

**June, 1936**  
**Studies in the Scriptures**  
**The Spirit Sealing.**

Closely connected with the Spirit's work of witnessing with the Christian's spirit that he is a child of God, is His operation in sealing. This appears clearly from 2 Corinthians 1:19-22 and Ephesians 1:13.

The riches of the Christian are found in the promises of God, and these are all "Yea and Amen" in Christ: unless, then, our faith be built up on *them*, it is worthless. It is not sufficient that the promises be sure, we must be "established" upon them. No matter how firm the foundation (be it solid rock), unless the house be connected therewith, actually built thereon, it is insecure. There, must then, be a *double* "Amen": one in the promises, and one in us. There must be an echo in the Christian's own heart: *God* says these things, so they must be true; faith appropriates them and says they *are for me*. In order to assurance and peace it is indispensable that we be established in and on the Divine promises.

The Christian's *riches* lie in the promises of God: his *strength and comfort* in his faith being built upon them. Now the same Divine power which delivered the Christian from the kingdom of Satan and brought him into a state of grace, must also deliver him from the attacks of the Enemy upon his faith and *confirm* him in a state of grace. Only God can produce stability: only He can preserve that spark of faith amid the winds and waves of unbelief, and this He is pleased to do—"He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it*" (Phil. 1:6). Therefore we are told "Now he which *stablisheth* us with you in Christ . . . is God" (2 Cor. 1:21): observe carefully it is *not* "hath stablished," but "stablisheth"—it is a continuous process throughout the Christian's life on earth.

In what follows the Apostle shows us what this "stablishing" consists of, or how it is accomplished: "and hath *anointed* us . . . who hath also *sealed* us, and given the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21, 22). Each of these figures refers to the same thing, and has to do with the "stablishing" or assuring of our hearts. Under the Old Testament economy, prophets, priests, and kings were authorised and confirmed in their office by "anointing" (Lev. 8:11; 2 Sam. 5:3; 1 Kings 19:16). Again; contracts and deeds of settlement were ratified by "sealing" (Esth. 8:8; Jer. 32:8-10). And a "pledge" or "earnest" secured an agreement or bargain (Gen. 38:17, 18; Deut. 24:10). Thus *the sure estate* of the Christian is first expressed under the general word "stablisheth," and then it is amplified under these three figurative terms "anointed, sealed, earnest." It is with the second of them we are now concerned.

It may be asked, But what need has the Christian of attestation or confirmation of his state in Christ—is not faith itself sufficient proof? Ah, often our faith and the knowledge we have of our believing in Christ is severely shaken: the activities of indwelling sin stir up a thick cloud of doubt, and Satan avails himself of this to tell us our profession is an empty one. But in His tender grace, God has given us the Holy spirit, and from time to time He "seals" or *confirms* our faith by His quickening and comforting operations. He draws out our hearts anew unto God and enables us to cry "Abba, Father." He takes of the things of Christ, shows them unto us, and brings us to realise that we have a personal interest in the same.

The same blessed truth is found again in Ephesians 1:13. It is important to note the order of the three things there predicated of saints: they "heard," they "believed," they were "sealed": thus the sealing is quite distinct from and follows the believing, as the be-

lieving does the hearing. There are two things, and two only, upon which the Spirit puts His seal, namely, two mighty and efficacious works: first, the finished work of Christ, whereby He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and second, upon His own work in the hearts of those who believe. In legal documents the writing always precedes the witnessing and sealing: so here—the Spirit writes God’s laws on the heart (Heb. 8:10), and then He seals the truth and reality of His own work to the consciousness of the recipient.

The main intent of “sealing” is to assure, to certify and ratify. First, the Holy Spirit conveys an assurance of the *truth* of God’s promises, whereby a man’s understanding is spiritually convinced that the promises are from God. Neither the light of reason nor the persuasive power of a fellow-mortal can bring any one to rest his heart upon the Divine promises: in order to that, there must be the direct working of the holy Spirit—“Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1 Thess. 1:5): the “much assurance” comes last! Second, He gives the believer an assurance of his own *personal interest* in those promises: and this again is something which none but the Spirit can impart. We do not say that this sealing excludes all doubting, but it is such an assurance as *prevails* over doubts.

There are many uses of a “seal” such as proprietorship, identification, confirmation, secrecy, security; but in Ephesians 1:13 the immediate thing stated is *the sealing of an inheritance*; we have obtained an inheritance by faith, and having believed we are “sealed.” What is the specific use of a “seal” in connection with an inheritance? It may either be the making of the inheritance *sure* to a man in itself, or making the man *know* that it is *his*—assuring him of the fact. Now it cannot be the former, for nothing is needed to make Heaven sure once a sinner truly believes—the moment he lays hold of Christ, the inheritance is certain. So it must be the latter: to make *us* sure, to persuade our hearts the inheritance is ours. It is this the Spirit accomplishes in His “seal.”

The Holy Spirit is never called a “Seal” as He is an “Earnest” (2 Cor. 5:5): it is only in relation to an *act* of sealing that this figure is associated with Him; thus it is a distinct operation of His “in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:22). It is not the stamping of God’s image upon the soul (as many of the Puritans supposed) that is referred to in Ephesians 1:13, for that is done *before* believing, and not after. The order of truth in that verse is very simple and decisive: in the Gospel salvation is offered—it *may* be mine; faith accepts that offer so as to *make* salvation mine; the Spirit seals or confirms my heart that salvation *is* mine. Thus in “sealing” the Spirit authenticates, certifies, ratifies.

Observe that He does this in His special character as “the Spirit of promise.” He is so designated because, first, the Spirit was the great and grand promise of the New Testament (John 14:26; 15:26, etc.) as Christ was of the Old. Second, because He works by means of the promises. Third, because in His whole work He acts according to the Everlasting Covenant, which, as it respects the elect, is a Covenant of Promise (Eph. 2:12). When He seals home a sense of the love of God and gives the soul a view of its interest in Christ, it is done by means of the Word of Promise. It was so when He “sealed” Christ (John 6:27) and consecrated Him to the work of redemption. The Father said by an audible voice from Heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17): this was repeating what had been pronounced in the purpose of Jehovah the Father concerning the Mediator (Isa. 42:1); this the Holy Spirit brought home in power or “sealed” upon the mind of Jesus at that time.

The “sealing” or assuring operations of the Spirit are known to the believer in two ways. First, *inferentially*: by enabling him to perceive His work in the soul, and from it conclude his regeneration. When I see smoke I must infer a fire, and when I discern spiritual graces (however feeble) I reason back to the Producer of them. When I feel a power within combating my corruptions, and often thwarting my intentions to indulge the lusts of the flesh, I conclude it is the Spirit resisting the flesh (Gal. 5:17). Second, *intuitively*: by a Divine light in the heart, by a Divine authority felt, by the love of God shed abroad therein. If I have any hope wrought in me, either by looking to Christ’s blood or perceiving grace in me, it is by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

The Spirit brings to the mind of the Christian the sacred promises. He shows him the good contained in them, the grace expressed in them, the perfection and freeness of Christ’s salvation declared by them; and thereby He seals them on his mind and enables him to rest thereon. He shows him the veracity and faithfulness of God in the promises, the immutability of the Everlasting Covenant, the eternity of God’s love, and that He hath by two immutable things (His word and His oath) in which it is impossible for Him to lie, given us a firm foundation for strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the Gospel (Heb. 6:18). It is in this way that “the God of all grace” doth, by the Spirit, “stablish, strengthen, settle us” (1 Peter 5:10). It is by the Spirit’s operations that the Christian’s fears are quietened, his doubts subdued, and his heart assured that a “good work” (Phil. 1:6) has been Divinely begun *in him*. The Spirit indwelling us is Christ’s seal (mark of identification) that we are His sheep; the Spirit authenticating His own blessed work in our souls, by revealing to us our “title” to Heaven, is His *sealing* us.—A.W.P.

### **The Epistle to the Hebrews.**

#### *102. The Passing of Judaism: 12:26, 27.*

It is exceedingly difficult, if not quiet impossible, for us to form any adequate conception of the serious obstacles presented to the mind of a pious Jew, when any one sought to persuade him that Judaism had been set aside by God and that he must turn his own back upon it. No analogy or parallel exists in our own experience. It was not merely that the Hebrews were required to turn away from something which their ancestors had set up, and around which twined all their own sentiments and affections of national patriotism, but that they were called upon to abandon a religious system that had been appointed and established by Jehovah Himself. That institution, a theocracy, was unique, sharply distinguished from all the idolatrous systems of the heathen. It was God's outstanding witness in the earth. It had been signally honoured and favoured by Him. It had existed for no less than fifteen centuries, and even when Christ appeared, He acknowledged the temple—the centre and headquarters of Judaism—as “My Father's House.”

We cannot but admire the tender grace of God in the gentle and gradual way in which He “broke the news” to His people, little by little preparing their minds to receive the truth that His purpose in Judaism had been completely accomplished. Intimations were given through the Prophets that the order of things with which they were connected would give place to another and better. To the same effect the Lord Jesus dropped one hint after another: as, for example, when He pointed out that the old bottles were incapable of receiving the new wine, or when He declared, not that which enters into a man defileth him (as the ceremonial law had taught), but that which issues from the heart, or when He announced “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father” (John 4:21); and finally, when He solemnly affirmed “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38).

The rending of the temple veil by a Divine hand was full of deep meaning for those who had eyes to see. The word given through Stephen that “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48), was another clear ray of heavenly light on the same subject. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and the commissioning of him as an Apostle to the Gentiles, intimated the direction in which the stream of Divine mercy was now flowing—it had burst the narrow banks of Judaism! The vision granted to Peter (Acts 10) and his message to Cornelius (v. 35), was a further advance along the same line. The important decision of the Apostles and elders of the Church at Jerusalem in Acts 15:23-29 not to bind the ceremonial law upon the Gentile converts, was another radical step in the same direction.

Yet Jerusalem still survived, the temple was yet intact, and its services continued. Moreover, the leaders of the Nation had rejected Christ and denounced Christianity as a device of Satan's. Many of the Jewish Christians were sorely puzzled and deeply exercised, for the Roman yoke had not been removed. As yet the followers of Christ were but few in number, and for the most part, poor and despised. The Hebrew believers were being hotly persecuted by their unbelieving brethren, and God had made no manifest interposition on their behalf. They were therefore almost ready to conclude that, after all, they had made a dreadful mistake in forsaking the religion of their fathers, and that the sore afflictions they were passing through were a Divine judgment upon them. It was to allay their fears, to more thoroughly instruct their minds, to establish their hearts, that God moved the Apostle to write this particular Epistle to them—the great theme of which is a

display of the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and its chief design being a call to perseverance and a warning against apostasy.

But even in this Epistle the Apostle did not come right out and say plainly "God has discarded Judaism." No, the path of *faith* is never an easy one. Faith can only thrive while it *fight*s (1 Tim. 6:12). There must be that which deeply exercises the heart if the soul is to be kept in the place of complete dependence upon God! Nevertheless, God always grants sufficient light unto a truly exercised soul to indicate the path which is to be followed; He always provides a foundation for faith to rest upon. Though He may not remove the chief obstacle (as He did not for the Hebrews while the temple still stood!) and grant a complete solution to our difficulties, yet He graciously furnishes the humble soul sufficient help to circumvent them. Thus it was in this Epistle. *Though no explicit statement is made* that God had done with Judaism, yet sufficient proof was furnished that He *had* set up something better in its place. This comes out again and again in almost every chapter, notably so in the passage now before us.

What has been pointed out in the last paragraph presents a principle and a fact which it is deeply important for true Christians to lay hold of today. Not a few of the Lord's people are now confronted with similar problems, which if not so acute as the Hebrews faced, are just as real to them: problems relating to church-fellowship, baptism, the Lord's supper, Sabbath observance. For over thirty years a situation existed in Israel which produced two parties, neither of which could convince the other; and, as usual, the larger party was in the wrong. On the one hand was the long-established Judaism, which contained the great majority of the Nation; on the other hand was the handful of God's faithful servants with the few who had sufficient grace to receive their teachings and walk by faith. Had the latter been regulated by ancient custom, or by mere numbers, or by the logic of circumstances (the outward providences of God), they had missed God's will for them and had "forsaken their own mercy" (Jonah 2:8).

The little company of converted Hebrews who had left Judaism for Christ were faced with a perplexing and trying situation. No doubt in the case of many of them, their loved ones still adhered reverently and vigorously to the religion of their fathers. Nor could either party convince the other of its error by a simple and direct appeal to Holy Writ. Each side had some Scripture to support it! Nowhere in the Old Testament had God *expressly said* that He would yet do away with Judaism, and nowhere in the New Testament had He *openly declared* that He had now set Judaism aside. No, dear reader, *that* is rarely God's way! In like manner, Christendom is now divided on various points both of doctrine and of duty, and each side is able to make out a real "case" by an appeal to Scripture, and often neither can cite one decisive verse proving the other to be wrong. Yet *one is wrong!* Only by earnestly waiting *upon God* individually can *His* mind be discovered.

But *why* has God ordered things thus? Why are not the Scriptures so worded that there would be no room for controversy? *To try our hearts.* The situation which confronted the converted Hebrews was a real test as to whether they would be followers of *men* or pleasers of *God*. The self-righteous Pharisees could appeal to a long-established system of religion in justification of their rejection of Christ; and there are those in Christendom today who vindicate their adherence to what *God* has never commanded and which is dishonouring to His Son, by an appeal to a long line of godly men who have believed and practiced these very things. When others seek to show that an *opposite* course is required by Scripture, they profess to be "unable to see" what is quite clear to simple

and humble souls, and ask for some verse which expressly *forbids* what they are doing; which is like those who, in the face of His miracles, said, "If Thou be the Christ tell us *plainly*" (John 10:24).

No doubt it *had* made matters much easier for the Hebrews if the Apostle said plainly "God has completely finished with Judaism": *that* had "settled the matter" for hesitating ones who were halting between two opinions—and poor fallen human nature loves to have things *so* "settled" that there may be an end to perturbation of mind and exercise of heart. Moreover, the converted Hebrews would then have had a clear proof-text which *must* have silenced those who differed from them—and we love to have a verse which will close the mouths of those who agree not with us, do we not? Or, God could have allowed the Romans to capture Jerusalem and destroy the temple thirty years sooner than they did: *that* also had "settled the matter"—yes, and left the Hebrews to walk by sight, instead of faith! Instead, He gave them this Epistle, which called for prayer, study, meditation, and for *more prayer*.

Let us now very briefly review the line of the Apostle's argument in 12:18 and onwards. First, he informs the believing Hebrews "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched" and which was so "terrible" that even Moses quaked "exceedingly" (vv. 18-21): no, Divine mercy had delivered them from that system. Second, Paul assures them "But ye are come unto mount Sion" (vv. 22-24): God had brought them unto an order of things where the Throne of Grace predominated. It is ever the Lord's way to reserve the best wine for the last. Third, the Apostle reminds them that increased privileges involve additional obligations, and that failure to discharge those obligations incurs greater guilt; therefore does he urge them to take heed unto God speaking to them in the Person of Christ, warning them that failure so to do would bring down upon them the Divine wrath more surely than did the disobedience of Israel of old (v. 25).

"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (v. 26). This verse has occasioned much difficulty to the commentators, scarcely any two of them (ancient or modern) agreeing in their interpretation of it. Many of them suppose that the ultimate, if not the prime reference in the quotation here made from Haggai relates to the final destruction of the earth and the heavens connected with it, as it is described in 2 Peter 3:10-12. But to suppose that Paul here made a declaration which concerned the then far-distant future, is not only to break the unity of this passage, but is to charge him with making a quotation which had no real relevancy to the immediate subject he was discussing. In pondering Hebrews 12:26-29 our first concern must be to trace their connection with the context.

Now in the context the Apostle had been treating of two things: the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and what this involved concerning the responsibility of those who were the subjects of this higher and grander revelation. These same two things *are still before* the Apostle in the closing verses of our chapter: he *continued* to show how immeasurably the new covenant excels the old, and he *continued* to enforce the pressing call which he had made in verse 25. First, he had intimated the vast difference which obtained between the *mouthpieces* which God employed in connection with the two revelations (v. 25): namely, "Moses" (10:28) and "His Son" (1:2). Second, he had shown the great disproportion between those two teachers, by pointing out the respective *positions* they occupied (v. 25). "Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2) was "on earth," whereas Christ speaks as seated upon His mediatorial throne "from Heaven."

Two things were intimated by God in the different seats or positions occupied by the messengers He had employed. First, inasmuch as He now spake through the Son from Heaven, God denoted that He had finished with Judaism, which was entirely a thing of the earth. Second, that Christianity was of Divine origin, and had to do solely with celestial things. From one angle, this call in Hebrews 12:25 was very similar to that exhortation "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2). Before their conversion, the affections of the Hebrews had been centered upon the temple—notice how the disciples, just before the crucifixion, came to Christ "for to show Him the buildings of the temple" (Matt. 24:1); but *they* were to be "thrown down"!—Christ had returned to Heaven, and thither their hearts must follow Him. Thus, the *heavenly* calling (Heb. 3:1), heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20), heavenly inheritance (1 Peter 1:4), instead of the earthly concerns of Judaism, were now to engage the hearts and minds of the regenerate in Israel.

Next, in the verses now before us, the Apostle brings out the vastly different *effects* produced through the two messengers. *This* is the *central* fact in verses 26, 27: the Voice "from Heaven" produced proportionately greater *results* than did the voice which spake "on earth." God through Christ speaks more powerfully and effectually than He did through Moses. Let us be careful not to lose sight of this *general* idea when pondering the details. A much greater and more far-reaching "shaking" was produced by the latter than was the case with the former. We believe that Matthew Henry was on the right track when he said, "It is by the Gospel from heaven that God shook to pieces the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jewish nation, and introduced a new state of the church, that cannot be removed, shall never be changed for any other on earth, but shall remain till it be made perfect in heaven." The Apostle is still supplying that the Hebrew believers were no longer connected with Judaism, but were come to the antitypical Zion.

"Whose voice *then* shook the earth." Here is the connecting link with the context: the "then" referring to the instituting of Judaism. "But now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12:26). The "but now" is not so much a time-mark as it is an adverbial expression, relating to *the theme* under immediate discussion, namely, the establishment and super-excellency of Christianity. Thus, to show once more the infinitely surpassing and glorious effects of power and majesty which issued from the voice of Christ, speaking from Heaven by the Gospel, and so as to give a more lively representation of the same, the Apostle compares them with the greatly inferior effects that accompanied the deliverance of the Law. As the right understanding of this "but now" has an important bearing upon all that follows, we subjoin the comments of another thereon.

"The word *now* does not denote the period when the promise was made, but the period to which the promise referred, which was *now*, opposed to *then* when the Law was established. It was equivalent to 'But with regard to the present period, which is the commencement of a new order of things, He has promised, saying.' This use of the word *now* in the Apostle's writings is common: Romans 3:21; 16:26, etc." (John Brown). There is, then, an opposition of the "but now" from what occurred at the "then" at the beginning of the verse. It is to be carefully noted that Paul *did not* say "He hath now promised," i.e., that in the Apostle's day God had announced He was going to do something in the far-distant future; instead, it is "But now He hath promised": the "now" relating to the

*fulfillment* of what Haggai had foretold, and not to some promise given through the Apostle.

“But now He hath promised, saying.” This “saying” which the Apostle at once quotes from Haggai he styles a “promise,” and that for at least three reasons. First, because what was but a prophecy in Haggai’s day had received its actual accomplishment in the Apostle’s time, in connection with the establishment of Christianity. Second, because this was therefore something for *faith to lay hold of*, and that is what he was seeking to persuade the Hebrew believers to do. Third, to prevent any misconception on *our* part: had the Apostle been pointing out that the prophecy of Haggai contained a yet deeper meaning and more ultimate reference, even to predicting the final destruction of this world and all its works, he had surely been very far from designating such an unparalleled Divine judgment as that, by the term “promise”! A “promise” always refers to something that is *good*, and never to a calamity!

“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” Let us now inquire, *What is denoted* by this “shaking” of earth and Heaven? This is a figure which is used in the Old Testament quite frequently to express *a great change*, produced by the providences and power of God in the affairs of men. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though *the earth be removed*, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psa. 46:1, 2), which is explained in “The heathen raged, *the kingdoms were moved*: He uttered His voice, the earth melted” (v. 6). “Thou hast made *the earth* to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh” (Psa. 60:2): what is signified by that metaphorical language is indicated in the next verse, “Thou hast showed *Thy people* hard things: Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.” “Therefore I will *shake the heavens*, and the earth shall remove out of her place” (Isa. 13:13)—language which signifies a tremendous commotion among the nations—compare Joel 3:16. Such vivid imagery is common in the Prophets.

“He stretched out His hand over *the sea*,” which is interpreted in the next sentence “He shook *the kingdoms*” (Isa. 23:11). “Behold, the LORD maketh *the earth* empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down” (Isa. 24:1)—words, we need hardly say, which are not to be taken literally. “At His wrath *the earth* shall tremble,” explained in the following clause, “and *the nations* shall not be able to abide His indignation” (Jer. 10:10). “Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD’S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth” (Micah 6:1, 2): such language is not to be understood literally, as the next clause shows “For the LORD hath a controversy with *His people*.” “For the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:26). Even Mr. Darby admitted (in his “Synopsis”), “This shaking of all things—whether here (Heb. 12:26, 27) or in the analogous passage in 2 Peter—evidently goes beyond Judaism, *but has peculiar application to it*”—italics ours.

“Whose voice then shook the earth.” The immediate reference is to Sinai at the time the Law was given. But, as we have seen, that material mount was emblematic of the entire economy which was then established. Thus the “shaking” of the “earth” denoted the great outward *change* which took place in the days of Moses. The *external* state of Israel was then greatly altered, they were organised into a kingdom and church-state (Acts 7:38), into a theocracy. Yet glorious as was that change, it reached not to “heaven,” that is to say, it affected not the *inner* man and was not concerned with *spiritual and eternal*



relations. "The economy established at Sinai, *viewed by itself*, was a temporal covenant with a worldly nation, referring to temporal promises, an earthly inheritance, a worldly sanctuary, a typical priesthood, and carnal ordinances" (J. Brown).

"But now (in relation to Christianity) He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12:26). The careful reader will observe that the Prophet had said, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land" (Hag. 2:6), whereas the Apostle was moved by the Holy Spirit to word it—for the sake of emphasis—"I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," hence a shaking of *both* "earth" and "Heaven" was here in view. "The voice in heaven produces more extensive and more permanent effects. It shakes both earth and heaven—effects a change both on *the external and spiritual* circumstances of those who are under it; and it effects a *permanent* change, which is to admit of no radical essential change forever" (J. Brown).

Though a great change had been produced in connection with the giving of the old covenant, a far greater change had been effected in the establishing of the new covenant. *That* had affected but one nation only, and that, merely in its external and temporal circumstances: *this* reaches unto God's people among all nations, and affects their spiritual and eternal interests. It was reserved for God's *Son* to bring this about, for in all things *He* must have the pre-eminence. A much greater commotion and convulsion in human affairs has been brought in by Immanuel, yea, it was then as though the very universe was shaken to its centre. In order to the establishing of that kingdom of Christ's which shall never be moved, there were tremendous revolutions, both in connection with Judaism and the idolatrous systems of the heathen—"These that have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) was the charge preferred against the Apostles.

Now as the great change in the temporal affairs of Israel at the instituting of Judaism had been adumbrated by the quaking of Sinai, so the far greater alterations introduced by the establishing of Christianity were also shadowed forth in the various physical phenomena and angelic appearances. "At His birth a new star appeared in the heavens, which filled the generality of men with amazement, and put those who were wise to diligent inquiries about it. His birth was proclaimed by an angel from Heaven, and celebrated by a 'multitude of the heavenly hosts.' In His ministry the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the shape of a dove. These things may answer that mighty work in Heaven which is here intimated. On the earth, wise men came from the east to inquire after Him; Herod and all Jerusalem were shaken at the tidings of Him. In the discharge of His work He wrought miracles in Heaven and earth, sea and dry land, on the whole creation of God. Wherefore in the first coming of Christ the words had their literal accomplishment in an eminent manner.

"Take the words metaphorically for great changes, commotions and alterations in the world, and so also were they accomplished in Him and His coming. No such alteration made in the world since the creation of it as was then, and in what ensued thereon. All the 'heavens' of the world were then shaken, and after a while removed: that is, all their *gods* and all their worship, which had continued from time immemorial, which were the 'heavens of the people,' were first shaken, and then utterly demolished. The 'earth' also was moved, shaken, and changed: for all nations were stirred up, some to inquire after Him, some to oppose Him, whereon great concussions and commotions did ensue; till all the most noble parts of it were made subject to Him.

“But, as we observed before, it is the dealing of God with *the church*, and the alteration which He would make in the state thereof, concerning which the Apostle treats. It is therefore the ‘heaven’ of Mosaic worship and that Judaical church-state, with the ‘earth’ of their political state belonging thereunto, that are here intended. These were they that were ‘shaken’ at the coming of Christ, and so shaken as shortly after to be removed and taken away, for the introduction of the more heavenly worship of the Gospel, and the immovable evangelical church-state. This was the greatest commotion and alteration that God ever made in the ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ of the church. This was far more great and glorious than the shaking of the ‘earth’ at the giving of the Law. Wherefore, not to exclude the senses before mentioned, which are consistent with this, and may be respected in the prophecy as *outward signs* and indications of it, *this* is that which is principally intended in the words, and which is proper to the argument in hand” (John Owen).

“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb. 12:27). This is the Apostle’s inspired commentary on Haggai’s prophecy. He points out that the “yet once more” denoted there had previously been a great change wrought in Israel’s fortunes, and also that now another radical alteration had been made therein. He insists that the “shaking” was in order to a *removal* of what was only transient, and this, *that the permanent might be fixedly established*: the great change was only in order that that which is unchangeable might remain.—A.W.P.

## The Life of David.

### 54. *His conviction.*

An interval of some months elapsed between what is recorded in 2 Samuel 11 and that which is found at the beginning of Chapter 12. During this interval David was free to enjoy to the full that which he had acquired through his wrongdoing. The one obstacle which lay in the way of the free indulgence of his passion was removed; Bathsheba was now his. Apparently, the king, in his palace, was secure and immune. So far there had been no intervention of God in judgment, and throughout those months David had remained impenitent for the fearful crimes he had committed. Alas, how dull the conscience of a saint may become. But if David was pleased with the consummation of his vile plans, there was One who was displeased. The eyes of God had marked his evil conduct, and the Divine righteousness would not pass it by. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence" yet He adds, "but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" (Psa. 50:21).

God may suffer His people to indulge the lusts of the flesh and fall into grievous sin, but He will not allow them to remain content and happy in such a case: rather are they made to prove that "the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15). In the 20th of Job the Holy Spirit has painted a graphic picture of the wretchedness experienced by the evil-doer. "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; Though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, *it is the gall of asps within him.* He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly. He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him . . . shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity" (Job 20:12-16, 26, 27). Notably is this the case with backsliders, for God will not be mocked with impunity.

The coarse pleasures of sin cannot long content a child of God. It has been truly said that "Nobody buys a little passing pleasure in evil at so dear a rate, or keeps it so short a time, as a good man." The conscience of the righteous soon reasserts itself, and makes its disconcerting voice heard. He may yet be far from true repentance, but he will soon experience keen remorse. Months may pass before he again enjoys communion with God, but self-disgust will quickly fill his soul. The saint has to pay a fearfully high price for enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season." Stolen waters may be sweet for a moment, but how quickly his "mouth is filled with gravel" (Prov. 20:17). Soon will the guilty one have to cry out, "He hath made my chain heavy . . . He hath made me desolate: He hath filled me with bitterness . . . Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace" (Lam. 3:7, 11, 15, 17).

Though the inspired historian has not described the wretchedness of David's soul following his murder of Uriah, yet we may obtain a clear view of the same from the Psalms penned by him after his conviction and deep contrition. Those Psalms tell of a sullen closing of his mouth: "when I kept silence" (Psa. 32:3). Though his heart must frequently have smitten him, yet he would not speak to God about his sin; and there was nothing else he could speak of. They tell of inward perturbation and tumult that filled him: "My bones waxed old through *my roaring* all the day long" (32:3): groans of remorse were wrung from his yet unbroken heart. "For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me" (v. 4)—a sense of the Divine holiness and power oppressed him, though it did not melt him.

Even a palace can afford no relief unto one who is filled with bitter remorse. A king may command his subjects, but he cannot quieten the voice of outraged conscience. No matter whether the sun of the morning was shining or the shades of even were falling, there was no escape for David. "Day and night" God's heavy hand weighted him down: "my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" he declared (v. 4)—it was as though some heated iron was scorching him: all the dew and freshness of his life was dried up. Most probably he suffered acutely in both body and soul. "Thus he dragged through a weary year—ashamed of his guilty dalliance, wretched in his self-accusation, afraid of God, and sulking in the recesses of his palace from the sight of the people.

"David learned what we all learn (and the holier a man is, the more speedily and sharply the lesson follows on the heels of his sin), that every transgression is a blunder, that we never get the satisfaction which we expect from any sin, or if we do, we get something with it which spoils it all. A nauseous drug is added to the exciting, intoxicating drink which temptation offers, and though its flavour is at first disguised by the pleasanter taste of sin, its bitterness is persistent though slow, and clings to the palate long after that has faded away utterly" (Alex. Maclaren). With equal clearness does this appear in the 51st Psalm. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (v. 12) he cries, for spiritual comforts had entirely deserted him. "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (v. 15): the dust had settled upon the strings of his harp because the Spirit within was grieved.

How could it be otherwise? So long as David refused to humble himself beneath the mighty hand of God, seeking from Him a spirit of true repentance, and freely confessing his great wickedness, there could be no more peace for him, no more happy communion with God, no further growth in grace. O my reader, we would earnestly press upon you the great importance of *keeping short accounts with God*. Let not guilt accumulate upon thy conscience: make it a point *each* night of spreading before Him the sins of the day, and seeking to be cleansed therefrom. Any great sin lying long upon the conscience, unrepented of, or not repented of as the matter requires, only furthers our indwelling corruptions: neglect causes the heart to be hardened. "My wounds stink and are corrupt *because of my foolishness*" (Psa. 38:5): it was his foolish neglect to make a timely application for the cure of the wounds that sin had made, which he there laments.

At the end of 2 Samuel 11 we read, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (v. 27), upon which Matthew Henry says, "One would think it should be followed that the Lord sent enemies to invade him, terrors to take hold on, and the messengers of death to arrest him. No, He sent *a Prophet* to him"—"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David" (2 Sam. 12:1). We are here to behold the exceeding riches of Divine grace and mercy: *such* "*riches*" that legal and self-righteous hearts have murmured at, as a making light of sin—so incapable is the natural man of discerning spiritual things: they are "*foolishness*" unto him. David had wandered far, but he was not lost. "Though he fall," (the righteous) yet it is written "*he shall not be utterly cast down*" (Psa. 37:24). O how tenderly God watches over His sheep! How faithfully He goes after and recovers them, when they have strayed! With what amazing goodness does He heal their backslidings, and continue to love them freely!

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David" (2 Sam. 12:1). It is to be duly noted that it was not David who sent for the Prophet, though never did he more sorely need his counsel than now. No, it was *God* who took the initiative: it is ever thus, for we never seek

Him, until He seeks us. It was thus with Moses when a fugitive in Midian, with Elijah when fleeing from Jezebel, with Jonah under the juniper tree, with Peter after his denial (1 Cor. 15:5). O the marvel of it! How it should melt our hearts. "If we believe not, yet *He* abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Though He says, "I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes," it is at once added "Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psa. 89:32, 33). So it was here: David still had an interest in that Everlasting Covenant "ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5).

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David." Probably about a year had elapsed from what is recorded in the beginning of the preceding chapter, for the adulterous child was already born (12:14). Rightly did Matthew Henry point out "Though God may suffer His people to fall into sin, He will not suffer His people to lie still in it." No, God will exhibit His holiness, His righteousness, and His mercy in connection therewith. His holiness, by displaying His hatred of the same, and by bringing the guilty one to penitently confess it. His righteousness, in the chastening visited upon it; His mercy, in leading the backslider to forsake it, and then bestow His pardon upon him. What a marvelous and blessed exercise of His varied attributes! "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners" (Isa. 57:17, 18).

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David." The Prophet's task was far from being an enviable one: to meet the guilty king alone, face to face. As yet David had evinced no sign of repentance. God had not cast off His erring child, but He would not condone his grievous offences: all must come out into the light. The Divine displeasure must be made evident: the culprit must be charged and rebuked: David must judge himself, and then discover that where sin had abounded grace did much more abound. Wondrous uniting of Divine righteousness and mercy—made possible by the Cross of Christ! The righteousness of God required that David should be faithfully dealt with; the mercy of God moved Him to send Nathan for the recovery of His strayed sheep. "Mercy and truth are *met together*; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. 85:10).

Yes, Nathan might well have quailed before the commission which God now gave him. It was no easy matter to have to rebuke his royal master. Varied indeed are the tasks which the Lord assigns His servants. Often are they sent forth with a message which they well know will be most unpalatable to their hearers; and the temptation to tone it down, to take off its sharp edge, if not to substitute another which will be more acceptable, is both real and strong. Little do the rank and file even of God's people realise what it costs a minister of the Gospel to be *faithful* to his calling. If the Apostle Paul felt his need of requesting prayer "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth *boldly*" (Eph. 6:19), how much more do God's servants today need the support of the supplications of their brethren and sisters in Christ! for on every side the cry now is "speak unto us *smooth* things!"

On a previous occasion God had sent Nathan to David with a message of promise and comfort (2 Sam. 7:4, 5, etc.); now he is ordered to charge the king with his crimes. He did not decline the unwelcome task, but executed it faithfully. Not only was his mission an unenviable one, but it was far from easy. Few things are more difficult and trying to one with a sensitive disposition than to be called upon to reprove an erring brother. In pon-

dering the method here followed by the Prophet—his line of approach to David’s slumbering conscience—there is valuable instruction for those of us who may be called upon to deal with similar cases. *Wisdom* from on High (we do not say “tact,” the *world’s* term, for more often that word is employed to denote the serpentine subtleties of the serpent than the honest dealings of the Holy Spirit) is sorely needed if we are to be a real help to those who have fallen by the wayside—lest we either condone their offences, or make them despair of obtaining pardon.

“And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him” (2 Sam. 12:1-4).

Nathan did not immediately charge David with his crimes: instead, he approached his conscience indirectly by means of a *parable*—clear intimation that he was out of communion with God, for He never employed *that* method of revelation with those who were walking in fellowship with Him. The method employed by the Prophet had the great advantage of presenting the facts of the case before David *without* stirring up his opposition of self-love and kindling resentment against being directly rebuked; yet causing him to pass sentence against himself without being aware of it—sure proof that Nathan had been given wisdom from above! “There scarcely ever was any thing more calculated, on the one hand, to awaken emotions of sympathy, and, on the other, those of indignation, than the case here supposed; and the several circumstances by which the heart must be interested in the poor man’s case, and by which the unfeeling oppression of his rich neighbour was aggravated” (T. Scott).

The Prophet, began, then, by giving an oblique representation of the vileness of David’s offence, which was conveyed in such a way that the king’s judgment was *obliged* to assent to the gross injustice he was guilty of. The excuselessness, the heartlessness, and the abominable selfishness of his conduct was depicted, though Uriah’s loyal service and the king’s ingratitude and treachery, and the murder of him and his fellow-soldiers, was not alluded to—is there not a hint here that, when reproofing an erring brother we should *gradually* lead up to the worst elements in his offence? Yet obvious as was the allusion in Nathan’s parable, David perceived not its application unto himself—how this shows that when one is out of touch with God, he is devoid of spiritual discernment: it is only in God’s light that we can see the light!

“And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die” (v. 5). David supposed that a complaint was being preferred against one of his subjects. Forgetful of his own crimes, he was fired with indignation at the supposed offender, and with a solemn oath condemned him to death. In condemning the rich man, David unwittingly condemned himself. What a strange thing the heart of a believer is! what a medley dwells within it!—often filled with righteous indignation against the sins of others, while blind to its own! Real need has each of us to solemnly and prayerfully ponder the questions of

Romans 2:21-23. Self-flattery makes us quick to mark the faults of others, but blind to our own grievous sins. Just in proportion as a man is in love with his own sins, and resentful of being rebuked, will he be unduly severe in condemning those of his neighbours.

Having brought David to pronounce sentence upon a supposed offender for crimes of far less malignity than his own, the Prophet now, with great courage and plainness, declared "*Thou art the man*" (v. 7), and speaks directly in the name of God: "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel." First, David is reminded of the signal favours which had been bestowed upon him (vv. 7, 8), among them the "wives" or women of Saul's court, from which he might have selected a wife. Second, God was willing to bestow yet more (v. 8): had he considered anything was lacking, he might have asked for it, and had it been for his good the Lord had freely granted it—cf. Psalm 84:11. Third, in view of God's tender mercies, faithful love, and all-sufficient gifts, he is asked "Wherefore hast thou *despised* the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight?" (v. 9). Ah, it is contempt of the Divine authority which is the occasion of all sin—making light of the Law and its Giver, acting as though its precepts were mere trifles, and its threats meaningless.

The desired result was now accomplished. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD" (v. 13). Those words were not uttered lightly or mechanically, as the sequel shows; but this we must leave (D.V.) till our next.—A.W.P.

## The Divine Covenants.

### 5. *The Siniatic.*

We have now arrived at a stage of our subject which we fear is not likely to be of much interest to many of our readers, yet we would ask them to kindly bear with us for the sake of those who *are* anxious to have a systematic exposition thereof. We write, therefore, for those who desire answers to such questions as the following: What was the precise nature of the covenant which God entered into with Israel at Sinai? did it concern only their temporal welfare as a nation, or did it also set forth God's requirements for the individual's enjoyment of eternal blessings? Was a radical change now made in God's revelation to men and what He demanded of them?—was an entirely different "way of salvation" now introduced? Wherein is the Siniatic Covenant *related to* the others, particularly to the Everlasting Covenant of grace and to the Adamic Covenant of works?—was it in harmony with the former, or a renewal of the latter? Was the Siniatic Covenant a simple or a mixed one: did it have only a "letter" significance pertaining to earthly things or a "spirit" as well, pertaining to heavenly things? What specific contribution did it make unto the progressive unfolding of the Divine plan and purpose?

We deem it of great importance that a clear conception be obtained of the precise nature and meaning of that august transaction which took place at Sinai, when Jehovah proclaimed the Ten Commandments in the hearing of Israel. No one who has given any due attention thereto can fail to perceive that it marked a memorable epoch in the history of that people. But it was far more than that: it possessed a much deeper and broader significance—it was the beginning of a new era in the history of *the human race*, being a momentous step in that series of Divine dispensations toward fallen mankind. Yet it must be frankly acknowledged that the subject is as difficult as it is important: the great diversity of opinion which prevails among the theologians and divines who have studied the subject is proof thereof. Yet this is no reason why *we* should despair of obtaining light thereon: rather should it cause us to cry to God for help, and to prosecute our inquiry cautiously, humbly, and carefully.

What was the precise character of the transaction which Jehovah entered into with Israel at Sinai? That there *was* a bona fide "covenant" made on that occasion cannot be gainsaid. The term is actually used in Exodus 19:5, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My *covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people." So again we read, "And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the *blood of the covenant*, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exo. 24:7, 8). Years after, when rehearsing God's dealings with Israel, Moses said, "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb" (Deut. 5:2). Not only is the *word* "covenant" used, but the transactions at Sinai contained all the *elements* of a covenant: the contracting parties were the Lord God and Israel; the condition was "If ye will obey My voice indeed"; the promise was "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo. 19:6); the penalty was the "curses" of Deuteronomy 28:15, etc.

But *what was* the nature and design of that covenant? Did God mock His fallen creatures by formally renewing the (Adamic) Covenant of Works, which they had already broken, under the curse of which all by nature lay, and which He knew they could not keep for a single hour? Such a question answers itself. Or did God do with Israel then as



He does with His people now: first redeem, and then put under law as a rule of life, a standard of conduct? But if *that* were the case, *why* enter into this formal “covenant?” Even Fairbairn virtually cuts the knot here by saying that the form of a covenant is of no consequence at all. But this *covenant-form* at Sinai is the very thing which requires to be accounted for. Christians are *not* put under the Law *as* a “covenant,” though they are as a Rule. No help is to be obtained by dodging difficulties, or by denying their existence; they must be fairly and prayerfully grappled with.

There is no doubt in the mind of the writer that many have been led astray when considering the *typical* teaching of Israel’s history and the antitype in the experience of Christians, by failing to duly note *the contrasts* as well as the comparison between them. It is true that God’s deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt blessedly foreshadowed the redemption of His elect from sin and Satan, yet let it not be forgotten that the majority of those who were emancipated from Pharaoh’s slavery perished in the wilderness, *not* being suffered to enter the promised land. Nor are we left to mere reasoning at this point: it is placed upon inspired record that “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: NOT *according to* the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord” (Heb. 8:8, 9). Thus we have Divine authority for saying that God’s dealings with Israel at Sinai *were not a parallel* with His dealings with His people under the Gospel, but *a contrast!*

H. Witsius took the view that the Siniatic compact was neither, *formally*, the Covenant of Grace nor the Covenant of Works, but a *national* covenant which presupposed them both, and that it promised “not only temporal blessings . . . but also spiritual and eternal.” So far so good. But when he states (book 4, section 4, paragraphs 43-45) that the *condition* of this covenant was “a sincere, though not, in every respect, a perfect obedience of His commands,” we certainly cannot agree. Witsius held that the Siniatic Covenant differed from the Covenant of Works—which made no provision or allowance for the acceptance of a sincere though imperfect obedience; and that it differed from the Covenant of Grace, since it contained no promises of strength to enable Israel to render that obedience. Though plausible, his position is not only erroneous, but highly dangerous. God *never* promised eternal life to men on the condition of an imperfect but sincere obedience—that would overthrow the whole argument of Romans and Galatians.

Thomas Bell (1814) in his heavy work on “The Covenants” insists that “The Covenant of Works was delivered from Sinai, yet as subservient to the Covenant of Grace. Such an accurate thinker was bound to feel the pressure of those difficulties which such a postulate involves, yet he took a strange way of getting out of them. Appealing to Deuteronomy 29:1 Bell argued that God made “two distinct covenants with Israel,” and that “the one made in Moab was the Covenant of Grace,” and that “the two covenants mentioned in Deuteronomy 29:1 are as opposite as the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith.” We will not here attempt to show the unsatisfactoriness and untenability of such an inference: suffice it to say there is less warrant for it, than to conclude that God made two totally distinct covenants with Abraham (in Gen. 15 and 17): the covenant at Moab was a *renewal* of the Siniatic, as the ones made with Isaac and Jacob were of the original one with Abraham.

Quite a different idea has been advanced by those known as “The Plymouth Brethren.” Mr. Darby (who had quite a penchant for novelties) advanced the theory that at Sinai Israel made a fatal blunder, deliberately abandoning the ground of receiving all from God on the basis of pure grace, and in their stupidity and self-sufficiency agreeing to henceforth *earn* His favours. The idea is that when God rehearsed His merciful dealings with them (Exo. 19:4) and then added “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people” (v. 5), that Israel was guilty of perverting His words, and evidenced their carnality and pride by saying “All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do” (v. 8). Those are regarded as most disastrous words, leading to most disastrous results, for it is supposed that, from this time, God entirely changed His attitude toward them.

In his “Synopsis” Mr. Darby concludes his remarks on Exodus 18 and opens 19 by saying, “But having thus terminated the course of grace the scene changes entirely. They do not keep the feast on the mount, whither God, as He had promised, had led them—had ‘brought them, bearing them as on eagles’ wings to Himself.’ He proposes a condition to them: If they obeyed His voice, they should be His people. The people—instead of knowing themselves, and saying, ‘We dare not, though bound to obey, place ourselves under such a condition, and risk our blessing, yea, make sure of losing it’—undertake to do all that the Lord has spoken. The blessing now took the form of dependence, like Adam’s on the faithfulness of man as well as of God . . . . The people, however, are not permitted to approach God, who hid Himself in the darkness.”

Mr. C. H. Mackintosh in his comments upon Exodus 19, says, “It (the scene presented at the end of 18) was but a brief moment of sunshine in which a very vivid picture of the kingdom was afforded; but the sunshine was speedily followed by the heavy clouds which gathered around that ‘palpable mount,’ where Israel, in a spirit of dark and senseless legality, abandoned His covenant of pure grace for man’s covenant of works. Disastrous movement! A movement fraught with the most dismal results. Hitherto as we have seen no enemy could stand before Israel—no obstacle was suffered to interrupt their onward and victorious march. Pharaoh’s hosts were overthrown, Amalek and his people were discomfited with the edge of the sword; all was victory, because God was acting on behalf of His people in pursuance of His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

“In the opening verses of the chapter now before us, the Lord recapitulates His actions toward Israel in the following touching and beautiful language: see Exodus 19:3-6. Observe, it is ‘*My voice*’ and ‘*My covenant*.’ What was the utterance of that ‘voice’? and what did that ‘covenant’ involve? Had Jehovah’s voice made itself heard for the purpose of laying down the rules and regulations of a severe and unbending Lawgiver? By no means. It had spoken to demand freedom for the captive, to provide a refuge from the sword of the destroyer, to make a way for the ransomed to pass over, to bring down bread from Heaven, to draw forth water out of the flinty rock;—such had been the gracious and intelligible utterance of Jehovah’s ‘voice’ up to the moment at which ‘Israel camped before the mount.’

“And as to His ‘covenant,’ it was one of unmingled grace. It proposed no condition, it made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck, no burden on the shoulder. When ‘the God of Glory appeared unto Abraham’ in Ur of the Chaldees, He certainly did not address him in such words as Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that, ah, no; such language was not according to His heart. It suits Him far better to place ‘a fair mitre’ upon a sinner’s

head than to put a 'yoke upon his neck.' His word to Abraham was '*I will give.*' The land of Canaan was not to be purchased by man's doings, but to be given by God's grace. Thus it stood; and in the opening of the book of Exodus we see God coming down in grace to make good His promise to Abraham's seed . . . . However, Israel was not disposed to occupy this blessed position."

As so many have been misled by this teaching, we will digress for a moment and show how utterly unscriptural it is. It is a serious mistake to say that in the Abrahamic Covenant God "proposed no conditions, and made no demands, it put no yoke on the neck." As we pointed out in our articles thereon when studying the Abrahamic Covenant, attention is *not* to be confined unto one or two particular passages, but *the whole* of God's dealings with that patriarch are to be taken into consideration. Did not God say to Abraham "walk before Me, and be thou perfect, *and* I will make My covenant between Me and thee" (Gen. 17:1, 2)? Did He not say "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" (Gen. 18:19)? Abraham had to "keep the way of the Lord," which is defined as "to *do* justice and judgment," this is, to walk obediently, in subjection to God's revealed will, if he was to receive the fulfillment of the Divine promises.

Again; did not the Lord expressly confirm His covenant to Abraham by oath in saying "By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I *will* bless thee," etc., (Gen. 22:16, 17). It is true, blessedly true, that God dealt with Abraham in pure *grace*; but it is equally true that He dealt with him as *a responsible* creature, as subject to the Divine authority and place him under law. At a later date, when Jehovah renewed the covenant to Isaac, He said, "And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (the original covenant promise) BECAUSE that Abraham *obeyed* My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My *laws*" (Gen. 26:4, 5). That is clear enough; and nothing could be plainer that God introduced *no change* in His dealings with Abraham's descendants when He said to Israel at Sinai, "Now therefore, if ye will *obey* My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people" (Exo. 19:5).

Equally clear is it from Scripture that the nation of Israel was itself *under law before* they reached Sinai: "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to *His commandments*, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee" (Exo. 15:26). Is it not strange to see men ignoring such plain passages? Lest the quibble be raised that the reference to God's "commandments and statutes" in that passage was *prospective*, i.e., in view of the Law which was shortly to be given them, note the following, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in *My law*, or no" (Exo. 16:4). The meaning of this is explained in "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD" (16:23). Alas for their response: "There went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather" (v. 27). Now mark carefully God's complaint "*How long* refuse ye to keep My commandments and *My laws*?" (16:28)—so the reference in 16:4 was not prospective, but *retrospective*: Israel WAS *under law* long before they reached Sinai!

But in further rebuttal of the strange theory mentioned above, we would ask, Was it not the Lord Himself who took the initiative in this so-called abandonment of the Abrahamic Covenant? for it was *He* who sent Moses to the people with the words (Exo. 19:5) which manifestly sought to evoke an affirmative reply! Again, we ask, If their reply proceeded from carnal pride and self-sufficiency, if it displayed an intolerable arrogance and presumption, why did it call forth no formal rebuke? So far from the Lord being displeased with Israel's promise, He said unto Moses "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and *believe thee forever*" (Exo. 19:9). Again; why at the rehearsal of this transaction, did Moses say, "The LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have *well* said *all* that they have spoken," and then He breathed the wish "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:28, 29).

How utterly excuseless and untenable is this theory (which has been accepted by many and echoed in the "Scofield Bible") in the light of the plain facts of Holy Writ. Had Israel acted so madly and presumptuously, would the Lord have gone through all the formalities of a covenant-transaction (Exo. 24:3-8)? Had the words uttered by Him, and responded to by the people, been based on impossible conditions on the one side, and palpable lies on the other, a *covenant* would be unthinkable. Finally, let it be carefully observed that so far from God pronouncing a judgment upon Israel for their promise at Sinai, He declared that, on their performance of the same, they would be peculiarly honoured and blessed: Exodus 23:27-29; Deuteronomy 6:18.—A.W.P.

## Union and Communion.

### *Experimental.*

In seeking to define and describe the nature and character of our *experimental* union and communion with Christ it has been pointed out, first, that it consists in a ready submission to Him as our Lord and an intimate intercourse with Him as our Friend: there is no aloofness on His part, and there should be no reserve on ours. Second, it is a walking with Him in the light: where all is open, real, honest, with no concealment or pretense. Third, it is a knowing, loving, enjoying Christ, having plain, practical, personal dealings with Him. Fourth, it is based on *faith's* realisation of Christ's relation to us and of our relation to Him: only the exercise of faith will make Him real and consciously near us. Fifth, *love* is the cementing bond of this union: there is a reciprocal affection between the Redeemer and the redeemed. Sixth, it consists of a sitting at the feet of our Lord and receiving from Him, a leaning upon the bosom of our Friend and enjoying His love. Seventh, it is exercised in a real personal intercourse with Him, opening our hearts freely to Him, and receiving free communications from Him.

The great thing for the Christian is to realise that Christ not only gave Himself *for* him, but that He has given Himself *to* him: Christ Himself is mine, my very own! Wondrous, blessed, glorious fact. Oh, for faith to realise it more fully. Oh for grace to act more consistently with it. Yes, Christ Himself is mine: to live upon, to lean upon, to consult, to confide in, to *make use of* in every way I need Him, to have the freest possible dealings with Him. Christ is *mine*: to enjoy to the utmost extent of my heart, to commune with, to delight in. He is ever with me, and under no conceivable (or unconceivable) circumstances will He ever leave or forsake me. He is ever the same: His love for me never varies: He has my best interests at heart. He can satisfy every longing of the soul as nothing else and none other can. He is ready to share with me His peace and joy. O what a happy soul I should be!

What a change it would make in the experience of both writer and reader if we could more fully grasp the amazing and precious truth that the Lord Jesus has not only given Himself for us, but that He has done much more—He has given Himself *to* us. CHRIST is ours! Most blessedly is that fact brought out in the wonderful type of Exodus 12: the selfsame lamb whose blood sheltered the Israelites from the Avenger, was theirs to feed upon, to draw strength from, to enjoy (vv. 7-11). Alas how feebly do any of us apprehend the Antitype of this evidenced in the complaints of our feebleness, leanness, fruitlessness. There is an infinite sufficiency in Christ for time and eternity, and that sufficiency or "fullness" is for us *to draw upon*; but alas, how little we do so. Surely our deepest experimental need is to be taught by the Spirit—for He alone *can* teach us this blessed secret, as He ever *does* where there is a heart really longing to know it—of HOW to make a right and full *use* of Christ.

It is only as we really live *upon* Christ that we can truly live *for* Him. Nor is this the vague, intangible, mysterious thing which human "religion" and Protestant priestcraft would make of it. It is to the Spirit-taught the most simple, natural, and practical thing for us. First, it is *faith's* realisation that Christ is truly and actually mine; my very own; mine in an infinitely nearer and dearer way than a mother or wife is mine. Second, it is *faith's* realisation that Christ is *with* me, near me, right by my side, "a very *present* help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1), the Friend who "sticketh closer than a brother." Third, it is *faith's* realisation that *all He has is mine*—IS, not shall be! We are even now "heirs of God and

*joint-heirs* with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). His wisdom, His righteousness, His holiness, His love, His peace, are *ours*. Fourth, it is faith’s *appropriation* of all this—ah, words easily written, easily understood at their letter-meaning—which enables me to draw from Him, share with Him, and enjoy what is mine in Him. *That* is “fellowship” with Christ!

Real and personal *fellowship* with Christ should be made the chief aim of our souls in all our approaches to Him: in ordinances, means, and privileges. In public worship, in private reading of the Word, in our meditation, in prayer, in spiritual conversation with our brethren and sisters in Christ, free and intimate communion with Him should be our definite quest. “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4): that was the Old Testament way of expressing this truth. To “dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” did not signify to spend all his time in the literal tabernacle or temple, but to abide in conscious communion with Him, enjoying His perfections. *This* the Psalmist “desired” above everything else, and this he “sought after.” So also must we.

Let us now anticipate an objection: What you have described in the above paragraphs is indeed a beautiful ideal, but alas, it is utterly impracticable for one in such circumstances as I am in. It might be realised by those who are free from the carking cares of this life, who have not to battle with the world for daily bread for themselves and those dependent upon them, for such who have time and leisure for holy contemplation and spiritual luxuriation. But for a poor soul like I who scarcely knows where the next meal is coming from, delighting ones self in the Lord is not to be attained unto in this life. First we would say, Be not unduly occupied with God’s temporal dealings with you, for His way in providence is often a great deep. Meditate upon the Everlasting Covenant of His grace and His boundless love to you. All God’s dealings, even in the most dark and trying dispensations, are in mercy and truth. He has sworn “I will not turn away from them to do them good” (Jer. 32:40).

If you will but attend to that same word of promise, meditate upon it, and pray over it, your faith will be strengthened, and you will triumph in the Lord and rejoice in the God of your salvation. Remember the faith of Habakkuk; he said “*Although* the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet* I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength” (3:17-19). On God’s word the Prophet relied. Even though all outward things should, *in appearance*, make against God’s word, yet we should believe, with joyful hope, in its sure accomplishment. It will be your wisdom and comfort to leave yourself and every concern with the Lord, committing all, by simple faith, into His hands. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee” (Psa. 55:22).

We can well imagine other readers saying, *That* is not my difficulty: *my* trouble lies deeper than being occupied with and worried over temporal circumstances, sorely trying though they often are. Such blissful communion with Christ as you have depicted above is impossible for me: how can one so depraved, such a mass of rottenness within, such a spiritual leper, such a miserable failure in everything, ever attain unto intimate intercourse with the Lord of Glory? Ah, *that* is the real problem which weighs so heavily on the hearts of the great majority of truly regenerated souls. Nor can the complacent, self-

righteous religionists of the day understand such cases, still less can they minister any help and comfort. Being strangers themselves to the plague of their own heart, having such low conceptions of sin, and still lower of the ineffable holiness of God, being blinded by pride and self-deception, it is utterly impossible that *they* should be able to enter into the anguish of those groaning under sin.

Permit a fellow-groaner to try in his feeble way to point you to “the balm of Gilead.” It is *with sin-harassed souls* that Christ holds communion! Ah, *that* is what the haughty Pharisees of the days of His flesh could not understand. They murmured at Him, saying “This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). It shocked their ideas of religious propriety that He should make so free with those whom *they* considered were so far beneath them spiritually. And if this book falls into the hands of their many successors we would be much surprised if they did not throw up hands of horror against the writer, and denounce such teaching as “dangerous,” as “Antinomian,” as “making light of sin.” But this would move us not: it would indeed be deplorable did we receive the approval and commendation of such people. But as of old “the *common people*” heard Christ “gladly” (Mark 12:37), so today those who are poorest in spirit will most readily receive His glad tidings.

The Gospel is, that it is the LAMB which is given us to feed on. *That* precious title speaks of Christ in His *sacrificial* character. It tells of His amazing grace and matchless love to give Himself to die the death of the Cross for hell-deserving sinners. It tells also of His giving Himself *to* His sinful people, for communion, nourishment, strength, and joy. But more particularly it reveals the perfect *suitability* of Christ for *sinners*. The blacker and viler we see ourselves to be, the better fitted are we for Him whose name is called “Wonderful”—wonderful in His compassion, in His condescension, His readiness to bind up the broken-hearted, His power to heal lepers. His unfailing promise is “All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Nothing honours Christ more than to come to Him *in faith* while feeling our wretchedness, filthiness, and utter unworthiness.

The precious blood of Christ is the only sufficient antidote for a wounded conscience. It is by new acts of faith in His blood that we experience afresh its virtue and efficacy. True, the believer feels the plague of his heart and groans under a body of sin and death, but this should not hinder him from believing—rather should it be an argument to encourage him in believing. The more conscious we are of our polluted condition, the more deeply should we realise our need of that open Fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). The dying thief rejoiced to see that Fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away. To it we should be constantly resorting. There is no danger whatsoever to be afraid of trusting that blood too much, or of having recourse to its cleansing too often—rather should we be afraid of trusting it too little. The more frequently we plead that blood before God the more Christ is honoured.

“For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15, 16). What a precious word is this for sin-harassed souls! First, we are reminded that Christ is our “High Priest,” the One who maintains our interests before God. Second, we are assured of His unfailing sympathies: He is One who has “compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way” (5:2). Third, in view of

Christ's official relation to and personal interest in us, we are invited to "come boldly (unhesitatingly, confidently, freely pouring out our hearts) unto the Throne of Grace"—the Mediatorial throne, upon which the eternal Lover of our souls is seated. Fourth, we are to come to that Throne, not only as worshippers to present our offerings of praise, but as sinners "that we may obtain *mercy*." Finally, access there is given that we may "find *grace* to help in time of need."

What other assurance from Him could we ask for? What further revelation of His heart is needed? A sense of our misery and wretchedness, filthiness and unworthiness, so far from acting as a deterrent, should prove a stimulus for us to come unto "the Friend of publicans and sinners." Christ is not like a "fair weather" friend, who fails in the hour of direst need, who turns his back on you when his love, counsel, and help are the most needed. No, no! Christ is that Friend who "loveth at *all* times," that Brother who is "born for *adversity*" (Prov. 17:17). Troubled soul, did you but know Him better, you could not doubt, that; would you but put Him to the proof more, you would obtain fuller evidence thereof in your own experience. Instead of reproving you, He will cordially receive you. It is *faith* which He asks for—faith in His love, His grace, His mercy, His readiness to welcome, to hear our complaints, to heal, to cleanse you.

*Faith*, dear reader, is neither encouraged nor discouraged by any thing we find in ourselves: it is neither encouraged by our graces, nor discouraged by our sinfulness; for *faith looks out of self unto Another*. Nothing will afford such encouragement to believing prayer as a sight of *the Lamb* on His mediatorial throne (Rev. 5:6). No matter how desperate may be our case, how often we have failed and fallen, how low we are sunk, it is *always* the believer's privilege to turn unto his Redeemer and say, "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful *unto me* as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name" (Psa. 119:132). Oh what incentives, what encouragements He has given us in His Word to pray thus: "very great are His mercies" (1 Chron. 21:13). Therein we read of "the multitude of Thy tender mercies" (Psa. 69:16), of "His abundant mercy" (1 Peter 1:3), that He is "plenteous in mercy" (Psa. 86:5), and that "the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Psa. 103:17).

Very similar as the expressions are in sound, yet there is a vast difference between "Christian experience," and the "experience of a Christian." Real and normal "Christian experience" is for the heart to be occupied with Christ, delighting itself in Him. But "the experience of the average Christian" consists largely of an increasing knowledge of sin and self, and *that* fills him with misery and loathing, and with a sense of emptiness and helplessness. Nevertheless, that only *fits* him the more for Christ—all the fitness He requireth is to feel our need of Him. But alas, only too often *Christ* is excluded from our thoughts; and then the state of our poor minds is very variable, dark, and uncomfortable, afflicted with many disquietudes and sorrows. As we feel sin at work within, we cannot but sorrow; and as we feel sorrow, we are often distracted. Yea, this is ever the case where God leaves us to *reason* about ourselves, to exercise our thoughts on what *we* are in ourselves.

It is in seasons of despondency and sorrow that we most need to turn to Christ and say, "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name" (Psa. 119:132). *This* is to "make use" of Him, to honour Him, to own Him as our loving Friend. When everything appears to be hopeless, go to the Throne of Grace, for Christ is exactly suited to thee and is all-sufficient for thee. Our desperate case



will only serve to draw out His heart, to show forth His grace, to display His compassion, to exercise His mercy, to manifest His all-sufficiency, to endear Himself to our hearts. His heart is ever toward us: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, *they* may forget, yet *will I not* forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are *continually* before me" (Isa. 49:15, 16) He declares. Then why should you doubt His love, or question His willingness to receive you graciously, hear you patiently, and cleanse you effectually?

Oh, my sin-stricken brother, my sin-mourning sister, return unto Him who first sought you out when there was none other eye to pity. Say unto Him, Hast Thou not loved me "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3); "wast Thou not wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities; so that the chastisement of my peace was upon Thee, that by Thy stripes I might be healed" (Isa. 53:5)? Hast Thou not said "Oh, Israel, return unto the LORD thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously," and hast Thou not promised "I *will* heal their backsliding, I *will* love them freely" (Hosea 14:1-4). Ah, my Christian friend, cannot you see that the Lord permits these sad falls, with the sorrow of soul which they occasion us, to make way for the discovery of His gracious heart, that we may *prove for ourselves* that He IS a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother! Earthly friends may fail and leave us; one day soothe, the next day grieve us; but there's One who'll ne'er deceive us, *O how HE loves*.

Experimental communion with Christ requires that we be continually *cleansed by Him*: a fuller consideration of this we must leave (D.V.) for the future; in the meanwhile, let it be pointed out that Divine grace has made full provision for this: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Note well that this comes immediately after, "If we say that we *have no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8). Sometimes the newly converted soul is favoured with such grace, with such communion with Christ, that iniquity hides its evil face, and it seems as though sin in us has been slain. But indwelling corruption soon reasserts itself; yet pride is unwilling to *acknowledge it*, and the temptation is to gloss it over and call it by some pleasanter name than SIN. But *that*, dear friend, is Satan's effort to draw us back again to "walk in darkness"—in deception and dishonesty; and it must be steadfastly resisted.

"If we *confess* our sins": *that* is to "walk in *the light*!" To "confess our sins" to Him, is to open our hearts to Him. It is to spread our case before Him: concealing, palliating nothing. It is to fully tell Him of all that damps our zeal after holiness, that quenches our love, that makes us miserable in ourselves. It is a laying bare of the whole of our inner man to the loving and wise Physician, who alone knows how to deal with us. And *He* is to be trusted with all the secrets of your soul. He is "faithful and just": He will not heal your wound slightly: He will set your sins before Him in the light of His countenance, and cause you to loathe them. As you *continue* this frank and open dealing with Him, He will not only "*forgive*" but "*cleanse you from all unrighteousness*"—deliver from deceit and guile, purge from reticence and reserve.

The more we walk in God's light, the more clearly will we see what vile creatures we are, and how far, far short we come of God's glory. The more we cultivate intimate communion with Christ, the more will He cause us to see that what we deemed "trifles" are grievous sins. But if we "confess" them, honestly, penitently, daily, He is "faithful and

and just to forgive us.” Ever remember that He requires *truth* in the “*inward* parts,” and lies and pretense He will not tolerate. Probably you say, *I have* confessed my sins to Him until now I am thoroughly ashamed to do so any more. *That* is pride and unbelief. When Peter asked if he was to forgive his erring brother seven times, the Lord answered, “Till seventy times seven”: *that* is what GRACE does! Oh my Christian reader, come to this Friend of sinners more frequently, rely upon His promise more fully, and He will not repulse you.—A.W.P.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 9. *Its Securer.*

“Sanctification of the Spirit” (2 Thess. 2:13) is a comprehensive expression which has a fourfold significance at least. First, it points to that supernatural operation of the Spirit whereby a sinner is “created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10), made vitally one with Him, and thereby a partaker of His holiness. Second, it tells of the vital change which this produces in his relation to the ungodly: having been quickened into newness of life, he is at once separated from those who are dead in sins, so that both as to his standing and state he is no longer with them common to Satan, sin and the world. Third, it speaks of the Spirit Himself taking up His abode in the quickened soul, thereby rendering him personally holy. Fourth, it refers to His bringing the heart into conformity with the Divine Law, with all that that connotes. Before taking up this last point, we will offer a few more remarks upon the third.

The coming of this Divine and glorious Person to indwell one who is depraved and sinful is both a marvel and a mystery: a marvel that He *should*, a mystery that He *would*. How is it possible for Him who is ineffably holy to dwell within those who are so unholy? Not a few have said it is impossible, and were it not for the plain declarations of Scripture thereon, probably all of us would come to the same conclusion. But God’s ways are very different from ours, and His love and grace have achieved that which our poor hearts had never conceived of. This has been clearly recognised in connection with the amazing birth, and still more amazing death of Christ; but it has not been so definitely perceived in connection with the descent of the Spirit to indwell believers.

There is a striking analogy between the advent to this earth of the second Person of the Trinity and the advent of the third Person, and the marvel and mystery of the one should prepare us for the other. Had the same not become an historical fact, who among us had ever supposed that the Father had suffered His beloved Son to enter such depths of degradation as He did? Who among us had ever imagined that the Lord of Glory would lie in a manger? But He *did*! In view of that, why should we be so staggered at the concept of the Holy Spirit’s entering our poor hearts? As the Father was pleased to allow the glory of the Son to be eclipsed for a season by the degradation into which He descended, so in a very real sense He suffers the glory of the Spirit to be hid for a season by the humiliation of His tabernacling in our bodies.

It is on the ground of Christ’s work that the Spirit comes to us. “Whatever we receive here is but the result of the fullness given to us in Christ. If the Spirit comes to dwell in us as the Spirit of Peace, it is because Jesus by His blood, once offered, hath secured for us that peace. If the Spirit comes as the Spirit of Glory, it is because Jesus has entered into and secured glory for us. If the Spirit comes as the Spirit of Sonship, it is because Jesus has returned for us to the bosom of the Father and brought us into the nearness of the same love. If the Spirit comes to us as the Spirit of Life, it is because of the life hidden for us in Christ with God. The indwelling of the Spirit therefore being a result and evidence of the *abiding* relation to God into which the resurrection and ascension of our Lord has brought us, must of necessity be an abiding presence. Consequently, the sanctification which results from the fact of His presence in us and from the fact of the new man being created in us, must be a complete and abiding sanctification—as complete and as abiding as the relation which Christ holds to us in redemption as the Representative and Head of His mystical body” (B.W. Newton).

Yet let it be pointed out that the blessed Spirit does not allow our hearts to remain in the awful condition in which He first finds them; and this brings us to our fourth point. In Titus 3:5 we read “according to His mercy He saved us, by the *washing* of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” All that is comprehended in this “washing” we may not be able to say, but it certainly includes the casting of all idols out of our hearts, to such an extent that God now occupies the throne of it. By this “washing of regeneration” the soul is so cleansed from its native pollution that sin is no longer loved, but loathed; the Divine Law is no longer hated, but delighted in; and the affections are raised from things below unto things above. We are well aware of the fact that *this* is the particular point which most exercises honest consciences; yet, God does not intend that our difficulties should be so cleared up in this life that all exercise of heart should be at an end.

Though it be true that the flesh remains unaltered in the Christian, and that at times its activities are such that our evidences of regeneration are clouded over, yet it remains that a great change *was* wrought in us at the new birth, the effects of which abide. Though it be true that a sea of corruption still dwells within, and that at times sin rages violently, and so prevails that it seems a mockery to conclude that *we* have been delivered from its dominion; yet this does not alter the fact that a miracle of grace *has* been wrought within us. Though the Christian is conscious of so much filth within, he *has* experienced the “washing of regeneration.” Before the new birth he saw no beauty in Christ that he should desire Him; but now he views Him as “the Fairest among ten thousand.” Before, he loved those like himself; but now he “loves the brethren” (1 John 3:14). Moreover, his understanding has been cleansed from many polluting errors and heresies. Finally, it is a fact that the main stream of his desires runs out after God.

But the “washing of regeneration” is only the *negative* side; *positively* there is “the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” Though this “renewing” falls far short of what will take place in the saint at his glorification, yet it is a very real and radical experience. A great change and renovation is made in the soul, which has a beneficial effect upon all its faculties. This “renewing of the Holy Spirit” has in it a transforming power, so that the heart and mind are brought into an obedient frame toward God. The soul is now able to discern that God’s will is the most “good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2) of all, and there is a deep desire and a sincere effort made to become conformed thereto. But let it be carefully noted that the present and not the past tense is employed in Titus 3:5—not ye were washed and renewed, but a “washing” and “renewing”: it is a *continual* work of the Spirit.

Ere proceeding to show further the nature of the Spirit’s work in the soul of His sanctifying operations, let it be pointed out that what our hearts most need to lay hold of and rest on is that which has been before us in the last few articles on sanctification. The believer has already been perfectly sanctified in the decree and purpose of the Father. Christ has wrought out for him that which, when reckoned to his account, perfectly fits him for the courts of God’s temple above. The moment he is quickened by the Spirit he is “created in Christ,” and therefore “sanctified in Christ”: thus both his standing and state are holy in God’s sight. Furthermore, the Spirit’s indwelling him, making his body His temple, constitutes him perfectly holy—just as the presence of God in the temple made Canaan the “holy land” and Jerusalem the “holy city.”

It is of the very first importance that the Christian should be thoroughly clear upon this point. We do not become saints by holy actions—that is the fundamental error of all

false religions. No, we must first be saints before there can be any holy actions, as the fountain must be pure before its stream can be; the tree good if its fruit is to be wholesome. The order of Scripture is "Let it not be once named among you, *as becometh SAINTS*" (Eph. 5:3), and "but now are ye light in the Lord: *walk as children of light*" (Eph. 5:8); "in behaviour as becometh holiness" (Titus 2:3). God first sets our hearts at rest, before He bids our hands engage in His service. He gives life, that we may be capacitated to render love. He creates in us a sanctified nature, that there may be sanctified conduct. God presents us spotless in the Holiest of all according to the blood of sprinkling, that, coming forth with a conscience purged from dead works, we may seek to please and glorify Him.

It is the creating of this holy nature within us that we must next consider. "It is something that is *holy*, both in its principle, and in its actions; and is superior to any thing that can come from man, or be performed by himself. It does not lie in a conformity to the light of nature, and the dictates of it; nor is it what may go by the name of *moral virtue*, which was exercised by some of the heathen philosophers, to a very great degree, and yet they had not a grain of holiness in them; but were full of the lusts of envy, pride, revenge, etc., nor does it lie in a bare, external conformity to the Law of God, or in an *outward reformation* of life and manners: this appeared in the Pharisees to a great degree, who were pure in their own eyes, and thought themselves holier than others, and disdained them, and yet their hearts were full of all manner of impurity.

"Nor is it what is called *restraining grace*: persons may be restrained by the injunction of parents and masters, by the laws of magistrates, and by the ministry of the Word, from the grosser sins of life; and be preserved, by the providence of God, from the pollutions of the world, and yet not be sanctified. Nor are *gifts*, ordinary or extraordinary, sanctifying grace: Judas Iscariot no doubt had both, the ordinary gifts of a preacher, and the extraordinary gifts of an Apostle; yet he was not a holy man. Gifts are not graces: a man may have all gifts and all knowledge, and speak with the tongue of men, and angels, and not have grace; there may be a silver tongue where there is an unsanctified heart. Nor is sanctification a restoration of the lost image of *Adam*, or an amendment of that image marred by the sin of man; or a new vamping up of the old principles of nature" (John Gill).

Having seen what this holy nature, imparted by the Spirit, *is not*, let us endeavour to define what *it is*. It is something entirely new: a new creation, a new heart, a new spirit, a new man, the conforming of us to another image, even to that of the last Adam, the Son of God. It is the impartation of a holy principle, implanted in the midst of corruption, like a lovely rosebush growing out of a dung-heap. It is the carrying forward of that "good work" begun in us at regeneration (Phil. 1:6). It is called by many names, such as "the inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16) and "the hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4), not only because it has its residence in the soul, but because our fellows can see it not. It is designated "seed" (1 John 3:9) and "spirit" (John 3:6) because it is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. It is likened to a "root" (Job 19:28), to "good treasure of the heart" (Matt. 12:35), to "oil in the vessel" (Matt. 25:4)—by "oil" there is meant *grace*, so called for its illuminating nature in giving discernment to the understanding, and for its supplying and softening nature, taking off the hardness from the heart and the stubbornness from the will,

It is in *this* aspect of our sanctification that we arrive at the third meaning of the term: the blessed Spirit not only separates us from the common herd of the unregenerate,

cleanses our hearts from the pollution of sin, but He suitably adorns the temple in which He now dwells. This He does by making us partakers of “the Divine Nature” (2 Peter 1:4), which is a positive thing, the communication of a holy principle, whereby we are “renewed after the image of God.” When the Levites were to minister in the holy place, not only were they required to wash themselves, but to put on their priestly attire and ornaments, which were comely and beautiful. In like manner, believers are a holy and royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5), for they have not only been washed from the filth of sin, but are “all glorious within” (Psa. 45:13). They have not only had the robe of imputed righteousness put upon them (Isa. 61:10), but the beautifying grace of the Spirit has been implanted in them.

It is by the reception of this holy principle or nature that the believer is freed from the dominion of sin and brought into the liberty of righteousness, though not until death is he delivered from the plague and presence of sin. At their justification believers obtain a relative or judicial sanctification, which provides for them a perfect standing before God, by which they receive proof of their covenant relationship with Him, that they are His peculiar people, His “treasure,” His “portion.” But more, they are also inherently sanctified in their persons by a gracious work of the Spirit within their souls. They are “renewed” throughout the whole of their beings; for as the poison of sin was diffused throughout the entire man, so is grace. It helps not a little to perceive that, as Thomas Boston pointed out long ago (in his “Fourfold State”), “Holiness is not one grace only, but *all* the graces of the Spirit: it is a constellation of graces; it is all the graces in their seed and root.”

Yet let it be pointed out that, though the whole of the Christian’s person is renewed by the Spirit, and all the faculties of his soul are renovated, nevertheless, there is no operation of grace upon his old nature, so that its evil is expelled: the “flesh” or principle of indwelling sin is neither eradicated nor purified or made good. Our “old man” (which must be distinguished from the soul and its faculties) is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and remains so till the end of our earthly pilgrimage, ever striving against the “spirit” or principle of holiness or “new man.” As the soul at the very first moment of its union with the body (in the womb) became sinful, so it is not until the moment of its dissolution from the body that the soul becomes inherently sinless. As an old divine quaintly said, “Sin brought death into the world, and God, in a way of holy resentment, makes use of death to put an end to the very being of sin in His saints.”

Many readers will realise that we are here engaged in grappling with a difficult and intricate point. No man is competent to give such a clear and comprehensive description of our inward sanctification that all difficulty is cleared up: the most he can do is to point out what it is not, and then seek to indicate *the direction* in which its real nature is to be sought. As a further effort toward this it may be said that this principle of holiness which the Spirit imparts to the believer consists of spiritual *light*, whereby the heart is (partly) delivered from the darkness in which the Fall enveloped it. It is such an opening of the eyes of our understandings that we are enabled to see spiritual things and discern their excellency; for before we are sanctified by the Spirit we are totally blind to their reality and beauty: such passages as John 1:5; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9 (*read* them!) make this clear.

Further, that principle of holiness which the Spirit imparts to the believer consists of spiritual *life*. Previous to its reception, the soul is in a state of spiritual death, that is, it is

alienated from and incapacitated toward God. At our renewing by the Spirit we receive a vital principle of spiritual life: compare John 5:24; 10:11, 28; Romans 8:2; Ephesians 2:1. It is by this new life we are capacitated for communion with and obedience to God. Once more; that principle of holiness consists of spiritual *love*. The natural man is in a state of enmity with God; but at regeneration there is implanted that which delights in and cleaves to God: compare Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:24. As “light” this principle of holiness affects the *understanding* as “life” it influences and moves the *will*, as “love” it directs and molds the *affections*. Thus also it partakes of the very nature of Him who *is* Light, Life, and Love. “Let *the beauty of the LORD our God* be upon us” (Psa. 90:17) signifies “let this principle of holiness (as light, life, and love) be healthy within and made manifest through and by us.

But we must now turn to the most important aspect of all, of the nature of this principle of holiness, whereby the Spirit sanctified us inherently. Our experimental sanctification consists in *our hearts being conformed to the Divine Law*. This should be so obvious that no laboured argument is required to establish the fact. As all sin is a transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), so all holiness must be a fulfilling of the law. The natural man is not subject to the law, neither indeed can he be (Rom. 8:7). Why? Because he is devoid of that principle from which acceptable obedience to the law can proceed. The great requirement of the law is *love*: love to God, and love to our neighbour; but regarding the unregenerate it is written, “Ye have not the love of God in you” (John 5:42). Hence it is that God’s promise to His elect is “The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to *love* the LORD thy God with all thine heart” (Deut. 30:6)—for “love is the fulfilling of the law.”

This is the grand promise of the Covenant: “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb. 8:10); and again, “I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek. 36:27). As we said in last month’s article: when Christ comes to His people He finds them entirely destitute of holiness, and of every desire after it; but He does not leave them in that awful condition. No, He sends forth the Holy Spirit, communicates to them a sincere love for God, and imparts to them a principle or “nature” which delights in His ways. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). Why? Because any work to be pleasing to Him *MUST* proceed from a right *principle* (love to Him), be performed by a right *rule* (His Law, or revealed will), and have a right *end* in view (His glory); and this is only made possible by the sanctification of the Spirit.

Experimental holiness is conformity of heart and life to the Divine Law. The Law of God is “holy, just and good” (Rom. 7:12), and therefore does it require inward righteousness or conformity as well as outward; and this requirement is fully met by the wondrous and gracious provision which God has made for His people. Here again we may behold the striking and blessed co-operation between the Eternal Three. The Father, as the King and Judge of all, gave the Law. The Son, as our Surety, fulfilled the Law. The Spirit is given to work in us conformity to the Law: first, by imparting a nature which loves it; second, by instructing and giving us a knowledge of its extensive requirements; third, by producing in us strivings after obedience to its precepts. Not only is the perfect obedience of Christ *imputed* to His people, but a nature which delights in the law is *imparted* to them. But because of the opposition from indwelling sin, perfect obedience to the law is

not possible in this life; yet, for Christ's sake, God accepts their sincere but imperfect obedience.

We must distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the principle of holiness which He implants at regeneration: the Creator and the nature He creates must not be confounded. It is by His indwelling the Christian that He sustains and develops, continues and perfects, this good work which He has begun in us. He takes possession of the soul to strengthen and direct its faculties. It is from the principle of holiness which He has communicated to us that there proceeds the *fruits* of holiness—sanctified desires, actions and works. Yet that new principle or nature has no strength of its own: only as it is daily renewed, empowered, controlled, and directed by its Giver, do we act “as becometh holiness.” His *continued* work of sanctification within us proceeds in the twofold process of the mortification (subduing) of the old man and the vivification (quickenings) of the new man.

The fruit of the Spirit's sanctification of us experimentally appears in our separation from evil and the world. But because of the flesh within, our walk is not perfect. Oftentimes there is little for the eye of sense to distinguish in those in whom the Spirit dwells from the moral and respectable worldlings; yea, often they put us to shame. “It *doth not yet appear* what we shall be” (1 John 3:2). “The world knoweth us not” (1 John 3:1). But the heart is washed from the prevailing love of sin by the tears of repentance which the Christian is moved to frequently shed. Every new act of faith upon the cleansing blood of Christ carries forward the work of experimental sanctification to a further degree. As Naaman was required to dip in the Jordan again and again, yea, seven times, till he was wholly purged of his bodily leprosy; so the soul of the Christian—conscious of so much of the filth of sin still defiling him—continues to dip in that “Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” Thank God, one day Christ will “present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27).—A.W.P.



### God's Use of a Tract.

Some years ago we sent a copy of our tract "God's Call to Separation" (based upon 2 Cor. 6:14) to a brother in the Lord whom we have never met. Not long since we received a letter from him which, though not intended for publication, we hope may prove a blessing to others.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). In the story which I am about to tell, I had no thought of the profitableness of my obedience to the Word; in fact I had not this text in mind. I was ruled and governed by 2 Corinthians 6:14—'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Your illuminating tract drew my attention to this Scripture, and God the Holy Spirit used it to arouse my conscience.

"Now to my story. I was in partnership with a Roman Catholic and an alleged Congregationalist, who was an ardent Spiritualist. Our business was a growing and prosperous one, and its future alluring. I had a young and large family and step-children dependents, and my wife made large demands on my purse; so I required a good income to carry on. Some years after forming this partnership I found the Lord. I had been a backslider, and had feared I had committed the unpardonable sin; so the joy of my salvation—after six years' seeking—was deep and lasting. How near I had been to the unpardonable sin, only eternity will disclose. Even now I can scarcely realise that a man could be so enlightened and so near to the kingdom as I must have been, and fall for twenty-five years, and yet be recovered. O praise the Lord with me for His mercy to a very chief of sinners. I bless God that I do feel an abject, hateful, and slimy creature, every time I think of my backsliding. What *can* God see in such?

"Some time after conversion your tract became effective. At first reading it did not do the work, but lay in my conscience as a good seed that finally sprang forth. I decided to leave the partnership. My partners tried to alter my decision, and failing, I secured a settlement on terms. That was four and a half years ago. Within three months the firm was in the maelstrom, and commenced to go down hill; and today it is in the melting-pot. I did not receive a cash settlement, but am being paid out of the assets, and the Receiver says I will get every penny, he thinks. My late partners will lose many thousands, and will receive nothing, or very little.

"In leaving them I acted against worldly judgment. I was driven by conscience. My only thought was to please the Lord; being willing to suffer loss by my act. But the Lord has shown me that 'Godliness is profitable unto all things: having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Today I am in bad health, and over sixty; but the money the Lord gave, and will give, has kept me, and with care will keep me until I am able to work again. When I think what might have happened had I disobeyed God, I realise how good He has been in making me *willing*, and causing all things to work together for His wayward one's good. Lest I might be thought 'wise' in the above, I must add that I have had many losses since retiring from the firm; and looking back, I can see selfishness, a want of calm meditative prayer before entering into matters, and much rashness in consequence in my affairs. Truly, our loving heavenly Father is a God of patience and forbearance in His dealings with His children.

"The above will encourage you, Beloved, to scatter more Seed in tracts, and to continue the work you are doing. I am not sending this for publication of course, as it is not

written with that in view; but if you care to make a digest of it in your thanksgiving extracts later on, you may.”

“Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters” (Isa. 32:20). “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1). May the above encourage and stimulate both writer and reader to heed these Scriptures.—A.W.P.