this grace was pre-eminently displayed by Christ. Hear His declaration—“The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt. 20:28). And again—“I am among you as He that serveth” (Luke 22:27). Behold Him performing the most menial duties: girding Himself with a towel, washing, and wiping the feet of His disciples. He was the only one born into this world who could choose the home and the circumstances of His birth: what a rebuke to our poor, foolish pride was the choice He made!

Ah, my reader, we must indeed learn *of Him* if this choice flower of Paradise is to bloom in the garden of *our* souls. O that it may be so for His name’s sake.—A.W.P.

