

Volume 20—Studies in the Scriptures—July, 1941
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

This Commandment to honour parents is much broader in its scope than appears at first glance. It is not to be restricted to our literal “father” and “mother,” but is to be understood of all our superiors. “The end of the Precept is that since the Lord God desires the preservation of the order He has appointed, the degrees of pre-eminence fixed by Him ought to be inviolably preserved. The sum of it therefore will be that we should reverence them whom God has exalted to any authority over us, and should render them honour, obedience, and gratitude . . . But as this precept is exceedingly repugnant to the depravity of human nature, whose ardent desire of exaltation will scarcely admit of subjection, it has therefore proposed as an example that kind of superiority which is naturally most amiable and least invidious, because that might the more easily mollify and incline our minds to a habit of submission” (Calvin).

Lest any of our readers—in this socialistic and communistic age, when insubordination and lawlessness is the evil spirit of our day—demur against this wider interpretation of the Commandment, let it be pointed out first, that since “honour” belongs primarily and principally to God, that secondarily and derivatively it pertains also unto those whom He hath dignified and made nobles in His kingdom, by raising them above others and bestowing titles and dominion upon them. Therefore they are to be revered by us as our fathers and mothers. In Scripture the word “honour” has an extensive application, as may be seen from 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 2:17, etc. Second, observe that the title “father” is given to kings (1 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 49:23), masters, (2 Kings 5:13), ministers of the Gospel (2 Kings 2:12; Gal. 4:19).

“Wherefore it ought not to be doubted that God here lays down a universal rule for our conduct: namely, that to everyone whom we know to be placed in authority over us by His appointment, we should render reverence, obedience, gratitude, and all the other services in our power. Nor does it make any difference whether they are worthy of this honour or not. For whatever be their characters, it is not without the appointment of the Divine providence that they have attained that station, on account of which the supreme Legislator has commanded them to be honoured. He has particularly enjoined reverence to our parents, who have brought us into this life” (Calvin). It scarcely needs to be said that the duty enforced here is of a reciprocal nature: those of inferiors implying a corresponding obligation on superiors; but limited space obliges us to consider here only the duties resting on subjects to their rulers.

First, *children to their parents*. They are to love and reverence them, fearful of offending out of the respect they bear them. A genuine filial veneration is to actuate children so that they abstain from whatever would grieve or offend their parents. They are to be subject unto them: mark the blessed example which Christ has left (Luke 2:51). “Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20): after David was anointed for the throne, he fulfilled his father’s appointment by tending his sheep (1 Sam. 16:19). They are to hearken to their instructions and imitate their godly practices: Proverbs 6:20. Their language must always be respectful and their gestures betoken submission: though Joseph was so highly exalted in Egypt, he “bowed himself with his face to the ground” before his father (Gen. 48:12); and note how king Solomon honoured his mother (1 Kings 2:19). As far as they are able and their parents have need, they are to provide for them in old age (1 Tim. 5:16).

Our duties to rulers and magistrates whom God has set over us. These are God's deputies and vicegerents, being invested with authority from Him: "by Me kings reign" (Prov. 8:15). God has ordained magistracy for the general good of mankind, for were it not for this, men would be savage beasts preying upon one another. Do not the fear of magistrates restrain those who have cast off the fear of God? Are they not afraid of temporal punishments? We should be as safe among lions and tigers as among men. They are to be honoured in our thoughts, regarding them as the official images of God upon earth (Eccl. 10:20). They are to be revered in our speech, supporting their office and authority: of the wicked it is written, "they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2 Peter 2:10). We are to obey them: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13, 14). We are to render "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear" (Rom. 13:7). We are to pray for them: 1 Timothy 2:1, 2.

The duties of *servants unto their masters*. They are to obey them: "Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eyeservice as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God" (Col. 3:22). They are to be diligent in duty, seeking to promote their master's interests: showing all good fidelity" (Titus 2:10 and see Eph. 6:5-7). They are to patiently suffer their rebukes and corrections: "not answering again" (Titus 2:9). So strictly has God enjoined them to a quiet submission unto their masters that, even when a servant has given no just cause for rebuke, yet he is to silently suffer the groundless anger of his master: "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter 2:18-19). O how far have we wandered from the Divine standard!

Finally, we should mention *pastors and their flocks*, ministers and their people, for between them also is such a relation of superiors and inferiors as brings them under the direction of this Fifth Commandment. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). Christ has so vested His servants with authority that He declares "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me" (Luke 10:16). So again, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17): this "double honour" is that of reverence and maintenance—"Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal 6:6 and cf. 1 Cor. 9:11). How solemn is the warning of, "But they mocked the messengers of God and despised His words and misused His Prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36:16).

To this precept is added the promise as a motive and encouragement to obedience: "That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." First, as an Old Testament promise this is to be regarded typically of the Eternal Life promised by the Gospel—as Canaan was a figure of Heaven. Second, as it is repeated in the New Testament (Eph. 6:2, 3 and cf. 1 Peter 3:10) it is often God's way to lengthen out an obedient and holy life. Third, but all promises of earthly blessing must necessarily imply this condition: they shall be literally fulfilled unto us if this would promote our eternal happiness—otherwise they would be threatenings and not

promises. In His mercy God often abridges this promise and takes His beloved unto Himself.—
A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

19. *Anxiety forbidden*: Matthew 6:28, 29.

“And why take ye thought for raiment?” (v. 28). In those words Christ returns to the Commandment which He had given in verse 25: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no (anxious) thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” In the verse we have now arrived at our Lord restricts His remarks to the matter of “raiment,” while in verse 31 He again takes up the subject of food and drink. “Why take ye (anxious) thought for raiment?” Though in the form of a question—to stir up our conscience—it has the force of a *prohibition*, and therefore is a repeating of the former precept. This is very solemn and humbling, for it shows how unresponsive we are to the voice of God: we have to be told again and again what we must do and what we must avoid. There is so much self-will, so much in us which is opposed to God, that a single order from Him is not sufficient. What vile and intractable creatures we are, still are, even if regenerate.

Observe then, the method followed by the supreme Teacher of the Church and the manner in which He propounded heavenly doctrine. He not only propounded it, and then urged it by strong and forcible reasons, but He proceeded to repeat it, and urge it by piece meal. Whenever He had a weighty truth in hand, because fallen man is unwilling to receive and practice it, Christ, in addition to propounding and confirming it, took it up in detail, pressing it upon us again and again, that thereby it might the better find place in our hearts and be the more effectual in bringing forth obedience in our lives. Herein our blessed Redeemer has left an example to be followed by all who teach God’s Word to others: not only unto ministers, but unto parents. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (Deut. 6:7): the margin gives “whet or sharpen” for “teach diligently,” the Hebrew word referring to the sharpening of a dull tool or sword—that so it may more deeply enter into the heart.

“And why take ye (anxious) thought for raiment?” All care for apparel is not here forbidden. There is a lawful and godly concern, whereby we may labour honestly and in a sober manner for such clothing as is meet for the station in life which Divine providence has allotted us: such as is needful to the health and comfort of our bodies. That which is here prohibited is a carnal and inordinate care for clothing, which arises either from distrust and fear of want, or from pride and discontent with such apparel as is meet and necessary. It is the latter which is one of the crying sins of our age, when there is such a lusting after strange and costly garments, when such vast sums are wasted annually upon outward adornment, when there is such a making of a “god” out of fashion, when maids covet the finery of their mistresses and when their mistresses waste so much time on the attiring of their bodies which ought to be spent upon more profitable duties. Well may all such seriously face the question, “Why take ye (such) thought for raiment?”

And why, we may well ask, has the pulpit for so long maintained a criminal silence, instead of condemning this flagrant sin? It is not one which is committed in a corner, but flouted openly. It is not one which only a few are guilty of, but is common to all classes and ages. Preachers are not ignorant that many in their own congregations are spending money they can ill afford in order to “keep up with the latest styles”—styles often imported from countries whose morals are notoriously corrupt. Why, then, has not the pulpit denounced such vanity and extravagance? Is it the fear of man, of becoming unpopular, which restrains them? Is it the sight of *their own* wives

and daughters in silk stockings, fur coats and expensive hats which hinders them? Alas, only too often the minister's family, instead of setting an example of sobriety, frugality and modesty, has given a lead to the community in worldliness and wastefulness. The churches have failed lamentably in this matter as in many others.

It may be that some preachers who read this article will be ready to say, We have something better to do than give our attention to such things, a far more important message to deliver than one relating to the covering worn by the body. But such a rejoinder will not satisfy *God*, who requires His servants to declare *all* His counsel and to keep back nothing which is profitable. If the Scriptures be read attentively it will be found that they have not a little to say upon the subject of clothing, from the aprons of fig leaves made by our first parents to the Mother of harlots "arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls" of Revelation 17. Has not the Most High said, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are *abomination* unto the LORD thy God" (Deut. 22:5)? No wonder His wrath is upon us when our streets are becoming filled with empty-headed women wearing trousers. No wonder so many church houses are being destroyed when their pulpits have so long been unfaithful!

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin" (Matt. 6:28). The scope of these words is wider than appears at first glance. As "raiment" must be taken to include all that is used for the adorning as well as covering of the body, so we are to learn from the "lilies" that which corrects every form of sin we may commit in connection with apparel, not only in distrusting God to supply us with what we need, but also our displeasing Him by setting our affections upon such trifles, by following the evil fashions of the world, or by disregarding His prohibitions. In sending us to learn of the flowers of the field Christ would humble our proud hearts, for notwithstanding our intelligence there are many important and valuable lessons to be learned even from these lowly and irrational creatures if only we have ears to hear what they have to say unto us.

"Consider the lilies of the field." This is brought in here to correct that inordinate care and that immoderate lusting which men and women have concerning raiment. It seems to us that part of the force of our Lord's design here has been generally missed, and this through failure to perceive the significance of His following remarks. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?" (v. 30). Though the lily be such a lovely flower, nevertheless it is but "the grass of the field." Notwithstanding its beauty and delicacy it belongs to the same order and stands upon the same level as the common grass, which withers and dies and is used (in oriental countries, where there is no coal) for fuel. What ground or occasion then has the lily to be proud and vain? None whatever: it is exceedingly frail, it belongs to a very lowly order of creation, its loveliness quickly vanishes, its destiny is but the oven.

In what has just been pointed out we may discover a forceful reason why we should not be unduly concerned about either our appearance or our raiment. There are some who are given gracefulness of body and comeliness of feature which, like the lilies, are much admired by those who behold them. Nevertheless such people need to be reminded that they come only of the common stock, that they are of the same constitution and subject to the same experiences as their less favoured fellows. Physical beauty is but skin deep, and the fairest countenance loses its

bloom in a few short years at most. The ravages of disease and the effects of sorrow dim the brightest eye and mar the roundest cheek, and wrinkles soon crease what before was so attractive. “For *all flesh is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Peter 1:24), and the grave is the “oven” to which the handsomest equally with the ugliest are hastening.

In view of the brevity of life and the fleetingness of physical charm how groundless and foolish is pride over a handsome body! That beauty upon which we need to fix our hearts and unto which we should devote our energies is “the beauty of *holiness*” (1 Chron. 16:29), for it is a beauty that fades not away, is not transient and disappointing, is not destroyed in the grave, but endures forever. And what is the beauty of holiness? It is the opposite of the hideousness of sin which is likeness unto the Devil. The beauty of holiness consists in a conformity unto Him of whom it is said, “how great is His goodness! and how great is His beauty!” (Zech. 9:17). This is not creature beauty, but Divine beauty, yet it is imparted to God’s elect, for “the King’s daughter is all glorious within” (Psa. 45:13). O how we need to pray, “Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (Psa. 90:17), then shall we be admired by the holy angels.

Not only does the evanescent beauty of the lily rebuke those who are proud of their physical comeliness, but it condemns all who make an idol of costly or showy apparel. Alas, such a sorry wretch is fallen man that even when his food is assured (for the present, at any rate) he must perforce harass himself over the matter of clothes—not merely for warmth and comfort, but for display, to gratify a peacock vanity. This gives as much concern to the rich as worrying about food does to the poor. Then “consider the lilies of the field”: they are indeed clothed with loveliness, yet how fleeting it is, and the oven awaits them! Does your ambition rise no higher than to be like unto them, and to share their fate? O heed that word, “Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:3, 4).

But let us pass on to another thought. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin” (Matt. 6:28). Here the Saviour teaches us that the irrational creatures of the field do in their kind yield more obedience unto God than man does, that we are more rebellious than they are. Isaiah called upon Heaven and earth to hear his rebuke of the Jews for their ingratitude (1:2). Another Prophet when rebuking Jeroboam for his idolatry cried, “O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD” (1 Kings 13:2). When Jeremiah condemned the king of Judah, he exclaimed, “O earth, earth, earth hear the word of the LORD” (22:29), while Ezekiel was bidden to prophesy to the mountains of Israel (6:3). All of these go to show that if these insensible creatures were endowed with the intelligence which man is, they would be more obedient to the will of their Creator than he is.

Again—in bidding us take the herbs of the field for our schoolmaster, Christ would signify that though we have these creatures before us daily, beholding and using them, yet partly through our blindness and ignorance and partly through neglect and inattention we do not discern in them what we should, nor learn from them those valuable lessons which they are fitted to teach us. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead: so that they are

without excuse” (Rom. 1:19, 20.) Thus the Lord Jesus here gave a check to our dullness and neglect in meditating upon the products of God’s hand. And if we are so slow to learn these things which are necessary to our temporal welfare, how shall we do in those things which concern our eternal salvation!

But *what* must we learn from the lilies? “How they grow.” Like all the works of God this, too, is wonderful and should provoke our admiration. In the winter season they lie dead in the earth, as though they were not. They are covered with frost and snow—yet in the springtime they spring up with stalks, leaves and flowers of such delicacy and loveliness as surpasses the glory of Solomon in all his royalty. And whence comes this? Is it of themselves or from man? Neither, for it is “field” or wild lilies our Lord here speaks of. Whence then? From the original fiat of creation, uttered by God when He made these creatures saying, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed” (Gen. 1:11). From that ever-operative word of the Almighty Creator comes the earth to have power and virtue to bear the beautiful lilies and every other herb. And the same God who by the Word of His power gives being to the lilies of the field has uttered a Word of providence that if we trust Him, using lawful means moderately, we shall have raiment sufficient and everything else that is needful to this life.

“They toil not, neither do they spin.” Here the Saviour bids us take note of how free from care the lilies are. They expend no labour in order to earn their clothing, as we have to do. This is proof that God Himself directly provides for them and decks them out so attractively. And how forcibly does that fact press upon us the duty of contentment, relying upon God’s gracious providence without distracting care. Not only have we title to Divine providence certainly not inferior to that possessed by the herbs of the field, but God has allowed unto us for our raiment the use of means which they lack. Though no man under the pretence of relying on God’s providence may live idly, neglecting the ordinary lawful means to procure things honest and needful, yet Christ here gives assurance to all who trust in Him and serve Him that even though all means should fail them, He will provide things needful for them. If through sickness, injury or old age we can no longer toil and spin, God will not suffer us to lack sufficient clothing.

“And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matt. 6:29). In those words Christ rebukes that folly of the vain which moves so many to make an idol of personal adornment. Before we endeavour to show the force of our Lord’s remark in this verse it should be pointed out that in making mention of the splendour of Solomon’s royal apparel He did not condemn the same—had that been His object, instead of mentioning the “glory” of Solomon, Christ had termed it his “vain show” or “ostentatious folly.” Though the Word of God reprehends pride and superfluities in attire, yet it allows unto princes and persons of high office the use of gorgeous and costly raiment. When Joseph was advanced unto state dignity he refused not to be arrayed in “garments of fine linen” and to have “a ring on his hand and a chain of gold about his neck” (Gen. 41:42); nor did the Apostle reprove Agrippa and Bernice because they came to hear him “in great pomp” (Acts 23:23).

How senseless it is to be conceited over fine attire and to be so solicitous about our personal appearance, for when we have done everything in our power to make ourselves attractive, we come far short of the flowers of the field in their glorious array! What cloth or silk is so white as the lily, what purple can equal the violet, what scarlet or crimson is comparable to roses and other flowers of that colour? The arts of the workman may indeed do much, yet they cannot

equal the beauties of nature. If, then, we cannot vie with the herbs of the field which we trample under our feet and cast into the oven, why should we be puffed up with any showiness in our dress? All worldly pomp is but vain, for in glory and beauty it is inferior to that of the flowers—yet what is more frail and transitory than the lily of the field!

Alas, so great is the depravity and perversity of man that he turns into an occasion of feeding his vanity and of self-display what ought to be a ground of humiliation and self-abasement. If we duly considered the proper and principal end of apparel, we should rather be humbled and abased when we put it on, than pleased with our gaudy attire. Clothing for the body is to cover the shame of nakedness which sin brought upon us. It was not ever thus, for of our first parents before the Fall it is written, “The man and the woman were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). Raiment, then, is a covering of our shame, the ensign of our sin, and we have no better reason to be proud of our apparel than the criminal has of his handcuffs or the lunatic of his straitjacket, for as they are badges of wrongdoing or insanity, so apparel is but the badge of our sin.

“Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” The array of Solomon must indeed have been magnificent. Possessed of illimitable wealth, owner of a fleet of ships which brought to him the products of many foreign countries, nothing was lacking to make his court one of outstanding splendour and pomp. No doubt on State occasions he appeared in the richest and most imposing of clothes, yet deck himself out as finely as he might, he came far short of the beauty of the lilies. Rightly did Matthew Henry point out, “Let us therefore be more ambitious of the *wisdom* of Solomon in which he was outdone by none—wisdom to do our duty in our place—than the *glory* of Solomon in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes.” To which we would add, let us seek to be “clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5) rather than lust after peacock feathers.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

19. *Effectual Prayer.*

At the close of last month's article we were occupied with the prayer offered by Elijah on mount Carmel: through lack of space we were unable to ponder its final petitions. This supplication of the Prophet requires to be examined attentively, for it was a prevalent one, securing a miraculous answer. There are two chief reasons why so many of the prayers of God's people are unavailing: first, because they fail to meet the requirements of acceptable prayer; second, because their supplications are unscriptural, not patterned after the prayer recorded in Holy Writ. It would take us too far afield to enter into full detail as to what requirements we must meet and what conditions have to be fulfilled by us in order to obtain the ear of God so that He will show Himself strong on our behalf; yet we feel this is a suitable place to say something on this highly important and most practical subject, and at least mention some of the principal requirements for success at the Throne of Grace.

Prayer is one of the outstanding privileges of the Christian life. It is the appointed means for experimental access to God, for the soul to draw nigh unto its Maker, for the Christian to have spiritual communion with his Redeemer. It is the channel through which we are to seek all needed supplies of spiritual grace and temporal mercies. It is the avenue through which we are to make known our need unto the Most High and look for Him to minister to the same. It is the channel through which faith ascends to Heaven and in response thereto miracles descend to earth. But if that channel be choked, those supplies are withheld; if faith be dormant, miracles do not take place. Of old God had to say of His people, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). And is it any different today? Again He declared, "your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 5:25). And is not this the case with most of us now? Have we not occasion to acknowledge, "We have transgressed and have rebelled: Thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. 3:42, 44). Sad, sad, indeed when such is the case.

If the professing Christian supposes that no matter what the character of his walk may be, he has but to plead the name of Christ and his petitions are assured of an answer, he is sadly deluded. God is ineffably holy and His Word expressly declares, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). It is not sufficient to believe in Christ, or plead His name, in order to ensure answers to prayer: there must be practical subjection to and daily fellowship with Him: "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). It is not sufficient to be a child of God and call upon his heavenly Father: there must be an ordering of our lives according to His revealed will: "Whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). It is not sufficient to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace: we must "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22)—that which defiles being removed by the cleansing precepts of the Word (see Psa. 119:9).

Apply the principles briefly alluded to above and mark how those requirements were met and those conditions fulfilled in the case of Elijah. He had walked in strict separation from the evil which abounded in Israel, refusing to compromise or have any fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness. In a day of spiritual degeneracy and apostasy he had maintained personal communion with the Holy One, as his, "The Lord God of Israel *before whom I stand*" (1 Kings 17:1) clearly attested. He walked in practical subjection to God, as his refusing to move until the "word of the Lord came unto him" (17:8) bore definite witness. His life was ordered by the revealed will of his Master, as was manifested by his obedience to the Divine command to dwell with a widow woman in Zarephath. He shrank not from discharging the most unpleasant duties, as was plain from his prompt compliance with the Divine order, "Go, show thyself to Ahab" (18:1). And *such an one*, my reader, had the ear of God—had power with God.

Now if what has just been pointed out serves to explain the prevalency of Elijah's intercession, does it not (alas) also furnish the reason why so many of us *have not* the ear of God—have not power with Him in prayer? It is "the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man" which "availeth much" with God (James 5:16), and that signifies something more than a man to whom the righteousness of Christ has been imputed. Let it be duly noted that this statement occurs not in Romans (where the legal benefits of the Atonement are chiefly in view), but in James, where the practical and experimental side of the Gospel is unfolded. The "righteous man" in James 5:16 (as also throughout the book of Proverbs, and ditto the "just") is one who is right with God practically in his daily life, whose ways "please the Lord." If we walk not in separation from the world, if we deny not self, strive not against sin, mortify not our lusts, but gratify our carnal nature, is there any wonder that our prayer-life is cold and formal and our petitions unanswered?

In examining the prayer of Elijah on mount Carmel we have seen that, first, at the time of the evening sacrifice "the Prophet came near": that is, unto the altar on which the slain bullock lay; "came near" though expecting an answer by fire! There we behold his holy confidence in God, and are shown the bottom foundation on which his confidence rested, namely, an atoning sacrifice. Second, we have heard him addressing Jehovah as the covenant God of His people: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel." Third, we have pondered his first petition: "Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel," that is, that He would vindicate His honour and glorify His own great name. The heart of the Prophet was filled with a burning zeal for the living God and he could not endure the sight of the land being filled with idolatry. Fourth, "and that I am Thy servant," whose will is entirely surrendered to You, whose interests are wholly subordinated to Yours. Own me as such by a display of Your mighty power.

These are the elements, dear reader, which enter into the prayer which is acceptable to God and which meets with a response from Him. There must be more than going through the motions of devotion: there must be an actual drawing near of the soul unto the living God, and for that, there must be a putting away and forsaking of all that is offensive to Him. It is sin which alienates the heart from Him, which keeps the conscience at a guilty distance from Him; and that sin must *needs* be repented of and confessed if access is to be ours again. What we are now inculcating is not legalistic, but insisting upon the claims of Divine holiness. Christ has not died in order to purchase for His people an indulgence for them to live *in* sin: rather did He shed His precious blood to redeem them *from* all iniquity and "purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), and just so far as they neglect those good works will they fail to enter experimentally into the benefits of His redemption.

But in order for an erring and sinful creature to draw near the thrice Holy One with any measure of humble confidence, he must know something of the relation which he sustains unto

Him, not by nature but by *grace*. It is the blessed privilege of the believer—no matter how great a failure he feels himself to be (provided he is sincere in mourning his failures and *honest* in his endeavours to please his Lord)—to remind himself that he is approaching One in covenant relationship with him, yea, to plead that covenant before Him. David—in spite of all his falls—acknowledged, “He hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure” (2 Sam. 23:5), and so may the reader if he grieves over sin as David did, confesses them as contritely, and has the same pantings of heart after holiness. It makes a world of difference in our praying when we can “*take hold of God’s covenant*,” assured of our personal interest in it. When we plead the fulfillment of covenant promises (Jer. 32:40, 41; Heb. 10:16, 17, for example), we present a reason God will not reject, for He cannot deny Himself.

Still another thing is essential if our prayers are to meet with the Divine approval: the motive prompting them and the petition itself must be a right one. It is at this point so many fail: as it is written, “Ye ask and receive not, because ye *ask amiss*, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). Not so was it with Elijah: it was not his own advancement or aggrandisement he sought, but the magnifying of his Master, and vindication of His holiness, which had been so dishonoured by His people turning aside to Baal worship. Ah, my reader, we need to test ourselves here: if the motive behind our praying proceeds from nothing higher than *self*, we must *expect* to be denied. Only when we truly ask for that which will promote *God’s glory*, do we ask aright. “This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything *according to His will*, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14), and we ask “according to His will” when we request what will bring honour and praise to the Giver. Alas, how carnal much of our “praying” is!

Finally, if our prayers are to be acceptable to God they must issue from those who can truthfully declare, “I am Thy *servant*”—one submissive to the authority of another, one who takes the place of subordination, one who is under the orders of his master, one who has no will of his own, one whose constant aim is to please his master and promote his interests. And surely the Christian will make no demur against this. Is not this the very place into which his illustrious Redeemer entered? Did not the Lord of Glory take upon Him “the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7) and conduct Himself as such all the days of His flesh! If we maintain our *servant character* when we approach the Throne of Grace we shall be preserved from the blatant irreverence which characterizes not a little so-called “praying” of today, for so far from making demands or speaking to God as though we were His equals, we shall humbly present our requests. “And *what are* the main things a “servant” desires?—a knowledge of what his master requires and needed supplies so that his orders may be carried out.

“And that I have done all these things at Thy word” (1 Kings 18:36). “And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the Prophet came near, and said Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I have done all these things at Thy word.” This was advanced by the Prophet as an additional plea: that God would send down fire from Heaven in answer to his supplications as an attestation of his fidelity to his Master’s will. It was in response to Divine orders that the Prophet had restrained rain from the earth, had now convened Israel and the false prophets together, and had suggested an open trial or contest, that by a visible sign from Heaven it might be known who was the true God. All this he had done not of himself, but by direction from above. It adds great force to our petitions when we are able to plead before God our faithfulness to His commands.

Said David to the Lord, "Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Thy testimonies," and again, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame" (Psa. 119:22, 31). For a servant to act without orders from his Master is self-will and presumption.

God's commands "are not grievous" (to those whose wills are surrendered to His), and "in keeping of them there is great reward"! (Psa. 19:11)—in this life as well as in the next, as every obedient soul discovers for himself. The Lord has declared, "them that honour Me, I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30) and He is faithful in making good His promises. The way to honour Him is to walk in His precepts. This is what Elijah had done, and now he counted upon Jehovah honouring him by granting this petition. When the servant of God has the testimony of a good conscience and the witness of the Spirit that he is acting according to the Divine will, he may rightly feel himself to be invincible—that men, circumstances, and Satanic opposition are of no more account than the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. God's Word shall not return unto Him void: His purpose shall be accomplished though Heaven and earth pass away. This, too, was what filled Elijah with calm assurance in that crucial hour. God would not mock one who had been true to Him.

"Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the LORD God" (1 Kings 18:37). How those words breathed forth the intensity and vehemence of the Prophet's zeal for the Lord of hosts. No mere formal lip service was this, but real supplication, fervent supplication. This repetition intimates how truly and how deeply Elijah's heart was burdened. He could not endure the LORD, hear" was the earnest cry of a pent-up soul. How his zeal and intensity puts to shame the coldness of our prayers! It is only the genuine cry of a burdened heart that reaches the ear of God. It is "the effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man" that "availeth much." O what need we have to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, for He alone can inspire real prayer within us.

"That this people may know that Thou art the LORD God." Here was the supreme longing of Elijah's soul: that it might be openly and incontrovertibly demonstrated that Jehovah, and not Baal or any idol, was the true God. That which dominated the Prophet's heart was a yearning that God would be glorified. And is it not thus with all of His genuine servants? They are willing to endure any hardships, glad to spend themselves and be spent, if so be that their Lord is magnified. "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13): how many since the Apostle have actually died in His service and for the praise of His holy name. Such, too, is the deepest and most constant desire of each Christian who is not in a backslidden condition: all his petitions issue from and center in this—that God may be glorified. They have, in their measure, drunk of the spirit of their Redeemer: "Father. . . glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1): when such be the motive behind our petition it is certain of an answer.

"And that *Thou* hast turned their *heart* back again" (1 Kings 18:37)—back from wandering after forbidden objects unto You, my God—back from Baal to the service and worship of the true and living God. Next to the glory of his Master, the deliverance of Israel from the deceits of Satan was the deepest longing of Elijah's heart. He was no selfish and self-centred individual that was indifferent to the fate of his fellows: rather was he anxious that they should have for their Portion and supreme Good that which so fully satisfied his own soul. And again we say, is not the same thing true of all genuine servants and saints of God? Next to the glory of their Lord

that which lies nearest their hearts and forms the constant subject of their prayers is the salvation of sinners, that they may be turned from their evil and foolish ways unto God. Note well the two words we place in italics: “that *Thou* hast turned their *heart* back again”—nothing short of the heart being turned unto God will avail anything for eternity, and for that, nothing short of God’s putting forth His mighty power can effect this change.

Having considered in detail and at some length each petition in Elijah’s prevailing prayer, let us call attention to one other feature which marked it, and that is its noticeable brevity. It occupies but two verses in our Bibles and contains only sixty-three words in the English translation: still fewer in the original Hebrew. What a contrast is this from the long drawn-out and wearisome prayers of many pulpits today! “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few” (Eccl. 5:2): such a verse as this appears to have no weight with the majority of ministers. One of the marks of the scribes and Pharisees was that they, “for a pretence (to impress the people with their piety) make long prayers” (Mark 12:40). We would not overlook the fact that when the Spirit’s unction is enjoyed (alas that it is now absent), the servant of Christ may be granted much liberty to pour out his heart at length, yet this is the exception rather than the rule, as God’s Word clearly proves.

One of the many evils engendered by lengthy prayers in the pulpit is the discouraging of simple souls in the pew: they are apt to conclude that if their private devotions are not sustained at length, then the Lord must be withholding from them the spirit of prayer. If any of our readers is distressed because of this, we would ask them to make a study of the prayers recorded in Holy Writ—in Old and New Testaments alike—and they will find that they are almost all of them exceedingly *short ones*. The prayers which brought such remarkable responses from Heaven were like this one of Elijah’s: brief and to the point, fervent but definite. No soul is heard because of the multitude of his words, but only when his petitions come from the heart, are prompted by a longing for God’s glory, and are presented in childlike faith. The Lord mercifully preserve us from hypocrisy and formality, and make us feel our deep need of crying to Him, “Teach us (not *how* to) but *to pray*.”—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

8. *Its Elucidation.*

Had we followed a strictly logical order, this branch of our subject would have followed right after our discussion of the problem which is raised by this doctrine, but we deemed it better to first build a broader foundation for our present remarks by considering its "complement." Following this line of thought, we showed, first, the twofoldness of Truth which characterizes the whole of Divine revelation. Second, that parallel with the fact of man's spiritual impotency runs his full responsibility. Third, that the acid test of sound theology consists in preserving the balance of Truth or presenting its component parts in their proper perspective. Fourth, that the servant of God must ever strive to set forth each aspect of the Gospel in its fair proportions, being impervious to the charge of "inconsistency" which is sure to be hurled at him by extremists.

Let us now re-state the problem to which we have endeavoured and will continue to endeavour to present a solution: how can fallen man be held responsible to glorify God when he is incapable of doing so? How can it be consistent with the *mercy* of God for Him to require the debt of obedience when we are unable to pay it? How can it be consistent with the *justice* of God to punish with eternal suffering for the neglect of what lay altogether beyond the sinner's power? If fallen man is bound fast with the cords of sin, with what propriety can God demand of him the performance of a perfect holiness? Since the sinner is the slave of sin, how can he be a free agent? Can we really be held accountable for not doing what it is impossible for us to do? If the Fall has not annulled human responsibility, must it not to a considerable extent have modified it?

Let it be said that it is not for the benefit of the complaining critic or the objecting Infidel that we take up such questions as these, but with the desire to help our fellow-Christians. Though such problems do not in the least degree shake their confidence in the character of the Lord or the integrity of His Word, yet some believers are at a loss to see how His ways can be equal. On the one hand Scripture declares, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" and therefore incapable of doing anything else but sin: "So then they, that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (Rom. 8:7, 8). Yet on the other we are informed that, "the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18) and that "every transgression and disobedience" shall receive "a just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:2). Nor is any deliverance from God's wrath obtainable through the Gospel except upon such conditions as no natural man can comply with, nevertheless a non-compliance with those conditions brings additional condemnation.

Unto not a few who give serious thought to this subject, it almost seems to make out the Most High to be what the slothful servant said—"reaping where Thou hast not sown and gathering where Thou hast not strowed" (Matt. 25:24). That such is far from being the true state of the case every regenerate heart is fully assured, yet the removal of this God-dishonouring suspicion is earnestly desired by those perplexed hereupon. These points have engaged the mind of the writer for many years past, and it is now our desire to pass on to other members of the Household of Faith what has been a help to us that these articles are being written. How fallen man can be *morally impotent* yet *morally responsible* is the matter we shall endeavour to elucidate.

In seeking the solution to our problem we shall first aim to cast upon it the light furnished by *the relationship* which exists between the Creator and the creature, between God and fallen man. When facing the difficulties raised by the truth of the moral impotency of fallen man it is of vast

importance that we clearly recognize and tenaciously hold fast the fact that God has not forfeited His right over the creature even though the creature has lost his power to meet God's requirements. It is at this point, especially, much of the difficulty is removed. Further light is thrown upon the nature of human responsibility by obtaining a right view of man's moral agency. So, too, by far the greater part of the difficulty vanishes when we correctly define and state the nature of man's impotency: what it is *not*, and what it *does* consist of. Finally, it will be found that man's own conscience and consciousness bears witness to the fact of his accountability.

In seeking to show the relationship which exists between the Creator and the creature, between God and the fallen man, let us inquire, What is the foundation of moral obligation? What is the rule of human duty? It should be evident to any anointed eye there can be only one answer to these questions: the will of God—the will of God as revealed to us. God is our Maker and as such He has the right to unlimited control over the creatures of His hands. That right of God is absolute, uncontrolled and without any limitation. It is the right of the Potter over the clay. Moreover, the creature is entirely dependent upon the Creator: "In Him we live and move and have our being." He that "formeth the spirit of man within him" sustains that spirit and the body which it inhabits. In reference to our bodies we have no self-sustaining power: let God's hand be withdrawn, and it returns to the dust. Equally dependent upon the sustaining power of God is the soul of man.

Because God is who He is and because man is the work of His hands, the will of God must be the foundation of moral obligation. "All things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). "Thou hast created all things: for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). But God is not only our Creator, He is also our Ruler and Governor, and His rights over us are made known by His will, by His expressed will. Man is bound to do what God commands and to abstain from what He forbids simply *because* He commands and forbids: beyond that there is no reason. Direct reference to the Divine will is essential to any moral virtue. When an action is done regardless of God's will no honour is shown to Him and no virtue pertains to it. Such is the clear and definite teaching of Holy Writ: it knows no foundation of right or wrong, no obligation, but the will of the Most High.

It therefore follows that the will of God revealed is the rule of duty. It is self-evident that the will of God cannot direct and govern us except as it is made known to us, and in His Word it is made known. God's own rule of action is His will, for higher and holier rule there can be none. "He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven and among, the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. 4:35). "He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9:15). To the will of God our blessed Redeemer uniformly referred as both the obligation and rule of His *own* action, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart" (Psa. 40:8). "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John 5:30). Even when the desire of His sinless humanity was for an escape from the awful cup, His holy soul felt the binding obligation of the Divine will: "not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Does not that settle the question once and for all? If the incarnate Son looked no higher, no lower, no farther, why should you? Compliance with the will of God because it is the will of God is the perfection of moral virtue.

It is a striking fact that whenever the heart of man is pierced by the arrows of the Almighty and his soul bowed down before the Majesty of Heaven, whenever he begins to feel the awful

burden of his guilt and his conscience is agitated over his fearful accountabilities and how they are to be met, his inquiry always is: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Every reader who has been taught of God knows this to be true. There is therefore a revealed testimony in every renewed heart to the righteousness of God's Rule and the reality of its obligation. This is the basic principle of Christian fidelity and fortitude. Under its influence the regenerate soul has only one inquiry in reference to any proposed enterprise: Is it *the will of God*? Satisfied of *this*, his heart tells him it *must* be done. Difficulties, hardships, dangers, even death present no obstacle: onward he presses in the path marked out for him by the will of his Father. Obedience to *that* is his only responsibility.

Let the reader then seek to grasp a firm hold of this important fact that the whole question of man's responsibility resolves itself into this: has God revealed, has God commanded? It must be grounded on the simple authority of the Most High. God neither reveals what is untrue nor commands what is unjust, and therefore the first principle of our moral duty is to know, acknowledge, and perform the Divine will as the ultimate fact in the government of God over us. This question must be resolved altogether irrespective of the state into which the Fall has brought man, or otherwise God must cease to be God and the creature must sit in judgment on his Creator. But alas, men in the enmity of their carnal mind and the pride of their heart dare to sit in judgment upon the Rule God has given them, measuring it by how far they deem it suitable to their condition, how far it comports with their ability, how far it commends itself to their reason—which is the very essence of unbelief and rebellion—the opposite of faith and obedience. Responsibility rests not upon anything in the creature, but on the authority of God who has made known His will to us. Responsibility is our obligation to respond to God's will.

We turn next to consider *the moral agency of man*. Since God furnished all other creatures with faculties suited to and an ability to fill their several places and to attain their different ends (as fish to swim in water, and birds to fly in the air), so He was no less gracious unto man. He who denied not capacity to His lower creatures withheld not the same from the noblest of His earthly works. How else could God have pronounced him "very good" (Gen. 1:31) if he lacked the natural capacity to answer the end of his creation? As he was to be made subject to moral government, man was endowed with moral agency. Man, then, has been fitted by his creation to serve his Maker, because he has been invested with faculties suited to the substance of the Divine Commands, and therefore whatever laws God gives us, it is our bounden duty to obey.

In amplifying what has just been said above we must seek answer to the question, What is the essence of moral agency? We answer: rational intelligence, volition or the power of choice, conscience or amoral sense. Rational intelligence: if man were incapable of comparing ideas, of marking their agreement or difference, to draw conclusions and infer results of conduct, he would not be a moral agent: that is to say, he would not be under a Law or revealed Will and liable to punishment for its violation or reward for its obedience. We do not treat infants or idiots, or regard brute beasts, as subjects of moral government. The unhappy maniac is pitied, but not blamed. But something more than a capacity to reason is included in the idea of moral agency: there are processes of reason, such as a mathematical demonstration, which contain no moral character.

Volition or the power of choice. To will is an act of the mind directing its thoughts to the production of an action and thereby exerting its power to produce it. The faculty of the will is

that power or principle of the mind by which it is capable of choosing: an act of the will is simply a choice. When the herdsmen of Abraham and his nephew quarreled, the Patriarch proposed a separation, and graciously offered the young man his choice of the whole land. "Then Lot *chose* him all the plain of Sodom." What does that "choice" signify? This: he took a view of the different localities, observed their relative features, balanced in his mind their respective advantages and disadvantages, and that which pleased him best offered the most powerful motive or incentive, and so was his choice. Such power of choice is necessary to constitute moral agency. Any one who is physically *forced* to perform an act contrary to his desires, be it good or bad, is not accountable for it.

Conscience or a moral sense, which discerns between moral good and evil, perceiving the difference between worthiness and blame, reward and punishment. A moral agent is one who has a capacity for being influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives exhibited to the view of the understanding or reason, so as to engage in a conduct agreeable to the moral faculties. That such a faculty exists within us is borne witness to by the consciousness of men the world over. There is an inward monitor from whose authority there is no escape, ever accusing or excusing. When its authority is defied, sooner or later conscience smites the transgressor with deep remorse and causes him to shrink from the anticipations of a reckoning to come. In a healthy state man recognizes the claims made by his moral faculty to supreme dominion over him. Thus the Creator has placed within our own bosoms His vicegerent; ever testifying to our responsibility to render obedience unto Him.

But let us here repeat: man's responsibility rests not on anything within himself, but is based solely upon God's rights over him—His right to command, His right to be obeyed. The faculties of intelligence, volition and conscience merely *qualified* man to discharge his responsibility. In addition to these faculties of his soul man was also given *strength* or power to meet the requirements of his Maker. God made him "upright" (Eccl. 7:29): placed within him holy dispositions, which perceived the glory of God, a heart which responded to His excellence. Man, as made in the image of God, after His likeness (Gen. 1:27): in other words, he was "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Man's understanding was spiritually enlightened, his will rightly inclined, and therefore was he capacitated to love the Lord his God with all his faculties and to render unto Him a sinless obedience. Thus was he fitted to discharge his responsibility.

Should it be asked, How was it possible for such a creature—so richly endowed by his Creator, so "very good" in his being, so capacitated to love and serve his Maker—to *fall*? The answer is because he was *not* constituted *immutable*—i.e., incapable of any change. Creaturehood and mutability (liability to change) are correlative terms. Having bestowed upon man everything which was necessary to constitute him a moral agent, everything which fitted him to answer unto the Divine requirements, man was made the subject of moral government: a rule of action being set before him, a rule which was vested with sanctions—reward for obedience, punishment for disobedience. Man, then, was put on probation under a covenant of works. He was duly tried: his fealty to God being tested by Satan. Man deliberately cast off his allegiance to God, rejected His authority, preferred the creature to his Creator, and thereby fell from his original estate.

It needs to be pointed out—for in most circles of professing Christians it is quite unknown—that when God placed Adam under the Covenant of Works and put him on probation, he acted not simply as a private individual but as a public person, as the federal head, as the legal repre-

sentative and father of all his posterity. Such was the constitution which it pleased the Lord to appoint unto the human race at the beginning of its history, and whether we can or cannot perceive the propriety and righteousness of such an arrangement, no spiritual mind will doubt its wisdom or justice once he is satisfied it is definitely revealed in Holy Writ. Had Adam survived his testing and remained loyal to his Ruler, the whole of his posterity had *shared his reward*. But instead, he rebelled and sinned, and in consequence, “by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . . by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:18, 19). “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22).

As the result of our federal head’s transgression we are born into this world depraved creatures, unable to render an acceptable obedience to the Divine Law. But the Fall has neither changed man’s *relationship* to God nor cancelled his responsibility: he is still a subject of the Divine government, still a moral agent, still accountable for his actions, still required to love and serve the Lord his God. God has not lost His right to enforce His just demands, though man has lost his power to meet them: depravity does not annul obligation. A human creditor may without the slightest injustice sue a prodigal debtor who has squandered his substance in riotous living: how much more so the Divine Creditor! The entrance of sin has neither weakened God’s right to demand subjection from His creatures nor invalidated their obligation to discharge their duty.—
A.W.P.

A WORD TO PARENTS.

Owing to lack of space we could intimate and enforce only one side of the requirement enjoined by the Fifth Commandment: the deplorable conditions now existing on every hand demand that we press the other side also. Under this Commandment are included the responsibilities of parents toward their children and masters toward their servants, as well as those of children and servants unto their superiors. This is quite clear from the opening verses of Ephesians 6 (which contain an exposition of the Fifth Commandment), where the Apostle begins with the duties of children toward their parents and then immediately follows with the duties of parents toward their children, and after instructing servants he at once proceeded to instruct their masters. We shall here confine ourselves to the former.

One of the saddest and most tragic features of our twentieth-century "Civilization" is the awful prevalence of disobedience on the part of children to their parents during the days of childhood, and their lack of reverence and respect when they grow up. This is evidenced in many ways, and is general, alas, even in the families of professing Christians. In his extensive travels during the past thirty years the writer has sojourned in a great many homes: the piety and beauty of some of them remain sacred and fragrant memories: but others of them have left the most painful impressions. Children who are self-willed or spoilt not only bring themselves into perpetual unhappiness, but inflict discomfort upon all who come into contact with them, and auger evil things for the days to come.

In the vast majority of cases the children are not nearly so much to be blamed as the parents. Failure to honour father and mother, wherever it is found, is in large measure due to the parental departure from the Scriptural pattern. Nowadays the father considers he has fulfilled his obligations by providing food and raiment for his children, and by acting occasionally as a species of moral policeman. Too often the mother is content to be a domestic drudge, making herself the slave of her children instead of training them to be useful, performing many a task which her daughters should do, in order to allow them freedom for the frivolities of a giddy set. The consequence has been that the home which ought to be—for its orderliness, its sanctity, and its reign of love—a miniature Heaven on earth, has degenerated into "a filling station for the day and a parking place for the night" as someone has tersely expressed it.

Before outlining the duties of parents toward their children, let it be pointed out that they cannot properly discipline their children unless they have first learned to *govern themselves*. How can they expect to subdue self-will in their little ones and check the rise of an angry temper, if their own passions are allowed free rein? The character of parents is to a very large degree reproduced in their offspring: "And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness after his image" (Gen. 5:3). The parent must himself or herself be in subjection to God if they may lawfully expect obedience from their little ones. This principle is enforced in Scripture again and again: "thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Rom. 2:21). Of the bishop or pastor it is written that he must be, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God" (1 Tim. 3:4, 5). And if a man or woman know not how to rule their own spirit (Prov. 25:28), how shall they care for their offspring?

God has entrusted to parents a most solemn charge and yet a most precious privilege. It is not too much to say that in *their* hands are deposited the hope and blessing, or else the curse and

plague, of the next generation. Their families are the nurseries of both Church and State, and according to the cultivating of them now such will be their fruitfulness hereafter. O how prayerfully and carefully should they discharge their trust! Most assuredly God will require an account of the children from their parents' hands, for they are His, and only lent to your care and keeping. The task assigned you is no easy one, especially in these superlatively evil days. Nevertheless, if trustfully and earnestly sought, the grace of God will be found sufficient here as elsewhere. The Scriptures supply us with rules to go by, with promises to lay hold of, and we may add, with fearful warnings lest you treat the matter lightly.

We have space to mention but four of the principal duties devolving on parents. First, *to instruct* their children. "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6, 7). This work is far too important to allocate unto others: *parents*, and not Sunday School teachers, are Divinely required to educate their little ones. Nor is this to be an occasional or sporadic thing, but one that is to have constant attention. The glorious character of God, the requirements of His holy Law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The wondrous gift of His Son, and the fearful doom which is the certain portion of all who despise and reject Him, are to be brought repeatedly before the minds of the little ones. "They are too young to understand such things" is the Devil's argument to deter you from discharging your duty.

"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). It is to be noted that the "fathers" are here specifically addressed, and this for two reasons: because they are the *head* of the family and its government is especially committed to them, and because they are prone to transfer this duty unto their wives. This instruction is to be given by reading to them the Holy Scriptures and enlarging upon those things most agreeable to their age. This should be followed by catechising them. A continued discourse to the young is not nearly so effective as when it is diversified by questions and answers. If they know they will be questioned on what you read, they will listen more closely: the formulating of answers teaches them to think for themselves. Such a method is also found to make the memory more retentive, for answering definite questions fixes more specific ideas in the mind. Observe how often Christ asked His disciples questions.

Second, good instruction is to be accompanied by good example. That teaching which issues only from the lips is not at all likely to sink any deeper than the ears. Children are particularly quick to detect inconsistencies, and despise hypocrisy. It is at this point parents need to be most on their faces before God, daily seeking from Him that grace which they so sorely need and which He alone can supply. What care they need to take lest they say or do anything before their children which would tend to corrupt their minds or be of evil consequence for them to follow. How they need to be constantly on their guard against anything which might render them mean and contemptible in the eyes of those who should respect and revere them! The parent is not only to instruct his children in the ways of holiness, but is himself to walk before them in those ways, and show by his practice and demeanour what a pleasant and profitable thing it is to be regulated by the Divine Law.

In a Christian home the supreme aim should be *household piety*—the honouring of God at all times—everything else being subordinated thereto. In the matter of family life neither husband

nor wife can throw on the other all the responsibility for the religious character of the home. The mother is most certainly required to supplement the efforts of the father, for the children enjoy far more of her company than they do of his. If there is a tendency in fathers to be too strict and severe, mothers are prone to be too lax and lenient, and they need to be much on their guard against anything which would weaken their husbands' authority: when he has forbidden a thing, she must not give her consent to it. It is striking to note that the exhortation of Ephesians 6:4 is preceded by, "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18), while the parallel exhortation in Colossians 3:21 is preceded by "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (v. 16), showing that parents cannot possibly discharge their duties unless they are filled with the Spirit and the Word.

Third, instruction and example is to be enforced by *correction and discipline*. This means, first of all, the exercise of authority—the proper reign of law. Of the father of the faithful, God said, "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 the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). Ponder this carefully, Christian fathers. Abraham did more than proffer good advice: he enforced law and order in his household. The rules he administered had for their design the keeping of "the way of the Lord"—that which was right in His sight. And this duty was performed by the Patriarch in order that the blessing of God might rest on his family. No family can be properly brought up without household laws, which include reward and punishment, and these are especially important in early childhood, when as yet moral character is unformed and moral motives are not understood or appreciated.

Rules should be simple, clear, reasonable and inflexible like the Ten Commandments—a few great moral rules, instead of a multitude of petty restrictions. One way of needlessly provoking children to wrath is to hamper them with a thousand trifling restrictions and minute regulations that are capricious and are due to a fastidious temper in the parent. It is of vital importance for the child's future good that he or she should be brought into subjection at an early age: an untrained child means a lawless adult—our prisons are crowded with those who were allowed to have their own way during their minority. The least offense of a child against the rules of the home ought not to pass without due correction, for if it find leniency in one direction or toward one offense, it will expect the same toward others, and then disobedience will become more frequent till the parent has no control save that of brute force.

The teaching of Scripture is crystal clear on this point. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15 and cf. 23:13, 14). Therefore has God said, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). And again, "Chasten thy son while there is yet hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). Let not a foolish fondness stay you: certainly God loves His children with a much deeper parental affection than you can love yours, yet he tells us, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19 and cf. Heb. 12:6). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). Such severity must be used in their early years, before age and obstinacy have hardened the child against the fear and smart of correction. Spare the rod, and you spoil the child: use it not on him, and you lay up one for your own back.

It should hardly need pointing out that the above Scriptures are far from inculcating that a reign of terror is to mark the home life. Children can be governed and punished in such a way

that they do not lose their respect and affection to their parents. Beware of souring their temper by unreasonable demands, or provoking their wrath by smiting them to vent your own rage. The parent is to punish a disobedient child not because he is angry, but because it is *right*—because God requires it, and the welfare of the child demands it. Never make a threat which you have no intention of executing, nor a promise you do not mean to perform. Remember that for your children to be well informed is good, but for them to be well controlled is better.

Pay close attention to the unconscious influences of a child's surroundings. Study to make your home attractive: not by introducing carnal and worldly things, but by noble ideals, by inculcating a spirit of unselfishness, by genial and happy fellowship. Separate the little ones from evil associates. Watch carefully the periodicals and books which come into the home, the occasional guests which sit at the table, and the companionships your children form. Parents carelessly let people have free access to their children who undermine their authority, overturn their ideals, and sow seeds of frivolity and iniquity before they are aware. Never let your child spend a night among strangers. So train your girls that they will be useful and helpful members of their generation, and your boys that they will be industrious and self-supporting.

Fourth, the last and most important duty, respecting both the temporal and spiritual good of your children, is *fervent supplication to God* for them, for without this all the rest will be ineffectual. Means are unavailing unless the Lord blesses them. The Throne of Grace is to be earnestly implored so that your efforts to bring up your children for God may be crowned with success. True, there must be a humble submission to His sovereign will, a bowing before the truth of Election. On the other hand, it is the privilege of faith to lay hold of the Divine promises and to remember that the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much. Of holy Job it is recorded concerning his sons and daughters that he “rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all” (1:5). A prayerful atmosphere should pervade the home and be breathed by all who share it.—A.W.P.

WELCOME TIDINGS.

“Set your affection on *things above*, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). There is great need for Christians to attend to this precept today, for Satan is making a supreme effort to occupy them with things now happening in the world, and unless they strive and pray against his assaults he will overcome them. The unregenerate has nothing better to engage his attention, for the excitement of the war helps him to forget the endless sufferings of Hell which await him. But it is far otherwise with the child of God: he has something infinitely superior to the doings of Hitler to absorb his heart. The sovereign grace of God in the Everlasting Covenant, the Person and work of his blessed Redeemer, the glory awaiting him, and earnestly endeavouring to walk worthy of such a calling while he is left in this wilderness of sin, are the objects and subjects which claim the affections and energies of the believer.

“I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Rom. 16:19). It is to his great loss if the Christian disregards this Divine counsel. Consequently, the less time he spends on reading the newspapers and listening to the wireless, the better for him. What profit is there therein? Does it feed the soul? help you to mortify your lusts, promote a closer walk with God? You know it does not. We read of “Men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth”—which is ever the effect of occupation with such things. But at such a time the word of Christ to His own is, “look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh”—is ever getting nearer and nearer, but *how* near only God knows (Luke 21:25-28).

It is to encourage heavenly mindedness that this little magazine is still being published. That our efforts, under God, are not altogether in vain appears from the testimonies we continue to receive, extracts from some of which we now append. “I thank God upon every remembrance of you, for I greatly appreciate your sending me the Studies. I have all the copies filed and indexed, and many times have found them exceedingly helpful in the preparation of sermons or Bible studies. Truly they have affected my life and ministry tremendously” (Bible Teacher). “I have just read your Annual Letter and praise the Lord for His goodness to you both in providing a quiet haven in which you can continue publishing the magazine which I still find most valuable. It has under God helped to mold my ministry greatly, and to strengthen my faith in Him” (Preacher).

“I do trust that what I read will be manifest in my walk and desire after practical holiness and conformity to the image of Christ” (Canadian reader). “I cannot praise the Lord enough for putting this magazine into my hands, for through it I have received the greatest blessing since becoming a Christian” (U.S.A. reader). “I express my thanks to the Lord and you, that you have brought before Christians the need of the teachings in the book of Matthew” (Preacher). “We have so enjoyed the series on the Impotency of Man. Though we thoroughly believed it, your articles have opened up and also clarified some aspects of this awful subject. Your work was never more important. It is a solemn thing to be entrusted with the feeding of the sheep in a day when it would seem there was no ‘open vision’ so that the ‘whole counsel’ practically applied is seldom found in print or pulpit. It is to the Studies that I owe most of my heart and head growth of the past year. I can say this knowing that you will ever respond ‘to Him only be the praise’ ” (U.S.A. reader).

“I have again received much blessing from the Studies, especially Godly Sorrow and the Life of Elijah” (Australian reader). “Your articles on the justice of God are very timely, and so helpful” (Canadian reader). “Always we give thanks to God for your faithfulness in the Studies: they are a great help to us. We realize in these strenuous days we have need to bear you before the Throne of Grace, and we always keep you in remembrance” (English reader). “We have been much helped and encouraged by the ministry contained in your monthly, and trust the blessed Lord may preserve Mrs. Pink and yourself in good health and enable you both to carry on the work to which you have devoted yourselves. Such ministry as the Studies contain are not wanted by the mass of (professing) Christians, but thank God there are still a few who value it” (Scottish reader).

“Thank you for the Studies received during another year. Words cannot convey the great help we have received from them. We have prayed that you may be preserved to minister that which is so needful in these days. Our prayers are being answered: we praise the Lord for it” (Welsh reader). “I always look forward to receiving the Studies. I find them most searching and instructive. I was glad to learn that you are now settled in Lewis. I trust your labours will be abundantly blessed. We are living in dark days, but God is reigning” (Scottish reader). “Am still praying for your protection and growth in wisdom and strength from the Lord” (U.S.A. reader)—how much we need such prayers! “Your writings have been a great blessing to me, for which I am thankful to my heavenly Father, and also to you. I think I have most of your writings in my library, and have read them through more than once. They have been a great help to me personally, in opening my eyes to spiritual truths of which I was heretofore ignorant” (Preacher).

“I have just received the 1940 bound volume of the Studies. I thank God for His overruling care and for getting them once more safely despite the dangers both in England and on the Atlantic. I continually pray for God’s protection over you and the leading of His Spirit, so that you may write a word in due season to His Household, and that the copies may all reach their various destinations safely”—we sincerely trust that many of our kind friends are also praying daily to the same end. “I thank God for the magazine: it is impossible to say which article is the most helpful, for they all supply some need in building up the saints” (Canadian reader).

Such unsolicited testimonies are indeed welcome tidings and cause for fervent thanksgiving. They encourage us to plod along in the face of much which is disheartening. We trust they will evoke praise unto God and stimulate our friends to continue in earnest supplication that the blessing of Heaven will rest on this monthly messenger and that we may yet be permitted to reach many more of God’s starved sheep in this cloudy and dark day. Thankful to say all is well with us. With Christian love and every good wish, Yours by Divine mercy.—A. W. and V. E. Pink.

DYING GRACE.

It was a true report which you heard of the gracious dealings of God with my daughter in her lingering illness. When she had the sentence of death in herself, and was given over by others, instead of being terrified, it was a pleasure to her. Permit me to repeat some of her dying expressions.

“It must be free grace indeed that saved such a sinner as I am, for I have been and am a very great sinner. What the saints enjoy in Heaven I know not, but soon I shall.” One morning upon being asked what sort of a night she had, she said, “A terrible one to my body: nothing but cold sweat, pain, and languishing; but if it pleased God to continue such consolation and to smile upon me as He did last night, these pains would be easy to bear. Dying-work is hard work indeed to nature. O the pain, the bliss of dying! It was a sight of glory I was favoured with, and the hope I shall be very soon there. I am extremely ill and almost at home.” At another time, “I hoped to have begun an everlasting Sabbath today; but if it be to glorify God, I hope I am willing to linger a little longer, though it be but now and then to say a word for Him. The sting of death is quite taken away; the thought of returning back to the world makes me shrink, though it were to enjoy health, and every blessing I ever possessed.”

She told one who came to take a last farewell that “The ground of her peace was not what she felt, but the unchangeable faithfulness of God.” Speaking of the sufferings of Christ, she said, “My sins greatly added to the weight which He sustained: they would have crushed me forever, if He had not borne them for me.” At a time when she was convulsed, she said, “Welcome convulsion fits, or anything else which the Lord is pleased to send. I know I shall be as happy as I have a capacity to be. I am dying, but cannot die. Come, Lord Jesus, I want to be gone. There is sin in every thing I say or do, but O! what a mercy that there is a righteousness for sinners! Christ is very precious. When He was dying, He cried, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ that I might now feel His presence! Call in everyone in the house, that they may hear how precious Christ is in a dying hour.”

When they were come to her bedside, she earnestly desired each one to beware of sin, and exhorted them to make sure of an interest in Christ; then she said, “This is the happiest hour I ever felt; it is transporting. Blessed be God, I can see Jesus. Satan has nothing at all to do with me now; and if he should assault me, I know that I shall come off more than a conqueror. What happy, happy work is dying! O glorious hour! O blessed abode! I shall be near and like my Lord.”

At length she expired, calling on the Lord God to receive her. Through the whole of her illness her mind was preserved from the least roving. And the nearer she approached to death the greater was her heavenly mindedness. I preached on the occasion from 1 Corinthians 15:57. Blessed be God for giving me such a child; and I hope I can say now that He has taken her away, Blessed be the name of the Lord.—R. Winter, 1782.

