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THE SPIRIT ENDOWING.

These articles upon the Person and work of the Holy Spirit would lack completeness if we ignored the fantastic and fanatical view which some have taken regarding 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 as the Divine pattern and ideal for “the open meeting” of the local church today. We refer to those who decry a “one-man ministry” and who encourage an “any-man ministry” under the guise of allowing the Spirit full freedom to move and use any whom Christ has “gifted.” It is insisted that here in 1 Corinthians 14 we behold different ones endowed with various gifts taking part in the same meeting, yet strange to say these very people readily acknowledge that the gift of tongues has *ceased*—but this very chapter prescribes *how that gift* was and was not to be used!

Now in the first place there is not a single statement in all the New Testament that the practice which obtained at *Corinth* prevailed generally in other churches of that day, still less that the assemblies of the saints in all generations were to be patterned after *their* order. Rather is there much to show that what obtained at Corinth was *not* the regular mode established by Christ and His Apostles. The fact is that not only were the conditions at Corinth merely *transitory and exceptional*, but they were *fraught with much evil*. In no other church of apostolic days was there such disorder and carnality. “Gifts” were valued there more highly than grace, knowledge than love, and the consequence was that the possessors of those miraculous gifts, by their pride and forwardness, neutralized whatever good those gifts accomplished. The reason for that is not far to seek: *they* had no governing head or heads and no Divinely authorized teacher or teachers. The *absence of elders* made them like an army without officers, or a school without masters. Where all were equal, none would submit; where all wanted to teach, none would learn.

So far from the Corinthian church supplying a pattern for all others to follow, it stands before us *a most solemn warning* and sample of what ensues when a company of Christians is left without a Divinely qualified leader. The most terrible laxity of discipline obtained: one member was living in adultery with his father’s second wife (5:1), while others were getting drunk at the Lord’s table (11:21). Those fearful sins (which would not be tolerated today in any Christian church worthy of the name) were winked at, because the assembly was split into parties through want of a controlling head (an under-shepherd of Christ), and because the sinning members belonged to the majority, the minority was powerless.

Besides the fearful laxity of discipline, the grossest irregularities prevailed at their public meetings for the worship of God. There was neither unity, order, edifying ministry, nor decorum. One had his “psalm,” another his “doctrine,” another his “tongue,” another his “revelation,” and yet another his “interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26)—which is mentioned by the Apostle *not* by way of commendation, but as a *rebuke* for their disorder, as is quite evident from the final clause of that verse, as also from verse 40: carefully compare the opening words of verses 15 and 26! As another has said, “Here, then, all were charged, as it were, to the muzzle, and each wanting to have the *first* say, the *longest* say, and the *loudest* say. They did not wish to edify, but to show off.”

Now it was in view of *such* a situation that the Apostle was moved of God to pen 1 Corinthians 14, in order to correct these abuses and to lay down rules for the regulation of those who possessed the extraordinary gifts of prophesying and speaking in tongues. But

this very fact at once *overthrows* that theory which has been built on an erroneous conception of this chapter! Not only is there not a single statement elsewhere in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit *is the President over assemblies*, or that He is ever present in any other sense than that He dwells in individual believers, but 1 Corinthians 14 itself is very far from teaching that the Spirit presides over the local church, and requires those who have been “gifted” by Christ to wait on Him, and be governed entirely by His inward promptings. Surely it is perfectly obvious that inward promptings of the Spirit render quite needless such rules and regulations as are given here!

To affirm that “the spirits of the prophets are subject *to the prophets*” (v. 32), that is, their “gift” of prophecy is under the prophet’s *own control*, is a vastly different thing from saying that the prophets were to be *subject to the Holy Spirit*! No matter how strong was the impulse to speak, he could not rightly defy the command given, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge” (v. 29) under the plea that the Spirit urged him *to speak*. So again, how easy it had been for the Apostle to affirm, “If the Spirit impel any one to speak in a tongue, He will move some other brother to translate”; but so far from that, he commanded, “But if there be no interpreter, let him *keep silence* in the church” (v. 28), which utterly demolishes the idea that these Corinthians were being *presided over* by the Holy Spirit.

Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15 is it stated that the Spirit conducted (or ought to conduct) their meetings, nor were the Corinthians *rebuked* for failing to look to Him for guidance. There is not a hint of their sinfulness in limiting His sovereign freedom among them! Instead, the Apostle says, “*I would* that ye all spake with tongues, *but rather* that ye prophesied” (v. 5), and, “*I had rather* speak five words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (v. 19) which he most certainly had *not* said if his theme here was the Spirit’s *superintendence*, for in *that* case the Apostle would have gladly and entirely subjected himself to His control. Throughout the entire chapter the Apostle presents action as coming from *the side of the possessors* of the gifts, and not from the side of the Spirit. It is *not*, “when ye come together the Spirit will move one to speak in a tongue, another to prophecy, etc.” No, they are bidden to use good sense, to show their love to one another by subjection, and to beware of shocking visitors (vv. 20, 23). But enough.

As there were *offices* extraordinary (Apostle and Prophets) at the beginning of our dispensation, so there were *gifts* extraordinary; and as successors were *not* appointed for the former, so a continuance was never intended for the latter. The gifts were *dependent upon the officers*: see Acts 8:14-21; 10:44-46; 19:6; Romans 1:11; Galatians 3:5; 2 Timothy 1:6. We no longer have the Apostles with us, and therefore the supernatural gifts (the communication of which was an essential part of “the *signs* of an Apostle”: 2 Cor. 12:12) are absent. None but a Prophet can “prophesy!” Let it be definitely noted that the “Prophet” and the “teacher” are *quite distinct*: 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5—the one is no more, the latter still exists. A Prophet was inspired by God to give out an infallible communication of His mind: 2 Peter 1:21.

Surely it is a manifest absurdity, then, to take a chapter which was given for the express purpose of regulating the exercise of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and apply it to a company today where none of those gifts exist! Furthermore, if 1 Corinthians 14 sets forth the Spirit’s *superintendence* of the local assembly in worship, why is it that there is *not a single mention of Him* throughout the whole of its forty verses? *That* is in-

deed a hard question to answer. Obviously, there has been read into it *what is not there!* But do we not still have the “word of wisdom” and “the word of knowledge”? Certainly not; they were among the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:1, and that word “spiritual” is *not* used there in contrast from “carnal” (as is clear from 1 Cor. 3:1, for they were *not* spiritual in that sense), so that it *must* mean *inspired*, and “inspired” men ceased when the Canon of Scripture was closed!

It is true that the Spirit *acts today*, but it is *in secret*, and not in open manifestation as in the days of the Apostles; and *by mixed agency*. The Truth is taught, but not perfectly as the Apostles and their delegates preached it. The best sermon now preached or article written, is not a standard (as it *would be* if inspired by the Spirit), for it has blemishes in it; yet the Spirit is not responsible for them. What the Spirit does now is to bestow ordinary ministerial gifts, which the possessor must improve and develop by study and use. To “*seek* power from High” or a special “filling of the Spirit” is to run the serious risk of being controlled by evil spirits posing as angels of light.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

118. *The Christian's Sacrifices: 13:15, 16.*

From the eighth verse onwards (of Heb. 13) the Apostle is engaged in setting forth those spiritual duties of worship of which God Himself is the Object. Therein a series of contrasts are drawn between what obtained under the old covenant and that which pertains to the new. The Christian's privileges greatly excel those which belonged to Judaism as such. These superior blessings have been considered by us as we have passed from verse to verse. What is before us in verse 15 supplies a further exemplification of this general principle. The Levitical rites required God's earthly people to provide material offerings: but the Christian's "sacrifices" are entirely *spiritual* in their character. The Israelite worshipper could not offer his sacrifices to God directly, but had to allow the priests to officiate for him: whereas Christians have themselves been made priests unto God, and therefore may sacrifice to Him *immediately*. The praise-sacrifices under the Law were only presented at particular times and places (cf. The "Feasts" of Lev. 23): but the Christian may, through Christ, offer a sacrifice to God anywhere, at any time—"continually."

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). More is implied than is expressed. The language of this verse is restricted to the duties of worship and our oral praising of God therein, yet we know full well that He accepts not thanksgivings from us unless it be accompanied by what good old Matthew Henry called "thanksgiving." Thus it is the *entire compass* of evangelical obedience to God which is comprehended here. Those who have been dedicated to Him by the blood of Christ are under the deepest obligations to please and honour Him. The nature of Gospel obedience consists in thanksgiving for Christ and grace by Him, and therefore the whole of it may be suitably designated "a sacrifice of praise." Gratitude and adoration are the animating principles of all acceptable service. Every act and duty of faith has in it the nature of a sacrifice to God, wherein He is well-pleased.

John Owen suggests a threefold reason for the particular language in which the Christian's duty of obedience is here expressed. "1st. The great obligation that is upon us of continual thankfulness and praise to God on account of Christ's atonement. The sum and glory of our Christian profession is that it is the only way of praising and glorifying God for His love and grace in the Person and mediation of Christ. 2nd. This obligation to praise succeeding in the room of all terrifying legal constraints to obedience, alters the nature of that obedience from what was required under and by the law. 3rd. Where the heart is not prepared for and disposed to this fundamental duty of praising God for the death and oblation of Christ, no other duty or act of obedience is accepted with God."

In bidding us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, two things are denoted: freedom from the limitations of time and place as were appointed under Judaism, and diligent perseverance and constancy therein. To abound in fervent praise unto God is the abiding duty of the Christian. But for that there must be the regular exercise of *faith*. Calling into question the promises of God quenches the spirit of worship; doubts snap the strings of our harps; unbelief is the deadly enemy of praise. To praise God continually requires us to be in *daily communion* with Him. It is not to be wondered at that the joy of many believers is so sickly, when we consider how little fellowship they have with the Lord: if there be so little heat around the bulb of their thermometer, how can the mercury

rise higher! To praise God “continually” we must cultivate perpetual gratitude, and surely *that* should not be difficult!

“I will bless the LORD at *all* times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psa. 34:1): at no lower standard than that must we aim. How this meets the lament made by so many Christians. “There seems so very little I can do to express my gratitude unto the Lord.” Ah, my brother, you may not be gifted with talents to exercise in public, you may not have much money to give to God’s cause, but what is to withhold your offering unto Him a sacrifice of praise, and that “continually”!? Is not this God’s due? Did Spurgeon express it too strongly when he said, “Praise is the rent which God requires for the use of His mercies”? Then shall we rob God? Shall we withhold that in which He delights? Does not God give us abundant cause to praise Him “continually”!?

“To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness *every* night” (Psa. 92:2). “I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psa. 104:33). What a word is that for the aged and infirm Christian! Ah, dear reader, your eyes may have become so dim that you can scarcely read the Sacred page any more, your strength may have become too feeble for you to walk to the house of prayer, but your *lips* can still articulate and express thanksgiving! “I will be glad and rejoice in Thy *mercy*: for Thou hast considered my trouble” (Psa. 31:7): rejoice in His pardoning mercy, preserving mercy, providing mercy. “Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can show forth all His praise?” (Psa. 106:2). Well did Goodwin close his reflections upon the Psalms of praise by saying, “My brother, let us *pray for* such a heart as this, that the saints of the Old Testament may not shame us who are Christians under the New.”

It is striking to note that the Hebrew word “bara” signifies “to create,” while “barak” means “to praise,” intimating that the praising of God is the chief end of our creation. Though nothing can be added to God’s essential glory, yet praise promotes His manifestative glory, for it exalts Him before others. In this manner the angels glorify Him for they are the choristers of Heaven, trumpeting forth His praise. An old writer quaintly pointed out that believers are the “temples” of God, and when their tongues are praising Him, their spiritual “organs” are then sounding forth. We read that the saints in Heaven have “harps” in their hands (Rev. 14:2), which are emblems of *praise*. Alas, that so often *our* harps are “hung on the willows” (Psa. 137:2), and murmurings and complaints are all that issue from our mouths. O my reader, be more earnest and diligent in seeking for grace to enable thee to be praising God continually.

“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:16). Here is the *fifth sacrifice* which the Christian is to offer unto God, namely, that of *ministering to others*, for all the acts and duties of love may fitly be termed “sacrifices.” In the previous verse the Apostle has shown the great obligation *Godwards* which the sanctification of the Church by the blood of Christ places upon its members, but here he makes known what influence it ought to have upon our conduct *manwards*. Thus, he turns from the first table of the Law to the second, and insists that if redemption places us under additional obligations to love God with all our hearts, it likewise supplies added reasons why we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

The first word of verse 16 is a connective, but the commentators differ as to how it should be translated. Calvin’s annotators insist it should be rendered “And”; John Owen suggested “Moreover”; our translators preferred “But.” There is no material difference in

these variants: if “but” be retained, it is *not* to be taken as exceptional, as though it introduced something adverse unto what had previously been presented. It is clearly a continuation, or an addition to the duty mentioned in verse 15. As some might think that the *entire* duty of the Christian was comprehended in rendering to God that homage and devotion to which He is justly entitled, and that while we attend to that, nothing else need concern us, the Apostle *added* “*But*”—notwithstanding the diligence required in the former duty—forget not to do good unto men and minister to their needs.

Herein we may perceive once more how carefully the Scriptures preserve the *balance* of truth at every point. The Divine Law is a unit, yet was it written upon *two* tablets of stone, and the one must never be exalted to the disparagement of the other. True, there is an *order* to be observed: God Himself ever has the first claim upon our hearts, time and strength; nevertheless our fellow-creatures, and particularly our fellow-believers, also have real claims upon us, which we must not ignore. To disregard the second table of the Law, is not only to inflict an injury upon our neighbours, but it is to disobey and therefore to displease God Himself. There is an harmony in obedience, and a failure in any one point disturbs the whole, as is evident from James 2:10, 11. It is for this reason, then, that our verse closes with “for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

It was at this very point that Israel failed so often under the old covenant. Instead of treating their servants considerately, they imposed upon them; instead of ministering to the widow, they robbed her; instead of relieving the poor, they oppressed them. Nevertheless, they were very strict in keeping up their worship of Jehovah! A striking example of this is recorded in the first half of Isaiah 58. The Prophet was bidden to cry aloud and spare not, but to show the people their sins. They had sought God “daily,” “forsook not His ordinances,” yea, took “delight” in approaching Him (v. 2). They were diligent in “fasting,” yet God *accepted not* their worship, saying, “Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (vv. 6, 7).

Another solemn example is found in Zecharia 7. God challenges them by asking, “When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast *unto Me*, even to Me?” (v. 5). Then the Prophet cried, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart” (vv. 9, 10). What a strange anomaly human nature presents! How glaring its inconsistencies! Punctilious in the performances of public worship, yet utterly remiss in attending to private duties! Diligent and zealous in keeping the fasts and feasts of the Lord, yet regardless of the needs and cries of their destitute fellows! How is such to be accounted for? Easily: it bolsters up self-righteousness, feeds the idea that the favour of God can be purchased by the creature, and causes such Pharisees to be looked up to for their “holiness” (?) by certain superficial people.

Hence it is that the duties of benevolence inculcated in our text are preceded by “forget not,” intimating there is a more than ordinary proneness in professors of the Gospel to neglect them. It is a *sinful neglect* which is here prohibited. John Owen suggested four reasons or vicious habits of mind from which such forgetfulness proceeds. First, “an un-

due trust unto religious duties, as in many barren professors," by which he means those who set a high value upon their religious acts and think to win Heaven thereby. How many there be who contribute liberally to "the church" and yet underpay their employees and overcharge their customers!—the gifts of such are a stench in God's nostrils.

Second, "from vain pleas and pretences against their duties attended with trouble and charge." It is much easier and pleasanter to go to the house of prayer and sing God's praises, than it is to enter the dwellings of the poor and personally wait upon those who are sick. It costs less to put a coin in the collection plate than it does to feed and clothe the destitute. Third, "a want of that goodness of nature and disposition which effectual grace will produce." The spirit of Christ in the heart will produce consideration and concern for others, and counteract our innate selfishness; but where Christ is absent, the Devil rules the heart. Fourth, "A want of that compassion toward sufferers, which is required of them that are still in the body: Hebrews 13:3." May God preserve us from all religion that hardens and produces callousness, stifling even "natural affection."

"But to do good and to communicate forget not" (v. 16). "It is the duty of Christians to express their gratitude to God for His goodness to them, through Christ Jesus, by doing good: i.e., by performing acts of beneficence—in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the distressed; and in this way communicating to their poor and afflicted brethren of the blessings Providence has conferred on them. While the terms are of that general kind as to express beneficence and the communication of benefits generally, it seems probable that the Apostle had a direct reference to doing good by communicating to others *those* blessings for which they were especially bound to give thanks. It is the duty of Christians to do good to their fellow-men by communicating to them, so far as this is competent to them, those heavenly and *spiritual* blessings for which they are bound continually to give thanks to God" (John Brown).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not." That which is here inculcated is *the sacrifice of love* unto our fellows. Two words are used to set forth this duty. First, "do good" which concerns the whole course of our lives, especially with regard to others. Three things are included. First, a gracious propensity or readiness of mind thereto: "the liberal deviseth liberal things" (Isa. 32:8): he does not wait till he is asked, but seeks to be on the alert and anticipate the needs of others. Second, the actual exercise of this benevolent inclination, in all those ways which will be useful and helpful, spiritually and temporally, to mankind. Idealizing and theorizing is not sufficient: there must be the acting out of good will. Third, by buying up all occasions and opportunities for the exercise of compassion and lovingkindness to others.

A spirit of philanthropy and benevolence is to be manifested by well-doing. It is not enough to *be* good, we must *do* good. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman *was full of good works* and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36): her charitable actions are called "good works" because they were profitable and did good to others. Nor is this ministering to the wants of others to be confined unto the members of our own family, or even the limits of our denomination. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto *all men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10)—therein the spirit of Christianity differs from the narrow and clannish spirit of all other religions. God does good unto all men, and we are to be "emulators of Him as dear children" (Eph. 5:1).

“But to do good and to communicate forget not.” Christians are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10), regeneration capacitating them thereunto. Christ gave Himself for us that we should be a people who are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14), for by them we honour Him and adorn our profession. No matter what self-sacrifice they entail, nor how ungrateful be the beneficiaries, we are to be diligent and persevering in helping all we can: “But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing” (2 Thess. 3:13). “For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:15). And even though our well-doing fails to silence the criticism of those who believe not, yea, if our perseverance therein brings down upon us increased opposition and persecution, yet it is written, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

The second term used here in connection with the sacrifice of charity is “communicate,” which means passing on to others what God has entrusted to us, according as their necessities do require. Literally, the Greek word signifies “having something in common with others.” It is the *actual exercise* of that pity for the poor and indigent which is required of us in the distribution of good things unto them, according to our ability. This is an important evangelical duty which the Scriptures repeatedly charge us with: the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, and the honour of our profession are highly concerned therein. It is striking to note that when he commended the Corinthians for their liberal contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem, the Apostle declared that “they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 9:13)—obedience to the command in our text is required by *the Gospel!*

John Owen rightly pointed out that “to be negligent herein is to despise the wisdom of God in the disposal of the lots and conditions of His own children in the world in so great variety, as He hath done always, and will always continue to do.” What light that throws on those providential dispensations of God which are often so mysterious and exercising to the hearts of many of His people! Here is an important reason intimated why God blesses a few of His saints with considerable of this world’s goods, and why many of them have scarcely any at all: it is to provide opportunity and occasion for the exercise of those graces in them which their several conditions call for. By the unequal distribution of His material mercies, the rich have opportunity for thankfulness, charity, and bounty; while the poor are called upon to exercise patience, submission, trust, and humility. Where those graces are mutually exercised, there is beauty, order, and harmony, and a revenue of glory unto God.

Christians are rarely more sensible of God’s goodness to them than when giving and receiving in a proper manner. He that gives aright feels the power of Divine grace at work in his heart, and he who receives aright is very conscious of Divine love and care in such supplies: God is near to both. Consequently, to be selfishly callous on the one hand, or proudly independent and scornful of charity on the other, is to impugn the wisdom of God in His disposal of the varied temporal circumstances of His people. No man is rich or poor merely of himself, but rather to occupy that place in the social order of things which God has designed unto His own glory. From what has been before us we may see how that many even of those who believe not are the temporal gainers by the death of Christ and the fruits thereof in the lives of His people.

Many and varied are *the motives* which Scripture employs to persuade the saint unto this duty of ministering unto the needy of His fellows. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov. 19:17). Do we really believe this? Do we *act* as though we did? The Lord allows none to lose by being generous, but repays him with interest one way or another, either to him or his posterity. "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse" (Prov. 28:27): the selfish man exposes himself to the ill-will of those whom he callously ignores, and brings himself under the providential curse of God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law (on this matter), even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9)—bear *that* in mind, dear reader, if you wish to have and retain the ear of God.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). What an inducement is that! How it should stimulate unto liberality those who by nature have a miserly disposition. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16): how that should encourage us in the performing of good works! "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6): the writer has lived long enough to see many striking examples of both of these classes. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about *doing good*" (Acts 10:38). He was ever thinking of others and ministering to them; feeding the hungry, healing the sick, relieving the distressed and He has left us an example that we should follow in *His* steps.

Let it be pointed out, however, that God requires us to use *discretion and discrimination* in the bestowments of charity. There is a class of shiftless idlers who are ever ready to impose upon the compassionate and generous heart, and make the benevolence of others a reason for their own indolence. It is positively wrong to encourage those who seek to subsist on the liberality of others, instead of earning their own bread. Indiscriminate giving often does more harm than good. It is our bounden duty to go to the trouble of properly investigating each case on its own merits, instead of allowing our sentiment to override our judgment. God Himself has said, "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10), and it is sinful for us to *negate* that by giving money to able-bodied loafers.

"For with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). Whatever benefits the Christian bestows on others God regards them as done to Himself, and honours them with the name of "sacrifices." What gracious condescension on His part, that He should dignify our worthless works as to pronounce them holy and sacred things, acceptable to Himself! Rightly, then, did Calvin point out, "When, therefore, *love* does not prevail among us, we not only rob men of their right, but God Himself, who has by a solemn sentence dedicated to Himself what He has commanded to be done to men." How this consideration ought to stir us up to the exercise of kindness towards our neighbour. The more we do so, the more pleasure do we give unto Him to whom we are infinitely indebted. Withhold not thy hand, then, from that which delights thy God.

"For with *such* sacrifices God is well pleased." There is a twofold emphasis in the word "such." First, it implies a contrast, denoting that God no longer required those an-

cient sacrifices which He had enjoined until an abrogation of the old covenant. Herein was a clear intimation that Judaism had been set aside. Second, it graciously stresses the fact that, though *we* deem our feeble praises and charitable works as too poor to be worthy of notice or mention, *God Himself* regards those very things as acts of worship that meet with His hearty approbation.

A beautiful illustration of what has just been pointed out is found in Philippians 4. The Philippian saints had sent a gift to the Apostle Paul, which he not only gratefully acknowledged, but declared that the same was “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (v. 18). “Beyond this the highest aspirations of a Christian cannot go. It is all he can wish; it is above all that he can think. To have the approbation of good men is delightful; to have the approbation of our own conscience is more delightful still; but to have the approbation of God, this is surely the highest recompense a creature can reach. This approbation is very strongly expressed in the Word: “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb. 6:10). It will be still more illustriously displayed when the Son appears in the glory of the Father, and in the presence of an assembled universe proclaims to those who, as a token of gratitude to God for the blessings of salvation, have done good and communicated: “For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me . . . inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me’: Matthew 25:35-40” (John Brown).—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

70. *His Son's Death.*

“The triumphing of the wicked is short, And the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment” (Job 20:5)—often so even when measured by human and temporal standards: how much more so in the light of Eternity! Alas, that our hearts are so little affected by that unspeakably solemn consideration—a *never-ending future*: enjoyed under the blissful approbation of God, or endured beneath His frightful curse. What are the smiles and honours of men worth, if their sequel be the everlasting frown of the Almighty? The pleasures of sin are but “for a season” (Heb. 11:25), whereas the pleasures which are at God’s right hand are “for evermore” (Psa. 16:11). Then what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Yet how many, like Esau of old, place more value upon a mess of pottage than the blessings of Heaven? How many, like Ahab, will sell themselves to do evil in order for a brief moment of pleasure or fame?

“The triumphing of the wicked is short.” Yes, and so it proved with David’s wretched son. Absalom had laid his plans carefully, executed them zealously, and had carried them out without any compunction (2 Sam. 15:1, 2, 5). He had taken a mean advantage of his father’s indisposition and had stolen the hearts of many of his subjects from him. He aspired to the kingdom, and now determined to seize the throne for himself (15:10). He had assembled his forces at Jerusalem, and had the powerful Ahithophel to counsel him. He had ruthlessly determined that his father’s life must be sacrificed to his ambition, and now goes forth at the head of the army to accomplish his death (17:24). His triumph seemed to be assured, but unknown and unsuspected by himself, he was going forth to meet his own tragic but fully merited doom.

“And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them” (2 Sam. 18:1). As Ahithophel had foreseen, the delay of Absalom had afforded David the opportunity to greatly augment his forces. Though considerable numbers had joined the rebel, yet there must have been many scattered throughout Israel who still remained loyal to David, and as the news of the insurrection spread abroad, no doubt hundreds of them took up arms and went forth to assist their fugitive king. That his arm had, by this time, been greatly strengthened, is clear from the terms of this verse. David now proceeded to muster and marshal his reinforcements so that they might be used to the best advantage. He girded on the sword with some of the animation of early days, and the light of trustful valour once more shone in his eyes.

It seems quite clear that, by this time, David had no fear of what the outcome would be of the coming conflict. He had committed his cause to God, and looked forward with confidence to the issue of the impending battle. The striking answer which God had given to his prayer that the counsel of Ahithophel might be turned to foolishness, must have greatly strengthened his faith. His language at the close of both the 42nd and 43rd Psalms (composed at this period) witness to his hope in the living God. Yet let it be duly noted that strong faith did not produce either sloth or carelessness. David acted with diligence and wisdom: marshalling his forces, putting them in good order, dividing them to best advantage, and placing them under the command of his most experienced generals. In order to ensure success, our responsibility is to employ all lawful and prudent means. Declining to do so is presumption, and not faith.

“And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and a third part under

the hand of Ittai the Gittite” (v. 2). How true it is that there is nothing new under the sun. Military tactics were conducted along the same lines then as they are now; David disposed his forces into a central army, with right and left protecting flanks. “And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also” (v. 2). David was not lacking in courage, and was ready and willing to share any danger with his men. Yet we believe there was something more than bravery evidenced by these words; was he not anxious to be on the spot when the crisis arrived, so that he could protect his wayward son from the fury of his soldiers! Yes, we see here the father’s heart, as well as the king’s nobility.

“And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.” His desire was still upon Absalom, judging that his presence might help to shield him, for he was of too soft a heart to disown the feelings of a father, even toward one who had risen up in rebellion against him. Yet it seems to us that there was something of a deeper character which prompted David at this time. He would feign go forth himself because he realized that it was his sin which had brought all this trouble upon the land, and he was far too noble-minded to let the risks of battle find any in the foreground but himself. Let not the reader forget what we pointed out several times in the preceding articles, namely, that it is *as the humble penitent* David is to be viewed throughout this connection: this it is which supplies the key to various details in these incidents.

“But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city” (v. 3). This is indeed beautiful. David had shown his affection for his faithful followers, and now they evidence theirs for him. They would not hear of their beloved king adventuring himself into the place of danger. How highly they esteemed him! and justly so: he was not only possessed of qualities which could well command, but of those which held the hearts of those who knew him best. The deep veneration in which he was held comes out again at a later date, when he was hazarding his life in battle with the Philistines: his men swore to him saying, “*Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel*” (2 Sam. 21:17). He was their “light”: their leader, their inspirer, their joy, the honoured and loved one, in favour with God and man.

“And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands” (2 Sam. 18:4). “He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a reserve of forces there, whence he might send them recruits—that may be a position of real service, which yet is not a position of danger. The king acquiesced in their reasons, and changed his purpose. It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be overruled by their advice, when it appears to be for your own good. Whether the people’s prudence had an eye to it or no, God’s Providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle; for then his tenderness had certainly interposed to save Absalom’s life, whom God had determined to destroy” (Matthew Henry).

Personally, we regard the king’s acquiescence as another indication of his *chastened heart*. There is nothing that more humbles and meekens the soul as a spirit of genuine repentance, as nothing more tends to harden and swell with self-importance than the absence of it. He who is blind to his own faults and failings is unprepared to listen to the

counsel of others: an unbroken will is self-assertive and impervious to either the feelings or wishes of his fellows. But David was sorrowing over his past sins, and that made him tractable and in a condition to yield to the desire of his men. As he stood at the gate, watching his army go forth to the battle of the wood of Ephraim, victory or defeat would be much the same to him. Whatever the outcome, the cause must be traced back to his *own* wrong doing. He must have stood there with a sad remembrance of that other battle, in which a devoted servant had fallen, as one murdered by his own hand (2 Sam. 11:24).

“And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom” (2 Sam. 18:5). So great was David’s love for his wayward son that, even now, he sought to deliver him from the stroke of death. He knew that Absalom was an excuseless rebel, who sought his life and throne, who had proven himself to be the very incarnation of iniquitous ingratitude, of unfeeling cruelty, of unadulterated wickedness, of Satanic ambition. He was guilty of treason of the vilest sort, and his life by every law of justice was entirely forfeited; yet in spite of all, the heart of David remained steadfast unto him. There is nothing recorded in Holy Writ which exhibits so vividly the depth and power of human affection, nothing which displays so touchingly *love for the utterly unworthy*. Therefore, is it not designed to turn our thoughts unto a higher and purer Love!?

Yes, see this aged parent, driven from his home, humiliated before his subjects, stricken to the very depths of his heart by the murderous hatred of the son whom he had forgiven and honoured, loving this worthless and Devil-driven youth with an unchanged devotion, that sought to save him from his just and impending doom. Yet wonderful as this was, it provided only a faint shadow of the amazing love of Christ, which moved Him to set His heart upon “His own,” even while they were totally depraved, utterly contempt, dead in trespasses and sins. God commended His love toward us by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:8), and it was for the rebellious and the ungodly that He was crucified. Nor can anything ever separate us from that love: no, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Verily, such love “passeth knowledge.”

“So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim” (2 Sam. 18:6). This statement has presented quite a problem to commentators, some going so far as to (irreverently) say there was a slip of the historian’s pen. As we have seen, both David and Absalom had crossed the Jordan and were now “in the land of Gilead” (17:22, 26), which was on the eastward side of the river; whereas *their* territory lay wholly on the west of it. How then, ask the skeptics, could this battle be said to have taken place in “the wood of Ephraim”? Did the narrator err in his geography? Certainly not; it is the critics who display their ignorance of sacred history.

We do not have to go outside of the Scriptures in order to discover the solution to this “serious difficulty.” If we turn back to Judges 12, we discover that an attack was made by “Ephraimites” upon Jephthah in the land of *Gilead*, under pretense of a wrong being done when *they* were not invited by the latter to take part in his successful invasion of Ammon. Jephthah sought to sooth his angry assailants, but in vain. A battle was fought near “the passage of the Jordan” (Judg. 12:5), and Ephraim met with fearful slaughter: in all forty-two thousand of their men being put to death. Now an event so fearful was not likely to

pass away without some memorial, and what more natural than to name their grave, the Aceldama of their tribe, by this name “the wood of Ephraim” in the land of Gilead!

For a short while the battle was furious, but the issue was not long left in doubt: the rebels suffering a heavy defeat; “The people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured” (2 Sam. 18:7, 8). “Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their uneasiness under so good a government, and their base ingratitude to so good a governor; and found what it was to take up arms for an usurper, who with his kisses and caresses had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferments, the golden days, they promise themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord and His anointed, and to think of breaking His bands asunder” (Matthew Henry).

Most evident was it on which side the Lord was. All was confusion and destruction in the ranks of the apostate. The anointed eye may discern the hand of God as manifest here as, on a former occasion, it has been at Gibeon: as there the “hailstones,” so here the “wood” devoured more than the sword. No details are given, so it is useless to conjecture whether it was pits and bogs or the wild beasts that infested those forests; sufficient that it was God Himself who fought against them—conquering them by a much smaller force than their own, and then, their being pursued by His destructive providences when they sought to escape the sword. Nevertheless, such wholesale slaughter of Israel—in view of their surrounding enemies—was a serious calamity for David’s kingdom.

And meanwhile, what of the arch-traitor himself? Ah, he is dealt with separately, and that, in a manner which still more conspicuously displayed God’s hand: he was “made a show of openly.” “And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away” (v. 9). Those boughs, like the hands of a giant, gripped him, holding him fast either by his neck or by his luxuriant hair (2 Sam. 14:26). His beast continued its progress, leaving him there, as though glad to be rid of such a burden. There he was suspended, between Heaven and earth, to intimate he was fit for neither. Behold the striking Providence of this: “*Cursed* is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13)! There he hung as an object of shame, filled with terror, incapable of delivering himself, unable to either fight or flee. He remained in this direful situation for some considerable time, awaiting with horror his merited doom.

Full opportunity was now afforded him to meditate upon his crimes and make peace with God. But, alas, so far as the sacred record informs us, there was no contrition on his part, nothing to intimate that he now felt unfit to either live or die. As God declared of Jezebel “I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21), so the life of Absalom was spared a few more hours, but no hint is given us that he confessed his fearful sins to God before being summoned into His holy presence. No, God had no place in his thoughts; as he had lived, so he died—defiant and impenitent. His father’s love, tears, and prayers were wasted on him. Absalom’s case presents to us one of the darkest pictures of fallen human nature to be met with in the whole of God’s Word.

A more melancholy and tragic spectacle can scarcely be imagined than Absalom dangling from the boughs of that tree. Deserted by his fellows, for they had one and all left him to his fate; abandoned by God, now that the cup of his iniquity was filled; a prey to

remorse, for though utterly heartless and conscienceless, his thoughts now must have been of the gloomiest nature. Quite unable to free himself, he was compelled to wait, hour after hour, until someone came and put an end to his wretched life. What an unspeakably solemn object lesson is this for the young people of our day! How clearly the fearful end of Absalom demonstrated the Lord's abhorrence of rebellion against parents! God's Word tells us that it is *the fool* who "despiseth his father's instruction" (Prov. 15:5), and that "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness" (Prov. 20:20); and again, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Prov. 30:17).

The sands of his hour glass had now almost run out. "And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak" (2 Sam. 18:10). This man had beheld Absalom's tragic plight, but had made no effort to extricate him: instead, he went and reported it to the general. "And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? And I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle. And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom" (2 Sam. 18:11, 12). And here we must stop: amidst so much that is revolting: it is a welcome contrast to behold the obedience of this man to his royal master.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

6. *The Davidic.*

We closed last month's article by pointing out the successive steps by which God gradually made known the counsels of His will which were to eventuate in the advent and incarnation of His Son. Under the Davidic Covenant, the royal dignity of the Messiah was for the first time definitely revealed. It should however be pointed out that a remarkable anticipation of this was given through the inspired Song of Hannah, recorded in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Therein we find a blessed blending of the typical with the prophetic, whereby the former pointed forward to things of a similar nature but of higher and wider importance. In other words, typical transactions supplied the material for a prediction of something analogous yet much loftier and grander in kind. The future was anticipated by present incidents, so ordered by God as to foreshadow Gospel verities, the historical thus serving as a mold to give prophetic shape to the future things of God's kingdom.

Hannah's song was evoked, under the moving of the Holy Spirit, by the birth of Samuel. The spiritual life of Israel was then at a very low ebb. The natural barrenness which had previously characterised Hannah adumbrated the sterility of the nation Godwards. The provocation which she received from "her adversary" and which provoked her sorely (1 Sam. 1:6), was a figure of the contempt in which Israel was held by her foes, the surrounding nations. The feebleness of Eli and his lack of discernment, imaged the decrepitude of the religious leaders in general: "in those days there was no open vision" (1 Sam. 3:1). The corruptness of Eli's sons and the readiness of the people to offer them bribes indicate clearly the sad level to which conditions had sunk. Such, in brief, is an historical outline of the situation at that time, typically featured in the items we have mentioned.

The gratitude and joy of Hannah when the Lord opened her womb, served as a suitable occasion for the Spirit to utter through her the prophetic song alluded to above. Deeply moved at having received the child of her hopes and prayers, which she had devoted from his birth as a Nazarite to the Lord's service, her soul was stirred by a prophetic impulse and her vision enlarged to perceive that *her* experience in becoming a mother was a "sign" of the spiritual fruitfulness of the true Israel of God in the distant future. Under that prophetic impulse she took a comprehensive survey of the general scheme of God, observing that gracious sovereignty which delights to exalt the humble piety, but which pours contempt on the proud and rebellious, until in the final crescendo she exclaimed, "The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His Anointed" (1 Sam. 2:10).

Remarkable indeed is that language. The final words "His Anointed" are literally, "His Messiah" or "Christ"! This is the first time in Holy Writ that blessed title is found in its most distinctive sense, though as we all know, it occurs hundreds of times afterwards as the synonym for the consecrated King, or Head of the Divine Kingdom. The other expressions in the same verse, "The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces" and "the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth" show that it was of *the Messiah's kingdom* that Hannah was moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. How striking, then, is it to see that the historical features of Hannah's day possessed an undoubted typical significance, and that they formed the basis of a prophecy which was to receive its fulfillment in the distant future! This supplies a valuable key to many of the later Messianic predictions!

Any possible doubt as to the prophetic purport of Hannah's song is at once removed by a comparison of the "Magnificat" uttered by Mary at the announcement of the Messiah's birth: see Luke 1:46-55. It is indeed striking to find how the Virgin re-echoed the same sentiments and in some instances repeated the very words used by the mother of Samuel a thousand years previously. "Why should the Spirit, breathing at such a time in the soul of Mary, have turned her thoughts so nearly into the channel that had been struck out ages before by the pious Hannah? Or why should the circumstances connected with the birth of Hannah's Nazarite offspring have proved the occasion of strains which so distinctly pointed to the manifestation of the King of Glory, and so closely harmonize with those actually sung in celebration of the event? Doubtless to mark the *connection* really subsisting between the two. It is the Spirit's own *intimation* of His ultimate design in transactions long since past, and testimonies delivered centuries before—namely, to herald the advent of Messiah, and familiarize the children of the kingdom with the essential character of the coming dispensation" (P. Fairbairn).

The combination of typical history with prophetic utterance which we observe in Hannah's song, is seen again and again in the later Scriptures, where the predictive feature is more extended and the typical element in the transactions which gave rise to it more definite. Such is especially the case with the Messianic Psalms, which being of a lyrical character afforded a freer play of the emotions than could be suitably introduced into more formal prophecy. But this, in turn, had its basis in the intimate connection there was between the present and the future, so that the feelings awakened by the one naturally incorporated themselves into the delineations of the other. It was the very institution of the temporal kingdom in the person and family of David which constituted both the ground and occasion of the predictions concerning Christ's future kingdom, and how beautifully the type prefigured the Antitype it will be our delight (D.V.) yet to notice.

The introduction of the royal sceptre into the hands of an Israelitish family produced a *radical change in the theocracy*, one that was calculated to draw the attention of the people more to the earthly and visible, and remove their minds from the heavenly and eternal. The constitution under which Jehovah, through Moses, had placed them, though it did not absolutely prohibit the appointing of a king, yet was of such a character that it seemed far more likely to suffer than be aided by the allowing of what would consist so largely of *the human* element. Till the time of Samuel it was strictly a theocracy: a commonwealth that had no recognized head but the Lord Himself, and which placed everything that concerned life and well-being under His immediate government. It was the distinguishing glory of Israel as a nation that they stood in this near relation to God, evoking that outburst of praise from Moses: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms . . . Happy art thou, O Israel: *who is like unto thee*, O people saved by the LORD, the Shield of thy help" (Deut. 33:27, 29).

But alas! Israel was far too carnal to appreciate the peculiar favour God had shown them, as was made evident when they sought to be like the Gentiles, by having a human king of their own. That was tantamount to saying they no longer desired that Jehovah should be their immediate sovereign, that they lusted after a larger measure of self-government. But this was not the only evil likely to result from the proposed change. "Everything under the Old Covenant bore reference to *the future* and more perfect dispensation of the Gospel; and the ultimate reason of any important feature or material change in respect to the former can never be understood without taking into account the

bearing it might have on the future state and prospects of men under the Gospel. But how could any change in the constitution of ancient Israel, and especially such a change as the people contemplated, when they desired a king after the manner of the Gentiles, be adopted without altering matters in this respect to the worst?

“The dispensation of the Gospel was to be, in a peculiar sense, the ‘kingdom of Heaven’ or of God, having for its high end and aim the establishment of a near and blessed intercourse between God and man. It attains to its consummation when the vision seen by St. John, and described after the pattern of the constitution actually set up in the wilderness, comes into fulfillment—when ‘the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them.’ Of this consummation it was a striking and impressive image that was presented in the original structure of the Israelitish commonwealth, wherein God Himself sustained the office of *king*, and had His peculiar residence and appropriate manifestations of glory in the midst of His people. And when they, in their carnal affection for a worldly institute, clamoured for an earthly sovereign, they not only discovered a lamentable indifference towards what constituted their highest honour, but betrayed also a want of discernment and faith in regard to God’s prospective and ultimate design in connection with their provisional economy” (P. Fairbairn).

In view of what has been before us, it is not to be wondered at that God manifested His displeasure at the fleshly demand for a human king, and that He declared to Samuel that the nation had thereby virtually rejected Himself (1 Sam. 8:7). It is but natural that we should enquire why, then, did the Lord yield to their evil desire? Ah, wondrous indeed are the ways of Him with whom we have to do: the very thing which the people, in their sin, lusted after, served to supply on a lower plain a *striking adumbration* of the nature and glory which Christ’s kingdom should yet assume on a higher plane—it was the eternal purpose of God that He would ultimately entrust the rule of the universe unto the Man of His own right hand! Thus the Divine procedure on this occasion supplies one of the most striking instances found in all the Old Testament of the overruling Providence of God, whereby He is able to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

God not only averted the serious damage which Israel’s demands threatened to do unto the theocracy, but He turned it to good account, in familiarizing the minds of future generations with what was designed to constitute the grand feature of the Messianic kingdom; namely, the Son of God assuming *human* nature. After the people had been solemnly admonished for their guilt in the appointing of a king after *their* worldly principles, they were permitted to raise one of their number to the throne, though *not* as an absolute and independent sovereign, but as the deputy of Jehovah, ruling in the name and in subordination to the will of God, and for this reason his throne was called “the throne of the LORD” (1 Chron. 29:23). But to render His purpose the more evident to those who had eyes to see, the Lord allowed the earthly throne to be first occupied by one who was little disposed to submit to the authority of Heaven, and was therefore supplanted by another, who, as God’s representative, is over thirty times called His “*servant*.”

It was in this second person, David, that the kingly administration of Israel properly began. He was the root and foundation of the earthly kingdom—as a “kingdom”—in which the Divine and the human were *officially* united, as they were ultimately to be in a Hypostatic or *personal* union. Most remarkably did the shaping Providence of God cause the preparatory and typical to shadow forth the ultimate and antitypical, making the various trials through which David passed ere he reached the throne, and the conflicts in

which he engaged subsequently, to prefigure throughout the sufferings, work and kingdom of the Messiah. A whole volume might well be devoted to a full amplification of that statement, showing how, in the broad outlines, the entire history of David possessed a typical significance, so that it was really a prophetic panorama. The same principle applies with equal force to many of his Psalms, where we find historical events turned into sacred songs, in such a way that they became *predictions* of what was to be realized by Christ *on a grander scale*.

It was in this way that what had otherwise tended to veil the purpose of God, and obstruct the principle design of His preparations under the old covenant, was made to be one of the most effective means for revealing and promoting it. "The earthly head, that now under God stood over the members of the commonwealth, instead of overshadowing His authority, only presented this more distinctly to their view, and served as a stepping-stone to faith, in enabling it to rise nearer to the apprehension of that personal indwelling of Godhead, which was to constitute the foundation and the glory of the Gospel dispensation. For occasion was taken to unfold the more glorious future in its practical features with an air of individuality and distinctness, with a variety of detail and vividness of colouring, not to be met with in any other portions of prophetic Scripture" (P. Fairbairn).

As an illustration of this combination of *typical history with prophecy*, we refer to the 2nd Psalm—which we hope to consult again in a later article. It has been termed "an inaugural hymn" designed to celebrate the appointment and triumph of Jehovah's King. The heathen nations are pictured as opposing (vv. 1, 2), as vowing together that if such an appointment were consummated, they would defy it (v. 3). Notwithstanding, the Most High, disdaining the threats of such puny adversaries (v. 4), accomplishes His counsel. The everlasting decree goes forth that the anointed King is established on Zion, and, because He is God's own Son, He is made *the Heir* of all things, even to the uttermost limits of the earth (vv. 5-9). The Psalm therefore closes with a call to earth's rulers to submit to the sceptre of the King of kings, warning them of the sure doom that would follow defiance.

Before pointing out the obvious connection of this Psalm with the life and history of David, let us carefully note the entire absence of any slavish *liberality*. In his elevation to the throne of Israel, David was *not* opposed by heathen nations and their rulers for they probably knew little and certainly cared less about it. Again, his being anointed king certainly did *not* synchronize with his being set on the holy hill of Zion, for there was an interval of some years between them. Moreover, when he was established in the kingdom, there is no record of his pressing the claims of his dominion on other monarchs, demanding that they pay allegiance to *him*. We emphasise these points, not to suggest there is any failure in the type, but as a warning against that modern species of literalism which so often reduces the Scriptures to an absurdity.

Shall we, then, go to an opposite extreme, and say there is no real relation between this Messianic Psalm and the life and kingdom of David? Surely not. Certainly it *has*, and a relation so close that *his* experiences were the beginning of what, on a higher plane and on a larger scale, was to be accomplished in His Son and Lord. While the language there employed for celebrating the Messianic King and His kingdom rises high above the experiences which pertain to His prototype, yet it bears the impress of them. In both alike we see the sovereign determination on the part of God to the regal office. In each case there is opposition of the most violent and heathenish kind to withstand that appointment—in David's case, first on the part of Saul, and then of Abner and Ishbosheth. In

each case we behold the slow but sure removal of all the obstacles raised against the purpose of God, and the extension of the sphere of empire till it reaches the limits of the Divine grant. The lines of history are parallel, the agreement between type and antitype unmistakable.—A.W.P.

Christ Our Exemplar.

“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Let it be duly considered that the principle design of the Apostle in this Epistle is to exhibit certain signs and marks, both negative and positive, for the examination or trial of men’s claims to be Christians (see 5:13). It is in *that* light our verse must be interpreted: the *proof* of a saving interest in Christ is our *imitation* of Him. Were this criterion faithfully insisted upon today from the pulpit much of the empty profession now abounding would be clearly exposed. A claim is made: “he that *saith* he abideth in Him,” which signifies an interest in and communion with Him. The only way in which that claim can be *established* is by *walking* as Christ walked—*following* the example He has left us.

“Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation of Christ convincingly appears in divers ways. First, *from the established order of salvation*, which is fixed and unalterable. God that hath appointed the end, hath also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory: ‘For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom. 8:29). The same God who hath predestinated men to salvation, hath in order thereunto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ and this order of Heaven is never to be reversed; we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ.

“Secondly, *the nature of Christ-mystical* requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be *heterogeneous*: of a nature different from the Head and how monstrous and uncomely would this be! This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, ‘This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay’ (Dan. 2:32, 33). Christ, the Head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and worldly members. And therefore the Apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the *members* of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the Head: ‘As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.’ That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

“Thirdly, this resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Him in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ’s ‘*fellows*’ or co-partners (Psa. 45:7) from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God giveth the same Spirit unto us, which He more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated; and this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God in the infusion of the Spirit of grace: for it is plain from Ezekiel 36:27 that practical holiness and obedience are the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men is to elevate their minds, set their affections upon heavenly things, purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of ho-

liness and obedience. Its nature also is *assimilating*, and changeth them in whom it is into the same image with Jesus Christ, their Heavenly Head: 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“Fourthly, the necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued from the design and end of Christ’s exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine of the Socinians, which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of His incarnation, yet we must not run so far from an error as to lose a precious Truth. We say, the satisfaction of His blood was a main and principal end of His incarnation, according to Matthew 20:28. We affirm also, that it was a great design and end of the incarnation of Christ to set before us a pattern of holiness for our imitation, for so speaks the Apostle: ‘He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps’ (1 Peter 2:21); and this example of Christ greatly obliges believers to His imitation: ‘let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 2:5).

“Fifthly, our imitation of Christ is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe, whom Christ will admit into the number of His disciples. ‘Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple’ (Luke 14:27); and again, ‘If any man serve Me, let him follow Me’ (John 12:26). To this condition we have submitted, if we be sincere believers; and therefore are strictly bound to the imitation of Christ, not only by God’s *command*, but by our own *consent*. But if we profess interest in Christ, when our hearts never consented to follow and imitate His example, then are we self-deceiving hypocrites, wholly disagreeing from the Scripture character of believers. They that are Christ’s are there described as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“Sixthly, *the honour of Christ* necessitates the conformity of Christians to His example, else what way is there left to stop detracting mouths, and to vindicate the name of Christ from the reproaches of the world? How can wisdom be justified of her children, except it be this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from such as desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by Christ’s example? The world hath eyes to see what we *practice*, as well as ears to hear what we *profess*. Therefore, either show the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honour of the Lord Jesus” (John Flavell, 17th Century Puritan).

From all that has now been before us we may draw the following inferences. First, if all who claim a saving interest in Christ are strictly bound to imitate Him, then it follows that *Christianity is very unjustly charged* by the world with the evils and scandals of empty professors. Nothing can be more unrighteous and unreasonable, for Christianity severely censures loose and scandalous actions in all professors and therefore is *not* to be blamed for them. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11, 12). Really, it is an argument greatly in favour of Christianity that even wicked men covet the name of it, though they only cloak their sins under it.

Second, if all professors forfeit their claim to a saving interest in Christ who endeavour not to sincerely and earnestly imitate Him in the holiness of His life, then *how small a number* of real Christians are there in the world! If flowery talking without strict walking, if common profession without holy practice, if Church membership without denying self and treading the Narrow Way were sufficient to constitute a Christian, then a considerable percentage of earth’s population would be entitled to that name. But if Christ owns none but those who follow the example that He has left, then His flock is indeed a little

one. The vast majority of those who claim to be Christians have a name to live, but are dead (Rev. 3:1), being such as walk after the flesh, following the course of this world and yielding their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (Rom. 6:13). The demands of Christ are too rigid for them: they prefer the Broad Road where the majority are found.

Third, *what blessed times* we should witness if true Christianity once generally obtained and prevailed in the world! How it would humble the proud, meek the self-willed, and spiritualize those that are carnal! A perverse world has often charged Christianity with being the cause of all the tumults which are in it; whereas nothing but pure Christianity, in the power of it, can cure those epidemics of evil. If the great majority of our fellows were regenerated by the Spirit and brought to walk after Christ in holiness, living in meekness and self-denial, then would our prisons be closed—armies and navies down away with, jealousies and animosities removed, the wilderness and solitary places be glad and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose. That is what constitutes the great difference between Heaven and a world that lies in the Wicked One: holiness is the very atmosphere of the former, whereas it is hated and banned here.

Fourth, it also follows that *real Christians are the best companions*. It is a blessed thing to consort with those who are genuinely seeking to follow the examples of Christ, for the holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and spiritual graces which were in Him, in their measure, are to be found in all true disciples of His. They show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into light. Something of the fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in all those whom He indwells. Yet it must be remembered that there is a great deal of difference between one Christian and another and that the best is sanctified but in part. If there be something engaging and sweet, there is also that which is distasteful and bitter in the most spiritual and mature saints. This it is which gives us occasion to forbear one another in love. Nevertheless, this is most certain, that notwithstanding all their infirmities and corruptions, the Lord's people are the best companions to be found on this earth. Happy are they who are now enjoying fellowship with those in whom can be discerned the likeness of Christ.

Fifth, if no man's claim to being Christ's be warranted except so far as he is walking according to Him, then *how groundless and worthless* are the expectation of all unsanctified persons who walk after their own lusts. "None are more forward to claim the privileges of religion than those that reject the duties of it; multitudes hope to be saved by Christ, who yet refuse to be governed by Him. But such hopes have no Scripture warrant to support them; yea, they have many Scripture testimonies against them. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 6:9, 10). O how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand souls are sentenced to Hell by this one Scripture!" (John Flavel, 1660).

Then how it behooves those of us who profess to be Christian to be not conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How we should strive to follow Christ's steps. *That* should be the great business of our lives, as it is the chief scope of the Gospel. If Christ has conformed Himself to us by taking upon Him our nature, how reasonable it is that we should conform ourselves to Him in a way of obedience

and sanctification. He came under the Law for our sakes (Gal. 4:4), then the least we can do in return is to gladly take His yoke upon us. It was Christ's abasement to conform Himself to those who were infinitely beneath Him—it will be our advancement to conform ourselves to Him who is so high above us. Surely the love of Christ must constrain us to spare no efforts to “grow up into Him in *all* things” (Eph. 4:15).

If we shall be conformed to Him in Glory, how logical it is that we should now conform ourselves to Him in holiness. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2), like Him not only in our souls but our bodies, too, will be transformed like unto His (Phil. 3:21). What a motive is this to bring us into conformity with Christ here, especially seeing that our conformity to Him in holiness is the *evidence* of our conformity to Him in Glory (Rom. 6:5). The conformity of our lives to Christ is our highest excellence in this world, for the measure of our grace is to be estimated by this rule. So far as we imitate Christ, and no farther, are we of any real help and benefit to those around us; contrariwise, the less we be conformed to Christ, the greater hindrances and stumblingblocks are we both to the saved and unsaved. What a weighty and solemn consideration is this! How it should drive us to our knees, seeking grace to become closer followers of Christ.

“That ye would *walk worthy* of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). By “worthiness” the Apostle had no reference to what is meritorious, but to that comeliness and decorum which befits a Christian. As Davenant has pointed out, “The word ‘worthy’ as used in Scripture does not always denote an exact proportion of equality between one thing and another, but a certain suitableness and fitness which excludes inconsistency.” Now to walk worthy of God is to walk as *Christ* walked, and any deviation from that standard is a reflection upon our profession and a reproach upon Him. It is for our own peace and joy that we be conformed to Christ's pattern: the answer of a good conscience and the smile of God's approbation are rich compensation for denying the flesh. A comfortable death is the ordinary close of a holy life: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa. 37:37). Then let us make every effort unto a closer following of Christ.

In drawing to a conclusion let us seek to pen a few lines of comfort to those who are cast down by the realization of how far, far short they come to measuring up to the standard which Christ has set before them. According to the yearnings of the new nature, you *have* sincerely endeavoured to follow Christ's example but being weak in grace and meeting with much opposition from the flesh and temptations from the Devil, you have been frequently turned aside from the holy purposes and designs of your honest hearts to the great grief and discouragement of your souls. You can heartily say with David, “O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!” (Psa. 119:5), and you have tried hard and long to follow after exact holiness, “If by any means” you might attain unto it. But your efforts have been repeatedly thwarted, your aspirations dashed and you have to cry “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” (Rom. 7:24).

First, let us assure the genuinely exercised soul that such defects in obedience do not invalidate your justification, or in any wise affect your acceptance with and standing before God. Your justification is built *not* upon *your* obedience, but upon *Christ's*. However imperfect you are in yourself, you are “complete in Him” (Col. 2:10). Woe had it been to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul if their justification had depended upon their own holiness and good works. Let not, then, your sad failures dampen your joy in Christ but rather be

increasingly thankful for His robe of righteousness which hides your filthy rags! Second, your heart-anguish over your unlikeness to Christ, instead of being a proof that you are less sanctified than those who *grieve not* over their lack of conformity to Him, evidences you are *more* sanctified than they, for it shows you are better acquainted with your heart than they are, have a deeper loathing of sin and love God more. The most eminent saints have made the bitterest lamentation on this account: Psalm 38:4.

Third, the Holy Spirit makes an excellent use of your infirmities and turns your failures unto your spiritual advantages. By those very defects He hides pride from your eyes, subdues your self-righteousness, causes you to appreciate more deeply the riches of free grace and place a higher value upon the precious blood of the Lamb. By your many falls He makes you to long more ardently for Heaven and gradually reconciles you to the prospect of death. The more a holy soul is buffeted by sin and Satan, the more sincerely will he cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psa. 55:6). "O the blessed chemistry of Heaven, to extract such mercies out of such miseries" (J. Flavell), to make sweet flowers spring up out of such bitter roots. Fourth, your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the Everlasting Covenant: that holds firm, notwithstanding your many defects and corruptions. "Iniquities prevail against me" said David, yet in the same breath he added "Thou shalt purge them away" (Psa. 65:3).

Fifth, though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in His sight: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). Sixth, your very grief is a conformity to Christ: for when here He was "the Man of sorrows." If He suffered because of our sins, shall we not be made to weep over them? Seventh, "Though God has left many defects to humble you, yet He hath given many things to comfort. This is a comfort, that the desire of thy soul is to God and the remembrance of His name. This is a comfort, that thy sins are not thy delight as once they were but thy shame and sorrow. This is a comfort, that thy case is not singular but more or less the *same* complaints and sorrows are found in *all* gracious souls through the world" (J. Flavell, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

14. *Its Practice.*

Ere seeking to open up this final phase of our many-sided subject, we had better make quite clear *the relation* between it and what has preceded. The believer possesses now a sanctification which is absolute, complete, and inalienable. He was sanctified by God the Father from all eternity, when chosen in Christ and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Him (Eph. 1:3, 4). He was sanctified by God the Son at the completion of His redemptive work upon the Cross (Heb. 13:12). He was sanctified by God the Spirit at regeneration (2 Thess. 2:13). Now this should, and does, produce radical effects in his life, though these effects vary considerably, both in specie and degree, in different cases; which variations are, in their final analysis, to be attributed unto the sovereignty of God's grace. Looking at the same thing in another way, we may say that this grand blessing and gift which is the believer's, entails definite obligations which he is required to discharge, and those obligations are what we are about to contemplate.

The ideas of the natural man here, as everywhere, are at direct variance with God's. People, generally, suppose that holy conduct makes a saint; whereas God's way is to make saints, and then demand from them holy conduct. An attentive reading of the New Testament Epistles will discover abundant confirmation of this. For example, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25): since the Spirit has regenerated us, our responsibility is to walk in newness of life. "I therefore . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1): we do not become saints by walking worthily, but because God has sanctified us in Christ Jesus, He bids us conduct ourselves suitably to such a high privilege. "Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8). That is the Divine order—an inestimable privilege is conferred, and then we are called upon to make a fitting response thereto.

As this is a point of first importance, and one which is woefully subverted in some quarters today, we beg the reader to bear patiently with us while we labour it a little further. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). As we learn from the chapters that follow, the Corinthians were in a low spiritual and moral condition, and were acting most unworthily of their high calling; nevertheless, they *were* saints, and addressed as such. They were "saints" or "sanctified ones," not because they were perfect people, but because they had been sovereignly and supernaturally called of God: yet, alas, their conduct was most unsaintly. Theirs was, indeed, an extreme case, yet, for that very reason, it forcibly illustrates the point we are now pressing: God makes saints and then He bids them avoid everything incongruous therewith—"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, *as becometh saints*" (Eph. 5:3).

Not only are the saints exhorted to avoid everything contrary to their high calling, but they are to cultivate all that is consonant therewith: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy (*saints*) and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, etc." (Col. 3:12). "*Keep* thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22), not "*make* thyself pure" emphasises the same thought. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour *as becometh holiness*" (Titus 2:3); their practical conduct should conform to their standing in Christ. Believers are, even now "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," yet that did not hinder the Apostle from saying, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you *as strangers and pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter

2:9, 11): yes, it was because they *were* “strangers and pilgrims,” and not in order to become such, that they were exhorted to act accordingly.

Men, in their fancied wisdom, may conclude that it had been much more conducive to holy living, to have concealed the wondrous truth of the believer’s completeness in Christ, and have left him to struggle on, stimulated by the thought that there is much for him to do and attain unto before he is qualified to enter into everlasting glory. As, but “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,” and sad to say, His wisdom is foolishness to them. It is the very revelation of the exceeding riches of His grace that exerts the greatest influence upon the renewed heart. And therefore, God had not only made known the completeness of His people’s sanctification in Christ, but He uses the same to promote their spiritual purity: “And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3 and cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Practical holiness is promoted by naught but the improvement or use of *evangelical* principles and motives. It is men’s misunderstanding of the true way of practical sanctification—by the exercise of faith and love—which has caused them to decline from the Truth and accept the Papist, Arminian, and Antinomian errors, wherein Satan appears to their natural understandings as an angel of light. The believer’s living unto God is *not* by his own power, but by faith’s appropriation of the strength of *Christ*. Many suppose that the doctrine which we are here inculcating makes Christians careless of good works. Not so: it makes them careless of seeking to do them by their own natural power, and in a way of slavish fear, but it makes them careful of relying on the grace of God, and heartily desirous of doing that which is pleasing in His sight.

Yet that ancient objection is still made by those who imagine that the only effectual method of enforcing holiness is by telling people their ultimate salvation depends entirely on their own conduct and the determinations of their own will; supposing that to assure Christians they are already delivered from the wrath to come by their faith in Christ, thus freeing them from all terrors of Hell, is to leave them without any argument or motive of sufficient force to produce practical holiness. Whereas the truth is that if Christians have no better security against the wrath to come than from their own behaviour and use of their wills, they, conscious of the deceitfulness of sin and of their own hearts, and of all the temptations and dangers attending their course, might indeed see reason for terror and dread, but in a manner and degree far from being favourable to inculcating holiness.

It is true that fear has its place and use for the restraining of sin, yet the proper principle of true holiness is *love*, and the faith which worketh by love. But if the believer has nothing to look to for securing him against damnation but the exercise of his own will and the aids and assistance which he is free to use or neglect, then there will be cause for continual terror, such terror as hath torment, and which is altogether inconsistent with that love which is the mainspring of holiness: 1 John 4:18. How differently has the Divine scheme of grace mixed and tempered things for the advancement of holiness! Though the salvation of God’s people be secured upon the most solid foundation, yet there remains much for them to fear with regard to sin and its consequences, with regard to the terrible chastisements, both inward and outward, which God visits upon the iniquities of His people.

Yet the Christian has, at the same time, a sure and well-founded hope, a strong consolation, a blissful prospect, and the most attractive motives which tend to increase love to God, and to His sovereignty and holiness, and to strengthen his heart in labouring for

conformity to it. Thus we may perceive the wisdom of that scheme which, while placing the curb of fear upon the unholy and unruly passions of the heart, supplies motives which contribute much to the advancement of love and strengthening of the hearts of Christians in their course. By Divine grace they have the greatest cause for that love which is the source of all acceptable obedience, yet a godly fear which is subservient to that love, having its root mainly in love itself. The grace of the new covenant has provided for the promotion of good works in a manner and degree far beyond what the Law of the old covenant produced.

Practical sanctification is absolutely demanded of those who are sanctified in Christ. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7). Those words, and there are many such in the New Testament, can only refer to our practical sanctification in daily life. We need to be much on guard here, lest in seeking to avoid the error of evacuating our perfect standing as God's holy ones, we fall into that other which evades the force of God's call to holiness of life. And let it be emphatically stated that the standard of practical holiness is *the holiness of God Himself*, and nothing lower. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48); "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

The nature and extent of this calling to practical holiness is set forth in passage after passage. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in *all manner of conversation*" (1 Peter 1:15); "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversations and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:11). There is a special need in these days of factitious morality, and of false sentiments as to what constitutes evangelical holiness, to turn to the Word of God, that we may search and try ourselves and our ways by its unerring standard. Men, even Christian men, are ever prone to *select* virtues which they esteem, and vices which they condemn; and the selection made by each individual is too apt to consist of virtues to which he is, or imagines himself, much inclined, and of vices to which he has, or thinks he has, little or no inclination. But the holiness of God demands he does not deal with a selection of virtues and vices: He requires holiness *in everything*.

The standard of holiness which God sets before us is, like Himself, perfect, and He will not lower it a single degree to meet our infirmities. He claims the whole being and requires holiness in every thought, word, and deed. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, whatsoever ye do, do *all* to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31); "*Whatsoever ye do* in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17); "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God *in all things* may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11). Nothing short of an all-embracing holiness will measure up to the standard God has set before us. It is not only the outward life, but the inward also which is exposed to His searching light (Heb. 4:12, 13). Unto all the exercises and emotions of the heart, its motives and purposes, its affections and sufferings, God presents the claims of His holiness.

It makes nothing against the Scriptures quoted above that other passages in God's Word (like Rom. 7:14-25; Phil. 3:12, 13) just as clearly show that *none actually attain unto* God's standard in this life, that our practical holiness falls far short of the perfection to which we are called, and is so often interrupted in its progress because the medium of

its action and manifestation is weak and imperfect, and is tenanted by the “flesh,” which ever lusteth against the spirit. On the one hand, we must steadily decline to lower God’s standard, confess the sad failure of our life and the many imperfections of our walk, no matter how humiliating this may be. It is because sinless perfectionists have such slight views of the enormity of sin, and such an inadequate conception of that holiness which God requires, that they are so easily deceived.

Christian reader, it is just because our sanctification in Christ *is* eternally complete and absolutely up to the satisfaction of God’s thoughts and heart, that we are called to the pursuit of perfect holiness, and are to be satisfied with nothing less. It is just because of this that we can never reach a point at which we may cease the pursuit: the goal of today must be the starting-point of tomorrow, and so till the end of our earthly pilgrimage. “Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). In those words the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to predicate eternal destiny upon the presence or absence of personal holiness; not because it rests on that, but because in the new creation there is never life, without life’s action; in God’s husbandry, there is never root without fruit in some measure.

Practical sanctification, or holiness of heart and life, of character and conduct, is, then, *a reflection or manifestation* of that perfect sanctification which the believer has in and through Christ; yet it is now but a *dim* reflection at best, because obstructed by the flesh, which remains unchanged to the last. It is because of our consciousness *of the dimness* to this reflection that we so often become discouraged and distracted. A sincere soul is much troubled over his conformity to Christ, and is so often made to wonder whether the root of the matter be in him at all. Let it be said, then, for the comforting of such, that holiness is more *longed after* than realized in this life; yet this statement requires to be guarded, lest those not entitled to it should draw consolation therefrom. Not a few have a vague and general wish for holiness in the abstract while having no relish for it in the concrete and the details of what is involved in a close walking with God.

The Israelites of old were well pleased with the abstract idea of serving the Lord, and avowed their purpose of doing so: they said, “The LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for He is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, *Ye cannot serve the LORD: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins*” (Josh 24:18, 19). Certain of the Jews said to Christ, “Lord, evermore give us this bread” (John 6:34), yet when He told them what it was to have the Bread of Life, they were offended. Ah, when it comes to the actual point of treading the Narrow Way, of watching and striving against sin both within and without, or rowing against the stream of the flesh, of diligently using all those means which are necessary for communion with God—they falter, murmur, and do nothing.

These vague and idle wishes after holiness which many religionists have are but hasty and ill-considered, and not deliberate and serious. The hearing of a powerful sermon, or the reading of an impressive article produces a real but evanescent effect, and for the moment such people are quite carried away. The commendations of holiness, and the representations of its imperative necessity convinces the mind, and they assent thereto, and promise themselves they will now make the pursuit thereof their chief business. Their emotions are stirred, the Word is received willingly, and they “consecrate” themselves afresh to God. But alas, their “goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it

goeth away” (Hosea 6:4): only that of which God Himself is the Author will survive the testings of time and endure for eternity.

The experience of such people is not bottomed in grace, and therefore they have no spiritual sincerity to sustain them. *Their* desires after holiness are but empty wishes, unaccompanied by diligent and laborious efforts. “The desires of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour” (Prov. 21:25). It is like saying, O that I had a lovely garden, and then refused to spade, plant, and weed it. Or, O that I were in such a place, and then were too lazy to journey thither. The wishes after holiness of this class are not steady and lasting, but are quickly crowded out by lusting after other things. They are not prepared to “*buy* the Truth” (Prov. 23:23). But he who truly thirsts for God and yearns to be conformed to His image, will put forth his utmost endeavours after the same. The language of the regenerate is “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I *seek after*: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD (enjoy fellowship with Him) all the days of my life” (Psa. 27:4).

“LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear” (Psa. 10:17). How comforting is this for those lowly ones who sincerely yearn after personal holiness! Their very yearning is a prayer, which reaches the ear of Him who will not quench the smoking flax. “He *will fulfill* the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psa. 145:19). And again, “The desire of the righteous *shall* be granted” (Prov. 10:24). Yes, not only does God hear the spiritual desire of His distressed child, but, in due time, He will fulfill it: that is a promise for *faith* to lay hold of, for its accomplishment is not in this life, but in the next. Meanwhile, our duty is defined in that word, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD*; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa. 37:4)—meditate upon His wondrous perfections, seek communion with Him, honestly endeavour to please Him.

Since God has promised to grant the desire of the righteous, how important it is that the Christian should watch against *the abatement* of his spiritual longings. If a man loses his natural appetite, his body soon languishes; so it is with the soul. True, *we* can neither give ourselves an appetite nor retain it, but *we can* do those things which will greatly impair it, and it is our responsibility to avoid whatever is injurious to our health—true alike naturally and spiritually. It is the Christian’s duty to do as those who would keep in the fire: cherish the spark, blow upon the embers, add more fuel to it. On the one hand, we must guard against those things which would chill and quench our love for God; and on the other, we must “strengthen the things which remain” (Rev. 3:2).—A.W.P.

Spiritual Liars.

“Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa. 119:29). How we should be humbled by such a prayer as this, for it is evidently an appropriate one for all the Lord’s people. The fact that it is not only recorded in Holy Writ, but here in the 119th Psalm, rather than in the prayer of a particular individual on some special occasion, plainly intimates this. There is nothing in all the Old Testament of wider latitude and of more general application than the various petitions found in this Psalm: each of them is pertinent to the experiences and exigencies of *all* the saints, and the one now before us is certainly no exception, no matter how loathe we may be to acknowledge the truth of it. Reader and writer alike are spiritual liars, guilty of dissembling before both man and God.

There are different kinds of lies; some are spoken, others are acted; some are intentional, others involuntary. We often pretend to be what we are not, and are indictable with much formality. We are guilty of making promises to God which we break, of uttering penitential confessions while our hearts are hard and unaffected, of asking for spiritual blessings for which we have no felt need, or returning thanks for mercies which have made no impression upon us; and all of this is a species of abominable dissimulation. When we are convicted and made conscience of the same we cry, “Remove from me the way of lying!” Below is a message recently sent to two dear souls who enjoy little assurance; may it please the Lord to make the same a blessing unto others of His distressed family.

“Remove from me the way of lying.” How *well suited* is this petition to the quickened child of God, who is often made painfully conscious of how much insincerity and hypocrisy is mixed up with his worship, supplications, repentance, and thanksgivings! When an honest heart examines his religious life, reviews his prayers, and ponders his character and conduct, he perceives how little *reality* and how much dissimulation characterises all his spiritual exercises, until at times it seems that he himself and all pertaining to his solemn profession is only a *sham*. If it were not so it would be quite useless for him to pray. “Remove from me the way of lying.” Observe how strongly this is expressed: not simply “deliver me from lying,” but “the way of lying”—a regular course, a confirmed habit.

Now the very fact that *we* find this petition so well-suited to our case supplies clear evidence that we *must* be among those who are enabled to see themselves in *God’s* light, for no Satan-blinded and sin-deceived soul feels and knows himself to be a spiritual liar. Moreover, the petitions which the Spirit of Truth has so graciously recorded in this 119th Psalm are most obviously neither designed for nor suited to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Should not this very consideration at least revive the spark of assurance which so often waxes dim in your breasts? Furthermore, the very fact that *you can*, from the depths of your soul, feelingly pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” is clear proof that you are *not* among those who love darkness rather than light. You *want to be* genuine with God, to be delivered from all insincerity, and this evidences an honest root amid the rank weeds and thistles of deception and formality.

Perhaps you answer, I follow you thus far, but alas, I have not the ear of God. Countless times have I confessed to Him my lack of sincerity, and begged Him, (in substance at least, if not in those identical words) to “Remove from me the way of lying”; but so far from my prayer being answered, I am conscious of *increasing unreality* in my devotions. Thank God that you *are* so conscious, dear brother and sister: if God had given you up “to a reprobate mind” (as He had the sovereign right to do, and as He *has* countless mil-

lions of our fellow creatures), then you would be quite *unconscious* of “the deceitfulness of sin,” quite *indifferent to* the unreality of your devotions. I ask you, frankly, Is it not so? Yet, perhaps, that hardly removes your difficulty.

But this does: “Remove from me the way of lying,” like many another prayer, awaits its answer till the life to come! We were *born* in “the way of lying”: it is the very sphere in which “the flesh” lives, moves and has its being; the way of lying ends only when the flesh itself is removed. Till then, the quickened soul is burdened, exercised, shocked, plagued, grieved by it—by the unreality and formality of his devotions—and that very grief finds expression in this prayer which is so well suited to some exercises of soul. Then step out of your mental gloom for a moment, into the warm sunshine of the clear *implications* of this verse, and thank God for having placed in your hands, yes, and put into your mouths, such a prayer as this, which, because it *is* so well suited to your case, denotes that you are *entitled* to make use of the same; which, in turn, proves *you* belong to that quickened company who are painfully aware of the plague of their own hearts.—
A.W.P.

The Providence of God.

The Prosperity of Joseph.

Can anything more clearly prove the continual and immediate agency of Providence in the affairs of this world than this account of the prosperity of the house of Potiphar for the sake of Joseph? “And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian” (Gen. 39:2). The security and comfort of the man of God was not left to the operation of general laws; but “the Lord was with Joseph.” And what was the consequence of the Lord’s being with Joseph? Is not the prosperity of Joseph directly ascribed to this? The prosperity of Joseph is not left to the influence of mere foresight and arrangement in Providence, but is the immediate effect of the Lord’s presence with him. Why, then, will the philosopher cruelly attempt to banish God from His people, and supply His place by certain fixed laws? Whether God acts by means of His usual laws, or contrary to them, His *presence* is equally necessary to produce the effect.

Here we are taught to consider worldly prosperity as the effect of Divine Providence. It is so in every instance, whether it respect His people or His enemies. Means are generally employed, but these means are of Providence as well as the event. Prosperity and adversity come both from God, though, in another respect, they may be the fruits of men’s own doings. But though God usually gives success to means, this is not universally the case. He sometimes shows that His own personal presence is necessary to the result. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep” (Psa. 127:1, 2).

The agency of Providence was so visible in the affairs in which Joseph was concerned, that it was recognized even by his heathen master: “And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand” (Gen. 39:3). Here an ignorant pagan sees what blind philosophers, calling themselves Christians, cannot see. They see no need for God’s immediate presence and operations: all things can be effected by foresight and arrangement. This is as absurd as it is wicked. Can foresight do anything? Can mere arrangement act? Is not an agent necessary to give effect to design?

Here we see, also, the reason why Providence gives prosperity to His enemies: it is to fulfill some of His purposes. God prospered the affairs of Potiphar in the hands of Joseph, that Joseph might find favour with his master, as one of the steps in the process of bringing this type of Christ into prison, and then into glory. When God prospers the wicked, He has always some wise design in it. The fact neither proves that God does not conduct the affairs of men, nor that He prospers His enemies, and gives adversity to His people out of caprice. All is done in wisdom.

This fact show us also that God considers His Providence as sufficient evidence of His existence and agency. He acted in this providential way in order to produce a certain effect on Potiphar. And we see that Potiphar did understand the lesson. He saw that God was with Joseph. If so, all men will be *held accountable* for all that God hath done in His works of Providence, as well as of creation.

In like manner, when Joseph went to prison, the Lord was with him, and found favour for him in the sight of the keeper of the prison. In the case of the favour of Potiphar, we are informed of the way in which God wrought on behalf of a man who knew Him not.

He gave prosperity to Potiphar through the management of Joseph. But in the case of the governor of the prison, we have no information of any means employed to excite a favourable sentiment towards the prisoner. The Lord can work without means as well as with means. "But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand: because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper" (Gen. 39:21-23). Whatever was the occasion of exciting the compassion of the keeper of the prison at first, the hand of Providence was soon visible in the management of Joseph: and in the prosperity of the affairs under his direction, the agency of God was recognized.

Let all Christians, in places of trust, act like Joseph; and from the lowest situations they may in the end be brought to the highest. Let them, on all occasions, not only act with the strictest fidelity, but let them discover an earnestness in the service of their employers. The most ungodly men will soon perceive that to have such persons in their employment is commonly for their advantage.—Alexander Carson.