

Volume 17—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 6**June, 1938****The Lord's Prayer—Part 4**

“Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). This second petition is the briefest and yet the most comprehensive one contained in our Lord's Prayer, nevertheless, strange and sad to say that, in some circles, it is the least understood and the most controverted. The following questions call for careful consideration. First, what is the *relation* between this petition and the one preceding it? Second, *Whose* “kingdom” is here in view? Third, exactly what is meant by “Thy *kingdom*”? Fourth, in what sense or senses are we to understand “Thy kingdom *come*”?

The first petition, “Hallowed be Thy name” concerns God's glory itself, the second and third respect the *means* whereby His glory is manifested and promoted on earth. God's name is manifestatively glorified here just in proportion as His “kingdom” comes to us and His “will” is done by us. The relation between this petition and the former one, then, is quite apparent. Christ teaches us to pray first for the sanctifying of God's great name, and then directs us to the means thereunto. Among the means for promoting God's glory none is so influential as the coming of His kingdom, and hence it is we are exhorted to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). But though men ought to glorify God's name upon earth, yet of themselves they cannot do so: God's kingdom must first be set up in their hearts. God cannot be honoured by us until we voluntarily submit to His rule over us.

“Thy kingdom come.” Whose “kingdom”? Why, God's, of course, or more specifically, the Father's; yet *not* as something that is separate from the kingdom of the Son. The Father's kingdom is no more a distinct one from Christ's than “the Church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15) is other than the Body of Christ; or the “Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1) is something different from the “Gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16), or than “the Word of Christ” (Col. 3:16) is to be distinguished from the Word of God. Rather does “Thy kingdom” (the Father's kingdom) point a contrast between God's and *Satan's* “kingdom” (Matt. 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder—the opposite from and hinderer of God's.

The Father's *kingdom* is, first and more generally, His universal *rule*, His absolute dominion over all creatures and things: “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all” (1 Chron. 29:11). Second, and more specifically, it is the external sphere of His grace on earth, where He is ostensibly acknowledged (Mark 4:11, etc.). Third, and more definitely still, it is God's spiritual and internal kingdom which is entered by regeneration: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Now, as the Father and the Son are one in nature, so is Their kingdom the same, and thus it appears in each aspect of it. In the kingdom of *providence*: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17), i.e., in the government of the world (cf. Heb. 1:3). In the *mediatorial* kingdom, Christ has it by the Father's appointment (Luke 22:29) and establishment (Psa. 2:6). In the kingdom of *grace*, as it is set up in the hearts of the Lord's people, it is the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 4:20), yet of the Son (Col. 1:13). In the kingdom of *Glory*: Christ will drink the fruit of the vine, “in My Father's kingdom” (Matt. 26:29),

yet it is also called “The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Hence we read of “the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ” (Rev. 12:10).

It may be inquired, *Which aspect* of the “kingdom” is here prayed for as yet future? Not God’s providential, since *that* has existed and continued from the beginning. It must, then, be the kingdom of His grace, which is consummated in the kingdom of glory. There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man—spirit and soul and body—to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. The character or nature of this reign is summed up in three things: “the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). First, Christ’s righteousness imputed, and then the righteousness of a good conscience, the basis of which is our sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Second, peace: peace of conscience toward God, peace with His people, and with all creatures—under “peace” is included all the duties of love. Third, joy: which is a fruit of the other two—a delighting in God in all estates.

“Thy kingdom *come*.” This has a threefold force, for it applies to each aspect of God’s kingdom. First, to the external kingdom of grace: let Thy Gospel be preached, the power of Thy Spirit attend it, the Church be strengthened, Thy Cause on earth be advanced, the works of the Devil be destroyed. Second, to the internal and spiritual kingdom of grace: let Thy throne be set up in our heart, Thy laws be administered in our lives, Thy name be magnified by our walk. Third, to the kingdom of Glory: let the days be hastened when Satan and all his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sin forever, when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

God’s kingdom “comes” in the following degrees. First, when He gives to men the outward means of salvation: Luke 11:20 and cf. 17:21. Second, when the Word preached enters the mind so that the mysteries of the Gospel are understood. Third, when the Spirit’s regeneration actually bring us into the kingdom or state of grace. Fourth, at death, when the soul is freed from all sin. Fifth, at the resurrection, when we are fully glorified. “O Lord, let Thy kingdom come to us who are strangers and pilgrims here on earth: prepare us for it and conduct us into it, that be yet outside to it; renew us by Thy Spirit that we may be subject to Thy will; confirm us who are in the way, that our souls after this life, and both soul and body in the day of judgment may be fully glorified: yea, Lord, hasten this glorification to us and all Thine elect” (W. Perkins).

We say again, Though this be the briefest petition, it is the most comprehensive one. In praying “Thy kingdom come,” we ask for the power and blessings of the Holy Spirit to attend the preaching of the Word, for the Church to be furnished with God-given and God-equipped officers, for the ordinances to be purely administered, for an increase of spiritual gifts and graces in its members, for the overthrow of Christ’s enemies—and thus that the kingdom of grace may be further extended till the whole of God’s elect are brought into it. By necessary implication, we pray that God will wean us more and more from the perishing things of this world.

In conclusion, let us point out some of the *uses* to which this petition should be put. First, *failures* to be bewailed and confessed by us. We are to own before God our wretched estate by nature, whereby we are the servants of sin and so under bondage to Satan: Romans 7:14, 24. We are to mourn over the sad state of the world: its woeful transgressions of God’s Law, whereby He is so dishonoured and the kingdom of Satan furthered: Psalm 110:36, Mark 3:5. Second, we are to earnestly *seek those graces* which

will influence our heart and lives whereby God's kingdom is erected and maintained, an endeavouring to be so subject to Christ that we are wholly ruled by Him. Third, *duties* to be performed: we are to "bring forth the fruit" of the kingdom (Matt. 21:43, Rom. 14:17), and diligently use all the Divinely appointed means for the furthering of it. Thus, the sum of this petition is that God, and not sin and Satan, may reign over us.—A.W.P.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

126. *Spiritual Freedom*: 13:23.

Before turning to our present verse we must complete our observations on the one which occupied our attention last month, for the practical importance and value of it cannot be over-estimated or over-emphasized. "Suffer the Word of Exhortation." In its local meaning to the Hebrews this expression comprehended the entire contents of the Epistle which Paul had addressed to them, for, from beginning to end, it was in the nature of an earnest entreaty that they would relinquish the now effete system of Judaism, and remain steadfast in the profession of Christianity and the performance of Gospel duties. This was, then, a final word from the Apostle that his readers would duly take to heart the message he had delivered to them—that no matter how radically it conflicted with their traditions, sentiments, and prejudices—their eternal welfare depended upon receiving what was worthy of all acceptance. It was an affectionate appeal to them that they would not, through natural disinclination, miss and lose the inestimable value of what he had written.

But this expression "the Word of Exhortation" has a still wider meaning and application for *us*. It may legitimately be taken for the entire Word of God, for what are the Scriptures—considered from one essential viewpoint—but a continuous exhortation? Just as in Romans 9:9 we read of "the Word of Promise" and in 2 Peter 1:19 of the more sure "Word of Prophecy," so here the Scriptures are designated "the Word of Exhortation"—the *emphasis* being changed in each case. And just as responding to the Word of Exhortation meant to the Hebrews that they must first *relinquish* something, and then *adhere* to another thing in its place; so it is with us. The Hebrews were called upon to forsake the Christ-dishonouring camp of Judaism and act by faith in the revelation which God had made in His Son; whereas we are called upon to forsake the world and its vanities, to forsake the pleasures of sin and the indulging of our fleshly lusts, and to tread that highway of holiness which alone conducts unto Everlasting Life. No matter how much the Divine exhortations cross our wills and oppose our corruptions, obedience thereto is absolutely necessary if we are to escape the wrath to come.

Last month we sought to show *how* we are to "suffer the Word of Exhortation," how we are to *respond* thereto, by making use of what is found in Psalm 119 on this subject, for it is there, more fully than anywhere else in Scriptures, we are taught how the man of God conducts himself with reference to the Divine Law. We briefly touched upon seven things, and pointed out that we are to "suffer" or give the Word of Exhortation that place in our hearts and lives to which it is entitled, by frequently reminding ourselves that obedience thereto is the way of true blessedness (Psa. 119:1-3), by constantly calling to mind the Divine authority with which it is invested (v. 4), by earnestly praying for enabling grace (vv. 12, 27), by frequently meditating therein (vv. 15, 48, 78), by begging God to make us go in the path of His commandments (v. 35), by praying to Him to incline our hearts thereto (v. 36), by our own diligent improvement of the grace which God has already given to us (v. 112): let us now add a few more words upon this last point.

"I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end" (v. 112). Was this creature boasting? Most certainly not, any more than Paul was guilty of the same when he declared, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." It is not unusual for Scripture to ascribe to us what God works in us, and that because of our subservient endeavours to Divine grace, as we pursue the work of

God. The soul responds to the impressions which the Spirit makes upon it. God gives us breath, yet we breathe. God supplies food, yet we have to prepare and eat it. God sets motives before us, but we have to respond thereto. God imparts grace, but we must improve it. This is the way to get more: Luke 8:18. It is our duty to heed that injunction “now *set your heart* and your soul to seek the LORD your God” (1 Chron. 22:19); and as Paul, “If that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12).

Moreover, there are certain *aids and helps* thereto, which it is our privilege to employ. For example the Psalmist said, “I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:63). We are largely affected and influenced by the company we keep: “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Prov. 22:24). We must not expect to love and obey God’s precepts if we have fellowship with those who despise them. But communion with godly souls will be a stimulus to our own piety: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Prov. 13:20). Here, too, our responsibility is exercised, for we are free to choose our companions. So far as Providence permits, it is our duty to cultivate acquaintances with those who make conscious efforts of obeying God’s commands. Pious conversation with them will kindle the spark of grace in our own hearts: “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Prov. 27:9).

There is one other thing we would notice in Psalm 119 as it bears upon the subject of obedience to God’s commands, and that is, profiting from Divine chastenings, begging God to sanctify to us the various trials through which we pass. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word” (v. 67). It is in seasons of temporal prosperity that we are most apt to decline spiritually, and generally we have to pass through deep waters of trouble before we are restored—the snapping dog of adversity is employed to recover the strayed sheep. Afflictions are blessings in disguise when they cool our lusts, wean us from the world, make us realize our weakness, and cast us back immediately upon God. So declared the Psalmist: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes” (v. 71). Then “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb. 12:5).

Ere turning from this subject, let us remind the reader that the Greek word rendered “exhortation” in Hebrews 13:22 is translated “consolation” in 6:18, for the term not only signifies to entreat and incite, but it also means to relieve and refresh. It may seem strange to some that the same word should have such different forces as exhortation and consolation, yet these two things have a much closer affinity than is generally realized, and this twofold meaning is designed by the Spirit to inculcate an important practical lesson. To despise the Word of Exhortation is to forsake our own comforts, as many a back-slidden Christian can testify. Obedience to the Divine precepts carries its own reward now: peace of conscience, tranquility of mind, contentment of heart, and assurance of God’s approbation. Divine consolation is secured by heeding the Word of Exhortation!

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” (Heb. 13:23). Following our usual custom we will first raise the question, What is the *connection* between this verse and the context? At first glance there does not appear to be any relation between them, yet further examination seems to indicate otherwise. Some of our readers may deem us fanciful, but it appears to the writer that this historical allusion to the “liberty” of Timothy supplies an *illustrative encouragement* for us

to respond to the call contained in the preceding verse. Let us set it forth thus: those who refuse to heed the Word of Exhortation, and instead give free play to their own corruptions, are in the worst servitude of all—the bondage of sin and Satan; but those who yield submission to the commands and precepts of God enter into true spiritual *freedom*.

It is one of the great delusions of the natural man that he is free only so long as he may please himself, supposing that to be placed under the authority of another is to curtail his liberty and bring him into bondage. But that is a putting of darkness for light and light for darkness. For just so far as the language of our hearts be, “let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us” (Psa. 2:3), are we tyrannized over by our lusts. In proportion as we follow the inclinations and devices of our evil hearts are we in servitude to sin and Satan. Lawlessness is not liberty, but libertinism, which is the worst bondage of all: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the slaves of corruption, for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Alas, what widespread ignorance and delusion abounds on this subject today. Carnal liberty is but moral thralldom. To make this the more evident let it be pointed out, first, that which most infringes upon a man’s real liberty is that which most hinders and disables him to prosecute his true happiness. When the things of sense crowd out the things of the Spirit, when the concerns of time oust the interests of eternity, when Satan is given that place in our lives which belongs only to God, then we are forsaking our own mercies and come under the most cruel task-masters. Second, that which disorders the soul and puts reason out of dominion, is certain spiritual bondage. When the base prevail over the honourable, it is a sign that a country is enthralled: and when our fleshly lusts, rather than our understanding and conscience, prevail over the will, it is sure proof that we are in spiritual bondage.

Again—consider the great power and tyranny of sin. Sin, in various forms and ways, has such complete dominion over the unconverted that it robs them of all control over themselves and their actions: they are “*serv*ing divers lusts and pleasures” (Titus 3:3). This is most evident in the case of the confirmed drunkard and the drug addict—what fetters they have forged for themselves, and how helpless they are to break from them! Yet, the bondage of pleasure and worldly pursuits is just as real, if not so apparent. Sin, even in its most refined forms, obtains such a mastery over its victims that they have no command of their affections and still less of their wills, so that they are quite unable to forsake what they themselves believe to be vanity or follow that which they know to be good. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer. 13:23). Therefore do many of them say, “There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everyone do the imagination of his evil heart” (Jer. 18:12).

Now on the contrary, true liberty is to be found in the ways of God, for spiritual freedom is a freedom from sin and not to sin—a freedom to serve God and not self, a freedom to take upon us the easy yoke of Christ and not the despising of it. Genuine liberty is not a liberty to do what we please, but to do what we ought. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*” (2 Cor. 3:17); contrariwise, where Satan rules there is captivity (2 Tim. 2:26). Said the Psalmist, “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts” (119:45). Yes, just so far as we walk according to the Divine precepts, are we freed from the fetters of our corruptions. It is that miracle of grace which brings the heart to love the Divine statutes, that sets the heart at rest. “The way of holiness is not a track for slaves,

but the King's highway for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bondage to the Canaan of rest" (Spurgeon).

First, the way of God's precepts is in itself liberty, and therefore God's Law is called "the perfect Law of liberty" (James 1:25). How grievously are they mistaken, then, who accuse us of bringing souls into bondage when we insist that the Law is the believer's Rule of Life—the bondage of the Law from which Divine grace delivers, is from the Law as a covenant of works, and therefore from its condemnation and curse; and not from the preceptive authority of the Law. Yet ever since we drank that poison, "ye shall be as gods" (Gen. 3:5), man desires dominion over himself and would be lord of his own actions. But Scripture makes it clear that the most dreadful judgment which God inflicts upon the wicked in this world is when He withdraws His restraints and gives them over to do as they please: Psalm 81:12; Romans 1:26-29.

Real liberty is found in the ways of God because it is there we are directed to attain unto true felicity. The way of sin seems broad and easy to the flesh, yet is it strait and painful to the spirit—"the way of transgressors is hard." Contrariwise, the way of holiness seems strait and narrow to the flesh, yet, because it is life and peace, it is broad and easy to the spirit—all of Wisdom's ways are "ways of pleasantness." He lives the freest life who lives under bonds of duty, who makes conscience of pleasing God, for it is the Truth which makes us free (John 8:32). The fuller be our obedience, the more completely emancipated are we from the fetters of moral slavery. The only unshackled ones are those who walk with God.

Second, liberty is given to walk in God's ways. At regeneration the soul, hitherto in prison, is set free by Christ (Luke 4:18; John 8:36). "For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Conversion is a change of masters: "But God be thanked, that ye were the *servants of sin*, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the *servants of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:17, 18). Redemption is a being delivered from the cruel task-masters of Egypt and coming under the Lordship of Christ. In loving, fearing, serving, and praising God the highest faculties of the soul are exercised in their noblest and most regular way of operation. The soul is lifted above the things of time and sense, elevated to occupation with heavenly and eternal things. For some things in the last few paragraphs we are indebted to Manton's sermon on Psalm 119:45.

We trust that the reader is now able to perceive the connection between the deeper spiritual significance of Hebrews 13:23 and the verse which immediately precedes it. The historical allusion to the physical release of Timothy from his imprisonment, coming immediately after the call for us to heed the Word of Exhortation, is to be regarded as an *illustration* of the spiritual freedom which attends our compliance with that Divine injunction. Just in proportion as we yield subjection to the Divine precept, do we enter into and enjoy *real freedom of soul*. If this should seem too fanciful to some of our more prosaic readers, perhaps they will be willing that others should be permitted to exercise their own judgment thereon.

"Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty." "Who this Timothy was, what was his relation unto Paul, how he loved him, how he employed him and honoured him, joining him with himself in the salutation prefixed unto some of his Epistles, with what care and diligence he wrote unto him with reference unto his office of an evangelist, is

known out of his writings. This Timothy was his perpetual companion in all his travels, labours and sufferings, serving him as a son serveth his father, unless when he designed and sent him unto any special work for the Church. And being with him in Judea, he was well known unto the Hebrews also, as was his worth and usefulness” (John Owen).

Timothy means “precious to God.” His father was a Greek; his mother a Jewess. Nothing is known of the former. That his mother was a true believer we learn from 2 Timothy 1:5, where the Apostle makes mention of the unfeigned faith which “dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.” The expression “unfeigned faith” testifies to the reality and genuineness of it, in contradistinction from the empty profession of others who, without just cause, posed as believers. From the above reference many have concluded that Timothy, in his early days, received a godly training. This is confirmed by “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). Apparently the family resided at Lystra.

The first visit of the Apostle Paul to Lystra is recorded in Acts 14. There he and Barnabas “preached the Gospel” (v. 7). There, too, God wrought a mighty miracle through Paul, by healing an impotent man who had never walked, being a cripple from his mother’s womb (v. 10). A deep impression was made upon the heathen inhabitants, who could scarce be restrained from doing homage to the Apostles as gods. But shortly after, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded the people—so fickle is human nature—to stone Paul. The writer believes that he was then actually stoned to death and that God restored him to life. Possibly the following passage refers to that incident: “We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our troubles which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in Whom we trust that He will yet deliver” (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

It was during this first visit of Paul to Lystra that young Timothy was converted. This seems clear from the fact that in 1 Timothy 1:2 he refers to him as “my own son in the faith”; while in 2 Timothy 3:10, 11, Paul reminds him how that he fully knew the persecutions and afflictions which befell his spiritual father “at Antioch, at Iconium, at *Lystra*.” The expression, “my own son in the faith” signifies that Paul had, ministerially, begotten him through the Gospel (1 Cor. 4:17). The Lystrians had dragged the body of Paul outside the city (Acts 14:19), but he rose up and returned into it. Next day he departed to Derbe, but after preaching the Gospel there, he returned to Lystra, “confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 22).

What has been pointed out above explains the fact that when Paul revisited Lystra some three or four years later, Timothy is already spoken of as a “disciple” (Acts 16:1). The second verse intimates how he had acquitted himself during the Apostle’s absence. During that time he had established a reputation for godliness, not only in Lystra, but in Iconium. He had become well known to the churches at both cities, and was “well reported of.” Probably it was this good report which attracted Paul, who then stood in need of a fellow-helper—Barnabas and Mark having in the interval deserted him (Acts 15:39). The commendation of Timothy’s “brethren” inclined Paul to select him for a wider work. But there was, however, one hindrance in the way: Timothy was a Gentile, and the Jew-

ish Christians were not yet, generally, prepared to receive an uncircumcised leader. To place him in office as a teacher might arouse prejudice, so Paul, in deference to their scruples, circumcised the young disciple.

Nothing is told us of what it must have cost Eunice to give up such a son: but *God* took notice (Psa. 56:8). From now on Timothy figured prominently in the history of Paul, becoming his companion and fellow-labourer. Two of his Epistles were addressed to him, and in six others he is associated with him in the superscription: compare 2 Corinthians 1:1. Timothy was with the Apostle during his second great missionary tour, accompanied him to Jerusalem, and was with him in his first imprisonment. In 1 Corinthians 4:17 we find Paul affirming Timothy was “faithful in the Lord.” Philippians 2:19-22 presents to us a lovely picture of the gracious power of the Spirit triumphing over the affections of the flesh, and the love of Christ constraining unto unselfishness. The Apostle was prisoner in Rome, and Timothy, who was there, was very dear unto him; yet was he willing to part with his beloved companion, even in his sorrow and solitariness. He was solicitous for the welfare of the Philippian saints, and having none other he could send, authorized Timothy to visit them.

In referring to Timothy as being “like minded” with himself, Paul gives us an insight into his ability. Not only was Timothy his “own son in the faith” but he speaks of him “as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel” (Phil. 2:22). Young believers generally become like those with whom they associate most intimately. Blessed is it when we see them growing up to follow the example of godly leaders—“followers of *us* and of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:6). How solemnly important it is, then, that the leaders should live so that the younger Christians may not stumble!

From the personal exhortations addressed by Paul to Timothy (in the Epistles bearing his name), it seems clear that he was of a sensitive, shrinking, and timid nature. The word in 2 Timothy 1:6 (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12, 14, 16) seems to imply that he was almost ready to give up in despair. The “God hath not given us the spirit of fear”—really “cowardice” (2 Tim. 1:7) and the “be not ashamed” (v. 8) intimate that there was need for the exhortation “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12) and “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3, and cf. 4:5). That he was a man of frail constitution is evident from 1 Timothy 5:23. Yet to Paul he was “his dearly beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2). Timothy’s “tears” (2 Tim. 1:4) over Paul’s imprisonment show that he was a man of feeling.

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty: with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” (Heb. 13:23). This supplies one more incidental confirmation that Paul was the writer of the Hebrews’ Epistle, for it is clear from this verse that Timothy was the one who accompanied him on his missionary journeys—there is no hint elsewhere that Timothy was the fellow-worker of anyone else but Paul. The actual incarceration of Timothy is not recorded in the Acts or elsewhere, but it is clear from this verse that he had been restrained, but that he was now free. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, yet is their release an occasion of rejoicing to the saints; and therefore the Apostle acquaints the Hebrews of this good news, for he knew how highly they esteemed Timothy. He had not yet returned to Paul himself—apparently having been imprisoned at some other place than Rome, but if God directed him thither, Paul purposed that they should again visit the churches in Judea. Whether this hope was realized, we know not.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

78. *His Honourable Conduct.*

There does not seem to be much in common between the murder of Amasa and the famine which afflicted the land of Israel, yet that the contents of 2 Samuel 20 and 21 are definitely linked together is clearly intimated by the opening "Then" of the latter. What that connection is, a little reflection should make clear: that which is now to be before us supplies a further illustration of the principal thought developed last month. It is *the retributive justice* of God which is again seen in exercise. There it had to do with an individual; here it affected a whole nation. Valuable light is here shed upon the subject of the Divine government of this world, for we are not only given to see how that God fully controls even its physical history, but are also shown something of the moral principles which regulate His procedure. So far from that government being a capricious one, it is regulated by definite design and method. It is the noting of this which supplies the key to the philosophy of history.

"Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year" (2 Sam. 21:1). When faced with droughts and famines, the scientists (so called) and other wise-aces prate about planetary disturbances, sun-spots, the recurring of astronomical cycles, etc., but the Christian looks beyond all secondary causes and discerns the Maker of this world directing all its affairs. And thus the simplest believer has light which the most learned of this world's savants possess not. They, and all who follow them, leave God out of their thoughts, and therefore the light which is in them is darkness, and how great is that darkness. It is only the eye of faith which sees the hand of the Lord in everything, and where faith is in exercise there is secured a satisfying resting-place for the heart.

"And David inquired of the LORD" (v. 1). Wise man: he declined to lean unto his own understanding. Nor did he, like the monarchs of Egypt and Babylon before him, send for the astrologers and soothsayers. There was no need to, when he had access to the living God. The pity is that he did not consult Him earlier, instead of waiting till the situation got really desperate. By inquiring of the Lord in the time of trouble, David left us an example which we do well to follow. The Sender of trouble is the only One who can remove it; and if it be not His pleasure to remove it, He is the One who can show us how best to meet it. He did so for David; and He will for us, if we seek Him aright—that is, with an humble, penitent, yet trustful heart.

Troubles do not come by haphazard. The poor worldling may talk of his "bad luck" and "ill fortune," but the believer ought to employ more God-honouring language. He should know that it is his *Father* who orders all his circumstances and regulates every detail of his life. Therefore, when famine comes upon him—be it a spiritual or a financial one—it is both his privilege and his duty to seek unto the Lord and ask, "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me" (Job 10:2). When the smile of God is withdrawn from us, we should at once suspect that something is wrong. True, His favour is not to be measured by His material benefits; and true also that His withholding of them does not always indicate His displeasure. No, He may be testing faith, developing patience, or preparing us for an enlarged trust. Nevertheless, it is always the part of wisdom to think the worst of ourselves, for the promise is "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these (material) things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

"And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house because he slew the Gibeonites" (2 Sam. 21:1). The Lord did not turn a deaf ear unto David's inquiry, even

though it was such a tardy one. How longsuffering He is with His own! How many of us have been like David in this! smarting under the chastening rod of God, yet allowing a lengthy interval to pass before we definitely inquired of Him as to its cause. Rightly did the poet say, "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pains we bear, All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer." Yes, oftentimes they are quite "needless," for if God shows us what is wrong, and we put matters right, His rod will quickly be removed.

It is solemn to note that the controversy which the Lord had with Israel at this time was not over some recent thing, but one which had been committed years previously; yet was it one that had never been put right. God does not forget, if we do. Many afflictions, both upon individuals and upon nations, are expressly sent by Him for the purpose of "bringing to remembrance" the sins of the past. In the case before us Israel was now suffering because of the transgression of Saul, for it is an unchanging principle in the Divine government that God deals with nations according to the conduct of their rulers or responsible heads. No truth is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this, and the same is plainly exemplified in the history of the world all through this Christian era. Nor need this fact and principle at all surprise us, for in the great majority of instances the rulers follow that policy which will best please their subjects.

The earlier history supplies no record of that which occasioned this calamity upon the nation. We mention this in order to correct the assertion which is often made in some quarters that Scripture always explains Scripture, by which it is meant that every verse or statement in the Word may be understood by some other statement elsewhere. As a general principle this is true, yet it is by no means without exception, and therefore it needs qualifying. The above is an example of what we mean: there is no historical account of Saul's slaying the Gibeonites. Nor is this example by any means an isolated one. Paul said, "thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep" (2 Cor. 11:25), yet we know not when and where this occurred. In connection with the giving of the Law at Sinai, "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. 12:21), but there is no record in the Old Testament of this. Hebrews 13:23 tells of Timothy being "set at liberty," yet his imprisonment is nowhere recorded in Scripture.

"Now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them" (2 Sam. 21:2). The allusion is to what is found in Joshua 9. It will be remembered that after Joshua had overthrown Jericho and Ai the inhabitants of Gibeon were afraid, and resorted to dishonest strategy. They succeeded in deceiving Joshua. After telling a plausible tale, the Gibeonites offered to become the servants of Israel. And we are told, "And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them" (Josh. 9:15). A little later, Israel learned that they had been deceived, that instead of the Gibeonites being travelers from a far country (as they had affirmed) they were really Canaanites. The sequel is very striking and contains a lesson which governmental leaders would do well to take to heart today.

Three days later, as they continued their advance, the Israelites reached the cities of the Gibeonites, and we are told, "And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel" (v. 18). The heads of the nation respected the solemn treaty into which they had entered with the Gibeonites. Then they were put to a more severe test: "And all the congregation mur-

mured against the princes" (v. 18). The common people urged their leaders to regard that treaty as a scrap of paper—human nature was just the same then as it is now: unprincipled, blind to its own highest interests, utterly selfish, indifferent to the Divine approval. But in the merciful providence of God, Israel at that time was favoured with conscientious leaders who refused to yield to the popular clamour and do that which they knew was wrong.

"But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them" (vv. 19, 20). What a mercy it is when the responsible heads of the nation are God-fearing men, whose word is their bond, who cannot be induced to forsake the paths of righteousness. And, my reader, how we need to *pray* (as we are commanded to do: 1 Tim. 2:1, 2) for all in authority over us, that God will make them honest, just, truthful, and that He will keep them steadfast in the performance of duty. Their position is no easy one: they are in need of Divine grace, and prayer is the appointed channel through which supplies of grace are communicated—to the ministers of state as truly as to the ministers of the Gospel. Then instead of criticizing and condemning them, let us hold up their hands by daily supplication for them.

Joshua confirmed the stand taken by the "princes"—the heads of the tribes. Calling the Gibeonites unto him, he asked why they had beguiled him. Whereupon they confessed it was out of fear for their very lives that they had resorted to the imposture; and then cast themselves upon his mercy and fidelity. "And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day" (vv. 26, 27). From that time onwards, the Gibeonites remained in Israel's midst, acting as their servants—a peaceful and useful people, as Nehemiah 3:7 and other passages intimate.

"And Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 21:2). In utter disregard for the solemn treaty which guaranteed their security, Saul determined to exterminate these Gibeonites; but this was done not out of zeal for the Lord, but "in his zeal to the children of Israel." How perverse human nature is! God had given Saul no commission to slay the Gibeonites, but He *had* commanded him to destroy the Philistines and Amalekites; but this he left undone. Ah, the extirpation of the Philistines was a difficult and dangerous task, for they were a well-armed and powerful people, fully prepared to resist; whereas the Gibeonites were an easy prey. And is there not much fleshly zeal being displayed in corrupt Christendom today?—thousands engaged in work to which God has never called them, whilst neglecting the great task He *has* assigned them. What numbers of the rank and file of professing Christians are now busy in seeking to "win souls to Christ," while neglecting the mortifying of their fleshly and worldly lusts—ah, the former is far easier than the latter.

Saul, then, broke public faith with the Gibeonites, for the solemn covenant entered into with them by Joshua assured their preservation. This is clear from verse 5, for while verse 2 says only that he "sought to slay them," here the Gibeonites referred to him as "the man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel," which is an amplification of the Lord's words, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (v. 1). This

brought down heavy guilt upon the nation, which had not been expiated by the punishment of the guilty. The three years' famine which now came upon the land was proof of this. "It pleased God in this manner, and so long after, to proceed against the nation for it: to show His abhorrence against such crimes; to teach rulers to keep at a distance from similar offenses themselves, and to punish them in others; and to intimate that the chief punishment of sin is *after* the death of the offenders" (Thomas Scott).

The fact that God waited so many years before He publicly evidenced His displeasure against Israel for this heinous transgression, manifested His longsufferance, granting them a lengthy space for repentance. But they repented not, and now He made them to realize that He had neither overlooked nor forgotten their crime. Learn then, my reader, that the passage of time does not remove or lessen the guilt of sin. Let us also learn what a solemn thing it is for a strong nation to go back upon its pledged word when they have promised protection to a weak people. This is something which the present government of Great Britain needs to take to heart, for if they should violate their promises to protect the lives and property of the Jews in Palestine, then we may most certainly expect the righteous judgment of God to fall heavily on our land.

God made known unto David the reason for his present controversy with Israel, that he might take proper measures for expiating the national guilt. As a God-fearing man, David at once recognized the binding obligation of the league Joshua had made with the Gibeonites, and the nation's guilt in violating the same. Accordingly, "David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD" (v. 3). This was but fair: they were the ones who had been wronged, and therefore it was but just that they should be given the opportunity for deciding what form the reparation should take. Incidentally, let it be carefully noted that this is still another passage which plainly teaches that "atonement" is made for the express purpose of turning away the displeasure of the Lord—there is no thought of atonement or reconciliation here, for the Gibeonites were not alienated from Him!

"And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel" (v. 4). Most generous and noble was their reply. It showed they were neither mercenary nor spiteful: they neither desired to turn this situation to their own material advantage, nor did they harbour a spirit of revenge. For centuries they had acted as servants, and now that Israel had broken the covenant they might well have demanded their freedom. How their unselfishness puts to shame the greedy, grasping spirit of this much-vaunted twentieth century! It is not often that the poor are free from covetousness and avarice—the great majority are not poor from choice, but from necessity of circumstances. No wonder the Lord was ready to plead the cause of so meek and mild a people.

"And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel; let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose" (vv. 5, 6). Here we perceive their spiritual intelligence and piety. Their asking for "seven" of the descendants of Saul showed they understood that number signified completeness. Their suggestion that these seven men should be "hanged," intimated that they knew this form of death betokened accursedness (Deut. 21:23). Their words "hang them up before the Lord in Gibeah" evinced their knowledge that satisfaction must be

offered unto God's justice before His wrath could be turned away from Israel. Their declaration, "Saul, whom the LORD did choose" was an open acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. Their offer "we will hang them up unto the LORD" was very magnanimous—willing to spare David, and themselves bear any public criticism which was likely to be offered.

But let us now notice the nobility of David's conduct in this connection. First, in his inquiring of the Lord as to the reason why the famine had been sent on his land. Those who have followed us throughout this lengthy series will recall how often this grace was seen in him—signal evidence of his piety. Second, in his readiness to consult with the Gibeonites. How many a man would have considered it beneath his dignity to hold conference with menials!—but humility was another grace which shone brightly in David. Third, in his fairness. An unscrupulous man would have disputed their claim, saying that the league made in the days of Joshua was long since obsolete. Fourth, in his consenting to their proposal. We know from other passages that he was sentimentally attached to the family of Saul, but with him the claims of justice superseded all personal considerations. Finally, his fidelity to the promise he had made to Jonathan: "But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them" (2 Sam. 21:7).—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

7. *The Messianic.*

In last month's article it was pointed out that following the times of David, the Prophets occupied a more and more prominent place in Israel, and that the primary purpose of their office was a *practical* one, designed for the good of those to whom they immediately ministered. As the spiritual life of the nation degenerated, the voice of the Prophets was heard more frequently—pressing the claims of God, rebuking the people for their sins, and affording comfort to the faithful. It was this third item that we enlarged upon in the closing paragraphs last month, calling particular attention to the large place given in the communications of the “major” Prophets unto things to come. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, for as things went from bad to worse in the earthly kingdom of Israel, God was pleased to grant much fuller revelations concerning the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah.

What has just been pointed out reveals a principle which is of great practical value for our own souls today. The further Israel's religious apostasy advanced and wickedness increased, the more were the godly handful among them taught to look away from the present to the future, to walk by faith and not by sight, to regale their desponding hearts with those Covenant blessings which the Messiah would obtain for all His people. It is not necessary to suppose that they fully understood the import of that which the Prophets set before them; yea, they were far from comprehending the entire truth which they contained; nevertheless, they must have gathered sufficient from them to relieve their minds from that distressing anxiety which their present circumstances had awakened. Those predictions which more particularly dealt with the new order of things which God promised should yet be ushered in, supply the real key to the interpretation of the numerous predictions regarding the Messiah's work with which they had long been familiar.

Here, then, is the grand lesson for us to heed. Though the present state of Christendom be so deplorable and saddening; though the Enemy has come in like a flood, threatening to carry everything before him; though the voice of the true servant of God be no more heeded today than was the Prophet's before the Captivity, yet God still has a remnant of His people upon the earth. Heavy indeed are their hearts at the dishonour done to the name of their Lord, at the low state of His cause on earth, at their own spiritual leanness. Yet, while it is meet they should sigh and cry for the abominations in the churches, deplore the wickedness abounding in the world, and penitently confess their own sad failures, nevertheless it is their privilege to look forward unto the grand future which lies before them, to the sure accomplishment of all God's covenant promises. Nor is it necessary that they should understand the order of coming events, or the details of unfulfilled prophecy: sufficient for them that Christ will yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, reign till every enemy be placed under His feet, and come again to receive His people unto Himself.

Both the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who exercised their ministry about the same time among different portions of the Covenant people, spoke the same language and gave the same assurances, in close connection with the promise of their future re-establishment in their own land. That particular promise was partly accomplished in their return from Babylon, but is fully understood only when viewed in the light of the *typical* import of the language used. The grand statement found in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is repeated with equal definiteness in the 32nd chapter (37-40): “Behold, I will gather them out of all

countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely, And they shall be My people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make *an everlasting covenant* with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." So again in 33:14-16.

In a similar strain and in terms equally explicit, Ezekiel addresses that portion of the Jews amongst whom he exercised his ministry, "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David: He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and My Servant David a Prince amongst them: I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them *a covenant of peace*, and will cause the wild beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hilt a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing" (34:23-26). And again; "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you . . . and cause you to walk in My statutes" (36:25-27).

But the clearest of all of these later communications by the Prophets is that furnished in Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make *a new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which My covenant they brake, although I was a Husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." On the two main points adverted to by us, namely, the *change* of the then existing dispensation, and the *spiritual* nature of that which was to succeed, its testimony is most decisive.

First, we must seek to remove a radical misconception which obtains in certain quarters, and that is as to the ones with whom God here promised to make this "new covenant," namely, "with the house of Israel and Judah." Modern dispensationalists insist that this says just what it means, and means just what it says: and with this the present writer is in hearty accord. Nevertheless, we would point out that it is entirely a matter of *interpretation* if we are to rightly understand what is said, and this can only be accomplished as the Spirit Himself enlightens our minds. Any method of Bible study, or any system of interpretation, (if such it could be called), that renders us self-sufficient, independent of the Holy Spirit, is self-condemned. An unregenerate man, by diligent application and the use of a good concordance, may soon familiarize himself with the letter of Scripture, and persuade himself that because he takes its letter at its face value, he has a good understanding of it; but that is a vastly different thing from a *spiritual insight* into spiritual things.

The first time the name "Israel" occurs upon the sacred page is in Genesis 32:28, where it was given to Jacob: "And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." This is most suggestive and significant: it was not his name by nature, but by grace! In other words, "Israel" stamped Jacob as *a regenerate* man, thereby intimating that this name primarily pertains to the spiritual seed of Abraham and not to his natural descendants. That this term "Israel" would henceforth possess this double significance (primary and secondary), was more than hinted at here in Genesis 32, for from this point onwards the one to whom it was originally given became the man with the *double* name: sometimes he is referred to as "Jacob," at other times he is designated "Israel," and this according as the flesh or the Spirit was uppermost in him.

In what has just been before us there was most accurately anticipated the subsequent usage of the term, for while in many passages "Israel" has reference to the *natural* descendants through Jacob, in many others it is applied to his *mystical* seed. Take for example, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (Psa. 73:1). Who are the ones referred to under the name "Israel" in this verse? Obviously it does not refer to the nation of Israel, to all the fleshly descendants of Jacob who were alive at the time Asaph wrote this Psalm, for most certainly it could not be said of by far the greater part of *them* that they were "of a clean heart"—cf. Psalm 12:1. A "clean heart" is one which has been cleansed by the sanctifying operations of Divine grace (Titus 3:5), by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on the conscience (Heb. 10:22), and by a God-communicated faith (Acts 15:9). Thus, the second clause of Psalm 73:1 *obliges* us to understand the "Israel" of the first clause as the *spiritual* Israel—God's chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people.

Again—when the Lord Jesus exclaimed concerning Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" (John 1:47), exactly what did He mean? Was nothing more signified than, "Behold a fleshly descendant of Jacob?" Assuredly it was: Christ's language here was discriminating, as discriminating as when He said, "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples *indeed*" (John 8:31). When the Saviour declared that they were "disciples indeed," He intimated they were such not only in name, but in fact; not only by profession, but in reality. And in like manner, when He affirmed that Nathanael was "an Israelite *indeed*," He meant that he was a genuine son of Israel, a man of faith and prayer, honest and upright. The added description "in whom is no guile" supplies still further confirmation that a spiritual and saved character is there in view: compare "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psa. 32:2).

"Behold Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. 10:18). Here again discriminating language is used; why speak of "Israel *after the flesh*" unless it be for the express purpose of distinguishing them from Israel after the Spirit, that is the regenerated and spiritual Israel. Israel "after the flesh" were the natural descendants of Abraham, but *spiritual* "Israel," whether Jews or Gentiles, are those who are born again and who worship God in spirit and in truth. Surely it must now be plain to every unbiased reader that the term "Israel" is used in the Scriptures in more senses than one, and that it is only by noting the qualifying terms which are added, that we are able to identify *which* "Israel" is in view in any given passage. Equally clear should it be that to talk of Israel being an "earthly people" is very loose and misleading language, and badly needs modifying and defining.

Some passages are admittedly more easy than others to determine *which* Israel is in view—the natural or the spiritual; yet in the great majority of instances, the context furnishes a definite guide. When Christ said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), He certainly could not intend the fleshly descendants of Jacob, for, as many Scriptures plainly state, He was equally sent unto the Gentiles. No, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” there means the whole election of grace. “Of this man’s seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus” (Acts 13:23). Here too it is the spiritual Israel which is meant, for He did not save the Nation at large. So, too, when the Apostle declared, “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20), he must have had in view the anti-typical Israel. “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16): this could not possibly refer to the Nation for God’s *curse* was on *that*—it is the Israel chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, regenerated by the Spirit.

“Not as though the Word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). In this verse the Apostle begins his discussion of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and shows that God had predetermined to cast off the Nation as such, and extend the Gospel call to all men indiscriminately. He does this by showing God was free to act thus (vv. 6-24), that He had announced through His prophets He would do so (vv. 25-33). This was a particularly sore point with the Jew, who erroneously imagined that the promises which God had made to Abraham and his seed included all his natural descendants, that those promises were sealed unto all such by the rite of circumcision, and that those inherited all the patriarchal blessings: hence their claim, “*We* have Abraham to our father” (Matt. 3:9). It was to refute this error, common among the Jews (and now revived by the dispensationalists) that the Apostle here writes.

First, he affirms that God’s Word was not being annulled by his teaching (Rom. 9:6, first clause), no indeed; his doctrine did not contravene the Divine promises, for they had never been given to men in the flesh, but rather to men in the spirit—regenerate. Second he insisted upon an important distinction (v. 6, second clause), which we are now seeking to explain and press upon our readers. He points out there are *two kinds* of “Israelites”: those who are such only by carnal descent from Jacob, and others who are so spiritually, these latter being alone the “children of the promise” (v. 8)—cf. Galatians 4:23 where “born after the flesh” is opposed to born “by promise”! God’s promises were made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, AS BELIEVERS, and they are the spiritual food and property of *none but believers*: Romans 4:13, 16. Until this fact be clearly grasped, we shall be all at sea in understanding scores of the Old Testament promises.

When the Apostle here affirms that, “*they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*” (Rom. 9:6), he means that not all the lineal descendants of Jacob belonged unto “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16)—those who were God’s people in the highest sense. So far from that being the case, many of the Jews were not God’s children at all (see John 8:42, 44), while many who were Gentiles by nature, have (by grace) been made “fellow-citizens with the (Old Testament) saints” (Eph. 2:19) and “blessed *with* faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9). Thus the Apostle’s language in the second clause of Romans 9:6 has the force of: Not all who are members of the (ancient) visible Church are members of the true Church. The same thought is repeated in Romans 9:7, “Neither because they are the (natural) seed of Abraham, are they all children”—that is the “children (or inheritors) of the promise,” as verse

8 explains—but “in Isaac (the line of God’s election and sovereign grace) shall thy (true and spiritual) seed be called.” God’s promises were made unto the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, and not to his natural descendants as such.

This same principle of *double application* holds equally good of many other terms used of the Covenant people: for example, Christ said to His Spouse, “Thou art beautiful, O My love, as Tirzah, comely as *Jerusalem*, terrible as an army with banners” (Song. 6:4). Now the Church goes under this name of “Jerusalem” in both the Old Testament and the New. “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem” (Isa. 40:2). Obviously this did not mean the literal city, nor even its inhabitants in general, for the great majority of them were unregenerate idolaters, and God sends no message *of comfort* to those who despise and oppose Him. No, it was the godly remnant. “For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us *all*” (Gal. 4:25, 26). One of Christ’s promises to the overcomer is “I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is—*new Jerusalem*” (Rev. 3:12)!—A.W.P.

CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

It will be observed that most of the quotations in the previous article were taken from writers of the seventeenth century, that is, when Puritanism was in its heyday. If, then, during the time that sound preaching and vital godliness flourished most in these favoured Isles, wickedness also held high carnival, why should it be thought strange that in our day—when faithful preaching and personal piety are at a discount—sin is in the saddle and lawlessness abounds on every side? But to continue our review of conditions in the past. Bad as the seventeenth century was, the eighteenth was far worse. No human pen can adequately depict the moral degeneracy and the spiritual stagnation of its first five decades. Page after page might be filled with quotations from the few men of God who lived then. A brief selection must suffice.

Upon the abdication of James II, Prince William of Orange was invited to occupy the English throne, for the surer establishment of Protestantism. Describing the assembling of the English gentry to welcome him to London, Lord Macauley wrote, "The attractions must have been great, for the risks of the journey were not trifling. The peace had, all over Europe, and nowhere more than in England, turned crowds of soldiers into marauders. Several aristocratic equipages had been attacked, even in Hyde Park. One day the British mail was robbed, another day the Dover coach. On Hounslow Heath a company of horsemen with masks over their faces watched for the great people who had been to pay their court to the King at Windsor.

"There are few periods in the history of the world that have been marked by deeper spiritual darkness than the commencing part of the eighteenth century. From 1700 to 1750 seemed to have lapsed into lifeless formality, and this, together with the matured abominations of Popery, opened the way for that tide of infidelity of which the French Revolution was the manifested result. The latter part of the eighteenth century was, through the Lord's great mercy, marked by a very decided revival of evangelical truth. The effect of the writings and preachings of Whitefield, Romaine, Newton, and others, was widely felt in Europe and America" (B. W. Newton, "Aids to Prophetic Enquiry," first series, p. 3).

"The darkest period which the church of God in this country has ever seen since the Reformation was in the reign of Queen Anne. Dissent had obtained a legal footing at the Revolution of 1688. From that era commenced the decline of vital religion till the time of Whitefield. The eighteenth century arose in the thickest cloud that has overspread this country since Popery fell. We live, it is true, in a day of much spiritual declension; but *things were much worse then*. Nearly all the Dissenting churches were sunk into Arianism (which denied the Godhead both of Christ and the Holy Spirit). Little else but dead morality was heard in pulpits where free grace was formerly proclaimed. Religion, in fact, had sunk so low that when Whitefield went about proclaiming the new birth, it was a doctrine as new to the Dissenters as to the adherents of the National Establishment. A national religion was the order of the day, and as much preached in the chapel as in the church" (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 336).

"Another thing wherein the state of things is altered for the worse from what it was in the times of the Reformation, is the prevalency of licentiousness in principles and opinions. There is not now that spirit of orthodoxy which there was then; there is very little appearance of zeal for the mysteries and spiritual doctrines of Christianity; and they never were so ridiculed and held in contempt as they are in the present age, and especially in England, the principal kingdom of the Reformation. In that kingdom, those prin-

ciples on which the power of godliness depends, are in a great measure exploded; and Arianism and Socinianism, Arminianism and Deism, are the things which prevail and carry almost all before them. History records no age wherein there was so great an apostasy of those who had been brought up under the light of the Gospel to infidelity; never was there such a casting off of Christianity and all revealed religion, never any age when it was so much scoffed at and the Gospel of Christ ridiculed" (Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 1, p. 471). Nor were conditions, generally, any better in the U.S.A. at that period.

"Surely the Lord has a controversy with this land; and there hardly can be a period assigned in the annals of the ages, when it was more expedient or seasonable for those who fear Him to stir up each other to humiliation and prayer than at present. What is commonly called our National Debt is swelled to an enormous greatness. It may be quickly expressed in figures; but a person must be something versed in calculation to form a tolerable idea of accumulated millions. But what arithmetic is sufficient to compute the immensity of our National Debt in a *spiritual* sense? or, in other words, the amount of our *national sins*? The spirit of infidelity, which, for a time, distinguished comparatively few, and, like a river, was restrained within narrow bounds, has of late years broken down its banks and deluged the land. This wide-spreading evil has, in innumerable instances, as might be expected, emboldened the natural heart against the fear of God, hardened it to an insensibility of moral obligation, and strengthened its prejudices against the Gospel. The consequence has been that profligate wickedness is becoming almost as universal as the air we breathe and is practiced with little more reserve or secrecy than the transactions of common business, except in such instances as would subject the offender to the penalty of human laws. O the unspeakable patience of God!

"The multiplied instances of impiety, blasphemy, cruelty, adultery, villany, and abominations not to be thought of without horror, under which this land groans, are only known to Him who knoweth all things. There are few sins which imply greater contempt of God, or a more obdurate state of mind in the offender, than *perjury*, yet the guilt of it is so little regarded, and temptations to it so very frequent, that perhaps I do not go too far in supposing there are more deliberate acts of perjury committed amongst us than among the rest of mankind taken together. Though some of the Roman poets and historians have given very dark pictures of the times they lived in, their worst descriptions of this kind would hardly be found exaggerated if applied to our own. But what are the sins of heathens, if compared with the like evils perpetrated in a land bearing the name of Christian, favoured with the Word of God, the light of the Gospel, and enjoying the blessings of civil and religious liberty and peace in a higher degree, and for a longer continuance, than was afforded to any people of whose history we have heard?" (John Newton, Vol. 1, p. 197).

In his "Foolish Virgins Described," William Huntington (1797) wrote, "We have more need to fear a certain army in the bowels of our own country, than all the combined forces on the frontiers (i.e. of Napoleon) . . . the daily elopement of women from their husbands, and the unclean spirit of whoredom that so universally reigns and rules among the higher classes . . . Another thing I fear is the threatened stroke of judgment upon *the oppressor*. The last hard frost gave the coal merchant his opportunity to grind the face of the poor to the utmost, which will never be forgotten by the days of this generation. The year following, the whole staff of life was confined in the hands of the farmer, the monopolist, and the miller, who exhibited such hardness of heart, covetousness, and cruel

oppression, as is not to be found in the annals of history” (Vol. 2, p. 568). So that “cornering” of food and unjust “profiteering” is no new thing.

Spiritual conditions in Scotland at this same period may be readily visualized from the following quotation. “The darkness of a dead, blasted, profane, or ignorant ministry prevails upon the withholding of the lamp of God’s Anointed. Indeed God may leave something in the land called the Gospel, and a set of men who call themselves ministers of the Gospel. But what sort of a lamp is it that is left, when the true Gospel lamp is taken away? It is the Devil’s lamp; it is not the narrow way, but a broad-way lamp, to set folk straightway to the bottomless pit. And what sort of ministers or lamp-bearers are left? Why, they are blind guides leading the blind, and both fall into the ditch together” (Eb. Erskine, Vol. 2, p. 285).

Perhaps the reader would inquire, Do you, then, wish to make out that conditions now are better, or at least no worse, than they were in the past? That expression “the past,” dear friend, is entirely a relative one. It all depends upon the unit of comparison. We are certainly not so mad as to argue that things now wear a more favourable appearance than they did a generation ago. No indeed, we freely grant and sadly acknowledge that during the past fifty years there has been a most decided and terrible deterioration, both spiritually and morally, and that not locally or provincially, but universally. The law winks at many things today which had been punished before the War. The press smiles upon things now which it had not dared to do then. The rank and file of the public countenance today was formerly condemned by all decent people. Professing Christians are no longer shocked by sights which once horrified them.

But what does the degeneracy and wickedness of our generation prove? That the end of the age is certainly upon us? By no means. That evil is more rampant today than it has ever been before? Certainly not: the testimony of history proves otherwise. Conditions *are* far worse than they were fifty years ago, yet, in many respects, they are not nearly so bad as they were two hundred years ago. Things generally were in an awful state during the first half of the eighteenth century, but even *they* were better than much which obtained before the Reformation, during the Dark Ages. All of this simply serves to illustrate what we said in our first article: there is *an ebb and flow of the tide*—manifest throughout the history of Israel in Old Testament times; equally evident during the course of this Christian era. What is coming next? We know not. No man knows. Only fools will prophesy. Whether God will soon graciously grant a widespread revival or whether He will let loose the bolts of His judgment, remains to be seen.

This very imperfect review of Conditions in the Past would lack anything approaching completeness if we failed to notice some of the *physical judgments* which, from time to time, God has sent upon men’s wickedness. Our special object in here referring to these is to protest against our “Signs-of-the-Times” men, who magnify out of all proportion and historical perspective such phenomena when they occur in our own days. If some terrible calamity happens, bringing with it great loss of life and destruction of property, and especially if such calamities quickly follow one another (for they rarely come singly) scaremongers and lovers of the sensational declare that nothing like it has ever happened before, and that such things “prove” the coming of the Lord is at our very doors. But “There is *no* new thing under the sun.” These very calamities have occurred all through human history.

“We have been visited with famines, earthquakes, pestilence, inundations, thunder and lightnings in winter, and most strange and unseasonable weather; but alas, all these have taken no effect: where is the humiliation, repentance, and reformation which they have wrought? therefore it must needs be there remains behind a great judgment” (William Perkins, 1587, Vol. 3, p. 424).

The earthquakes which have happened in our own lifetime, at San Francisco and Quetta, severe as they were, were mild in comparison with those which occurred at earlier dates. In the opening century of this Christian era the entire cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were totally destroyed. In more recent times, that at Lisbon, in 1755, to mention no others, resulted in no fewer than fifty thousand people losing their lives. Thomas Brooks (Vol. 6. p. 191) makes reference to a famine in England in 1316 which was so terrible, “that horses, dogs, yea, men and children, were stolen for food; and the thieves newly brought into the jails were torn in pieces and eaten at once, half alive, by such as had been there longer.”

Fletcher, the Historian of Salton, tells us that in 1690 conditions were such that, “besides many wretchedly provided for, there were two hundred thousand people, or one fourth or fifth of the total population of Scotland begging from door to door.” As recently as 1847 there occurred a most fearful famine in Ireland. “One correspondent from the County of Cork to whom we sent aid, mentions that in his district forty or fifty people die daily, either of famine or of disease produced by famine. The graveyards are full; through the number of the dead and the general distress, coffins cannot be procured” (Gospel Standard, 1847, p. 122). Probably some of our own readers can recall the fearful poverty and suffering in Lancashire in 1867-8, following the closing of all the cotton mills—owing to the Civil War in the U.S.A., when cotton ceased to be shipped from there.

“On one night in the month of August, 1846, a fatal blast traversed the length and breadth of Ireland, the effect of which was that the growing potatoes which, to use the language of an eye-witness, the day before stood up like gooseberry trees, next morning drooped and flagged, and in a few days filled the air with the stench of putrefaction. Men of science bring their microscopes, and talk very learnedly of fungus, and worn-out stock, and improper soil, and over-much moisture; but the leaf blotched in a single night tells its own tale, and proclaims the *air* as the bringer of the corrupting taint. The vial of wrath thus poured into the air, swept off in a single night the food of a nation, and in spite of the noble assistance, publicly and privately, of maligned and ill-requited England, herself suffering under a similar infliction, sent at least a million Irishmen to the grave, either by positive famine or by its invariable and more fatal accompaniments, fever” (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 227).

“When the plague was in London, in 1665, when the Lord, to correct and punish the inhabitants of this kingdom for their national impieties, sent amongst them the most dreadful plague that had been in the memory of man, it was preceded by an unusual drought. The meadows were parched and the highways burnt up: insomuch that there was no food for the cattle, which occasioned, first a murrain among *them*, and then a general contagion among the *human* species, which increased in the city and suburbs of London, till eight or ten thousand died in a week. The richest inhabitants fled to the remotest countries; but the calamities of those who stayed behind, and of the poorer sort, are not to be expressed. Trade was at a full stand; all the commerce between London and the country entirely cut off, lest the infection should be propagated thereby. Nay, the country house-

keepers and farmers dared not entertain their city friends and neighbours or relations who came from London, till they had performed quarantine in the fields or outhouses. If a stranger passed through the neighbourhood, they fled from him as an enemy. In London the shops and houses were quite shut up, and many of them marked with a red cross, and an inscription over the doors, 'Lord, have mercy on us!' Grass grew in the streets, and every night the bellman went his round with a cart, crying, 'Bring out your dead' " (S. E. Pierce's Letters, Vol. 1, p. 80). This dreadful plague was followed by a four day's fire in London (1666) so devastating that it destroyed 89 churches and 13,200 houses.

When the Revolution occurred in Russia twenty years ago, [1917] and also in the early days of the present conflict in Spain, sensationalists announced in the most extravagant terms that nothing like it had ever happened before. But those with the merest smattering of history would know that the Reign of Terror in France when the streets of Paris literally ran with blood at the close of the eighteenth century, witnessed that which was equally atrocious and on a far vaster scale. In his Annual-Fast sermon, Nathaniel Emmons said, "From January 1789 to October 1795 the number of slain and banished in France amounted to 2,152, 979." He added, "Since that period there have been five years of internal revolution and foreign wars, carried on with infinite waste and havoc in Holland, along the Rhine, in Switzerland, in the Pyrenean frontiers of Spain, in every part of Italy, in England, in Syria." Well did he conclude, "Human nature has been the same in all nations and in all ages."

Nor were sensationalists in those days slow to avail themselves of such material, and "students of prophecy" turned prophets themselves, announcing that such Divine judgments were the immediate precursors of the return of Christ. The same occurred again in 1848 during the Chartist riots in England—"Who does not remember that memorable day, April 10, 1848, when London, commercial, political, and aristocratical, trembled to its very centre at the Chartist procession: when the Bank of England was armed and garrisoned like a fortress, and the greatest general of the age had made his military plans by disposing artillery and soldiers at various points, to drown the threatened insurrection in torrents of human blood" (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 185). More so, sensationalists were in their heyday during the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the Civil War in the U.S.A., as anyone can verify for himself, if he has access to books on "The Second Coming of Christ" written at that time.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

4. *Its Verity.*

Striking as is the case of Abraham's own election, yet God's dealings with his offspring is equally if not more noteworthy. Therein God furnished an epitome of what has largely characterized the history of all His elect, for it is a very rare thing to find a whole family which (not simply makes a profession, but) gives evidence of enjoying His special favour. The common rule is that one is taken and another is left, for those who are given to really believe this precious but solemn truth, are made to experimentally realize its force in connection with their own kin. Thus Abraham's own family furnished in his next and immediate successors, a prototype of the future experience of the elect. In his family we behold the most striking instances of both election and preterition, first in his sons, and then in his grandsons.

That Isaac was a child of pure election grace (which was the cause and not the consequence of his faith and holiness), and that as such he was placed in Abraham's family as a precious gift, whilst Ishmael was excluded from that pre-eminent favour, is quite evident from the history of Genesis. Before he was born, yea, before he was conceived in the womb, God declared unto Abraham that Isaac was heir of the same salvation with him, and had irrevocably estated the Covenant of Grace upon him, thereby distinguishing him from Ishmael: who, though blessed with temporal mercies, was not in the Covenant of Grace, but rather was under the Covenant of Works: see Genesis 17:19-21 and compare the Spirit's comments thereon in Galatians 4:22-26.

Later, while Isaac was yet young, and lay bound as a sacrifice upon the altar, God ratified the promises of blessing which He had made before his birth, confirming them with a solemn oath: "By Myself have I sworn saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying thee I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the Heaven" (Gen. 22:16, 17). That oath respected the spiritual seed, the heirs of promise, such as Isaac was, the declared son of promise. To that the Apostle referred when he said, "wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Heb. 6:17). And what was His "immutable counsel" but His eternal decree, His purpose of election? God's counsels are His decrees within Himself from everlasting (Eph. 1:4, 9, 10). And what is a promise with an oath but God's immutable counsel or election put into promissory form. And who are the "heirs of promise" but the elect, such as Isaac was.

An objector would argue that the choosing of Isaac in preference to Ishmael was not an act of pure sovereignty, seeing that the former was the son of Sarah, while the latter was the child of Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman—thus supposing that God's gifts are regulated by something in the creature. But the next instance precludes even that sophistry and entirely shuts us up to the uncaused and uninfluenced will of the Most High. Jacob and Esau were by the *same* father and mother, twins. Concerning them we read, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth: it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). Let us bow in awed silence before such a passage.

The nation which sprang from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was God's chosen and favoured people, singled out and separated from all other nations, to be the recipients of the rich blessings of God. It was that very fact which added so greatly to the enormity of their sins, for increased privileges entail increased responsibility, and increased responsibility not discharged involves increased guilt. "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel . . . *You only* have I *known* of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). From the days of Moses until the time of Christ, a period of fifteen hundred years, God suffered all the heathen nations to walk in their own ways, leaving them to the corruptions and darkness of their own evil hearts. No other nation had God's Word—no other nation had a Divinely-appointed priesthood. Israel alone was favoured with a written revelation from Heaven.

And why *did* the Lord choose Israel to be His special favourites? The Chaldeans were more ancient, the Egyptians were far wiser, the Canaanites were more numerous; yet they were passed by. What, then, was the reason why the Lord singled out Israel? Certainly it was not because of any excellency in them, as the whole of their history shows. From Moses till Malachi they were a stiff-necked and hard-hearted people, unappreciative of Divine favours, unresponsive to the Divine will. It could not have been because of any goodness in them: it was a clear case of Divine sovereignty: "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers" (Deut. 7:6-8). The explanation of all God's acts and works was to be found in Himself—in the sovereignty of His will and not anything in the creature.

The same principle of Divine selection is as plainly and prominently revealed in the New Testament as in the Old. It was strikingly exemplified in connection with the birth of Christ. First, in the place where He was born. How startlingly the sovereignty of God was displayed in that momentous event. Jerusalem was not the Saviour's birthplace, nor was it one of the prominent towns of Palestine; instead, it was in a small village! The Holy Spirit has called particular attention to this point in one of the leading Messianic prophecies: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be *little* among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of *thee* shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). How different are God's thoughts and ways from man's! How He despises what we most esteem, and honours that which we look down upon. One of the most insignificant of all places was chosen by God to be the scene of the most stupendous of all events.

Again—the high sovereignty of God and the principle of His singular election appeared in those to whom He first communicated these glad tidings. To whom was it God sent the angels to announce the blessed fact of the Saviour's birth? Suppose Scripture had been silent upon the point: how differently would we have conceived of the matter. Would we not have naturally thought that the first ones to be informed of this glorious event had been the ecclesiastical and religious leaders in Israel? Surely the angels would deliver the message in the *temple*. But no, it was neither to the chief priests nor to the rulers they were sent, but unto the lowly shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the fields. And again we say, how entirely different are God's thoughts and ways from

man's. And what thus took place at the beginning of this Christian era was indicative of God's way throughout its entire course: see 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

Let us next observe that this same grand truth was emphasized by Christ Himself in His public ministry. Look at His first message in the Nazareth synagogue. "And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed the Gospel to the poor [i.e. the poor in spirit, and not to wealthy Laodiceans], He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted [not the stout-hearted, but those sorrowing before God over their sins], to preach deliverance to the captives [and not to those who prate about their "free will"], and recovering of sight to the blind [not those who think they *can* see], and to set at liberty them that are bruised [not those who deem themselves whole]: to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19).

The immediate sequel is indeed solemn: "And He began to say unto them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (vv. 21, 22). So far so good: they were pleased at His "gracious words"; yes, but would they tolerate the preaching of *sovereign grace*? "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto *none of them* was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and *none of them* was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (vv. 25-27). Here Christ pressed upon them the truth of God's high sovereignty, and *that* they could not endure: "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath; rose up, and thrust Him out of the city" (vv. 28, 29) and mark it well that it was the respectable worshippers of the synagogue who thus gave vent to their hatred of this precious truth! Then let not the servant today be surprised if he meet with the same treatment as his Master.

His sermon at Nazareth was by no means the only time when the Lord Jesus proclaimed the doctrine of election. In Matthew 11 we hear Him saying, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast *revealed* them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (vv. 25, 26). To the seventy He said, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are *written in Heaven*" (Luke 10:20). In John 6 it will be found that Christ, in the hearing of the multitude, hesitated not to speak openly of a company whom the Father had "given to Him" (vv. 37, 39). To the Apostles He said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16): how shocked would the great majority of church-goers be today if they heard the Lord say such words unto His own! In John 17:9 we find Him saying, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me."

As an interesting and instructive illustration of the emphasis which the Holy Spirit has placed upon this truth we would call attention to the fact that in the New Testament God's people are termed "believers" but twice, "Christians" only three times, whereas the designation "*elect*," is found fourteen times and "saints" or separated ones sixty-two times! We would also point out that various other terms and phrases are used in the Scriptures to express election: "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that

thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I *know* thee by name” (Exo. 33:17); “Before I formed thee in the belly I *knew* thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer. 1:5 and cf. Amos 3:2). “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18 and cf. Matt. 20:16). “As many as were *ordained to eternal life* believed” (Acts 13:48). “God at the first did visit the Gentiles to *take out of* them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). “Church of the firstborn, which are *written in Heaven*” (Heb. 12:23).

This basic truth of election undergirds the whole scheme of salvation: that is why we are told “the *foundation of God* standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord *knoweth them that are His*” (2 Tim. 2:19). Election is necessarily and clearly implied by some of the most important terms used in Scripture concerning various aspects of our salvation, yea, they are unintelligible without it. For example, every passage which makes mention of “redemption” presupposes eternal election. How so? because “redemption” implies a previous possession: it is Christ *buying back* and delivering those who were God’s at the beginning. Again—the words “regeneration” and “renewing” necessarily signify a *previous* spiritual life—lost when we fell in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22). So again the term “reconciliation”: this not only denotes a state of alienation before the reconciliation, but a condition of harmony and amity, before the alienation. But enough: the truth of election has now been abundantly demonstrated from the Scriptures. If these many and indubitable proofs are not sufficient, it would be a waste of time to further multiply them.

Let it now be pointed out that this grand truth was definitely held and owned by our forefathers. First, a brief quotation from the ancient Creed of the Waldenses (11th century)—those renowned confessors of the Christian Faith in the dark ages, in the midst of the most terrible persecutions from the Papacy: “That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundation of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He foresaw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus His Son; passing by all the rest, according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice.” Here is one of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England: “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby before the foundations of the world were laid He hath constantly decreed by His secret counsel to us to deliver from curse and condemnation those whom He had chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring by Christ to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour.”

This is from the Westminster Confession of Faith, subscribed to by all Presbyterian ministers, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.” And here is the third article from the old Baptist (English) Confession: “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice.”

Let it not be thought that we have quoted from these human standards in order to bolster up our cause. Not so: the present writer, by Divine grace, would believe and teach this grand truth if none before him had ever held it, and if everyone in Christendom now repudiated it. But what has just been adduced is good evidence that we are here advanc-

ing no heretical novelty, but a doctrine proclaimed in the past in each section of the orthodox Church upon earth. We have also made the above quotations for the purpose of showing how far the present generation of professing Christians has *departed from the Faith* of those to whom under God, they owe their present religious liberties. Just as the modern denials of the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures (by the higher critics), the denial of immediate creation (by evolutionists), the denial of the Deity of Christ (by Unitarians), so the present denial of God's sovereign election and of man's spiritual impotency are equally departures from the Faith of our forefathers, which was based upon the inerrent Word of God.

The truth of Divine election has been most conspicuously exemplified in the history of Christendom. If it be true that during the last two thousand years of the Old Testament dispensation the spiritual blessings of God were largely confined to a single people, it is equally true that for the last five hundred years one section of the human race has been more signally favoured by Heaven than all the other sections put together. God's dealings with the Anglo-Saxons have been as singular and sovereign as His dealings with the Hebrews of old. Here is a fact which cannot be gainsaid, staring us all in the face, exposing the madness of those who deny this doctrine: for centuries past the vast majority of God's saints have been gathered out of the Anglo-Saxons! Thus, the very testimony of modern history unmistakably rebukes the folly of those who repudiate the teachings of God's Word on this subject, rendering their unbelief without excuse.

Tell us, ye who murmur against the Divine sovereignty, why is it that the Anglo-Saxon race has been singled out for the enjoyment of far the greater part of God's spiritual blessings? Were there no other races equally needy? The Chinese practiced a nobler system of morality and were far more numerous: why, then, were they left for so long in Gospel darkness? Why was the whole African continent left for many centuries before the Sun of Righteousness shone there again with healing in His wings? Why is America today a thousand times more favoured than India, which has thrice its population? To all of these questions we are compelled to fall back upon the answer of our blessed Lord: "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." And just as with Israel of old there was an election within an election, so in Germany, in Great Britain, and in the U.S.A., certain particular places have been favoured with one faithful minister after another, while other places have been cursed with false prophets. "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city" (Amos 4:7)—true now in a spiritual way.

Finally, the veracity of election is clearly evidenced by the fierce opposition of Satan against it. The Devil fights *truth*, not error. He vented His hatred against it when Christ proclaimed it (Luke 4:28, 29); he did so when Paul preached it (as Rom. 9:14, 19 more than hints); he did so when the Waldenses, the Reformers, and the Puritans heralded it—using the Papists as his tools to torment and murder thousands of them who confessed it. He still opposes it. Today he does so in his guise as an angel of light. He pretends to be very jealous of the honour of God's character, and declares that election makes Him out to be a monster of injustice. He uses the weapon of ridicule: if election be true, why preach the Gospel? He seeks to intimidate: even if the doctrine of election be Scriptural, it is not wise to preach it. Thus, the teaching of Scripture, the testimony of history, and the opposition of Satan, all witness to the veracity of this doctrine.—A.W.P.

CONSCIENCE—2. *Its Office and Character.*

[Continued from May issue]

Of course the truth may be received merely intellectually, not believingly: and if trifled with, it is no wonder if it results in terrible hardening of the heart. The more orthodox Pharisees were worse persecutors of the Lord than the infidel Sadducees. And the Jews everywhere led the heathen in their early attacks on Christianity. But in these cases it was still rejected truth that stirred up their opposition. But the truth is really and decisively rejected where its claim over the heart and life is allowed in word, and in word only—he who to his father's claim of service said openly, "I will not," yet afterward repented and went—while he who respectfully answered "I go, sir," and *never* went.

And this is the character of truth, that it stirs up opposition. It speaks, prophet-like, *for God*, affirming His authority over the soul, and abasing the glory of man in His presence. Unbelief says, as Ahab of Micaiah, "I hate it, for it does not prophesy good of me, but evil." And even in the believer, it runs counter to all that is not of faith within him; and alas! how much within us is not faith! Thus, among Christians themselves, the truth in any fullness causes many to stumble and at every fresh unfolding of it, some who had followed thus far are left behind: it is even well if they do not become active opponents of it. Thus He who in the angel's announcement brings "peace on earth," brings in fact, nevertheless, because of man's condition, "not peace, but a sword." The fellowship of saints is disturbed and broken up: the thousands drop to hundreds in the very presence of the enemy. Romanism boasts, with a certain reason, of her unity at least in outward organization; while Protestantism proclaims the sanctity of conscience, and divides into a hundred sects!

Yet if conscience be in any respect given up, all is. For its principle is obedience to God, and to God only; and this is a first necessity for a walk with God. Conscience is, above all things, therefore individual. It refuses to see with other eyes than its own; and refuses, too, subjection or guidance without seeing. It will easily incur in this way the reproach of obstinacy, contumacy, pride, self-will; while on the other hand there is constant danger of mistaking these for it. It is thus a thing which all ecclesiastical systems find it difficult to recognize or deal with, and which makes large demands for wisdom, patience, and forbearance with one another. "We see in part; we prophecy in part": and what we see may seem in ill accord with what is really truth seen by others, just for want of knowledge of a larger truth embracing both. But even if we see not, and but think we see, conscience, because it touches our practical relationship with God, is a solemn thing to deal with: he who meddles with it interferes with God's rights over the soul, and usurps a vicegenercy which He commits to no one.

Yet the voice of God, let us carefully remember, conscience is not. It is an ear to hear it only: and which may be dull and deaf, and hear with little clearness after all. God's voice is that which utters itself by the Spirit through the Word. But this voice speaks to the individual, to him that has an ear to hear. None can, but at his peril, resign his responsibility in this to another; and none can, but at his peril, require this to be done. Yet, alas! how often, in various ways, consciously and unconsciously, is this required and yielded to!

3. *Purged and Pure.*

"To serve the living God," the conscience must first of all be "purified from dead works" (Heb. 9:14). A soul alarmed on account of sin, is driven by conscience into an

effort to escape from the wrath which it foresees as the necessity of Divine holiness. In an awakened condition, not so much conscience drives from God, as the heart, estranged, refuses One in whom it finds no pleasure. Its pleasure is in banishing Him, if possible, from the thought: aye, terrible as it is to realize, sin as sin, an offense to Him whom it counts an enemy, is a real pleasure. Many, it is true, are quite ignorant of this, and would resent the imputation of it; for the heart is deceitful above all things, as it is desperately wicked, and who can know it? But when we wake up to realize our condition, we shall assuredly begin to realize it to be so, and none who has been truly brought to God, but will own with the Apostle, the remarkable example of it, that “when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”

When awakened, the holiness of God is seen as necessary wrath against sin; and then effort begins to secure shelter from it. And naturally this takes the shape of an attempt to keep those commandments of God, hitherto despised and broken. Ignorant of how complete the ruin sin has caused—ignorant of the unbending requirements of God’s holiness—ignorant of the grace which has provided complete atonement, the soul persists (often for how long!) in trying to bring to God some fruit that He can accept, and which will secure, or help to secure, the one who brings it. But this is only “dead works.” It is neither “work of faith” nor “labour of love.” It is self-justification, the fruit of fear and unbelief; hence truly called “*dead works*,” the mere outside of holiness at the best, with no life—no inward spirit in it to make it acceptable to the “living God.” It is rather itself an offense, and thus a necessary defilement of the soul.

The blood of Christ therefore it is that purifies the conscience from dead works. Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Brought to God, and to God known in Him, there is “no more conscience of sins” in the rejoicing worshipper. Free from the load of guilt, he is able to welcome the light fully and without reserve—yea, with eager desire. The yoke of Christ is rest and freedom. Thus the apprehension of grace delivers from a morbid self-occupation to enable one for real holiness. The conscience is purified so as faithfully to receive, without partiality or distortion, the communications of the Father’s will. “The fruit of the *light* is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:9).

And if that were all, how blessed—how wholly blessed would be this condition! “Light is good” indeed, “and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun.” If in this all nature rejoices, how the new nature in that which is the “light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”! Thus the fruit of the light is found in this eternal day and summer of the soul.

From the side of God there is no more need of change or variation. His grace is perfect; His gifts and calling are without repentance. Here, in the enjoyment of its own things, the soul is called to abide; here all its own interests summon it to abide. What might be expected then but continual growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Alas! that this rightful expectation should be so little fulfilled: but in whom is it perfectly fulfilled? in how many do we see almost the opposite of it, retrogression instead of progress?! And how many are there who remain apparently almost stationary, although in reality of course with loss of zeal and fervour, year after year?! What is the cause of all this, which we find acknowledged in apostolic times as in the present? For the Galatians were no solitary exception of those who “did run well,” being hindered from steadfast obedience to the truth. At Rome, those whose faith had once been

“spoken of throughout the whole world” we find testified of by the same witness as all seeking their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 2:21). And later he says of them, “at my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me” (2 Tim. 4:16). Corinth went into worldliness and immorality. Ephesus left its first love. Of some of these it may be pleaded that it is assemblies that are spoken of, not individuals, but the two ordinarily go together, and the magnitude of the departure shows that the plea can hardly avail. The general fact is as plain as it is intensely solemn.

But the decay of the fruits of faith means the decay of faith itself. And this decay of faith, whence does it proceed but from failure to maintain the purity of conscience? In the case of some, (who had, no doubt, got far away) the Apostle argues thus: “Holding faith and a good conscience, which (i.e., the latter), some having put away, concerning *faith* have made shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19). It is easy to show how heresies and false doctrines, and the reception of these by others, spring from a conscience defiled; but this is not now my point. For simplicity of faith itself, a good conscience must be maintained. As another Apostle says, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:20, 21). And so the Lord, in view of Peter’s grievous fall, and the natural result of it, assures him, “I have prayed for thee, that thy *faith fail not*” (Luke 22:32). How vital, then, to the whole spiritual condition is the maintenance of a pure conscience!

But again, this pure conscience can only be maintained by exercise. “Herein do I *exercise* myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16). And how many mistake—how easy, therefore, is it to mistake—a conscience dulled by neglect, for one that is really “good”! How many persuade themselves all is well with them, while they are simply not near enough to God to detect the evil! “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord,” we are admonished, “walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). This alone is the Christian “rule” (Gal. 6:16), and that is alone a good conscience which keeps to the measure of this. Yet how easy to have the theory, nay, in some respects, the faith of where we are, without this becoming the real measure for conscience of practical walk!

In the sanctuary, with God alone, we find the light in which things take their true shape and character. In Israel’s sanctuary of old, the light of common day was jealously excluded. The light of the golden candlestick guided the priests alone in their daily sacrifice. For us, the light of the holiest is that of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And in this, things look very differently, indeed, from the mere common light in which the natural conscience views them. Yet many Christians are able to be at peace with themselves merely because they are judging themselves by a standard little beyond the common use. They even ignorantly bring in the grace of God to quiet the stirring of self-accusation, which they suppose is legality, and go on in a careless dream, as far as possible removed from the peace of communion—“peace of Christ.” But the Apostle was not legal when he said, “Wherefore labour, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him” (2 Cor. 5:9, Greek), nor in his exercise to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.—F.W. Grant.