

**Volume 22—Studies in the Scriptures—April, 1943**  
**IN THE POTTER'S HOUSE.**

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them” (Jer. 18:5-10).

A superficial reading of those verses may suggest they contain that which supports the Arminian's conception of God, yet a more careful pondering should show there is nothing whatever in them which militates against the “immutability of His counsel” (Heb. 6:17). The Lord does not here say to Israel “ye have become marred in My hand”—ye have defeated My purpose concerning you,” nor does He declare, “I will repair and make another vessel of you”—revise My intention and try again. Rather does He affirm His sovereignty and supremacy over them: “as the clay is in the potter's hand so are ye in Mine hand.” Again, it is to be carefully noted that God is not here speaking of the spiritual and eternal destiny of individuals, but of the earthly and temporal fortunes and misfortunes of kingdoms (Jer. 18:7) In this passage the Most High is viewed as the Governor of the nations, as the Dispenser or Withholder of eternal blessings, and not as the Predestinator of His Church to everlasting glory. God deals with kingdoms on a very different footing from what He does His dear children, and unless that be clearly recognized we shall be without the master-key which opens scores of passages

The favour which the Lord shows unto a nation is an altogether different thing from the love which He bears unto His elect, and he who is blind to such a distinction is utterly unqualified to expound Holy Writ. God's favour unto a nation is merely the outward dispensing of good things, which favour is forfeited when they turn their backs upon Him. But His love for the elect is an eternal and unchanging purpose of grace which effectually works in them, ceasing not to do them good and securing their everlasting felicity with regard to the former. He may pluck up and pull down what His providence has planted and set up, but to the elect, His assurance is, “He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it” (Phil. 1:6). From the former He may withdraw what He has bestowed, but to the latter, “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:29). Nor do the variations of the Divine dispensations with a kingdom argue any fickleness in His character, rather do they demonstrate His stability—as long as a nation's ways please Him He gives proof of His approbation. When displeasing He evidences His disapprobation.

God may act in mercy with a nation today and in wrath tomorrow without the least “shadow of turning” or change of character, and so far from that being any alteration of His eternal decree it is through these multifarious dispensations it is accomplished, for He foreordained *all* that comes to pass. There is therefore no proportion whatever between the fluctuations of His temporal bestowments on a kingdom and the peculiar love and special grace of the Everlasting Covenant wherein God assures His saints of their eternal security on the ground of His immutability. The decrees of God, as to their execution are suspended on no condition in man. If they were, it would destroy alike His wisdom, inde-

pendence and fidelity. On the other hand, when He declares, “them that honour Me, I will honour, and them that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam. 2:30), God is enunciating a moral law according to which He governs the race. His decrees are His irresistible determinations. His laws reveal the duty of men and the issues thereof according to their response.

The Lord approves of obedience and righteousness wherever it is found and rewards the same with temporal blessings without the least saving grace. Conversely, He disapproves of sin and unrighteousness and sooner or later visits His anger upon them in this world. But even when the dark clouds of His judgments hang over a kingdom, calamity may be averted by national humiliation before God and reformation of conduct. But that no more implies fickleness in the Divine character that it denies His foreknowledge. The history of God’s judgments on Egypt is a case in point: each time her monarch humbled himself in any measure, the Divine rod was lifted. Nevertheless, God had foreordained the destruction of Pharaoh and suited His dispensations in great variety and with many changes to bring it about. He plagued and freed him, freed and plagued him again, yet there was not the least alteration in God, all being so many effects of His power suited to the accomplishment of His unalterable purpose.

God’s governmental dealings make more or less evident to men the proportion there is between their conduct and His attitude toward them—the correspondence is such as to convey impressions of His goodness, justice and mercy. The character of God’s dominion is seen to be such that where righteousness and morality obtain He blesses “in basket and store,” but where wickedness is obstinately indulged in it inevitably entails a doom of evil. Yet if sin is forsaken that doom is avoided and a heritage of prosperity is entered into. But such alterations as these in the Divine administration, so far from making God to be capricious in His ways or unstable in the principles of His government, rather demonstrates that He is unalterably the same. It is because His procedure is marked by undeviating righteousness that He must change His dealings with men when their relation or attitude to Him involves a change. Consequently when God is said to “repent” it connotes no change in His purpose or mind, but only in the matter of His treating with men.

Jeremiah 18:7, 8 simply means that many of the judgments which God pronounces against kingdoms are not absolute declarations or infallible predictions of what is about to surely take place, but rather ethical intimations of His sore displeasure on account of sin and solemn threats of what must inevitably follow if there be no change for the better in those denounced. Whether or not the impending judgments become historical events is contingent upon their refusal to heed the warning. In like manner Jeremiah 18:9 has reference to no absolute promise of God: it is no unqualified declaration of what He would certainly do, but rather an intimation of His readiness to bless and prosper, accompanied by a warning that such blessing will be forfeited if obedience gives place to disobedience. God never signified in any promise of national blessing that the promise held good under *all* circumstances. See Deuteronomy 28:2 and 15! God ever presses upon men the fundamental distinction between sin and holiness. It was the fatal mistake of the nation of Israel to regard God’s promises to them as absolute, supposing the fulfillment was certain regardless of their degeneracy.

We must, then, distinguish sharply between God’s decrees and His denunciations, between His absolute purpose and His conditional promises, between His bestowment of spiritual gifts and temporal mercies, between the administration of the Covenant of Grace

and the dispensations of His providence. We must distinguish between the ground on which Jehovah deals with His Church and with a nation, for the former is in Christ and the latter out of Christ. There was a radical and vital difference between Christ shedding tears over Jerusalem because the Jews stubbornly refused to enter into the benefits of a temporal covenant (Matt. 23:37) and His shedding His blood for His brethren that they might receive the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant (Heb. 13:20, 21). Changes in God's material favours unto a nation do not imply that the eternal purpose of spiritual grace is liable to alteration, any more than the removal of a local "candlestick" (Rev. 2:5) argues that He may take away His Spirit from any regenerate soul. The "wills" and "shalls" of Divine immutability and fidelity are never jeopardized by the "ifs" of human responsibility.—A.W.P.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

#### 26. *Profession Tested: Matthew 7:21-27.*

“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” (Matt. 7:21). With these words of our Lord commenced the twelfth and final division of this notable Sermon. It was perhaps the most searching and solemn section in it. Here the One who cannot be imposed upon by any deceit makes known His inexorable demand for reality. Here the One who shall yet officiate as the Judge of all the earth declares that at the Grand Assize all who have deceived themselves and deluded others will stand forth in their real characters. Here the One who knows every thought and imagination of the heart, before whose omniscient eye all things are naked and opened, makes it crystal clear that lip service is worthless and that even the most imposing deeds count for nothing where vital and practical godliness are lacking. The more this passage be thoughtfully pondered the less surprised are we that so many seek to get rid of this Sermon by terming it “Jewish” and insisting “it is not for this dispensation.”

If it be true that Matthew 5-7 is more hated by our moderns than any other portion of God’s Word, it is equally true that none is more urgently needed by them. Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on earth as there are today, and never was there such a small percentage of real ones. Not since before the days of Luther and Calvin, when the great Reformation effected such a grand change for the better, has Christendom been so crowded with those who have “a form of godliness” but who are strangers to its transforming power. We seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in the history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within the churches who verily believe that all is well with their souls when in fact the wrath of God abideth on them. And we know of no single thing better calculated to undeceive them than a full and faithful exposition of the closing verses of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount.

The relation of this passage to the context is easily determined. Taking the more remote one, this final section forms a fitting conclusion to the whole address, which be it remembered was delivered in the hearing of the multitude (5:1; 7:28), though more immediately to His “disciples.” It was a most suitable climax. Christ had commenced by delineating the character of those who are approved of God, and He finished by describing those upon whom eternal judgment will fall. Herein we may see how the chief of the Apostles patterned his ministry after the example of his Master. If on the one hand “love” constrained him, on the other hand it was by “the terror of the Lord,” that he sought to persuade men. Thus, when standing before Felix, “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment” so that the governor “trembled” (Acts 24:25). Alas, how little of this faithful dealing with souls is there in this degenerate day—how little probing of the conscience—how little plain speaking of the awful doom awaiting the ungodly! How little shaking them out of their fatal complacency!

If we look at the more immediate context we shall be increasingly impressed with the appropriateness of this solemn peroration. Our Lord had just uttered a warning against the false prophets who are to be recognized by the “fruits” which they bear, or in other words, by the “converts” which they make—the disciples they draw after them. It is the Antinomian beguiled who are there more especially in view, as is clear from our Lord’s words “who come to you in sheep’s clothing,” thereby concealing their real character. In

like manner their adherents assume a sanctimonious pose and employ the most pious language, carrying a Bible with them wherever they go and being able to quote it freely. They refer to the Redeemer in most reverent terms, being particular to accord Him His title of "Lord." Nevertheless, when weighed in the balances they are found wanting, for they are lacking in vital godliness. Their hearts are not renewed, their wills are not surrendered to God, their conduct corresponds not with their high pretensions.

It is the juxtaposition of Matthew 7:19 and 7:20 which enables us to clearly perceive the scope of the latter. Though the Saviour had said in verse 16, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," He repeats this identifying mark of these deceivers of souls in verse 19, and then immediately adds, "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom." The intimate connection, then, between these two sections of His address is too plain to miss—converts made by the false prophets are big talkers but little doers. They claim to be devoutly attached to Christ but their claim is invalid, being unsupported by the evidence which is necessary to give it credibility. The fine talk is not corroborated by a Christian walk, and therefore it is insufficient to obtain for them an entrance into His kingdom. If the blind follow the blind both fall into the ditch. It takes something more than "sheep's clothing" to make one a servant of Christ, and something more than lip service needed before He will own anyone as a true disciple of His. It is empty and windy professors whom He here exposes.

"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." Let us consider first the application of these words to those who were immediately addressed. Many of the Jews were so impressed by the miracles wrought by Christ that they were disposed to be His disciples while ignorant of, and in fact, strongly opposed to His doctrine concerning salvation and the requirements of the kingdom of God. "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them" (John 2:23, 24). Nicodemus expressed the attitude of some of the more influential when he said, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him" (John 3:2). But so far from allowing Nicodemus to entertain the idea that an acknowledgement of Him as a "Teacher sent from God" would secure for him the blessings He came to bestow, He told him frankly that except he were born again he could neither see nor enter the kingdom of God.

When Christ had fed the great multitude from the five loaves and two small fishes, so deeply were they impressed that we are told: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." Yet, "when Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself apart alone" (John 6:14, 15). This it was which directly occasioned the searching declaration of the section which is now before us. Very far was He from taking advantage of a temporary and superficial bias of men in His favour. Plain speaking and honest dealings characterized the whole of His transactions with His countrymen. It was to prevent them from imagining that their owning Him as Prophet or even acknowledging Him as the Messiah in the sense that they understood the term was sufficient, that He here pressed upon His hearers they must be actually and personally *doers* of God's will before they were qualified to participate in the blessings of His spiritual and eternal kingdom.

While the verses before us were addressed first and locally to the Jews of Christ's day, yet it is obvious that they have a far wider application—that they belong to the Gentiles of our day. As we have proceeded through this Sermon section by section, we have endeavoured to point out again and again and make clear the force and relevance of our Lord's words as they respected His immediate hearers and also their pertinence unto and bearing upon ourselves. There was nothing provincial or evanescent in the teaching of Christ: it was designed for all nations and for all generations, and by it all men will yet be judged (John 12:48). This declaration of Christ's, then, is full of important instruction to all in every country and every age, wherever the Gospel is presented to the examination and reception of men. It was true at the beginning, it is just as true today, and it will continue so as long as the world lasts, that some, yea, many, will go no further than a mere lip profession, and consequently will be excluded from the kingdom—and that only those who really perform the Divine will shall enter into the enjoyment of the blessings of Christianity.

This expression, "the kingdom of Heaven," need not detain us very long, for we have explained its meaning in previous articles. As it is employed here it is synonymous with "the kingdom of God" in John 3:3, as a comparison of Matthew 18:3 and Luke 18:17 clearly proves. It had reference to the new order of things introduced by the Messiah, being a contrast from and the successor of Judaism. That new order of things may be contemplated as beginning in this present life and perfected in the life to come, they being two aspects of the one economy. We designate the former the kingdom of grace and the latter the kingdom of glory. Most of the older commentators understood "the kingdom of Heaven" in the verse now before us as referring to the second aspect, and therefore as being equivalent to the state of celestial blessedness, but personally we see no reason for this restriction. A mere lip profession fails to secure even a present participation in the peculiar privileges of Christianity, for it obtains neither reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of sin, nor an enjoyment of that holy happiness which is the portion now of those truly converted. It inevitably follows that those who enter not the kingdom of grace on earth will never enter the kingdom of glory in Heaven.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven" or as we find it in Luke 6:46, "Why call you Me, Lord, Lord?" This expression is equivalent to acknowledging Christ as "Teacher and Master," even owning Him as the Son of God, the alone Saviour of sinners. There is a designed emphasis in the "Lord, Lord," for it is meant to express not merely profession, but a decided, open, habitual profession. Thus Christ here declares that a merely verbal acknowledgment of the truth concerning His Person or a lip profession that we are His disciples and prepared to accept His teaching—however explicit, public, and often repeated that profession is made—does not open the way to the enjoyment of the special blessings of His kingdom—unless it is proved to be the result of true repentance and sound conversion and unless it is accompanied with a corresponding course of conduct in doing the will of the Father. An outward profession of the most orthodox religion is useless if it be joined not with vital godliness and sincere obedience. Even the demons owned Him as the "Son of God" (Matt. 8:29), but what did it avail them!?

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that no entrance into the kingdom of God is possible unless Christ is owned as "Lord." Unitarians and those "Modernists" who deny that

Christ is anything more than the ideal Man, are certainly outside the pale of salvation. "The words before us obviously imply what is very distinctly stated in other parts of Scripture, that a profession of discipleship, and acknowledgment of our submission in mind and heart to Christ Jesus, is absolutely necessary in order to our enjoying the privileges of discipleship. No person who does not call Christ 'Lord, Lord' can enter into the kingdom of God: no man who is ignorant of His claims, who treats these claims with neglect, who rejects these claims, or who, though he may be all but persuaded that these claims are just, yet from worldly motives does not acknowledge them—no such person can participate in the peculiar blessings of His disciples, either on earth or in Heaven" (John Brown, to whom we are indebted for some things above and in what follows). "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am" (John 13:13). "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 John 1:9).

But while the necessity of owning Christ as Lord is clearly implied in His words here, the truth which they more directly teach is that profession however necessary in connection with faith and obedience cannot of itself secure a participation in the spiritual blessings of the new economy. No matter how loudly a man avows his acceptance of the teachings of Christ, unless he be a *doer* of the Word his avowals count for nothing. He who requires the heart will not be put off with shadows for the substance, the mere semblance for the reality, words instead of works. Empty compliments are not worth the breath which utters them. They who trust in a form of godliness which is devoid of its power are building their hopes upon a foundation of sand. Not only is a bare profession insufficient for the saving of the soul, but it is an insult to Christ Himself. It is a horrible mockery to call Him Lord while we continue to do only that which is pleasing to ourselves, to profess to obey Him while we treat His commands with contempt. It is *obedience* which marks men as His disciples and distinguishes them from the subjects of Satan.

Let us now describe the different types of professors. First, there are those who are simply *nominal* ones. They bear the name of "Christians" and that is all. They happen to have been born in a country where Christianity is the prevailing religion and where it is regarded as a mark of respectability to give some recognition and assent to it. A few drops of water were sprinkled upon them in infancy by a preacher and possibly they received some kind of instruction in the rudiments of religion during the days of their childhood. But after reaching maturity, except for an occasional visit to a church, probably at "Christmas" or "Easter" that is as far as they go. Yet if asked to declare themselves they readily affirm they are "Christians," but that means little or nothing more than that they are not Jews, pagans or open infidels. Such persons usually are grossly ignorant of the very fundamentals of the Faith and often the lives of respectable heathens would put theirs to shame. Surely such people are outside the kingdom of God. They cannot participate in its blessings either on earth or in Heaven—if they could, its blessings would not be spiritual ones.

Second, *formal* professors. This class is made up of those who regard themselves as much in advance of the ones in the former. They are able to repeat some catechism, or at least can give a fairly intelligent account of both the doctrine and the laws of Christ. If not members of a church they are at least "adherents" and regular attendees at its services. They claim to be submissive to Christ's authority and observe all the outward acts of worship which characterize His follower, but they know nothing of the blessedness of communion with the Lord nor is His joy their strength. Their religion is but a mental as-

sent to an orthodox creed and going through a round of external observances. They evince no desire for the Truth to have a dominating power over their affections and wills, and most of them regard as deluded enthusiasts and canting hypocrites those who regard experimental godliness as the only genuine Christianity, and who pant after a deeper acquaintance with God. It is plain that these, too, are outside the kingdom, being strangers to those operations of the Spirit which alone make us meet for it.

Third, *deceived* professors. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 31:12). Those in this class look with pharisaical pity upon these described above. These deem themselves better taught. They place no reliance upon infant sprinkling, no subscription to the soundest confession of faith, rather do they pride themselves upon an intellectual assent to the letter of Holy Writ. They are quite sure that Christ died for them and that they have accepted Him as their personal Saviour. None can shake their assurance. Yet meekness and lowliness characterize them not. Forbearing one another and forgiving one another they are strangers to the fruit of the Spirit and practical godliness is missing from their daily lives. Their associates address them as "Brother" or "Sister" and that suffices. But what does it profit me to have the reputation of being a wealthy man if I have not the wherewithal to purchase the necessities of life? What avails it to call me a healthy person if disease be eating away my very vitals? If Christ bars the door of the kingdom against me, no personal assistance will give me entrance.

Fourth, *hypocritical* professors. The number in this class we are fain to believe is much smaller than in the preceding ones. For the former there is some hope while life lasts, but for these we can see none. Hypocritical professors are those who deliberately assume a role—they are consciously playing a part. They know that they are not Christians, but for one reason or other are anxious to make their fellows believe they are so. Some of them belonged formerly to one of the other groups, of the third especially, then they discovered the emptiness of their profession or that they had been deceived. They are too dishonest to disclaim themselves as Christians so they take increased pains to persuade others of their piety. Not content with a dull formal round of duties, they put the appearance of a deep interest in the things of God and of zeal in seeking to promote His cause. This is incomparably the vilest of the four classes we have sketched. Such conduct is no less contemptible than irrational. God cannot be imposed upon and no affronts are likely to be more severely punished than dishonour done to His omniscience. The hypocrite's portion will be the "outer darkness" where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Fifth, the *genuine* professor. This is the real Christian, who enjoys the blessings of the kingdom of grace here and shall be admitted to the bliss of the kingdom of glory hereafter. He is described here according to his conduct and actions: "but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." Two points need determining: what is here signified by the Father's will? And what is meant by the doing of it? "The fundamental part of doing the will of God is revealed in these words: 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him' (Matt. 17:5). Where this is complied with, everything else follows" (J. Brown). The will of the Father is perfectly made known by the incarnate Word, for He is the final spokesman of God (Heb. 1:1, 2), all judgment being committed unto Him (John 5:22). The will of the Father is that we should forsake our sins, trust in His Son, take His yoke upon us, and follow Him; to do less and yet call Him our Lord is most horrible mockery. So perfect and intimate is the oneness of the Father



and the Son that Christ goes on to say, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of *Mine* and doeth them” is like one who builds his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24 and cf. Luke 6:48).

What is meant by doing the Divine Will? Obviously it does not connote a perfect or flawless performance thereof, for there is no Christian who has ever attained to such excellence in this life, though nothing short of this is the standard set before us (Matt. 5:48). It means that I have surrendered my heart and will to the claims of Christ, so that I truly desire Him to “reign over me” (Luke 19:14) and order my life. It means that I have subjected myself to His authority and that it is the prevailing bent of my mind and constant endeavour to please and honour Him in all things. It means that I genuinely aim to be both internally and externally conformed to His holy image, and that it is my greatest grief when I do those things which displease Him. It means I truly seek that my thoughts, affections and actions are regulated by His precepts. It is not a sinless obedience which is here in view, but it is a sincere one. It is not a forced one, but prompted by love. It is not merely an external compliance with the Divine commands but a “doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6).—A. W. P.

## THE MISSION AND MIRACLES OF ELISHA.

### 1. *First Miracle.*

The relation between Elijah and Elisha was that of master (2 Kings 2:16) and servant (2 Kings 3:11), and thus it set forth that which exists between Christ and His ministers. For some time Elijah himself occupied the stage of action, but upon the completion of his mission and after a miraculous passage through Jordan he was supernaturally removed to Heaven. Thus it was with the One whom he foreshadowed: when the Saviour had finished the work given Him to do and had risen in triumph from the grave, He ascended on high. But men were appointed by Him to serve as ambassadors in the world from which He departed, to act in His name and perpetuate His mission. So it was with His type. Elisha was to succeed Elijah and carry forward what he had inaugurated. In order thereto he had been called by him. We saw last month how Elisha was subjected to a series of tests, which shadowed forth the disciplinary experiences by which the servant of Christ approves himself and through which he is schooled for his life's work. Then we viewed the path which Elisha was required to tread and pointed out briefly the spiritual significance thereof in connection with the preparatory history of the minister of the Gospel. One other preliminary feature remains for our consideration, namely, *the enduement* Elisha received.

It will be remembered that when Elijah had put to his companion that searching question, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee," Elisha had replied, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." This, we believe, betokened three things. First, it revealed his modesty and humility, being an acknowledgment of his weakness and insufficiency. He was conscious of his unfitness for his mission and felt that nothing but a plentiful supply of the Spirit which had rested upon the Tishbite would avail for the tasks confronting him. Happy the young servant of Christ who is aware of his own impotency, for in felt weakness lies his strength. Happy the one who has experimentally learned the force of that word, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord" (Zech. 4:6). Second, if Elisha was to take Elijah's place at the head of the schools of the Prophets, then he needed a superior endowment to theirs—a double supply of the Spirit of wisdom and power. Third, as the accredited servant of God he needed more than the rank and file of His people: not only the Spirit indwelling, but also the Spirit resting upon him.

We have only to turn to the final discourse of our Lord unto His Apostles, recorded in John 14-16, to discover the part which the Holy Spirit must play if His servants are to be duly equipped for their work. First, He declared he would pray the Father that another Comforter should be given them, who would abide with them forever (14:16). Then He promised this blessed Comforter, sent in His name, would teach them all things (15:26). It was by means of the Spirit of Truth given unto them that they would be enabled to bear testimony unto their Master (15:26, 27). He would guide them into all Truth, show them things to come, and glorify Christ by a fuller revelation to them of the mystery of His Person, office and work (16:13-15). In the book of Acts we see how those promises were made good. They were already *indwelt* by the Spirit of life (John 20:22) but the "power of the Holy Spirit was to come *upon* them" (Acts 1:8). This took place on the day of Pentecost, when "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them. And they (the Apostles—1:26) were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (2:4, 5).

This, then, is the deep need of the servant of Christ: that he be endowed by the Spirit, for without such an anointing his labours can only prove ineffectual. It was thus that Christ Himself was furnished: Matthew 3:16; Acts 2:38, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Much has been said and written on this subject of the minister being endowed and empowered by the Holy Spirit and varied, indeed, are the directions given as to what must be done in order to enter into this blessing. Personally we have long been convinced that the position occupied by the Apostles was an entirely unique one, and therefore we are certainly not warranted in praying and looking for any supernatural endowment such as they received. On the other hand we must be careful of going to an opposite extreme and concluding there is no special and distinct anointing by the Spirit which the servants of God need today. Elisha shows otherwise, for his case is, we believe, a typical and representative one.

Taking it for granted, then, that most of our readers will concur in the last remarks, we proceed to the important question—What is required of the minister if he is to enjoy a double portion of the Spirit? In answering this inquiry we will restrict ourselves to what is recorded of Elisha. In his case there were two things: first, the passage through Jordan, for it is to be duly noted that Elijah did not ask him, “what shall I do for thee,” until they had gone through its divided waters! Now the Jordan stands for death (Jer. 12:5), and death must be experimentally passed through before we can know the power of resurrection. The minister has to *die to self*, to all self-pleasing and self-seeking before the Spirit of God will use him. Second, the Prophet had to keep his eye fixed steadily upon his master if his desire was to be realized (2 Kings 2:10). It is all summed up in those words of Paul, “not I, but Christ” (Gal. 2:20). Just in proportion as self is set aside and the magnifying of Christ be our aim and goal of my ministry, is Holy Spirit likely to use me.

“And it came to pass as they still went on and talked that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind to Heaven, and Elisha saw it” (2 Kings 2:11, 12). Of course he did—God never disappoints those who renounce self and are occupied solely with Christ. Elijah had made the granting of Elisha’s request upon this very thing: “if thou *seest me* when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee.” Additional incentive, then, had the young Prophet to keep his gaze steadfastly on his master. Those who follow on to know the Lord, will press forward in the race set before them. They will suffer nothing to turn them aside from fully following Christ. They are given to behold things which are hidden not only from the world but also from their half-hearted brethren. A view of the unseen is ever the reward which God grants unto faith and fidelity. It was so with Abraham (John 8:56), with Moses (Heb. 11:27), with Stephen (Acts 7:55), with John (Rev. 1:1).

But something more than spiritual vision was granted unto Elisha, namely, spiritual perception—he not only saw, but *understood* the significance of what he beheld. “And Elisha saw, and he cried, My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” (2 Kings 2:12). Only as we ponder carefully the words of that sentence will the force of it be apparent. He did say, “the chariot of *fire*,” nor even, “the chariot of *God*,” but “the chariot *Israel*.” What did he mean? And why preface that explanation with the “My father! my father!”? He was interpreting for us the wondrous vision before him, the supernatural phenomenon described in the preceding verse. There was a Divine suitability in Elijah’s being removed from this scene in a chariot of fire driven by horses of fire. No other conveyance could have been more suitable and suggestive, though we have met

no writer who appears to have grasped the significance of it. Why did God send a fiery chariot to conduct His servant to Heaven? Let us endeavour to find the answer to that question.

Scripture interprets Scripture and if we turn to other passages where “chariots” and “horses” are mentioned we shall obtain the key which opens to us the meaning of the one here before us. “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psa. 20:7). Good reason had Israel for saying that. Go back to the beginning of their national history. Behold them in their helplessness before the Red Sea as “Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen” (Exo. 14:23) menaced their rear. Ah, but behold the sequel! They are all safe on the other side, singing, “The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea....the depths have covered them....Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy” (Exo. 15:3-6). The ungodly may look to such things as horses and chariots for protection and prowess, but the saints will find their sufficiency in the name of the Lord their God.

Sad indeed is it to see how woefully the favoured nation of Israel failed at this very point. “They soon forgot His works,” yea, they “forgot God their Saviour” (Psa. 106:13, 21) and relied upon the arm of flesh. They even sought alliances with the heathen until one of their Prophets had to cry, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD” (Isa. 31:1). Now set over against this our present passage and is not its meaning clear? As Elisha beheld that awe-inspiring sight his soul perceived the significance thereof: “My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kings 2:12). *Thou* my master, hast been in the hand of the Lord, Israel’s *real* chariot and horses, their true defense against Jezebel and Baal’s prophets which are bent on their destruction. The nation was too carnal, too much given to idolatry to recognize what they were losing in the departure of Elijah. But Elisha realized it was “the chariot of Israel” which was being taken from them.

This brings us then to *the time* when Elisha performed his first miracle. It was what men generally would deem a most unpropitious one, when the Prophet’s spirits were at their lowest ebb. His beloved master had just been taken from him and deeply did he feel the loss. “He took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces” (v. 12). That action was emblematic of his grief, as a comparison of Genesis 37:34 and Joshua 7:6 shows. Yet it was a temperate sorrow, a controlled sorrow, and not an inordinate one: he only rent his garment in two pieces—had he done more they would have been wastefully ruined. His action may also have betokened Israel’s rejection of Elijah (cf. 1 Sam. 15:26-28). But severe as was his loss and heavy as must have been his heart, Elisha did not sit down in despair and wring his hands with inconsolable dejection—repining over the loss of eminent ministers accomplishes no good to those left behind, but rather enfeebles them. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. The darkest hour of all is the best time to prove His sufficiency. This is what Elisha did now.

Second, consider now *the object* on which it is wrought. A formidable one it was, none less than the river Jordan. He had friends, the Prophets at Jericho, on the other side. The problem was how to come to them. Probably he was unable to swim, or surely he had done so, as miracles are not wrought where there is no urgent need for them. There

was no boat to take him over—how then was he to cross it? A very real difficulty confronted him. Let us note that he looked the difficulty squarely in the face: he “went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan” (v. 13), instead of foolishly playing the part of ostrich, which buries its head in the sand when menaced by danger. To close our eyes to difficulties gets us nowhere, nor is anything gained by the under-estimating or belittling of them. The Jordan was a challenge to Elisha’s faith. So he regarded it and so he dealt with it. That is why God suffers His servants and saints to be confronted with difficulties: to try them and see of what mettle they are made.

Third, the *instrument* and means for it. “And he took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan” (v. 13). When his master’s mantle fluttered to his feet he knew beyond doubt that Heaven had granted his request: not only had he seen Elijah at the moment of his departure, but the gift of his prophetic garment was an additional token of receiving a double portion of his spirit. And now came the test: what use would he make of his master’s mantle! Testing always follows the bestowment of a Divine gift. After Solomon had asked the Lord for “an understanding heart” that he might judge His people wisely and well and “discern between good and bad,” he was quickly confronted by the two women each claiming the living child as hers (1 Kings 3:9, 16). No sooner did the Spirit of God descend upon Christ than He led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. Scarcely had the Apostles been endued with power from on high and begun to speak with other tongues, than they were charged with being “full of new wine.” So here: Elijah’s mantle fell at his feet, but before Elisha stretched the Jordan!

Fourth, the *mode* of it. This is of deep interest and importance, for it inculcated a truth of the greatest possible moment. “And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and smote the waters” (2 Kings 2:14). That was what the mantle had been given to him for: not to be idolized as a venerable memento but to be made practical use of. “Unto him that hath shall more be given” (Luke 8:18), which means unto him that has in reality, who evidences it in improving the same by putting it out to interest. By cleaving so steadfastly to his master, Elisha had already given proof that he was indwelt by the Spirit and now the double portion became his. This, too, he used, and used in the right way—he followed strictly the example his master had left him. In the context we are told, “Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the waters” (v. 8). Now his disciple did precisely the same thing. Is not the lesson for us as though it were written with a sunbeam? If the servant of Christ would work miracles, his ministry must be patterned closely after his Master’s example.

Fifth, the *meaning* of it. In view of all that had been before us this should now be apparent. As we have sought to show, Elisha is to be regarded as through the piece as the representative servant, as a figure of the ministers of Christ—in their call, their testings, the path they must tread, their spiritual endowment. The miracles he performed are not to be taken as exception to the rule. What then is the meaning and message of this first miracle—the smiting of and dividing asunder the waters of the Jordan? Clearly it is victory over death, *ministerial victory*. The servant of Christ is sent forth to address those who are dead in trespasses and sins. What an undertaking! How is he to prevail over the slaves and subjects of Satan? As Elisha did over the Jordan! He must be Divinely equipped: he must obtain a double portion of the Spirit. By acting as Elijah did: using what has been given him from above. When Elisha smote the waters in the exercise of

faith, he said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?”—give proof that Thou art with me, too.

Sixth, the *value* of it. “And when he also had smitten the waters they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over” (2 kings 2:14). There was the proof that though Elijah was not present, the *God* of Elijah was! There was the proof that he had received a double portion of his master’s spirit. There was the proof that by using the same means as his master had employed, God was pleased to honour his faith and grant the same result. There was the proof of his power over death. Three times in Scripture do we read of a miraculous crossing of the Jordan—see Joshua 3:17 for the first—typifying, we believe, the victory of Christ over the grave, the deliverance of the Church from spiritual death, and the resurrection of their bodies in the day to come. Here then is how the minister of the Gospel furnishes proof of his calling and commission: by preaching the Word (the appointed means) in the power of the Spirit so that souls are born again. Such fruit is evidence that God is with him, granting him victory over death.

Seventh, the *recognition* of it. “And when the sons of the Prophets which were to view saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him” (2 Kings 2:15). The miracle they had witnessed convinced them, and they owned him as the successor or representative of Elijah. The parted waters of Jordan demonstrated the presence of the Holy Spirit. So the regeneration of souls make manifest that the servant of God has been endowed with power from on high, and those with spiritual perceptions will own and honour him as such, for faithful ministers are to be “esteemed very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5:13). If Romanists have gone to one extreme in unwarrantably exalting the priesthood and making it a barrier to prevent the individual Christian having direct dealings with God Himself, the democratic spirit of our day has swung so far to the other side as to level all distinctions. Those who have received a double portion of the Spirit are to “be counted worthy of double honour” if they “rule well” (1 Tim. 5:17).—A.W.P.

## DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

### 7. *Its Perversion.*

5. It is perverted by those who divorce the purpose of God *from the means* through which it is accomplished. God has purposed the eternal felicity of His people and that purpose is certain of full fruition—nevertheless it is not effected without the use of means on their part, any more than a harvest is obtained and secured apart from human industry and persevering diligence. God has made promise to His saints that “bread shall be given” them and their “water shall be sure” (Isa. 33:16), but that does not exempt them from the discharge of their duty or provide them with an indulgence to take their ease. The Lord gave a plentiful supply of manna from Heaven, but the Israelites had to get up early and gather it each morning, for it melted when the sun shone on it. So His people are now required to *labour for* “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27). Promises of Divine preservation are not made to sluggards and idlers but those called unto the use of means for the establishing of their souls in the practice of obedience. Those promises are not given to promote idleness but are so many encouragements to the diligent, assurances that sincere endeavours shall have a successful issue.

God has purposed to preserve believers *in holiness* and not in wickedness. His promises are made to those who strive against sin and mourn over it, made to those who take their full thereof and delight therein. If I presume upon God's goodness and count upon His shielding me when I deliberately run into the place of temptation, then I shall be justly left to reap as I have sown. It is Satan who tempts souls to recklessness and to the perverting of the Divine promises. This is clear from the attack which he made upon the Saviour. When he bade Him cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and to rely upon the angels to preserve Him from harm, it was an urging Him to presume upon the end by disdaining the means. Our Lord stopped his mouth by pointing out that, notwithstanding His assurance from God and of His faithfulness concerning the end, yet Scripture requires that the means tending to that end be employed, the neglect of which is a sinful tempting of God. If I deliberately drink deadly poison I have no ground for concluding that prayer will deliver me from its fatal effects.

The Divine preservation of the saints no more renders their own activities, constant care and exertions superfluous than does God's gift of breath make it unnecessary for us to breathe. It is their own preservation in faith and holiness which is the very thing made certain. They themselves, therefore, must live by faith and in the practice of holiness, for they cannot persevere in any other way than by watching and praying. They must carefully avoid the snares of Satan and the seductions of the world, resisting and mortifying the lusts of the flesh, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. To neglect those duties, to follow a contrary course, is to “draw back unto perdition” and *not* to “believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39). He who argues that since his perseverance in faith and holiness is assured he needs exercise no concern about it or trouble to do anything toward it, is not only guilty of a palpable contradiction but gives proof that he is a stranger to regeneration and has neither part nor lot in the matter. “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight” (Psa. 119:35) is the cry of the renewed.

6. It is perverted by those who deny the truth of *Christian responsibility*. In this section we shall turn away from the “mongrel Calvinists” to consider a serious defect on the part of “hyper-Calvinists,” or as some prefer to call them, “fatalists.” These people not

only repudiate the general offer of the Gospel, arguing that it is a virtual denial of man's spiritual impotency to call upon the unregenerate to savingly repent and believe, but they are also woefully rent in exhorting believers unto the performance of Christian duties. Their favorite text is, "without Me ye can do nothing," but they are silent upon, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). They delight to quote the promises wherein God declares, "I will" and "I shall," but they ignore those verses which contain the qualifying "if ye" (John 8:31) and "if we" (Heb. 3:6). They are sound and strong in the truth of God's preservation of His people, but they are weak and unsound on the correlative tone of the saints' perseverance. They say much about the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, but very little on the method He employs or the means and motives He makes use of.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). He does not compel but inclines: it is not by the use of physical power but by the employment of moral suasion and sweet inducements that He leads, for He deals with the saints not as stocks and stones but as rational entities. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psa. 32:8). The meaning of that is more apparent from the contrast presented in the next verse: "Be ye not as the horse (rushing where it should not) or as the mule (stubbornly refusing to go where it should) which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." God does not drive His children like unintelligent animals, but guides by enlightening their minds, directing their inclination, moving their wills. God led Israel across the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: but they had to respond thereto, to *follow* it. So the Good Shepherd goes before His sheep, and they follow Him.

It is true, blessedly true, that God "draws," yet that drawing is not a mechanical one as though we were machines, but a *moral* one in keeping with our nature and constitution. Beautifully is this expressed in Hosea 11:4, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Every moral virtue, every spiritual grace, is appealed to and called into action. There is perfect love and gracious care on God's part toward us. There is the intelligence of faith and response of love on our part toward Him—and thereby He keeps us in the way. Blessed and wondrous indeed is the inter-working of Divine grace and the believer's responsibility. All the affections of the new creature are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit. He draws out our love by setting before us God's love: "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19), but we *do* love Him, we are not passive, nor is love inactive. He quickens our desires and revives our assurance, and we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). He brings into view "the prize of the high calling" and we "press toward the mark, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

It is very much like a skilled musician and a harp: as his fingers touch its strings they produce melodious sounds. God works in us and produces the beauty of Holiness. But how? By setting before our minds weighty considerations and powerful motives, and causing us to *respond* thereto. By giving us a tender conscience which is sensitive to His still small voice. By appealing to every motive-power in us: fear, desire, love, hatred, hope, ambition. God preserves His saints not as He does the mountain pine which is enabled to withstand the storm without its own concurrence, but by calling into exercise and act the principle that was imparted to them at the new birth. There is the working of Divine grace first, and then the outflow of Christian energy. God works in His people both



to will and to do of His good pleasure, and they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12, 13). And it is the office of God's servants to be used as instruments in the hands of the Spirit. It is their task to enforce the responsibility of the saints, to admonish slothfulness, to warn against apostasy, to call unto the use of means and the performance of duty.

If the hyper-Calvinist preacher compares the method he follows with the policy pursued by the Apostles he should quickly perceive the vast difference there is between them. True, the Apostles gave attention to doctrinal instruction, but they also devoted themselves to exhortation and exhortation. True, they magnified the free and sovereign grace of God and were careful to set the crown of glory upon the One to whom alone it belonged, yet they were far from addressing their hearers as so many paralytics or creatures who must lie impotent till the waters be moved. "No," they said, "Let us not sleep, as do others" (1 Thess. 5:6), but "awake to righteousness and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). They bade them "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1) and not sit down and mope and hug their miseries. They called upon them to "resist the Devil" (James 4:7), not take the attitude they were helpless in the matter. They gave direction, "keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21) and did not at once negate it by adding, "but you are unable to do so." When the Apostle said, "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to *stir you up* by putting you in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:13), he was not usurping the prerogative of the Spirit but was enforcing the responsibility of the saints.

7. It is perverted by those who use the doctrine of justification to crowd out the companion doctrine of sanctification. Though they are inseparably connected, yet they may be and should be considered singly and distinctly. Under the Law, the ablutions and oblations, the washings and sacrifices were together, and justification and sanctification are blessings which must not be disjointed. God never bestows the one without the other, yet we have no means of knowing we have received the former apart from the evidences of the latter. Justification refers to the relative or legal change which takes place in the status of God's people. Sanctification to the real and experimental change which takes place in their state, a change which is begun at the new birth, developed during the course of their earthly pilgrimage and is made perfect in Heaven. The one gives the believer a *title* to Heaven, the other a *meetness* for the inheritance of the saints in light. The former clears him from the guilt of sin, the latter cleanses from sin's defilement. In sanctification something is actually *imparted* to the believer, whereas in justification it is only *imputed*. Justification is based entirely on the work which Christ wrought for His people but sanctification is principally a work wrought in them.

By our Fall in Adam we not only lost the favour of God but also the purity of our nature, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and renewed in our inner man, for without personal holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour); because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16). God's nature is such that unless we be sanctified there can be no intercourse between Him and us. But can persons be sinful and holy at one and the same time? Genuine Christians discover so much carnality, filth and vileness in themselves that they find it almost impossible to be assured they are holy. Nor is this difficulty solved, as in justification, by recognizing that though completely unholy in ourselves we are holy in Christ, for Scripture teaches that those who are

sanctified by God are holy *in themselves* though the evil nature has *not been removed* from them.

None but “the pure in heart” will ever “see God” (Matt. 5:8). There must be that renovation of soul whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. There must be that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God and abstinence from evil which issues from faith and love. There must be that directing of all our actions to the glory of God by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. There must be a spirit of holiness working within the believer’s heart so as to sanctify his outward actions if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom “there is no darkness.” True, there is perfect holiness in Christ for the believer, but there must also be a holy nature received from Him. There are some who appear to delight in the imputed obedience of Christ who make little or no concern about personal holiness. They have much to say about being arrayed in “the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10), who give no evidence that they are “clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5) or that they have “put on...bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another” (Col. 3:12, 13).

How many there are today who suppose that if they have trusted in Christ all is sure to be well with them at the last, even though they are not personally holy. Under the pretence of honouring faith, Satan, as an angel of light, has deceived and is now deceiving multitudes of souls. When their “faith” is examined and tested, what is it worth? Nothing at all so far as insuring an entrance into Heaven is concerned: it is a powerless, lifeless, fruitless thing. The faith of God’s elect is unto “the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Titus 1:1). It is a faith which purifies the heart (Acts 13:9), and it grieves over all impurity. It is a faith which produces an unquestioning obedience (Heb. 11:8). They therefore do but delude themselves who suppose they are daily drawing nearer to Heaven while they are following those courses which lead only to Hell. He who thinks to come to the enjoyment of God without being personally holy, makes God out to be an unholy God, and puts the highest indignity upon Him. The genuineness of saving faith is only proved as it bears the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of true piety.

Sanctification consists of receiving a holy nature from Christ and being indwelt by the Spirit so that the body becomes His temple, setting apart unto God. By the Spirit’s giving me vital union with “the Holy One” I am “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2). Where there is life there is growth, and even when growth ceases there is a development and maturing of what has grown. There is a living principle, a moral quality communicated at the new birth, and under sanctification it is drawn out into action and exercised in living unto God. In regeneration the Spirit imparts saving grace, in sanctification He strengthens and develops it—the one is a *birth*, the other a *growth*. Therein it differs from justification: justification is a single act of grace—sanctification is a continued work of grace. The one is complete, the other *progressive*. Some do not like the term “progressive sanctification” but the thing itself is clearly taught in Scripture. “Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that *it may bring forth more fruit*” (John 15:2). “I pray that your love may abound yet *more and more* in knowledge and all judgment” (Phil. 1:9). That you “*may grow up into Him* in all things” (Eph. 4:15) is an exhortation thereto.

8. The doctrine of the Saints’ perseverance is perverted by those who fail to accord the *example of Christ* its proper place. Few indeed have maintained an even keel on this important matter. If the Socinians have made the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole

end of the incarnation, others have so stressed His atoning death as to reduce His model walk to comparative insignificance. While the pulpit must make it clear that the main and chief reason why the Son of God became flesh was in order that He might honour God in rendering to the Law a perfect satisfaction on behalf of His people, yet it should also make equally plain that a prominent design and important end of Christ's incarnation was to set before His people a pattern of holiness for their emulation. Thus declares the Scriptures: "He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), and that example imperatively obligates believers unto its imitation. Though some have unduly pressed the example of Christ upon unbelievers, others have woefully failed to press it on believers. Because it has no place in the justification of a sinner, it is a serious mistake to suppose it exerts no influence upon the sanctification of a saint.

The very name "Christian" intimates that there is an intimate relation between Christ and the believer. It signifies "an anointed one," that he has been endued with a measure of that Divine unction with his Master received "without measure" (John 3:34). And as Flavel, the Puritan pointed out, "Believers are called 'fellows' or co-partners (Psa. 45:7) of Christ from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God gives the same spirit unto us which He more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated....Its nature also is *assimilating*, and changes those in whom it is, into the same image with Christ, their heavenly Head (2 Cor. 3:18)." Again—believers are denominated "Christians" because they are disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19 margin, Acts 11:26), that is, learners and followers of His, and therefore it is a misuse of terms to designate a man a "Christian" who is not sincerely endeavouring to mortify and forsake whatever is contrary to His character—to justify his name he must be Christ-like.

Though the perfect life of Christ must not be exalted to the exclusion of His atoning death, neither must it be omitted as the believer's model. It may be true that no attempt to imitate Christ can obtain a sinner's acceptance from God. It is equally true that the emulating of Him is imperatively necessary and absolutely essential in order to the saints' preservation and final salvation. "Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation convincingly appears from the established order of salvation, which is fixed and unaltered. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory. 'For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). The same God who has predestinated men to salvation, has in order thereto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ, and this order of Heaven is never to be reversed. We may as well think to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ" (John Flavel).

In Christ God has set before His people that standard of moral excellence at which He requires them to aim and strive after. In His life we beheld glorious representation in our own nature of the walk of obedience which He demands of us. Christ conformed Himself to us by His abasing incarnation. How reasonable, therefore, is it that we should conform ourselves to Him in the way of obedience and sanctification. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). He came as near to us as was possible for Him to do. How reasonable then is it that we should endeavour to come as near as it is

possible for us to do. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me” (Matt. 11:29). “Even Christ pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3). How reasonable is it that we should be required to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24), for without so doing we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:27). If we are to be conformed to Christ in glory how necessary that we first be conformed to Him in holiness: “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19)—let him either put on the life of Christ or drop the name of Christ.—A.W.P.

### AN HONEST HEART.

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Let it be duly considered that as it is not the falling of the seed into the ground which makes it good, so it is not the Word of God which makes the heart honest. The soil itself must be rich or there will be no satisfactory crop, and the heart itself must first be honest if the Word is to be received and bear fruit. But such a heart no man has by nature—instead it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. “By nature we are a lie and in our best estate vanity. The old nature is a lie, a mere falsity, something contrary to that nature God created. It was first introduced by a lie of the Devil (Gen. 3:5) and therefore a fancy that God had lied in His command. Therefore our old nature is no better than a lie, and we cannot serve God with it” (Stephen Charnock, the Puritan). The heart of fallen man is radically and essentially dishonest, feeding on lies, loving deceits, producing hypocrisies; and he can no more effect any alteration in it than the Ethiopian can change his skin. Nor does he even desire to do so—he is totally unconscious of its rottenness.

“The preparation (or disposings) of the heart in man...is from the LORD” (Prov. 16:1). It is by the regenerative operations of the Holy Spirit that the heart is made honest. Honesty of heart is the grand distinction between the genuine Christian and all other men. We do not regard it as a separate grace, like purity or humility, but rather is the regulator of all the graces: thus we read of “*unfeigned* faith” (2 Tim. 1:5) and “*unfeigned* love” (1 Peter 1:22). As holiness is the glory of all the Divine perfections, so honesty is what gives colour and beauty to all the Christian’s graces. Holiness is the distinctive glory of the Godhead: as Howe termed it, “an attribute of attributes, casting lustre upon the others.” “As God’s power is the strength of His perfections, so His holiness is the beauty of them: as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them” (Charnock). This it is on a lower plane: without honesty to regulate them, the graces of the Christian would be worthless.

As honesty of heart is that which distinguishes the genuine Christian from all other men, so it is the grand feature which is common to all the children of God, none of them being without it. Different saints are eminent for various graces: Abraham for his faith, Moses for his meekness, Phineas for his zeal, Job for his patience or endurance. But honesty is that which characterizes and regulates all of them, so that to speak of a dishonest Christian is a contradiction in terms. An honest heart is an “upright” heart (Psa. 7:10): it is a “single” (Col. 3:22) or “undivided” one (Hosea 10:2). An honest heart is a “sound” one (Prov. 14:30), a “true” one (Heb. 10:22). The marks and fruits of an honest heart are candor, genuineness, truthfulness, integrity, righteousness, fidelity, sincerity—in contrast from dissimulation, guile, deceitfulness, pretense, treachery. An honest heart hates all shams. But passing from generalizations let us point out some of the more specific and fundamental workings and manifestations of an honest heart.

1. An honest heart *loves the Truth*, and none other does. “This is condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19), and that is true—a description of all men the world over. What a fearful state to be in: not only in the dark, but loving the darkness. And why? Because it is congenial to their depraved hearts, it is their native element. Hence the passage goes on to say, “for everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (v. 20). Many excuses are made why they turn away from

plain and faithful preaching and why they do not read God's Word in private, but the real reason is because they hate the Light—exposure, even to themselves, is the very last thing of all they desire. In sharp contrast therefrom: "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (v. 21). This is the man with an honest heart: so far from hating the Light, he welcomes it, wanting to be searched and discovered by it.

An honest heart is open to the Word, not merely to certain portions only, but to the Word as a whole. Such an one sincerely wants the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. He does not wish the preacher to please or flatter him, but to be frank and faithful. The language of the unregenerate is, "Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). They desire to hear of an easy and flesh-pleasing road to Heaven, one which does not demand the denying of self and forsaking the world. They want to be at ease in their sins and assured they are the children of God while free to serve the Devil. But it is the very opposite with one having an honest heart. He is fearful of being imposed upon, and thinking more highly of himself than he has a right to do. If he is deceived, he ardently longs to be undeceived; if he is building his house upon sand, he wants to know it. He is willing to be tested and searched, and therefore he "cometh to the Light"—does so repeatedly and continuously, as the tense of the verb denotes.

An honest heart, then, is a Truth-loving heart, one which genuinely desires to know the mind of God, one which is ready for his creed, his character and his conduct to be searched by the light of the Sanctuary. He wants to know the truth about *God*, the One with whom he has to do, the One before whom he must yet appear and render an account. He will not be put off with any superficial and sentimental representations of the Divine Character, he determines at all costs to acquaint himself with God as He actually is. He wants to know the truth about *himself*, whether his soul be only slightly disposed or whether his case be so desperate as to be altogether beyond help. He is anxious to determine whether he has only a head or intellectual knowledge of things that matter most or whether he has been given a heart or spiritual knowledge of them. He wants to make certain of how he stands with regard to God and eternity, and he dare not take any man's opinion or say-so with regard thereto.

2. An honest heart *accepts the Divine diagnosis* of fallen man's condition and bows to the Divine verdict passed upon him. That diagnosis is that which is sinful, depraved, corrupt in every part of his being; that his understanding is darkened, his affections perverted, his will enslaved. The Divine Physician declares that, "from the sole of his foot even unto the head there is *no* soundness in him" (Isa. 1:6). It explains why this is so: because man, every man, is "shapen in iniquity" and "conceived in sin" (Psa. 51:5), and therefore "the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psa. 58:3). So far from allowing that there is something spiritually good in every man, which only needs to be carefully cultivated in order to bring it to fruition, the Divine Physician declares, the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21), and in the flesh, "there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). And the honest heart quarrels not with that diagnosis, but receives it as true of himself.

Because fallen man is what he is he stands condemned before his Judge. The Divine Law pronounces him guilty. It declares that he is a rebel against God, that he has followed the desires of his own heart and disregarded the claims of his Maker. It declares that there is, "no fear of God" before his eyes (Rom. 3:18), that he has conducted himself

as though there is no Day of reckoning to be faced. It declares that he has “set at nought all God’s counsel and would none of His reproof” (Prov. 1:25). It declares that “the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). It declares that, in the searching light of the Divine holiness, his best performances, his religious actings, his very righteousnesses are as “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Now because the *honest* heart welcomes the Light, because it sincerely desires to know the worst about himself, it bows to the Divine verdict and “sets to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). An honest heart acknowledges, “I am vile” (Job 40:4), “without excuse” (Rom. 1:20), a Hell-deserving sinner; and none but an honest heart sincerely does so.

3. An honest heart causes its possessor to take his place *before God in the dust*. How can it be otherwise if he accepts the Divine diagnosis and condemnation of his condition? As the penitent thief on the Cross acknowledged, “we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds” (Luke 23:41), so the one who truly bows to God’s verdict owns that the everlasting burnings are his legitimate due. Thus pride receives its death-wound, all pretensions to goodness are repudiated, and with the publican of old he smites upon his breast crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Instead of seeking to extenuate his transgressions, he wonders at God’s longsufferance toward him. Instead of asking, What have I done to deserve eternal damnation? he marvels that he is not in Hell already. He perceives clearly that if such a wretch as himself is to receive salvation it must be by grace alone, and that God has the full right to withhold such grace if He so pleases.

4. An honest heart *ceases fighting against God*, which is only another way of saying that he repents of his evil past, for true repentance is a taking sides with God against myself. He who loves the Truth is influenced and regulated by it; and therefore is he brought to renounce whatever is opposed to it. As light and darkness are opposites, so uprightness and crookedness, honesty and sin have nothing in common. Where there is an honest heart repentance and conversion necessarily follow. And repentance is not only a sorrowing for sin but also a turning away from it, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against God. To love the light is to love God, for He is light (1 John 1:5), and if we love God we shall forsake our sins, abandon our idols and mortify our lusts. An honest soul cannot do otherwise: anything short of that would be hypocrisy. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the Truth” (1 John 1:6). The upright man is the one who “feareth God and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8).

5. An honest heart *seeks to please God* in all things and offend Him in none. That is why this honesty is termed “simplicity (the single eye) and godly sincerity” (2 Cor. 1:12), for it desires and seeks the approbation of God above everything else. An honest heart refuses to accept the plaudits of men on anything for which conscience would condemn him. “God is a Spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). He cannot be imposed upon by pious words or a sanctimonious demeanor. He must be approached with “a true heart” (Heb. 10:22): all dissimulation and pretense has to be set aside in our dealings with Him who “trieth the heart and the reins” and whose eyes are “a flame of fire.” When the heart beats true toward God there is a deep desire to please Him, not in some things only, but in *all* things, so that without reserve it asks, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). True, that desire is not fully realized in this life, but the genuineness of it is evidenced when we can truly say, “I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104).

6. An honest heart *feigns not wisdom*, but is very conscious of and frankly owns up to great ignorance. Even though he is well acquainted with the letter of Scripture and thoroughly familiar with all the external means of grace, that contents him not: there is a longing for a spiritual, an experimental, an efficacious knowledge of the Truth. Such an one feels himself to be the veriest babe in Divine things, which is indeed a healthy sign, for it is under such the mystery of godliness is revealed (Matt. 11:25). Such an one cries daily, “that which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32), for he longs to know the way of the Lord more perfectly—not only in the letter but chiefly in the power thereof. So conscious is he of his ignorance that he prays with David, “make me to understand the way of Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:27)—how to walk in them, the way to keep them. And again, “Teach me Thy statutes”—observe well how this is repeated again and again (Psa. 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135), for it is in *this* the upright realize themselves to be more deficient.

7. An honest heart *makes conscience of sin*. Necessarily so if he sincerely desires to please God. Therefore he does not willfully and habitually ally himself in any known sin, against the light and stirrings of conscience, for “the highway of the upright is to depart from evil” (Prov. 16:17). As one of the lesser known Puritans said, “A righteous man hates all sins, even the ones he cannot conquer; and loves all the Truth, even that which he cannot understand” (Anthony Burgess). He makes conscience of what the world calls peccadilloes or trifling faults, praying, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes that spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15), yea, “cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Psa. 19:12)—the sins of ignorance of which I am not conscious, but which defile before the thrice Holy One. Consequently, an honest heart makes it a point of confessing all known sins to God, even those of which his fellows know nothing. Sin is his heaviest burden and greatest grief.

8. An honest heart *welcomes godly reproof*. “Grace will teach a Christian to take those potions which are wholesome, though they be not toothsome” (Geo. Swinnock, 1660). “Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8), but hypocrites will resent it and fools rage at thee. An honest heart prefers the bitters of gracious company to the dainties of the ungodly: he would rather be smitten by a saint than flattered by the unregenerate. He not only gives a permit to faithful admonition but, when in his right mind, invites to, “*Let* the righteous smite me: it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” (Psa. 141:5). “As oil refreshes and perfumes, so does reproof, when fitly taken, sweetens and renews the heart. My friend must love me well if he tells me my faults: there is an unction about him if he points out my errors” (C. H. Spurgeon) and about me also if I heed him. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6)—only the upright will subscribe to that.

9. An honest heart *is impartial*. “Now therefore are we all present before God, to hear *all things* that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). These words of Cornelius were the language of sincerity. How very rare is such a spirit. The average church-member wishes to hear only that which accord with “*our* doctrines” and when he reads the Bible it is through theologically-tinted glasses. Here is where so many preachers are handicapped: they are bound by a detailed creed and know that if they departed therefrom they would lose their position. Bias, prejudice, sectarian shibboleths quench the spirit of honesty. To desire the Truth for *Truth’s* sake is rare indeed. But an honest heart is impartial, refusing to pick and choose and is not swayed by denominational prejudices.



An honest heart values the Divine precepts equally with the promises, appropriates the admonitions and threats as well as the comforting portions of Scripture, acknowledges himself in the wrong and his opponent who has the Truth on his side to be right, and admires and owns the image of Christ when he sees it in one belonging to another company.

10. An honest heart is *chiefly concerned with the inner man*. In His solemn denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees Christ said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess... Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:25, 27-28). It is at this point especially that the genuine Christian is distinguished from the formal religionists. One with an honest heart makes conscience of wandering thoughts, evil imaginations the workings of unbelief, the risings of pride and rebellion against God. He seeks grace to mortify his lusts and prays to be cleansed from "secret faults." He cries daily, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10); "Unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Psa. 86:11); "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119:36). He makes much of *heart work* and endeavours to keep it with all diligence (Prov. 4:23).

Probably most of our readers are ready to exclaim, Alas, this quite cuts me off: I freely admit that such honesty of heart as has been described ought to be found in me, but to my shame and sorrow I must confess that much to the contrary is still operative in my soul. But cannot you see that is the last thing you would frankly own if you were dishonest?! The fact is that no soul is conscious of the workings of unbelief until God has *given* faith, is not troubled about the swellings of pride until humility is *bestowed*, mourns not over coldness until love is *communicated*, and is not exercised over deceitfulness before he is *made* sincere. We best learn to know things by their opposites. It would be a great mistake to insist that there is such a thing as perfect and unmixed honesty in this life, so that there is no guile or falsehood joined with it. We not only know in part, but our faith and love are weak and unstable, and honesty of heart has to contend with much that is opposed to it. If we can plead before God uprightness of intentions and if we grieve over all crookedness within us, that is sure proof we are no longer under the dominion of hypocrisy.

There are two distinct and mutually-hostile principles at work within the Christian, each bringing forth after its own kind, and it is by *what* each one brings forth that its presence may be ascertained. The "works of the flesh" are manifest (Gal. 5:19, etc.), but "the fruit of the Spirit" (v. 22, etc.) is equally identifiable. A detailed description of "the fruit of the Spirit" should not be understood to mean that "the flesh" has ceased to exist. And a portrayal of the workings of an honest heart must not be taken to signify that all which is contrary thereto has been expelled. David was an upright man, yet he found it needful to pray, "Remove from me the way of lying" (Psa. 119:29). The disciples of Christ had been given honest hearts, yet their Master deemed it requisite to bid them, "be not as the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:5). It is the regenerate who are exhorted, "wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and all hypocrisies" (1 Peter 2:1), which would obviously be quite meaningless if those evils had been eradicated from their beings. "Who can understand his errors! Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Psa. 19:12). There is more deceit and

more deceit and self-ends operating in all of us than we perceive. If you prize an honest heart above a good name and value a clear conscience before God beyond a high reputation among men you are no hypocrite.—A.W.P.

