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Studies in the Scriptures
The Spirit Leading.

It is the office of Jehovah the Spirit in the covenant of redemption, after He has called the elect out of the world, to place Himself at their head and undertake their future guidance. He knows the only path which leads to Heaven. He knows the difficulties and dangers which beset us, the intricate maze of life's journey, the numerous false routes by which Satan deceives souls, and the proneness of the human heart to follow that which is evil; and therefore does He, in His infinite grace, take charge of those who are "strangers and pilgrims" in this scene, and conduct them safely to the Celestial Country. O what praise is due unto this heavenly Guide! How gladly and thankfully should we submit ourselves unto His directions! How hopeless would be our case without Him! With what alacrity should we follow His motions and directions!

As we have already pointed out, the blessed Spirit of God "leads" both objectively and subjectively: by pointing us to the directive precepts of the Word, that our actions may be regulated thereby: and by secret impulses from within the soul, impressing upon us the course we should follow—the evils to be avoided, the duties to be performed. The Spirit acts upon His own life in the renewed soul. He works in the Christian a right disposition of heart relating to Truth and duty. He maintains in the believer a right disposition of mind, preparing and disposing him to attend unto the revealed will of God. He speaks effectually to the conscience, enlightens the understanding, regulates the desires, and orders the conduct of those who submit themselves unto His holy suggestions and overtures. To be "led by the Spirit of God" is to be under His guidance and government.

The wayward child and the self-willed youth is guided by his own unsanctified and unsubdued spirit. The man of the world is controlled by "the spirit of the world." The wicked are governed by Satan "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). But the Christian is to yield himself unto "the still small voice" of the Holy Spirit. Yet a word of caution is needed at this point, for in our day there are many fanatics and impious people who do that which is grossly dishonouring to God under the plea that they were "prompted by the Spirit" so to act. To be "led by the Spirit of God" does not mean being influenced by unaccountable suggestions and uncontrollable impulses which result in conduct displeasing to God, and often injurious to ourselves and others. No, indeed: not so does the Spirit of God "lead" any one.

There is a safe and sure criterion by which the Christian may gauge his inward impulses, and ascertain whether they proceed from his own restless spirit, an evil spirit, or the Spirit of God. That criterion is the written Word of God, and *by it* all must be measured. The Holy Spirit never prompts any one to act contrary to the Scriptures. How could He, when He is the Author of them! *His* promptings are always unto obedience to the precepts of Holy Writ. Therefore, when a man who has not been distinctly called, separated, and qualified by God to be a minister of His Word, undertakes to "preach," no matter how strong the impulse, it proceeds not from the Holy Spirit. When a woman "feels led" to pray in public where men are present, she is moved by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4), or if one claimed "guidance" in assuming an unequal yoke by marrying an unbeliever, 2 Corinthians 6:14 would prove conclusively that it was *not* the "guidance" of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit fulfills His office of Guide by three distinct operations. First, He communicates life and grace, a new “nature”; second, He stirs that life unto action, and gives “more grace”; third, He directs the action into performance of duty. Life, motion, and conduct are inseparable in nature and grace alike. First, the Holy Spirit quickens us into newness of life, infusing gracious habits into the soul. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezek. 36:26). Second, He moves upon the soul and assists the new nature to act according to its own gracious habits and principles: He “worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Third, He *directs* our actions by enlightening our understandings, guiding our inclinations, and moving our wills to do that which is pleasing unto God. It is the last two we are now considering.

Divine direction is *promised* the saints: “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Psa. 25:9): and this not only by general directions, but by particular excitations. “I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go” (Isa. 48:17). Divine guidance is *desired* by the saints as a great and necessary blessing: “Show me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day” (Psa. 25:4, 5). Mark the earnestness of this prayer: “show me, teach me, lead me.” Note the argument: “Thou art the God of my salvation,” and as such, pledged to undertake for me. Observe the importunity: “on Thee do I wait all the day,” as if he would not be left for a moment to his own poor wisdom and power. Even the “new nature” is utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Though the children of God are “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8) and have a general understanding of the way of godliness, yet much ignorance and darkness still remains in them, and therefore in order to a steady and constant course of obedience they need to be guided by the Holy Spirit, so that their light may be both directive and persuasive. Though Christians have a general understanding of their duty, yet to perform it in particular cases much grace from God is needed by them. If left to themselves, their own corruptions would blind and govern them, and therefore do they pray, “Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psa. 119:133). The way to Heaven is a “narrow” one, hard to find and harder still to be kept, except God teach us *daily* by His Spirit. Wisdom from on High is continually needed to know how to apply the rules of Scripture to all the varied details of our lives. The Holy Spirit is the only fountain of holiness, and to Him we must constantly turn for directions.

But something more than knowledge is needed by us: the Spirit must persuade and incline our hearts, and move our wills. How strong are our inclinations to sin, how easily fleshly impulses override our better judgment, how weak we are before temptation! We know what *we should* do, but are carried away by corrupt affections to the contrary. It is at *this* point the Holy Spirit governs from within. First, by His restraining motions, bidding us to avoid and mortify sin; second, by His quickening motions, inviting us to the pursuit of holiness. And just so far as we *yield* to His “strivings” are we “*led* by the Spirit of God.” As moral agents we are responsible to co-operate with the Spirit and respond to His gentle sway over us. Alas, we so often fail to do so. But though He suffers this up to a certain point—for our humbling—yet by His invincible power He prevents our making shipwreck of the faith, and after many chastenings, conducts us safely to Glory.

In conclusion we will seek to supply answer to the following question: *How* may Christians know whether they be among those who are “led by the Spirit of God?” In general, those who are directed by this Divine Guide are moved to examine their hearts and take frequent notice of their ways, to mourn over their carnality and perverseness, to confess their sins, to earnestly seek grace to enable them to be obedient. They are moved to search the Scriptures daily to ascertain the things which God has prohibited and the things which He enjoins. They are moved to an increasing conformity to God’s holy Law, and an increasing enablement to meet its requirements is wrought in them by the Spirit blessing to them the means of grace. But to be more specific.

First, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *led from ourselves*: from confidence in our own wisdom, from dependence upon our own strength, and from trust in our own righteousness. We are led from self-will, self-pleasing, self-aggrandizement. The Spirit conducts away from self unto God. Yet let it be pointed out that this weaning us from ourselves is not accomplished in a moment, but is a perpetual and progressive thing. Alas, God has at best but a portion of our affections. It is true there are moments when we sincerely and ardently desire to be fully and unreservedly surrendered to Him, but the ensnaring power of some rival object soon discovers how partial and imperfect our surrender has been.

Second, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *brought to occupation with Christ*. To whom else, in our deep need, can we go? Who so well-suited to our misery and poverty? Having severed us in some degree from ourselves, the Spirit brings us into a closer realisation of our union with the Saviour. Are we conscious of our filth and guilt?—the Spirit leads to the blood of Christ. Are we sorely tried and oppressed?—the Spirit leads unto Him who is able to succour the tempted. Are we mourning our emptiness and barrenness?—the Spirit leads to the One in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. It is the special office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

Third, just so far as we are governed by the Spirit of God are we *conducted along the highway of holiness*. The Spirit leads the Christian away from the vanities of the world, to the satisfying delight which is to be found in the Lord. He turns us from the husks which the swine feed upon unto spiritual realities, drawing our affections unto things above. He moves us to seek after more intimate and more constant communion with God, which can only be obtained by separation from that which He abhors. His aim is to conform us more and more to the image of Christ. Finally, He will conduct us to Heaven, for of it the Spirit is both the pledge and the earnest.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

96. *A Warning against Apostasy: Heb. 12:16, 17.*

The verses which we are now to consider are among the most solemn to be found in the Word of God. They present a most pointed warning against apostasy. They bring before us what is to all tender consciences a terror-provoking subject, namely, *sin for which there is no forgiveness*. It is indeed to be deplored that recent writers have dealt with it like they do with most matters—very superficially or quite erroneously. Either they have limited themselves unto two or three passages, ignoring many others directly relating to the theme, or they have wrongly affirmed that no one can commit “the unpardonable sin” during this present dispensation. On the other hand, most of the old writers seem to have devoted their efforts to re-assuring weak and fearing Christians that *they* had not committed this awful offence, rather than in making any attempt to define the character of the transgression itself.

The subject is admittedly a difficult one, and we believe God has permitted a measure of obscurity to rest upon it, and that in order to deter men from rashly venturing too near the brink of this terrible precipice. It therefore becomes us to approach it in fear and trembling, with modesty and humility, seeking grace and wisdom from on High to deal with it in a faithful, clear, and helpful manner. For this is no easy thing, if we are to avoid error and preserve the balance of truth. Two extremes have to be guarded against: a blunting of its fearful point so that the wicked would be encouraged to continue trifling with God and sporting with their eternal destiny, or failing to write with sufficient definiteness so that awakened and contrite sinners would not be delivered from sinking into despair beneath Satan’s lying misuse of it against them.

Before turning to the positive side it seems necessary to briefly point out wherein they seriously err, who insist that no one ever sins beyond the possibility of Divine pardon during this present era of grace. There are quite a number of passages in the New Testament Epistles which clearly show the contrary. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12 we read “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” In Hebrews 6:4, 6 it is said of some “it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” In Hebrews 10:26, 27 it is said, “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” While in 1 John 5:16 we are expressly informed “there is a sin unto death.” In our judgment each of these passages refers to a class of offenders who have so grievously provoked God that their doom is irrevocably sealed while they are yet here upon earth.

Against the testimony of the above Scriptures an appeal has often been made to, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin” (1 John 1:7). But the Word of God does not contradict itself, and it is an evil practice which cannot be too strongly condemned to pit one passage against another: any attempt to neutralize one text by another is handling the Truth deceitfully. With regard to 1 John 1:7 three things need to be pointed out. First, the precious blood of Christ was never designed to cleanse from every sin—was it designed to cleanse Judas from his betrayal of the Saviour! Its application is no wider than its impetration: its virtue does not extend beyond *the purpose for which* it was shed. Second, it does not say “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin”; instead, it is strictly qualified: “cleanseth *us* from all sin,” that is, God’s own people.

It is dishonest to appropriate these words to unbelievers. Third, the promise is further limited in the preceding clause, "But *if* we walk in the light, as He is in the light."

Nor do we at all agree with those writers who, while allowing that "the unpardonable sin" may be committed during this present dispensation, yet affirm it is a very rare occurrence, a most exceptional thing, of which only one or two isolated cases may be found. On the contrary, we believe that the Scriptures themselves clearly intimate that *many* have been guilty of sins for which there was no forgiveness either in this world or the world to come. We say "sins," for a careful and prolonged study of the subject has convinced us that "the unpardonable sin" is *not* one particular act of committing some specific offence, like maliciously ascribing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit (which, no doubt, is one form of it), but that it varies considerably in different cases. Both of these conclusions of the present writer will receive illustration and confirmation in what follows.

The first human being who was guilty of unpardonable sin was Cain. He was a professor or outward worshipper of God, but because Abel's offering was accepted and his own rejected, he waxed angry. The Lord condescended to expostulate with him, and went so far as to assure him that if he did well he should not lose his pre-eminence as the first-born. But so far from doing well, he persisted in wickedness, and his enmity against God was evidenced by his hatred of His child, ending in the murder of him. Whereupon the Lord said unto him, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground. And now art thou *cursed* from the earth . . . a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Gen. 4:10-12). To which Cain answered, "Mine iniquity is greater than it may be forgiven" (Gen. 4:13 margin).

The record of Genesis 6 makes it clear that a whole generation of the world's inhabitants had transgressed beyond all hope of remedy or forgiveness. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:5-7), which was duly accomplished by the Flood. The whole of mankind in the days of Nimrod sinned so grievously (Rom. 1:21-23) that "God gave them up" (Rom. 1:24-26), for His Spirit "will not always strive with men."

A whole generation of the Hebrews were also guilty of "the great transgression." In exodus 23:20, 21, we read, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will *not pardon* your transgressions: for My name is in Him." Alas they heeded not this solemn word: "our fathers would not obey, but thrust Him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:39). Consequently the Lord said, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest" (Heb. 3:10, 11).

It seems evident to the writer that there have been some in every age who have gone beyond the bounds of Divine mercy. Passing by such individual cases as Pharaoh, Balaam, and Saul, we would observe that the Pharisees of Christ's day—the bulk of them at least—were guilty of sin for which there was no forgiveness. It is clear from John 3:2 they recognised Him as "a Teacher come from God" and from John 11:47 that they could not gainsay His miracles. Nay more, it is plain from Mark 12:7 that they *knew* the right-

eousness of His claims: "But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him." Thus they acted with their eyes wide open, sinning against their own confession, against light and knowledge, against the strong conviction His miracles produced, and against His holy life spread before them. Therefore did Christ say to them, "I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall *die in your sins*: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21).

"Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psa. 19:13). Here the unpardonable sin is denominated "the great transgression." It is called such because this is what a bold and audacious defiance of God necessarily culminates in, unless sovereign grace intervenes. "Presumptuous" sins, are committed by those who, while professing God's name and avowing a claim upon His mercy, persist in a known course contrary to His word. Such rebels, presuming upon God's patience and goodness, are mocked by Him, being suffered to go beyond the bounds of His forgiveness. It is also called "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 12:31), "resisting the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51), "doing despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). The "new testament" or "covenant" is "the ministration of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:8), which far exceeds in glory the legal dispensation. To be guilty of the great transgression is to sin willfully against and to speak maliciously of the Holy Spirit, who is revealed and promised in the Gospel; it is a quenching of His convictions, resisting His enlightenment, defying His authority.

It is called "a sin unto death" (1 John 5:16) because its perpetrator is now out of reach of the promise of eternal life, having made the Gospel, which is a proclamation of Divine grace unto those who will submit themselves to its requirements, a "savour of death unto death" to himself. He was convicted by it that he was legally dead, and because of his impenitence, unbelief, hard-heartedness, and determination to go on having *his own way*, he is left spiritually dead. Unto others God grants "repentance unto life," (Acts 11:18), but when once "sin unto death" has been committed, it is "impossible to renew again unto repentance" (Heb. 6:4-6). By his opposition to the Gospel and refusal to receive Christ's "yoke," the guilty rebel has trampled under foot the blood of God's Son, and as *that* alone can procure forgiveness, there is now no pardon available for him.

The very fact that it is designated "*a sin unto death*" rather than "*the sin unto death*" confirms what we said in a previous paragraph, namely that it is not some specific offence but rather that the particular form it takes varies in different cases. And herein we may perceive how the *sovereignty* of God is exercised in connection therewith. God allows some to go to greater lengths of wickedness than others: some evil-doers He cuts off in youth, while other workers of iniquity are permitted to live unto old age. Against some He is more quickly and more strongly provoked than others. Some souls He abandons to themselves more readily than He does others. It is *this* which renders the subject so unspeakably solemn: no man has any means of knowing how soon *he may cross the line which marks the limits of God's forbearance with him*. To trifle with God is hazardous to the last degree.

That the sovereignty of God is exercised in this matter appears very clearly from the cases of those whom He is pleased to save. What fearful crimes Manasseh was guilty of before Divine grace renewed him! What dreadful sins Saul of Tarsus committed ere the Lord Jesus apprehended him! Let the writer and the reader review their own unregenerate

days: how dreadfully did we provoke the Majesty on High; how long did we persevere in a course of open rebellion; against what restraints, privileges, light and knowledge, warnings and entreaties, did we act! How many of the godless companions of our youth were cut off in their guilt, while we were spared. Was it because *our* sins were less crimson? No, indeed; so far as we can perceive, our sins were of a deeper dye than theirs. Then why did God save us? and why were they sent to Hell? “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight” *must* be the answer.

A sovereign God has drawn the line in every life which marks the parting of the ways. When that line is reached by the individual, God does one of two things with him: either He performs a miracle of grace so that he becomes “a new creature in Christ Jesus,” or henceforth that individual is *abandoned* by Him, given up to hardness of heart and final impenitency; and *which* it is, depends entirely upon His own imperial pleasure. And none can tell how near he may be to that line, for some reach it much earlier in life than others—according as God sovereignly decreed. Therefore it is the part of wisdom for each sinner to promptly heed that word “Seek ye the Lord *while He may be found*” (Isa. 55:6), which plainly denotes that soon it may be too late—as Proverbs 1:28-31 and Matthew 25:8-12 plainly show.

This solemn distinction which God makes between one case and another was strikingly shadowed out under the law. We refer to a remarkable detail concerning the *jubilee* year, a detail which seems to have escaped the notice of those who have preached and written on the subject. Those in Israel who, through poverty, had sold their possessions, had them restored at the year of jubilee: see Leviticus 25:25-28. That was a wondrous and beautiful figure of the free grace of God towards His people in Christ, by which, and not because of anything of their own, they are restored to the Divine favour and given a title to the heavenly inheritance. But in connection therewith there was *an exception*, designed by God, we doubt not, to adumbrate that which we are here treating upon. That exception we will briefly notice.

“If a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: *it shall not go out in the jubilee*” (Lev. 25:29, 30). We cannot now attempt an exposition of this interesting passage or dwell upon its leading features. No part of the “land” could be sold outright (see v. 23), for that was the free gift of *God’s* bounty—there can be no failure in Divine grace: but houses in the city were the result of *their* labour—human responsibility being in view. If the house was sold and not repurchased within a year, it passed *beyond the reach of redemption*, its forfeiture being irrevocable and irrecoverable! Symbolically, the “house” spoke of security under the Divine covenant, for in all generations God in covenant has been the “dwelling place” of His people (Psa. 90:1). To part with his house typified a professor selling himself to work presumptuous wickedness (1 Kings 21:20), and so selling his soul, his God, his all. To such an one the Spirit will never “proclaim liberty” of the Jubilee, for Satan holds him fast, and Divine justice forbids his discharge: when God “shutteth up a man, there can be *no opening*” (Job 12:14).

In view of all that has been before us, how softly we should tread, how careful we should be of not provoking the Holy One! How earnestly we should pray to be kept back from “presumptuous sins!” How diligently should the young improve their privileges:

how they should heed that warning, “He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that *without remedy*” (Prov 29:1)! How careful we should be against adding sin to sin, lest we provoke God to leave us unto final impenitency. Our only safeguard is to heed the voice of the Lord *without delay*, lest He “sware in His wrath” that *we* “should not enter into His rest!” How we need to beg God to write those words upon our hearts, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12), for there is no hope whatever for the apostate.

A word now unto those with tender consciences that fear *they* may have committed sin for which there is no forgiveness. The trembling and contrite sinner is the farthest from it. There is not one instance recorded in Scripture where any one who was guilty of “the great transgression” and had been given up by God to inevitable destruction, ever repented of his sins, or sought God’s mercy in Christ; instead, they all continued obstinate and defiant, the implacable enemies of Christ and His ways unto the end. While there be in the heart any sincere valuing of God’s approbation, any real sense of His holiness which deters from trifling with Him, any genuine purpose to turn unto Him and submit to His requirements, any true fearing of His wrath, *that soul has not* been abandoned by Him. If you have a deep desire to obtain an interest in Christ, or become a better Christian; if you are deeply troubled over sin, if your heart grieves over its hardness, if you yearn and pray for more tenderness of conscience, more yieldedness of will, more love and obedience to Christ, then you have *no cause* to suspect you have committed the “unpardonable sin.”

“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb. 12:16, 17). These verses continue what was before us in the preceding one, and complete the series of exhortations begun in verse 12. As we pointed out at the close of last month’s article, the ultimate reference in verse 15 is first a warning against that which if disregarded would end in apostasy, and second, a caution against suffering one who evidences the symptoms of an apostate to remain in the assembly—its language being an allusion unto Deuteronomy 29:18. That warning and caution is now exemplified by citing the fearful example of Esau, who, though born among the covenant people and receiving (we doubt not) a pious upbringing, committed a sin for which there was no forgiveness, and became an apostate.

First of all, two particular sins are here warned against: “fornication” and “profanity,” each of which is “a root of bitterness,” which if permitted to “spring up” will cause “trouble” to the guilty one and “defile many” with whom he is associated. Both “fornication” and “profanity” are opposed unto the *holiness* exhorted unto in verse 14. Fornication is a sin against the second table of the Law, and profanity a breach of its first table. As in verse 14 the Apostle had enjoined the Hebrews to “follow peace” which has respect to *man* and “holiness” which regards our relation to *God*, so now he forbids two sins, the first of which would be committed against man, the second against God. The two sins go together, for where a course of moral uncleanness is followed, profanity almost always accompanies it; and on the other hand, profane persons habitually think lightly of immorality. The forsaking of either sin by sincere repentance is exceedingly rare.

The term “profane” has a more specific meaning and wider application than it is commonly accorded in our speech today. “Holy things are said to be profaned when men take off the veneration that is due unto them, and expose them to common use or contempt. To ‘profane’ is to violate, to corrupt, to prostitute to common use things sacred, either in their nature or by Divine institution. A profane person is one that despiseth, sets light by, or condemneth sacred things. Such as mock at religion, or who lightly regard its promises and threatenings; who despise or neglect its worship, who speak irreverently of its concerns, we call profane persons, and such they are, and such the world is filled with at this day. This profaneness is the last step of entrance into final apostasy. When men, from professors of religion, become despisers of and scoffers at it, their state is dangerous, if not irrevocable” (J. Owen).

An instance of this evil is given in Esau, and a fearfully solemn case his is, one which should warn us not to put our trust in *external* privileges. “He was the firstborn of Isaac, circumcised according to the law of that ordinance, and partaker of all the worship of God in that holy family; yet an outcast from the covenant of grace and the promise thereof” (Owen). The particular offence with which he is here charged is that “for one morsel of meat” he “sold his birthright.” Now the birthright or privilege of the firstborn carried with it the following things: the special blessing of his father, a double portion of his goods, dominion over his brethren, and priestly functions (Num. 3:41) when the father was absent from home. The “birthright” was regarded as a very special thing, being typical of the primogeniture of Christ, of the adoption of saints, and of a title to the heavenly inheritance. All of this Esau despised.

The historical account of Esau’s sin is recorded in the closing verses of Genesis 25: the heinousness of it is exhibited in our text. Esau preferred the gratification of the flesh rather than the blessing of God. He relinquished all claims to the privileges contained in and annexed to his being the firstborn, for a trifling and temporary enjoyment of the body. Alas, how many there are like him in the world today. What vast numbers prefer carnal pleasures to spiritual joys, temporal advantages to eternal riches, physical gratification to the soul’s salvation. By calling Esau “profane,” the Holy Spirit reveals that he placed no higher value upon sacred things than he did upon those which were common. That which he received as the price of his wickedness is termed “meat,” to indicate that satisfying of the flesh was his motive; and a “morsel,” to emphasise the paltriness of his choice.

The enormity of the sin of “profanity” is determined by the sacredness of the objects to which it is opposed: let the reader carefully compare Leviticus 18:21; 21:9; Nehemiah 13:17; Ezekiel 22:26. The “profane” are guilty of trampling God’s pearls beneath their feet. To spurn the Scriptures, to desecrate the Sabbath, to revile God’s servants, to despise or ridicule the Gospel, to mock at the future state, are all so many forms of this unspeakable wickedness. As helps against it we would mention the need of being well instructed from the Word, so that we may know *what are* “holy” things. To bring our hearts to realise the superlative excellency of holiness. To meditate seriously and frequently upon God’s indignation against those who slight what He highly esteems.

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Heb. 12:17). This takes us back to the closing section of Genesis 27, where we learn the consequences which his sin entailed. Isaac had pronounced the patriarchal benediction

upon Jacob, which, when his brother learned thereof deeply agitated him: “He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry” (Gen. 27:34). It was then that his “tears” were shed: but they proceeded not from anguish of heart because he had sinned so grievously against God, rather did they flow from a sense of self-pity—they expressed his chagrin for the consequences which his *folly* had produced. Similar are the lamentations of probably ninety-nine out of a hundred so called “deathbed repentances.” And such will be the “weeping and wailing” of those in Hell: not because *God* was so slighted and wronged by them, but because of the eternal suffering which their sins have justly resulted in.

Esau’s “tears” were of no avail: “he was rejected.” His appeal *came too late*: Isaac had already bestowed the blessing upon Jacob. It was like an Israelite seeking to recover his property eighteen months after he had sold it: see again Leviticus 25:30. Isaac, who was a prophet of God, His mouthpiece, refused to be moved by Esau’s bitter wailing. In like manner, the Lord says of those who have sinned away the day of grace “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me” (Prov. 1:28); and “Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, *yet will I not hear them*” (Ezek. 8:18). O what point that gives to the call “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him *while He is near*” (Isa. 55:6). Reader, if you have not yet genuinely responded to that call, do so at once; delay is fraught with the utmost peril to your soul.

The Apostle was here addressing professing Christians, and the fearful case of Esau is set before them (and *us!*) as a warning against departing from the Narrow Way, of exchanging the high privileges of the faithful for the temporary advantages of a faithless world. The doom of the apostate is irretrievable. To lightly esteem, and then despise, sacred things, will be followed “afterward” by bitter regret and unavailing anguish. To reject the terms of the Gospel in order to gratify the lusts of the flesh for a brief season, and then suffer forever and ever in the Lake of Fire, is the height of madness. No excuse could palliate Esau’s profanity, and nothing can extenuate the wickedness of him who prefers the drudgery of Satan to the freedom there is in Christ. Esau’s rejection by Isaac was the evidence of his reprobation by God. May it please the Lord to use this article to *search the heart* of every reader.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

48. *His Kindness to Mephibosheth.*

Behind the noble magnanimity exercised by David toward the last descendant of his arch-enemy Saul, we may perceive the shining forth of the glory of God's grace unto His fallen and sinful people. Alas, how feeble are our apprehensions of this wonderful attribute of God, how altogether inadequate our best efforts to set forth its excellency! Those who are the most indebted to the Divine favour, are most conscious of the poverty of their language to express the gratitude and praise, the admiration and adoration which is due from them. When the poor outcast and crippled son of Jonathan was brought from Lodebar to Jerusalem, and was received not only with kindness, but accorded a place in the king's family and given a seat at David's own table, he must have found words to utterly fail him. And when a slave of sin and captive of Satan is not only set free by Christ but made a joint-heir with Him, he is lost in wonderment. Eternity will be required to render unto God that worship to which He is entitled.

Grace is the opposite of justice. Justice gives to each his exact due: it shows no favour and knows no mercy. It gives impartially to all the precise wages which they have earned. But grace is free favour, unwarranted and unmerited by the recipients of it. Grace is the very last thing to which rebellious sinners are entitled; to talk of *deserving* "grace" is a contradiction in terms. Grace is purely a matter of charity, exercised sovereignly and spontaneously, attracted by nothing praiseworthy in its object. Divine grace is the free favour of God in the bestowment of mercies and blessings upon those who have no good *in* them, and concerning whom no compensation is demanded *from* them. Nay more: Divine grace is not only shown to those who have no merit, but who are full of positive demerit; it is not only bestowed upon the ill-deserving, but the Hell-deserving.

How completely grace sets aside *every* thought of personal desert, may be seen from a single quotation of Scripture: "Being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24). The word "freely" gives intensity to the term "grace," though the Greek does not convey the thought of abundance, but rather emphasises its gratuitousness. The same word is rendered "without a cause" in John 15:25. There was nothing whatever in the Lord Jesus to deserve such vile treatment from the hands of His enemies, nothing whatever that He had done warranting such awful enmity on their part. In like manner, there is nothing whatever in any sinner to call forth the favourable regard of a holy God, nothing done by him to win His love; instead, everything to the contrary. Grace, then is gratis; a free gift.

The very expression "the grace of God" implies and denotes that the sinner's condition is desperate to the last degree, and that God may justly leave him to perish; yea, it is a wonder of wonders that he is not already in Hell. Grace is a Divine provision for those who are so depraved they cannot change their own nature, so averse from God they will not turn to Him, so blind they can neither see their malady nor the remedy, so dead spiritually that God must bring them out of their graves on to resurrection ground if ever they are to walk in newness of life. Grace is the sinner's last and only hope; if he is not saved by grace, he will never be saved at all. Grace levels all distinctions, and regards the most zealous religionist on the same plane as the most profligate, the chaste virgin as the foul prostitute. Therefore God is perfectly free to save the chiefest of sinners and bestow His mercy on the vilest of the vile.

In last month's article, we got as far as Mephibosheth being actually brought into the presence of David. What a meeting was that! For the first time in his life this man now

sees the one whom his grandfather had so mercilessly and unrighteously persecuted. "Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence" (2 Sam. 9:6). Fitting position was this to take for one whose very life hung upon the mere mercy of the king. What could he expect but to hear from his lips the sentence of death! There he lies, aptly portraying a trembling sinner, who, in his understanding and conscience, is brought, for the first time, face to face with the thrice holy God, with the One whom he has so long slighted, so wickedly ignored, so grievously offended. It was thus with Saul of Tarsus when the Lord first appeared to him: "he fell to the earth" (Acts 9:4). Reader, have you ever taken your place before Him in the dust?

Most probably David had never before seen Mephibosheth, yet he now addressed him in the most intimate terms; "And David said, Mephibosheth" (2 Sam. 9:6). It is blessed to see that the king was the first one to break the silence, showing us in type how God *takes the initiative* at every point in connection with the saving of His people. This recalls to us that word of the Apostle's to the Galatians, "But now, after that ye have known God, *or rather* are known of God" (4:9). A single word was all that David yet uttered—"Mephibosheth"—yet how much was expressed by it! How it reminds us of that precious declaration from the lips of the Good Shepherd, "He calleth His own sheep *by name*" (John 10:3). When, at the burning bush, the Lord first revealed Himself to Israel's deliverer from Egypt, He said, "Moses, Moses" (Exo. 3:4). The first word of the Saviour to the one in the sycamore tree was "Zacchaeus" (Luke 19:5). When He made known Himself unto the tear-blinded seeker at His sepulchre, it was by the single word, "Mary" (John 20:16.) His first word to the persecutor of His church was "Saul" (Acts 9:4). Thus it was in our present incident. "And Mephibosheth answered, Behold thy servant."

But the next word of David's was yet more blessed: "Fear not" (2 Sam. 9:7) he said to the cripple prostrate before him. There was no rebuke for his having so long kept away from him, no reproaching him because he was of the house of Saul; but instead, a word to assure him, to put him at his ease. O how this should comfort every contrite soul: we have nothing whatever to fear, once we take our place in the dust before the Lord. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6). Was it not thus with the Father, when the penitent prodigal cast himself on His mercy! No word of censure left His lips: instead He quickly assured him of His love. How this "fear not" of David to Mephibosheth reminds us of the same language found so often on the lips of the Redeemer when addressing His own! Wondrous is it to observe that, when the glorified Saviour appeared unto John in Patmos, when that Apostle fell at His feet as dead, it was the same old familiar "Fear not" (Rev. 1:17) which reassured him.

Not only did David address Mephibosheth by name, and quiet his heart with a "Fear not," but he also added, "For I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (2 Sam. 9:7). This was grace pure and simple, wondrous grace, the "exceeding riches of grace." There was no contingency here, no bargain made, no conditions stipulated; but instead "I will *surely* show thee kindness." David did not say "If you do this or that" or "if you will keep your part of the contract, I will adhere to mine." No, no; it was free favour, gratuitous mercy, unmerited bounty; everything for nothing. David acted royally, like a king, for it becomes not a monarch to barter. How much more is this the case with the King of kings: He is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10), and eternal

life is a *gift* (Rom. 6:23) wherever He is pleased to bestow it. To preach salvation by works is not only to mock impotent sinners, but is to grossly insult the ineffable Jehovah.

And what effect did this astonishing kindness have upon Mephibosheth? Did it puff him up with self-importance, and cause him to act as though he was other than a poor cripple? No, indeed; such is never the effect of Divine grace applied to the heart, though often it is the case where airy notions of it sink no deeper than the head. "And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" (v. 8). Is not that truly beautiful? The exceeding kindness of David did not work in him self-elation and self-exaltation, but self-abasement: it wrought in him a deeper consciousness of his utter unworthiness before such unthought of favours. He was amazed that the king should even notice, much less favourably regard, such a worthless creature as he felt himself to be. Did he not now conduct himself in suitable accord with *his name*, when he called himself "a dead dog"; for "Mephibosheth" signifies "a shameful thing." And what is the name which Scripture gives to me?—sinner!: do I, by my attitude, own the truthfulness of it?

This line in our picture calls for particular notice in such a day as we are living in, wherein there is so much self-esteem, creature boasting, Laodicean complacency and Pharisaic self-righteousness. O what a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty must be the reeking pride of modern Christendom. How little practical exemplification of that principle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). How few feel, like Paul did, that they are "the chief of sinners." And why is this? Because the hearts of so very few are *really* touched and affected by the grace of God. Grace ever humbles. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Where the kindness of God is truly felt in the soul we are "little in our own eyes." Just as the royal magnanimity of David bowed Mephibosheth before him, causing him to own that he was but "a dead dog," so when the love of God melts our hard hearts, we realise and own what unworthy wretches, vile creatures, and corrupt worms we are.

We must now consider the wondrous *portion* which was bestowed upon Mephibosheth as the result of the great kindness which David showed him, for this was a striking figure of the "riches" which Divine grace imparts to those who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. First, there was *life* for him, for the king refused to slay him when he was in his power. That his life was spared him was a notable act of clemency on the part of the monarch. Blessedly did this illustrate the abounding mercy of God unto those who have flouted His authority, broken His laws, and deserved naught but unsparring judgment at His hands: though the wages of sin is death, yet the gift of God is "eternal life" through Jesus Christ our Lord. Second, there was *peace* for him: David's "Fear not" was designed to allay his terror, quieten his heart, and set him at perfect ease in the presence of the king. So it is with the believer: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1).

Third, there was *an inheritance* for him. "Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house" (2 Sam. 9:9). What a truly wonderful line in our typical picture is that!—one, we are again constrained to say, which no merely human artist could have drawn. How it portrays to us the bounty of our God in bestowing upon poor bankrupt paupers the riches of His grace. Though we come to Him empty-handed, He does not suffer us to remain so.

But there is something there yet more definite: Mephibosheth had restored to him the *forfeited* inheritance. The heritage which had originally belonged to Saul had been lost to his family. In like manner, through our first father's apostasy, we lost our primitive heritage, even the life, image, and blessing of God. Nor could *we* possibly do anything to regain it. But as David "for Jonathan's sake" restored unto Mephibosheth the estate of his fathers, so God for Christ's sake gives back to His people all that they lost in Adam.

Fourth, there was a *wondrous portion* granted him. Said David to Mephibosheth, "thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (v. 7). What a tremendous contrast was that from being an outcast at Lodebar—"the place of no pasture": now to feast at the king's own table, and that, not merely for once, but "continually!" Truly it *was* the "kindness of God" which David showed unto him. How forcibly this reminds us of what we find at the close of the parable of the prodigal son, when he who, having been "in want" in the far country, after his return in penitence, is feasted by his Father with the "fatted calf." Nothing short of giving us His best will satisfy the great heart of "the God of all grace": and what is His "best" but *fellowship with Himself*, which eating at His table is the symbol of.

Fifth, there was *an honoured position* for him: "As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, *as one of the king's sons*" (v. 11). He eats not as an alien or stranger, but as a member of the royal family. Not only was he sumptuously fed, but highly honoured: a place in the king's own palace was now his, and that, not as a servant, but as a son. How this makes us think of "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called *the sons of God*" (1 John 3:1)! O what a marvelous place does Divine grace give unto those that are the objects of it: all believers stand accepted as the children of God, the subjects of His everlasting favour. That is something which Saul never enjoyed, but for Jonathan's sake Mephibosheth now gained more than he had previously lost. So through Christ the believer obtains far, far more than he lost in Adam. Where sin abounds, grace does *much more* abound. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). Under the king's table the crippled feet of Mephibosheth were *lost to sight*: in Christ all our deformities are hid!

There is a sequel, both pathetic and blessed, recorded in the later chapters of 2 Samuel which we will here briefly notice, for it provides a lovely completeness to all which has been before us. First, in 2 Samuel 16:1-4 we learn that when David fled from Absalom, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met the king with a liberal provision of food for his men. When David inquired where Mephibosheth was, Ziba answered him, "Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father." This is one of many warnings given to the saints in Scripture that they must be prepared for calumny and unkind treatment: often—as was the case here—by those from whom it should be the least expected.

Second, after Absalom's death, there went forth a company to do honour to the returned king. Among them was Mephibosheth, of whom it is said, that he "had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace" (2 Sam. 19:24). What a lovely picture does that present to us of a loyal soul, whose heart had remained true to the (temporarily) rejected king! How clearly Mephibosheth's condition evidenced *where his affections* had been during David's absence! David now repeated the tale which Ziba had told him, and is informed it was utterly false. Mephibosheth then cast himself on the spiritual discern-

ment and sovereign pleasure of his royal master (vv. 27, 28). The king then put his heart to the test, suggesting that the land be divided between Mephibosheth and his servant—the same in principle as Solomon’s proposal that the living child be divided between the two women who claimed it as hers.

Had Mephibosheth been the false-hearted wretch which Ziba had painted him, he had acquiesced promptly to David’s suggestion, glad to escape so easily: “a wise settlement” he would have exclaimed. Instead, he nobly replied, “Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house” (2 Sam. 19:30). How that gave the lie to Ziba’s accusation: how it demonstrated Mephibosheth was clear of any carnal covetousness. It was not *land* which he wanted: now that his beloved master had returned, he was quite satisfied. O how this should speak to and search us: are *our* affections set upon the Person of the absent King? Is it *His* presence that *we* long for above everything else?—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

4. *The Abrahamic.*

In the application unto Abraham of those Divine principles considered in last month's article, it should be quite obvious that the law of his obedience was attended with both promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments, suited unto the goodness and holiness of God, and fitted for the discharge of his moral responsibility. It may be asked, Where is there any hint in Scripture of any provisos and terms attached to the Abrahamic Covenant, or any clear statement that God stipulated any terms to him? Such a question is capable of several answers. In the first place, unless there *were* such provisos and terms, no "covenant" had been made at all. Second, the extreme brevity of the Genesis account must be borne in mind, and instead of expecting a full categorical statement, its fragmentary details need to be carefully pieced together. Third, Genesis 12:1 shows plainly that Canaan was first set before him *provisionally*.

In addition to what has just been said, we would point out what the Lord declared in connection with the sign and seal of this covenant: "the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath *broken My covenant*" (Gen. 17:14). Here, then, it is clear that a "condition" *was* stipulated, the failure to meet which "broke the covenant." Again, in Genesis 18:19 we find God saying, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; *that* (in order that) the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Abraham had to "*keep the way of the LORD,*" which is defined as "to *do justice and judgment,*" that is, walk *obediently*, in subjection to God's revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises. Once more, we read "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen. 26:5). Thus, while God dealt with Abraham in pure grace, it is plain that he was also placed under the law.

Some readers are likely to object, This is a wretched subversion of the glorious Covenant of Grace: by your "conditions," "terms," and "provisos" you reduce it to a contingency and uncertainty, instead of its being "ordered in all things and *sure.*" Our first rejoinder is that, *We* have not introduced the "conditions" and "provisos" into the covenant; instead, they are so stated in the Scriptures. God did not make an absolute grant of Canaan unto Abraham when He first revealed Himself to him in Chaldea: rather was he required to tread the path of obedience unto that land "which he should *after* receive for an inheritance." Nor does God make an absolute (or unconditional) grant of Heaven when the sinner first believes in Christ; instead, He requires him to walk the narrow way which alone leadeth unto Life, and faithfully warns him that it is to his imminent peril if he converges therefrom.

It may be replied, But this is to leave all at an uncertainty. It all depends upon the angle from which you view it. Considered as the object of God's everlasting love, as chosen in Christ, as redeemed by Him, as indwelt and sealed by the Spirit, the believer's safely reaching Heaven is placed beyond all peradventure. But consider the believer as a responsible agent, as still having the "flesh" in him, living in a world where he is beset by temptation on every side, called upon to "fight the good fight of faith" and to "lay hold on eternal life," and the matter appears in quite another light; and the one viewpoint is just as *real and actual* as is the other! The difficulty here as to whether or not the be-

liever's "keeping" or "breaking" the covenant renders all insecure, is precisely the same as showing the consistency between Divine *preservation* and Christian *perseverance*. Though the "ifs" of John 8:31 and Colossians 1:23 do *not* annul the promise of Philippians 1:6, nevertheless, they are *there*, and must be taken into account by us.

From the Divine side, the Covenant of Grace *is* "ordered in all things and *sure*": there is not the slightest possibility of anything in it failing: Christ *will* "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," and not one of those given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world will be lost. But that does not alter the fact that while the elect are left here in this world they are bidden to "*make* their calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10), "*if* they may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also they were apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). The Covenant has provided for the communication of *effectual* grace to secure the saints' obedience and perseverance, yet that does not alter the fact that God still enforces His righteous claims upon them and deals with them as moral agents, who are required to heed His warnings, obey His precepts, and *use the means* He has appointed for their preservation.

Some experience difficulty in fitting together those Scriptures which present "eternal life" as the present and inalienable possession of the believer, with other passages that place it in the future and as only being attained unto by following a course of self-denial: such verses as John 5:24 and Romans 6:23 are quite simple to them, but Romans 6:22; 8:13; Galatians 6:8; Jude 21, they are at a loss to know what to do with. But there is nothing inconsistent between a believer acting from a principle of grace and life *already* communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, and his so acting that he *may* live. A man must be alive before he can eat, yet he must eat in order that he may live: were he to cease entirely from the taking of food would there be any life for him in a month's time? Neither would the Christian enter Heaven if he entirely neglected the means of grace appointed for his spiritual preservation.

Of old Moses said unto Israel, "The LORD thy God *will* circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. 30:6). Was he, then, "inconsistent" when, at the close of the same address, he declared, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed *may* live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (vv. 19, 20). Was Moses there setting before them a "yea and nay Gospel?" Emphatically, No; for he was the mouth-piece of Jehovah Himself. Nor was this appeal a "legal" one, but a strictly "evangelical" one. Alas, that so many today err "not knowing the Scriptures." "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him *and keep his commandments* to a thousand generations"—not merely from Moses till Christ! (Deut. 7:9); yes, and with no others. This verse is just as much a part of the Holy and inspired Word of God as is Ephesians 2:8, 9, and the one is needed by us as much as the other.

Should it be objected, This is bringing in a legalistic inducement and inculcating a mercenary spirit to put the believer upon using means in order to his preservation, and setting before him Heaven or eternal life as a "reward" for his faithfulness. In reply, let us

quote from the renowned and evangelical Dutch theologian: “A mercenary baseness is certainly unworthy of the highborn sons of God, but their heavenly Father does not forbid them to have any regard to *their own* advantage in the exercise of holiness. David himself confesseth that, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether . . . ‘by them is Thy servant warned, and *in keeping of them* there is great *reward*’ (Psa. 19:9, 11). And the faith of Moses is commended because ‘he had respect unto the recompense *of the reward*’ (Heb. 11:26). Yea, *that* faith is required of all who come to God, that they ‘*must* believe that He is a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him’—Hebrews 11:6” (from “Irenicon” by H. Witsius, 1696).

To anticipate one more objection—not with any expectation of convincing the carping critic, but rather in the hope of helping some who are in a state of bewilderment from the one-sided teaching of our unhappy day:—But does not all of the above inculcate the principle of human *merit*? No, for it is due alone to Divine *grace* that the believer has had communicated to him a principle of obedience—a heart or nature which desires to please God. Furthermore, it is solely for *Christ’s* sake that God so liberally rewards the sincere endeavours of His people, for apart from the Mediator and *His* merits, they could not be accepted by Him. Finally, there is no proportion whatever between the Christian’s obedience and the “reward” he receives—the Inheritance infinitely exceeding his poor efforts; any more than there was in God’s giving Canaan to Abraham and his seed because he left Chaldea.

Coming closer now to our immediate theme, it should be pointed out that the Abrahamic Covenant is *not* to be regarded as a thing apart, having no direct connection with what went before or what followed it; but rather is it to be viewed as a part of and a further step in the unfolding unto God’s people of His eternal counsels. The call of Abraham was a most important step in the outworking of God’s purpose. It was one of those remarkable epochs in the history of the Church which produced a new order of things, in perfect keeping with, yet greatly in advance of, what had previously been communicated. The work of preparation for the appearance of the Messiah now assumed a more tangible form and entered on a phase bearing more visibly upon the attainment of the ultimate result. The line from which the promised Seed was to spring was now more definitely defined, while the scope of Divine grace was more clearly revealed.

The declaration made by the Lord God in Eden after Adam’s transgression, that the “Seed” of the woman should triumph over and destroy the Serpent, had been the ground of the saints’ faith and the object of their hope during the first two thousand years’ history of the world. Until the time of Abraham, nothing more had been revealed concerning the person of the coming Deliverer (so far as Scripture records) than that He was to be of the human race; but of what particular family, or even of which nation, no one was informed. Where men were to look for Him, whether in Egypt, in Babylon, or in some other land, did not yet transpire. But in the covenant which God made with Abraham, not only was the promise of a Saviour renewed, but His family and place was now made known. For this great honour the “friend of God” was selected: to him it was revealed that the Messiah should spring from *his* stock, and that the land of *Canaan* would be the scene of His glorious mission.

Not only should the Abrahamic Covenant be regarded as part of a greater whole rather than an isolated transaction, but attention must not be restricted to any single episode in the patriarch’s life or God’s dealings with him. We fully agree with John Kelly when he

said, "If we would form an accurate estimate of that covenant, and of the truth which it was the means of revealing, we must not confine ourselves to any one particular transaction in which allusion is made to it, however important that transaction may have been. Our examination must embrace all the incidents recorded. We must bear in mind that everything that occurred to Abraham, from his call to the close of his life, was intended to explain and illustrate the nature of the Covenant."

It was not by one specific communication that the mind of God was fully disclosed unto Abraham. Several were made at different times, all relating to the same subject, and unfolding the import of the covenant; while the character of Abraham himself—shaped by the various trials through which he was called to pass and molded by grace through faith—throws important light upon the conceptions which he entertained of what had been revealed to him. All these form one homogeneous whole, and from them, thus considered, we are to form our views of the covenant. When Abraham was first called by the Lord, a bare hint was given him of the Divine purpose, which, under the Spirit's blessing, was the means of quickening his faith and producing the decision which he made. Yet only a *glimpse* was then afforded him of what God designed; it was not the formal establishment of the covenant—that event took place subsequently, after an interval of some years.

What has just been said appears to receive confirmation from Galatians 3:16, 17, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." "Four hundred and thirty years" prior to the giving of the Law at Sinai takes us back to *the beginning* of God's dealings with Abraham, recorded in Genesis 12, though the actual *term* "covenant" is not found in that chapter. It is not until we reach Genesis 15:18 that we find the transaction itself: "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land." Then in Genesis 17 we find the sign and seal of the covenant—circumcision—given. To the covenant there are other references in the chapters which follow: in Genesis 22 the covenant is confirmed. Thus, in fact, the covenant received important and successive enlargements during the intercourse which God, in infinite condescension, continued to have with His servant. Hebrews 6:13-18 links together the great "promise" of Genesis 12:3 and the "oath" of Genesis 22:15-18.

In our endeavour, then, to obtain a correct and comprehensive view of the Divine transaction in the Abrahamic Covenant, we are required to carefully examine *all* the information which the Genesis narrative supplies, the leading events in Abraham's own life (which are designed as a contribution for imparting an explanation), and the light which the New Testament casts upon them both, and regard all in its entire unity as illustrative of the covenant. To confine ourselves to one passage, however important it may seem to be, would be doing injustice to the subject. It is failure at *this* point which has resulted in so many superficial, inadequate, and one-sided discussions of the same by various writers. Those who approach the examination and consideration of the Abrahamic Covenant (or any other Scriptural theme) with a single pet theory or idea in their minds, which they are determined to establish at all costs, cannot expect to obtain a right and full view of the covenant as a whole.

We shall, then, regard the Abrahamic Covenant as a striking advance in the development of God's gracious purpose toward men, and yet as only a part of a greater and grander whole. In so doing that which will claim our special attention is, What was the particular nature and what the amount of the Truth, which it was the means of revealing? Upon these points a very wide diversity of opinion obtains, both among the older and more recent writers. Exactly *what* did the Abrahamic Covenant make manifest to the minds and hearts of God's people of old? and *how far* does the same apply to us now? The proper answers to these questions must be drawn from Holy Writ itself, fairly interpreted. Perhaps our best course (God Willing) is to single out the leading particulars, and then comment thereon as each may seem to require.—A.W.P.

Union and Communion.

4. *Federal.*

Once more we would point out that *the origin* of that union which subsists between the Church and Christ was the everlasting love of God: this it was which cemented Head and members together. The loving purpose of God gave the Church an election-union to Christ, which (for the want of a better term) we have styled the “mystical.” Inseparably connected with the election-standing of the Church before God, was its marriage to Christ, and upon that marital relationship we dwelt at length in last month’s article. We are now to consider further what branched out of the mystical union in view of the Church’s fall in its nature-head. Having in His high sovereignty predetermined the apostasy of Adam, upon His foreviews of the same, God engaged in an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of their fall. What that involved and included it will now be our joy to consider.

In contemplating the Covenant of Grace [the Everlasting Covenant] which was made between God and the Mediator, it is very necessary to recognise that Christ acted therein as *the Head* of the Church. This it is which determined the title of our present article. The elect had not only a mystical union with Christ in the womb of God’s decrees, but they had an actual oneness together in the sight of the Divine Law. That oneness has been variously designated by different writers: “covenant union,” “legal union,” “representative union,” “federal union,” all which signify much the same. The grand point to be apprehended here is, that Christ and His people were one in Divine election, He the Head and they the members of the mystical Body, and so likewise they are to be regarded in the Everlasting Covenant. The Covenant was made with Christ, not as a single person, but as a common Head, representing all the elect who were given to Him in a federal way; so that what He promised in the covenant, He promised for them and on their account; and what He was promised, He received on their behalf.

This federal oneness which exists between Christ and the elect from everlasting, means that they are one in a legal sense: or to state it yet more simply, Christ and His people are looked at as one by the eyes of the law, as surety and debtor are one. The bond of this union is Christ’s *suretyship*. “A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connection is established between our Redeemer and those who are given to Him by His Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God; and it was stipulated that, on account of His satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins” (John Dick).

The federal union between Christ and the elect gave them a covenant-subsistence in Him, for it was as their Head and Representative that He contracted to serve. The Everlasting Covenant flowed from and was the fruit of the love and grace of God. The ordering thereof pre-supposed *sin*, for its provisions had respect to the Fall, and its effects upon the Church. It was made with Christ not as a private or single person, but as a public and common Person. As the Covenant of Works was made with the first Adam as the federal head of his posterity—so that he was “the figure of Him that was to come” (Rom. 5:14)—so the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the last Adam as the federal Head of His spiritual offspring. The elect, then, had a representative union to Christ in the

Covenant, for all that He engaged to do, He engaged in their name and on their account; and when *He* performed its stipulations it was the same with God as if it had been done by *them*.

The bond, then, of the federal, legal and representative union between Christ and His people, is suretyship for them. Christ's entering upon that office on their behalf gave full proof of His deep and unchangeable affection to them. He loved them "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), and as Song of Solomon 8:7 declares, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." So it was here: not even His foreviews of the Church's apostasy in Adam, its fall into a state of degradation and defilement could change the heart of Christ toward His Bride. Her defection in Adam and her alienation from God only provided opportunity unto her eternal Lover to manifest the infinite affection He bore to her. Christ drew nigh unto God on the behalf of His Church, gave His bond, and placed Himself under obligation to pay all the debts of His people and satisfy for their sins.

Though the Church fell in Adam from her state of native innocence, she did not fall from the heart or arms of her heavenly Bridegroom. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25): note "loved" *before* "gave Himself for it." And when did He first love the Church? Hear His own answer: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). That declaration establishes two points: the eternity and the nature of Christ's love for His Church. Christ has been loved by the Father "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24), and He had been loved with a love which delighted in the excellency of His Person. Such was Christ's love toward His Church: it was not a love of compassion in view of the wretchedness occasioned by her fall in Adam, but a love of *complacency*, when He first viewed her as "all glorious within" (Psa. 45:13). His "delights" with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31) were precisely the same as the Father's "delight" in Him (Prov. 8:30). Blessedly did He display that love when, in foreviews of the Fall, He presented Himself to the Father to serve as "Surety" on behalf of His Church, who was immersed in debt which she could never discharge.

Then it was that the Father said, "Who is this that *engaged* (or, as the Hebrew word is rendered, "be surety for" in Psa. 119:122; Prov. 11:15) His heart to approach unto Me?" (Jer. 30:21). That the reference here is to Christ Himself, and that His undertaking to serve as Surety was infinitely wellpleasing to God, is clear from the first part of the verse: "their Governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me." It was then that Christ became "a Surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:22), substituting Himself in the place and stead of His fallen people, placing Himself under obligation to fully discharge their legal responsibility, pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. It was then that Christ offered to "finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24). This being accepted of by God, henceforth Christ and His elect were looked upon by the law as one person.

What was then transacted in the secret councils of eternity was, "when the fullness of the time was come" (Gal. 4:4), openly manifested on earth. In order to discharge His suretyship, it was necessary for there to be a natural union (a union in human nature), between Christ and His people, for "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are

all *of one*”—one nature (Heb. 2:11). Before the Son of God could take upon Him the sins of the elect, He must first assume their nature. It was meet that the Divine Law should be magnified and made honourable by One in the same nature as those by whom it had been disobeyed and dishonoured. Moreover, it was only by becoming incarnate that the second Person in the Trinity could be “made under the law.” Therefore do we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

The incarnation of Christ may therefore be called “manifestative union,” for at His birth there was *openly displayed* the oneness which existed between Him and His Church. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the *sins of the people*” (Heb. 2:17). The elect, who had fallen in Adam, could not be conformed unto the image of Christ until He had—by amazing grace—been conformed to their image. The nature which Christ assumed was the same as that which we have, for it was the “seed” of the woman—save that it was entirely free of sin’s taint. Though this union was supernaturally effected in time, yet it was the fruit of Christ’s love for the Church and the fulfillment of His covenant-engagements on her behalf before time began. Though the nature Christ assumed is one that is common to all mankind, yet as Hebrews 2 so plainly intimates, it was taken by Him with a peculiar regard to the elect—His “brethren,”—the “children,” the seed “of Abraham.”

Before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the election union, the marital union, the federal union which the Church had with Christ, and the manifest union which the incarnation gave Him to the Church, are only so many branches of and all take their rise from the everlasting *love union*. Everything is founded upon and grows out of the eternal love of the Triune God unto the elect: *this* is the grand original, the strong and firm bond of union between the Head and His members, and is the spring of all that communion and fellowship which the Church has with Christ (and God in Him) in time, and shall have to all eternity. All is antecedent to our faith union with Christ. It is from hence that the Holy Spirit is sent down into their hearts to renew them and work faith in their souls. Faith does not give them a being in Christ, but is only one of the fruits, effects, and evidences of their being in Christ and of their union to Him.

It is true that the elect do not, and cannot, *know of* their being eternally in Christ, nor of their union to Him before the foundation of the world, until they are given to savingly believe in Him; and that, by Christ’s sending the quickening Spirit into their hearts. Only then is that which before was concealed from them, revealed to them. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17): but being made a “new creature,” does not put a man into Christ, rather is it *the evidence of* his being there, and without which he cannot know it. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9): nevertheless, I may be one of Christ’s chosen and redeemed ones, though I have not yet the Spirit indwelling me. The *full* manifestation of our union to Christ will only appear in heaven itself, when His prayer in John 17:20-24 is fulfilled. But to return unto the present aspect of our subject.

Christ is the Friend who “*sticketh closer* than a brother” (Prov. 18:24) to His people. Nothing could dissolve the tie which had been established between them ere the world began. Nothing could quench His love to them, for “having loved His own which were in

the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Therefore, when He viewed the Church in its fallen estate, He willingly became incarnate, entered the office of Surety on their behalf, and engaged to put away all their sins and bring in a perfect righteousness for them. Christ undertook to conquer Satan, death, and Hell for His Church, and to present her before the high throne of God holy and without spot, as though she had never been defiled. This is a greater work than His making all things out of nothing, or the upholding of all things by the Word of His power. This work is the admiration and marvel of angels, and the theme of Heaven’s new song.

Jehovah Jesus, the God-man, with all the love of the Godhead in His heart, in His incarnate state, stood in the law-place, room and stead of, His sinful people as their Sponsor, lived and obeyed the law for them. He was here as their Representative, and His perfect fulfillment of the law in thought and word and deed, constitutes their everlasting righteousness. When Christ had magnified the law and made it honourable, the Lord caused to meet on Him the iniquities of all His people, so that He was, imputatively, “made sin” (2 Cor. 5:21) for them. Jehovah the Father alone could dispose of iniquity, and gather all the sins of all the elect and place them on Christ: He “the Judge of all” (Heb. 12:23) was the One immediately sinned against, and therefore the only One who could provide and accept an atoning sacrifice. “*God was in Christ* reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

As “the Lamb of God” Christ was appointed and prepared from eternity as is clear from Revelation 13:8 and 1 Peter 1:19, 20. The atoning death of Christ, then, was a grand article of the Everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son. This was decreed by God, agreed upon by the Mediator, and published by the Spirit in the Scriptures. The transferring of sin from the persons of the elect to the Person of Christ was shadowed forth under the Old Testament sacrifices, they being substituted in the room of sinners and offered for sin—the sins of the offenders being laid upon them in a typical way: see Leviticus 4:4 and 16:21. The curse and vengeance of God’s wrath which was to fall upon Christ when He should have the sins of His people laid upon Him, and be borne by Him in His own body to and on the Tree, was set forth by the fire which lighted upon and consumed the sacrifices under the law.

The covenant oneness of Christ and His Church was adumbrated by the relation which obtained between Adam and the human race, for though Christ’s actual discharge of His suretyship was historically afterwards, yet in the order of God’s decrees it was before it. This is clear from Romans 5:18, 19, “Therefore *as* by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; *even* so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For *as* by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, *so* by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” Believers are made righteous through the obedience of Christ on precisely the same principles of all of Adam’s posterity were made sinners by the disobedience of their natural head: there was an identity of legal relations and reciprocal obligations and rights. In each case it was the one that was acting on the behalf of many, and doing so because of his federal union with the many.

When God accepted Christ as the federal Head of His people, they were henceforth considered as legally one: this, and this alone, being the foundation for the imputation of their sins to Him and of His righteousness to them. *This* was the foundation of all which Christ did and suffered for them, and for them alone; and for all the blessings of grace

which are or shall be bestowed on them; which blessings are denied all others. To discharge their legal liabilities, Christ entered upon the office of Surety, in consequence of which He became responsible to the law for His people: so truly so, that the benefit of His transactions redounds to them. As Adam's transgression was imputed to us because we were legally one with him, so our iniquities were imputed to Christ because He stood before the law as our Sponsor; and in like manner, His obedience and its reward is reckoned to our account: "For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

It is of vast importance to perceive that the saving-work of Christ was performed not only *for* His people, but that He did it as *in union with* them, so that the Church has such an interest in all her Head did and suffered for her sake, that she was one with Him, yea, *in Him*, in all His actions and sufferings. He loved *them*, was born for them, lived for them, died for them, rose from the grave for them, and ascended into Heaven for them. But more: they were one with Him at every point. They were crucified "*with Christ*" (Gal. 2:20), "buried with Him" (Col. 2:12), "and hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). These expressions indicate not only the *intimacy* of the federal union, but the efficacy of the same, for the validity and virtue of His actions are reckoned to her. In Christ the Church is holy and righteous, pure and spotless: "ye are complete *in Him*" (Col. 2:10).

In the grand fact of federal union, and nowhere else, do we obtain an adequate answer to the age-long question of infidels, "How could Christ, a perfectly innocent person, *justly* suffer the curse of the law? If he were guiltless in Himself, then how could the Judge of all the earth *righteously* cause His sword to smite Him?" This objection loses its air of plausibility once the clear light of Christ's Covenant Headship is thrown upon it. Christ *voluntarily* suffered in the room and stead of others. If it be asked, What righteous principle justified His dying as a *Substitute*? "the just for the unjust?" the answer is, That gracious substituting of Himself as a victim for His people was the discharge of His *Suretyship*. If the inquiry be pressed further back still, "And what justified Christ's entering upon His office of Surety? the answer is, *His Covenant-oneness* with His people. And what moved Him to enter into His covenant engagement? LOVE, love to His Bride as He foresaw her fallen into sin.

In view of what has just been pointed out, must we not join the Apostle in exclaiming "O *the depth* of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33). Contrariwise, are we not also obliged to lament "O the dreadful *superficiality* of present-day preaching (?) of the Cross!" It was by a voluntary act on Christ's part, out of love to God and His people, that He offered to serve as the Surety of His elect, substitute Himself in their fallen stead, and bear the full punishment due their sins. Because their guilt was imputed to Him, the Father, without the slightest impeachment of His holiness and justice, exacted satisfaction from the Sponsor. In like manner, in perfect righteousness, God imputes Christ's merits to them. Therefore, no one considered as innocent, suffered; and none, considered guilty, escaped. The blood shed by Christ was "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20), and therefore has God promised Christ "By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth *Thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9:11).

The *effect* of this federal union is the Church's *communion* with Christ in all the benefits which His infinitely-meritorious work as Surety procured. "There is therefore now no

condemnation to them which are *in* Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1); “In the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24); “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). The elect have a community with their Head in His covenant standing and rights: *His* God and Father is *their* God and Father (John 20:17). The one Spirit who sanctified, anointed, sealed, and graced Him, does the same (according to their measure) for them. They have fellowship with Him now in His sufferings, and shall have fellowship with Him in His glory throughout eternity. May writer and reader be enabled to “mix faith” with this blessed truth to the praise and glory of Him “who loved us and gave Himself for us.”—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

7. *Its Author.*

God Himself is the alone source and spring of all holiness. There is nothing of it in any creature but what is immediately from the Holy One. When God first created man, He made him in His own image, that is, "in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24 and cf. Col. 3:10). The creature can no more produce holiness of himself than he can create life: for the one he is just as much dependent upon God as he is for the other. How much less, then, can a *fallen* creature, polluted and enslaved by sin, sanctify himself? More easily could the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots, than a moral leper make himself pure. Where any measure of real holiness is found in a human heart its possessor must say with Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). Sanctification, then, is the immediate work and gift of God Himself.

No greater delusion can seize the minds of men than that defiled nature is able to cleanse itself, that fallen and ruined man may rectify himself, or that those who have lost the image of God which He created in them, should create it again in themselves by their own endeavours. Self-evident as is this truth, yet pride ever seeks to set it aside. Self-complacency assumes that obligation and ability are co-extensive. Not so. It is true that God requires and commands us *to be holy* for He will not relinquish His rights or lower His standard. Yet His command no more denotes that we have the power to comply, than His setting before us a perfect standard implies we are able to measure up to the same. Rather does the one inform us that we are *without* what God requires, while the other should humble us into the dust because we come so far short of the glory of God.

But so self-sufficient and self-righteous are we by nature it also needs to be pointed out that the very fact God promises to *work in His people* by His grace both indicates and demonstrates that of themselves they are quite unable to meet His demands. Ponder for a moment the following: "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33), "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:39, 40), "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. 36:26, 27). In those blessed assurances, and no where else, is contained the guarantee of our sanctification: all turns upon *God's* power, grace, and operations. He is the alone accomplisher of His own promises.

The Author of our sanctification is the Triune God. We say "the *Triune God*, because in Scripture the title "God," when it stands unqualified, is not used with an uniform signification. Sometimes "God" refers to the first Person in the Trinity, sometimes to the second Person, and sometimes to the Third. In other passages, like 1 Corinthians 15:28, for instance, it includes all the three Persons. Each of the Eternal Three has His own distinctive place or part in connection with the sanctification of the Church, and it is necessary for us to clearly perceive this if we are to have definite views thereof. We have now reached that stage in our prosecution of this subject where it behooves us to carefully trace out the particular operations of *each* Divine Person in connection with our sanctifi-

cation, for only as these are discerned by us will we be prepared to intelligently offer unto each One the praise which is His distinctive due.

In saying that the Author of sanctification is the Triune God, we do not mean that the Father is the Sanctifier of the Church in precisely the same way or manner as the Son or as the Holy Spirit is. No, rather is it our desire to emphasise the fact that the Christian is equally indebted unto each of the three Divine Persons, that his sanctification proceeds as truly from the Father as it does from the Holy Spirit, and as actually from the Son as it does from either the Spirit or the Father. Many writers have failed to make this clear. Yet it needs to be pointed out that, in the economy of salvation, there is an *official order* observed and preserved by the Holy Three, wherein we are given to see that all is *from* the Father, all is *through* the Son, all is *by* the Holy Spirit. Not that this official order denotes any essential subordination or inferiority of one Person to another, but that each manifests Himself distinctively, each displays His own glory, and each is due the separate adoration of His people.

It is most blessed to observe there is a beautiful *order* adopted and carried on by the Eternal Three through all the departments of Divine love to the Church, so that each glorious Person of the Godhead has taken part in every act of grace manifested toward the mystical Body of Christ. Though all Three work conjointly, yet there are distinct Personal operations, by which they make way for the honour of each other: the love of the Father for the glory of the Son, and the glory of the Son for the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is in connection with the subject now before us. In the Scriptures we read that the Church is "sanctified by God *the Father*" (Jude 1), and again, "Wherefore Jesus also, that *He* might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12), and yet again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification *of the Spirit*" (2 Thess. 2:13). Each Person of the Godhead, then, is our Sanctifier, though not in the same manner.

This same co-operation by the Holy Three is observable in many other things. It was so in the creation of the world: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24), where the reference is plainly to the Father; of the Son it is affirmed "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3); while in Job 26:13 we are told, "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." So with the production of the sacred humanity of our Redeemer: the supernatural impregnation of the Virgin was the immediate effect of the Spirit's agency (Luke 1:35), yet the human nature was voluntarily and actively assumed by Christ Himself: He "took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7 and cf. "took part" in Heb. 2:14); while in Hebrews 10:5 we hear the Son saying to the Father, "a body hast Thou prepared Me."

Our present existence is derived from the joint operation of the Divine agency of the blessed Three: "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10); of the Son it is said, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth" (Col. 1:16); while in Job 33:4 we read, "The spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me life." In Like manner, the "eternal life" of believers is indiscriminately ascribed to each of the Divine Persons: in Romans 6:23 it is attributed to the bounty of the Father, 1 John 5:11 expressly assures us that it "is in the Son," while in Galatians 6:8 we read "he that soweth to the Spirit shall *of the Spirit* reap life everlasting." By the Father we are justified (Rom. 8:33), by Christ we are justified

(Isa. 53:11), by the Spirit we are justified (1 Cor. 6:11). By the Father we are preserved (1 Peter 1:5), by the Son we are preserved (John 10:28), by the Spirit we are preserved (Eph. 4:30). By the Father we shall be raised (2 Cor. 1:9), by the Son (John 5:28), by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

The actions of the Persons in the Godhead are not unlike to the beautiful colours of the rainbow: those colours are perfectly blended together in one, yet each is quite distinct. So it is in connection with the several operations of the Holy Three concerning our sanctification. While it be blessedly true that the Triune God is the Author of this wondrous work, yet, if we are to observe the *distinctions* which the Holy Scriptures make in the unfolding of this theme, they require us to recognise that, in the economy of salvation, *God the Father* is, in a special manner, *the Originator* of this unspeakable blessing. In connection with the whole scheme of redemption God the Father is to be viewed as the Fountain of grace: all spiritual blessings originating in *His* goodness, and are bestowed according to the good pleasure of His sovereign will. This is clear from Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

That the Father is the Sanctifier of the Church is obvious from 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here He is acknowledged as such, by prayer being made to Him for the perfecting of this gift and grace. So again in Hebrews 13:20, 21, we find the Apostle addressing Him as follows, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ." It is the furthering of this work within His people for which the Apostle supplicates God. In both passages it is the Father who is sought unto. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10): here the sanctification of the Church is traced back to the sovereign will of God as the supreme originating cause thereof, the reference again being to the eternal gracious purpose of the Father, which Christ came here to accomplish.

Further proof that the first Person in the Divine Trinity is the immediate Author of our sanctification is found in Jude 1: "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Note it is not simply "them that are sanctified by God," but more specifically "By God *the Father*." Before attempting to give the meaning of this remarkable text, it needs to be pointed out that it is closely connected with those words of Christ's in John 10:36, "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Our Lord was there referring to Himself not as the second Person of the Godhead absolutely considered, but as the God-man Mediator, for only as such was He "sent" by the Father. His being "sanctified" *before* He was "sent," has reference to a transaction in Heaven ere He became incarnate. Before the foundation of the world the Father set apart Christ and ordained that He should be both the Head and Saviour of His Church, and that He should be plenteously endowed by the Spirit for His vast undertaking.

Reverting to Jude 1, we would note particularly *the order* of its statements: the "sanctified by God the Father" *comes before* "preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." This initial aspect of our sanctification antedates our regeneration or effectual call from darkness

to light, and therefore takes us back to the eternal counsels of God. There are three things in our verse: taking them in their inverse order, there is first, our “calling,” when we were brought from death unto life; that was preceded by our being “preserved in Jesus Christ,” i.e., preserved from physical death in the womb, in the days of our infancy, during the recklessness of youth; and that also preceded by our being “sanctified” by the Father, that is, our names being enrolled in the Lamb’s book of life, we are given to Christ to be loved by Him with an everlasting love and made joint-heirs with Him forever and ever.

Our sanctification by the Father was *His eternal election of us*, with all that the term connotes and involves. Election was far more than a bare choice of persons. It included our being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:5). It included our being made “vessels unto honour” and being “afore prepared to glory” (Rom. 9:21, 23). It included being appointed “to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9). It included our being separated for God’s pleasure, God’s use, and “that we should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:12). It included our being made “holy and without blame before Him” (Eph. 1:4). This eternal sanctification by God the Father is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who hath saved us, and called us with *an holy calling*, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*.”

As we pointed out in the last paragraph of last month’s article, “Sanctification is, first, *a position of honour* to which God hath appointed His people.” That position of honour was their being “chosen *in Christ* before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), when they were constituted members of His mystical Body by the eternal purpose of God. O what an amazing honour was that! a place in glory higher than that of the angels being granted them. Our poor minds are staggered before such wondrous grace. Here, then, is the link of connection between John 10:36 and Jude 1: Christ was not alone in the mind of the Father when He “sanctified” Him: by the Divine decree, Christ was separated and consecrated as the Head of a sanctified people. In the sanctification of Christ, all who are “called saints” were, in Him, eternally set apart, to be partakers of His own holy standing before the Father! This was an act of pure sovereignty on the Father’s part.

As it is not possible that anything can add to God’s *essential* blessedness (Job 22:2, 3; 35:7), so nothing whatever outside of God can possibly be a motive unto Him for any of His actions. If He be pleased to bring creatures into existence, His own supreme and sovereign will must be the sole cause, as His own *manifestative* glory is His ultimate end and design. This is plainly asserted in the Scriptures: “The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4), “Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11), “Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:35, 36). So it is in the ordaining of some of His creatures unto honour and glory, and appointing them to salvation in bringing them to that glory: nought but God’s sovereign will was the cause, nought but His own manifestative glory is the end.

As we have shown in previous articles, to “sanctify” signifies to consecrate or set apart for a sacred use, to cleanse or purify, to adorn or beautify. Which of these meanings has the term in Jude 1? We believe the words “sanctified by God the Father” include all three of those definitions. First, in that eternal purpose of His, the elect were *separated* from all other creatures, and predestinated unto the adoption of sons. Second, in God’s

foreviews of His elect falling in Adam, the corrupting of their natures, and the defilement which their personal acts of sin would entail, He ordained that the Mediator should make a full atonement for them, and by His blood *cleanse* them from all sin. Third, by choosing them in Christ, the elect were *united* to Him and so made one with Him that all *His* worthiness and perfection becomes theirs too; and thus they were *adorned*. God never views them apart from Christ.

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). The Greek word for “accepted” is “charitoo,” and Young’s Concordance gives as its meaning “to make gracious.” It occurs (as a passive participle, rather than in its active form, as in Eph. 1:6) again only in Luke 1:28, where the angel said to the Virgin, “Hail, thou that art *highly favoured*,” which Young defines as “to give grace, to treat graciously,” and in his Index “graciously accepted or much graced.” This, we believe, is the exact force of it in Ephesians 1:6: “according as He hath *much graced* us in the Beloved.” A careful reading of the immediate context will show that this was *before* the foundation of the world, which is confirmed by the fact that the elect’s being “much graced in the Beloved” comes *before* “redemption” and “forgiveness of sins” in verse 7!—note too the “hath” in verses 3, 4, 6 and the change to “have” in verse 7!

Here, then, is the ultimate reference in “*sanctified* by God the Father” (Jude 1). As we have so often pointed out in the previous articles “sanctification” is not a bare act of simply setting apart, but involves or includes the adorning and beautifying of the object or person thus set apart, so *fitting it for* God’s use. Thus it was in God’s eternal purpose. He not only made an election from the mass of creatures to be created; He not only separated those elect ones from the others, but He chose them “in Christ,” and “much graced them in the Beloved!” The elect were made the mystical Body and Bride of Christ, so united to Him that whatever grace Christ hath, by virtue of their union with Him, His people have: and therefore did He declare, “Thou hast loved *them*, AS Thou hast loved *Me*” (John 17:23). O that it may please the Holy Spirit to so shine upon our feeble understandings that we may be enabled to lay hold of this wondrous, glorious, and transcendent fact. “Sanctified by God the Father”: set apart by Him to be Body and Bride of Christ, “much graced” in Him, possessing His own holy standing before the Throne of Heaven.—A.W.P.

Our Annual Letter.

“For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice” (Zech. 4:10). Three lines of thought are suggested by these words. First, in the history of the Church there *are* periods which may justly be termed “the day of small things.” Second, the temptation arises to *disparage* God’s work at such times, because of its “smallness.” Third, assurance is here given that despondency shall give place to gladness and they who lightly esteemed the lesser displays of God’s gracious power shall be followed by those who “rejoice.”

It was “the day of small things” when the little remnant of Israel returned from their captivity, repaired the walls of Jerusalem, and built the house of God. The temple of Solomon far surpassed in splendour the one erected by Zerubbabel. As God said to the Jews through Haggai, “Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” (2:3); yea, when many of the ancient men saw its foundation laid, they “wept with a loud voice” (Ezra 3:12). Nevertheless, the Lord *was* working, and therefore did He issue this challenge to their hearts “*Who* hath *despised* the day of small things?” Even the minor displays of God’s power and the lesser blessings of His mercy are not to be disparaged.

Our lot is also cast in a “day of small things.” When present spiritual conditions are compared with those of fifty years ago, the difference is most marked: in the number of faithful preachers of the Truth, in the number of homes where the family altar is maintained, in the demand for really helpful literature. The *cause* for this contrast may be looked for in two directions. First, in the *sovereignty* of God, for He does not act uniformly. Some seasons enjoy a much more bounteous supply of rain and sunshine than others: as it is in the natural realm, so it is in the spiritual. Second, the *unfaithfulness* of the Lord’s people. Where light is given and it be not walked in, where great privileges are granted and there be no corresponding fruit, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched, and further blessings are withheld. *Both* of these factors explain the present situation.

Yet God *is* still working. In various places there are “showers” of blessing, even though the “former rains” be withheld. While there is much that calls for exercise of heart, humiliation of soul, and confession to God, yet there is no warrant for abject despair. The question asked in Zechariah 4:10 is a challenge, and perhaps a *rebuke* to some of us: shall we “despise” what God is now doing because it be a “day of *small* things?” If God is still maintaining a testimony for the Truth, and a few souls are being blest here and there, that is proof He has not entirely abandoned Christendom. Moreover, a Divine promise is coupled with the challenge: O for faith to lay hold of it—“for they *shall* rejoice.” Brighter days are ahead. Christ will yet crush the Serpent’s head beneath His feet!

It is in the spirit of Zechariah 4:10 that we desire grace from on high to carry on this work. The past year has been one of severe testing. [Brother Pink wrote this to his readers in *late 1935*.] Hitherto the Lord has moved many of the readers to send in their contributions early in the year (which, for the magazine, begins December 1), so that by the end of March only a smaller amount was needed each month to meet expenses. But this year it was otherwise: all through it has been a case of “from hand to mouth,” and sometimes the meal in the barrel was almost—though not quite!—exhausted. Yet to the praise of our faithful God be it recorded, that He *has* graciously moved different ones to send in something each week (*L4*—20 dollars—is needed every week, the year round), so that only one bill is before us, and before that is due (Nov. 7) we fully expect to have sufficient on hand to more than meet it.

We have also been much exercised over the smallness of our circulation. As each year passes, we are finding it harder and harder to locate those who really relish spiritual literature. The popular demand is for that which is light and superficial, or for that which is startling and sensational. Many prefer anecdotes, brief articles, or comments upon the latest doings of Hitler and Mussolini. Few are willing to *study* that which calls for concentration of mind, and fewer still articles which search the conscience. But we dare not lower the standard. Many of our older readers have been called Home, and it is very difficult to find new ones to replace them. Very few *co-operate* with us in seeking to make this magazine known to fellow-Christians. How many would *really* be sorry if we are obliged to cease publishing for lack of support? How many are endeavouring to *prevent* this by their efforts?

We have now to remove from our list several hundred names, to whom we have sent "Studies" this year: those whose names were given us by friends, or who applied personally themselves; but who have manifested no appreciation of its contents—owing to the smallness of our circulation, it costs 3/6 (90 cents) to send to each person for a year. *Where* are we going to find new readers to fill their places? Unless we do so in the near future, we will not have sufficient names on our book to carry on! We know that some readers have done their best to interest others; but there are many quite indifferent. If half of our readers could introduce us to just one Christian who would welcome this Magazine, it would be a great relief to our minds. Show your copies to those likely to be interested: not to those looking for something for nothing, but those hungry for soul food. Do please carefully consider this appeal.

Another thing which has deeply concerned the editor is that no doors have been opened for oral ministry. From the human side, two things place us at a great disadvantage. First, having lived almost all our Christian life in the U.S.A. and Australia, we are virtually unknown in Great Britain. Second, not being prepared to "join" any denomination or sect, makes most of the "churches" unwilling to use us. Do any of our readers know of any undenominational cause or "independent" church, anywhere in Great Britain, where a man of Truth would be welcome, or any "Mission," conducted on Scriptural lines, where there would be openings for Bible Conference addresses? Our preaching is along the same lines as our magazine articles. Some readers have a wide acquaintance and may know of suitable openings, and God may use them to give us contact with places that would welcome an uncompromising and soul-edifying message. Please pray over this, *and write us*.

The days are evil, the need is great, many of Christ's sheep are being starved, very little real Gospel is now preached. Soon our race will be run: what little time is yet left us, we desire to be used wholly for the Lord, and to be made a blessing to His people. Many "churches" and places we could not enter because of their heterodoxy and worldliness. How are we to make contact with *sound* ones for a week's special meetings? Cannot *you* be of assistance here? If not, will you please definitely supplicate the Throne of Grace on our behalf? By the mercy of God we have both been preserved from all illness through another year. Earnestly soliciting your prayers, with hearty Christian greetings and with all good wishes, we remain, Yours by God's abounding Mercy—A.W. and V.E. Pink.