

**Volume 20—Studies in the Scriptures—May, 1941**  
**THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.**

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exo. 20:7). As the Second Commandment concerns the manner in which God is to be worshipped (namely, according to His revealed will), so this one bids us worship Him with that frame of spirit which is agreeable to the dignity and solemnity of such an exercise and the majesty of Him with whom we have to do: that is, with the utmost sincerity, humility and reverence. “*Fear* this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD” (Deut. 28:58). O what high thoughts we ought to entertain of such a Being! In what holy awe should we stand of Him! “The end of this Precept is that the Lord will have the majesty of His name to be held inviolably sacred by us. Whatever we think and whatever we say of Him should savour of His excellency, correspond to the sacred sublimity of His name and tend to the exaltation of His magnificence” (Calvin). Anything pertaining to God should be spoken of with the greatest sobriety.

Let us first endeavour to point out *the scope* and comprehensiveness of this Commandment. By the Name of the Lord our God is signified God Himself as He is made known to us, including everything through which He has been pleased to reveal Himself: His Word, His titles, His attributes, His ordinances, His works. The Name of God stands for His very nature and being, as in Psalm 20:1; 135:3; John 1:12, etc. Sometimes the Name of God is taken for the entire system of Divine Truth: “we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God” (Micah 4:5)—in that way of Truth and worship which He has appointed. “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men Thou gavest Me” (John 17:6)—instructed them in the heavenly doctrine. But usually, and more specifically, the Name of God refers to that by which He is called and made known to us. To “*take* His Name” means to employ or make use of the same, as the Object of our thoughts or the Subject of our speech. Not to take His Name “in vain” is the negative way of saying it must be held in the utmost awe and used holily in thought and word and deed.

It will thus be seen that this Commandment requires us to make mention of the Name of God. Since He has given us so many and gracious discoveries of Himself, it would evince the vilest contempt of the greatest of privileges if we expressed no regard to those discoveries and made no use of the same. Those who make no religious profession and desire not to be instructed in those things which relate to the Divine glory, are guilty of thus slighting the Most High. We make use of God’s Name in public worship, in private prayer, and when taking religious oaths or making solemn vows. When we draw near to God in prayer we should adore the Divine perfections with a becoming humility, as did Abraham (Gen. 18:27), Jacob (Gen. 32:10), Moses (Exo. 15:11), Solomon (1 Kings 8:33), Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:15), Daniel (9:4), the inhabitants of Heaven (Rev. 4:10, 11). Negatively, this Commandment prohibits all dishonouring thoughts of God, all needless, flippant, profane or blasphemous mention of Him, any irreverent use of His Word, any murmurings against His Providence, any abuse of anything by which He has made Himself known.

Let us now point out more specifically some of the ways in which God’s Name may be taken in vain. First, when it is used without propounding to ourselves a due end. And there are but two ends which can warrant our use of any of His Names, titles or attributes: His glory and the edification of ourselves and others. Whatsoever is besides these is frivolous and evil, afford-

ing no sufficient ground for us to make mention of such a great and holy Name, which is so full of glory and majesty. Unless our speech be designedly directed to the advancement of the Divine glory or the promotion of the benefit of those to whom we speak, we are not justified in having God's ineffable Name upon our lips. He accounts Himself highly insulted when we mention His name to idle purpose.

God's Name is taken in vain by us when we use it without due consideration and reverence. Whensoever we make mention of Him before whom the seraphim veil their faces, we ought seriously and solemnly to ponder His infinite majesty and glory, and bow our hearts in deepest prostration before that Name. They who think and speak of the great God promiscuously and at random—how can they use His Name with reverence when all the rest of their discourse is filled with froth and vanity? That Name is not to be sported with and tossed to and fro upon every light tongue. O my reader, form the habit of solemnly considering *whose* Name it is you are about to utter—that it is the Name of Him who is present with you, hearing you pronounce it, who is jealous of His honour, and who will dreadfully avenge Himself upon those who have slighted Him.

God's Name is used in vain when it is employed *hypocritically*—when we profess to be His people and are not. Israel of old was guilty of this sin: “Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth*, nor in righteousness” (Isa. 48:1)—they used the Name of God, but did not obey the revelation contained therein, and so violated this Third Commandment: compare Matthew 7:22, 23.

When using the Name of God, we must do so in a way which is true to its meaning and to its implications, otherwise He says to us, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, *and do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). In like manner, we are guilty of this awful sin when we perform holy duties lightly and mechanically, our affections not being in them. Prayer without practice is blasphemy, and to speak to God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him is but a mocking of Him and an increasing of our condemnation.

God's Name is taken in vain when we swear lightly and irreverently, using the Name of God with as little respect as we would show to that of a man, or when we swear falsely and are guilty of perjury. When we are placed on oath and we attest that to be true which we do not know to be true, or which we know to be false, we are guilty of one of the gravest sins which man can possibly commit, for he has solemnly called upon the great God to witness that which the father of lies has prompted him to speak. “He that swareth in the earth shall swear by *the God of Truth*” (Isa. 65:16), and therefore it behooves him to consider well whether what he deposes is true or not. Alas, oaths have become so excessively multiplied among us—being interwoven, as it were, into the body politic—and so generally disregarded, that the enormity of this offense is scarcely considered. “Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts; against his neighbour; and love no *false oaths*, for all these are things that I *hate*, saith the LORD” (Zech. 8:17).

And what shall be said of that vast throng of profane swearers who pollute our language and wound our ears by a vile mixture of execrations and blasphemies in their common conversation? “Their throat is an open sepulchre . . . the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom. 3:13, 14). Utterly vain is their thoughtless plea that they mean no harm: vain their excuse that all their companions do the same: vain their plea that it is merely to relieve their feelings—what a madness is it when men anger you, to strike against *God* and

provoke *Him* far more than others can provoke you! But though their fellows do not censure, the police arrest, or the magistrate punish them (as the law of our land requires), yet “*The LORD* will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.” “As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him . . . as he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water” (Psa. 109:17, 18). God is dreadfully incensed by this sin, and in the common commission of this Heaven-insulting crime our country has incurred terrible guilt.

It has become almost impossible to walk the streets or enter mixed company without hearing the sacred Name of God treated with blasphemous contempt. The novels of the day, the stage, and even the wireless, are terrible offenders, and without doubt this is one of the fearful sins against Himself for which God is now pouring out His judgments upon us. Of old He said unto Israel, “*Because of swearing (cursing) the land mourneth*; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil” (Jer. 23:10). And He is still the same: “The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.” Sore punishment shall be his portion, if not in this life, then most assuredly so, eternally so, in the life to come.—A.W.P.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

#### 19. *Anxiety Forbidden*: Matthew 6:25.

It will be seen from the above title that another subject of practical importance is presented to our notice in the verse we have now reached. It is a subject which immediately concerns each one of us, for, in varying degrees, all are guilty of the very thing which is here forbidden, namely, worrying over material things, yielding to anxiety about the future. This is something which is highly dishonouring to God, a sin which we need to make conscience of, confessing it with shame and seeking grace to avoid any further repetitions thereof. The very fact that such anxiety is here forbidden not only exhibits once more the exalted standard of piety which is set before us in the Holy Scriptures, but also evidences their uniqueness, their Divine Authorship—for there is no other book or religion in the world which condemns inordinate solicitude over the temporal necessities of life. Proof of this assertion appears in the fact that the natural man is quite unaware that anxiety about food and clothing is a SIN.

Not only is such anxiety wrong, but it is a sin of great gravity. It is not simply a constitutional infirmity which we may excuse, a mere trifle we need not be concerned about, but rather is it a foul iniquity from which we should seek cleansing. To be fearful about the supply of future needs, to be worried that we may yet be left to suffer the lack of temporal necessities, is to be guilty of wicked unbelief. It calls into question the goodness and care of our Creator. It manifests a lack of faith in His wise and gracious providence. And if we be Christians, it betrays doubt of our Father's love. And surely these are evils of the deepest kind. Moreover, as we shall yet see, such disquietude and distraction of mind is, in reality, the workings of *covetousness*, the lusting after things we have not, which is a sin of great magnitude. O that the Spirit may convict us of this wickedness and subdue this iniquity!

It has been pointed out in previous months that the main drift of our Saviour's Sermon from verse 19 to the end of chapter 6 was to dissuade and deliver His hearers from the spirit of covetousness. Having forbidden the practice itself (v. 19), and disposing of those objections which the corrupt heart of man might frame to excuse himself (vv. 22-24), Christ now struck at the very root of covetousness and sought to remove the cause thereof, namely, a distrustful and inordinate care for the things of this life, especially for such things as are necessary for the maintenance thereof. This is clear from His words in verse 23, and the attentive reader will note that the same line of thought is continued by Him to the end of verse 34. Such unusual repetition as, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat" (v. 25), "Take no thought saying, what shall we eat?" (v. 31), "Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (v. 34), intimates not only the weightiness of this Divine precept, but also our slowness in heeding the same.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on (v. 25). Before proceeding to amplify what has been said in the last paragraph, let us point out that there is a close connection between this verse and those preceding. It may be regarded as Christ's meeting a further objection against what He had insisted on. He had forbidden the laying up of treasures on earth, and had warned against the making of mammon our god. To this many might answer, There is no danger of us doing that: so little of this world's riches come our way that we can scarcely procure the bare necessities of life. Even so, says Christ, yet you, too, are in grave danger: the fear of poverty and worrying about the future as truly ensnare the souls of the poor as the love of wealth does the rich. Dis-

trustful and distracting care about supplies of temporal needs is a sure sign that the heart is fixed on earthly things.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life.” This is another declaration of Christ’s which must not be taken absolutely or without limitation—compare our remarks on 5:34, 42. If Scripture is compared with Scripture it will be found that there are two kinds of “care”: a godly and moderate one, a distrustful and inordinate one. The former is enjoined upon us by the Word of God. For example in Proverbs 6:6, Wisdom sends the sluggard to the ant to learn diligence and providence for things needful. The Apostle Paul points out that it is the duty of parents to “lay up” for their children (2 Cor. 12:14), and declares that, “If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). From these passages it is quite clear that there is a lawful care to be taken even for the things pertaining to this life, nor do the words of Christ in the passage now before us conflict with this to the slightest degree.

There is a solicitude about temporal things which is a duty, varying according to a man’s station in the world. God requires him to be diligent in business and prudent in its management. He is obligated to provide for himself and family so far as health and industry will permit. He is required to live within his income, so that he “owe no man anything.” He is to guard against any of God’s bounty being wasted or squandered in prodigality. It is his business to look ahead and seek to provide for those demands which may be made upon him in the future—by additions to his family, by illness, by old age. He should, so far as consistent with piety and charity, endeavour to make provision for those dependent upon him, so that if he should die first, those left behind will not become a burden upon others. It is not faith but presumption which would lead to carelessness therein—fanaticism and not spirituality which inculcates the neglect of all proper means.

Yet it should be pointed out that there is real danger lest the above-mentioned duties be extended beyond due bounds. None ought to be so occupied with the consideration of providing for the future that he be unfitted for the discharge of present obligations or the enjoyment of present privileges. None ought to attend to such duties in a way that is distrustful of Divine providence. None ought to be weighted down with anxiety over them. The following rules must regulate us therein. First, attention to the needs of the body must be subordinated to our seeking after the welfare of our souls, for temporal affairs must never crowd out spiritual and eternal concerns. Second, in diligently walking in our earthly calling we must strictly see to it that we deal uprightly and honestly with our fellows, seeking to acquire only those things which are needful and right. Third, we must leave the issue or success of all our labours and endeavours *to God*: ours is to use the means to the best of our ability and opportunity, His is to bless and prosper according as He desires best.

Let it be clearly understood then that when Christ commanded, “Take no thought for your life,” He was very far from forbidding us to look ahead and make provision against a future likelihood. Foresight and forbidding are two very different things. That which our Lord here prohibited is not the making of careful preparation for what is likely to come, but the constant occupation of the mind and distraction of the heart over what will never come. It is not the foresight of the storm and the taking in of sail while there is yet time which He reprehends, but that after we have taken in the sail we continue to gaze at the horizon with such fear and unbelief that we are

weakened thereby and disqualified for the discharge of far more important duties. To be tormented by anxious thoughts about the future is unworthy of our manhood, let alone of our Divine sonship, and is most dishonouring to our Creator.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life” (Matt. 6:25). Observe the force of the opening “Therefore.” Seeing that they who set their hearts upon earthly treasures do neglect the true riches and do lack the single eye of spiritual wisdom to discern heavenly treasure, and are therefore the slaves of Mammon. Be not concerned, harbour not immoderate and distrustful thoughts about things needful to your temporal life. Because it is impossible at one and the same time to make earthly and heavenly things the principal subject of your thoughts, all anxiety about material things is improper. Note, too, the, “I say unto you”—I your Master, upon whom you depend for instruction and direction in all things needful for both soul and body—so as to command their attention and compliance. “He says it as the Lord and Sovereign of our hearts; He says it as our Comforter and the Helper of our joy” (Matthew Henry).

“Therefore I say unto you, be not anxious for your life” (American R.V.) which conveys the idea better than the A.V. The “care” which is here forbidden is a tormenting one, which disquiets and distracts, which disturbs our joy in God, and destroys our peace. When concern over making provision for the future leads the heart away from God and produces distrust, it has become sinful. Foresight must not degenerate into foreboding, diligence into worrying. It is troubling care and distressing fear which is here reprehended. It is distrustful care we are called upon to guard against. We are guilty of this when we trouble ourselves about the issue of our labours: when having used the means and performed our duty we vex ourselves over the success, instead of relying upon God’s providence for the blessing of the same. It is this distrust of God which draws the covetous hearts of men to employ unlawful means in the obtaining of worldly things—such as lying, fraud, false weights, oppression of the weak.

“Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.” To take it on its lowest ground, such things as food and clothing are not worth worrying about. In a few years at most we shall no more need the staff of life to support us and shall be where the coarsest shroud will serve as well as a royal robe. Of what worth are those things over which death has dominion? Why be so foolish, then, as to make our chief concern those things which perish with the using? And how much worse is our offense if, instead of being content with such things as a gracious God has provided us with, we lust after and bend our best efforts to acquire something of a superior quality? What will it matter a hundred years hence whether we fed on the fat of the land or the poorest of fare, whether we were dressed in silks and satins or the cheapest of garments? But it will matter everything whether or not we fed on the Lamb and were clothed with the robe of His righteousness!

But to look higher. Why is it that there is so little fruit from the preaching of God’s Word? How few realize that this worldly care is one of the chief hindrances thereto. Yet, that this is the case is clear from the teaching of our Lord in His parable of the Sower. There He informs us that, “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the Word: and *the care of this world* and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22), so that worry over poverty is as fatal to spiritual fruitfulness as is gloating over wealth. Alas, what a large percentage there is in our congregations who can neither pray, hear the Word, or go home and meditate thereon, without their poor minds being distracted with worldly thoughts and

carnal anxieties. Our minds are so constituted that they *cannot* at one and the same time be stayed upon the Lord and fixed upon next winter's new coat or hat.

Having sought to show something of the sinfulness of worrying about temporal things, let us seek to point out how it may be avoided. This is to be found in following the counsel which is given to us in the Word of Truth. "Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psa. 37:5). "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psa. 55:22). "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Prov. 16:3). "Casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). It is not that these passages exempt us from performing the duties of our calling and using all lawful means therein, but that in the performance of duty and after the use of means we must leave the event and issue for good success to the blessing of God. Such a course involves the exercise of faith and the complete submitting of ourselves unto the sovereign pleasure of Him with whom we have to do, and who alone can give the increase.

Thus the tradesman, whose business it is to buy and sell, must be careful and diligent in his business, disdaining all lying and deceit, misrepresentation or overcharging, and then refer the success of his trade to the blessing of God. Thus, too, with the farmer and crofter: he must faithfully do his part in plowing and sowing, and then leave the harvest to God's good providence. This is the Apostle's counsel: "Be careful for nothing," that is, after a distrustful and distressing sort, "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). Thus it is clear that anxiety and worry are opposed to prayer and thanksgiving, being an hindrance thereto. Instead, after using lawful means, we are to pray God's blessing thereon, that when it comes we may give Him thanks, yea, thank Him now by faith's anticipation.

But is it not hard for flesh and blood to abstain from anxiety about success? How, then, shall we be enabled to leave it wholly with God? By laying to heart the precious promises of God which are made to those who depend upon His mercy and goodness, labouring to live by faith thereon. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows"—while men trust to themselves or in the means, toiling as they will, theirs is the bread of fretfulness. In sharp contrast therefrom, "So He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psa. 127:2). In sleep there is a laying aside of care and a forgetfulness of need. Those who trust in and love the Lord are delivered from fretting and fuming, and are given rest of soul. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psa. 34:10). If we had no other promise in the Scriptures than this, it is sufficient warrant to make us rest upon God's providence, in the sober use of lawful means. "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psa 37:3). What more can we ask than that?

"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isa 33:15-16). No matter in what period of the world's history our lot is cast, how evil the days, or how sore and severe God's judgments upon the earth, if we fulfill His specified conditions, then, (even though drought and famine be upon the land, as in the time of Elijah), our bread and water *is sure*. No-where has God promised that His child shall be *feasted* with dainties, but "verily thou shalt be

*fed.*” Such was the blessed assurance of the Apostle, “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19)—not all your desires or greed, but *need*. Now if faith be really mixed with these promises, then we shall be quietened from fear and our hearts will be kept in peace.

How shall we rely upon the mercy of God in the hour of death if we are afraid to trust His providence for the things of this life? But when serious losses befall us and everything seems to be against us, must we not redouble our efforts and look increasingly to the use of means? No, rather is that the time to cleave more closely to God and only upon Him to undertake for us. If the blessing were in the means, men would not be so often crossed in them. God knows far better than we do what is good for us, and therefore we should rest content with His providence, no matter how He may disappoint our expectations for temporal things. Lack is often better for God’s child than plenty, adversity than prosperity. So David found, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word” (Psa. 119:67). And many a saint since then has had reason to exclaim, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psa. 119:71).

“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matt. 6:25). Observe how Christ here distinguishes between life and food, the body and clothing, and that He does so with the purpose of showing us how senseless is our worrying over the supply of temporal things. This first reason of His to dissuade us from such anxiety may be stated thus: the life is greatly superior to food and the body to raiment, and since the Creator has bestowed the former, therefore much more will He provide the latter for their sustenance. Therein the Saviour teaches us to make good use of our creation, and by a contemplation thereof to learn confidence in God’s providence for all things needful to our natural life. “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet Thou dost destroy me!” (Job. 10:8); thus the Patriarch persuaded himself of preservation because God had made him. “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19)—because God is our faithful Creator, in death we may fully rely upon Him.

If the Christian is trusting in God and attending to duty, he need have no fear that he will be deserted by Him and left to starve. God called us into being and furnished us with a body without our care, then is He not well able to sustain the one and clothe the other. Dependence is the law of our being: we are obliged to leave unto God the size, form, colour, and age of our body: then count upon Him for its maintenance. As long as God means us to live, He will assuredly feed and clothe us. He who brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and delivered them from death at the Red Sea, did not suffer them to perish from lack of food in the wilderness. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him *also* freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). Such a guarantee should be amply sufficient to quieten every fear and allay all anxiety about bodily food and raiment.—A.W.P.



## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

### 17. *On Carmel.*

“And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked” (1 Kings 18:27). Hour after hour the prophets of Baal had called upon their god, to make public demonstration of his existence by causing fire to come down from Heaven and consume the sacrifice which they had placed upon his altar—but all to no purpose: “there was no voice, nor any that answered.” And now the silence was broken by the voice of the Lord’s servant, speaking in derision. The absurdity and fruitlessness of their efforts richly merited this biting sarcasm. Sarcasm is a dangerous weapon to employ, but its use is fully warranted in exposing the ridiculous pretensions of error and is often quite effective in convincing men of the folly and unreasonableness of their ways. It was due unto the people of Israel that Elijah should hold up to contempt those who were seeking to deceive them.

“And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them.” It was at midday, when the sun was highest and the false priests had the best opportunity of success, that Elijah went near them and in ironical terms bade them increase their efforts. He was so sure that nothing could avert their utter discomfiture that he could afford to ridicule them by suggesting a cause for the indifference of their god: “peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.” The case is so urgent, your credit and his honour are so much at stake, that you must arouse him: therefore shout louder, for your present cries are too feeble, they are not heard, your voice does not reach his remote dwelling-place: you must redouble your efforts in order to gain his attention. Thus did the faithful and intrepid Tishbite pour ridicule on their impotency and hold up to contempt their defeat. He knew it would be so, and that no zeal on their part could change things.

Is the reader shocked at these sarcastic utterances of Elijah on this occasion? Then let us remind him that it is written in the Word of Truth, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” (Psa. 2:4). Unspeakably solemn is this, yet unmistakably just: they had laughed at God and derided *His* warnings and threatenings, and now He answers such fools according to their folly. The Most High is indeed longsuffering, yet there is a limit to His patience. He calls unto men, but they refuse. He stretches out His hand unto them, but they will not regard. He counsels them, but they set it all at nought; He reproveth, but they will have none of it. Shall, then, He be mocked with impunity? No. He declares, “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me” (Prov 1:26-28).

The derision of Elijah upon mount Carmel was but a shadowing forth of the derision of the Almighty in the day when He deals in judgment. Is our own lot now cast in such a day? “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel, they despised all My reproof” (29-30). Who with any spiritual discernment can deny that those fearful words accurately describe the conduct of our own generation, especially so during the past twelve years, and markedly so at the present moment? Is, then, the awful sentence now going forth, “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the ease (margin) of the simple shall slay them and the prosperity of fools shall de-

stroy them” (31-32)? If so, who can question the righteousness of it? How blessed to note that this unspeakably solemn passage ends with, “But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (33). That is a precious promise for faith to lay hold of, to plead before God, and to expect an answer thereto, for our God is not a deaf or impotent one like Baal.

One would have thought those priests of Baal had perceived that Elijah was only mocking them while he lashed them with such cutting irony, for what sort of a god must he be which answered to the prophet’s description! Yet so infatuated and stupid were those devotees of Baal that they do not appear to have discerned the drift of his words, but rather to have regarded them as good advice. Accordingly, they roused themselves to yet greater earnestness, and by the most barbarous measures strove to move their God by the sight of the blood which they shed out of love to him and zeal in his service, and in what they supposed he delighted. What poor, miserable slaves are idolaters whose objects of worship can be gratified with human gore and with the self-inflicted torments of their worshippers! It has ever been true, and still is today, that “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty” (Psa. 74:20). How thankful we should be if a sovereign God has mercifully delivered us from such superstitions.

“And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” (1 Kings 18:28). What a concept they must have held of their deity who required such cruel macerations at their hands! Similar sights may be witnessed today in heathendom, and in a milder form among the deluded Romanists with their penances. The service of Satan, whether in the observance of idolatrous worship or in the practice of immoralities, while it promises indulgence to men’s lusts is cruel to their persons and tends to torment them in this world. Jehovah expressly forbade His worshippers to “cut themselves” (Deut. 14:1). He indeed requires us to mortify our corruptions, but bodily severities are no pleasure to Him. He desires only our happiness, and never requires one thing which has not a direct tendency to make us more holy that we may be more happy, for there cannot be any real *happiness* apart from *holiness*.

“And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded” (1 Kings 18:29). Thus they continued praying and prophesying, singing and dancing, cutting themselves and bleeding, until the time when the evening sacrifice was offered in the temple at Jerusalem, which was at 3 p.m. For six hours without intermission had they importuned their god. How do heathens put to shame many professing Christians today, who think the worship of God a weariness and the service too long if it lasts a couple of hours! Four hours is not too long for a dance, or some other folly. Why is this? Because their *heart* is in *it*, whereas in going up to the house of prayer they only follow custom. But all the exertions and imploring of Baal’s prophets were unavailable: no fire came down to consume their sacrifice. Surely the lengths to which they had gone was enough to move the compassion of any deity! And since the heavens remained completely silent did it not prove to the people that the religion of Baal and his worship was a delusion and a sham?

“There was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” How this exposed *the powerlessness* of false gods! They are impotent creatures, unable to help their votaries in the hour of need. They are useless for this life; how much more so for the life to come! Nowhere

does the imbecility which sin produces more plainly evidence itself than in idolatry. It makes utter fools of its victims, as was manifest there on Carmel. The prophets of Baal reared their altar and placed upon it the sacrifice, and then called upon their god for the space of six hours to evidence his acceptance of their offering. But in vain. Their importunity met with no response: the heavens were as brass. No tongue of fire leapt from the sky to lick up the flesh of the slain bullock. The only sound heard was the cries of anguish from the lips of the frantic priests as they maltreated themselves till their blood gushed forth.

And my reader, if you be a worshipper of idols, and continue so, you shall yet discover that your god is just as impotent and disappointing as was Baal. Is your *belly* your god? Do you set your heart upon enjoying the fat of the land, eating and drinking not to live, but living to eat and drink? Does your table groan beneath the luxuries of the earth, while many today are lacking its necessities? Then know you this: if you persist in this wickedness and folly, the hour is coming when you shall discover the madness of such a course. When your digestive system is ruined, when the very sight of the dainties you lusted after shall nauseate you, when the doctors are unable to give you a new stomach or prolong your wretched existence, then will it be utterly vain for you to pray unto savoury dishes, for *they* are powerless to help you. And in Hell your distress will be immeasurably greater: not only will any relief from your sufferings be denied, but you will be bidden to “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things . . . but now thou art in torment” (Luke 16:25).

Is *pleasure* your God? Do you set your heart upon a ceaseless whirl of gaiety? Rushing from one form of entertainment to another, spending all your available time and money in visiting the garish shows of “Vanity Fair?” Are your hours of recreation made up of a continual round of excitement and merriment? Then know you this: if you persist in this folly and wickedness the hour is coming when you shall taste of the bitter dregs which lie at the bottom of such a cup. When your nervous system is wrecked through turning into day, when the very things you so much craved shall pall on you—when you shall find it impossible to get any “thrill” out of the vanities which once enthralled you—then shall you discover the emptiness of such baubles and their inefficiency to minister relief in your hour of need. What would be the use of praying too such objects as the race track, the football game, the theater, the dance hall? Could any movie star or worldly companion ease your dying pillow or give you any true comfort on the threshold of a hopeless eternity?

Is *mammon* your God? Do you set your heart upon material riches, bending all your energies to the obtaining of that which you imagine will give you power over men, a place of prominence in the social world, enable you to procure those things which are supposed to make for comfort and satisfaction? Is it the acquisition of property, a large bank balance, the possession of bonds and shares for which you are bartering your soul? Then know you this: if you persist in such a senseless and evil course, the time is coming when you shall discover the worthlessness of such things, and their powerlessness too mitigate your remorse. You may worship your golden image now, but in a day of crisis it will be useless to pray to it for help. When the dread summons comes, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,” even though you be a millionaire, all your wealth will be unable to purchase for you a single moment’s reprieve.

O the folly, the consummate madness of serving false gods! From the highest viewpoint it is madness, for it is an affront unto the true God, a giving unto some other *object* that which is due

unto Him alone, an insult which He will not tolerate or pass by. But even on the lowest ground it is crass folly, for no false god, no idol, is capable of furnishing real help at the time man needs help most of all. No form of idolatry, no system of false religion, no god but the true One, can send miraculous answers to prayer, can supply satisfactory evidence that sin is put away, can give the Holy Spirit, who, like fire, illumines the understanding, warms the heart and cleanses the soul. A false god could not send down fire on mount Carmel, and he cannot do so today. Then turn to the true God, my reader, while there is yet time.

Ere passing on there is one other point which should be noted in what has been before us, a point which contains an important lesson for this superficial age. Let us state it thus: the expenditure of great earnestness and enthusiasm is no proof of a true and good cause. There is a large class of shallow-minded people today who conclude that a display of religious zeal and fervour is a real sign of spirituality; and that such virtues fully compensate for whatever lack of knowledge and sound doctrine there may be. "Give me a place," say they, "where there is plenty of life and warmth even though there be no depth to the Preaching, rather than a sound ministry which is cold and unattractive." Ah my reader, all is not gold that glitters. Those prophets of Baal were full of earnest zeal and fervour, but it was in a false cause, and brought down nothing from Heaven! Then take warning therefrom, and be guided by God's Word and not by what appeals to your emotions or love of excitement.

"And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him" (1 Kings 18:30). Clearly evident was it that nothing could be gained by waiting any longer. The test which had been proposed by Elijah, which had been approved by the people, and which had been accepted by the false prophets, had convincingly demonstrated that Baal could have no claim to be the (true) God. The time had thus arrived for the servant of Jehovah to act. Remarkable restraint had he exercised all through those six hours while he had allowed his opponents to occupy the stage of action, breaking the silence only once to goad them onto increased endeavour. But now he addresses the people, bidding them to come near unto himself, that they might the better observe his actions. They responded at once, no doubt curious to see what he would do and wondering whether his appeal to Heaven would be more successful than had been that of the prophets of Baal.

"And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down" (v. 30). Mark well his first action, which was designed to speak unto the hearts of those Israelites. Another has pointed out that here on Carmel Elijah made a three-fold appeal unto the people. First, he had appealed to their *conscience*, when he asked and then exhorted them: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him" (v. 21). Second, he had appealed to their *reason*, when he had proposed that trial should be made between the prophets of Baal and himself that, "the God that answereth by fire let Him be God" (v. 24). And now, by "repairing the altar of the LORD," he appealed to their *hearts*. Therein he has left an admirable example for the servants of God in every age to follow. The ministers of Christ should address themselves unto the consciences, the understandings and the affections of their hearers, for only thus can the Truth be adequately presented, the principal faculties of men's souls be reached, and a definite decision for the Lord be expected from them. A balance must be preserved between the Law and the Gospel. Conscience must be searched, the mind convinced, the affections warmed, if the will is to be moved unto action. Thus it was with Elijah on Carmel.

“And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him.” How strong and unwavering was the Prophet’s confidence in his God. He knew full well what his faith and prayer had obtained from the Lord, and he had not the slightest fear that he would now be disappointed and put to confusion. The God of Elijah *never* fails any who trust in Him with all their hearts. But the Prophet was determined that this answer by fire should be put beyond dispute. He therefore invited the closest scrutiny of the people as he repaired the broken altar of Jehovah. They should be in the nearest proximity so that they might see for themselves there was no trickery, no insertion of any secret spark beneath the wood on which the slain bullock was laid. Ah my reader, Truth does not fear the closest investigation: it does not shun the light, but courts it. It is the Evil One and his emissaries who love darkness and secrecy and act under the cloak of mysticism. There is nothing which Rome fears so much as the open Bible.

“And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down” (v. 30). There is far more here than meets the eye at first glance. Light is cast thereon by comparing the language of Elijah in 19:10—“the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars.” According to the Mosaic law there was only one altar upon which sacrifices might be offered, and that was where the Lord had fixed His peculiar residence—from the days of Solomon, in Jerusalem. But before the tabernacle was erected, sacrifices might be offered in any place, and in the previous dispensation altars were built wherever the Patriarchs sojourned for any length of time, and it is probably unto *them* that Elijah alluded in 19:10. This broken altar, then, was a solemn witness that the people had departed from God. The Prophet’s repairing of the same was a rebuking of the people for their sin, a confessing of it on their behalf, and, at the same time, bringing them back to *the place of beginning*.

And reader, this is recorded for *our* instruction: Elijah began by repairing the broken altar. And that is where we must begin if the blessing of Heaven is to come again on the churches and on our land. In many a professing Christian home there is a *neglected* altar of God. There was a time when the family gathered together and owned God in the authority of His Law, in the goodness of His daily providence, in the love of His redemption and continuing grace, but the sound of united worship no longer is heard ascending from the home. Prosperity, worldliness, pleasure, has silenced the accents of devotion. The altar has fallen down: the dark shadow of sin rests on the home. And there can be no approach to God while sin is unconfessed. They who hide sin cannot prosper (Prov. 28:13). Sin must be confessed before God will respond with holy fire. And sin must be confessed in deed as well as in word: the altar must be *set up again*. The Christian must go back to the place of *beginning*! See Genesis 13:1-4; Revelation 2:4, 5!—A.W.P.

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

### 7. *Its Complement.*

Last month we pointed out that side by side with the fact of fallen man's spiritual impotency must be considered the complementary truth of his *moral responsibility*. We sought to show the vital importance of holding fast to *both* and presenting them in their due proportions, and thereby preserving *the balance* between them. In order to make this the more obvious and impressive, and at the same time to demonstrate the disastrous consequences of failing to do this, we enlarged upon the general principle of maintaining the Gospel in its fullness, instead of taking it piecemeal. We endeavoured to enforce the necessity for adhering unto what God has joined together and of not confounding what He has separated, illustrating the same by a presentation of the seven concurring causes of salvation, and of the natures and offices of Christ. We now resume that line of thought by insisting:

Third, the order of the Covenant must not be disturbed. Said David of the Lord, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). A certain class of writers have expressed themselves quite freely upon the everlastingness of this Covenant, and also upon its sureness, but they have said very little indeed upon the *ordering* of it, and still less upon needs-be of our abiding by its arrangements. None shall have any part in this Covenant unless he is prepared to take the whole compact. Therein God has so arranged things that they may not and do not hinder one another. This order of the Covenant appears chiefly in the right statement of privileges and conditions, means and ends, duties and comforts.

*Of privileges and conditions.* "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:38, 39). Do not those words state a condition which excludes the Infidel and includes the penitent believer? "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (John 13:8) declared the thrice holy Saviour: unless we are cleansed by Him we can have no part with Him in His benefits. So again, "He is the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* Him" (Heb. 5:9). Christ would act contrary to His Divine commission, contrary to the Covenant agreed upon by Him, were He to dispense His grace upon any other terms. Now some men trust in their own external and imperfect righteousness, as if that were the only plea to make before God; whereas others look at nothing in themselves—either as conditions, evidence or means—and think their only plea is Christ's merits.

But neither those who trust in their own works, nor those who think that no consideration is to be had of repentance, faith and new obedience, is there any adhering to the Covenant of Grace. No, those who preach such a course deliver unto men a covenant of their own modeling, and not the Covenant of God, which is the sole charter and sure ground of the Christian's hope. The blood of Christ accomplishes what belongs to it, but repentance and faith must also do what belong to them. True, they have not the least degree of that honour which belongs to the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, or the operations of the Spirit—nevertheless repentance, faith and new obedience must be regarded in their place. Is it not self-evident that none of the privileges of the Covenant belong to the impenitent and unbelieving? It is the Father's work to love us, Christ's to redeem, and the Spirit's to regenerate; but *we* must *accept* of the grace offered—that is, repent, believe and live in obedience to God.

So also there is a right order of *means* and *ends*, that by the former we may come to the latter. The greater end of Christianity is our coming to God, and the prime and general means is the

office and work of Christ: "For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). The subordinate means are the fruits of Christ's grace in sanctifying us and enabling us to overcome temptations—more expressly by patient suffering and active obedience. Patient suffering: "If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17), "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19). Obedience: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16), "He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

Now the great difficulty in connection with our salvation, (1 Peter 4:18), lies not in a respect to the end, but the means. There is some difficulty about the end, namely, to convince men of an unseen felicity and glory; but there is far more about the means. There is not only greater difficulty in convincing their minds, but in gaining their hearts and bringing them to submit to that patient, holy, self-denying course whereby we obtain eternal life. Men wish the end, but refuse the means: like Balaam (Num. 23:10) they want to die the death of the righteous, but are unwilling to live the life of the righteous. When the Israelites despised the land of Canaan (Psa. 106:24, 25) it was because of the difficulty of getting to it. They were assured that Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, but when they learned there were giants to be overcome first, walled towns to be scaled and numerous inhabitants to be vanquished, they demurred. Heaven is a glorious place, but it can only be reached by the way of denying self, and this few are willing to do. But the Covenant enjoins this upon us: Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:26.

So also there is a right order of *duties and comforts*. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your soul" (Matt. 11:28, 29). Observe carefully how commands and comforts, precepts and promises are here interwoven, and let us not separate what God has joined together. We must diligently attend unto both in our desires and practices alike. We must not pick and choose what suits us best and pass by the rest, but earnestly seek after God and labour by all His appointed means that He may "fulfill *all* the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). But alas, of how many must God say, as He did of old, "Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught and loveth to tread out the corn but will not break the clods" (Hosea 1:11, an ancient translation). Poor people desire privileges but neglect duties, they are all for wages but reluctant to work for them.

So it is even in the performance of duties: some are welcomed and done, others are disliked and shirked. But every duty must be observed in its place and season, and one must never be set against another. In resisting sin some avoid sensuality but yield to worldlings, deny fleshly lusts but fall into deadly errors. So with graces: Christians look so much to one that they forget the others. We are bidden to take unto ourselves "the *whole* armour of God" (Eph. 6:11), not simply a breastplate without a helmet. We must not cry up knowledge so as to neglect practice, nor fervour of devotion so as to betray us to ignorance and blind superstition. Some set their whole hearts to mourn for sin and think little of striving after a sense of their Saviour's love or humility; others prattle of free grace but are not watchful against sin nor diligent in being fruitful.

Lest some of our friends imagine that in the above paragraphs we have departed from the landmarks of our fathers and have inculcated a spirit of legality, we propose to supply a number of quotations from the writings of some of the most eminent of God's servants in the past, men who in their day lifted up their voices in protest against the lopsided ministry which we are decrying and who stressed the vital importance of preserving the balance of Truth, and of according to each part and portion thereof its due place and emphasis. For the evil we are here resisting is no new thing, but one that has wrought much havoc in every generation. The pendulum has ever swung from one extreme to the other, and few have been the men who preserved the happy mean or who faithfully declared all the counsel of God. We begin with a portion of Bishop J. C. Ryle's "An Estimate of Manton," the Puritan:

"Manton held strongly the need of preventing and calling grace; but that did not hinder him from inviting all men to repent, believe, and be saved. Manton held strongly that faith alone lays hold on Christ and appropriates justification; but that did not prevent him urging upon all the absolute necessity of repentance and turning from sin. Manton held strongly to the perseverance of God's elect; but that did not hinder him from teaching that holiness is the grand distinguishing mark of God's people, and that he who talks of 'never perishing' while he continues in willful sin, is a hypocrite and a self-deceiver. In all this I frankly confess I see much to admire. I admire the Scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard and fast systems, could dare to be apparently inconsistent in order to 'declare all the counsel of God.' I firmly believe that this is the test of theology which does good in the church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless."

Alas, if Manton were on earth today we know not where he would be able to obtain a hearing. One class would denounce him as a Calvinist, while another would shun him as an Arminian: one would accuse him of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, while another would charge him with gross legality. All would say he was not consistent with himself, that one of his sermons contradicted another, that he was a "Yea and Nay preacher," one day building up and the next day tearing down what he had previously erected. So long as he confined himself to what *their* Articles of Faith expressed, Calvinists would suffer him to address them; but as soon as he began to press *duties* upon them and exhort to performance of the same, he would be banished from their pulpits. Arminians would tolerate him just so long as he kept to the human responsibility side of the Truth, but the moment he mentioned unconditional election or particular redemption they would close their doors against him.

That prince of theologians, John Owen, in his work on "The causes, ways, and means of understanding the Mind of God," after fully establishing "The necessity of an especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds to make us understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures," and before treating of the means which must be used and the diligent labours put forth by us, began his fourth chapter by anticipating and disposing of an objection. A certain class of extremists, fanatics, (termed "enthusiasts" in those days) argued that, if our understanding of the Scriptures were dependent upon the illuminating operations of the Holy Spirit, then there is *no need for* earnest endeavour and labourious study on our part. After affirming that the gracious operations of the Spirit, "Do render all our use of proper means for the right interpretation of the Scripture, in a way of duty, indispensably necessary," Mr. Owen went on to point out:



“But thus it hath fallen out in other things. Those who have declared anything either of doctrine or of the power of the grace of the Gospel, have been traduced as opposing the principles of morality and reason, whereas on their grounds alone, their true value can be discovered and their proper use directed. So the Apostle preaching faith in Christ with righteousness and justification thereby, was accused to have made void the law, whereas without his doctrine, the law would have been void, or of no use to the souls of men. So he pleads: ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law’ (Rom. 3:31). So to this day, justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and *the necessity of our own obedience*, the efficacy of Divine grace in conversion and the liberty of our wills, the stability of God’s promises and our diligent *use of means*, are supposed inconsistent.”

It will be seen from the closing sentences of the above quotation that there were some, in the palmy days of the Puritans who made a “god” of consistency, or rather what *they deemed to be consistent*, and that they pitted parts of the Truth against their own favourite doctrines, refusing and rejecting anything which they considered to be inharmonious or incongruous therewith. But Owen refused to buckle in to them and preferred to be regarded as inconsistent with himself, a “Yea and Nay” man rather than withhold those aspects of the Gospel which he well knew were equally glorifying to God and profitable for His people. It is striking to note that the particular things singled out by him for mention are the very ones objected to by the hyper-Calvinists to-day, which show how far astray they are from what Owen taught. Continuing to quote from him:

“So it is here also. The necessity of the communication of spiritual light unto our minds to enable us to understand the Scriptures, and the exercise of our own reason in the use of external means, are looked on as irreconcilable. But as the Apostle saith, ‘Do we make void the law by faith? God forbid: yea, we establish it.’ Though he did it not in that place, nor unto those ends that the Jews would have had and used it. So we may say, do we, by asserting the righteousness of Christ make void our own obedience, by the efficacy of grace destroy the liberty of our wills, by the necessity of spiritual illumination take away the use of reason? God forbid: yea, we establish them. We do it not, it may be, in such a way or in such a manner as some would fancy and which would render them all on our part really useless, but in a clear consistency with and proper subservience unto the work of God’s Spirit and grace.”

“The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever: and how saith Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?” (John 12:34). In his comments upon this verse that grand old commentator Matthew Henry said: “They alleged those Scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that He should be so far from being cut off in the midst of His days, that He should be a ‘Priest forever’ (Psa. 110:4) and a King ‘forever’ (Psa. 89:29, etc.). That He should have length of days forever and ever, and His years ‘as many generations’ (Psa. 61:6)—from all this they inferred the Messiah should *not* die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the Scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity and to fight Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness will appear if we consider that when they vouched the Scripture to prove that the Messiah ‘abideth forever,’ they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah’s death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that He ‘abideth forever,’ but had they never heard out of the law that Messiah ‘shall be cut off’ (Dan. 9:26), that He shall ‘pour out His soul unto death’

(Isa. 53:12), and particularly that His 'hands and feet' should be pierced? (Psa. 22:16). Why, then, do they make so strange of His being 'lifted up'?"

The folly of these skeptical Jews was not one whit greater than that of rationalistic Calvinists. The one refused to believe one part of Messianic prophecy because they were unable to harmonize it with another. The latter rejecting the truth of human responsibility because they cannot perceive its consistency with the doctrine of fallen man's spiritual impotency. Aptly did Matthew Henry follow up the above remarks by immediately adding: "We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with Scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in His Word has put together, and opposing one truth under the pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the Gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we must cordially embrace both, and not separate them, or set them at variance." Divine grace is not bestowed with the object of freeing men from their obligations but rather for supplying them with a powerful motive to the more ready and grateful discharge of the same. To make God's favour a ground of exemption from the performance of duty comes perilously near to turning His grace into lasciviousness.

In his "Precious Remedies against Satan's devices," Thomas Brooks (1670) wrote: "The fourth device Satan hath to keep souls off from holy exercises is by working them to make false inferences on those blessed and glorious things that Christ hath done. As that Jesus Christ hath done all for us, therefore there is nothing for us to do but to joy and rejoice. He hath perfectly justified us, fulfilled the law, satisfied Divine justice, pacified His Father's wrath, and is gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, and in the meantime to intercede for us; and therefore away with praying, mourning, hearing etc. Ah! what a world of professors hath Satan drawn in these days from religious services by working them to make such sad, wild and strange inferences from the excellent things the Lord Jesus hath done for His beloved ones." As one remedy against this, the Puritan named:

"To dwell as much on those Scriptures that show you the duties and services that Christ *requires* of you, as upon those Scriptures that declare to you the precious and glorious things Christ hath *done* for you. It is a sad and dangerous thing to have two eyes to behold our dignity and privileges, and not one to see our duties and services. I should look with one eye upon the choice things Christ hath done for me to raise up my heart to love Christ with the purest love and to joy in Him with the strongest joy, and to lift up Christ above all who hath made Himself to be my all—and I should look with the other eye upon those services and duties that the Scriptures require of those for whom Christ hath done such blessed things, as 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 15:58; Galatians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 10:24, 25. Now a soul that would not be drawn away by this device of Satan must not look with a squint eye upon these blessed Scriptures, and many more of like import, but he must *dwell upon* them, make them to be his chiefest and choicest companions, and this will be a happy means to keep him close to Christ."—A.W.P.

### THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28-29). It has been pointed out in the preceding months upon this passage that the Lord Jesus began by uttering a gracious invitation which is accompanied by a precious promise, and then He proceeded to make known the conditions on which that promise is made good. To those whose consciences are weighted down by a felt and intolerable burden of guilt and are anxious for relief, He says, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” He and He alone is the Giver of spiritual and saving rest. But His rest can only be obtained as we meet His requirements: these are that we take His “yoke “ upon us, and that we “learn” of Him. It was shown last month that this taking of Christ’s yoke upon us consists of surrendering our wills to Him, submitting unto His authority, and consenting to be ruled by Him. We would now consider at more length what it means to “*learn*” of Him.

“Learn of Me.” Christ is the antitypical Prophet, to whom all the Old Testament Prophets pointed, for He alone was personally qualified to fully make known the will of God: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Heb. 1:1, 2). Christ is the grand Teacher of His Church, all others being subordinate to and appointed by Him: “He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11, 12). Christ is the chief Shepherd and Feeder of His flock, His under-shepherds learning of and receiving from Him. Christ is the personal Word in whom and through whom the Divine perfections are most illustriously displayed: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18). Thus it is to Christ we must come in order to be instructed in the Heavenly doctrine and be built up in our most holy faith.

“Learn of Me.” Christ is not only the final Spokesman of God, the One by whom the Divine will is fully uttered, but He is also the grand *Exemplar* set before His people. Christ did more than proclaim the Truth, He was Himself the living embodiment of it. He did more than utter the will of God: He was the personal exemplification of it. The Divine requirements were perfectly set forth in the very character and conduct of the Lord Jesus. And therein He differed radically, essentially, from all who went before Him and all who come after Him. In the lives of the Old Testament Prophets and in the New Testament Apostles we behold broken and scattered rays of light, but they were merely reflections and refractions of the Light—Christ is in His own blessed and peerless Person—“the Sun of righteousness.” Therefore is He fully qualified to say, “learn of Me.” Not only was there no error whatever in His teaching, but there was not the slightest blemish in His character or flaw in His conduct. Thus, the very life that He lived presents to us a perfect standard of holiness—a perfect pattern for us to follow.

When His enemies asked Him, “Who art Thou?” He answered, “even the same that I said unto you from the beginning” (John 8:25). The force of that remarkable utterance (as expressed in the Greek) is brought out yet more plainly in Bagster’s Interlinear and the margin of the American R.V.—“Altogether that which I also spoke unto thee.” In replying to their interrogation, the incarnate Son of God affirmed that He was essentially and absolutely that which He de-

clared Himself to be. I have spoken of "light": I *am* that Light. I have spoken of "Truth": I *am* that Truth—the very incarnation, personification and exemplification thereof. Wondrous declaration was that. None but He could really say I am Myself that of which I am speaking to you. The child of God may speak the Truth and walk in the Truth, but He is not the Truth itself—Christ is! A Christian may let his light "shine," but he is not the light itself. Christ is, and therein we perceive His exalted uniqueness. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us all understanding that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20): not "Him who taught the truth," but "Him that *is* true."

Now it is just because the Lord Jesus could make this claim, "I am altogether that which I spoke unto thee": I am the living embodiment, the personal exemplification of all which I teach, that he is a perfect Pattern for us to follow, that He can say "Learn of Me." "He has left us an example, that we should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). As we bear His name (being called Christians) it is meet that we should imitate His holiness. "Be ye followers of me (said the Apostle), as I also am *of Christ*" (1 Cor. 11:1). The best of men are but men at the best: they have their errors and defects, which they freely acknowledge, and therefore wherein they differ from Christ, it is our duty to differ from them. No mere man, however wise or holy he may be, is a perfect rule for other men. The standard of perfection is found in Christ alone: He is the rule of every Christian's way and walk. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). Though we fall far short of reaching such a standard in this life, yet nothing short thereof must be our aim.

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). Many reasons might be given in proof of that "ought." It is utterly vain for any man to profess he is a Christian unless he furnishes evidence that it is both his desire and endeavour to follow the example which Christ has left His people. As one of the Puritans put it, "let him either put on the life of Christ, or put off the name of Christ; let him show the hand of a Christian in works of holiness and obedience, or else the tongue and language of a Christian must gain no belief or credit." God has predestinated His people "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29): a work which is begun here and perfected after death, but that work is not consummated in Heaven unless it is commenced on earth—"we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ" (J. Flavell).

This experimental and practical conformity between God's Son and His sons is rendered indispensably necessary by their relation in grace: this relation is that which obtains between body and head. Believers are made members of a living organism of which Christ is the Head. Of the members we read, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13); of Christ we are told, "and (God) gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23). The two together—members and Head—form Christ-mystical. Now as Christ, the Head, is pure and holy, so also must be the members. An animal with a human head would be a monstrosity. For the sensual and godless to claim oneness to Christ is to misrepresent Him before the world, as though His mystical Body were like unto the image of Nebuchadnezzar, with the head of fine gold and the feet of iron and clay (Dan. 2:32-33, etc.).

This resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Him in the same Spirit of grace and holiness. Not only is Christ the "First-born among many brethren," but it is also said of Him that God anointed Him, "with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psa. 45:7). That "oil of gladness" is an emblem of the Holy Spirit, and God gives the same unto each of the "fellows" or partners which He more abundantly communicated to Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle are, there the same fruits and works must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace bestowed. This is the very design for which the Holy Spirit is given to believers: as it is written, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, *are changed into the same image* from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

To name but one other reason: the very honour of Christ demands the conformity of Christians to His example. In what other way can they close the mouths of those who despise and reject their Master and vindicate His blessed name from the vile reproaches of the world? How can Wisdom be justified of her children except in this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from those who desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by His example? The wicked will not read the inspired record of His life in the Scriptures, and therefore is there all the more need that they should have His excellencies set before them in the lives of His people. The world has eyes to see what we practice, as well as ears to hear what we profess. Unless we evince consistency between our profession and practice we cannot glorify Christ before a world which has cast Him out.

Let us next point out that there must be an inward conformity to Christ before there can be any resemblance without: there must be an experimental oneness before there can be a practical likeness. How can I possibly be conformed to Him in external acts of obedience unless there is a conformity to Him in those springs from which such actions proceed? We must live in the Spirit ere we can walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). "Let this mind be in you," says the Apostle, "which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5), for it is the mind which should regulate all our other faculties, and therefore are we told, "for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). And what was "the mind which was in Christ Jesus?" The verses that follow tell us: it was that of self-abnegation and devotedness unto the Father. That we must begin with inward conformity to Christ is evident from our text, for after saying "learn of Me," He at once added, "for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Last month we emphasized the need of attending closely to our Lord's order in this passage, insisting that we cannot possibly "learn" of Him (in the sense meant here) unless and until we have taken His "yoke" upon us, that is, until we surrender ourselves to Him and submit to be ruled by Him. It is not merely to all intellectual learning of Him which Christ here calls us, but to all experimental, effectual, and transforming learning; and in order to *that* we must be completely subject to Him. John Newton suggested in his sermons on this passage that there is another relation between these two things: that not only is our taking of Christ's yoke upon us an indispensable requirement for our learning of Him, but that our learning of Him is His only appointed *means* for enabling us to wear His yoke. We believe that both these things are included, so we will now work out Mr. Newton's suggestion:

" 'Learn of Me.' Be not afraid to come to Me for help and instruction, *for* I am meek and lowly in heart.' Here is encouragement indeed. You need not hesitate to apply unto such an One,

Maker of Heaven and earth, King of kings and Lord of lords though He be. O what a wondrous Person is the Christ of God! What varied excellencies meet in Him: both God and man in one Person. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, yet at the same time the gentle Lamb. The One before whom the Roman soldiers fainted (John 18:6), yet the One who took into His arms little children and blessed them. The One before whom all the angels of Heaven prostrate themselves in adoring homage, yet the One who is the Friend of sinners. Because He is God, possessed of omniscience and omnipotence, therefore is He able to solve our every problem and supply strength for the weakest; because He is Man, possessed of human sensibilities, therefore is He capable of being 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' How gladly, then, should we turn unto such an One!

" 'Learn of Me.' I know the cause why these things appear so hard. It is owing to the pride and impatience of your hearts. To remedy this, take Me for your example; I require nothing of you but what I have performed before you, and on your account: in the path I mark out for you, you may perceive My own footsteps all the way. This is a powerful argument, a sweet recommendation, of the yoke of Christ, to those who love Him, that He bore it Himself. He is not like the Pharisees, whom He censured (Matt. 23:4) on this very account: who bound heavy burdens, and grievous, to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers.

"1. Are you terrified with the difficulties attending *your profession*: disheartened by hard usage, or too ready to show resentment against those who oppose you? Learn of Jesus, admire and imitate His constancy: 'Consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself' (Heb. 12:3). Make a comparison (so the word imports) between yourself and Him, between the contradiction which He endured, and that which you are called to struggle with; then surely you will be ashamed to complain. Admire and imitate His meekness: when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; He wept for His enemies, and prayed for His murderers. Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

"2. Do you find it hard to walk steadfastly in His *precepts*, especially in some particular instances, when the maxims of worldly prudence and the pleadings of flesh and blood, are strongly against you? Learn of Jesus. He pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3): He considered not what was safe and easy, but what was the will of His heavenly Father. Intreat Him to strengthen you with strength in your soul, that as you bear the name of His disciples, you may resemble Him in every part of your conduct, and shine as lights in a dark and selfish world, to the glory of His grace.

"3. Are you tempted to repine at the dispensations of Divine *providence*? Take Jesus for your pattern. Did He say, when the unspeakable sufferings He was to endure for sinners were just coming upon Him, 'The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?' (John 18:11); and shall *we* presume to have a will of our own? especially when we further reflect that as His sufferings were wholly on our account, so all our sufferings are by His appointment, and all designed by Him to promote our best, that is our spiritual and eternal welfare?" (John Newton).

"Learn of Me." Christ, then, teaches His disciples not only by precept but by example, not only by word of mouth but chiefly by His own perfect life of obedience and submission to the Father's will. When He uttered these words of Matthew 11:29, He was Himself wearing the "yoke" and giving a personal exemplification of meekness and lowliness. O what a perfect

Teacher, showing us in His own utter selflessness what these lovely graces really are! Meekness and lowliness discovered themselves in all that the Redeemer said and did. He associated not with the noble and mighty, the rich and influential, but made fishermen His ambassadors and sought those most despised, so that He was dubbed “a Friend of publicans and sinners.” We read of but one triumph in all His earthly life, when He entered Jerusalem to the acclaiming Hosannas of the people: yet observe how He then carried Himself: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *meeek*, and sitting upon an ass” (Matt. 21:5)!

“And learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Those heavenly graces, which are the roots from which all other spiritual excellencies spring, can only be learned from Christ. The colleges and seminaries cannot impart them, preachers and churches cannot bestow them, no self-culture can attain unto them. They can only be learned experimentally and vitally at the feet of Christ, as we take our proper place in the dust before Him. They can only be learned as we take His yoke upon us. They can only be learned as we commune with Him day by day and drink more deeply of His spirit. They can only be learned as we ponder the details of His recorded life and then follow the example which He has left us. They can only be learned as we turn those ponderings into earnest prayers that we may be more fully conformed unto His holy image. They can only be learned as we definitely and trustfully seek the enablement of His Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body.

What cause have we to mourn that there is so little meekness and lowliness in us! How we need to confess unto God our lamentable deficiency. Though it is much to be thankful for if we are conscious of and humbled over our sad lack, yet merely mourning over it will not improve matters. We must go back to the root of our folly, and *judge it*. Why have I failed to learn of Christ these heavenly graces? Ah, has it not to be said of me, as of Israel of old, “Ephraim is a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke”? If so, how I need to cry unto Christ with all my might and beg Him to give me a heart for His yoke. Not until my proud spirit is broken and my will is completely surrendered to Christ, can I truly “learn of Him.” Only then shall I take pleasure in pondering the Psalms and the Gospels wherein I may discover the recorded manifestations of His meekness and lowliness. Only then shall I delight in making Christ the Object of my heart and the pattern of my character and conduct.

And this taking of Christ’s yoke upon us and learning of Him is to be a *daily* thing, the chief business of my life. Christianity is far more than an orthodox creed and ethical code: it is a being practically conformed to the image of God’s Son. It is a learning to be nothing, that He may be all in all. So many make the great mistake of supposing that coming to Christ and taking His yoke upon them is a single act, which may be done once and for all. Not so: it is to be a continuous and daily act, “To whom *coming*, (again and again) as unto a living Stone” (1 Peter 2:4). We need to continue as we began. The most matured Christian who has been fifty years in the way needs Christ as truly and urgently now as he did the first moment he was convicted of his lost condition—needs His cleansing blood, His quickening power, His healing virtue—needs to come as an empty-handed beggar to receive of His grace. In like manner he needs to daily take His yoke upon him and learn of Him.—A.W.P.

**THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.**

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). In one division of a sermon on this text, wherein he pointed out a number of instances in which churches of different denominations acted contrary thereto, C. H. Spurgeon said, “if churches are to agree one with another, they must not make rules that ministers who are not of their denomination should not occupy their pulpits. I should be ashamed of you (he said to his own members), if you passed a resolution that no one dissenting from us should stand in my pulpit. But we know a church which says, ‘No matter how good a man may be—he may be a man venerated as James Angell James, or he may have all the excellencies of a William Jay—we would not, perhaps, mind hearing him in a town hall, but into the sacredness of our particular rostrum these interlopers must not intrude.’ Where is the unity of the Spirit there?”

That honoured servant of Christ had too much of the love of God in his heart to close his pulpit against fellow-labourers in the vineyard, who were sound in the faith and orderly in their walk. Something much higher than sectarian considerations regulated that noble and greatly-used man of God. Alas, how few resemble him in this, or in any other respect. It needs pointing out that one may keep strictly to the Narrow Way without being of a narrow and contracted spirit. Fidelity to God does not require any to act uncharitably to His servants. Those churches which shut their pulpits to all who wear not their particular livery are grieving the Spirit, and oftentimes depriving themselves of the very help they much need. None can act in defiance of the unity of the Spirit without themselves being the losers.—A.W.P.

