

Volume 17—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 5

May, 1938

The Lord's Prayer—Part 3

“Hallowed be Thy name” (Matt. 6:9). This begins the petitions of Christ's pattern prayer. They are seven in number, which are significantly divided into three and four: the first three concerning God, the last four (the number of the creature) our own selves. Similarly the Ten Commandments: the first five teach us our duty toward God (in the 5th the parent stands to the child in the place of God), in the last five our duty toward our neighbour. Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves, and give God the pre-eminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplications. This petition necessarily comes first, for the glorifying of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things. All other requests must be subordinate to this one and be in pursuance of it. We cannot pray aright unless the glory of God be dominant in our desires. We are to cherish a deep sense of the ineffable holiness of God and an ardent longing for the honouring of it, and therefore we must not ask anything which would be against the Divine holiness to bestow.

“Hallowed be Thy name.” How easy it is to utter these words without any thought of their solemn importance! In seeking to ponder them, four questions are naturally raised in our minds. First, what is meant by “hallowed”? Second, what is signified by God's “name”? third, how are we to understand “Hallowed *be* Thy name”? Fourth, why does this petition come first? The “hallowed” is an old English word, the Greek term is elsewhere translated “sanctified.” It means to set apart for a sacred use. “Hallowed by Thy name” signifies revered, adored, glorified, be Thy matchless name—let it be held in the utmost respect and honour, let its fame spread abroad and be magnified.

“Thy name” is put for *God Himself*, as in “let them that love Thy name (i.e., Thyself) be joyful in Thee” (Psa 5:11); “the name of the God of Jacob defend thee” (Psa. 20:1), that is, the God of Jacob Himself defend thee; “the name of the LORD is a strong tower” (Prov. 18:10)—Jehovah Himself is such. Again—the Name of God stands for *the Divine perfections*. It is striking and blessed to observe that when He “proclaimed the name of the LORD” to Moses, God enumerated His blessed attributes (see Exo. 34:5-7); so again, when it is said, “they that know Thy name (i.e., Thy wondrous perfections) will put their trust in Thee” (Psa. 9:10). But more particularly, His “Name” signifies God as He is *revealed*, made known to us. It is in such titles as the “Almighty,” “the Lord of Hosts,” “Jehovah,” “the God of peace,” “our Father,” that He has discovered Himself unto us.

What is intended by “Hallowed *be* Thy name”? First, in its widest sense we ask that *God* “by His overruling providence, would direct and dispose of all things to His own glory” (Larger Catechism). Hereby we pray that God Himself would sanctify His name: that He would cause it—by His providence and grace—to be known and adored, through the preaching of His Law and Gospel. Second, that His name be sanctified and magnified in and by *us*. Not that we can add anything to God's essential holiness, yet we should promote His manifestative glory—so we are exhorted, “give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name” (Psa. 96:8). Yet we cannot do this of ourselves, and hence the verb is in the passive form. Nevertheless, it is the desire and must be the determination of every Christian's heart *to advance* the revealed glory of God on earth.

By praying “Hallowed *be* Thy name” we beg that God, who is most holy and glorious, would enable us to *acknowledge and honour* Him as such. As Manton forcefully expressed it, “In this petition the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part; for

every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask. Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God's hearing: we speak to God to warm ourselves—not for His information, but for our edification.” Alas that this necessary implication of prayer is not more insisted upon in the pulpit today, and more clearly perceived in the pew. We but mock God if we present to Him pious words and have no intent of striving with our might to live in harmony therewith.

To “hallow” or sanctify His name means that we give God the supreme place, that we set Him above all in our thoughts, affections, and lives. It is the antithesis of the builders of the Tower of Babel, of whom we read, “let us make *us* a name” (Gen. 11:4), and of Nebuchadnezzar who said of Babylon, “That I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty” (Dan. 4:30). “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15): that the awe of His majesty and holiness be upon you, so that all within may be reduced unto entire subjection to Him. For this we must pray and strive to obtain right views and a deeper knowledge of Him, that we may worship Him aright and serve Him acceptably.

Third, this petition not only expresses the desire that God would sanctify Himself in and through us, and enable us to glorify Him, but it also voices our longing that *others* may know, adore, and glorify Him. “In the use of this petition we pray that the glory of God may be more and more displayed and advanced in the world in the course of His providence, that His Word may run and be glorified in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, that there may be an increase of holiness in all His people, and that all profanation of the names of God among men may be prevented and removed” (John Gill). Thus, this petition includes the asking of God to grant all needed effusions of the Holy Spirit to raise up faithful pastors, to move His Churches to maintain a Scriptural discipline, to stir up the saints to an exercise of their graces.

It is obvious, then, why this is the *first* petition in the Prayer. It must be the basis of all our other requests. The glory of God is to be our chief and great concern. Whatever comes to me, however low I may sink, no matter how deep the waters through which I may be called to pass, Lord, magnify Thyself in and by me. Mark how blessedly this was exemplified by our perfect Saviour: “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name” (John 12:27, 28). Though He must be baptised with the baptism of suffering, yet the Father's glory was what most concerned Christ.

The following beautifully summarizes the meaning of this petition. “O Lord, open our eyes that we may know Thee aright and may discern Thy power, wisdom, justice, and mercy. Enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify Thee in our affections, by making Thee our fear, love, joy, and confidence. Open our lips that we may bless Thee for Thine infinite goodness; yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see Thee in all Thy works, and incline our wills with reverence for Thy name appearing in Thy works. Grant that when we use anyone of them, that we may honour Thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof” (W. Perkins).

In conclusion, let us point out very briefly the uses to be made of this petition. 1. Failures to be bewailed and confessed: we are to humble ourselves for those sins whereby we have hindered God's manifestative glory and profaned His name; by pride of heart, coldness of zeal, stubbornness of will, impiety of life. 2. Earnest seeking of those graces

whereby we may hallow His name: a fuller knowledge of Himself, his fear to be more upon our hearts, increased faith and love, and a spirit of praise, the right use of His gifts.

3. Duties to be practiced: that there be nothing in our conduct which would cause His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (Rom. 2:24), and that “whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).—A.W.P.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

123. *Divine Exhortations: 13:22.*

Before taking up our present verse let us offer some further remarks upon the last portions of verse 21, which, through lack of space, we had to omit from last month's article. The central thing which we sought to make clear last month, was, that while the believer received at his regeneration a new nature or principle of grace (often termed by the older writers "the *habit* of grace"), yet it is not sufficient of itself to empower us unto the actual execution of good works. At the beginning God *did* place in Adam everything necessary to equip him for the performing of all obedience; but *not so* with the Christian. God has not communicated to us such supplies of grace that we are self-sufficient. No indeed: rather has He placed *in Christ* all "fullness" of grace for us to draw on (John 1:16), thereby making the members dependent on their Head. And, as we shall now see, it is from Christ that fresh supplies of grace are communicated to us.

"Working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ" (Heb. 13:21). The "through Jesus Christ" has a double reference: to God's working in us, and to the acceptance of our works. First, in the light of verses 20 and 21 as a whole, it is clear that what is there insisted upon is that there are no communications of grace unto us from the God of peace except in and by Jesus Christ—by His mediation and intercession. This is a most important point to be clear upon if the Redeemer is to have that place in our thoughts and hearts which is His due: all the gracious operations of the Spirit within the redeemed, from their regeneration to their glorification, are conducted according to the mediation of the Saviour and are in response to His intercession for us. Therein we may perceive the admirable wisdom to God, which has so contrived things that *each* Divine Person is exalted in the esteem of His people: the Father as the fountain of all grace, the One in whom it originates; the Son, in His mediatorial office, as the channel through which all grace flows to us; the Spirit as the actual communicator and bestower of it.

Second, in our judgment, these words "through Jesus Christ" have also more immediate connection with the clause "that which is well-pleasing His sight," the reference being to those "good works" unto which the God of peace perfects or fits us. The best of our duties, wrought in us as they are by Divine grace, are not acceptable to God simply as they are *ours*, but only on account of the merits of Christ. The reason for this is that Divine grace issues through an imperfect medium: sin is mixed with our best performances. The light may be bright and steady, yet it is dimmed by an unclean glass through which it may shine. We owe, then, to the Mediator not only the pardon of our sins and the sanctification of our persons, but *the acceptance* of our imperfect worship and service: "To offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5) states that aspect of truth we are here emphasizing.

"To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:21). Here the Apostle, as was his custom, adds praise to petition. This is recorded for our instruction. The same principle is inculcated in that pattern prayer which the Lord Jesus has given to His disciples, for after its seven petitions He teaches us to conclude with, "for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen" (Matt. 6:13). There is some uncertainty as to whether the ascription of praise in our text be unto the God of peace, to whom the whole prayer is addressed, or whether it be unto Jesus Christ, the nearest antecedent. Personally, we believe that Both are included and intended. Both are equally worthy, and Both should receive equal recognition from us. In Philippians 4:20 praise is offered dis-

tinctively unto the Father; in Revelation 1:5, 6 to the Mediator; while in Revelation 5:13 it is offered unto Both.

“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words” (Heb. 13:22). We will first give a brief exposition of this verse, and then make some remarks upon its central theme. The opening word is misleading in our Version, for it is contrastive and not connective, being rightly rendered “But” in the R.V. In the preceding verse, the Apostle had spoken of *God* working in His people that which is well-pleasing in His sight: here he addresses *their responsibility*, and urges unto diligence on their part. Herein we may perceive again how perfectly Paul ever preserved the *balance* of truth: unto the Divine operations must be added our endeavours. Though it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure, nevertheless, we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling: Philippians 2:12, 13.

The “word of exhortation” refers, in our judgment, to the entire contents of this Epistle. The Greek word for “exhortation” is quite a comprehensive one, including within its meaning and scope direction, admonition, incitation, and comfort. It is mostly translated “consolation” or “exhortation,” one as often as the other. Manifestly it was very appropriate for the Apostle to thus summarize the whole of his Epistle, for, from beginning to end, its contents are a most powerful and impressive incitation unto perseverance in the faith and profession of the Gospel, in the face of strong temptations to apostasy. “The word of exhortation is the truth and doctrine of the Gospel applied unto the edification of believers, whether by way of exhortation or consolation, the one of them including the other” (John Owen—and so all the best of the commentators). But let us observe the tactfulness and gentleness with which the Apostle urged the Hebrews to attend unto the exhortations that had been addressed to them.

First, he said, “But I *beseech you*.” This was “an affectionate request that they would take kindly what on his part was meant kindly” (J. Brown). Paul did not set himself on some lofty pedestal and *command* them—as he might well have done by virtue of his apostolic authority—but placing himself on their level, he tenderly urged them. “This word of exhortation as it comes out of the bright atmosphere of truth, so it comes out of the genial atmosphere of affection” (A. Saphir). Second, he added. “I beseech you, *brethren*,” “denoting (1) his near relation unto them in nature and grace, (2) his love unto them, (3) his common interest with them in the case at hand—all suited to give an access unto his present exhortation” (John Owen); to which we may add, (4) it evidenced his commendable humility and lowliness of heart.

Third, he added “But I beseech you, brethren, *suffer* the word of exhortation.” This of course implied there were things in this Epistle which were *opposed to* their corruptions and prejudices. This also revealed once more the deep solicitude which the Apostle had for the Hebrews. He had written to them some pointed warnings and some severe admonitions, and he was deeply concerned that they should not miss the benefit thereof, either through their negligence or because of their natural antipathy. “Probably he records (uses) the word of *exhortation* for this reason: though men are by nature anxious to learn, they yet prefer to hear something new, rather than to be reminded of things known and often heard before. Besides, as they indulge themselves in sloth, they can ill bear to be stirred and reproved” (John Calvin).

Here we may perceive again what a blessed *example* the Apostle has left all ministers of the Word. The preacher must be careful to stir up his hearers to seek their own good:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the Word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezek. 3:17, 18). In nothing are our hearers (even the saints) more backward than to appreciate and respond to the word of *exhortation*. Yet exhortation was the Apostle’s keynote all through this Epistle. God has given His Word to us for *practical* ends, and the faith of God’s elect is “the acknowledging of the truth *which is after godliness*” (Titus 1:1). The Holy Scriptures have been placed in our hands that we may be furnished unto all good works, instructed in every duty, fortified against every temptation. No doctrine is rightly understood unless it affects our *walk*. But in pressing unto a compliance with the Divine precepts let us seek grace that we may do it with the fidelity, wisdom, humility, and tenderness that the Apostle evidenced and exemplified.

“For I have written a letter unto you in a few words.” Strange to say some have been puzzled by this clause, because most of Paul’s Epistles are much shorter than this one, and hence they have invented the wild theory that verse 22 alludes only to this final chapter, which Sir Robert Anderson strangely designated “a kind of covering letter.” But the Apostle was not here referring *absolutely* to the length of his Epistle, but to the *proportion between* its length and the momentousness and sublimity of the theme of which it treats. In comparison with the importance and comprehensiveness of the many subjects which he had touched upon, brevity had indeed marked his treatment throughout. Nothing more than a short compendium had been given of the new covenant, the office and work of Christ, the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, the life of faith, and the varied duties of the Christian.

The principal subject referred to in our present verse is the Divine *exhortations*, which is one of great practical importance and value, yet alas, it is sadly neglected and generally ignored today. In Calvin’s time men preferred “to hear something new, rather than to be reminded of things known and often heard before,” but the present generation is woefully ignorant of those paths of righteousness which God has marked out in His Word, and so far from *often* hearing of many of those duties that God requires us to perform, most pulpits are largely silent thereon, substituting themes and topics which are more agreeable to the flesh, studiously avoiding that which searches the conscience and calls for reformation. Now an “exhortation” is an urging to the performance of duty, an incitation unto obedience to the Divine precepts. In developing this theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow the order set forth in Psalm 119.

We are there shown, first, the *blessedness* of those who respond to God’s claims upon them: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, that seek Him with the whole heart” (Psa. 119:1, 2). The Psalmist began here because it is essential that we should have a right understanding of what true blessedness consists. All men desire to be happy: “There be many that say, Who will show us any good?” (Psa. 4:6). This is the cry of the world, “Good, good”: it is the yearning of nature for contentment and satisfaction.

Alas, sin has so blinded our understandings that by nature we neither know where real blessedness is to be found nor how it is obtained. So thoroughly has Satan deceived men they know not that happiness is the fruit of *holiness*, a conscience testifying to God’s ap-

probation. Consequently, all, until Divine grace intervenes, seek happiness in riches, honours, and pleasures, and thus they flee from it while they are seeking it—they intend joy, but choose misery. “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psa. 4:7)—yes, “*their* corn and their wine”: not only possessed by them, but chosen by them as their portion and felicity. But David found that by treading the highway of holiness, God had put a gladness in his heart to which the pleasures of the worldling could not for a moment compare.

The main difference in thought between the first two verses of Psalm 119, wherein the secret of true happiness is revealed is this: in the former the outward conduct of the man of God is described; in the latter, the inward principle which actuates him is seen, namely, whole-hearted seeking unto the Lord. As it is out of the heart there proceeds all the evils enumerated by Christ in Matthew 13:19, so it is out of the heart there issues all the graces described in Galatians 5:22, 23. It is for this reason we are bidden, “Keep thy heart *with all diligence*, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). This is very solemn and searching, for while “man looketh on the outward appearance, the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Therefore there must be the exercise of faith and of love before our outward conduct can be pleasing unto God.

After affirming and describing the blessedness of those who walk in the Law of the Lord (Psa. 119:1-3), the Psalmist next reminds us that God has “*commanded us* to keep His precepts diligently” (v. 4). First, he sets before us a most attractive inducement to heed the Divine commands, and then we are reminded of God’s righteous claims upon us. We are His creatures, His subjects, and as our Maker and Ruler He has absolute authority over us. God’s will has been clearly revealed in His Word, and we are obligated to give our best attention and respect thereunto. God will not be put off with anything: He requires to be served with the utmost care and exactness. Thus, it is not left to our caprice as to whether or not we will walk in God’s Law—an absolute necessity is imposed.

“O that my ways *were* directed to keep Thy statutes” (v. 5). Awed by a sense of the authority of God, conscious of the propriety of His commanding His creatures, and of the justice of His claims, the Psalmist now felt his own weakness and utter insufficiency, his deep need of Divine grace, to enable him to fulfill his duty. This is one of the marks of a regenerate soul: first he is enlightened, and then he is convicted. Knowledge of the path of duty is communicated to him, and then consciousness is awakened of his inability to walk therein. Holiness begins with holy desires and aspirations: O that I were walking in the Law of the Lord, and keeping His precepts diligently. He realized that in the past, he had followed his *own* ways and paid little or no attention unto God’s authority. But now he longs for this to be radically altered.

This panting after a conformity to the Divine will is the breathing of the new nature, which is received at regeneration. A change of heart is ever evidenced by new desires and new delights. “For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, *our* love goes out to God, and as His love is a regard for our good, so our love for Him is a regard for His glory. Love to God is testified by a longing to be subject to Him: “For this is the love of God, that we *keep His commandments*; and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). The more clearly the believer discerns the wisdom, goodness, purity, and holiness of the Divine precepts, the more earnestly does

he long to obey them: “O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes”—this is the longing of the heart for directing grace.

Passing over the intervening verses, we observe, next, the Psalmist’s prayer for enabling grace: “Blessed art Thou O LORD: teach me Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:12). One of the duties of God’s people in connection with the Divine precepts is to turn them into prayer. This is in accord with the new covenant, where precepts and promises go hand in hand. What God requires from us, we may ask of Him, “Why doth God require what we cannot perform by our own strength? He doth it (1) to keep up His right; (2) to convince us of our impotency, and that upon a trial: without His grace we cannot do His work; (3) that the creature may express his readiness to obey; (4) to bring us to lie at His feet for grace” (Thomas Manton).

Prayer is the expression of our desires, and if we truly long to obey God, then we shall earnestly supplicate Him for enabling grace. The first thing sought is that God would *teach us* His statutes, which has reference to both the outward means and the inward grace. The letter of the Word and the preaching thereof must not be despised, for it is an ordinance which is appointed by God; yet it is only as the Divine *blessing* attends the same that we are truly profited. When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples we are told that He first opened to them the Scriptures, and then He opened their understandings (Luke 24:27, 45). The inward teaching of the Spirit consists in enlightening the understanding, inflaming the affections, and moving the will, for Divine teaching is ever accompanied by drawing (John 6:44, 45).

The great need for such inward teaching by the Spirit is our *obstinacy and prejudice*. To live for eternity instead of for time, to walk by faith and not by sight, to deny self and take up the cross daily, seems utter foolishness to the natural man. To yield ourselves wholly to God, is to row against the raging stream of our lusts. The old nature has a long start of the new, so that we are confirmed in evil habits, and therefore to act contrary to our natural bent and bias is likened unto cutting off right hands and plucking out right eyes. Moreover, every step we take, yea, attempt to take, along the highway of holiness, is hotly opposed by Satan. Thus, the need is real, urgent, imperative, that we should be Divinely empowered to discharge our duties. None but God Himself can work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Next we find the Psalmist declaring, “I *will meditate* in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways” (Psa. 119:15). Prayer is vain unless it be accompanied by faithful endeavour on our part. Here is David’s hearty resolution and purpose to discharge his responsibility. He knew that he would never have that respect for God’s ways of holiness which is their due, unless he made His precepts the subject of his constant thoughts. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If our minds were constantly engaged with sacred things, the savour thereof would be apparent in our conversation. But the fear of God and a delight for His Word must first be established in our hearts, for our thoughts follow our affections—that which the heart has no relish for, the mind finds irksome to dwell upon. Difficulties in holy duties lie not in the duties themselves, but in the backwardness of our affections.

“I will meditate in Thy precepts and have respect unto Thy ways” (v. 15). The *order* is deeply suggestive: meditation precedes obedient conduct. Meditation is to be far more than a pious reverie: it is an appointed means to God-pleasing conduct: “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, *that* thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written”

(Josh. 1:8). Meditation is not for the purpose of storing the mind with curious notions and subtle ideas, but is to be turned to practical use. Observe well, dear readers, it is not “I will meditate in Thy promises” (though that, too, has its proper place), but “in Thy *precepts*.” And why is it so essential that we *should* meditate therein? That they may be fixed more permanently in the memory, that they may make a deeper impression on the heart, and that we should the better discern their manifold application unto the varied duties of our lives.

“I will meditate in Thy precepts.” This was no passing fancy with David, like the forming of a New Year’s resolution that is never carried into execution. He repeats his determination, “I *will* meditate in Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:48), and again he declares, “I will meditate in Thy precepts” (v. 78). It is often said that in this strenuous and bustling age meditation is a lost art. True, and is not this one of the chief reasons why obedience to God’s commands is a lost practice? God complained of old, “My people do not *consider*” (Isa. 1:3): what goes in one ear, goes out the other. “When anyone heareth the Word of the kingdom, and *understandeth it not*, then cometh the Wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart” (Matt. 13:19): and how can the Word be understood unless it be prayerfully pondered, turned over and over in the mind. “Let these sayings *sink down* into your hearts” (Luke 9:44)—by means of serious reflection and steady contemplation thereof.

“Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight” (Psa. 119:35). Here we find David praying for *compelling grace*. Though he were a regenerate man and delighted in the Divine precepts, he was painfully conscious of the fact that there was still much in him which pulled the other way. The flesh lusted against the spirit, so that he could not do the things which he would. True, Divine grace has placed within the born-again soul an inclination and tendency toward that which is good, yet fresh supplies of grace are needed daily before he has strength *to perform* that which is good. And for this grace God would be sought unto. Why so? That we may learn that power belongs unto Him alone, and that we may be kept lowly in our own esteem. Were God to send sufficient rain in a day to suffice for a year, no notice would be taken of His acts of providence; and were He to grant us sufficient grace at the new birth to suffice the rest of our lives, we would quickly become prayerless.

It is a very humbling thing to be brought to realize that we must be “*made to go*” in the path of God’s commandments, yet sooner or later each believer experiences the truth of it. Godly desires and holy resolutions are not sufficient to produce actual obedience: God has to work in us to *do*, as well as to “*will*” of His good pleasure. Peter’s resolution was strong when he declared that he would not deny Christ, though all others should do so, yet in the hour of testing he discovered that he was as weak as water. We are told of Hezekiah that “God *left him*, to try him,” that he might know all that was in his heart” (2 Chron. 32:31); and at times He does this with all His people, that they may discover that without Him they can do *nothing*. When this discovery *is* made, the soul feels the suitability of this prayer, “*Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments.*”

“Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:36). In these words there is a confession implied, as well as a supplication expressed. There is an acknowledgment that the natural bent of the heart is away from God unto worldly things. That for which he prayed was that the bias of his heart should be turned unto God and His precepts. For the heart to be “*inclined*” unto God’s Word means for the affections to be

so inflamed unto holiness that *the will* is carried after them. Just as the power of sin lies in the love it has for the objects attracting us, so our aptness for godly duties lies in the *love* we have for them. When God says "I will *cause you* to walk in My statutes," it means that He will so enlighten the understanding and kindle the affections that the will is inclined thereto.

But let it be said again that diligent effort *on our part* must be added to praying, for God will not heed the petitions of the slothful and careless. Hence we must carefully note that not only did David beg God to, "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies," but he also declared, "*I have inclined* mine heart to perform Thy statutes always" (Psa. 119:112). It is our bounden duty to incline our hearts unto God's Law, yet it is only by God's enablement we can do so. Nevertheless, God deals not with us as sticks and stones, but as rational agents. He sets before us motives and inducements which it is our responsibility to respond unto. He appoints means, which it is our duty to use. He bestows blessings, which it is our obligation to improve—*trading with* the pound He has given us. And this David had done. True, it was all of grace, as he had been the first to acknowledge: nevertheless the fact remained he *had co-operated with* grace: working out what God had worked in; and all is vain till that be done.

Our space is exhausted. Does some captious critic ask, What has all the above to do with Hebrews 13:22? We answer, much every way, *How* are we to "suffer the Word of Exhortation?" Psalm 119 supplies a detailed answer! (1) By frequently reminding ourselves that compliance therewith is the way of true blessedness. (2) By constantly calling to mind the Divine authority with which it is invested. (3) By owning and bewailing our perverse disinclination thereto. (4) By earnest prayer for enabling grace. (5) By meditating daily therein. (6) By begging God to make us go in the path of His commandments, and (7), by diligent improvement of the grace given.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

77. His Purpose Thwarted.

In previous articles it has been pointed out that Joab was a man of a fierce and intractable spirit, and that he was ungodly and unscrupulous in principle. Once David had placed himself in his power (by making him his secret agent in the death of Uriah: 2 Sam. 11:14, 15), Joab thenceforth took matters more and more into his own hands, executing or disregarding the king's orders as best suited himself. Imperious and ruthless to the last degree, Joab would brook no interference with his own policy. Devoid of natural feeling, fearing neither God nor man, he hesitated not to slay any who stood in his way. Fearfully does his arrogance, treachery, and brutality appear in the incident which is to be before us. Feign would we pass by an episode so revolting, yet it is recorded in Holy Writ, and therefore it must contain some message that is needed by us.

We have also seen how that, at length, David made a determined effort to strip Joab of his power, by removing him from the head of the army. Accordingly Amasa was selected as the one to replace him. But the king's design was thwarted, frustrated by one of the vilest deeds chronicled in the Scriptures. Under pretence of paying obeisance to the new general, Joab thrust him through with the sword. Such an atrocity staggers the thoughtful, making them to wonder why God suffers such outrages to be perpetrated. This is indeed one of the dark mysteries of Divine providence—why the Lord permits such monsters of wickedness to walk the earth. Faith is assured that He must have some sufficient reason. Though often God giveth “no account of any of His matters” (Job 33:13), yet His Word does indicate, more or less clearly, the general principles which regulate His governmental dealings.

Much help is afforded upon the mystery of Providence when it is perceived that God makes “all things *work together*” (Rom. 8:28). When incidents are contemplated singly they naturally appear distorted, for they are viewed out of their proper perspective; but when we are able to examine them in relation to their antecedents and consequences, usually their significance is much more evident. The detached fragments of life are meaningless, bewildering, staggering; but put them together, and they manifest a design and purpose. Much in the present finds its explanation in that which preceded it in the past, while much in the present will also become intelligible by the sequel in the future—“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (John 13:7). If these principles were more steadily borne in mind, we should be less non-plussed by startling occurrences.

Our present incident is a case in point. Viewed by itself apart, the brutal murder of Amasa is indeed overwhelming—as to why God should permit him to come to such a fearful end. But viewed in relation to other things, contemplated in connection with that inexorable but righteous principle of sowing and reaping, light is cast on that dark scene. If we take the trouble to go back from effect to cause, we shall find that God had a just reason for employing Joab to thwart David's purpose, and that in meeting with such a death Amasa but received his just deserts. If this can be demonstrated, then we may perceive much more clearly why this revolting incident is recorded in Holy Writ; for since it is evident that God had a sufficient reason for suffering *this* tragedy to occur, we may rest the better assured that He has His own wise ends in things which often appear so puzzling and appalling to us in the world today.

There was a reason why God permitted Jacob to be so basely deceived about the fate of his beloved Joseph (Gen. 37:31-35): he was but reaping what he had sown in the deceiving of his father Isaac (Gen. 27). There was a reason why God permitted the Egyptians to treat the Hebrews with such cruelty and severity (Exo. 1 and 5): they were His instruments in punishing them for their idolatry and their refusal to heed the Divine call to cast away the heathen abominations with which they had defiled themselves (Ezek. 20:7, 8). There was a reason why God permitted Doeg to brutally slay no less than eighty-five of the priestly family (1 Sam. 22:18): it was the execution of the solemn judgment which He pronounced upon the house of Eli (1 Sam. 2:31-36; 3:12-16), the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children. There is a reason why God has permitted the Jews to be more hated and persecuted throughout this Christian era than any other people: the guilt of Christ's crucifixion rests on them and their children (Matt. 27:25).

"The curse causeless shall not come" (Prov. 26:2). While God is absolute sovereign and exercises His justice or His mercy as and when He pleases, yet He acts not arbitrarily: He neither punishes the innocent, nor does He pardon the guilty without reparation—i.e., through a Substitute. Hence, we may rest assured that when the Divine curse falls upon a person, there is due cause for the same. But let not the reader misunderstand us: we do not wish to imply that any of *us* are capable of ascertaining the reason or reasons which lie behind any calamity that may overtake either ourselves or any of our fellows. On the contrary, it lies entirely outside of our province to explain the mysteries of Divine Providence, and it would be the height of presumption to say *why* an affliction has been sent upon another—the book of Job warns loudly against such a procedure.

No, what we have been seeking to do is to point out that the most mysterious of Divine Providences, the most appalling events in history—whether involving individuals only or nations—*have* a satisfactory explanation, that God *has* sufficient reason for all that He does or permits. And in His Word He has graciously made this evident, by revealing in instance after instance the obvious connection between sowing and reaping. True, He has by no means done so in every case, for God has not written His Word either to vindicate His own character and conduct or to satisfy our curiosity. Sufficient is said in His Word to show that God is infinitely worthy of our utmost confidence, so that we should say with him whose faith was tried in a way and to an extent that few ever have been, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

We have followed out the present train of thought because some are so overwhelmed by the shocking things which take place in the world from time to time, that their faith is shaken. They know that so far from its affording any solution to the problem, to affirm that *God* has no connection with such things, is a serious error—denying His present government over and control of the wicked. Nay, it is because they recognize that God actually permits these outrages that they find it so difficult to harmonize this with His revealed character. We have called attention to some outstanding cases because they are to be regarded as *examples* of a general principle. Retributive justice is one of the Divine perfections, and though we are often far too short-sighted to perceive its workings, nevertheless, we may have implicit confidence in its operations, and as it is regulated by Omniscience, we know it makes no mistakes.

Resuming now at the point where we left off last month: "When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them" (2 Sam. 20:8). It will be remembered that in connection with David's journey back to Jerusalem, upon his crossing of the Jor-

dan, there had occurred a sharp controversy between the elders of Judah and the elders of Israel. The old spirit of rivalry and jealousy was stirred up, and an evil man, by name of Sheba, who belonged to the tribe of Saul, sought to capitalize the situation, and called upon those belonging to Israel to abandon the cause of David. In this he was, for the moment, successful, for we are told, "So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri" (2 Sam. 20:2). This threatened the most serious consequences, and unless Sheba's plans were nipped in the bud, David would be faced with another rebellion.

The king recognized the danger, and at once took measures to meet it. Now was the opportunity, he felt, to put into execution the plan which he had formed for the removing of Joab from the head of his forces. Calling Amasa to him, he said, "Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present." As we saw, there was some delay, so, "David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, to pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us." Then we are told, "And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba." They had some distance to go, and apparently the great stone in Gibeon was to be the gathering-point of David's forces, for, "when they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them." By this we understand that the men whom Amasa had gathered together came up with those led by Abishai, and that Amasa, according to David's orders, now took charge of the entire expedition.

And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out" (v. 8). It seems from this that Joab had accompanied the soldiers in a private capacity. He pretended to gladly submit to the new arrangement, and to be full of zeal for David's cause, prepared to do his part in preventing another general uprising. But outward appearances are often deceptive. In reality, Joab was determined to avenge the dishonour done to him and assassinate the one who had been appointed to displace him. As he advanced to greet the new commander-in-chief, his sword fell out of its sheath, and to prevent its falling to the ground he caught it in his left hand. It looked as though the sword had become unsheathed by accident, but the sequel shows it was by design, and was but a subtle device to cloak his vile purpose.

"And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died" (vv. 9, 10). How the real character of Joab was here displayed! Treacherous, ruthless, blatant, utterly hardened. Amasa was his own cousin, yet ties of blood meant nothing to this callous wretch. Amasa had been definitely appointed by the king to lead his forces, but the royal authority counted for naught to Joab. Moreover, it was in front of all the troops that Joab committed this awful crime, caring not what they thought nor afraid of what they might do. Thoroughly lawless and defiant, he never hesitated to take matters into his own hands and crush whoever stood in his way.

Viewed as an isolated event, here was a most appalling crime. A man in the path of duty brutally murdered without a moment's warning. And yet a holy God permitted it, for most certainly He could have prevented it had He so pleased. Why, then, did He suffer

David's purpose to be so rudely thwarted? And why was Joab allowed to slay Amasa? The two questions are quite distinct, and must be considered separately. Unspeakably solemn though the subject be, yet earlier events cast their light on this dark scene. After David's murder of Uriah God had said, "the sword shalt never depart from thine house" (2 Sam. 12:10), and Amasa was David's *own nephew*: see 2 Samuel 17:25 and compare 1 Chronicles 2:13, 16. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). It found David out: in the death of Bathsheba's child, in the raping of Tamar, in the murder of Ammon, in the death of Absalom, and now in the slaying of Amasa.

And what of Amasa himself? Ah, was he one who had served the king with unswerving loyalty? No indeed, far from it. And what of the stock from which he came? Were his parents pious, so that the blessing of the Lord might be expected upon their offspring? And again the answer is no. "And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab" (2 Sam. 17:25). Thus, Amasa had not only failed David at the most critical juncture, but he had taken an active and prominent part against him. And now he was slain, justly slain, by one who had fought for the king. 2 Samuel 17:25 also tells us, "Which Amasa was a man's son, whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah, Joab's mother"—so that here again it was a case of the sins of the parent being visited upon the child. Thus, revolting though this episode be, we may see in it the righteous judgment of God.

"So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab and he that is for David, let him go after Joab" (2 Sam. 20:10, 11). This was playing politics with a vengeance, pretending that fealty to David demanded that the army should follow the leadership of Joab—how often the people are induced to follow a course which is evil under the impression that they are furthering a righteous cause! Why, these soldiers had just seen Joab slay the very man whom the king had called to head his forces: how, then, could they be for David if they followed this murderer? But, few people think for themselves, and fewer still are regulated by moral principle. The great majority are easily imposed upon, accepting what any glib-tongued or forcible leader tells them.

"And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri" (vv. 12, 13). Though none had raised a hand against the cold-blooded murderer, they had sufficient decency to stand their ground until the body of his victim was removed from the public highway and respectfully covered. This done, they unanimously followed Joab. He might be impetuous and imperious, still he was a valiant warrior, and in the eyes of these soldiers, *that* covered a multitude of sins. Moreover, was he not pursuing Sheba, the enemy of their king? There could not, then, be anything radically wrong with him. Such has often been the superficial logic of the multitude, as the testimony of history abundantly illustrates. Yet faith discerns One behind the scenes working all things after the counsel of His own will.

Sheba had meanwhile taken refuge in the "city," or fortified town of Abel. Thither came Joab and his forces to besiege it, battering upon the outer wall to throw it down. Whereupon a "wise woman" of the city expostulated with Joab, protesting against the needless destruction of the town and the slaying of its inhabitants, reminding him that by

so doing, he would "swallow up the heritage of the Lord" (v. 19). Joab at once made it known that all he was after was the capture of the arch-rebel against David, assuring the woman that as soon as that son of Belial was delivered up to him, he and his forces would withdraw. Accordingly, Sheba was executed and his head thrown over the wall. Thus perished one more of those who set themselves against the Lord's anointed. "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him" (Psa. 140:11).

The readiness of Joab to heed the wise counsel of the woman of Abel is not to be taken as a redeeming feature on this occasion, still less as conflicting with what we have said above about his general character. Joab had no personal grievance against the inhabitants of that city: had *that* been the case, it had indeed gone hard with them. Moreover, to have made a wholesale slaughter of those innocent Israelites, would obviously have been against the interests of the kingdom at large, and Joab was too politic to be guilty of so grave a blunder. "And Joab returned unto Jerusalem unto the king" (v. 22). Unabashed at his crime, conscious of the guilty hold which he had over him, Joab feared not to face his royal master. Thus was David's purpose thwarted, and as though to particularly emphasize the fact, the chapter closes saying, "Now Joab was over all the hosts of Israel" etc. (v. 23).—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

7. *The Messianic.*

We have designated this final covenant “the Messianic” rather than “the Christian” or “the New” covenant, partly for the sake of alliteration and partly for the sake of emphasis. Before we consider its special nature and contents, we must first bridge the interval that elapsed between the making of the Davidic Covenant and the commencement of the Christian era—an interval of approximately a thousand years. From the times of David a special feature gradually became more prominent in the history of the covenant people. *The gift of prophecy*, enjoyed by the Psalmist, was now more widely diffused than it had been previously, and was conferred in greater fullness and upon a larger number of individuals, who in succession were raised up and in different degrees exercised a most important influence upon the nation of Israel.

This gift of prophecy was by no means a new one. Moses possessed it in a large measure, yet under conditions which separated him from all who followed up to the coming of Christ. With him God spake, “mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the LORD did he behold” (Num. 12:8). In this respect he was an eminent type of Him that was to come, on whom the prophetic influence rested in unlimited measure: of this, God, through Moses, gave intimation when He said, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18, 19). To others, during the life of Moses, the gift was communicated, if only for a season. The most striking case was that of Balaam, a worthless character, who, against his own intentions, was constrained to pronounce blessings on Israel.

In the period that followed we find traces of its bestowment, though only occasionally, and after considerable intervals, until the last of the judges. That eminent person, Samuel, was not only a prophet himself, but on him was conferred the honour of founding schools for young men for the prophetic office. The object of those institutions, so far as we can gather, seems to have been to impart a knowledge of the Law to men suitably endowed, fitting them to teach and influence the Nation. From what little is recorded of them, we may conclude that those sons of the prophets enjoyed, as circumstances required, special assistance from God in the work to which they were devoted. On David, however, the gift was conferred in unusual measure, the fruit of which appears in his inspired Psalms. Several of his contemporaries were similarly endowed. From this period the prophetic element, with some brief intervals, became more prominent and influential in Israel, increasing in the copiousness of its communications till the depression of the house of David during the captivity.

The peculiar work of the Prophet has not been always correctly understood. That element in some of them which had respect to the foretelling of future events has attracted undue attention and been magnified out of all proper proportions. This may be accounted for from its striking uniqueness, and the use to which it has been put as an important department of Christian evidence—drawing from it an invincible argument for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Yet this concentration upon the predictive aspect of prophecy has served to create a widespread misconception concerning the nature of the gift itself and the chief design in its exercise. The main purpose of the prophetic office has

almost been lost sight of. By many today it is unknown that its leading object contemplated *the practical* spiritual interests of the people: that the prophets were principally employed in imparting instruction to them, exposing their sins, calling them to repent, setting before them the paths of duty, and in various ways seeking to promote their religious improvement.

Prediction, in the strict sense of the term, occupies a very inconspicuous place in the ministry of Moses, the chief of all the Prophets. Some of the more prominent among them—as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha—seem hardly to have uttered any predictions at all. Their business consisted mainly in denouncing the idolatrous practices of the people, and in vindicating the claims of God to their homage and service. It is true that in the writings of two or three, predictions largely abound; nevertheless, if they are examined with care it will quickly be seen that *their* ministry, too, had largely to do with the existing spiritual conditions of those among whom they laboured. Take for example Isaiah, who of all the Prophets was perhaps most honoured with revelations of the future, and a cursory investigation will show that foretelling constituted only one portion of the message he delivered. The true idea of the Prophet is that of a man raised up to witness for God, His mouthpiece to the people—to rebuke sin, counsel in perplexity, and instruct them in the ways of the Lord.

Even the positive predictions delivered by the Prophets, while contemplating the benefit of future generations (by which alone, on their fulfillment they could be fully understood), were subservient to the immediate purposes of their ministry, by affording encouragement and hope unto those who feared God amidst the general disorders and declension of the times in which they lived. This plain view of the case, which numerous and obvious facts support, requires to be understood in order to a correct conception of the prophetic Scriptures in their general structure. On the subject of *the Covenants*, the predictive portions of their writings, as would naturally be expected, have the more direct bearing, yet the practical parts, which deal with the sins and duties of the people, make their own contribution—the practical sections furnishing many striking illustrations of the previous revelations and give definiteness to the meaning of many particulars embraced in the Covenants.

The didactic and the practical are often strangely mingled. Statements which at first bear on present duty, sometimes insensibly, and at other times more abruptly, pass into representations of the future which startle us, not less by the suddenness of their introduction, than by the vividness of their colouring. All, however, is made strictly subservient to the immediate purpose which the Prophets had in view. The intimate blending of these different elements makes it far from easy to separate them in all instances, nor is it necessary to attempt it. As they now stand, they more effectually promoted the end in view in the spiritual improvement of the people. The glowing prospects of the future either supplied an incentive to the discharge of present duty, or ministered to their support under present trial. Still, to the predictions, strictly so called, we must look as the chief means of furnishing the fullest light on the prospective covenant transactions of God with His people.

The nature and extent of the help we shall derive from these intimations of the future will turn, to a large extent, on the mode in which we deal with them. The interpretation of prophecy, in all its principles and results, is a large subject, but a few words are called for here so as to prevent misconception. A slight examination of the prophetic Scriptures is

enough to show that their language is not infrequently taken—leaving out of consideration the figures which natural scenery supply—either from past events in the history of Israel or from the sacred institutions and arrangements with which they had long been familiar. And of course this is quite natural when we bear in mind the typical character impressed on the Old Testament dispensation throughout; yea, probably it was necessary as the best means of imparting to the Jewish people an intelligible representation of the future.

The creation of an entirely new nomenclature in literal adaptation to the better things to come, instead of being understood, would only have occasioned perplexity, and defeated the object for which the revelation was given. Be this as it may, the fact is certain that in terms peculiar to the theocracy, or descriptive of theocratic events, the revelation of future things was made. In other words, the language of the type is familiarly employed in delineation of the antitype. Thus, for example, “Israel” is the term used in reference to the spiritual seed; “visions and dreams” (the current mode of the Divine communications in those times) describe the future operations of the Holy Spirit under the Gospel dispensation. “David,” in like manner, is the name applied again and again to the Messiah, the true Shepherd of Israel; and the events of the future are represented in terms derived from the dispensation then existing. Occasionally express statements are made affirming that the order of things then in being was destined to pass away—as in Jeremiah 3:16; at other times, the change impending was as plainly implied.

On this principle, then, these predictions are constructed almost throughout, and on no other can they be correctly interpreted. It was thus that the Apostles dealt with them, yet it is sadly overlooked by many of our moderns. A slavish adherence to a literal interpretation—which is the survival of a Jewish error—if consistently carried out, necessarily leads to consequences which few are prepared to face, opposed as they are to both the letter and the spirit of the Gospel. It is certainly a humiliating proof of human infirmity, even in good men, that at this late date, the principle on which so large a part of the Word is to be interpreted has yet to be settled, and that from the same prophetic statements the most diverse conclusions are derived. Surely it should be apparent that since the literal cannot be fairly applied without eliciting conclusions contradicting apostolic testimony, we are bound to abide by the typical and figurative as the only safe principle.

There is one other misconception against which we must guard. It must not be concluded that because the Messianic predictions are for the most part plain to us, acquainted as we are with the events in which they found their fulfillment, that therefore they must have been equally plain unto those to whom they were first delivered, but from whose times these events were far distant. In dealing with those Scriptures for our own edification, it is our privilege to take advantage of all the light furnished by the New Testament, but in so doing we must not forget that *our* position is vastly different from that of those amongst whom the Prophets exercised their ministry. Take, for instance, the predictions expecting the Messiah—the great subject of the Covenant promises. Consider the many references to His lowly condition, His sufferings and death, and then to the triumphant strain in which His exaltation and glory are so largely set forth. Some passages represent Him as a man amongst His fellow-men; others as the mighty God. How perplexing must those representations—apparently so much at variance with each other—have been to the Jews!

Keeping these things in mind we may now observe that the ministry of the Prophets, commencing with David, and, after a break, continuing from Joel onwards, was of considerable value in filling up the truth which, in brief outline, the Covenants exhibited, yet leaving much to be still supplied by the actual fulfillment of the promises they contained. No one contributed more to this result than Isaiah. On the one hand, he furnishes the most vivid portrayals of the treatment which the Messiah would receive from His countrymen, and of the nature and severity of the sufferings He was to endure, both at the hands of God and of men, in the accomplishment of His work. On the other hand, he supplies the most blessed testimony to the essential dignity of His Person, and the most animating assurances of the extent and glory of His kingdom; and, under highly figurative language, describes the beneficial and peaceful effects of His government and the spiritual results of His reign.

With few exceptions, the rest of the Prophets corroborated and supplemented the testimony of Isaiah. The Person and work of the Messiah are represented from various angles, the stupendous results of His undertaking depicted under striking imagery, and Divine wisdom is clearly evidenced in the phraseology—derived from the religious institutions of the Jews or from events of their history—which is employed to give vividness to their representations. The effects of this must have been to impart to the mass of the people a new and deeper realization of the magnitude of the results involved in the Covenants under which they were placed, however perverted their views of the nature of these results may have been; and to awaken in the godly remnant of them expectations of a future immensely surpassing anything yet realized in their history—a future with which, in some mysterious way, their own spiritual life was bound up.

As the earthly prospects of Israel became darker, through the growing corruption of the nation, hastening towards that catastrophe which destroyed their temple, and for a time removed them as captives into a strange land, those Prophets who then exercised their ministry were far more explicit in regard to the nature of the great alteration which the appearing of the Messiah would produce and of the blessings which He would dispense. In their hands the future assumed a more precise shape, and the expectations warranted by their language exhibited an expansion far in advance of anything to be found in the Scriptures. This was just what the circumstances of the time required. One can readily conceive the despondency with which the pious Jews must have looked on the course which events were taking. The idolatrous propensities of the masses, the general immorality which was encouraged by idol worship, the common contempt with which God's servants were treated, the wickedness of their kings, and the frequent invasion of their land by hostile forces, all presaged the dissolution of their state.

When assured that the Divine patience was at last exhausted, that the infliction of the oft-threatened punishment was nigh at hand, and that the triumph of their enemies was certain, at what conclusion could they arrive than that for their sins they were forsaken of God, that the Covenant was about to be made void, and that all their hopes would soon be buried in the ruin of their country? They might not unreasonably have supposed that the stability of the Covenant was dependent upon their obedience, and since that obedience had been withheld, and all the gracious measures taken to reclaim them had failed—since, in the review of their past history, no lesson was so impressively taught as their incurable tendency to sin—they might have concluded that God was absolved from His promise, and that even His righteousness demanded the people should be cut off and left

to the ruin which they had so persistently courted, the near approach of which everything seemed to indicate.

Such a despondent condition required special encouragement, and the form which that encouragement assumed deserves particular attention. It consisted in the assurance of a thorough change in the dispensation under which Israel had hitherto been placed, and of the establishment of a *new covenant* under the immediate administration of the Messiah, the purely spiritual character of which is described in language far more explicit than had hitherto been given. This more glorious constitution of things they were taught was the designed issue of all God's dealings towards them, and to it their hopes were henceforth to be confined. Notwithstanding their present calamities, the continuance of their national existence was assured to them until in due time the new order of things was inaugurated. Could anything be conceived better fitted to enkindle the hopes and communicate the richest consolation to the devout portion of the Jews than such an assurance?—A.W.P.

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

There is nothing more outstanding today in the sad state of Christendom than *the abounding of empty professors* (those with a non-saving or dead faith), and as so many suppose that this is a certain precursor of the Great Apostacy which will mark the terminal of this age, we give further quotations to show that identically the same feature has prominently marked other generations in the past. "Christ is a Lord to command us to walk in the way of life. The fault of our times is that multitudes profess Christ, yet many allow of no Christ but of their own devising, namely, a Christ that must be a Saviour to deliver from Hell, but not a Lord to command them; *that* they cannot brook . . . Faith was never more professed, yet there was never less true faith" (Perkins, Vol. 2, pp. 163, 230). And this, be it noted, was in the palmy days of the Reformation!

"These are days wherein we have as sad and tremendous examples of apostasy, back-sliding, and falling from high and glorious pitches in profession, as any age can parallel. As many washed swine returning to their mire, and as many Demases going after the present evil world, and men going out from the church which were never truly and properly of it, as many sons of the morning and children of high illumination and gifts sitting in darkness, and that of all sorts; as ever in so short a space of time since the name of Christ was known upon the earth. What through the deviating of some to the ways of the world, and the lusts of the flesh; what of others, to spiritual wickedness and abominations; it is seldom that we see a professor to hold out in the glory of his profession to the end" (John Owen, Vol. 6, p. 123).

"It were enough to excite a smile if the subject was not too serious for laughter, to behold the seeming zeal with which numbers in the present day (A.D. 1800) are hastening to convert *others*, many of whom, it is to be feared, were never converted *themselves*; and to hear the indignation expressed by many against infidels, who, as far as relates to any saving work of grace wrought upon their own souls, are no less infidels under a different bearing. All such Christians are Christians only by system. Their creed is derived from their fathers, and is either the effect of habit or education" (Robert Hawker, Vol. 7, p. 500). As it is now, so it was then; as it was then, so it is now—thousands of nominal Christians engaged in "personal" and "missionary" work, who are ignorant of some of the most rudimentary principles of the Faith, working merely in the energy of the flesh.

How the true servant of God bemoans the *lack of response* today unto faithful preaching, the stolid indifference of his hearers: neither the terrors of the Law nor the attractions of the Gospel making any impression. Elderly evangelists are complaining how much rarer genuine conversions are now than they were thirty years ago. But this is no new thing. "This age is miserable if we regard the practice of faith and repentance which God requireth: for men live in ignorance, without knowledge, they go on in looseness of life without reformation, which is both odious to God and scandalous to men; not one in an hundred turn to God at the preaching of His Word, renewing his ways by daily repentance" (Perkins, Vol. 3, p. 249). "How many have melting hearts when they hear God blasphemed and the religion of Christ wronged? How few are there that yield to the motions of the Spirit! We may take up a wonderful complaint of the hardness of men's hearts in these days, who never tremble at the Word of God. Neither His promises, nor threatenings, nor commands, will melt their hearts" (R. Sibbes, about 1630, Vol. 6, p. 40).

“We are fallen into times in which the thing and doctrine of it is forgotten and laid aside, in which there are multitudes of professors but few converts, many that seem to walk in the way of life, but never came in at the strait gate. There is a zeal amongst us to advance this or that reformation in religion, and it hath been all the cry. But, my brethren, where is *regeneration* called for or regarded? We have seen the greatest outward alterations that ever were in any age; kingdoms turned and converted into commonwealths, the powers of Heaven and earth shaken; but men, although they turn this way and that, from this or that way, from this opinion to that, yet their hearts generally turn upon the same hinges they were hung upon when they came into this world. In this University of Oxford we have had puttings out and puttings in, but where is putting off the old man and putting on the new? Where do we hear (as we did formerly) of souls carrying home the Holy Spirit from sermons, of their being changed and made new, and of students running weeping to their studies crying out ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ This was heretofore a common cry. Conversion is the only standing miracle in the Church, but I may truly say this miracle is *well-nigh ceased*; we hear of few of them” (Thomas Goodwin, 1670, Vol. 6, p. 157).

Nor is the low state of spirituality which now obtains so generally amongst those we have reason to believe *are* the Lord’s people, any new thing. “O that this union among saints was more conspicuous and evident. But with grief of heart be it spoken, little is to see of that, whilst much of that which is the opposite to it is everywhere too apparent. What schisms, rents, divisions are to be found even amongst the Lord’s people” (J. Jacobson, 1647, p. 55). “The English Christians heretofore were famous for their strict walking, constant communion with God, undaunted zeal, sweet experiences, holy conferences and communications, whereas now we meet with but such as are, like the vain men of Israel, of a light spirit, loose conversation; given to vain wranglings and disputes, more than to practicing a holy life, and measuring religion not so much by the power of godliness as by form and faction, and siding with parties” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 5, p. 424).

“We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in great measure departed from us. What a woeful withering wind has blown upon God’s vineyard in the land! We are fallen from our first love, our former zeal for God and His precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer’s crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people in Scotland, as once in a day it has been; and the worst of it is, that though it be so, though gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it: we make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return to the Lord” (Eb. Erskine, about 1760, Vol. 1, p. 112).

“We live in a day when the love of many (of whom we would hope the best), is, at least, grown very cold. The effects of a narrow, suspicious, censorious and selfish spirit are but too evident amongst professors of the Gospel. If I were to insist at large upon the offenses of this kind which abound amongst us, I should seem almost reduced to the necessity either of retracting what I have advanced, or of maintaining that a great part (if not the greatest part) of those who profess to know the Lord, are deceiving themselves with a form of godliness, being destitute of its power: for though they may abound in knowledge and gifts, and have much to say upon the subject of Christian experience, they appear *to lack* the great, the inimitable, the indispensable criterion of true Christianity, *a love to the brethren*; without which all other seeming advantages and attainments are of

no good” (John Newton, 1770, Vol. 1, p. 180). “Whether the present age be worse than others which have preceded it, I shall not determine [wise man!], but this is manifest, that it abounds not only in infidelity and profligacy, but with great numbers of loose characters among professing Christians. Even of those who retain a decency of character, many are sunk into a *Laodicean lukewarmness*” (Andrew Fuller, 1810, Vol. 4, p. 355).

Reference has previously been made to the fearful profligacy of the court of Charles the First, and the open wickedness which prevailed generally in this land throughout his reign. Under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell conditions greatly improved, but after his demise (in 1658) and upon the enthronement of Charles the Second, the rivers of evil soon broke their banks, spreading moral desolation far and wide. “Few have any idea of the flood of ungodliness and profanity which characterized the reign of Charles II. It was not merely libertinism and the most unblushing profligacy which stalked abroad in open day, but the most avowed infidelity and coarsest profaneness. It was as if all Hell had broken loose; and as if ungodliness, chained up by the iron hand of Cromwell, would now take its full swing, and make ample amends for past deprivations. The Puritans, called so derisively from their purity of principle and conduct, were hooted down, and driven from society as disturbers of the public peace” (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 334).

“Alas, do not many prop up themselves in some earthly thing, as if there were no God in Israel to be sought unto; strengthening themselves in their own righteousness, as if there were no Mediator . . . I am sore afraid that most of the knowledge of God and Christ we have in this age (1670) is a mere notion of faith without value, like a ring without the diamond” (S. Charnock, Vol. 4, p. 58). In his dedication of George Swinnock’s “The Beauty of Magistracy,” Thomas Hall, addressing “All the prudent, zealous, and magnanimous Magistrates, Judges, and Gentry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in September, 1659, began: ‘My Lords, and Gentlemen—The dedication of this treatise was intended for the Parliament, but that being dissolved, it most properly falls to you, who are, under God, the pillars of the state. *Such is the corruption of the times* we live in, that we are put to dispute every inch of the way with enemies of truth—Magistracy, ministry, Sabbaths, sacraments, Trinity, Scriptures: all things are now questioned, nothing believed or practiced by many’ ” (Swinnock’s Works, Vol. 4, p. 147).

“How is this land filled with sin, yea, with the worst of sins, against the Holy One of Israel. Hell seems to be broken loose, and men try to exceed, and excel one another in all kinds of wickedness. Oh the scarlet sins that are now to be found under many scarlet robes! [Romanist Bishops.] Oh the black transgressions that are now to be found under many black cassocks! [Priests.] Oh the new-found oaths, the hellish blasphemies, the horrible filthiness, and abominable debaucheries that are committed daily in the face of the sun! How shameless, how senseless are sinners grown in these days! Sin everywhere now appears with a whore’s forehead. What open opposition does Christ meet with in His Gospel, offices, members, ways, worship, and works! How does all iniquity abound, and how bold and resolute are multitudes now in dishonouring of God, in polluting His ordinances, in destroying their own souls, and in treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5)! But the worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be; the more profane the age is wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be” (T. Brooks, 1650, Vol. 4, p. 364).

“Wickedness like a flood is like to drown our English world; it begins already to be above the tops of the mountains; it has almost swallowed up all: our youth, our middle age, old age. O debauchery, debauchery, what hast thou done in England! Thou hast corrupted our young men, hast made our old men beasts; thou hast deflowered our virgins, and hast made numerous whores; thou hast made our earth to reel to and fro like a drunkard; it is in danger to be removed like a cottage; yea, it is, because transgression is so heavy upon it, like to ‘fall and rise no more’ (Isa. 24:20). O that I could mourn for England, and for the sins that are committed therein, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God’s wrath are about to deal with us (Ezek. 9:1, 2). Well, I have written, and by God’s assistance shall pray, that this flood may abate in England; and could I but see the tops of the mountains above it, I should think these waters were abating.

“It is the duty of those that can, to cry out against this deadly plague; yea, to lift up their voice as with a trumpet against it, that men may be awakened about it, fly from it, as from that which is the greatest evils. Sin pulled angels out of Heaven, pulls men down to Hell, and overthroweth kingdoms. Who that sees the land in danger, will not set the beacons on a flame? Who that sees the devils as roaring lions continually devouring souls, will not make an outcry? But above all, when we see sin, sinful sin, swallowing up a nation, sinking of a nation, and bringing its inhabitants to temporal; spiritual, and eternal ruin, shall we not cry out, ‘They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink; they are intoxicated with deadly poison of sin, which will, if its malignity be not by wholesome means allayed, bring soul and body, estate and country, and all, to ruin and destruction’ ” (John Bunyan, 1660, from “The Life and Death of Mr. Badman”). And for such faithful witnessing Bunyan was cast into prison.

One of the saddest features of our day is the blatant and almost universal desecration of the Holy Sabbath. Yet other ages besides ours have been cursed with the same fearful sin. “Men make this their business: they will be rich, and hence it is they are not only unmerciful to themselves in wearing and wasting their own spirits with carking cares, but to such also as they employ; neither regarding the souls or bodies of men: scarce affording them the liberty of the Lord’s Day (as has been too common in our Newfoundland employments), or if they have it, yet they are so worn out with incessant labours that that precious time is spent either in sleep or idleness. It is no wonder God gives you more rest than you would have, since that day of rest hath been no better improved. This over-doing hath not been the least cause of our undoing” (John Flavell, 1660, Vol. 5, p. 272). It has long been our own conviction that the frequent spectacle of millions of artisans, in different countries, being out of work, *is a Divine judgment* for so much labour upon His day.

“In these late years how has profaneness, like a flood, broke in upon us on the Lord’s Day! And therefore it highly concerns all the profaners of God’s Sabbath to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to say, The Lord is righteous, the Lord is righteous, though He has laid our habitations desolate. Who is so great a stranger in our English Israel as not to know that God was more dishonoured on the Sabbath, within and without the walls of London, than He was in all the other six days of the week? and therefore let us not think it strange that such a fire (the terrible fire of London in 1666) was kindled on that day as has reduced all to ashes. What antic habits did men and women put on, on this day! What frothy, empty discourses and intemperance was to be found at many men’s tables this day! How were ale-houses, stews, and Moorfields filled with debauched sin-

ners this day! No wonder then if London be laid desolate” (Thomas Brooks, 1667, Vol. 6, p. 114).

We are not unmindful of the fact that some evilly-minded persons may be inclined to turn to a wrong use of what has been advanced, making the same a cloak for their own carnality, arguing that *they* are no worse, nay, not so bad as many who lived in by-gone days. Nor must Christians persuade themselves that they are obliged to swim with the tide, that in view of the degeneracy of our days it cannot be expected that they should be as godly and fruitful as if they had lived during a time of spiritual revival. Let each of us earnestly endeavour to take to heart and turn into fervent prayer those timely words of Thomas Brooks, “The worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be; the more profane the age wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be.”

Nor are we unmindful of another danger. In discovering that the evils of our decadent age are but fresh outbursts of those moral and spiritual diseases which have often plagued previous generations, we lose or lessen our horror and sorrow over the wickedness which now stalks through the world. May God graciously deliver us from stoical indifference at the sad sights which now stare us in the face on every hand. God has promised a special blessing to those who “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done” in our land (Ezek. 9:4). Let us seek to drink more deeply into the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem. Finally, let us marvel and adore the infinite patience of Him who “bears with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

4. *Its Verity.*

Before proceeding further with an orderly opening up of this profound but precious doctrine, it may be better (especially for the benefit of those less familiar with the subject) if we now demonstrate *its Scripturalness*. We must not take anything for granted, and as numbers of our readers have never received any systematic instruction upon the subject—yea, some of them know next to nothing about it—and as others have heard and read only perversions and caricatures of this doctrine, it seems essential that we should pause and establish its verity. In other words, our present object is to furnish proof that what we are now writing upon is not some theological invention of Calvin's or any other man's, but is clearly revealed in Holy Writ, namely, that God, before the foundation of the world, made a difference between His creatures, singling out certain ones to be the special objects of His favour.

In this article we shall deal with the subject in a more or less general way—occupying ourselves with *the fact itself*; reserving the more detailed analysis and the drawing of distinctions for later articles. Let us begin by asking, Has God an elect people? Now this question must be propounded to God Himself, for He alone is competent to answer it. It is, therefore, to His Holy Word we have to turn, if we would learn *His* answer thereto. But ere doing so, we need to earnestly beg God to grant us a teachable spirit, that we may humbly receive the Divine testimony. The things of God can no man know, till God Himself declares them; but when He *has* declared them, it is not only crass folly, but wicked presumption, for anyone to contend or disbelieve. The Holy Scriptures are the Rule of Faith, as well as the Rule of Conduct. To the Law and the Testimony, then, we now turn.

Concerning the nation of Israel we read, “The LORD thy God hath *chosen* thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the earth” (Deut. 7:6); “For the LORD hath *chosen* Jacob unto Himself, Israel for His peculiar treasure” (Psa. 135:4); “But thou, Israel, art My Servant, Jacob whom I have *chosen*, the seed of Abraham My friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, thou art My servant; I have *chosen* thee, and not cast thee away” (Isa. 41:8, 9). These testimonies make it unmistakably plain that ancient Israel were the favoured, elect people of God. We do not here take up the question as to why God chose them, or as to *what* they were chosen unto; but notice only the bare fact itself. In Old Testament times God had an elect Nation.

Next it is to be observed that even in favoured Israel God made a distinction: there was an election within an election; or, in other words, God had a special people of His own from amongst the Nation itself. “For they are *not all Israel*, which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all *children*; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Rom. 9:6-8). “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew...I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal: even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the *election* of grace . . . Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the *election* hath obtained it” (Rom. 11:4-7). Thus we see that even in invisible Israel, the nation chosen to outward privileges, God had an election—a *spiritual* Israel, the objects of His love.

The same principle of Divine selection appears plainly and conspicuously in the teaching of the New Testament. There, too, it is revealed that God has a peculiar people, the subjects of His special favour, His own dear children. The Saviour and His Apostles de-

scribe this people in various ways, and often designate them by the term of which we here treat. "For the *elect's* sake those days shall be shortened . . . insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very *elect* and they shall gather together His *elect* from the four winds" (Matt. 24:22, 24, 31). "Shall not God avenge His own *elect*, which cry day and night unto Him?" (Luke 18:7). "Who shall lay anything to the charge of *God's elect*?" (Rom. 8:33). "That the purpose of God according to *election* might stand" (Rom. 9:11). "I endure all things for the *elect's* sake" (2 Tim. 2:10), "The faith of *God's elect*" (Titus 1:1). Many other passages might be quoted, but these are sufficient to clearly demonstrate that God has an elect people. God Himself says He has, who will dare say He has not?!

The word "elected" in one of its forms, or its synonym "chosen" in one of its forms, occurs upon the sacred page considerably over one hundred times. The term, then, belongs to the Divine vocabulary. It must mean something; it must convey some definite idea. What, then, is its significance? The humble inquirer will not force a construction upon the word, or seek to read into it his own preconceptions, but will prayerfully endeavour to ascertain the mind of the Spirit. Nor should this be difficult, for there is no word in human language which has a more specific meaning. The concept universally expressed by it is that one is taken and another left, for if all were taken there would be no "choice." Moreover, the right of choice always belongs to him who chooses: the act is his, the motive is his. Therein "choice" differs from compulsion, the paying of a debt, discharging an obligation, or responding to the requirements of justice. Choice is a free and sovereign act.

Let there be no uncertainty about the meaning of our term. God has made a choice, for election signifies selection and appointment. God has exercised His own sovereign will and singled out from the mass of His creatures those upon whom He determined to bestow His special favours. There cannot be an election without a singling out, and there cannot be a singling out without a passing by. The doctrine of election means, that, from all eternity, God made a choice of those who were to be His special treasure, His dear children, the co-heirs of Christ. The doctrine of election means that before His Son became incarnate God marked out the ones who should be saved by Him. The doctrine of election means that God has left nothing to chance: the accomplishment of His purpose, the success of Christ's undertaking, the peopling of Heaven, is not contingent upon the fickle caprice of the creature. God's will, and not man's will, fixes destiny.

Let us now call attention to a most remarkable and little known example of Divine election. "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and *the elect angels*" (1 Tim. 5:21). If then, there are "elect angels" there must necessarily be non-elect, for there cannot be the one without the other. God, then, in the past made a selection amongst the hosts of heaven, choosing some to be vessels of honour and others to be vessels of dishonour. Those He chose unto His favour, stood steadfast, remained in subjection to His Will. The rest fell when Satan revolted, for upon his apostasy he dragged down with himself one third of the angels (Rev. 12:4). Concerning them we read, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness" (2 Peter 2:4). But those of them who belong to the election of grace are "the holy angels": holy as the consequence of their election, and not elected because they were holy, for election antedated their creation. The supreme example of election is seen in Christ; the next highest in that God made choice amongst the celestial hierarchies.

Let us next observe and admire the marvel and singularity of God's choice among men. He has selected a portion of Adam's race to be the high favourites of Heaven. "Now this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the Heaven, even the Heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did He not select one from the majestic order of angels, or from the flashing cherubim and seraphim who stand around His throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a mighty race of angels, and why were not those chosen of God from before the foundation of the world? What could there be in *man*, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did He not assume the nature of angels, and take *them* into union with Himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There was something congruous if He had said unto the angels. 'Ye shall be My sons.' But no! Though all these were His own, He passes them by and stoops to man" (C. H. Spurgeon).

Some may suggest that the reason why God made choice of Adam's descendants in preference to the angels, was that the human race fell in Adam, and thus afforded a more suitable case for God to display His rich mercy upon. But such a supposition is entirely fallacious, for, as we have seen, one third of the angels themselves fell from their high estate, yet so far from God showing them mercy, He "hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). No Saviour was provided for them, no Gospel has ever been preached to them. How striking and how solemn is this: the fallen angels passed by; the fallen sons of Adam made the recipients of the overtures of Divine mercy.

Here is a truly marvellous thing. God determined to have a people who should be His peculiar treasure, nearer and dearer to Himself than any other creatures; a people who should be conformed to the very image of His Son. And that people was chosen from the descendants of Adam. Why? Why not have reserved that supreme honor for the celestial hosts? They are a higher order of beings; they were created before us. They were heavenly creatures, yet God passed them by; we are earthly, yet the Lord set His heart upon us. Again we ask, why? Ah, let those who hate the truth of God's high sovereignty and contend against the doctrine of unconditional election, carefully ponder this striking example of it. Let those who so blatantly insist that it would be unjust for God to show partiality between man and man, tell us why did He show partiality between race and race, bestowing favours upon men which He never has upon angels? Only one answer is possible: *because it so pleased Him*.

Election is a Divine secret, an act in the will of God in eternity past. But it does not for ever remain such. No, in due time, God is pleased to make openly manifest His everlasting councils. This He has done in varying degrees, since the beginning of human history. In Genesis 3:15 He made known the fact that there would be two distinct lines: the woman's "seed," which denoted Christ and His people, and the Serpent's "seed," which signified Satan and those who are conformed to his likeness; God placing an irreconcilable "enmity" between them. These two "seeds" comprehend the elect and the non-elect. Abel belonged to the election of grace: evidence of this being furnished in his "faith" (Heb. 11:4), for only those "ordained to eternal life" (Acts 13:48) savingly "believe." Cain belonged to the non-elect: evidence of this is found in the statement, "Cain who was

of that Wicked one" (1 John 3:12). Thus at the beginning of history, in the two sons of Adam and Eve, God "took" the one into His favour, and "left" the other to suffer the due reward of his iniquities.

Next, we behold election running in the line of Seth, for it was of his descendants (and not those of Cain's) we read, "Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:26). But in the course of time they too were corrupted, until the entire human race became so evil that God sent the Flood and swept them all away. Yet even then the principle of Divine election was exemplified: not only in Enoch, but that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8). It was the same after the Flood, for a marked discrimination was made between the sons of Noah: "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem" (Gen. 9:26) which imports that God had chosen and blessed him. On the other hand, "Cursed be Canaan: a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25), which is expressive of preterition and all that is involved in God's rejection. Thus, even of those who emerged from the ark, God made one to differ from another.

From the sons of Noah sprang the nations which have peopled the world. "By these (i.e. Noah's three sons) were the nations divided in the earth after the flood" (Gen. 10:32). From those seventy nations God chose the one in which the great current of His election would run. In Genesis 10:25 we read that this dividing of the nations was made in the time of Eber, the grandson of Shem. Why are we told this? To intimate that God then began to separate the Jewish nation unto Himself in Eber, for Eber was their father; hence it is also that at the beginning of Shem's genealogy we are told, "Shem (the elected and blessed of God), the father of all the children of *Eber*" (10:21). This is very striking, for Shem had other and older children (whose line of descendants is also recorded), as Asshur and Elim, the fathers of the Assyrians and the Persians.

The seemingly dry and uninteresting detail in Genesis 3:10 to which we have just alluded, marked a most important step forward in the outworking of the Divine counsels, for it was then that God began to separate unto Himself the Israelites in Eber, whom He had appointed to be their father. Till then the Hebrews had lain promiscuously mingled with the other nations, but now God "divided" them from the rest, as the other nations were divided from one another. Accordingly we find Eber's posterity, even when very few in number, were designated "Hebrews" as their national denomination ("Israel" being their *religious* name) in distinction from those amongst whom they lived: "Abram the *Hebrew*" (Gen. 14:13), Joseph "the *Hebrew*" (Gen. 39:14). Hence, when they became a nation in numbers, and whilst living in the midst of the Egyptians, they are again styled "Hebrews" (Exo. 1:15), while in Numbers 24:24 they are distinctly called "*Eber*"!

What we have sought to explain above is definitely confirmed by "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy fathers, and they will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High *divided* to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel: *for* the LORD's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. 32:7-9). Notice, first, the Lord here bade Israel cast their minds back to ancient times, the traditions of which had been handed down by their fathers. Second, the particular event alluded to was when God "divided" to the nations their inheritance, the reference being to that famous division of Genesis 10. Third, those nations are spoken of not "as the sons of Noah" (who was in the elect line), but as "the sons of *Adam*"—another plain hint that *he* headed the line of the reprobate. Fourth, that when

God allotted to the non-elect nations their earthly portion, even then the eye of His grace and favour was upon the children of Israel. Fifth, “according to the *number* of the children of Israel,” which was seventy when they first settled in Egypt (Gen. 46:27)—the exact number of the nations mentioned in Genesis 10!

The chief link of connection between Eber and the nation of Israel was, of course, Abraham, and in his case the principle of Divine election shines forth with sunlight clearness. The Divine call which he received marked another important stage in the development of God’s eternal purpose. At the tower of Babel God gave over the nations to walk in their own evil ways, afterward taking up Abraham to be the founder of the favoured nation. “Thou art the LORD the God, who didst *choose* Abram and broughtest him forth out of Ur” (Neh. 9:7). It was not Abraham who chose God, but God who chose Abraham. “The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia” (Acts 7:2): this title “the God of Glory” is employed here to emphasize the signal favour which was shown to Abraham, the glory of His grace in electing him, for there was nothing in him by nature that lifted him about his fellows and entitled him to the Divine notice. It was unmerited kindness, sovereign mercy, which was shown him.

This is made very evident by what is told us in Joshua 24 of Abraham’s condition *before* Jehovah appeared to him: “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served *other gods*” (v. 2). Abraham was living in the heathen city of Ur, and belonged to an idolatrous family! At a later date God pressed this very fact upon his descendants, reminding them of the lowly and corrupt state of their original, and giving them to know it was for no good in him that he had been chosen: “Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged: look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him” (Isa. 51:1, 2). What a flesh-withering word is that: the great Abraham is here likened (by God) to “the hole of the pit”—such was his condition when the Lord first appeared unto him.

But there is more in the above passage. Observe carefully the words “I called him *alone*.” Remember that this was while he dwelt in Ur, and as modern excavations have shown, that was a city of vast extent: out of all its huge number of inhabitants God revealed himself to *one only*! The Lord here emphasized that very fact and calls upon us to mark the singularity of His election by this word “alone.” See here, then, the absolute sovereignty of God, exercising His own imperial will, choosing whom He pleases. He had mercy upon Abraham simply because He was pleased to do so, and He left the remainder of his countrymen in heathen darkness simply because it so seemed good in His sight. There was nothing more in Abraham than in any of his fellows why God should have selected him: whatever goodness was found in him later, was what God Himself put there, and therefore it was the consequence and not the cause of His choice.—A.W.P.

CONSCIENCE.

1. *Its Nature and Origin.*

There is in man, as man—as the creature of God—a “moral sense,” as it is called; a faculty of perception of moral quality in whatever comes into the field of view. This, of course, was his before the Fall; indeed, without it, a fall would not have been possible. He would have been a mere beast, for which it is impossible to be *immoral*, just because it is *unmoral*—with no capacity of moral perception or reflection at all. Such a being could not *fall*. “Man that is in honour, and *understandeth* not”—here spoken clearly, not of rational, but of moral discernment—“is like the beasts that perish” (Psa. 49:20). That is the character of the beast, then. Had man gained by the Fall a moral sense, it would have been really in the phrase of a modern infidel, a “fall upward”; it would have brought him into a higher condition than that in which he was created.

When God said of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” this was surely not to be understood by Adam as a mere consequence which would follow a certain course, a mere appeal to self-love, and no more! Had it been so, and he had merely understood it as an alternative proposed to him, he might have chosen the alternative, however fatal, yet without sin. But in this case “thou shalt not” could not have been said: the prohibition would have sunk into mere advice. Sin could not then have been, nor fall possible. The innocence in which man stood—as made “upright” (Eccl. 7:29)—was not the immaturity of a babe which we call such. To confound the reality of innocence in upright Adam with the shadow of it only in the fallen creature would be to accuse the Creator and make the record of the Fall an unintelligible mystery.

What, then, does the knowledge of good and evil, as acquired in the Fall, imply? For it is of this that the very name of the prohibited tree speaks: it is this that the serpent proposed, “ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil”; and it is this that the Divine Word after the Fall assures us had resulted: “the man is become as one of Us, knowing good and evil.” What, then, is this knowledge? It is, as all the inspired Word is, put before us to understand, and it will be a gain to us to understand it.

When the prohibition was first given, it is plain it was in a scene where God had pronounced everything, without exception, which He had created, “very good.” Evil there was not anywhere then to be perceived. The faculty of perception did not, of course, create the object to be perceived. Evil there yet was none. I do not mean that angels had not fallen. The whole history assures one that they had. But that did not necessarily introduce it into the world. This was, with all in it, very good; and as such is committed into the hands of man its head. Upon his obedience the condition of all within this realm of his depended. Save through him, evil could not enter; for the presence of the Devil in the serpent was not an entrance in the sense in which I speak of it. Man himself alone could really bring it in.

It may be asked, however, Did not the prohibition itself suppose (and imply the knowledge of) evil as possible, at least? To us, alas! it does; and here, indeed, is the great difficulty for us: how can we put ourselves back into that lost estate of innocence, so as to form any right conception of it at all? Prohibition to us, alas! awakens at once the thought of possible disobedience, and in the fallen nature the lust of it. But Adam had no lust, and no conception as yet of possible disobedience. This need not imply any mental or moral feebleness, but as to the latter (taking all into account), the very opposite.

To know good and evil means simply to discern the difference between these two; but for this to be, the two must be *together* within the field of vision. It was just the perfection of Adam's world that in it there was none, and in himself none. He could abide in good, and enjoy it, without thought of its opposite; a state for us difficult of conception, no doubt, but not impossible to conceive. Gratitude he could have and feel, without thought of ingratitude; believe, praise, love and adore he could, without realizing even the possibility of the opposite of these, and with a moral nature which could yet recognize them immediately if they were presented.

The history of the Fall confirms this. The serpent's first approach is by a question, which under the form of a question of fact, suggests a moral one: "Yea (is it so) that God *hath said*, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" But to entertain a moral question as to God is fatal. Implicit confidence in God is gone, and evil is already there known in the soul of her who entertains the question. The woman's answer already shows the consequence of this: "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die"! Here, in her mind the prohibited tree had displaced the tree of life. The prohibition, increased to harshness in the manner of it, is weakened in the certainty of its attending penalty. God's love and truth are obscured in her doubting soul; and the Devil can say, "Surely ye shall not die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

Here it should be plain that faith in God, receiving all at His hand, prohibition and all, as good alike, would have foiled the Enemy, and remained master of the field. By faith, from the first, and of necessity, man stood. All dispensations are, in this, alike. The evil that gained entrance into the world began as unbelief in the woman's soul, and this having speedily ripened into the positive transgression, conscience awoke—the inward eyes were opened: they knew evil in contrast with good—knew it in themselves, and their actions show plainly that they did so: "they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons."

The evil that had come in was in themselves alone, for of moral evil alone is capable. And thus the moral perception in man is become a judgment of good and evil in himself, and of himself in view of it: and this is *conscience*. There is always in it a reference to one's self. It is always, as it were, testifying to our nakedness. It is the inheritance of fallen Adam's children, to whom innocence is no longer possible: a watch set upon us by God as under His just suspicion. It is the knowledge of good and evil as found in one who has obtained it by disobedience.

Yet how the grace of God to man shines out already here! "The man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil." How significant in its connection with that eternal purpose which was even then, when these words were spoken, beginning to be declared! A return to innocence was indeed impossible, but, holiness might yet be, if Divine love so willed. And thus out of the ruin of the first, a new creation yet more glorious was indeed to spring.

2. Its Office and Character.

It is evident, and easy to see, that conscience *reveals* nothing. It simply declares the character of whatever is presented, and that according to the light it has. As the eye is the light, only as it is the *inlet* of light, to the body, so the conscience is simply the *inlet* of whatever light morally there may be for the spirit. And just as disease may, to any extent,

affect the bodily eye, so may it affect also the spiritual. Alas! the solemn consideration is that sin has thus affected, to a greater or lesser degree, the consciences of all men. Yet in none, perhaps, is it altogether darkened, and its power will manifest itself often in the most unexpected and striking way in those who, notwithstanding, resist to the last its convictions.

The scribes and Pharisees, plotting to entrap the Lord by the case of the adulteress condemned by Moses' law, are thus driven out of His presence by the simple yet penetrating words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Conscience in Herod sees in Christ the murdered Baptist risen from the dead (Mark 6:16). Stephen's adversaries, on the other hand, rush into murder, cut to the heart by the conviction that they have resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:54). Thus, in the midst of the most frantic opposition to the Truth, nay, *by* this, the power of the Truth over the conscience is clearly shown.

Scripture declares it in doctrine as well as example—"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God" (John 3:19-21). Here is the principle of which the example last given is the illustration. The evil-doer is aware of the light when he shuns it; would quench it, if possible, because he is aware of it. In it he is not, because he flees, not welcomes it; yet in fleeing, carries the unmistakable witness of it in his heart.

Again, in the parable of the sower the Lord declares the same thing in another form. Of the seed sown by the wayside He says, "When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Matt. 13:19). Now this is one apparently quite unconvinced; he does not understand the seed lies merely upon the surface of the ground, inviting the fowls of the air to catch it away. The heart of this man, hard as the roadside with the traffic of other things, if you could say of any that it was untouched by the Word, you could say it here; yet the Lord expressly says, "taketh away that which was sown *in his heart*." Even here the Word has not only touched, but *penetrated*. The heart, unchanged by it, has rejected it: true, but it has *had* to reject it. Satan is allowed to remove the Word, and it is taken away: but its rejected witness will come up in terrible memory at another day.

And this exactly agrees with the words of the Apostle: "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which *believe not*, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). Here again the unbelief which refuses the Gospel shuts the unbeliever up into the enemy's hand. The blinding of the mind by the god this world, like the removal of the seed by the fowls of the air, is the direct result of this first rejection of unwelcome testimony.

How immensely important, then, to the soul, is the treatment it accords to whatever it has to own as truth. As little or as much as it may seem to be! God is the God of Truth; and, where souls are themselves true, the possession of any portion of it is the possession of a clue-line which leads surely into His presence; the giving it up is the deliberate choice of darkness as one's portion. And this applies in measure to everyone, sinner and saint alike, and to every truth of revelation. Every truth really bowed to in the soul leads

on to more; every error received requires, to be consistent with it, the reception of more. It is darkness; and darkness is a kingdom, as the light is—part of an organized revolt against God. As the truth leads to and keeps us in His presence, so error is, in its essence, departure from Him.

[To be continued in June issue.]