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FAITHFULNES.

“It is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). From the preceding verse it is clear that the Apostle was having reference to the ministers of Christ, those whom He has appointed to act as officers in His churches. Other virtues are desirable, but fidelity is imperative. No matter how gifted a man may be, if he is untrue to this trust, he is an offense unto Christ and a stumblingblock to His people. Ministerial faithfulness includes loyalty to his Master, devotion to His interests, steadfast adherence to the preaching of His Word, dispensing the Truth unto those whose souls are committed to Him, not mixing it with speculations, much less substituting false doctrine. A far higher motive than the pleasing of his hearers must actuate and regulate ministerial service.

Those who have been much used of God have ever been men in whom this grace of faithfulness was outstandingly prominent. The father of all who believe is expressly designated “faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9). Concerning Moses the Lord testified, “who is faithful in all His house” (Num. 12:7). What a blessed witness is that borne to Daniel: “Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was *faithful*” (Dan. 6:4). Of himself Paul wrote, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me *faithful*, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12). Concerning Timothy he testified, “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and *faithful* in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17). What is now being recorded in the Lord’s “book of remembrance” of you and me, fellow-minister?

Loyalty to God has always been a costly matter, but individual faithfulness has never involved more personal sacrifice than it does in this day of abounding disloyalty, hypocrisy and compromise. Faithful preaching will render the minister unpopular, and will *empty*, not “fill” churches. It will close doors against him, and if he be without a charge he will find his services are not wanted. It cost Joseph something to be faithful! It did Daniel; it did Paul; and it does every minister of Christ in this degenerate and adulterous age. How necessary it is then for the minister to strengthen his heart by laying hold of those *promises* which are specially given to faithfulness. Here is one of them: “the LORD *preserveth* the faithful” (Psa. 31:23)—from those rocks upon which so many self-seekers make shipwreck.

“He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word *faithfully*” (Jer. 23:28): no matter how unpalatable it may be to the flesh, how much of a weariness to those who wish to have their ears tickled with novelties, or how loud be the outcry against it. “A wicked messenger falleth into mischief; but a faithful ambassador is health” (Prov. 13:17): that is, he maintains his own soul in good health, and exerts a healing influence upon others. “A faithful witness will not lie” (Prov. 14:5): he who maintains a pure conscience before God will not dare to give forth a testimony which he knows to be untrue. Nor will he to obtain the good-will of men represent anything to be other than it is. Consequently, “He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness” (Prov. 12:17): that is, by making conscience of veracity and integrity, he makes it clear that he is governed by the principle of righteousness.

How much there is in Scripture to stimulate the minister unto fidelity! “A true (Hebrew, “faithful”) witness *delivereth souls*” (Prov. 14:25), and he is the only one who ever

does so. Souls are caught fast in the meshes of Satan's lies, and nothing but the sword of God's Truth can cut them free. However unpopular he may be among men, the faithful witness is approved of and is pleasing *to God*. "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters" (Prov. 25:13). Yes, such are "a sweet savour to God" (2 Cor. 2:15). What holy encouragement is there here for the hearts of the Lord's servants! What rich compensation for the slights and sneers of men!

For there is no faithfulness in their mouths . . . they flatter with their tongues" (Psa. 5:9). *There* is the identifying mark of the "hireling," the false witness. He aims at pleasing his hearers, making them feel satisfied with themselves, ever patting them on the back. But what are the springs from which integrity and fidelity issue? First, *faith*. It is striking to note that both in the Hebrew and the Greek the same word does duty for both "faith" (the noun) and "faithfulness" (the adjective). Unbelief, then, is the root of unfaithfulness. Second *the fear of God*: "I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many" (Neh. 7:2). There is nothing like the fear of God to deliver us from the fear of men. Third, *love of God*, for where that is warm there must be the desire to please Him at all costs.

But let not the reader suppose that this grace is something restricted to Christ's ministers: not so, God requires it from *all* His people. This is clear from the opening verses of Ephesians, which is distinctly addressed to "the faithful in Christ Jesus." Much of what has been said above applies with equal force to the rank and file of the saints. They, too, will find that loyalty to God and fidelity to His Word will cost them not a little in the world today, where there is so much pretence, sham, and double dealing. It will result in their receiving the "cold shoulder" even from many of those who profess to be fellow-Christians. But this must not deter them: "Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10), is the grand word to lay hold of.

Faithful people have always been in a marked minority. "Help, Lord, for the godly men ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12:1), cried David. Note how those two characteristics are conjoined, for piety and honesty are inseparable—compare "good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:23). So, too, Solomon exclaimed, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a *faithful man who can find*" (Prov. 20:6). Why is this? Because it is the part of fallen human nature to take the line of least resistance and choose the path easiest to the flesh. But remember, my reader, whoever you be, "lying lips are abomination to the LORD; but they that deal truly (Hebrew, "faithfully") are His *delight*" (Prov. 12:22). Here is another of the Divine promises specially addressed to the faithful: "A faithful man shall abound with blessings" (Prov. 28:20): the true way to be happy is to be holy and honest. He who is true to God and man will be blest of Him. O that it may be said of us, "Beloved, thou doest faithfully *whatsoever thou doest* to the brethren, and to strangers" (3 John 5).—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

10. *The Law, and Murder: Matthew 5:21-26.*

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (vv. 23, 24). Christ here drew a practical conclusion from what He had declared in the preceding verses, in which He enforces the duty of preserving Christian love and peace between brethren. First, He held up to view the false interpretation of the Sixth Commandment given by the ancient rabbis and perpetuated by the Scribes and Pharisees (v. 21). Second, He gave the true meaning of it (v. 22). And third, He here propounded certain rules of concord between those that be at variance. Even a secret feeling of anger, and much more so a contemptuous or maledictory reproach, constitutes in God’s sight a breach of His Law, and He will not accept the worship of those guilty of such a crime. We must, therefore, without delay, remove every root of bitterness that might spring up and produce so deadly a fruit.

Our Lord here spoke in the language of the dispensation then in force, but the principles He enunciated on this occasion apply equally to Christian ordinances, especially the Lord’s Supper. The maintenance of righteousness and amity between one another is indispensable to fellowship with the thrice holy God. “It was the doctrine of the Scribes, and the practice of the Pharisees corresponded with it, that anger, hatred, and the expression of these, if they did not go so far as an overt act of violence, were among the minor faults; and that God would not severely judge men for these, if they were but regular in presenting their sacrifices, and observing the other external duties of religion. In opposition to this, our Lord teaches that, according to the righteousness of His kingdom, having one’s mind not subject to the law of justice and love would render all external religious services unacceptable to God” (J. Brown).

Under the Mosaic law various gifts and sacrifices were presented to Jehovah, some of them being absolutely obligatory, others optional—“free-will offerings.” Broadly speaking, those gifts were of two kinds: propitiatory and eucharistic: the one for obtaining Divine forgiveness, the other as expressions of thanksgiving. Christ alludes here only to the latter, but under it He comprehended all manner of true outward worship, whether legal or evangelistic. The Lord Jesus had not yet offered Himself to God as the great antitypical sacrifice, and therefore He conveyed His lesson through the terms of the ceremonial law; but we have no difficulty in transferring what He then affirmed unto ourselves. It was as though He said, If thou comest to worship God in any way, either by prayer, hearing His Word, offering sacrifices of praise, or celebrating the Lord’s Supper, you must live in peace with your brethren, or your worship will be rejected.

It is indeed solemn and searching to ponder the important practical principle which our Lord here enunciated. How deceptive is the human heart, and what numbers impose upon themselves in this matter. But we cannot impose upon that One before whom everything is naked and open. Of old the Jews were guilty of this very thing. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks. . . and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isa. 1:11, 15). Why? “Your hands are full of blood.” While they cruelly oppressed their brethren, the worship they offered unto God was an abomination unto Him. So again in Isaiah 58:5, 6 we find Jehovah despising the religious

fasts of Israel because they omitted those acts of mercy which He required, and instead were guilty of evilly treating their fellows.

The Lord charged the people with the same sins in the time of Jeremiah: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely. . . and come and stand before Me in this House, which is called by My name?" (7:9, 10). Other passages might be quoted, but these are sufficient if we duly lay them to heart. From them we may learn that the performance of any outward service unto God is displeasing to Him if it be separated from unfeigned love of the brethren. To serve God acceptably we must perform not only the duties of the first table of the Law, but also those of the second. Make no mistake, my reader, the Holy One abhors all professions of piety from those who make no conscience of endeavouring to live in peace with their brethren.

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar" (Matt. 5:23, 24). The words "thy brother hath aught against thee" clearly signifies, "If *you* have done him some injury," or *he* has cause of complaint (either real or fancied) against you. If you have treated him in some way inconsistent with the fraternal relationship, if he is conscious that you have wronged him, then you must promptly seek to right that wrong, no matter what the cost may be to your pride or interests. It may be that you were guilty of what some would lightly dismiss as, "only an outburst of temper," and which you regretted afterwards; nevertheless, peace has been disrupted, and God requires you to do everything in your power to lawfully restore it.

Does not failure to heed this rule go far to explain why the supplications of so many of the Lord's people remain *unanswered*? What number's fondly imagine that so long as they are regular in their attendance in the house of prayer and maintain a reverent demeanor therein, that their petitions will prevail—even though they be at enmity against some of their brethren. Not so: the words of the Psalmist on this are much too pointed to be misunderstood, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). Before bending the knee in prayer, let us call to mind that we are about to draw near unto Him who is as much the Father of the offended brother as He is ours, and that He cannot receive us while we continue casting a stumblingblock in the way of the other. No worship or service can be acceptable to God while we are under the influence of a malicious spirit.

"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother." This means there must be a sincere and penitent acknowledgment of the offense committed and proper restitution made for any injury done, so that by all proper means and reasonable concessions we seek forgiveness from the one offended. "In this case the person, instead of offering his gift, is to go immediately to his brother, and be reconciled to him; dismissing all malignant feeling from his mind, he is to repair the injury he has done to his brother. If he has deprived him of his property, he is to restore it; if he has slandered him, he is to do all that lies in his power to counteract the effect of his calumny, and acknowledge his regret for having acted so unbrotherly. In this way he is likely to be reconciled to his brother, that is, to be restored to his brother's favour" (J. Brown).

The question may be raised, What can be done in a case where the one whom I have offended is no longer accessible to me?—one perhaps who has moved to far-distant parts. Answer: every effort must be made to obtain his or her address, and then write them a

confession of your fault and your grief for the same, as frankly as though you were speaking to them. But suppose their address be unobtainable? Then in such a case you are hindered by Divine providence and God will accept the will for the deed, if there be a willing mind, providing you have done all you could to right the wrong, and have humbly confessed the same unto God and sought *His* forgiveness.

It should be pointed out that in this rule concerning reconciliation with an aggrieved brother, the Lord furnished a third direction for the expounding of God's commandments. First, He showed that under any *one* sin prohibited in the commandment, God forbids *all* sins of the same kind, with all the causes thereof (v. 22). Second, that to the breach of any commandment there is *annexed a curse*, whether it be specifically expressed or not (v. 22). And now, third, that where any vice is forbidden, there the contrary virtue is enjoined; and on the contrary, where any virtue is commanded, the opposite vice is reprehended. Herein the Divine Laws evidence their superiority to human, for man's laws are satisfied by abstaining from the crime prohibited, though the contrary virtue be not practiced: so long as we abstain from murder, it matters not though we fail to love our brethren. But God requires not only abstention from vice, but also the practice of virtue.

Another general principle is brought out in the verses before us, one which is of considerable importance in the correct interpreting of many New Testament passages, namely, that to be "reconciled" to another does not signify so much to cherish kindly feelings towards one with whom we have been offended, as to be restored to the favour of one we have offended. This throws light on such a statement as, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). The primary reference is to the Redeemer's propitiating God and obtaining for us His blessing—the same holds good equally of Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:21. In like manner, "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20) means not only throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him, but primarily, be restored to His favour.

One other important principle enforced by Christ in our passage is there are *degrees* of value in the several duties of Divine worship: all are not equal, but some are more and some less necessary. The highest degree of holy worship is prescribed in the First Commandment: to love, fear, and rejoice in God above all, trusting Him and His promises. The second degree is to love our neighbours as ourselves, living in harmony with them, and seeking reconciliation when any division exists. The third degree consists of the outward ceremonial duties of God's worship; and that these are inferior to the other is clear from Christ's, "first be reconciled to thy brother." Even the outward solemnities of Sabbath keeping are to give place to the works of love. God esteems mercy above sacrifice. Alas, how many today are sticklers for the details of baptism and the Lord's Supper who will not even speak to some of their brethren.

"First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:24). This is far from implying that the regaining of his brother's esteem is a good work which entitles him to the favour of God. No—the man who rests his hope of the acceptance of his religious services on the consciousness that his brethren have nothing against him, is leaning on a broken reed: the only valid ground of hope for the acceptance of either our persons or our worship is the free grace of God. But it means that, when peace has been restored, he must not forget to return and offer his gift; for although God will not receive our worship unless—so far as in us lies—we are on loving terms with our neighbours, yet

the performance of our duty to men in nowise frees us from the obligation of direct service to God.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (25, 26). This is one of the passages appealed to by the Papists in support of their Christ-insulting dogma of purgatory: that they have to apply to such verses as these in order to bolster up their error shows how hard pressed they are to find anything in the Scriptures which even appears to favour their vile tenets.

The Roman expositors are not even agreed among themselves. Some take the “Adversary” to be the Devil, and the “Judge” God Himself. Others among them suppose the “Adversary” to be God administering His Law, the “Judge” they regard as Christ, the “officer” an angel, and the “prison” to be purgatory; “the way” the span of our life on earth. “Agree with God while you are in this life, lest you come before Christ in judgment, and He cause His angels to cast you into purgatory, and there you remain till you have made full satisfaction for all your venial sins.” But such a concept utterly ignores the context, where Christ lays down a rule of reconciliation between man and man, and not between God and man. Moreover, such an interpretation (?) pits the Father against the Son. Finally, it denies the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement, making the sinner himself the one who provides satisfaction for his venial sins.

Many Protestant commentators regard verses 25 and 26 as a parable, which portrays the grave peril of the sinner and his urgent need of believing the Gospel. Injurious conduct toward our fellow-men renders us noxious to the wrath of God, who is our Adversary-at-law. We are on the way to the Judgment-seat and our time here is but short at best. But a way of reconciliation is revealed in the Gospel, and of this we should avail ourselves immediately. If it be neglected and despised, then we forsake our own mercies, and close the door of hope against us. If we die with our sins unpardoned, then nothing awaits us but a certain judgment, and we shall be cast into the Prison of Hell, and being unable to offer any satisfaction to Divine justice we must there suffer the due reward of our iniquities forever and ever. Such a concept may evidence the ingenuity of the commentator, but where is the slightest hint in the passage that Christ was speaking a parable?

Personally we see no reason whatever for not understanding our Lord’s words here *literally*. Christ had exhorted the party doing wrong to seek to be reconciled with his brother, by acknowledging the offense and making reparation according to the injury inflicted. In support thereof, He had advanced the solemn consideration that until this be done, communion with God is broken and our worship is unacceptable to Him. Here (knowing how proud and obstinate the human heart is, and how slow men are to yield and

submit to this duty) Christ descended to a lower level, and points out another reason why it is highly expedient for the offending believer to put matters right with him whom he has wronged, namely, lest the aggrieved one go to the law, and this involve him in costly litigation, or even procure his imprisonment.

“Agree with thine adversary” is just the same as, “Be reconciled to thy brother,” for “adversary” is a general name applied to all persons in common who have a controversy or are at variance with each other. “Agree with” the one you have provoked, seek restora-

tion to his favour—by repairing the injury you have done him. An injured one, or a creditor, might at any time sue him, demanding that his case be tried in the magistrate's court. While on their way to court, there was still time to come to an amicable agreement between themselves, but once they appeared before the magistrate the matter would pass out of their hands, and be subject to the decision of the court, whose business it is to see that strict justice be impartially enforced.

The view given above was held by the renowned Calvin, "If in this place the judge signify God, the adversary the Devil, the officer an angel, the prison purgatory, I will readily subscribe to them (the Papists). But if it be evident to everyone that Christ thus intended to show how many dangers and calamities persons expose themselves, who prefer obstinately exerting the rigour of the law to acting upon the principles of equity and kindness, in order the more earnestly to exhort his disciples to an equitable concord, pray where will purgatory be found?" Verses 26 and 27 are to be regarded as a warning of what may befall those who heed not the command in verses 24 and 25. If we refuse to humble ourselves and strive to preserve peace, we must not be surprised if others deal harshly with us and sue us. In closing, it may be observed that Christ here approves of the magisterial office, his proceeding against the guilty, and of imprisonment.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

90. *His Wise Decision.*

“When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them” (Exo. 30:12). In the absence of any commission from God to do so David not only did wrong in yielding to the pride of his heart by insisting that a military census should be taken of Israel, but he also erred grievously in the way it was carried out. This it is which explains to us why Divine judgment followed upon his being so remiss, and why that plague fell on all the Nation, for the Law laid the responsibility on every individual alike. The amount of the required “ransom” was so small (a shilling—a quarter) that it lay within the capacity of the poorest. “The rich were not allowed to give more, thus teaching us that all mankind are, in this matter, equal. All had sinned and come short of the glory of God: therefore all needed, equally needed, a ransom.

“This numbering was a solemn ceremonial that could not be done quickly, as we see by the first chapter in the book called Numbers. Therefore there was time for the officers to have looked up in the Law what was required of them. For a man to present himself to God without a ransom was a solemn and dangerous thing to do. The fact that the result, which they were warned by this law to avoid, came upon them, shows us that we are expected to read the Word, and that God will not contradict His own Word. As Paul warns us, ‘If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself’: 2 Timothy 2:13” (C. H. Bright). How loudly ought this incident to speak unto us in this flesh-pleasing and God-defying age: to ignore the requirements of the Divine Law is to court certain disaster—true alike for the individual and for the nation.

“So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king” (2 Sam. 24:8, 9). For nine long months the pride of David’s heart deceived him, as alas, lust had before dimmed his eyes the same length of time (2 Sam. 11:12). During this season his conscience slumbered, and there was no exercise of it before God over his action—such is ever the case when we are caught in the toils of Satan. Does it strike us as incredible that one so favoured of God and one who had so signally honoured Him in the general course of his life, should now have such a deplorable and protracted lapse? Let each of us answer the question out of his checkered experience. We doubt not that the majority of our Christian readers will hang their heads with shame, as they are conscious of similar backslidings in their own history—and if perchance a minority have been preserved from such falls, well may they marvel at the distinguishing mercy which has been vouchsafed them.

“And David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people” (2 Sam. 24:10). This indicated that he was a regenerate soul, for it is ever one of the marks of a true believer to repent of his misdeeds. Though on the one hand the flesh lusts against the spirit, on the other, the spirit (the nature received at the new birth) is contrary to the flesh, and delights not in its works. For almost a year David appears to have been indifferent to his sin, but now he is conscious of his wickedness, without, so far as we are informed, any human instrument convicting him of the evil which he had done. It is good to see that though he had remained so long in the path of self-will, his heart was not obdurate:

though his conscience had indeed slumbered, yet it was not dead. It is cause for real thanksgiving when we find that we have hearts which smite us for wrong doing.

We are not here told what it was that aroused David from his spiritual stupor and caused his heart to smite him: simply the bare fact is stated. Here again is where we receive help by comparing the supplementary account furnished by 1 Chronicles 21, for there we are told, "And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly" (vv. 7, 8). In 2 Samuel 24:10 David's confession of his sin *followed* his contrition, so that a careful comparison of the two passages enables us to ascertain that the chiding from his heart was the effect of the Lord's being displeased at what he had done. This is one of many illustrations which serves to bring out the characteristic differences of the two books: the one is mainly exoteric, the other largely esoteric: that is to say, 1 and 2 Samuel narrate the historical facts, whereas 1 and 2 Chronicles generally reveal the hidden springs from which the actions proceed.

"And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel" (1 Chron. 21:7). Here we learn how *God* regarded the policy David had pursued: He was offended, for His Law had been completely disregarded. "And He smote Israel": observe particularly that this comes before David's confession of his sin (v. 8), and before God "sent pestilence upon Israel" (v. 14). Ere God caused the plague to fall upon the Nation, He first smote David's heart! He did not turn His back upon David! As another has pointed out, "The whole system of Israel, by this national transgression, was now defiled and tainted, and ripe for severity of judgment: this pride was the giving up of God, and God would have been dealing righteously had He at once laid Israel aside, as He did Adam, in such a case." Instead, He acted here in sovereign grace.

No, the Lord was far from utterly forsaking David. Put together the two statements, and in this order, "And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel" (1 Chron. 21:7), "And David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people" (2 Sam. 24:10). Do not these two statements stand related as cause to effect? The one revealing the Lord's working, the other showing the result produced in his servant. God now smote David's heart, making him to feel His sore displeasure. David, as a child of God, might be tempted, overtaken in a fault, and thus brought to shame and grief; but could he be left impenitent? No; no more than Peter was (Luke 22:32). The reprobate are given up to hardness of heart; but not so the righteous; the Lord would not suffer David to remain indifferent to his sin, but graciously wrought conviction and contrition within him. And so far from David's conscience being as one which had been "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2), it was sensitive and quick to respond to the influences of God's Spirit.

"And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people." What a warning is this for us! How it should speak to *our* hearts! What a solemn and salutary lesson does it point: the very thing which David imagined would bring him pleasure, caused him pain! This is ever the case: to listen to Satan's temptations is to court certain trouble, to be attracted by the glitter on the bait he dangles before us, will be to our inevitable undoing. It was so with Eve, with Dinah (Gen. 34:1), with Achan. Indulging the pride of his heart, David fondly supposed that to secure an accurate count of the full military strength of his kingdom would prove gratifying; instead, he now grieves over his folly. What insanity it is for us to invest folly with the garb of satisfaction: not only will a sense of sin dampen the Christian's carnal joy, but, "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:32).

“And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech Thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly” (2 Sam. 24:10). David had been convicted by the Spirit, and a heavy sense of guilt oppressed him—ever an intolerable burden to a renewed soul. Sensible of his wrongdoing, he earnestly sought forgiveness of the Lord. Where Divine grace possesses the heart, the conscience of a saint, upon reflection, will reprove him for his transgressions. It is at this point there appears the great difference between the regenerate and the empty professor or religious hypocrite. The latter may afterwards have a realization of his madness and suffer keen remorse therefrom, but he will not get down in the dust before God and unsparingly condemn himself. Instead, he invariably excuses himself by blaming his circumstances, his associates, or those lusts which are now his master. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of depraved human nature: Adam took not upon himself the blame for his fall, but sought to throw the onus of it upon his wife, and she upon the Serpent.

But it is far otherwise with those who have been made the subjects of a miracle of grace. One who is born again has been given an honest heart, and one of the plainest evidences of this is that its possessor is honest with himself, with his fellows, and above all, with God. An honest soul is sincere, open, candid, abhorring deception and lies. Therefore in unmistakable contrast from the hypocrite the genuine believer will, upon realizing his transgressions, humble himself before the Lord, and with unfeigned contrition and fervent prayers seek His forgiveness, sincerely purposing by His grace to return no more to his folly. Wondrous indeed is the ministry which grace performs, making our very pride to be an occasion of increasing our humility! Thus it was with David. The same appears again in the case of Hezekiah: “Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up: therefore was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah *humbled* himself for the *pride* of his heart” (2 Chron. 32:25, 26).

“And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech Thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly.” It is by the depth of his conviction, the sincerity of his repentance, and the heartiness of his confession, that the child of God is identified. So far from making any attempt to extenuate himself, so far from throwing the blame upon Satan (who had tempted him), David unsparingly condemned *himself*. To others it might seem a small thing that he had done. But David felt he had “sinned greatly.” Ah, he now saw his deed in the light of God’s holiness. In true confession of sin we do not spare ourselves or minimize our misdemeanors, but frankly and feelingly acknowledge the enormity of them. “I have done very foolishly,” David owned, for what he had done was in the pride of his heart, and it was veritable madness for him to be proud of his subjects when they were *God’s* people, as it is insane for the Christian to be proud of the gifts and graces which the Spirit has bestowed upon him.

“For (Hebrew “And”) when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the Prophet Gad, David’s seer” (2 Sam. 24:11). This seems to indicate that David’s confession had been made during the hours of darkness. God “giveth His beloved sleep” (Psa. 127:2), and likewise He withholds it when it serves His purpose. And it is always for our *good* (Rom. 8:28) that He does so, whether we perceive it or not. Sometimes He “giveth songs in the night” (Job 35:10); we read too of “visions of the night” (Job 4:13); but at other times God removes sleep from our eyes and speaks to us about our sins. Then it is we can say with Asaph, “My sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted” (Psa. 77:2), and then it is that we have a taste of David’s experience: “I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears” (Psa. 6:6). But whatever be God’s object in withholding sleep, it is blessed when we can say, “By night on my bed I *sought Him* whom my soul loveth” (Song. 3:1).

“And when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the Prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee” (2 Sam. 24:11, 12). The solemn exercises of David’s heart during the night season were to prepare him for God’s message of judgment. He had been made to taste something of the bitterness of his folly while others were slumbering, but now he is to know more definitely how sorely displeased God was. When the Lord is about to send us a special message, be it one of cheer or of reproof, He first fits the heart to receive it. When the morning broke, the Lord commissioned Gad to deliver His ultimatum to the king. Gad was a Prophet, and he is here designated “David’s seer” because he was one who, on certain occasions, was wont to counsel him in the things of God. At this time he had to deliver a far-from-pleasant message—such often falls to the lot of God’s servants.

His heavenly Father must correct David, yet He graciously gave him leave to make a choice whether it should be by famine, war, or pestilence; whether it should be a long-protracted judgment or a very brief yet terribly severe one. Matthew Henry suggested that the Lord had a fourfold design in this. First, to humble David the more for his sin, which he would see to be exceeding sinful, when he came to consider that each of the judgments were exceeding dreadful. Second, to upbraid him for the proud conceit he had entertained of his own sovereignty over Israel: he had become so great a monarch that he might now do whatever he would: very well, says God, choose which of these three things you prefer. Third, to grant him some encouragement under the chastisement: so far from the Lord having utterly disfellowshipped him, He let him decide what He should do. Fourth, that he might more patiently endure the rod seeing it was one of his own selection.

“So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days’ pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me” (v. 13). Here is the third thing connected with this incident which is apt to greatly puzzle the casual reader. First, that such an apparently trifling act on David’s part should have so sorely displeased the Lord. Second, that He suffered Satan to tempt David, and then was angry with him for doing as the Tempter suggested. These we have already considered. And now, after David had been convicted of his sin, sincerely repented of the same, had confessed it, and sought the

Lord's forgiveness, that judgment should fall so heavily upon him. It is really surprising that so many of the commentators when dealing with this "difficulty" fail to bear in mind the opening sentence of the chapter—the key to all that follows: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against *Israel*."

God had a controversy with the Nation, and this it is which accounts for the character of His governmental dealings with them. His judgment could not be averted, and therefore He punished their pride and rebellion by leaving them to suffer the consequences of their king's following out the natural impulse of his heart. But there are several other aspects of the case which must be borne in mind. David's sin had not been a private but a *public* one, and though God forgave him as to his personal concern, yet he had to be publicly humiliated. Again, while God remits the penal and eternal consequences of sin unto a contrite saint, yet even penitents are chastised and often made to smart severely in this world for their folly. Though God be longsuffering, He will by no means clear the guilty. True, His gifts and calling are without repentance (Rom. 11:29), and unto His own His compassions fail not (Lam. 3:22); yet, the righteousness of His government must be vindicated.

What has last been pointed out holds good in all dispensations, for God's "ways" change not. Correction is ever a characteristic of the Covenant, "for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6). Had David walked in his integrity and in humility before God, he would have been spared severe discipline, but now he must bear the rod. "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psa. 89:32, 33): that clearly states the principle. "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hands of man" (2 Sam. 24:14). Here was his wise decision, the meaning and blessedness of which we must leave for consideration (D.V.) in our next.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

9. Its Perception.

“The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The office of a “witness” is to give testimony or supply evidence for the purpose of adducing proof, either of innocence or guilt. This may be seen from, “which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom. 2:15). Though the heathen had not received a written revelation from God (as was the case with the Jews), nevertheless they were His creatures, accountable to Him, subject to His authority, and will yet be judged by Him. The grounds on which their responsibility rest are: the revelation which God has made of Himself in nature which renders them “without excuse” (Rom. 1:19, 20) and the work of the Law written on their hearts, which is rationality or “the light of nature.” Their moral instincts instruct them in the difference between right and wrong and warn of a future day of reckoning. While their conscience also “bears witness,” supplies evidence that God is their Governor and Judge.

Now the Christian has a renewed conscience, and it supplies proof that he is a renewed person, and consequently, one of God’s elect. “We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb. 13:18): the bent of his heart was for God and obedience to Him. Not only does the Christian sincerely desire to honour God and be honest with his fellows, but he makes a genuine endeavour thereunto: “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16). And it is the office of a good conscience to witness favourably for us and unto us. To it the Christian may appeal. Paul did so again and again. For example, in Romans 9:1 we find him declaring, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,” which means that his conscience testified to his sincerity in the matter. Thus we see again how Scripture interprets Scripture: Romans 2:15 and 9:1 define the meaning of “our spirit bearing witness”—adducing evidence, establishing the verity of a case.

Romans 8:16 declares that our spirit (supported by the Holy Spirit) furnishes proof that we are “the children of God,” and, as the Apostle goes on to show, if children, “then heirs” (v. 17) and “God’s elect” (v. 33). Now this witness of our spirit is the testimony of our heart and conscience, purged and sanctified by the blood of Christ. It testifies in two ways: by inward tokens in itself, and by outward proofs. As this is so little understood today, we must enlarge thereon. Those inward tokens are certain special graces implanted in our spirit at the new birth, whereby a person may be certainly assured of His Divine adoption, and therefore of his election to salvation. Those tokens regard first our sins, and second the mercy of God in Christ. And for the sake of clarity we will consider the former in connection with our sins past, present, and to come.

The token or sign in our “spirit” or heart which concerns *sins past* is “*godly* sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:10), which is really a mother grace of many other gifts and graces from God. The nature of it may the better be conceived if we compare it with its opposite. *Worldly* sorrow issues from sin, and is nothing else but *terror* of conscience and an apprehension of the wrath of God for the same; whereas *godly* sorrow, though it be indeed occasioned by our sins, springs from a *grief* of conscience caused by a sense of the goodness and grace of God. *Worldly* sorrow is horror only in respect of the punishment, whereas *godly* sorrow is grief for sin as sin, which is increased by the realization that there will be no

personal punishment for it since that was inflicted upon Christ in my stead. In order that no one may deceive himself in discerning this “godly sorrow,” the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 7:11 has given us seven marks by which it may be identified.

The first is, “For behold this selfsame thing (“godly sorrow”) that ye sorrowed after a godly sort: what carefulness it wrought in you.” The word for “carefulness” signifies first “haste” and then diligence—the opposite of negligence and indifference. There is not only mourning over, but going to work with a will so as to rectify the misconduct. Second, “yea, what clearing of yourselves”: the Greek word signifies “to apologize,” seeking forgiveness: it is the reverse of self-extenuation. Third, yea, “what indignation,” instead of unconcern: the penitent one is exceedingly angry with himself for committing such offenses. Fourth, “yea, what fear,” lest there be any repetition of the same: it is an anxiety of mind against a further lapse. Fifth, “yea what vehement desire”: for Divine assistance and strength against any recurrence of it. Sixth, “yea, what zeal,” in performing the holy duties which are the opposite of those sins. Seventh, “yea what revenge,” upon himself, by daily mortifying his members. When a man finds these fruits in himself, he need not doubt the “godliness” of his repentance.

The token in our spirit with respect of sins *present* is the resistance made by the new nature against the old, or the principle of holiness against that of evil: see Galatians 5:17. This is proper to the regenerate as they are dual creatures—children of men and children of God. It is far more than the checks of conscience which all men, both good and bad, find in themselves as often as they offend God. No—it is that striving and fighting of the mind, affections, and will *with themselves*, whereby as far as they are renewed and sanctified they carry the man one way, and as they are still corrupt they carry him the contrary. It is this painful and protracted warfare which the Christian discovers to be going on within himself, which evidences him to be a new creature in Christ. If he reviews and recalls the past, he will find in his experience nothing like this before his regeneration.

Everything in the natural adumbrates spiritual realities, did we but have eyes to see and understandings to properly interpret them. There is a disease called ephalites which causes its victims when they are half asleep to feel as though some heavy weight is lying across their chest, bearing them down; and they strive with hands and feet, with all their might, to remove that weight, but cannot. Such is the case of the genuine Christian: he is conscious of something within that drags him down, which clips the wings of faith and hope, which hinders his affections being set upon things above. It oppresses him and he wrestles with it, but in vain. It is the “flesh,” his inborn corruptions, indwelling sin, against which all the graces of the new nature strive and struggle. It is an intolerable burden which disturbs his rest, and prevents him from doing the things which he would.

The token in our spirit which respects *sins to come* is an earnest care to prevent them. That this is a mark of God’s children appears from, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). Note carefully the tense of the verb: it is not, “he does not sin,” but “sinneth not”—as a regular practice and constant course. From that he “keepeth himself.” This carefulness consists not only in the ordering of our outward conduct, but extends to the very thoughts of the heart. It was to this the Apostle referred when he said, “I keep under my body, but bring it into subjection” (1 Cor. 9:27)—not his physical body, but the body of sin within him. The more we make conscience of evil

thoughts and unlawful imaginations, the more we sit in judgment upon our motives—the less likely is our external behaviour to be displeasing unto God.

We turn now to consider the tokens or signs in the Christian's spirit with respect to *God's mercy*, tokens which evidence him to be one of God's elect. The first one is when a man feels himself to be heavily burdened and deeply disturbed with the guilt and pollution of his iniquities, and when he apprehends the heavy displeasure of God in his conscience for them. This far outweighs any physical ills or temporal calamities which he may be subject to. Sin is now his greatest burden of all, making him quite unable to enjoy worldly pleasures or relish the society of worldly companions. Now it is he feels his urgent need of Christ, and pants after Him as the parched hart does for the refreshing stream. Carnal ambitions and worldly hopes fade into utter insignificance before this overwhelming yearning for reconciliation with God through the merits of the Redeemer. "Give me Christ or else I die," is now his agonizing cry.

Now to all such sin-sick, conscience-tormented, Spirit-convicted souls, Christ has made some exceedingly great and precious promises—promises which pertain unto none but the quickened elect of God. "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38). Is not that exactly suited to the deep needs of one who feels the flames of Hell upon his conscience? He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for he knows that he has none of his own. He thirsts for peace, for he has none night or day. He thirsts for pardon and cleansing for he sees himself to be a leprous felon. Then come to Me, says Christ, and I will meet your every need. "I will give him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). And mark what follows his coming to Christ: "Whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14).

The second token is *a new affection* which is implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, whereby a man does so esteem and value and set such a high price upon the blood and righteousness of Christ that he accounts the most precious things of this world as but dross and dung in comparison. This affection was evidenced by Paul: see Philippians 3:7, 8. Now it is true that almost every professor will say that he values the Person and work of Christ high above all the things of this world, when the fact is that the vast majority of them are of Esau's mind, preferring a mess of pottage to Jacob's portion. With very, very few exceptions those who bear the name of Christians much prefer the fleshpots of Egypt to the blessings of God in the Land of Promise. Their actions and their lives demonstrate it, for where a man's treasure is there is his heart also.

That no man may deceive himself in connection with this particular sign of regeneration and election, God has given us two identifying and corroborating marks. First, when there is a genuine prizing of and delighting in Christ above all other objects, there is an unfeigned love for *His members*. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14): that is, such as are members of the mystical body of Christ, and because they are so. Those who are dear to God must be dear to His people. No matter what differences there may be between them in nationality, social position, personal temperament—there is a *spiritual* bond which unites them. If Christ be dwelling in my heart, then my affections will necessarily be drawn forth unto all in whom I perceive, however faintly, the shape of His holy image. And just so far as I allow the

spirit of animosity to alienate me from them, will my evidence of election be overclouded.

The second corroborating mark of a genuine valuing of Christ is a love and longing for *His coming*: whether it be by death, or by His second advent. Though nature shrinks from physical dissolution, and though the sin which indwells the Christian renders him uneasy at the thought of being ushered into the immediate presence of the Holy One of God, nevertheless, the actings of the new nature carries the soul above these obstacles. A renewed heart cannot rest satisfied with its present, fitful, and imperfect communion with his Beloved. He yearns for full and complete fellowship with Him. This was clearly the case with Paul: "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). That this was not peculiar to himself, but that it is something which is common to the entire election of grace appears from his word, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto *all* them also that *love His appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8).

Next we turn to the *external* token of our adoption. This is evangelical obedience, whereby the believer sincerely endeavours to obey God's commands in his daily life. "*Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*" (1 John 2:3). God does not judge disobedience by the rigour of the Law, for then it would be no token of grace but a means of damnation. Rather does God esteem and consider that obedience according to the tenor of the New Covenant. Concerning those who fear Him the Lord declares, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17). God regards the things done not by their effects or absolute doing of them, but by *the affection* of the doer. It is at the heart God chiefly looks. And yet, lest any be deceived on this point, let the following qualifications be prayerfully pondered.

That external obedience which God requires of His children and which for Christ's sake He accepts from them, is not one which has respect to only a few of the Divine commands, but unto all, without exception. Herod heard the Baptist gladly, and did many things (Mark 6:20), but he drew the line at complying with the Seventh Commandment to leave his brother, Philip's, wife. Judas forsook the world for Christ, and became a preacher of the Gospel, yet he failed to mortify the lust of covetousness, and perished. On the contrary David exclaimed, "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:6). He that repents of one sin truly repents of all sins, and he that lives in any one known sin without repentance, actually repents of no sin at all.

Again—for our external obedience to be acceptable to God, it must extend itself to the whole course of a Christian's life after conversion. We are not to judge ourselves (or anyone else) by a few odd actions, but by the general tenor of our lives. As the course of a man's life is, such is the man himself; though he, because of the sin which still indwells him, fails in this or that particular action, yet does it not prejudice his estate before God, so long as he renews his repentance for his offenses—not lying down in any one sin. Finally, it is required that this external obedience proceed from the whole man: all that is within him is to show forth God's praises. At the new birth all the faculties of the soul are renewed, and henceforth are to be employed in the service of God, as formerly they had been in the service of sin.

Let it be said once more that it is most important that the Christian should be quite clear as to exactly *what it is* his spirit bears witness unto. It is not to any improvement in his carnal nature, nor to sin being less active within him; rather is it to the fact that he is a

child of God, as is evident from his heart going out after Him, yearning for fellowship with Him, and his sincere endeavour to please Him. Just as an affectionate and dutiful child has within his own bosom proof of the peculiar relationship which he stands in to his father, so the filial inclinations and aspirations of the believer prove that God is his heavenly Father. True, there is still much in him which is constantly rising up in opposition to God, nevertheless there is something else which was not in him by nature.

Let us here anticipate an objection: some say that it is a sin for the Christian to question his acceptance with God because he is still so depraved, or to doubt his salvation because he can perceive little or no holiness within. They say that such doubting is to call God's Truth and faithfulness into question, for He has assured us of His love and His readiness to save all who believe in His Son. They deny that it is our duty to examine our hearts and say that we shall never obtain any assurance by so doing; that we must look to Christ alone and rest on His naked Word. But this is a serious mistake. We *do* rest on His Word when we search for those evidences which that Word itself describe as the marks of a child of God. Said the Apostle, "For Our rejoicing is this: *the testimony of our conscience*, etc." (2 Cor. 1:12). "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And *hereby* we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 John 3:18, 19).

But notwithstanding the evidences which a Christian has of his Divine sonship, he finds it no easy matter to be assured of his sincerity or to establish solid comfort in his soul. His moods are fitful, his frames variable. It is at this very point the blessed Spirit of God helps our infirmities. He adds *His* witness to the testimony of our renewed conscience, so that at times the Christian *is* assured of his salvation, and can say, "*my conscience* also bearing me witness in *the Holy Spirit*" (Rom. 9:1). —A.W.P.

THE HOLY SABBATH.

6. *Its Perpetuation.*

We now approach what is to us, upon whom the ends of the ages are come (1 Cor. 10:11), the most pertinent and important aspect of our subject. It is therefore necessary to proceed slowly and enter more into detail, especially as there is so much confusion and error at this point. In seeking to open up this branch of our theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow more or less closely the lucid and helpful writings of P. Fairbairn thereon. We would like to quote him at length, but this would occupy too much space, so we content ourself by summarizing his able exposition thereof, intermingling and adding some remarks and conclusions of our own.

First, a Christian Sabbath was clearly anticipated by Old Testament prophecy: or to put it another way, the Prophets plainly intimated that the Holy Sabbath would be perpetuated throughout the Christian dispensation. Thus we have a natural bridge which connects the Old and New Testaments together. A wide field is here opened for investigation, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, we shall confine our attention to two predictions: the first one enunciating the basic general principle, the second furnishing more explicit details. We have discussed the former passage under the Covenant articles in our *Studies in the Scriptures*, but for the sake of new readers, and particularly as it bears upon our present theme, we must again look at it.

Before turning to those ancient evangelic testimonies, it should be pointed out that a considerable portion of the prophetic writings pertains rather to the New, than to the Old Testament dispensation. They were designed to deliver the Jews from dwelling too exclusively in their thoughts on their present regime; on which they were ever prone to settle with a carnal and exclusive regard; and to direct the eye of faith forward to those better things which were to come, and which were to be disclosed in "the dispensation of the fullness of times" (Eph. 1:10). It was of those very things, the prophecies we are to consider, spoke. They were "the testimony of Jesus," witnessing beforehand of the work He was to do, the nature of that kingdom which He would establish, and the character of those blessings He should confer.

In proof of our contention that the Sabbath obtains for the Christian dispensation, we appeal first to, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the (spiritual) house of Israel, and with the (spiritual) house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they break, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jer. 31:31-34). That the new covenant here mentioned is that brought in by Christ is expressly affirmed in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, so that there can be no doubt of this being one of those prophecies which had immediate reference to the Gospel economy.

Now the leading characteristic of this New Covenant, as contradistinguished from that which was made with carnal Israel at Sinai, is that God's Law is now written on the

hearts of His people, whereas it was formerly written on tables of stone: in this the Law is transmitted internally, in that, the Nation had it externally. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is identically *the same Law*: the moral Law, not the ceremonial, for so far from that being exalted into a higher place by Christ, it was in Him abolished, passing away like the shadow when the substance comes. Nor is the ceremonial law ever designated absolutely “the Law of God,” and least of all could that be meant when the Law and the Covenant are viewed (as they are here) as in great measure identical. That which is pre-eminently called “*the Law*” in the Pentateuch and which formed exclusively the old covenant, was simply the Ten Commandments—those wholly and those alone.

It was the Ten Commandments, then, which the Spirit of Prophecy (through Jeremiah) foretold should one day, namely, in the Gospel dispensation—be inscribed by the finger of God upon the hearts of His people. By a miracle of grace being wrought in them, they would, after the inward man, delight in and serve God’s Law (Rom. 7:22, 25). It could not be otherwise, for God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29)—initially so now, fully so in Glory. If then the Head could say, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:8), so in their measure can the members of His mystical Body say the same. Yet there is this great difference—for in all things He has the pre-eminence: Christ was born (“that Holy thing”: Luke 1:35) with God’s Law in His heart, whereas it is only written in ours at the new birth.

Now if the Ten Commandments as a whole be written upon the hearts of Christians it must be true of each individual part—*the Fourth* as well as any of the rest. That Commandment was most certainly included as an essential part of the Law or Covenant which was formerly written without and set before the Nation of Israel, but is now written within and infused with living power in the affections of the souls of God’s people. And is not that very fact attested by Christian experience? How uniformly do they who are admitted into the privileges of the New Covenant love and delight in the Day of God! Nay, the more deeply anyone drinks into the spirit of the Gospel and experiences the grace of God writing the Law of holiness on the tablet of his heart, the more invariably does he count the Sabbath “the holy of the Lord and honourable.”

So far from a renewed soul chafing at the restraints which the Day of Rest throws upon his conduct, and hankering after a larger freedom amid the pleasures and business of the world, he gladly hails its hallowed employments, and finds its weekly returns as so many “spring days” in his spiritual nature. He thinks and feels with the poet:

“Sweet day of rest! for thee I’d wait,
Emblem and earnest of a state
Where saints are fully blest!
For thee I’d look, for thee I’d sigh.
I’d count the days till thou art nigh
Sweet day of sacred rest!”

The second passage to which we appeal for proof of the Sabbath in this dispensation is, “Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant: Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of

sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar: for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:3-7).

Now it should be unmistakably evident to all that the above prediction does and could not refer to Jewish but must relate to *Gospel times*. First, this is clear from the place it occupies in the chain of prophecy, and of which it is a part—i.e., beginning at 54:1 immediately after the atoning death of Christ in chapter 53. Second, it is directly connected with the revelation of “God’s righteousness” and the “coming near of His salvation” (56:1), which can only be understood of Gospel times (see Rom. 1:16, 17), and is so regarded by all sound interpreters. Third, express mention is here made of the keeping of the Sabbath as a characteristic mark of godliness on the part of the “strangers” (Isa. 56:6) that is, *the Gentiles* who should join themselves to the Lord—“To the Lord,” and not to the Nation of Israel!

It is also to be noted that the duty and blessedness of observing the Sabbath are spoken of in Isaiah 56:4 as belonging to the “eunuchs,” who under the Mosaic dispensation were *excluded* from the congregation of the Lord, as also were the “strangers” as a body. Now the calling of the Gentiles and the removal of all outward, personal disabilities in God’s sight, are emphatically marks of the New Testament Church; yet of such a Church it was definitely predicted that the observance of *the Sabbath* would form a distinctive characteristic. Finally, not only is the observance of the Sabbath three times repeated with singular emphasis, but it is coupled with laying hold of the Covenant, doing justice, and loving the name of the Lord—clearly importing that the Sabbath has its place with the most important and permanent appointments of God’s kingdom.

Ere passing on, perhaps it will be well for us to anticipate an objection which some may be inclined to make against what has just been advanced. The dispensationalists, who are so fond of allocating to a Jewish “millennium” those prophecies which receive their fulfillment under this Christian economy, are likely to say Isaiah 56:3-7 cannot be understood as receiving its accomplishment in Gospel times, but must be regarded as describing conditions under a future and restored Judaism, because verse 7 says, “their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar.” From this and other passages the grotesque conclusion is drawn that an era yet to come is to witness a revival of the ancient Levitical ritual—a thing which is not only without a vestige of New Testament support, but which is expressly refuted by the entire contents of the Hebrews’ Epistle, the special design of which is to show that the Aaronic priesthood has been forever set aside, superseded by the more excellent priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek.

Surely only those who are blinded by prejudice could fail to see that so far from Isaiah 56:7 containing anything in favour of a future restored Judaism, the whole passage in which that verse occurs makes dead against such a preposterous view. Why, if there be any one thing more than another which outstandingly characterized the exclusiveness of Judaism, it was that the priestly functions were rigidly confined *to the family of Aaron*. “Therefore thou (Aaron) and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest’s office for every-

thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto *you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num. 18:7 and cf. 3:10, 38). In passage after passage "death" is threatened the "stranger" (Gentile) who dared to approach that altar. So strict was Jehovah in the enforcement of this restrictive statute, that even when one of Israel's own kings dared to usurp sacerdotal functions by burning incense upon the altar, He smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-20)!

What shall be thought, then, of those "renowned Bible teachers," who are supposed to have so much more light than the rank and file of ministers, when they display such ignorance of one of the most elementary principles of Judaism, and give forth such a carnal and absurd interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures? Why, to put it as charitably and mildly as possible, that they are unsafe guides in spiritual things, and that though they may be able to amuse the curious, they cannot edify those seeking a closer walk with God. This childish and slavish "literalism" is so far from honouring God, that it brings His Holy Word into disrepute among sober-minded people. Anyone who possesses spiritual discernment and who is at all acquainted with the New Testament, should at once perceive that the "burnt offerings" of Isaiah 56:7 are the same, as the "*spiritual* sacrifices" of 1 Peter 2:5, expressed in the terminology of the Old Covenant.

What a blessed picture does Isaiah 56 furnish of the distinctive and special blessings of Gospel times! New Covenant privileges are portrayed under the figures of Old Covenant institutions, yet such remarkable contrasts are drawn that there is no excuse for mistaking their purport. Both eunuchs and strangers were expressly excluded from the sacred precincts of Israel's tabernacle and temple, and to here affirm that the Lord would give them a "place in His house," is only the Old Testament way of saying that the "middle wall of partition" would be broken down." When in verse 6 it says, "the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him," the same Hebrew word is used as signifies the service *of the altar*: in other words, it was a prophetic announcement that the redeemed from the Gentiles were made "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) to offer no material and outward sacrifices, but spiritual and inward ones, the holy exercises of renewed hearts. The wild idea that it is "millennial" blessings which are here portrayed, is conclusively discountenanced by, "I will give them an everlasting name" (Isa. 56:5).

But to proceed: that the Sabbath should be continued throughout our own dispensation is just what might be expected, for the merciful nature and tendencies of the weekly Day of Rest is in perfect accord with the character and genius of Christianity. If a day of stated rest, on which all labour was forbidden as unlawful, and nothing permitted save what ministered to the life and well-being of the soul (with the exception only of works of necessity and mercy), was appointed by God for the good of His creatures under the Old Covenant, then certainly such a gracious provision is equally suited to the character and design of the New Covenant. If there be any feature of Christianity in its connection with human society, more prominent than another, it is the tenderness it breathes toward the poor and needy, and the beneficent influence it is fitted to exert on the conditions of those who require most of sympathy and kindness.

Christ Himself gave it as the leading characteristic of His work on earth that thereby the objects of deepest compassion were relieved, and that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them (Matt. 11:4, 5). There was in His heart an infinite tenderness and fellow-feeling for such, even in regard to temporal evils, which often excited the wonder of

His immediate followers and rebuked their comparative indifference. And is not a weekly Sabbath, bringing a periodical release from the toils and burdens of life, permitting the most weary and oppressed a season of repose in the bosom of their families, and to attend to what they must otherwise neglect, namely, the higher interests of their being—is not *such* a Day an unspeakable boon to the great bulk of mankind? Has not the Sabbath been one of the most wise and benevolent gifts the Creator has bestowed upon His creatures, testifying His care both for their bodies and their spirits, by providing relaxation for the one and refreshment for the other?

Undoubtedly that is the real character of the Sabbath. And if Christianity has done anything to destroy the foundations on which such a blessed institution rests, it must surely in this particular, be strangely inconsistent with its general tendency and design. In its care for the poor and oppressed—it must then actually rank lower than Judaism, and be chargeable with removing one of the noblest bulwarks of the weak against the strong—of the labouring classes of society against the greed and grind of the monopolists. That the Gospel of the grace of God was intended to produce such an unfavourable effect, or can be made to do so otherwise than by some gross perversion of its meaning, will not readily be believed by any who know what the spirit of the Gospel is. The benevolent character of the Gospel, viewed in connection with the equally benevolent character of the Sabbath, amounts to a strong presumption that so far from subverting, the one must rather establish and support the other.—A.W.P.

THE TWO NATURES

(Continued from the May issue)

At the outset: we are the same persons all through. Neither the deprivation of spiritual life at the Fall, nor the communication of spiritual life at the new birth, affects the reality of our being in possession of what we commonly call human nature. By the Fall we did not become less than men; by regeneration we do not become more than men. That which essentially constitutes our manhood was not lost, and no matter whatever be imparted to us at regeneration, our individuality is never changed.

If the above distinctions be carefully borne in mind, particularly between what our nature essentially consists of and what it “accidentally” became by virtue of the changes passing upon it, then there should be less difficulty in our understanding what is signified by the Lord’s assuming *our nature*. When the Son of God became incarnate, He took to Himself human nature. He was in every respect true Man, possessing spirit and soul and body: “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17). This does not explain the miracle and mystery of the Divine incarnation, for that is incomprehensible; but it states the fundamental fact of it. Christ did not inherit our corruption, for that was not an essential of manhood. He was born and ever remained immaculately pure and holy; nevertheless, He took upon Him our nature intrinsically considered.

Reverting for a moment to our opening passage: “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Here “the flesh” is the name given to human nature as fallen—it must not be restricted to the body (as in a few passages it is), but understood (as generally in the New Testament) of the entire human constitution. In affirming, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” Christ reiterated the basic and unchanging principle—repeated no less than nine times in Genesis 1—that every creature brings forth “after his kind.” The quality of the fruit is determined by the nature of the tree that bears it: an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Man’s fallen nature cannot yield that which is sinless. No matter how much fallen man may be educated, civilized, or religionized, in his natural state he cannot produce that which is acceptable to the thrice holy God. In order to that he must be born again—a new and sinless nature imparted to him.

“But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” A new, a spiritual life is communicated, from which the grand moral change in its subject proceeds. This communication of Divine life to the soul is viewed in the New Testament under various figures. It is likened to the implanting of an incorruptible “seed” in the soul (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9); to a cleansing of the heart, a “washing of water by the Word” (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26); to a renovation of the will, or a writing of God’s Law in the mind (Heb. 8:10). The figure of the “seed” conveys the idea of a subsequent growth; the washing of water suggests a process of cleansing only commenced; while that of God’s writing His Law in our minds intimates the durability and permanence of His work of grace. It is from this new life or nature, imparted by the Spirit, that all spiritual life proceeds.

We have no desire to belittle the marvel and miracle of the new birth: so far from it, we freely accept our Lord’s declaration that it is a mystery beyond man’s power to solve (John 3:8). If the communication of natural life be an enigma to human understanding, much more so is the impartation of spiritual life. Thus, in our efforts to simplify one aspect of regeneration we seek to guard against falsifying it at another. What we wish to make clear is, that at the new birth no new faculties are added to man’s soul, no addition is made to his essential threefold constitution. Previously, he possessed a spirit and soul

and body; he does not now have a fourth thing bestowed upon him. It is the man himself who is born again. As at the Fall his person was vitiated, now his person is regenerated—the full effects of which will only appear at his glorification.

Having thus considered, very briefly, the two natures in the Christian, we must now distinguish sharply between them and the individual in whom they reside. A *nature* and a *person* are in many respects widely different. Whether unconverted or converted, the person is constitutionally the same: it is the one who was dead in trespasses and sins who has been Divinely quickened. It is identically the same individual who formerly was a child of disobedience, under condemnation, who is now justified and sanctified. And, my reader, it is to the *person* and not to his nature that accountability attaches. Deeds belong to the individual and not to his nature. No amount of quibbling can gainsay the fact that in his heart even the unregenerate is conscious that he is responsible to act and live contrary to his fallen nature, and that he is justly culpable if he yields to his depraved inclinations. It is on this very ground that God will judge him in the Day to come, and so self-evidently righteous will this be that “every mouth will be stopped” (Rom. 3:20) and God “will be clear when He judges” (Psa. 51:4).

Plain and simple though it be, yet we feel we must labour the point a little further. How many professing Christians today speak of “the flesh,” in themselves and in others, in such a way as if its being an exhibition of the flesh thoroughly explained matters. Were one to rebuke another for conduct unbecoming a child of God, and he replied, Yes, that is the flesh working in me, such language would plainly evidence an attempt *to escape* responsibility. If evil deeds by a Christian were excusable on the ground that the flesh still remains within him, then by parity of reason every sinner on earth could excuse himself, and how then could God judge the world? In point of fact the unregenerate do, everywhere, fall back on their sinful nature to escape condemnation, whereas if they listened to conscience they would certainly know that their nature never compelled them to commit a single sin. It inclined them, but they were responsible to control and resist it, and the essence of their guilt is that they did not.

It is *the man*, then, who sins, and is the sinner; it is the man who needs to be forgiven and justified; it is the man who is responsible to walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit. It is the same person all through. It is the man who is born again, and not a nature. True, at the new birth he receives a new life or nature, so that he now has two natures, and his responsibility is to mortify the old and feed, strengthen, and be governed by the new. The flesh is in no wise improved by the presence of the “spirit,” any more than weeds are bettered by planting flowers in their midst. The flesh and the spirit are contrary to each other, and my responsibility lies in making no provision for the former, acting according to the dictates of the latter.—A.W.P.

1 Peter 2:25

“For ye were as sheep going astray, are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). How distinctly this shows that those sinners who trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation were already His sheep, when as yet they had not been brought to know their need of the great salvation accomplished for them by their “Good Shepherd.” “Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd”: how distinctly this shows the sure results of *grace*, through the quickening work of the Holy Spirit. As the result of that work, the Lord Jesus possesses the chief attraction for them. “My sheep hear My voice. . . and they follow Me.” They now seek no other place of refuge, no other Guide but Himself. They may possess but little comfort. They have but a very faint assurance of their interest in His love. Great may be the depths of inbred evil over which they have to mourn; yet withal they can truly say that their eyes are toward Him and the desire of their hearts is after Him. The sure evidence this, that His eyes were previously towards them, and His desire first after them, and that His voice has effectually called them to Himself.

“Them also I *must* bring, and they *shall* hear My voice.” How emphatic! How certain is the Shepherd’s language! How complete are the arrangements of the Everlasting Covenant! How irresistible are the workings of sovereign electing grace! So is it always. He begins the work in the soul of His beloved; and it is He who carries on that work unto the end. Both the beginning and the end shall evermore be to the glory of His matchless, free, and unmerited grace.—Thomas Moore.

There are two points in the above quotation, most blessed and important, yet little understood today, which perhaps call for a brief amplification. First, the fact that those who savingly believe in Christ are His “sheep” before ever they turn unto Him, for it is to be duly noted that 1 Peter 2:25 is not treating of the recovery of backslidden Christians, but of their first coming to the Saviour. As our Lord so plainly declared, “Other sheep I have (not “shall have”) . . . them also I must bring” (John 10:16). They belonged to Him from all eternity. They were His by the Father’s election and by His gift of them to His Son. But, it may be objected, these sheep are said to “return” to Christ, so they must previously have been in the fold. The answer is simple: Christ’s sheep *went astray* from Him when they fell in Adam, their natural head, and consequently they were born in sin.

Second, the voice of the verb. It is not “ye *have* returned unto the Shepherd,” but “*are* now returned.” This denotes they were completely *passive* therein. The work of regeneration is entirely Divine, and nothing of man enters into it. It is wrought in us, and not done by us. The active follows the passive, as the results of life follow the bestowment of life. Our coming to Christ is the consequence of His having drawn us. It is a sovereign act of Divine power which brings us from death unto life, in which we are completely passive.—A.W.P.