

Volume 18—Studies in the Scriptures—Number 11
November, 1939
A TENDER HEART.

“Because thine heart was tender” (2 Kings 22:19). What a desirable thing is a tender heart. How earnestly we should aspire after one. And when such has been graciously bestowed upon us, what diligence we should exercise in seeking to preserve the same. The tenderness of Josiah’s heart was precious in the sight of the Lord, and in consequence thereof his prayers were answered, as the remainder of our opening text declares. There is nothing like a tender heart, my reader, for obtaining the ear of the Lord. A tender heart is one which is responsive to the voice of God, and unless we possess this how can we expect Him to hear our calls? A tender heart is the only one which truly honours God, as it is the only one which ensures our growth in grace. How deeply important, then, is the question, Have you, have I, really a tender heart? May we be enabled to answer truthfully.

In the last two issues we pointed out some of the principal characteristics of a tender heart, and also sought to indicate those duties which must be performed if we are to retain this valuable possession. But it is probable that not a few of our readers would prefer for us to tell them how a tender heart may be *recovered*. They are already persuaded of the great excellence of this spiritual treasure, and they also perceive clearly what is necessary in order to retain it. What grieves them is that they are conscious of guilty failure in safeguarding this Divine gift. They are sensible that the fine gold has become dim, that little foxes have spoiled their vines, that their conscience is no longer so sensitive as it once was, that they do not respond so readily to the motions of God’s Spirit; that much hardness now resides in their hearts.

It is sadly true that a tender heart may be lost: not absolutely so, but relatively; not permanently, but temporarily. But sadder still is the fact that many who have suffered this deprivation are unconscious of it. It is with them as it was with Ephraim of old: “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he *knoweth it not*; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he *knoweth not*” (Hosea 7:9). They may still attend the means of grace and perform their outward devotions, but their hearts are not in them. They may still be respected by their fellow-Christians and regarded as in a healthy spiritual state, while in reality they are backsliders. Sights from which they once shrank appall them no longer. Things which used to exercise their conscience do so no more. The standard at which they formerly aimed is now regarded as too strict and severe.

Said the Apostle to the Galatians, “Ye *did* run well, who (or “what”) hath hindered you?” (5:7). What are the things which destroy tenderness of heart? Ungodly companions is one. Satan will tell the young Christian that he or she may keep old friends and suffer no loss, but God says, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). Friendship with worldlings will soon have a paralyzing influence upon true spirituality. Prayerlessness is another thing which speedily affects the heart. Unless a close fellowship with God be maintained—and that is impossible if the Throne of Grace is neglected—coldness and hardness will soon steal upon us. Equally so will a neglect of the Word. This will not necessarily mean the omission of reading so many chapters each day, but the absence of actually communing with God therein. The spirit of hypocrisy, pretending to be what we are not, hardens—for guile and tenderness are incompatible.

Yes, a tender heart may be lost, as truly as first love may be left (Rev. 2:4). Can it be regained? Yes, though not as easily as it may be hardened. How? First, by warming afresh at the fire of God's love. This is ever the most effectual means of removing hardness of heart. What was it that melted and broke you down at your first conversion? Was it not a sense of the Divine grace and a sight of Christ's dying love? And nothing is so calculated to soften the backslider: it is "the goodness of God" which leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). What was before David when he commenced his contrite confession? This: the Lord's "lovingkindness" and the "multitude of His tender mercies" (Psa. 51:1). When was it that Peter went out and wept bitterly? Was it not when the Saviour "turned and looked upon him" (Luke 22:61)?

Was it not the *sorrow* which Peter saw in that look—a sorrow which issued from love for him—which broke his heart?! The Lord had given him every proof that he was dear unto Him, and how had Peter requited that love? And has not the Lord given you, my brother, my sister, abundant evidence that you are precious in His sight? Did He deem any sacrifice too great to make atonement for your sins? Has He not favoured you above millions of your fellows in bringing you to a saving knowledge of the Truth? Has He not bestowed the Holy Spirit upon you? Has He not borne with your dullness with infinite patience? Can you dwell upon these things with unmoved heart? Surely not. Seek unto Him, then, and your coldness and hardness will indeed be thawed.

Second, by genuine contrition. As it is the allowance of sin which hardens the heart, so it is sorrow for sin which softens it. Hence, when the Lord admonishes the one who has left his first love, His word is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). First, "Remember *therefore* from whence thou art fallen," which looks back to the previous verse. Call to mind the happy fellowship you once enjoyed with the eternal Lover of your soul, when He found delight in you, and your own heart was satisfied. Consider "from *whence* thou art fallen"—no longer leaning on His bosom, but having entered a course which both displeases and dishonours Him. Unless this produces godly sorrow in you, nothing else will, and it is godly sorrow which "worketh repentance" (2 Cor. 7:10). Take a leaf out of the copybook of the prodigal son: arise, forsake the far country, return to your Father, and pour out your griefs into His welcoming ear.

Third, by the exercise of faith. "And do the first works" (Rev. 2:5). What was the first work you did when you originally came to God in Christ as an empty-handed and contrite sinner? Was it not to cast yourself upon His mercy, to lay hold of His promises, to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning blood? Well, the same remedy is available now. Did not David cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10)?—deal with me now as Thou did at the first! And was he not able to say, "He restoreth my soul" (Psa. 23:3)? Precious promises are recorded in the Word which exactly suit your case: "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22). "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely" (Hosea 14:4). Make these promises your own, plead them before God, and count upon Him making them good in your own case.

In conclusion, a word or two on some of the *evidences* of a tender heart. We mention one or two of these so that writer and reader may *test* himself by them. Is your heart affected by the present state of Christendom? Are you made to sigh and cry, "for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezek. 9:4)? Is your experience, in some

measure at least, that “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy Law” (Psa. 119:53)? “Mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock is carried away captive” (Jer. 13:17)—is that how you feel? Again—“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19): do you respond to the motions of God’s Spirit? Finally, do you mourn over your own hardness and grieve over your callousness? *These* are some of the manifestations of a tender heart. A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

12. *The Law and Oaths*: Matthew 5:33-37.

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by Heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:33-37). Last month we gave an exposition of these verses, in which we showed how our Lord here condemned the wicked devices of the Scribes and the evil practices of the Pharisees and their followers. Now we propose to treat the subject topically, for there is real need today for a Scriptural enforcement of the whole subject.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exo. 20:7). This is the fundamental precept of God upon the matter of oaths, and the scope of its prohibition and the range of its meaning is far more extensive than is now commonly supposed. “Thy commandment is exceeding broad” (Psa. 119:96), declared David of old, and clearly was it made manifest in Christ’s teaching. Those who have followed us closely in the previous articles will remember that in this Sermon the Saviour has furnished us with some most important and invaluable rules for interpreting the Ten Commandments. First, that when God forbids one sin, He at the same time prohibits all sins of the same kind, with all the causes and occasions thereof. Second, that to the breach of any Commandment there is annexed a curse, whether it be expressed specifically or not. Third, that where any vice is condemned, the opposite virtue is enjoined.

When God said, “thou shalt not kill,” He not only prohibited the overt deed of murder, but also condemned every evil working of heart and mind which had a tendency to lead up to it: all hatred, anger, provoking language or gestures. When He said, “thou shalt not commit adultery,” He not only forbade the actual act of immorality, but also all unlawful lustings and desires, all impure thoughts and imaginations. In like manner, when He said, “thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain,” He not only reprehended the vile sin of using any of His sacred titles in cursing, He not only prohibited the crime of perjury, but He also forbade us both to swear by any of His creatures or take any unnecessary oaths, as well as condemned all extravagant expletives.

Scholars tell us that an oath in the Hebrew is called “shebuah,” and that there are two things observable about it. First, that the verb “to swear” is used only in the niphāl—a passive conjugation—which implies that we should be passive in swearing; that is, we should not take an oath unless called upon to do so, or at least when circumstances morally oblige us thereunto. Most significantly the Hebrew word is taken from a root that signifies “seven,” which perhaps implies it should be taken before many witnesses, and seven being the sacred and complete number, the name of an oath may be derived from it because it is appointed to put a complete end to differences. The Greeks called it “horkos,” most probably from a root signifying “to bind or strengthen,” for by an oath a man takes a bond on his soul which cannot be loosed ordinarily. The Latin *juro* and *jusjurandum* are plainly derived from “just”: that is “right and law.”

Let us now consider, first, the *nature* of an oath. An oath is a religious and necessary confirmation of things doubtful by calling God to be a Witness of truth and a Revenger of

falsehood. That it is a confirmation is clear from Hebrews 6:16, where the Holy Spirit expressly affirms the same. That it is a religious confirmation appears from the fact that it is a part of Divine worship, God Himself being invoked therein: in Isaiah 19:18, “swear to the Lord of hosts,” is used for the whole of His worship. It must be a necessary confirmation because any oath is unlawful which concerns only trifling matters or things which need no solemn settlement. That God is called in both as Witness and Revenger is self-evident, because therein consists the form and all the force of an oath. The one who thus swears, acknowledges the Divine perfections, appealing to Him as the God of truth and the Hater of lies.

Properly speaking, then, in an oath there are four things. First, a formal *assertion* of the truth, which should always be spoken even though no oath is taken. Second, a *confession* of the omnipotent presence of the thrice holy Lord God, whereby we do most solemnly acknowledge Him as both Witness, Judge, and Revenger of falsehood. Third, an *invocation* whereby God is called upon to bear witness to our conscience that what we swear to is nothing but the truth. Fourth, an *imprecation*, in which the swearer asks God to be the Revenger of all lies, binding himself to Divine punishment if he swear falsely. Therefore it clearly follows that an oath is not to be lightly entered into, that one is not to be taken at all except in matters of real importance, and that it must be taken in the most solemn manner—otherwise we violate the Third Commandment and are guilty of the awful sin of taking the holy name of the Lord God in vain.

Second, the *design* of an oath consists in a solemn confirmation of what we affirm or deny by a religious invocation of the name of God, as One that knows and owns the truth. So far as God is thus invoked in an oath, it is part of His worship, both as required by Him and as ascribing glory to Him. When a man is admitted under oath he is, as it were, discharged from an earthly tribunal, having betaken himself to the Lord as the only Judge in the case. By what particular expression this appeal unto God and invocation of Him is made is not absolutely necessary unto the nature of an oath to determine. It is sufficient that such expressions be used as are approved, and received signs of such an invocation and appeal among those that are concerned therein. The placing of one hand upon a copy of Gods’ Holy Word while we are being sworn in, appears to us eminently desirable, while the other hand might well be raised toward Heaven; but the kissing of the Book afterwards strikes us as both needless and unsuitable.

Third, a word now upon the *qualifications* or characteristics of lawful oaths. These are clearly expressed by the Prophet, so that nothing needs to be added to them, and nothing must be taken from them. “Thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness” (Jer. 4:2). “Truth” is required in it, in opposition unto guile and falsehood, for where this obtains not, God is called to be Witness unto a lie, which is to deny His very being. It must be “in judgment” we swear: not lightly, not rashly, not without a just and sufficient cause. There must be discernment and careful discretion in exercise, both in connection with the thing in question which is to be confirmed, and also of the solemn nature of an oath and of the issue of the same. “In righteousness” we must swear, namely, that it be equity which we wish to confirm, tending to the glory of God and the good of our fellows.

When the above qualifications are complied with, and where matters are in controversy among men and the peace of human society in general, or particular, depends upon the rightful determination of them, it is meet and proper for a believer, being lawfully

called, to confirm the truth which he knows by the invocation of God, with the design of putting an end to strife. Oath-taking is a part of the natural worship of God, which the light of nature leads unto. This is evident from the example of the Lord Himself, who at sundry times took an oath both before the Mosaic law (Gen. 22:16) and afterwards. Now it is obvious that if men had not had from the light of nature an understanding of the nature, legitimacy, and obligation of an oath, this would have had no significance for them or have been of any use to them.

In earliest times God often enlightened and more fully instructed men by His own example. In compliance therewith we find that those who walked the closest with Him, centuries before the giving of the Law at Sinai, did solemnly swear one to another when occasion did require it, and when they were legitimately warranted in so doing. Thus Abraham swore to Abimelech (Gen. 21:23, 24), and required an oath to be taken by his servant (Gen. 24:8, 9). In like manner Jacob swore with Laban (Gen. 31:53). And so, too, Joseph swore to his father (Gen. 47:31). Let it be duly noted that the instances had no respect unto the legal institutions of Moses, and therefore there is no reason to think there would be anything in the Gospel which condemned such a practice today.

One would think the above was quite simple and clear, but alas, such is man that he will discover difficulties where none exist and twist and wrest the plainest statement. Though the great majority of professing Christians have rightly understood and acted upon the teaching of Scripture on this subject, there have been a number that err therein. The Society of Friends and a few others consider that the New Testament expressly forbids the use of any oaths. They appeal to Christ's saying, "Swear not at all," and to, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your Yea be yea; and your Nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12), supposing these passages prohibit us swearing under any circumstances whatever—and therefore they refuse to bear witness upon oath even when called upon to do so by the rulers of the land.

It is evident that the verse quoted from James is derived from and has respect to the words of our Saviour in Matthew 5:33-37, it being an exhortation inculcating His precept and directions on the same matter. The same answer will therefore serve both places, nor will it be at all difficult to expose and refute the errors based thereon. First of all, it must be pointed out that there is nothing in the essential nature of an oath which can make it criminal, or it would never have been enjoined by Divine authority (Deut. 6:13). An oath is simply an appeal to the Omniscient One (who searches the heart and is the great Governor of the world, punishing fraud and falsehood) as to the truthfulness of our testimony and the sincerity of our promises. As this is a dictate of the light of nature no mere change of dispensation could make right to be wrong.

Second, the prophecy of Isaiah 45:23 belongs and is expressly applied to believers in the New Testament. "I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall *swear*"—see Romans 14:11. This had respect to what God had of old prescribed: Deuteronomy 6:13. This now, says the Prophet, shall in the days of the Gospel be observed throughout the world, which certainly could not be the case if it were unlawful to swear under any circumstances by that holy Name. In like manner Jeremiah predicted concerning the calling and conversion of the Gentiles under the new covenant, "It shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name,

the LORD liveth . . . then shall they be built up in the midst of My people” (12:16). But that could be no direction or encouragement to converts of the Gentiles if it be unlawful for them to swear and if it be not their duty when duly called upon.

Third, as we have fully shown in our exposition of Matthew 5:33-37 (in last month’s article), Christ was there condemning only those oaths which were contrary to the Law, prohibiting things which were essentially evil in themselves. It was the errors of the Jews He was exposing—the wicked perversions of the Pharisees He was refuting. That this must be the right way of understanding our Lord’s teaching in this passage appears plainly from the principles which He had laid down so emphatically at the beginning of this section of His Sermon: “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled” (vv. 17, 18). If oaths pertain to “the Law” or “the Prophets” (and they did), then it most certainly was not Christ’s purpose to annul them. The Giver and Fulfiller of the Law is not also its Destroyer.

Fourth, in the matter of judicial oaths Christ Himself has left us an example (which we should follow: 1 Peter 2:21), for when He stood before the Sanhedrin, though He had previously refused to answer either His accusers or the high priest, yet He immediately responded to Caiaphas when he said, “I adjure Thee by the living God” (Matt. 26:63, 64). Fifth, Paul, the greatest of the Apostles, confirmed his testimony again and again by calling God for a Witness (2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20, etc.). In such passages he most solemnly swears to the truth of his own affirmations concerning himself and his sincerity therein (cf. Rom. 9:1). It was not respecting any doctrine he taught that he did swear to, for it needed no confirmation of an oath, deriving as it did all its authority and assurance from Divine revelation. But it was concerning his own heart and purpose, whereof there might be some doubt, and when it was of great concern to the Church to have the Truth emphatically stated.

Sixth, Hebrews 6:16 tells us, “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.” In this verse Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, addressing the holy brethren who are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1), not only urges the common usage of mankind, but lays down a certain maxim and principle of the law of nature, whose exercise was to be approved amongst all. And if the practice thereof had not been lawful unto those to whom he wrote, namely, Christians, those who obeyed the Gospel, then he had exceedingly weakened the whole design of his discourse there concerning the oath of God, by shutting it up with this instance, which could be of no force to them if it were unlawful for them to practice the same or have an experience of its efficacy. Finally, if oaths had become unlawful under the New Testament, then God would not have continued their use in any kind, lest His people be encouraged to act contrary to His command. But He *did* so, commissioning an angel to “swear by Him that liveth forever and ever” (Rev. 10:5, 6).

From what has been before us in Matthew 5 we may perceive the importance and need of heeding two particular rules when interpreting Scripture. First, that universal affirmations and negations are not always to be universally understood, but are to be limited by their occasions, circumstances, and the subject matter treated of. Things expressed in universal language must be regarded according to the thing in hand. Thus, when the Apostle declared, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor.

(1 Cor. 9:22): if his language were taken without limitation, it would signify that he became a blasphemer to blasphemers, etc., whereas his statement must be restricted to things indifferent and innocent, in which he yielded to the weakness of others. In like manner, when Christ said, "Swear not at all," His obvious meaning (according to what follows) is, swear not blasphemously, needlessly or by any mere creature.

Second, it is a rule of real use in the interpreting of Holy Writ that when anything is prohibited in one passage, but allowed in another, that not the thing absolutely considered is spoken unto in either case, but rather some particular mode, cause, end, or reason is intended. So here—in Matthew 5:34 swearing is forbidden, whereas in other passages we find it is allowed and that examples thereof are proposed unto us. Wherefore it cannot be swearing absolutely that is intended: but evil and needless swearing is condemned by the one, and swearing in right causes or for just ends is approved in the other.

Nor is the taking of an oath to be restricted to courts of law only: Exodus 22:11 and the instances of Paul in his Epistles prove otherwise. In certain cases *private* oaths, between man and man, are perfectly legitimate. Boaz was a private person, who confirmed by an oath his promise of marriage to Ruth (Ruth 3:13). Obadiah was a private person, a righteous man, and one that feared the Lord, who declared with an oath the fact of which he wished to convince Elijah (1 Kings 18:10). I can find, therefore, no better rule than that we regulate our oaths in such a manner that they be not rash or inconsiderate, wanton or frivolous, but used in cases of real necessity" (John Calvin). The awful solemnity of an oath appears from 1 Kings 8:31, 32. So, too, we should duly lay to heart the fearful judgments of God which came upon Israel of old when they were guilty of breaking the Third Commandment (Jer. 5:7-9; Zech. 5:4).—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

95. *His Closing Days.*

The public life of David had been a stormy one throughout, nor was he permitted to end his career in tranquility—such is generally the lot of those in high station, who are ignorantly envied by so many. Even in his declining days, when the infirmities of old age were upon David, serious trouble broke out in his kingdom, so that both the public peace was jeopardized and his own family circle again threatened by the assassin. Another of his own sons now set himself not only against the will of his father, but also against the declared purpose of God; in which he was abetted by those who had long held positions of honour under the king. No doubt we should look deeper and see here a setting forth of the conflict which obtains in a higher realm: the enmity of the Serpent against the woman's Seed and his opposition to the will of God concerning His kingdom. But it is with that which refers more immediately to David we shall concern ourselves.

The record of what we have referred to above is found in 1 Kings 1. That chapter opens by presenting to us the once virile and active king now going the way of all the earth: his natural spirits dried up, no longer able to attend to public affairs. The events chronicled therein occurred very near the close of David's eventful career. Though not yet quite 70 he is described as "old and well stricken in years." Though blest with a vigorous constitution, the king was thoroughly worn out: among the contributing causes, we may mention the strenuous life he had lived and the heavy domestic griefs which had fallen upon him. That he was still dearly beloved by his followers is evident from their kindly if ill-advised efforts for his comfort (vv. 1-3). David's falling in with their plan, shows him taking the line of least resistance, apparently out of deference to the wishes of his attendants. It was a device which has been resorted to in various climes and ages, yet surely it was one which did not become a child of God.

Old age as well as youth has its own particular snares, for if the danger of the latter is to disdain the advice of seniors and be too self-willed, the infirmities of the former place them more in the power of their juniors and they are apt to yield to arrangements which their consciences condemn. It is not easy to deny the wishes of those who are tending us, and it seems ungrateful to refuse well-meant efforts to make our closing days more comfortable. But while on the one hand the aged need to guard against irritability and a domineering spirit, yet on the other they must not be a willing party to that which they know is wrong. Legitimate means of restoring health and for prolonging our days should be employed, but unlawful measures and anything having the *appearance* of evil or which may become an occasion of temptation to us, should be steadfastly refused, no matter by whom it is proposed.

The Lord's *displeasure* against David's weakness in consenting to the carnal counsel of his friends is plainly marked in the immediate sequel. Serious trouble now arose from yet another of his sons. It is true that this was the fruit of his earlier laxity in ruling his children, for he was much too easy-going with them: yet *the time* when this impious insubordination occurred leaves us in no doubt that it is to be regarded as a Divine chastening of David for being a party to such a questionable procedure as that to which we have briefly alluded above. "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (1 Kings 1:5). Nothing is more conspicuous throughout the whole history of David than that

whenever a believer sows to the flesh he will most certainly of the flesh reap corruption; and another solemn example of this is here before us.

David was now stricken in years, and the time for one to succeed him to the throne had well-nigh arrived. Yet it was for Jehovah alone to say who that one should be. But Adonijah, the oldest living son, determined to be that successor. Nor is this to be wondered at, for, "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" (v. 6). David had permitted him to have his own way. He never crossed his will, never inquired the motive of his actions, nor at any time rebuked him for his folly. In allowing his son to be guided by his own unbridled will, David's sadly failed to exercise his parental authority and to fulfil his parental responsibility—and bitterly did he now pay for his folly, as many since have also been made to do.

That which immediately follows verse 6 is recorded for our learning, and a most solemn warning does it point for our own day, when so many fond parents are allowing their children to grow up with little or no restraint placed upon them. They are only preparing a rod for their own backs. God Himself has forbidden parents to refrain from chastening their children when they need it: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Prov. 23:13). And again, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). And yet again, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). Because of his parental neglect David himself was in large measure responsible for the lawlessness of his son. Lax and indulgent parents must expect willful and wayward children, and if they despise the infirmities of their sires and are impatient to get possession of their estates, that will be all which they deserve at their hands.

David's unruly son now determined to exalt himself, even though he certainly knew that Solomon had been appointed by God to succeed David in the kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-16; 1 King 2:15-18). "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (1 Kings 1:5). In this magnifying of his state, he followed the evil example of his rebellious brother Absalom (2 Sam. 15:1)—a solemn warning this for older brothers to set their younger ones a good example. Adonijah dared to usurp the throne of Israel: he made a feast, gathered the people about him, and incited them to proclaim him as king (1 Kings 1:7-9, 25). In this, too, he was again following the example of Absalom (2 Sam. 15:10), confident that where his brother had failed, he would now succeed. But like Absalom before him, Adonijah reckoned without God: "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to naught: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth forever" (Psa. 33: 10, 11).

Nevertheless, for a time it looked very much as though the daring revolt of Adonijah would be successful, for both Joab the commander of the army and Abiathar the priest, threw in their lot with him (1 Kings 1:7). Thus does God often allow the wicked to prosper for awhile, yet their triumphing is but short. Joab, as we have seen in other connections, was a thoroughly unprincipled and ungodly man, and no doubt the impious Adonijah was more congenial to his disposition than Solomon would be. Moreover if this son of Haggith obtained the kingdom, then his own position would be secure, and he would not be displaced by a successor to Amasa (2 Sam. 19:13). So too Abiathar the high priest seems to have been less regarded by David than Zadok was, and probably he feared that Solomon would set his family aside for the line of Eliazer to which Zadok belonged.

Characters like Joab and Abiathar are ever actuated by selfish motives, though individuals like Adonijah often flatter themselves that the service of such is rendered out of love or esteem for their persons, when in reality very different considerations move them. Disinterested loyalty is a very rare thing, and where found it cannot be valued too highly. Those in eminent positions, whether in church or state, are surrounded by mercenary sycophants, who are ever eager to turn to their own advantage everything which transpires. It mattered nothing to Joab and Abiathar that their royal master was a pious and faithful one, who had steadily sought the good of the kingdom, or that Adonijah was a grasping and lawless semi-heathen; they were ready to forsake the one and espouse the other. So it is still: that is why those in high places are afraid to trust the ones nearest to them in office.

“There are many devices in a man’s heart: nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand” (Prov. 19:21). No planning on man’s part can thwart the purpose of the Most High. Saul had proved that; so too had Absalom; so now shall Adonijah. Yet the Lord is pleased to use human instruments in bringing His counsel to pass. He always has His man ready to intervene at the critical moment. In this instance it was Nathan the Prophet: “Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not?” (1 Kings 1:11). Nathan had been faithful in rebuking David for his sin in former days (2 Sam. 12:7-12). He was faithful now in recalling to him the promise he had made concerning Solomon. He interviewed Bathsheba and persuaded her to go unto David and remind him of his oath (1 Kings 1:11-13), and arranged that while she was speaking to the king, he also would come into his presence and confirm her testimony (v. 14).

It is blessed, both from the Divine and human side, to see how readily and how graciously Bathsheba responded to Nathan’s suggestion. From the Divine side, we may behold how that when God works He works at both ends of the line: if the Prophet gave counsel under Divine prompting, the queen was willing in the day of God’s power, as David also yielded thereto—each acted under Divine impulse, yet each acted quite freely. From the human side, we may note that Bathsheba made no demur to Nathan’s counsel but readily acquiesced. Though David was her husband she “bowed and did obeisance to the king” and addressed him as “my lord” (vv. 16, 17), thereby evidencing that she was a true daughter of Abraham. First she reminded him of his solemn oath that Solomon should reign after him (v. 17). Then she acquainted him with the revolt of Adonijah (v. 18). Next she assured the king that the Nation awaited an authoritative word from him about the accession; and ended by warning him that if he failed in his duty she and Solomon would be in grave danger of their lives.

“And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the Prophet came in” (v. 22). It was something more than a political move on Nathan’s part to appear before the king at the exact moment of which Bathsheba had just said. It was an act of obedience to the Word of God, for the Divine Law required that matters of solemn moment must be confirmed by one or more witnesses. “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deut. 19:15). The same principle was insisted upon by Christ on more than one occasion, and therefore it is binding on us today. Much needless trouble had been avoided in the church (Matt. 18:16), many a false accusation had been exposed (John 8:13, 17), many a breach had been healed (2

Cor. 13:1), and many an innocent servant of God had been cleared (1 Tim. 5:19) if only this principle had been duly heeded.

According to his promise to Bathsheba, Nathan entered the king's presence and bore out what she had just told him. The Prophet showed how urgent the situation was. First, he declared that the supporters of the revolt were so confident of success that they were even now saying, "God save king Adonijah" (1 Kings 1:25). Second, he pointed out the ominous fact that neither himself nor Zadok the priest, Benaiah or Solomon had been invited to the feast (v. 26), which made evident his lawless designs: neither the will of God nor the desire of his father were going to be consulted. Third, he endeavoured to get the aged David to take definite action before it was too late. He asks the king point blank if this thing was being done with his approval (v. 27), to make him realize the better what blatant insolence Adonijah and his party were guilty of in thus acting without authority from the crown. Thus did he make clear to David his public duty.

It was now that the real character of David asserted itself. Weak he was in the ruling of his own household, but ever firm and fearless where the interests of God's kingdom were concerned. Nothing could induce him to resist the revealed will of the Lord of Israel. First, he now acknowledged again the faithfulness of God unto himself: "And the king sware, and said, As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress" (v. 29). The Lord is the Deliverer of all who put their trust in Him, and repeatedly had He delivered David out of the hands of his enemies. Second, God's faithfulness to David (1 Chron. 22:9-13), now inspired him to be faithful to his covenant promise concerning Solomon: "Even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shalt sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day" (1 Kings 1:30). Most blessed is this: whatever danger his own person might be threatened with, he hesitated not.

In what immediately follows we are informed of the decisive measures taken by David to overthrow the plot of Adonijah. "Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the Prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the Prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet and say, God save king Solomon. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne: for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah" (1 Kings 1:32-35). Orders were given for the proclaiming of Solomon: he was to be set upon the royal mule, formally anointed, and duly proclaimed king. This important transaction was entrusted to men of God who had proved themselves in His service. Solomon would thus have the necessary authority for conducting state affairs until David's decease, after which there would be no uncertainty in the public mind as to his rightful successor.

"And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be He with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David" (vv. 36, 37). The measures proposed by the king met with the hearty approval of his advisers. Speaking in the name of the others, Benaiah expressed their complete satisfaction in the royal nomination: his "Amen" shows the original meaning and emphasis of this term—it was faith's affirmation, assured that God would make good His promise.

Benaiah's language was that of fervent piety, for he realized that the plans of his master, no matter how wise and good, could not be carried to a successful conclusion without the blessing of Divine providence—alas that this is so largely lost sight of today. He added the earnest prayer that God would bless Solomon's reign even more than He had his father's.

The orders which David had given were promptly executed. Solomon was brought in state to the place appointed and was duly anointed. This gave great joy and satisfaction to the people. "And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes and rejoiced with great joy, so the earth rent with the sound of them" (v. 40): thereby they evidenced their cheerful acceptance of him as David's successor. In like manner, all who belong to the true Israel of God gladly own the Lordship of His Son. The sequel was indeed striking. No sooner was Solomon acclaimed by the loyal subjects of David, than news thereof was borne to Adonijah and his fellow-conspirators (vv. 41, 42). Instead of ending in joy, the feast of the rebel terminated in consternation: "And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar" (vv. 49, 50). Thus did the Lord graciously show Himself strong on David's behalf to the end of his course.

In closing we would call attention to a most blessed typical picture, in which both David and Solomon are needed to give it completeness—compare the joint-types supplied by Joseph and Benjamin, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha. First, David had been successful as "a man of war" (1 Chron. 28:3), for by him the Lord so overcame the enemies of Israel as to "put them under the sole of his feet" (1 Kings 5:3). In like manner, the Lord Jesus by His death and resurrection was victorious over all His foes (Col. 2:14, 15). Second, Solomon had been chosen and ordained to the throne before he was born (1 Chron. 22:9): so, too, Christ was the Elect of God from all eternity (Isa. 42:1). Third, Solomon rode on a mule, not as a warrior, but in lowly guise: so did Christ (Matt. 21:1-9). Fourth, he was anointed with the sacred oil—type of the Spirit: so Christ received the Spirit in His fullness at His ascension (Acts 2:33). Finally, rest and quietness was granted unto Israel throughout Solomon's reign (1 Chron. 22:9): so Christ is now reigning as "the Prince of Peace" over His people.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

11. *Its Opposition.*

Third, *the Gospel offer is meaningless*. Those who refuse to receive the truth of Divine election are fond of saying that the idea of God having eternally chosen one and passed by another of His creatures would reduce evangelical preaching to a farce. They argue that if God has foreordained a part of the human race to destruction, it can contain no bona fide offer of salvation to them. Let it first be pointed out that this objection does not press upon Calvinism alone, but applies with the same force to Arminianism. Free-willers deny the absoluteness of the Divine decrees, yet they affirm the Divine prescience. Then let us turn the question round upon them: How can God in good faith bid men to repent and believe the Gospel, when He infallibly *foreknows* they will never do so? If they suppose the former objection to be irrefutable, they will find our question is unanswerable by their own principles.

Whatever difficulty may be presented at this point—and the writer has no thought of belittling it—one thing is clear: to whomsoever the Gospel comes, God is sincere in bidding its hearers submit to its requirements, receive its glad tidings, and be saved thereby. Whether we can or cannot perceive how this is so matters nothing; but the integrity of the Divine character must be maintained at all costs. The mere fact that we are unable to discern the consistence and harmony between two distinct lines of Truth, certainly does not warrant our rejecting either one of them. The doctrine of sovereign election is clearly revealed in the Scriptures; so, too, is the genuineness of the Gospel offer to all who receive it: the one must be contended for as earnestly as the other.

But do we not create our own difficulty by supposing that the *salvation* of men is God's sole object, or even His principal design, in the sending forth of the Gospel? But what other ends, it may be asked, are accomplished thereby? Many. God's first end in the Gospel, as in everything else, is the honour of His own great name and the glory of His Son. In the Gospel the character of God and the excellence of Christ are more fully revealed than anywhere else. That a worldwide testimony should be borne thereto is infinitely fitting. That men should have made known to them the ineffable perfections of Him with whom they have to do is certainly most desirable. God, then, is magnified and the matchless worth of His Son proclaimed, even though not one sinner ever believed and was saved thereby.

Again—the preaching of the Gospel is the appointed instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit whereby the elect are brought to Christ. God does not disdain instrumental agencies, but is pleased to employ them: He who ordained the end, also appointed the means thereto. Just because God's elect are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52) among all nations, He has commanded that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). It is by hearing the Gospel they are called out of the world. By nature God's elect are the children of wrath "even as others": they are lost sinners needing a Saviour, and apart from Christ there is no salvation for them. Therefore the Gospel must be preached to and believed in by them before they can rejoice in the knowledge that their sins are forgiven. The Gospel, then, is God's great winnowing fan, separating the wheat from the chaff, and gathering the former into His garner.

Moreover, the non-elect *gain much* from the Gospel, even though it effects not their eternal salvation. The world exists for the elect's sake, yet all share the benefits of it. The

sun shines upon the evil as well as the good, refreshing showers fall upon the lands of the wicked as truly as on the ground of the righteous. So God causes the Gospel to reach the ears of many of the non-elect, as well as those of His favoured people. Why? Because it is one of His powerful agencies to hold in check the wickedness of fallen men. Millions who are never saved by it, are reformed: their lusts are bridled, their outward course improved, and society is made more suitable for the saints to live in. Compare the peoples without the Gospel and those who have it: in the case of the latter it will be found that higher morality obtains even where there is no spirituality.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Gospel is a real test of the characters of all who hear it. The Scriptures declare that man is a fallen, corrupt, and sin-loving creature. They insist that his mind is enmity against God, that he loves darkness rather than light, that he will not be subject to God under any circumstances. Yet who believes such humbling truths? But the response to the Gospel by the non-elect demonstrates the verity of God's Word. Their continued impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience bears witness to their total depravity. God instructed Moses to go unto Pharaoh and make request that Israel should be allowed to worship Jehovah in the wilderness; yet in the very next verse He told him, "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand" (Exo. 3:18, 19). Then why send Moses on such an errand? To make manifest the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, the stubbornness of his will, and the justice of God in destroying such a wretch.

Fourth, *it destroys human responsibility*. Arminians contend that to affirm God has unalterably decreed and fixed the history and destiny of every man, would be to demolish human accountability, that in such a case man would be no better than a machine. They insist that man's will must be free, free equally unto good and evil, or otherwise he would cease to be a moral agent. They argue that unless a person's actions are without compulsion, and are in accordance with his own desires and inclinations, he could not be justly held responsible for them. From this premise the conclusion is drawn that it is the creature and not the Creator who chooses and decides his eternal destiny, for if his acts are self-determined, they cannot be Divinely determined.

Such an objection is really a descent into the dark regions of philosophy and metaphysics, a specious attempt of the Enemy to lead us away from the realm of Divine revelation. So long as we abide by the Holy Scriptures, we are safe, but as soon as we resort to reasoning upon spiritual matters we are certain to err. God has already made known all that He deems well for us to know in this life, and any attempt to be wise above that which is written is naught but folly and impiety. From the Scriptures it is clear as a sunbeam that man—whether considered as unfallen or fallen—is a responsible being, that he is made to reap whatsoever he sows, that he will yet have to render unto God an account of all his deeds and be judged accordingly; and nothing must be allowed to weaken the impression of these solemn facts upon our minds.

The same line of reasoning has been employed by those who reject the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It is contended that such a postulate entirely eliminates the human element from the Bible, that if we insist (as this writer, for one, most emphatically does) that not only the thoughts and sentiments but the very language itself is Divine, that every word and syllable of the original manuscripts was God-breathed—then the human penman employed in transmitting the same were merely automatons. But this we know is false. In like manner, with as much show of reason might the objector declare that Christ

cannot be both Divine and human: that if He is God, He cannot be man, and that if He is truly man, it follows that He cannot be God. What is reasoning worth, my reader, upon such matters?!

The books of the Bible *were* written by men, written by them under the free exercise of their natural faculties, in such a way that the impression of their personalities is clearly left upon their several contributions. Nevertheless, they originated nothing: they were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21), and so completely were they controlled by Him, that not the slightest shadow of a mistake or error was made by them, and every thing they wrote was “the words which . . . the Holy Spirit teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). The Redeemer is the Son of man, who was “in all things made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17); yet because His humanity was taken into union with His Divine Person, everything He did possessed a unique and infinite value. Man is a moral agent, acting according to the desires and dictates of his nature: he is at the same time a creature, fully controlled and determined by his Creator. In each of these cases the Divine and human elements coalesce, but the Divine dominates, yet not to the exclusion of the human.

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it *must* needs be that offenses come” (Matt. 18:7). Then surely, may an objector reply, there can be no guilt resting on him who introduces that which is inevitable. Different far was the teaching of Christ: “but *woe* to that man by whom the offense cometh” (v. 7). “When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be” (Mark 13:7). There is a *must-be* for these death-dealing scourges, yet that alters not the criminality of the instigators of them. There is a *needs-be* for “heresies” (1 Cor. 11:19), yet the heretics themselves are to blame. Absolute necessity and human responsibility are therefore perfectly compatible, whether *we* can perceive their consistency or not.

Fifth, it is objected against the truth of predestination that it *supercedes the use of* means and renders all incentives to human endeavour negative. It is asserted that if God has elected a man unto salvation that he will be saved although he remains utterly unconcerned and continues to take his fill of sin—that if he has not been elected, then no efforts to obtain eternal life would be of any use. It is said that for men to be told they have been Divinely ordained either to life or death by an eternal and immutable decree, they will at once conclude that it makes no difference whatever how they conduct themselves. Since no act of theirs can to the slightest degree either impede or promote the foreordination of God, it is argued all motives to diligence are effectually neutralized, and that it is subversive of every exhortation to morality and spirituality.

Really, this is the most senseless of all objections. It is not an objection at all against the *Scriptural* doctrine of predestination, but against an entirely different concept, one hatched in the brains of ignorance, or conceived by malignity in order to bring odium on the Truth. The only sort of predestination to which this objection is applicable, would be an absolute pre-appointment to an end without any regard to the *means*. Stripped of all ambiguity, this objection presupposes that God secures His purposes without employing any instrumental agencies. Thus, when the objection is exposed in its nakedness we see at once what a sorry figure it cuts. Those whom God has elected to salvation He has chosen to it “*through* sanctification and belief of the Truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

The fact is that God decreed to bring His elect to glory in a way of sanctification, and in no other way than that; and throughout their entire course He treats with them as rational and accountable creatures, using suitable means and motives to draw out their

hearts unto Himself. To affirm that if they are elected they will reach Heaven whether sanctified or not, is just as silly as to say Abraham might have been the father of many nations although he had died in infancy, or that Hezekiah could have lived his extra 15 years without food or sleep. Prior to the taking of Jericho it was Divinely revealed to Joshua that he should be master of that place (6:2): the assurance was absolute. Did, then, Israel's leader conclude that no action was needed, that all might sit down and fold their arms? No—he arranged the procession around its walls in obedience to God's command, and the event was accomplished accordingly.

We turn now to briefly consider some of the principal Scriptures used by those who resist the Truth. "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all My counsel, and would none of My reproof" (Prov. 1:24, 25). "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts" (Isa. 65:2). "How often would I have gathered thy children together . . . and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37). We are told by Arminians that these declarations are irreconcilable with Calvinism, that they show plainly the will of God *can be* resisted and thwarted by men. But most certainly a disappointed and defeated God is not the God of Holy Writ. To draw from these verses the conclusion that the Divine decrees fail of accomplishment is utterly erroneous: they have nothing whatever to do with God's eternal purpose, but instead, they respect only His *external* agencies, whereby He enforces man's responsibility, tests his character, and makes evident the wickedness of his heart.

"For God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). From these words it is urged that if God loves the world He desires the salvation of the whole human race, and that it was for this end He provided a Saviour for them. Here it is a case of being misled by the mere sound of a word, instead of ascertaining its real import. To say that God gave His Son with the design of providing salvation for all of Adam's children is manifestly absurd, for half of them had already died before Christ was born, and the vast majority of them perished in heathen darkness. Where is there the slightest hint in the Old Testament that God loved the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Babylonians? And where else in the New Testament is there any statement that God loves all mankind? The "world" in John 3:16 (as in many other places) is a *general* term, used in contrast from *Israel*, who imagined they had a monopoly on redemption. God's love extends far beyond the bounds of Judaism, embracing His elect scattered among all nations.

"And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Strange to say this is one of the verses appealed to by those who will not have election at any price. They suppose it teaches the free will unto good of fallen Man, and that Christ seriously intended the salvation of those who despise and reject Him. But what is there in these words which declares that Christ seriously intended their salvation? Do they not rather signify that He was here preferring a solemn charge against them? So far from our Lord's utterance implying that these men had the power within themselves to come to Him, they rather declare the perversity and stubbornness of their wills. Instead of any inclination for the Holy One, they hated Him.

"Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth . . . who gave Himself a ransom for *all*" (1 Tim. 2:4, 6). In order to understand these words they must not be considered separately, but in connection with their setting. From the context it is unmistakably evident that the "all men" God wills to be saved and for whom

Christ died are all men *without regard to national distinctions*. Timothy's ministry was exercised chiefly among Jewish converts, many of whom still retained their racial prejudices, so that they were unwilling to submit to the authority of heathen rulers. This was why the Pharisees had sought to discredit Christ before the people when they asked Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Paul here tells Timothy that Christians were not only to yield obedience unto Gentile rulers, but to pray for them as well (vv. 1, 2).

In 1 Timothy 2 Paul struck at the very root of the prejudice which Timothy was called upon to combat. The law of Moses was now set aside, the distinction which so long obtained between the lineal descendants of Abraham and the rest of mankind no longer obtained—God willed the salvation of Gentiles and Jews alike. Note particularly these details. First, "There is one God (see Rom. 3:29, 30!) and one Mediator between God and (not "the Jews" but) men" (1 Tim. 2:5). Second, "Who gave Himself a ransom for all (indefinitely), *to be testified in due time*" (v. 6): when Christ was crucified it was not generally understood, not even among His disciples, that He gave Himself for Gentiles and Jews alike; but in "due time" (particularly under Paul's ministry,) it was clearly "testified." Third, "whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an Apostle . . . a teacher of the *Gentiles*" (v. 7). Fourth, "I (with apostolic authority) will therefore that men pray *everywhere*" (v. 8): those professing the faith of Christ must drop at once and forever, their Jewish notions and customs—Jerusalem no longer possessed any peculiar sanctity.

"We see Jesus . . . that He by the grace of God should taste death for *every man*" (Heb. 2:9). Have you taken the trouble to ascertain how that expression is used elsewhere in the New Testament? "And then shall *every man* have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). Does that mean all of Adam's race? How can it, when "depart from Me, ye cursed" will be the portion of many? "The head of *every man* is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3): was He the Head of Judas or Nero? "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to *every man*" (1 Cor. 12:7). But some are "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:19 and cf. Rom. 8:9). It is "everyone" in *God's family* that is meant in all of these Epistle passages: note how the "every man" of Hebrews 2:9 is defined as "many sons" (v. 10), "brethren" (v. 11), "children" (vv. 13-14).

"There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). This verse is often cited in an attempt to disprove that Christ died for the elect only, which only serves to show what desperate shifts our opponents are reduced to. Why the verse makes no reference unto Christ at all, still less to His death! The Greek word here is not "kurios" at all—the one commonly used when referring to the Lord Jesus; but "despotes." The only places where it occurs, when applied to a Divine Person, are Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:21; Jude 4; Revelation 6:10, in all of which God the Father is plainly intended, and in most of them as manifestly distinguished from Christ. "Bought" here has reference to temporal deliverance, being taken from Deuteronomy 32:6. Peter was writing to Jews, who boasted loudly they were a people purchased by the Lord, and therefore he used this expression to aggravate the impiety of these false teachers among the Jews.

"Not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Here again a false meaning is extracted by divorcing a snippet from its context. The key to this verse is found in the word "usward": "the Lord is . . . longsuffering to usward," for He is not willing that "any" *of them* should perish. And who are they? Why, the "beloved" of verse 1 (those mentioned at the beginning of the first Epistle, "elect ac-

ording to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit”), and because He has purposed that “all” *of them* should come to repentance,” He refers to the second coming of Christ (vv. 3, 4). Christ will not return till the last of His people are safely in the Ark of Salvation.—A.W.P.

THE HOLY SABBATH.

7. *Its Christianization.*

In these particular articles upon the Christianization of the Sabbath we are seeking to establish (from Scripture) two things. First, that there is a *Sabbath* appointed by God for this dispensation—a *Christian Sabbath* for His people to keep holy and enjoy. Second, that this Christian Sabbath is to be observed upon “*another day*” of the week than the one celebrated throughout the Old Testament era. The one passage in the New Testament which above all others most conclusively proves both of these points is Hebrews 4:8-10, and therefore are we seeking to give a careful exposition of these verses and their setting. We would ask those who are really interested and concerned to re-read at this stage our article in the October issue, and then proceed with this.

Last month we got as far as Hebrews 4:9 which expressly declares, “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous than that verse. The striking thing is that it occurs in the very Epistle whose theme is the superiority of *Christianity* over Judaism—a theme developed by showing the superiority of Christ (the Center and Life of Christianity) over angels, Adam, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the whole Levitical economy. It is an Epistle addressed to “holy brethren partakers of the *heavenly calling*” (3:1). Therefore it cannot be denied that Hebrews 4:9 is referring directly to *the Christian Sabbath*. Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says that there is *no* Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the *New Testament Scriptures*.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). In this, and the following verse, the Apostle evidences the perfect analogy between the several rests of God and His people discoursed of in this chapter. First, at the beginning there was the creative work of God and His resting therefrom, which made way for a rest for His creatures in Himself and His worship by the contemplation of the works He had made. A day was specially assigned for that purpose—that was the primitive Sabbatismos. Second, there was a great work of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt and the establishing of His people in Canaan, which made way for their entering into His rest and worship, a Sabbath day being appointed to express both the one and the other—this was the Mosaic Sabbatismos.

So now, under the Gospel, there is a Sabbath comprised of all these. As we shall see there was another and greater work of God, and a rest of His own ensued thereon. On that work is founded the promise of rest spiritual and eternal to those who do believe, and the determination of a new day expressive of the one and the other. This is the Christian Sabbatismos. That the redemptive work of Christ has not only secured this spiritual rest to His people, but has also necessitated and resulted in *a new Sabbath* to celebrate it appears from two things in the Apostle’s discourse. First, by his referring to our Gospel rest by the name of DAY (v. 8). Second, from his coining of this term “Sabbatismos” to express both our spiritual rest and the Sabbath-keeping which memorializes the same.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works as God did from His” (v. 10). Plain and simple as these words are, yet they have been grievously wrested by most of the commentators. They are generally regarded as referring to *believers* entering into the rest of God, through their believing of the Gospel. But there are two considerations which expose the error of this view. First, the verse does *not* read, “*they* who enter into His rest,” but “He that is entered into.” Second, if the reference was to be-

lievers, *what* are the “works” from which they cease? Their sins, say some; their legalistic efforts to win God’s approval, say others; their sorrows and sufferings, from which they shall rest in Heaven, say yet others. But *how* could they be said to rest from any such works, “AS God from His” own? It is utterly impossible to satisfactorily answer such a question. No, the verse speaks not of believers, but of *Christ*.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His.” Here the Apostle concludes his argument by declaring that the “rest” which remains for believers to enter into (4:3), and the new day appointed by God for this dispensation (4:9), have a new and special foundation, which the previous rests and days had no interest or concern in, namely, that the Author of it ceased from His own works and entered into His rest. Proofs that this verse refers to *Christ* are many. First, its opening “For,” which denotes that the Apostle now indicates whence it is there is a new Sabbatismos remaining for the people of God. He had before shown there could be no such rest but what was founded upon the works of God. Such a foundation this new rest must have, and does have. It is the work of Him by whom the Church is builded: Hebrews 3:3, 4.

Second, the change of number in the pronoun from the plural to the singular intimates the same thing. In Hebrews 4:1-3 the Apostle had used “us” and “we,” but here, verse 10, he says, “*He* that is entered.” This is the more noticeable because in the verse immediately preceding he had mentioned “the people of God.” That it is *not they* who are here in view further appears from the fact that they never cease from their works while left in this world. No other reason can possibly be given for this change of number except that a single person is here expressed. Third, note it is not simply said of this person that, “He that is entered into rest” (as in vv. 3 and 8), but “into *His* rest” absolutely. God spoke of “My rest”; here He mentions “His rest”—Christ’s rest!

Fourth, there is a direct parallel supplied by this verse between the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the Apostle is openly comparing together. 1. In the *Authors* of them: of the former it is said of God the Creator, He did “rest from all His works” (4:4). So “He (Christ) also hath ceased from His own.” 2. The *products* of the One and of the Other are mentioned: Their respective “works,” and there is a due proportion between them, each being creative and “very good.” 3. There is the *rest* of the One and of the Other, and these also have a proportion to one another. It should now be unmistakably plain to every impartial reader that it is the Person of Jesus Christ who is the subject spoken of in verse 10.

The blessed Person referred to, then, in verse 10 is the Lord Jesus, and none other—the Author of the new creation. This alone gives meaning to the causal conjunction: there is a Sabbatismos now for the people of God, FOR Christ is entered into His rest. What is denoted by His “rest” we must now inquire. This was certainly not His being in the grave. His body indeed rested there for a brief season, but that was no part of His *Mediator* rest, as He is the Builder of His Church; and that for two reasons. First, His entombment was part of His *humiliation* (Isa. 53:9). Second, the separation of His soul and body was *penal*, a part of the sentence of the Law which He underwent, and hence Peter declares, “The pains of death” were not loosed until His resurrection (Acts 2:24).

Nor did Christ first enter into His rest at His ascension, rather was that an entrance into His *glory*, as in the full public manifestation of it. No, Christ’s entrance into rest was in, by, and at His resurrection from the dead. For it was then and thereon He was freed

from the power and service of the Law, being discharged from the debts of our sins. It was then and thereon that all prefigurations and predictions concerning the work of redemption were fulfilled. It was then and thereon that He received “the promise of the Spirit” (Acts 2:33), and the whole foundation of the Church of God was laid upon His Person. It was then and thereon that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). God manifesting unto all that this was He of whom He said, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Acts 13:33).

“Thus did the Author of the new creation, the Son of God, having finished His works, enter into His rest. And this was, as we all know, on the morning of the *first* day of the week. And hereby did He limit and determine the day for a sacred Sabbatical rest under the New Testament. For now was the old covenant (the Siniatic) utterly abolished, and therefore the day which was the pledge of the rest of God and man therein, was to be taken away. As the rest from the beginning of the world had its foundation from the works of God, and His rest which ensued thereon, which was determined unto the seventh day, because that was the day wherein God ceased from those works—which day continued under the legal administration of the covenant by Moses—so the rest of the Lord Christ is the foundation of our rest, which, changing the old covenant, and the day annexed unto it, He hath limited unto the *first* day of the week, whereon He ceased from His works and entered into His rest.

“Wherefore when the Lord Christ intended conspicuously to build His Church upon the foundation of His works and rest, by sending the Holy Spirit with His miraculous gifts upon the Apostles, He did it on *this day*: which was then among the Jews the feast of Pentecost. Then were the disciples gathered together with one accord, in the observance of the day signalized to them by His resurrection (Acts 2:1). And by this did their obedience receive a blessed confirmation, as well as their persons a glorious endowment with abilities for the work which they were immediately to apply themselves unto” (John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much in this and last month’s article).

It remains for us to point out that the rest into which Christ entered is proposed unto His people in the Gospel. This is asserted in the precious verse and is here made manifest. “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God,” (Heb. 4:9) *because* Christ has entered into His rest. As the other rests—the one at the beginning of human history and the other at the beginning of the commonwealth of Israel—had their foundation in the works and rests of God, whereon a Day of rest was appointed for them to keep, so has this new rest a foundation in the works and rest of Christ—who has built all things and is *God* (Heb. 3:3, 4), determining a day for our use in and by that whereon He entered into His rest, which is the first day of the week.

Before giving a brief word on verse 11, let us refer to what may present a difficulty unto a few. It should be quite clear there is a Christian Sabbath, a Sabbath appointed for this dispensation. Some may be ready to say, Yes, “for the people of God” (v. 9), but how about unbelievers? First, we answer, we know of nothing in Scripture which intimates that God requires unbelievers to celebrate the first day of the week as a memorial of our Lord’s resurrection, for Christ means nothing to them. But second, they *are* commanded to keep the Sabbath holy unto God their Creator and Ruler. The original Covenant of Works has never been repealed, and all out of Christ are under it. Though the day of Sabbath observance is changed, God requires all alike, believers and unbelievers, to abstain from all secular employment on the Sabbath and keep the day holy unto Himself.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:11). First, it is to be noted that the Apostle does not here use the term “Sabbatismos” (as in v. 9), but, “katapausis” as in verses 1, 3, 5, etc. This shows that he now returns to his principal exhortation—the reader will be helped on the passage as a whole if he places verses 4-10 in a parenthesis, thus connecting verse 11 with verse 3. In the opening verse of the chapter Paul has said, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,” and here he now makes known how that “fear” is to exert itself. It is not a “fear” of dread or doubt, but is such a reverential respect unto the Divine threatenings and promises as would stir up its possessors unto all diligence to avoid the one and inherit the other.

The utmost of our endeavours and efforts are required in order to our obtaining an entrance into the rest of Christ. We are to “labour” or give the greatest possible diligence thereto. Men are in real earnest and spend their strength in striving after the bread which perishes; the same intentness and zeal are required in our seeking the Bread of Life. He who teaches men that an entrance into spiritual and eternal rest is a thing plain, easy, and suited to nature, does but delude and deceive them. To mortify sin, deny self, cut off right hands, endure all sorts of afflictions and persecutions—are painful, difficult, and attended with many hardships. The future state of the Christian is one wholly of rest, but his present state is a *mixed* one, partly of rest and partly of labour—labour against sin, rest in the love and grace of God.

Having now gone carefully through our passage let us see what we have learned from it. First, Hebrews 4 opens with a pointed warning taken from the case of the unbelieving Israelites of old (Heb. 3:16-18). Second, but though those Israelites failed to enter into it, yet there is a rest of God proposed unto us in the Gospel, and which believers enter into (v. 3). Third, this led the Apostle to take up the different “rests” of God and His people: the Edenic, Mosaic, and Messianic (vv. 4-10). Fourth, in leading up to his climax the Apostle throws the emphasis not so much on the “rest” as on the DAY appointed to celebrate it. In verse 7 he declares that God (prophetically) limited or determined “a certain day.” In verse 8 he expressly refers to “another day” which supplies proof that a *different one* from the old seventh day is now instituted. In verse 9 this other day and the rest it memorializes is definitely designated a “Sabbatismos” or “keeping of a Sabbath.” In verse 10 he shows *why* the Sabbath day had been changed: because it was on that day Christ entered into His rest.

Well, then, may we with the utmost confidence exclaim with the Psalmist, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it*” (118:24). “We observe the day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer” (C. H. Spurgeon). It should be pointed out that the passage we have last quoted is part of a remarkable prophecy, which set forth both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus—“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” The passage is quoted in the New Testament no less than six times, being expressly applied to the Saviour. First, He is seen as “the Stone which the builders refused,” and then as “became the Head of the corner” (Psa. 118:2).

And how could that “Stone,” contemptuously trodden underfoot by men, become “the Head of the corner”? How indeed except by *being raised!*? It was by His triumph over death that Christ became the Head of the corner—a “corner” is when two walls meet together, and in resurrection Christ became Head of both believing Jews and believing

Gentiles! The Psalmist added, "This is the LORD'S doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psa. 118:23). And then follows, "*This is the day* which the LORD hath made." What could be clearer? How perfectly it accords with Hebrews 4:9, 10! That "day" was Divinely "made" to memorialize Christ's victory over the grave: God has "made it remarkable, made it holy, has distinguished it from all other days: it is therefore called the Lord's Day, because it bears His image and superscription" (Matthew Henry).

And so it is: the Christian Sabbath is specifically designated "the *Lord's Day*" in Revelation 1:10. It is called such because it owes its pre-eminence to the Lord's institution and authority. By taking to Himself the title of "the Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28), Christ clearly intimated His authority to determine which day of the week a Sabbath rest was to be observed by His people, and by ceasing from His works and entering into His rest on the *first* day of the week, He has "limited" this one for us. Those who are determined to close their eyes to all this evidence and get rid of the first-day Sabbath at any price, wrest these words in Revelation 1:10 by saying they signify "the Day of the Lord" when He comes in judgment. But the immediate context is dead against them: all that follows from 1:10 to the end of chapter 3 shows that this opening vision respected present and *not future* things. Moreover, the Greek is different from 2 Peter 3:10! "The Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:20) memorializes His death; "the Lord's Day" celebrates His resurrection.

Here is a summary of the reasons why Christians should observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week. First, because that day was clearly anticipated by Old Testament typology—the striking things connected with "the *eighth* day." Second, because the New Covenant necessitated a new Day of rest to signify the old covenant was abrogated. Third, because the honour and glory of *Christ* required it: on the day specially appointed for Divine worship, God would now have us occupied with His risen and exalted Son. Fourth, His own example bears witness thereto: His repeated meetings with His disciples (John 19) and His sending the Spirit on that day (Acts 2:1) set His imprimatur upon it. Fifth, because the early Church so celebrated it (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). There is not a single recorded instance in the New Testament of the saints meeting together for worship, after Christ's resurrection, on any other day but on the *first* of the week! Sixth, because we are expressly told that God has "limited" or determined "*another* day" (Heb. 4:9) than the old one, and that, because Christ then rose from the dead (v. 10). Seventh, because we are Divinely assured that, in view of the raising up of the rejected Stone to be the Head of the corner, "This is *the day* which the Lord hath made" (Psa. 118:24), and therefore is it called "the *Lord's Day*" in the New Testament (Rev. 1:10).—A.W.P.

MORTIFIED EYES.

“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: quicken Thou me in Thy way” (Psa. 119:37). The first request is for the removing of impediments to obedience, the other for addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another: unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract a deadness of heart. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God; therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued.

1. It therefore concerns those that would walk with God to have their eyes turned away from worldly things. He that would be quickened, carried out with life and vigour in the ways of God, must first be mortified, die unto sin. Speaking of the fruits of Christ's death, the Apostle mentioned death unto sins before life unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:25). If any would live with Christ, first they must learn to die unto sin. It is impossible for sin and grace to thrive in the same subject.

2. One great means of mortification is *guarding the senses*—eyes and ears, taste and touch—that they may not betray the heart. I put it so general because the man of God that is so solicitous about his eyes would not be careless of his ears and other senses. We must watch on all sides. When an assault is made on a city, if one gate be open it is as good as if all were. The ingress and egress of sin is by the *senses*, and much of our danger lies there. There are many objects that agree with our distempers, and by them insinuate themselves into the soul, and therefore things long since seemingly dead will soon revive again and recover life and strength. There are no means to keep the heart unless we keep the eye. In every creature Satan has laid a snare for us, to steal away our hearts and affections from God. The senses are so ready to receive these objects from without to wound the heart, for they are as the heart is. If the heart be poisoned with sin, and became a servant to it, so are the senses of our bodies “weapons of unrighteousness” (Rom. 6:13). Objects have an impression upon them answerable to the temper and affections of the soul, and what it desires they pitch upon; and therefore if we let the senses wander, the heart will take fire.

3. Above all senses *the eye* must be guarded. First, because it is the noblest sense, given us for high uses. There is not only a natural eye to inform us of things profitable and hurtful for the natural man, but a *spiritual* use to set before us those objects that may stir us and raise our minds to heavenly meditations. By beholding the perfection of the creature we may admire the more eminent perfection of Him that made them: “the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhood” (Rom. 1:20). The perfections of the creature are to draw us to God, and its defects to drive us from themselves. The eye, as it is used, will either be a help or a snare: either it will let in the sparks of temptation, or enkindle the fire of true devotion. These are the windows which God has placed in the top of the building, that man from there may contemplate God's works and take a prospect of Heaven.

Second, because the eyes have a great influence upon the *heart* either to good or evil, but chiefly to evil. In this corrupt state of man, by looking we come to liking, and are brought inordinately to affect what we do behold. “Seek not after your own heart and

your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring” (Num. 15:39). “If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walk after mine eyes” (Job 31:7). These are the spies of the heart—brokers to bring it and the temptation together; the eye sees, and then by gazing the heart lusts, and the body acts the transgression. It is more dangerous to *see* evil than to hear it.—Thomas Manton, 1660.

