

January, 1936
Studies in the Scriptures
The Spirit Assuring.

We do not propose to treat of the Spirit assuring in a topical and general way, but to confine ourselves to His inspiring the Christian with a sense of his adoption into the family of God, limiting ourselves unto two or three particular passages which treat specifically thereof. In Romans 8:15 we read, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The eighth chapter of Romans has ever been a great favourite with the Lord's people, for it contains a wide variety of cordials for their encouragement and strengthening in the running of that heavenly race which is marked out and set before them in the Word of God. The Apostle is there writing to such as have been brought, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, to know and believe on the Lord Jesus, and who by their communion with Him are led to set their affection upon things above.

First, let us observe that Romans 8:15 opens with the word "For," which not only suggests a close connection with that which precedes, but intimates that a proof is now furnished of what had just been affirmed. In the 12th verse, the Apostle had said, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh": the "Therefore" being a conclusion drawn from all the considerations set forth in verses 1-11. Next, the Apostle had declared, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (v. 13); which means, first, ye shall *continue* to "live" a life of *grace* now; and second, this shall be followed by a "life" of *glory* throughout eternity. Then the Apostle added, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (v. 14), which is a confirmation and amplification of verse 13: none live a life of grace save those who are "led by the Spirit of God"—are inwardly controlled and outwardly governed by Him: for they only are "the sons of God."

Now, in verse 15, the Apostle both amplifies and confirms what he had said in verse 14: there he shows the reality of that relationship with God which our regeneration makes manifest—obedient subjection to Him as dear children; here he brings before us further proof of our Divine sonship—deliverance from a servile fear, the exercise of a filial confidence. Let us consider the negative first: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." By nature we were in "bondage" to sin, to Satan, to the world; yet they did not work in us a spirit of "fear," so they cannot be (as some have supposed) what the Apostle had reference to; rather is it what the Spirit's convicting us of sin wrought in us. When He applies the law to the conscience our complacency is shattered, our false peace is destroyed, and we are terrified at the thought of God's righteous wrath and the prospect of eternal punishment.

When a soul has received life and light from the Spirit of God, so that he perceives the infinite enormity and filthiness of sin, and the total depravity and corruption of every faculty of his soul and body, that spirit of *legality* which is in all men by nature, is at once stirred up and alarmed, so that the mind is possessed with secret doubts and suspicions of God's mercy in Christ to save; and thereby the soul is brought into a state of legal bondage and fear. When a soul is first awakened by the Holy Spirit, it is subject to a variety of fears; yet it does not follow from thence that *He* works those fears or is the Author of them: rather are they to be ascribed unto our own unbelief. When the Spirit is pleased to convict of sin and gives the conscience to feel the guilt of it, it is to show him his need of

Christ, and not to drive unto despair.

No doubt there is also a dispensational allusion in the passage we are now considering. During the Mosaic economy, believing Israelites were to a considerable extent under the spirit of legal bondage because the sacrifices and ablutions of the Levitical institutions could not take away sins. The precepts of the ceremonial law were so numerous, so various, so burdensome, that the Jews were kept in perpetual bondage. Hence, we find Peter referring to the same as “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). Much under the Old Testament dispensation tended to a legal spirit. But believers, under the Gospel, are favoured with a clearer, fuller, and more glorious display and revelation of God’s grace in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Evangel making known the design and sufficiency of His finished work, so that full provision is now made to deliver them from all servile fear.

Turning now to the positive side: believers have “received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father”: they have received that unspeakable Gift which attests and makes known to them their adoption by God. Before the foundation of the world God predestinated them “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph. 1:5). But more: the elect were not only predestinated *unto* the adoption of children—to actually and openly enjoy this inestimable favour in time—but this blessing was itself provided and bestowed upon them in the Everlasting Covenant of grace, in which they not only had promise of this relationship, but were given in that Covenant to Christ under that very character. Therefore does the Lord Jesus say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given Me” (Heb. 2:13).

It is to be carefully noted that God’s elect are spoken of as “children” *previous to* the Holy Spirit’s being sent into their hearts: “Because ye *are* sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). They are not, then, made children by the new birth. They were “children” before Christ died for them: “he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one *the children* of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:51, 52). They were not, then, made children by what Christ did for them. Yea, they were “children” before the Lord Jesus became incarnate: “Forasmuch then as *the children* are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb. 2:14). Thus it is a great mistake to confound adoption and regeneration: they are two distinct things; the latter being both the effect and evidence of the former. Adoption was by an act of God’s will in eternity; regeneration is by the work of His grace in time.

Had there been no adoption, there would be no regeneration: yet the former is not complete without the latter. By adoption the elect were put into *the relation* of children; by regeneration they are given *a nature* suited to that relation. So high is the honour of being taken into the family of God, and so wondrous is the privilege of having God for our Father, that some extraordinary benefit is needed by us to assure our hearts of the same. This we have when we receive the Spirit of adoption. For God to give us His Spirit is far more than if He had given us all the world, for the latter would be something *outside* Himself, whereas the former *is* Himself! The death of Christ on the cross was a demonstration of God’s love for His people, yet that was done without them; but in connection with what we are now considering “the love of God is shed abroad *in our hearts* by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

Wondrous and blessed fact that, God manifests His love to the members of His Church

in precisely the same way that He evidenced His love unto His Head when He became incarnate, namely, by the transcendent gift of His Spirit. The Spirit came upon Jesus Christ as the proof of God's love to Him and also as the visible demonstration of His Sonship. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and abode upon Him, and then the Father's voice was heard saying, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—compare John 3:34, 35. In fulfillment of Christ's prayer, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be *in them*" (John 17:26) the Spirit is given to His redeemed, to signify the sameness of the Father's love unto His Son and unto His sons. Thus, the inhabitation of the Spirit in the Christian is both the surest sign of God's fatherly love and the proof of his adoption.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

97. The Inferiority of Judaism 12:18, 19.

As there are certain parts of a country which offer less attraction than others unto tourists and sight-seers, so there are some portions of Scripture which are of less interest to most readers and writers. As there are some scenes in Nature which can be taken in at a glance while others invite a repeated survey, so there are verses in each Epistle which afford less scope than others unto the teacher. That is why almost every preacher has a sermon on certain favourite texts, whereas other verses are neglected by nearly all pulpits. But the expositor has not the same freedom to follow his inclinations as the textual sermonizer: unless he shirks his duty, he must go through a passage verse by verse, and clause by clause. Still more so is this the case with one who essays to write a commentary upon a whole book of the Bible: he is not free to pick and choose, nor yield to his personal preferences, but must give the same attention and enlargement to one part as to another.

The above reflections have occurred to the editor as he has pondered the verses which next claim our consideration in Hebrews 12. Their contents are not likely to make much appeal unto the ordinary reader, for there seems little in them which would be relished either by those who have an appetite for “strong meat” or by those preferring the “milk” of babes. Our passage neither sets forth any of the “doctrines of grace” nor presents any practical exhortation for the Christian life. Instead, it alludes to an historical incident which was chiefly of interest to the Jews, and multiplies details from the same which would be tedious unto the average church-goer of this untoward generation. Nevertheless, it is a part of *God’s Word*, and as it lies in our immediate path through this Epistle we shall not ignore or turn from it. As the Lord enables, we shall endeavour to give it the same attention and space as what has preceded it.

The passage upon which we are about to enter (which reaches from 12:18 to the end of the chapter) has been variously interpreted by different commentators. One class of more recent writers have, it seems to us, been far more anxious to read into it their own pet theory regarding the future, than to interpret these verses in accord with the theme of the Epistle in which they are found. It would indeed be strange for the Apostle to introduce here a reference to some future “millennium”: the more so in view of the fact that he has studiously avoided the use of the future tense—not the emphatic “ye *are* come” (v. 22) and “but *now*” (v. 26). If due attention be paid unto the main line of the Apostle’s argument in this treatise, then there should be no difficulty in arriving at a correct understanding—of the substance of it, at least—of this portion of it.

As we pointed out so frequently in the earlier articles of this series, the immediate and principal design of the Apostle in this Epistle was to prevail with the Hebrews in persuading them unto a perseverance in their profession of the Gospel, for therein they appear at that time to have been greatly shaken. Therefore does he warn them, again and again, of the various causes and occasions of backsliding. Principal among these were, first, an evil heart of unbelief, the sin which did so easily beset them. Second, an undue valuation of the excellency of Judaism and the Mosaic church-state. Third, wavering under the afflictions and persecutions which fidelity to the Gospel entailed. Fourth, prevalent lusts, such as profaneness and fornication. Each of which we have considered in the preceding sections.

The principal argument which the Apostle had urged unto their constancy in Christianity was the superlative excellency, glory, and benefit of the Gospel-state into which the Hebrews had been called. This he has accomplished and proved by setting forth the Person and office of its Author, His priesthood and sacrifice, with all the spiritual worship and privileges belonging thereto. Each of these he compared and contrasted with the things that corresponded unto the same during the Old Testament dispensation. Thereby he set over against each other the type and the antitype, the shadow and the substance, and by so doing made it unmistakably evident that the new economy was immeasurably superior to the old, that all the ordinances and institutions of the law were but prefigurations of those spiritual realities which are now revealed by the Gospel.

Having insisted so largely and so particularly on these things in the preceding chapters, and brought his arguments from them to a plain issue, he now recapitulates them as a whole. In the passage which is now to engage our attention, the Apostle presents a brief scheme of the two states or economies (designated as “testaments” or “covenants”), balancing them one against another, and thereby demonstrating the conclusive force of his central argument and the exhortations which he had based upon it, unto constancy and perseverance in the faith of the Gospel. It is no new argument which he here proceeds with, nor is it a special amplification of the warning pointed by the example of Esau; still less is it a departure from his great theme by a sudden excursus into the realm of eschatology. Instead, it is a forcible summary, under a new dress, of all he had previously advanced.

The central design, then, of our passage as a whole, was to present one more and final antithesis of Judaism and Christianity. The contrast here drawn is virtually parallel with the one instituted in Galatians 4 between Hagar and Sarah, the figure of two “mounts” being used instead of the two women. The great honour and chief privilege of the Judaical Church-state whereon all particular advantages did depend, was their coming to and station in Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law. It was there that Jehovah revealed Himself with all the insignia of His awe-inspiring majesty. It was there that they were taken into covenant with the Lord (Exo. 24), to be His particular people above all the world. It was there that Israel was formed into a national Church (Acts 7:38). It was there that they had committed unto them all the privileges of Divine worship. It is that very glory which the Jews boast of to this day, and whereon they rest in their rejection of the Gospel.

It was necessary, then, for the Apostle to make direct reference unto that upon which the unbelieving Hebrews based all their hopes, and to which they were appealing in their efforts to get their believing brethren to apostatise from Christ. His argument had neither been complete nor conclusive unless he could undermine their confidence in the foundational glory of Judaism, take off their hearts from unduly admiring, and show that it had been succeeded by that which “excelleth.” He therefore directs attention to those features in connection with the giving of the Law, which so far from being calculated to win the affections, inspired with dread and terror. He points out a number of items which by their very nature intimated that the Divine communications vouchsafed at Sinai were not the full and final unveiling of the Divine character, such as the souls of awakened sinners longed for.

Our introduction has been a somewhat lengthy one, though briefer than that of J. Owen’s, which we have closely followed in the last paragraphs; yet we deemed it necessary. The details of our present passage cannot be viewed in their true perspective until

they are rightly focused in the light of our Epistle as a whole. The *scope* of the passage must first be determined, before we are ready to examine its several members. This calls for time and real *study*, yet only as this preliminary work is properly executed will we be preserved from those errors which are inevitably fallen into when a passage is treated hurriedly and superficially. This is only another way of saying that the foundation must be well and securely laid, if it is to bear successfully the superstructure which is raised upon it. Alas that such foundation-labour is so little appreciated today.

“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire” (Heb. 12:18). The Apostle here returns to his central theme by an easy and natural transition. He had just been dehorting from backsliding, pointed by the solemn case of Esau. Now he urges unto constancy by appealing to the privileges they enjoyed. As Calvin well put it, “The higher the excellency of Christ’s kingdom than the dispensation of Moses, and the more glorious our calling than that of the ancient people, the more disgraceful and the less excusable is our ingratitude, unless we embrace in a becoming manner the great favour offered to us, and humbly adore the majesty of Christ which is here made evident. And then, as God does not present Himself to us clothed in terrors as He did formerly to the Jews, but lovingly and kindly invites us to Himself, so the sin of ingratitude will be thus doubled, except we willingly and in earnest respond to His gracious invitation.”

“For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched.” The principal design which the Apostle here had in hand was to set forth, in its most attractive form (see vv. 22-24), that evangelical state where-unto the Hebrews had been called and into which they had entered. This he first does *negatively*, by describing the Church-state under the Old Testament, from which they had been delivered. Thus, before the “Ye are come” of verse 22, he introduces this “For ye are not come.” Two things were thereby noted: that order or system to which their fathers belonged, but from which *they* had been freed by their responding to the Gospel call. They were no more concerned in all that dread and terror, and their consideration of that fact supplied a powerful motive to their perseverance in the Christian faith.

Freely granting that a great privilege was conferred on their fathers at Sinai, the Apostle observes “that it was done in such a way of dread and terror, as that sundry things are manifest therein: as, 1. That there was no evidence in all that was done of God’s being reconciled to them, in and by those things. The whole representation of Him was of an absolute Sovereign and severe Judge. Nothing declared Him as a Father, gracious and merciful. 2. There was no intimation of any condescension from the exact severity of what was required in the law or of any relief or pardon in case of transgression. 3. There was no promise of grace in a way of aid or assistance for the performance of what was required. Thunders, voices, earthquakes and fire gave no signification of these things. 4. The whole was hereby nothing but a glorious ministration of death and condemnation (as the Apostle speaks in 2 Cor. 3:7) whence the consciences of sinners were forced to subscribe to their own condemnation, as just and equal.

“5. God has here represented in all outward demonstrations of infinite holiness, justice, severity and terrible majesty on the one hand; and on the other, men in their lowest condition of sin, misery, guilt and death. If there be not therefore something else to interpose between God and men, somewhat to fill up the space between infinite severity and inexpressible

guilt, all this glorious preparation was nothing but a theatre set up for the pronouncing of judgment and the sentence of eternal condemnation against sinners. And on this consideration depends the force of the Apostle's argument; and the due apprehension and declaration of, is a better explanation of verses 18-21 than the opening of the particular expressions will amount to; yet they also must be explained.

"It is hence evident that the Israelites in the station of Sinai, did bear the person of sinners under the sentence of the law. There might be many of them justified in their own persons by faith in the promise; but as they stood and heard and received the law, they represented sinners under the sentence of it, not yet relieved by the Gospel. And this we may have respect to in our exposition, as that which is that final intention of the Apostle to declare, as is manifest from the description which he gives of the Gospel state, and of those that are interested therein" (J. Owen).

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched" (Heb. 12:18). It is both pathetic and amusing to read the various shifts made by some of the commentators to "harmonize" the opening words of our text with what is said in Exodus 19:12, "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, *or touch* the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." Some have pleaded that the little "*not* be touched" was inadvertently dropped by copyist of the Greek manuscript. Others insist our verse should be rendered "Ye are come to a mount not to be touched." But the only "discrepancy" here is in the understanding of the expositors. The Apostle was not making a quotation from Exodus, but rather describing, negatively, that *order of things* unto which the Gospel had brought the believing Hebrews. In so doing he shows the striking contrast between it and the order of things connected with the giving of the Law.

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched" (Heb. 12:18). The simple and evident meaning of which is, The Gospel has not brought you unto that which is material and visible, palpable and touchable by the physical senses, but unto what is spiritual and can only be apprehended by faith. A "mount" is a thing *of the earth*; whereas the glory of Christianity is entirely celestial. The passage which most clearly interprets this clause is found in our Lord's discourse with the woman at the well: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father....But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:21, 23). Judaism was the Church's kindergarten, in which its infantile members were instructed, mainly, through their bodily senses. Christianity has introduced a far superior order of things.

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," then, is a figurative way of saying that Christ has opened a way into something infinitely superior to a system which, as such, had nothing better than "a *worldly* sanctuary" and "*carnal* ordinances" (Heb. 9:1, 10). The Greek word for "come" in our text is that technical or religious term which had been used repeatedly by the Apostle in this Epistle to express a *sacred access* or coming to God in His worship: see 4:16, 7:25, 10:1—last clause "comers thereunto." Mount Sinai was a material thing, exposed to the outward senses, and was an emblem of the entire order of things connected with Judaism. As such, it was in complete contrast from that order of things brought in by Christ, which is wholly spiritual, invisible, and celestial. The one was addressed to the bodily senses; the other to the higher faculties of the soul. Spiritually speaking, Romanists and all other Ritualists are occupied with "the

mount that might be touched!”

“And that burned with fire.” In their literal acceptance those words allude to what transpired at Sinai. In Exodus 19:18 we read, “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire.” But it is with their figurative purport we are more concerned. In Scripture “fire” is the symbol of Divine wrath and judgment. As we are told in Deuteronomy 4:24, “The LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God,” and the “jealousy” of God is, His holy severity against sin, not to leave it unpunished. With respect unto the law which He there gave—for Deuteronomy 33:2 declares “from His right hand went a fiery law”—it signified its inexorable sternness and efficacy to destroy its transgressors. Thus, the “fire” denoted the awful majesty of God as an inflexible Judge, and the terror which His law strikes into the minds of its violators with expectation of fiery indignation.

This was the first thing which the people beheld when they came to Sinai: God as a “consuming fire” presented to their view! Thus it is in the experience of those whom God saves. For many years, it may be, they lived in a state of unconcern: they had no heart-affecting views of the majesty and authority of God, and no pride-withering apprehensions of the fearfulness of their guilt. But when the Spirit awakens them from the sleep of death, gives them to realise *Who it is* with whom they have to do, and whose anger burns against sin; when the Law is applied to their conscience, convicting them of their innumerable offences, their hearts are filled with dread and misery as they perceive their undone condition. There the law leaves them, and there they must be consumed, unless they obtain deliverance by Jesus Christ.

And that was exactly what, by Divine grace, these believing Hebrews *had* obtained. The Redeemer had “delivered them from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). They were now as secure in Him as Noah was in the ark. The fire of God’s wrath had spent itself in the Person of the Substitute. God was now reconciled to them, and henceforth they had an inalienable standing before Him—not as trembling criminals, but as accepted sons. To them the word was “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). No, as Christians, we have nothing more to do with the mount “that burned with fire,” but only with “the Throne of Grace.” Hallelujah! And that so many Christians are being robbed of their birthright. If Romanists and Ritualists are guilty of being occupied with “the mount that might be touched,” then those who are constantly presenting God before His people in His dread majesty—instead of as a loving Father—are taking them back to that mount “that burned with fire.”

“Nor unto blackness and darkness” (Heb. 12:18). Here again the literal allusion is unto the awe-inspiring phenomena which attended the giving of the law. There was “a thick cloud upon the mount . . . mount Sinai was altogether a smoke” (Exo. 19:16, 18). Different commentators have resorted to various conjectures in their efforts to “harmonize” the “blackness and darkness” with the “fire”: some suggesting the one was followed by the other after an interval of time, others supposing the “darkness” was over the camp and the “fire” at the summit of the mount. But such theorisings are worthless in the face of Deuteronomy 5:22-23, “The LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness . . . heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire).” The fact is this “fire” was *supernatural*: as that of Babylon’s furnace *burned not* while the three Hebrews

were in it (Dan. 3), this *glowed not* increasing the terror of its beholders because it emitted no light!

If the above explanation be deemed “far fetched,” we would appeal to the corroborating correspondency in the experience of those who have been saved. Was it not a fact that when we were shut up under guilt and terrified by the representation of God’s severity against sin, we looked in vain for anything in the Law which could yield relief? When the glory of God’s holiness shined into your conscience and His law was applied in convicting and condemning power, did you perceive His *merciful design* in the same? No, indeed; at that time, His gracious purpose was covered with “blackness,” and “darkness” filled your soul. You perceived not that the law was His instrument for flaying your self-righteous hopes (Rom. 7:11) and “a schoolmaster unto *Christ*” (Gal. 3:24). Your case appeared hopeless, and despite the fiery power of the law, you knew not how to “order your speech (before God) by reason of darkness” (Job 37:19).

“And tempest” (Heb. 12:18): under this term the Apostle comprises the thunderings, lightnings, the earthquake which were on and in mount Sinai (Exo. 19:16, 18), all of which symbolized the disquieting character of so much that marked the Mosaic economy—in contrast from the peace and assurance which the Gospel imparts to those who believingly appropriate it. The order here agrees with the experience of those whom God saves. First, there is an application of the “fiery law,” which burns and terrifies the conscience. Second, there is the blackness and darkness of despair which follows the discovery of our lost condition. Third, there is the agitation of mind and turmoil of heart in seeking help by self-efforts and finding none. The soul has no light and knows not what to do. The mind is in a tumult, for no escape from the law’s just curse seems possible. Not yet has Christ appeared to the distressed one.

“And the sound of a trumpet” (Heb. 12:19). This too, we believe, was a supernatural one, emitting ear-splitting tones, shrill and loud, designed to inspire both awe and fear. It signified the near approach of God. It was to summon the people before Him as their Lawgiver and Judge (Exo. 19:17). It was the outward sign of the promulgation of the Law, for immediately upon the sound of it, God spoke unto them. It was a pledge of the final judgment, when all flesh shall be summoned before God to answer the terms of His Law. Experimentally, it is the imperative summons of the Word for the soul to answer to God’s call. Those who neglect it, will have to answer for the whole when they receive the final summons at the last day. Those who answer it now are brought into God’s presence in fear and trembling, Who then reveals to them Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour.

“And the voice of words” (Heb. 12:19). This is the *seventh* and final detail which the Apostle here noticed. The “voice of words” was articulate and intelligible, in contrast from the dull roar of the thunder and the shrill tones of the trumpet. Those “words” were the Ten Commandments, written afterward on the two tables of stone: see Deuteronomy 5:22 and the preceding verses. Those “words” were uttered by the voice of the Lord God Almighty (Exo. 20:1), concerning which we are told, “The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty; the voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars” (Psa. 29:4, 5), etc. It was God declaring unto His Church the eternal establishment of His Law, that no alteration should be made in its commands or penalties, but that all must be fulfilled.

“Which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more” (Heb. 12:19). This reveals the terror-stricken state of those who were en-

camped before Sinai. There was that on every side which inspired awe and dread: Nature itself convulsed and supernatural phenomena attending the same. This was intended to show the people that God had ascended His awful tribunal as a strict Judge. But that which filled them with intolerable consternation was the voice of God Himself speaking immediately to them. It was not that they refused to hear Him, but that they desired Him to speak to them through Moses, the typical Mediator. Experimentally, the sinner is overwhelmed when the voice of God in the Law comes in power to his conscience.—
A.W.P.

The Life of David.

49. *His Servants Insulted.*

The next incident recorded in the life of David needs to be pondered from more than one viewpoint. This is intimated to us by the fact that in 2 Samuel 10 it is given immediately after the account of the grace which he showed unto Mephibosheth, whereas in 1 Chronicles 19 it is placed right after a parallel account of what is mentioned in 2 Samuel 8. Yet though the context of 2 Samuel 10 and 1 Chronicles 19 is so different, each of them opens with *the same* words: "And ('Now') it came to pass after this." Thereby it is suggested that in as much as this incident is described at length in almost identical language in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, it possesses a *twofold* significance; because it is given different settings, that it requires to be considered *separately* its relation to each one. We shall endeavour, then, to follow up this clear viewing the subject first as it comes immediately after what was before us in last month's article.

The king of the Ammonites having died, David purposed to express a neighbourly and friendly sympathy for his son. Accordingly, he sent some of his servants "to comfort him." But instead of this kindly overture meeting with appreciation, it was regarded with distrustful suspicion. The princes of the Ammonites imagined that David had evil designs against the city, and that the men who had ostensibly come to console their bereaved master, were but spies, seeking information with a view to their overthrowing. Whereupon Hanun the king grievously insulted his visitors and put them to an open shame. His actions was a declaration of war against David, and so the king of Israel regarded it. The remainder of the chapter records the fighting which their insult gave rise to. But it is the typical and spiritual meaning of it which we are desirous of being occupied with. Nor should this be difficult to arrive at.

The link of connection between 2 Samuel 9 and 10 is obvious on the surface: the former opens with "and David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may *show him kindness* for Jonathan's sake?" The latter opens with, "And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. Then said David, *I will show kindness* unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me." But with the exception of the words we have just italicized, everything else is in sharp and solemn contrast. In 2 Samuel 9 David shows kindness to an Israelite; in 2 Samuel 10 he shows kindness to an Ammonite. In the former, it was to the descendant of his arch-enemy; in the latter it was to the son of one who had befriended him. In the one, his gracious overtures were deeply appreciated; in the other, they were maliciously resented.

Now as we showed at length in our two articles upon 2 Samuel 9, that chapter gives us a most lovely typical picture of the free and sovereign grace of God upon His elect. What, then, is it which is distinctively prefigured here in 2 Samuel 10? In seeking the answer to this question, as we attend closely to each word used in the first five verses of it, we notice a further contrast throughout 2 Samuel 9. It is David himself who is prominent; whereas in 2 Samuel 10 it is his ambassadors who occupy the centre of the stage. In verses 2-4 the *servants* of David are referred to no less than four times; whereas his servants are not mentioned once in the preceding chapter. Here, then, is the key to our incident; typically, it is the ambassadors of the Son of David who are in view.

"But after that the kindness and pity (margin) of God our Saviour toward *man* appeared" (Titus 3:4). And wherein is that "kindness and pity of God our Saviour" revealed?

In the Gospel. And to whom is His Gospel to be preached? To “every creature” (Mark 16:15). There are some of our readers—preachers—who need reminding of this. Christ has commissioned His servants to preach the Gospel, to make known His “kindness and pity,” not only to those who give evidence of having been awakened by the Holy Spirit, but also to the unregenerate. There is something seriously wrong with any creed or theological system which cramps and fetters the preacher in his free proclamation of the Gospel. They who imagine that the Gospel is only for the elect, err grievously. In order to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5) one does not have to embrace the errors of Arminians and believe either in a general redemption or in the free-will of fallen man.

In the parable of the Sower, Christ makes it very clear that *He* sowed the Seed upon *all* parts of the field, and not on the “good ground” only. In the closing parable of Matthew 13, He represents the Gospel “net” as gathering in fish of all kinds, “bad” as well as “good.” In the parable of the Great Supper, the servant is sent forth to say, “Come; for all things are now ready,” and this, even unto those who “all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:17, 18). In the closing section of the parable of the two sons, Christ declared concerning the *elder* brother (the self-righteous, hard-hearted Pharisee) “therefore came his father *out*, and *entreated* him” (Luke 15:28). O my dear brethren in the ministry, seek grace and wisdom to make *your* ministry square with that of Christ’s! HE did not allow the eternal decrees of God to tie His hands or muzzle His mouth.

It was the same with those that immediately succeeded Christ. It was to a *promiscuous* audience (Acts 3:9), to those who were unbelievers (v. 17), that Peter said, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19)! “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5): we are not told that it was to a small and picked company, who had been quickened by the Spirit, but to “the *city of Samaria*” in general. And what was the theme of his preaching? *Christ!*—as an all-sufficient Saviour for the very chief of sinners. The Apostle Paul was not cramped in his message: “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21): the impenitent he called upon *to* repent; and the unbelieving, he bade believe on the Saviour. Are not these very things recorded for *our* learning, as a precedent for us to follow!

That which we have sought to emphasise in the last three paragraphs receives striking illustration and confirmation in the incident we are here considering. If 2 Samuel 9 supplies a blessed representation of the kindness of God shown toward one of His elect, our present chapter gives an equally clear type of the overtures of the Lord’s kindness extended unto the non-elect. Here is the reason why the two incidents are placed side by side: the one *supplements* the other. If in the last chapter we beheld the “kindness” of David manifested unto one with whom he was in covenant relationship, in the chapter now before us we see his “kindness” being shown to one who was outside the commonwealth of Israel, to one who was a heathen. And it is in *that* particular fact lies the typical beauty of our passage, and the great evangelical lesson which we need to learn from it.

“And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. *Then* said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash” (2 Sam 10:1, 2). It is only as we attend closely unto each detail here that we can appreciate the accuracy of our typical picture. *Death* provided the dark background for it. It was the decease of Nahash which supplied the opportunity for David to manifest the kindness of his heart! Once our minds are definitely focused on this item,

what anointed eye can fail to perceive its spiritual signification? No "comfort" was needed by man in his unfallen state; the Gospel had been entirely unsuited to Adam during the brief season that he remained in unclouded communion with his Maker. But the entrance of sin entirely altered the case.

Adam's transgression cast a pall of blackness over the fair scene of Eden; nor was its darkness in anywise relieved till the light of the Gospel (Gen. 3:15) broke in on it. It is *sin* which exhibited the need for a Saviour; it was the spiritual *death* into which the Fall plunged the whole family, which made evident the glad tidings of life in Christ. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. And it was where sin abounded that grace did much more abound. The sin of men brought out the marvellous grace that was in the heart of God. The Lord had by no means acted unjustly had He eternally doomed the whole human race when their father and federal head apostatised from Him. But He did not do so: in wrath He "remembered mercy."

Here, then, is the first line in our typical picture: *death* provides it a suitable background. The more the awfulness be felt of that spiritual death which it adumbrated, the more will we appreciate the blessedness of that wondrous "comfort" which Divine mercy hath provided. The terrible fall which brought in spiritual death was of such an aggravated nature that it left all whom Adam represented without excuse. The nature of our spiritual death is described in Ephesians 4:18, "Having the understanding darkened, being *alienated from the life of God* through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." It has wrought in us a carnal mind which "is enmity" against God (Rom. 8:7). Why, then, should the Lord have any regard for us? Why should He concern Himself about those who prefer darkness to light, evil to good, death to life? Had He totally abandoned us to our ruin and wretchedness, that had been all we deserved.

"Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun" (2 Sam. 10:2). Here is the second line in our typical picture, pointing us unto the One Who is the Author of all that is good, gentle, sympathetic and unselfish in His creatures and is Himself "of great kindness" (Jonah 4:2). O what kindness did the Lord show when He left Heaven's glory and came down to this sin-cursed earth! What kindness for the Lord to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and minister unto others rather than be ministered unto. What compassion He exhibited when in the presence of want, suffering and misery; what kindness when He "healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 4:23). Thus did the kindness of David shadow forth the infinitely greater kindness of his Son and Lord.

"And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants" (2 Sam. 10:2). This gives the third line in our typical picture. During the days of His flesh, Christ announced, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). Since His ascension, He has continued this gracious ministry through His ambassadors and servants: 2 Corinthians 5:20; Mark 16:20. O what a message of "comfort" have Christ's ministers for every poor sinner that will give ear to their message which makes known a way of escape from the wrath to come, that tells of how the forgiveness of sins may be obtained; how peace, joy, everlasting life and bliss may become our portion.

The fourth line in our picture is given in the next words of 2 Samuel 10:2, "And the

servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon.” If those words be carefully weighed by those of us who may be inclined toward hyper-Calvinism—the term is justly warranted, for his own writings make it very clear that Calvin himself pressed the requirements of the Gospel (repentance and faith) upon all and sundry. These servants of David were not like Jonah, who demurred when called upon to preach unto the Ninevites. No, they made no objection against going *outside* the bounds of God’s covenant people, and journeying to a place of idolaters. As such, they prefigured the obedient servants of the Son of David, whose commission is “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among *all nations*” (Luke 24:47).

“And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?” (2 Sam. 10:3). Is any interpreter required here? Is not this next line in our picture so clear that it speaks for itself! The common experience of the Christian evangelist is identical in substance with that which befell the servants of David. Though his intentions are of the best, they are interpreted as being evil. Though he comes with a message of true “comfort,” the poor blinded dupes of Satan regard him as a “kill-joy.” Though his only object be to make known the “kindness” of his royal Master, the vast majority of those to whom he comes, resent his mission. Alas, that now, in many circles of professing Christians, the true servant of Christ is not wanted, but rather looked upon with suspicion, as a “self-seeker” or “disturber of the peace.”

“Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away” (v. 4). This line in our picture is also so obvious that it needs little comment from us. It foreshadowed the treatment which the Son of David’s servants would receive from those whose welfare they sought. Those servants were mocked and insulted: not wanted, they were “sent away” in shame. Men today have other ways of insulting and disgracing the ministers of the Gospel beside the methods used by those Ammonites; but they are just as effective. Wrongful charges are made against them, false reports are spread, so that they are excluded from many places.

“When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return” (v. 5). Here is the sequel to the unkind treatment they had met with: the servants of David are called upon *to retire from the public eye*. They have to spend a season—one of some months at least—in seclusion, cut off from fellowship. One wonders how many today are, like the writer, “tarrying at Jericho!” Not a few “teachers” are now “removed into a corner” (Isa. 30:20), for the time hath come “when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). Concerning Israel of old we read, “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)—is this soon to be repeated in the history of Christendom?

The final line in our typical picture—occupying the remainder of 2 Samuel 10—is a very solemn one: *David avenged his insulted servants*. He regarded the ignominy heaped on them as a direct affront upon himself. Thus it is in the antitype. Concerning His ministers, Christ has said, “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth *you* despiseth *Me*” (Luke 10:16). He regards the ill-usage of *them* as a declaration of war against

against *Himself*. Thus He has said, "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm" (Psa. 105:15), and He will not be disobeyed with impugny. Solemn is it to look forward to the time when those who have despised, slandered, insulted, and cast out His servants, will yet have to answer to the Son of David Himself.

Many and important are the lessons for the servants of Christ in this incident. Chief among them are 1. They are to obediently carry out the orders of their royal Master, no matter how unreasonable they may appear or how distasteful they be unto themselves. 2. They must be prepared for their best intentions and kindest actions to expose them unto the basest suspicions. They must expect ingratitude, contempt, and abuse; but sufficient for the servant to be as his Lord. 3. These things must not discourage them, for eventually, Christ Himself will plead their cause! 4. They must not attempt to avenge themselves, but rather follow the example left by their Master: 1 Peter 2:23. 5. If now, for a season, they are required to "tarry at Jericho," they may take comfort from the fact that it is their Lord who has ordered that isolated seclusion.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

4. *Abrahamic.*

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). In this simple narrative we have *the original promise* made to Abraham that the Messiah should come of his family. This Divine pledge was made to the patriarch when he was only a little short of seventy-five years of age. It was given at a point in human history half way between the creation of the first Adam and the incarnation of the last Adam: that is, two thousand years after the entrance of sin into the world, and two thousand years before the advent of the Saviour.

The first great purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant was to make known *the stock* from which the Messiah was to spring. This was the most prominent aspect of Truth revealed in it: the appearing of the promised Seed in Abraham’s own line. The primary intimation of this was given to the patriarch when God first appeared to him: “in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Two things are to be noted in the language there used. First, the “all families *of the earth* be blessed” obviously looks back to Genesis 3:15, for the “*all families*” was sufficiently definite to announce the international scope of the blessing. It is indeed very striking to observe that in Genesis 12:3 God did not use the word “*eretz*” (as in Gen. 1:1; 14:19; 18:25, etc.), but “*adamah*” as in Genesis 3:17. The manifest link between “*Cursed is the ground*” (Gen. 3:17) had been made more evident had Genesis 12:3 been rendered “in thee all families of the *ground* be *blessed*”—the Curse was to be removed by Christ!

Second, the terms of this Messianic intimation were quite *general* in their character: later, this original promise was repeated in more specific form: the “*in thee* shall all the families of the ground be blessed” being defined as “*in thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” This illustrates an important principle which may be discerned throughout the Divine revelation, namely, that of progressive unfolding: “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). This is evident here by a comparison of the far-reaching promises made to Abraham with the prophecies of Noah concerning his three sons. Jehovah was the God of Shem, yet Japheth should dwell in his tents (Gen. 9:26, 27); now He becomes known as “the God of Abraham,” but *all families* of the ground should be blessed in him and his seed. What a striking advance was here made in the Divine plan, by revealing the breadth of its meaning and the explicitness of its purpose!

“By his call Abraham was raised to a very singular pre-eminence and constituted in a manner the root and centre of the world’s future history, as concerned the attainment of real blessing. Still, even in that respect, not exclusively. The blessing was to come chiefly to Abraham, and through him; but, as already indicated in the prophecy on Shem, others were to stand, though in a subordinate rank, on the same line—since those also were to be blessed who blessed him; that is, who held substantially the same faith, and occupied the same friendly relation to God. The cases of such persons in the patriarch’s own day, as his kinsman Lot, who was not formally admitted into Abraham’s covenant, and still more of Melchizedek, who was not even of Abraham’s line and yet individually stood in

some sense higher than Abraham himself, clearly showed, and were no doubt partly raised up for the purpose of showing that there was nothing arbitrary in Abraham's position, and that the ground he occupied was to a certain extent common to believers generally.

"The peculiar honour conceded to him was that the great trunk of blessing was to be of him, while only some isolated twigs or scattered branches were to be found elsewhere; and even these could only be found by persons coming, in a manner, to make common cause with him. In regard to himself, however, the large dowry of good conveyed to him in the Divine promise could manifestly not be realised through him personally. There could at the most be but a beginning made in his own experience and history: and the widening of the circle of blessing to other kindreds and regions, till it reached to the most distant families of the earth, must necessarily be affected by means of those who were to spring from him. Hence the original word of promise, 'In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,' was afterwards changed into 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'" (P. Fairbairn).

It needs pointing out, though, that *each* of those expressions had its own specific significance and importance, and that they must be conjoined so as to bring out the full design of God in the calling of Abraham. The promised blessing was to be wrought out in its widest sense not by Abraham individually and immediately, but through him mediately, by means of the "seed" that should be given to him. This clearly implied that that "seed" must possess far higher qualities than any to be found in Abraham himself, since blessing from it would flow out so widely; yea, it only thinly veiled the truth that there should be a wondrous commingling of the Divine with the human. Christ, then, as the essential kernel of the promise and the Seed of Abraham, rather, than Abraham himself, was to have the honour of blessing all nations.

But what we have just called attention to by no means evacuates the force of the original "*in thee* shall all families of the ground be blessed," for by so definitely connecting the good with Abraham himself as well as with his "seed," the organic connection was marked between the one and the other. "The blessing to be brought to the world through his line had even in his time a present though small realisation—precisely as the kingdom of Christ had its commencement in that of David, and the one ultimately merged into the other. And so, in Abraham as the living root of all that was to follow, the whole and every part may be said to take its rise" (P. Fairbairn). Not only was Christ after the flesh "the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1), but every believer in Christ is of Abraham's "seed" (Gal. 3:29); and the entire company of the redeemed shall have their place and portion "with Abraham" in the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11).

Other promises followed, such as "unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7), "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7) etc., which Lord willing, we shall consider later. That which immediately concerns us is the meaning of the term "seed" in these passages. The Scripture which throws the most light thereon is Galatians 3:16, 17: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Yet strange to say, this passage has occasioned the commentators much trouble, no two of them agreeing in its interpretation. It is commonly regarded as one of the most ab-

struse passages in all the Pauline Epistles.

Matthew Henry says, "The covenant is made with Abraham and his Seed. And he (the Apostle) gives us a very surprising exposition of that but he attempts no detailed interpretation at all. J.N. Darby seeks to undo the knot by changing the Apostle's "promises" to "the promise," restricting the reference unto Genesis 22. Yet not only is the Greek in the plural number, but such an idea is plainly refuted by the "four hundred and thirty years after," which necessarily carries us back to Genesis 12. Albert Barnes discusses at great length what he terms "the perplexities of this very difficult passage of Scripture." But as usual, the commentators have created their own difficulties: partly by failing to take into full account the immediate context, and partly through a slavish adherence to "the letter," there is missing the "spirit" of the verse.

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (Gal. 3:16). Abraham was the "father" of a twofold "seed," a natural and a spiritual; and if we attend unto the context here, there is not the slightest difficulty in determining *which* of them the Holy Spirit has in view. In verse 6 He had said, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness"; from which the conclusion is drawn, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (v. 7). What could be plainer than that? They which are "of faith," genuine believers are "the *children* of Abraham": that is, his *spiritual* children—he being their "father" as the pattern to which they are conformed. In other words—sinners today are justified by God in precisely the same way as Abraham was—by faith.

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:8, 9). The same truth is here re-affirmed. In view of God's purpose to justify Gentiles by faith, He proclaimed that Gospel to Abraham himself, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Let it be carefully noted that the Holy Spirit here quotes from Genesis 12, and *not* from Genesis 22! The same conclusion is again drawn: believers receive the identical spiritual blessing that Abraham did, namely, the righteousness of Christ imputed to their account, so that they now measure up to every requirement of the law. And that, because "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13); this having opened the way "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (v. 14).

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). But in the case before us we have far more than "a man's covenant"—we have a *Divine* "covenant," for God solemnly ratified His promises to Abraham by covenant. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" (v. 16). Now in the light of "the children of Abraham" (v. 7), "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 9), and "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (v. 14), "to Abraham and his seed" *must* mean "to Abraham and his *spiritual* seed were the promises made." Collateral proof of this is supplied by Romans 4:16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all," for it is only *all* of his *spiritual* "seed" who are assured of the blessings promised.

“He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). This is the clause which many have found so perplexing. They have pointed out that, both in the Old Testament and the New, the term “seed” often refers to descendants *without* limitation, just as the word “posterity” does with us. Furthermore, it is a fact, which a use of the concordance will amply confirm, that this term “seed” is *never* use in the plural at all to denote a posterity, the singular from being constantly employed for that purpose; indeed the plural form of the word never occurs except here in Galatians 3:16. This presents a problem for which no literalist can supply any satisfactory solution, which plainly intimates that it was not with the surface-meaning of the term the Apostle was here treating.

“The force of his reasoning here depends not on the mere dictionary *word* ‘seed,’ but upon the great scriptural *idea* which, more and more clearly in Old Testament revelation, becomes manifested through that word—the idea of an individual person, who should sum up in Himself the covenant people as well as (for them) the covenant blessings, that is, the promised Messiah, *Christ*” (James MacGregor, on Galatians, 1879). This is the only writer we are acquainted with who has indicated the direction in which we must look for the true explanation of the Apostle’s terms, namely, not in their merely literal signification, but in the spiritual concept which they embodied—just as the term “Christ” literally signifies “anointed,” but is employed as the special title of the Saviour, and is given to Him not as a private but public Person, including both the Head and members of the Church (1 Cor. 12:12).

“He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Abraham had two entirely different “seeds,” one by humble procreation, the other by Divine regeneration. But the promises were not made to both his seeds, but to one of them only, namely, the spiritual, the *mystical* “Christ”—the Redeemer and all who are legally and vitally united to Him. Thus the antithesis drawn by the Apostle is between the *unity* of the “seed” in contrast from the *diversity* of the “seeds.” This has been strikingly shadowed forth on the earth plane. Abraham had two sons, but one of them, Ishmael, was excluded from the highest privileges: “In *Isaac* shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12). But those words did not signify, All the descendants of Isaac are destined unto heavenly bliss; rather do they affirm that it was from Isaac the promised Messiah, would, according to the flesh, descend.

Later, the line of Messiah’s descent was more definitely restricted, for of Isaac’s two sons Esau was rejected, and Jacob was chosen as the progenitor of Christ. Out of Jacob’s twelve sons Judah was selected as the tribe from which the promised Seed should issue. Out of all the thousands of Judah the family of Jesse was the one honoured to give birth to the Saviour (Isa. 11:1). Of Jesse’s eight sons (1 Sam. 16:10, 11) David was appointed to be the father of the Messiah. Thus we may see that as time went on the channel through which Abraham’s “Seed” should issue was more definitely narrowed down and defined, and therein and thereby God gradually made it known *how* His original promises to Abraham were to receive their fulfillment. The *limitation* of these promises was evidenced by the rejection of Ishmael, and then of Esau, which clearly intimated that *all* of Abraham’s descendants were *not* included therein; until, ultimately, it was seen that their *fulfillment* was received in Christ Himself and those united to Him.

Had the promises of God to Abraham embraced both branches of his family, including Ishmael as well as Isaac, then some other term than “seed” had been used. But God so

ordered that so different were the circumstances of the births and future lives, so diverse were the prophecies respecting them, and so utterly dissimilar were the two races that sprang from them, that in Scripture the descendants of Ishmael ceased to be spoken of as the posterity of Abraham. And therein God adumbrated the wide gulf which separated the *natural* descendents of Abraham (the Jews) from his *spiritual* children (Christians), and has thereby rendered excuseless our confounding the one with the other when looking for *fulfillment* of the promises. The promises were *limited* originally, and that limitation was evidenced more clearly by successive revelations until it was shown that none but Christ (and those united to Him) were included: "And to thy Seed, which is *Christ*" (mystical)!!

"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). To sum up. The promises of God were never made to all the descendants of Abraham, like so many different kinds of "seed," but were limited to the *spiritual* line, that is, to "Christ" *mystical*. Hence the *unbelieving* descendants of *Jacob* were as much excluded from those promises as were the posterity of Ishmael and Esau. Contrariwise, believing Gentiles, one with Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, were as truly embraced by them as was Isaac and Jacob and all the godly Israelites.—A.W.P.

Union and Communion.

5. *Vital.*

In last month's article it was shown God established a legal or federal union between the Redeemer and those who were to be redeemed by Him, so that He became answerable for them to the Divine justice. But something more was necessary in order to *their actual enjoyment* of the benefits of Christ's representation. God not only determined that His Son should sustain the character of their Surety, but also that a vital and spiritual relation should take place between them, through which there should be *conveyed to them* the benefits of His purchase. God ordained that as Christ and the Church were one in the law, so also they should be one experimentally: that not only should His righteousness be imputed to His members, but that His very life should also be imparted to them.

Though the elect were federally united to Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, yet until they are regenerated they are personally and experimentally *far from* God and Christ, so far as their actual state is concerned. This is abundantly clear from, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . that at that time ye were *without Christ*, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:11, 12). But at the new birth, Christ unites them to Himself in a vital way: this He does by sending His Spirit to take possession of them and communicate to them a principle of spiritual life, namely, His *own* life, whereby they are made *living* members of His Body, the Church. Previously we were "in Christ" mystically (Eph. 1:4) and representatively (1 Cor. 15:22), now we are "in Christ" vitally (2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2; Rom. 16:7).

As we were not the actual possessors of Adam's guilt until we were conceived by our mothers and thereby united to him by carnal generation, neither are we the actual possessors of Christ's merits until we are quickened by His Spirit and thereby united to Him by regeneration. While there was a legal union between Adam and us in Eden, yet not until we are born into this world do we enter into personal communion with what his conduct entailed. In like manner, though there was a federal union between Christ and us when He served as our Sponsor, yet not until we are born again do we begin to enjoy that which the discharge of His Surety-engagement obtained for us. Though there was a mystical and federal union between Christ and His people, not until their regeneration can they have any *communion* with Him.

The human race was inseparably linked to Adam in a *double* way—federally and naturally, as he was both the legal representative and father of his posterity. So too the elect are related to Christ in a double way—federally and vitally, as He is both their legal Representative and their spiritual Quickener: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). Those whom Adam represented (the first "many") were "made sinners" judicially the moment he fell, but they were only "made sinners" experimentally when they were "shapen in iniquity" (Psa. 51:5). Those whom Christ represented (the second "many," which is *not* co-extensive with the first) were "made righteous" judicially when He rose again from the dead, but they are only "made righteous" experimentally when they are born again and believe.

This is only another way of saying that Christ's *Headship* is of a twofold character: He is unto His mystical Body both a Head of government and a Head of influence. The term "head" has a twofold extension in our common speech: it is that by which we name

the highest part of our physical organism, and it is also that by which we describe the chief ruler, be he over a family, a corporation, or a nation. Such is its significance as applied to Christ: He is both the Life and the Lord of His people. Remarkably has God caused this to be adumbrated in the natural realm: sever the head from the physical organism, and all its members are at once reduced to a state of lifelessness. Likewise, if the brain were removed, the members become incapable of action—they are regulated and dominated by the mind.

In the natural body the head is the seat of sensation, and from it feelings and motions are communicated to all of its members by means of the nerves which have their origin in the brain. Here again the natural supplies an object-lesson of the spiritual. It is from Christ, the Head, there flows that life and grace by which the members of His mystical Body are enabled to perform the various functions of the Christian life. “May grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: *from whom* the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15, 16). It is from the Head there proceeds that which causes “the effectual working in the measure of every part” of His Body.

The same blessed truth is set before us again in, “And not holding the Head, *from which* all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). Here the Apostle was setting forth the evil tendency of one of the errors of Gnosticism, which now occupies a prominent place in the vile system of Romanism. Under the pretense of honouring Christ and abasing man, the Gnostic taught that He was so far above us in the scale of being that access could only be obtained to Him via the angels (v. 18). In like manner, Romanism introduces various mediators between Christ and the sinner. But this is failing to hold fast the doctrine of the Head. It is only by *immediate* union and communion with Christ Himself that His members are nourished and strengthened.

Christ, then, is not only the Head of authority, the Lord and Ruler of His Church, but He is also the Head of influence—its Quickener and Nourisher. In God’s appointed time, the Lord Jesus sends down the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people when they are dead in trespasses and sins, imparting spiritual life to their souls, and thus making them one with Himself in a *vital* way; and this He does by virtue of the prior mystical and federal union existing between them. It is our *eternal* union with, interest in, and relation to the Person of Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, which is the foundation of the Spirit’s work in our souls during the time-state. It is by communicating His own life into the members of His Body, the Church, that their mystical and legal union with Him is then made real and actual to them in their own experience.

As Adam is the root of generation, so Christ is the root of regeneration; note “His seed” and “the travail of His soul” in Isaiah 53:10, 11. If we had not been in Adam by Divine creation, we would not have been produced from him by generation; and had we not been given a super-creation being in Christ by Divine election, we had never been manifested in Him by regeneration. Had there been no *oneness with* Christ, there could be no *life from* Him; and if no life, then no justification, salvation, or glorification. And in order to our having life from Christ, we must receive His Spirit; for as our physical bodies are lifeless without the natural spirit (James 2:26), so the soul is spiritually dead without the Spirit of God. At regeneration the Holy Spirit becomes to the soul—though in a

far more excellent manner—what the soul is to the body with respect to its animal and rational life.

The vital union which is effected between Christ and His people is a work of God by which His elect are made spiritually one with their Head, for the same Spirit which indwells Him now takes up His abode within them. Herein we may perceive how each Person in the Holy Trinity is distinctively honoured, and endeared unto us. God the Father gave us a mystical union to Christ when He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. God the Son gave us a legal union to Himself when He took upon Him the office of Surety. And God the Spirit gives us a vital union to Christ by imparting to us His life and making us living members of His Church. It is only by means of this third union that the first and second are made manifest to us: “*Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit*” (1 John 4:13).

This union has also been variously designated by different writers. It has been called the “new-creation” union, because it is effected by our being born again. It has been called the “influential” union, because only through it do we receive the virtues of the mystical and federal unions. It has been called the “manifestive” union, because by it is revealed to us our eternal oneness with Christ. We have called it the “vital” union because it is that which gives us a living relation with Christ. This it is which capacitates the Christian to know Christ, to receive Him, to have communion with Him, to live upon and enjoy Him. The Spirit unites us to Christ at the very first moment the “good work” of God is “begun” (Phil. 1:6) in the heart. Then it is that we are “delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1:13), so that we are brought into open and actual fellowship with Him.

Then also it is that we are “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). It was Christ’s work *for* us which secured our *title* to the heavenly inheritance, but it is the Spirit’s work *in* us which supplies the *fitness* or capacity to enjoy the same. This is confirmed by what we read in 2 Corinthians 5:5: “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” The context here is also speaking of the heavenly inheritance of the saints, when “mortality shall be swallowed up of life.” And “for” that inheritance (the “selfsame thing”) God hath “wrought us” or fashioned and fitted us, for we are “His workmanship created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10). In addition to the *evidence* which His work in our souls gives us, that we are vessels of mercy “prepared unto glory,” the Spirit Himself indwells us as an *earnest* or guaranty of our future bliss.

Christ has a threefold union with the Church, and the Church has a threefold union with Him. First, He had a mystical union, when God elected Him to be the Head of His Church. Second, He had a legal union, when He agreed to serve as our Representative and Sponsor. Third, this began to be *openly effected* when He became incarnate, entering into a natural union with us by being made flesh. In like manner, our mystical and federal union with Christ becomes manifest and efficacious when we are vitally joined to Him by the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The entrance of Christ into our nature capacitated Him to discharge His office-work of Surety, and fitted Him to be a merciful High Priest who could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The communication of Christ’s nature unto us qualifies us for communion with Him and fits unto the discharge of our Christian duties “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17).

As in our natural bodies, the members receive life (the animal spirits) from their head,

so in the mystical Body of Christ the members receive the life-giving Spirit from their Head. This, we believe, is the meaning of John 1:16, "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." What is signified *here* by Christ's "fullness?" Let it be noted that in John 1:16 Christ is not presented absolutely as the second Person in the Godhead, but as incarnate (v. 14), as the God-man Mediator, as the next verse shows. What then, was His "fullness" as Mediator, *furnishing Him* for the discharge of that office? Was it not His being "anointed with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38)? Is not the key to this word "fullness" in John 1:16 found in John 3:34, "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him"?—Christ as God-man was capacitated to receive the Spirit *without* "measure," to receive Him in all His fullness.

Therefore it is that Christ is represented as "He that *hath* the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 3:1), that is, the Spirit in His plenitude or fullness—cf. that sevenfold reference to the Spirit as given in Isaiah 11:1, 2! Thus Christ's *Mediatorial* "fullness" is the Holy Spirit indwelling Him *without* "measure." But let it be observed that Christ received the Spirit not for Himself alone, but also for and in order to communicate Him to His people. This is clear from Acts 2:33, "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this (at Pentecost), which ye now see and hear." Thus "out of (Greek) His fullness have all we received" signifies that Christ has communicated to us the same Spirit He received—called "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9) and "the Spirit of His Son" (Gal 4:6). A beautiful illustration of this is found in John 20:22, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, *Receive ye* the Holy Spirit."

Perhaps a word should be given upon the last clause of John 1:16, for we have never seen any interpretation of it which quite satisfied us: "and grace for grace." Just as the same life which is in the vine is in each of its branches producing "after its *own* kind," so the same "grace" (the same in nature, though not in degree) which the Spirit produced in Christ (*see* Luke 2:40 and 52!) He reproduces in His people. Was the lovely "fruit" of Galatians 5:22, 23 found in it *fullness* in Christ?—then the Spirit works the same in us *in measure*. "Grace for grace," then, means grace *answerable to* grace: the same spiritual excellency which abides in the Head, is communicated to the members of His Body; and thus are they being "conformed" unto His "image."

"The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). It is as such that He sends forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His own. "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ* our Saviour" (Titus 3:5, 6). "But ye have an Unction from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20): the "Unction" (the Greek word for which is rendered "anointing" in 2 Cor. 1:21 and 1 John 2:27) is the Holy Spirit and He comes to us from "the Holy One," that is, Christ (Psa. 16:10, Mark 1:24). A blessed type of this is seen in Psalm 133:2, "The precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." Here we behold the high priest of Israel anointed unto his holy office, and the "precious ointment"—emblem of the Holy Spirit—proceeding from his head to that part of his vestments which touched the earth!

"There is one Body, and one Spirit" (Eph. 4:4) which animates it: "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). As the soul and body of man are so united as to form one entire person, so God's elect and their Head are

so united as to form one mystical and spiritual Body, the Church. Just as the human soul gives a living union between the most widely separated members—the head and the feet—so the Divine Spirit livingly unites together the Head in Heaven and His members on earth. “If a man were never so tall that his head should reach the stars, yet having but one soul, he would be but one man still. Though Christ in His nature be exceedingly distanced from us, yet there being but one and the selfsame Spirit in Him and in us, we are one mystical Christ” (John Owen).

The distance between Christ in Heaven and believers on earth is no obstacle to their vital union, for being God, the Spirit is *Omni-present*, and therefore does He indwell both Head and members. A very striking proof of the Spirit’s being the living bond of union between Christ and the Church is found in Romans 8:11: “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall *also* quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit* that dwelleth in you.” The saints will not be raised from the dead by the naked power of God *without* them, but by virtue of their risen Head sending forth the quickening influences of His Spirit *within* their bodies. This is wonderfully adumbrated in the natural: when awakening out of sleep, the animal spirits arouse the *head* first, and then the senses are awakened throughout the whole body!

A real living union is effected between Christ and His members, not (as it were) by soldering two souls together, but by the Spirit anointing and indwelling *both*, for He being *infinite* is able to conjoin those who, in themselves, are so far apart. The whole person of the Christian (1 Cor. 6:15) is united to the whole Person of Christ: “At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). The same Spirit who lives in our exalted Redeemer, lives in His people on earth. By this spiritual union a far more blessed relation is established than which obtains between a king and his subjects, or even between a husband and wife: the tie connecting Him with His people is so intimate that He indwells them—“*Christ liveth in me*” (Gal 2:20).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). Let it be duly noted that as “grace” is predicated of Christ and “love” of God (the Father), so “communion” is as expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit; and, as we said so often in the earlier articles of this series, there can be no “communion” unless there first be *union*. It is by the Spirit there is union and communion between Christ and the Church. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9), that is, he is not yet grafted as a *living* member into His mystical Body. Let it be pointed out in conclusion that, blessed and glorious as is this vital union, yet it falls far below the “Mediatorial union: that was two distinct natures (the Divine and the human) forming together *one Person*; this is of different persons being joined together so as to make *one Body*, the Church.—A.W.P.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

8. *Its Procurer.*

We have now reached what is to our mind the most important and certainly the most blessed aspect of our many-sided subject, yet that which is the least understood in not a few circles of Christendom. It is the *objective* side of sanctification that we now turn to, that perfect and unforfeitable holiness which every believer has in Christ. We are *not* now going to write upon sanctification as a moral quality or attribute, nor of that which is a manner of experience or attainment by us; rather shall we contemplate something entirely *outside ourselves*, namely, that which is a fundamental part of our standing and state in Christ. That which we are about to consider is one of those “spiritual blessings” which God has blest us with “in the heavenlies in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). It is an immediate consequence of His blood shedding, and results from our actual union with Him as “the Holy One of God.” It is that which His perfect offering has sanctified us *unto*, as well as what it has sanctified us *from*.

Among all the terrible effects and fruits which sin produces, the two chief are alienation from God and condemnation by God: sin necessarily excludes from His sanctuary, and brings the sinner before the judgment-seat of His Law. Contrariwise, among all the blessed fruits and effects which Christ’s sacrifice procures, the two chief ones are justification and sanctification—it cannot be otherwise. Inasmuch as Christ’s sacrifice has “put away” (Heb. 9:26) “made an end” (Dan. 9:24) of the sins of His people, they are not only freed from all condemnation, but they are also given the right and the meetness to draw nigh unto God as purged worshipers. Sin not only entails guilt, it *defiles*; and the blood of Christ has not only secured pardon, it *cleanses*. Yet simple, clear, and conclusive as is this *dual* fact, Christians find it much harder to apprehend the second part of it than they do the first.

When we first believed in Christ, and the burden of our sins rolled away, we supposed that (as one hymn expresses it) we would be happy all the day. Assured of God’s forgiveness, that we had entered His family by the new birth and that an eternity with Christ in unclouded bliss was our certain inheritance, what could possibly dampen our joy? Ah, but it was not long before we discovered that we were still *sinners*, living in a world of sin: yea, as time went on, we were made more and more conscious of the sink of iniquity that indwells us, ever sending forth its foul streams, polluting our thoughts, words and actions. This forced from us the agonized inquiry, *How* can such vile creatures as we see, feel, and know ourselves to be, either pray to, serve, or worship the thrice holy God? Only in His own blessed Word can be found a sufficient and a satisfying answer to this burning question.

“The Epistle to the Romans, is, as is well known, that part of Scripture in which the question of justification is most fully treated. There, especially, we are taught to think of God as a Judge presiding in the Courts of His holy judgment. Accordingly, the expressions employed throughout that Epistle are ‘forensic’ or ‘judicial.’ They refer to our relation to God, or His relation to us, in His judicial Courts—the great question there being, how criminals can be brought into such a relation to Him, as to have, not criminality, but righteousness, imputed to them.

“But if, in the Epistle to the Romans, we see God in the Courts of His judgment, equally in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we see Him in the Temple of His worship. ‘Sanctified’ is a word that has the same prominence in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that ‘justified’

has in the Epistle to the Romans. It is a *Temple*-word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His worship, just as 'justified' is a *forensic* word, descriptive of our relation to God in the Courts of His judgment. Before there can be any question about serving or worshipping God acceptably, the necessity of His holiness requires that the claims both of the Courts of His judgment, and also of the Courts of His worship, should be fully met. He who is regarded in the judicial Courts of God as an unpardoned criminal, or who, in relation to the Temple of God, is regarded as having the stains of his guilt upon him, cannot be allowed to take his stand among God's servants. No leper that was not thoroughly cleansed could serve in the Tabernacle. The existence of one stain not adequately covered by compensatory atonement, shuts out from the presence of God.

"We must stand 'uncharged' in relation to the judicial Courts of God and imputatively 'spotless' in relation to the Courts of His worship: in other words, we must be perfectly 'justified' and perfectly 'sanctified' before we can attempt to worship or serve Him. 'Sanctification,' therefore, when used in this sense, is not to be contrasted with justification, as if the latter were complete, but the former incomplete and progressive. *Both are complete to the believer.* The same moment that brings the complete 'justification' of the Fifth of Romans, brings the equally complete 'sanctification' of the Tenth of Hebrews—both being equally needed in order that God, as respects the claims of His holiness, might be 'appeased' or 'placated' toward us; and therefore equally needed as pre-requisites to our entrance on the worship and service of God in His heavenly Temple: for until wrath is effectually appeased there can be no entrance there.

"The complete and finished sanctification of believers by the blood of Jesus, is the great subject of the Ninth and Tenth of the Hebrews. 'The blood of bulls and goats' gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a title to enter into the courts of the typical tabernacle, but that title was not an abiding title. It was no sooner gained than it was lost by the first recurring taint. Repetition therefore of offering, and repetition of sprinkling was needed again and again. The same circle was endlessly trodden and retrodden; and yet never was perpetuity of acceptance obtained. The tabernacle and its services were but shadows; but they teach us that, as 'the blood of bulls and goats' gave to them who were sprinkled therewith a temporary title to enter into that typical tabernacle; so, the blood of Christ, once offered, gives to all those who are once sprinkled therewith (and all believers *are* sprinkled) a title, not temporary, but abiding, to enter into God's presence as those who are sanctified for Heaven" (B.W. Newton).

"We *are* sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all For by one offering He hath *perfected for ever* them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:10, 14). These blessed declarations have no reference whatsoever to anything which the Spirit does in the Christian, but relate exclusively to what Christ has secured *for* them. They speak of that which results from our *identification* with Christ. They affirm that by virtue of the Sacrifice of Calvary every believer is not only counted righteous in the Courts of God's judgment, but is perfectly hallowed for the Courts of His worship. The precious blood of the Lamb not only delivers from Hell, but it also fits us for Heaven.

By the redemptive work of Christ the entire Church has been set apart; consecrated unto and accepted by God. The grand truth is that the feeble and most uninstructed believer was as *completely sanctified before God* the first moment that he trusted in Christ, as he will be when he dwells in Heaven in his glorified state. True, both his sphere and his circumstances will then be quite different from what they now are: nevertheless, his

title to Heaven; his meetness for the immediate presence of the thrice Holy One, will be no better than it is today. It is *his relation to Christ* (and that alone) which qualifies him to enter the Father's House; and it is his relation to Christ (and that alone) which gives him the right to *now* draw nigh within the veil. True, the believer still carries around with him "this body of death" (a depraved nature), but that *affects not* his perfect standing, his completeness in Christ, his acceptance, his justification, and sanctification before God.

But, as we said, in an earlier paragraph, the Christian finds it much easier to believe in or grasp the truth of justification, than he does of his present perfect sanctification in Christ. For this reason we deem it advisable to proceed slowly and enter rather fully into this aspect of our subject. Let us begin with our Lord's own words in John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Unto whom did Christ allude when He spoke there of sanctifying Himself? Certainly He could not possibly be referring to anything subjective or experimental for in His own Person He was "the Holy One of God," and as such, He could not increase in holiness, or become more holy. His language then must have respect unto what was *objective*, relating to the exercise of His mediatorial office.

When Christ said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," He denoted that He was then on the very point of dedicating Himself to the full and final execution of the work of making Himself a sacrifice for sin, to satisfy all the demands of God's Law and justice. Christ, then, was therein expressing His readiness to present Himself before the Father as the Surety of His People: to place Himself on the altar as a vicarious propitiation for His Church. It was "for the sake" of others that He sanctified Himself: for the sake of His eleven Apostles, who are there to be regarded as the representatives of the entire Election of Grace. It is on their behalf, for their express benefit that He set Himself apart unto the full discharge of His mediatorial office that the fruit thereof might redound unto them. Christ unreservedly devoted Himself unto God, that His People might reap the full advantages thereof.

The particular end here mentioned of Christ's sanctifying Himself was "that they also might be *sanctified* through the truth," which is a very faulty rendering of the original, the Greek preposition being "in" and not "through," and there is no article before "truth." The marginal rendering, therefore, is much to be preferred: "that they might be truly sanctified"—Bagster interlinear and the R.V. give "sanctified in truth." The meaning is "that they might be" actually, really, verily "sanctified"—in contrast from the typical and ceremonial sanctification which obtained under the Mosaic dispensation: compare John 4:24, Col. 1:6, 1 John 3:18 for "in truth." As the result of Christ's sanctifying Himself—devoting Himself as a whole burnt offering to God, His people are perfectly sanctified: their sins are put away, their persons are cleansed from all defilement; and not only so, but the excellency of His infinitely meritorious work is imputed to them, so that they are perfectly acceptable to God, meet for His presence, fitted for His worship.

"For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14)—not by anything which the Spirit works in them, but solely by what Christ's sanctifying of Himself has wrought for them. It is this sanctification in and through Christ which gives Christians their *priestly* character, the title to draw near unto God within the veil as purged worshipers. Access to God, or the worship of a people made nigh by blood, was central in the Divinely appointed system of Judaism (Heb. 9:13). The anti-type, the substance, the blessed reality of this, is what Christ has secured for His Church.

Believers are already perfectly sanctified *objectively*, as the immediate fruit of the Saviour's sacrifice. Priestly nearness is now their blessed portion in consequence of Christ's priestly offering of Himself. This it is, and nought else, which gives us "boldness to enter into the Holiest" (Heb. 10:19).

Many Christians who are quite clear that they must look alone to *Christ* for their justification before God, often fail to view *Him* as their complete sanctification before God. But this ought not to be, for Scripture is just as clear on the one point as on the other; yea, the two are therein inseparably joined together. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). And here we must dissent from the exposition of this verse given by Charles Hodge (in his commentary) and others of his school, who interpret "sanctification" here as Christ's Spirit indwelling His people as the Spirit of holiness, transforming them unto His likeness. But this verse is speaking of that sanctification which *Christ is made unto us*, and not that which we are *made by Christ*—the distinction is real and vital, and to ignore or confound it is inexcusable in a theologian.

Christ crucified (see the context of 1 Cor. 1:30—vv. 17, 18, 23), "Of God is made unto us" four things, and this in precisely the same way that God "made Him (Christ) to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), namely, objectively and imputatively. First, Christ is "made unto us Wisdom," objectively, for He is the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid. It is true that by the Spirit we are made wise unto salvation, nevertheless, we are far from being as wise as we ought to be—see 1 Corinthians 8:2. But all the wisdom God requires of us is found in Christ, and as the "Wisdom" of the Book of Proverbs, He is ours. Second, Christ is "made unto us Righteousness," objectively, as He is Himself "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6), and therefore does the believer exclaim "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isa. 45:24). As the law raises its accusing voice against me, I point to Christ as the One who has, by His active and passive obedience, met its every demand on my behalf.

Third, Christ is "made unto us Sanctification," *objectively*: in Him we have an absolute purity, and by the imputation to us of the efficacy and merits of His Cross-work we who were excluded from God on account of sin, are now given access to Him. If Israel became a holy people when sprinkled with the blood of bulls and goats, so that they were readmitted to Jehovah's worship, how much more has the infinitely valuable blood of Christ sanctified us, that we may approach God as acceptable worshipers. This sanctification is not something which we have in our own persons, but was ours in Christ as soon as we laid hold of Him by faith. Fourth, Christ is "made unto us Redemption," *objectively*: He is in His own Person both our Redeemer and redemption—"in whom we have redemption" (Eph. 1:7). Christ is "made unto us redemption" not by enabling us to redeem ourselves, but by Himself paying the price.

1 Corinthians 1:30, then, affirms that we are *complete* in Christ: that whatever the law demands of us, it has received on our account in the Surety. If we are considered as what we are in ourselves, not as we stand in Christ (as one with Him) then a thousand things may be "laid to our charge." It may be laid to our charge that we are woefully ignorant of many parts of the Divine Word but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Wisdom. It may be laid to our charge that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: but the sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Righteousness. It may be laid to our charge that we do many things and fail to do many others which unfit us for the presence of a holy God: but the

sufficient answer is, that Christ is our Sanctification. It may be laid to our charge that we are largely in bondage to the flesh: but the sufficient answer is, Christ is our Redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30, then, is *a unit*: we cannot define the “wisdom” and the “sanctification” as what the Spirit works in us, and the “righteousness” and the “redemption” as what Christ has wrought for us: all four are either objective or subjective. Christ is here said to be “sanctification” unto us, just as He is our righteousness and redemption. To suppose that the sanctification here spoken of is that which is wrought in us, would oblige me to explain the righteousness and redemption here spoken of, as that which we had in ourselves; but such a thought Mr. Hodge would rightly have rejected with abhorrence. The righteousness which Christ is “made unto us” is most certainly not the righteousness which He works in us (the Romanist heresy), but the righteousness which He wrought out *for* us. So it is with the sanctification which Christ is “made unto us”: it is not in ourselves, but in Him: it is not an incomplete and progressive thing, but a perfect and eternal one.

God has made Christ to be sanctification unto us by imputing to us the infinite purity and excellency of His sacrifice. We are made nigh to God by Christ’s blood (Eph. 2:13) *before* we are brought nigh to Him by the effectual call of the Spirit (1 Peter 2:9): the former being the necessary foundation of the latter—in the types the oil could only be placed upon the blood. And it is on this account we “are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). How vastly different is this—how immeasurably superior to—what the advocates of “the higher life” or the “victorious life” set before their hearers and readers! It is not merely that Christ is able to do this or willing to do that for us, but every Christian *is already* “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” My ignorance of this does not alter the blessed fact, and neither does my failure to clearly understand nor the weakness of my faith to firmly grasp it, in anywise impair it. Nor have my feelings or experience anything whatever to do with it. *God* says it, *God has* done it, and nothing can alter it.—A.W.P.

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The word “inspire” signifies to in-breathe, and breath is both the means and evidence of *life*; for as soon as a person ceases to breathe he is dead. The Word of God, then, is vitalized by the very life of God, and therefore it is a *living* Book. Men’s books are like themselves—dying creatures; but God’s Book is like Himself—it “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Yet, let it be pointed out that, unless we are on our guard, our belief of this fact is liable to lead us into error. Because the Scriptures are a living Book, some seem to think they possess, abstractly, some magical virtue of their own. Have you never heard one say, “Give them the Word of God: it will do its own work”; he meant well, but expressed himself inaccurately.

More than the Scriptures are needed to bring a sinner out of darkness into God’s marvellous light, namely, the Person and work of *the Holy Spirit*. It is only as He *applies* the Word that the conscience is pierced, the heart searched, and the will moved. Perhaps some one retorts, “But did not Christ say in John 6:63 ‘the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,’ and does not that prove the very words of Scripture are life-giving?” Ah, go back to the first part of that very verse: “It is *the Spirit* that quickeneth”! We must not separate the Spirit from the Word: He is the Divine Agent, the Word is the instrument which He uses.

On the other hand, we must not exalt the Spirit to the detriment of the Word. It is sadly wrong to say that, “Apart from the Spirit, the Scriptures are a dead letter.” How *can* they be such when “inspired of God”—instinct with His very “breath” or life! Well, then, since they are a *living* Word, will they not impart life of themselves? No. Let me use an illustration. The farmer sows wheat in his ground: it is good wheat, possessing a living germ. Will *it* “do its own work” and yield an increase? Not of itself: if there be no rain, there will be no grain. So the Seed of the Word may lie in the hearts of sinners, but until the Spirit descends as dew from Heaven, it never springs up into life.

The Scriptures, then, are the living Word of the living God. Observe carefully how our opening passage expresses it: “All Scripture IS given by inspiration of God,” *not* “all Scripture *was* given by inspiration of God,” as man would have expressed it. The Holy Scriptures not only *were* “inspired of God,” but they *are* so now. They come as really and as truly God’s Word *to us*, as they did unto those to whom they were first addressed. In substantiation of what I have just said, it is striking to note “Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7, 8); and again, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *saith* (not “said”) unto the churches” (Rev. 2:7). Now a book that presents itself to us as a Messenger from Heaven should have convincing credentials to set before those to whom it comes; and such it has: its high claims are well attested.

First, we call attention to *its self-evidencing authority*. Let me explain what I mean by that expression. Health is self-evidencing: the bright eye, the glowing cheek, the firm step, manifest that its possessor is hale and hearty. Fire is self-evidencing: it carries its own conviction to our senses, so that other witness or proof is quite unnecessary. Light is self-evidencing: it supplies its own demonstration; it is the very nature of light to manifest itself, yea, it does so by a necessity of its nature. Now the Scriptures are *light*—heavenly, spiritual, Divine. They clearly evidence they are sure by giving illumination unto all upon whom they shine: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my

path” (Psa. 119:105).

Just as God’s works in creation have stamped upon them the unmistakable marks of His power and wisdom, so has His Word. The surest way to ascertain this is to read and study it for yourselves, for the majesty and authority of its Author shines through every page. An astronomer might prove to you by accurate calculation that at nine tomorrow morning the sun will be above the horizon; but what need would I have of his mathematical demonstration if my own eyes beheld it and my whole body was warmed by its genial rays? The Scriptures need not the voice of the “Church” to authenticate them. They authenticate themselves by their own uniqueness and by the spiritual effects which they, under the Spirit, produce on those who read and yield to them.

Second, a word upon *its suitability for our times*. The Bible was completed eighteen hundred years ago, when by far the greater part of the world were Barbarians. Yet it comes to us as something far more than an interesting relic of the past: its sacred contents are exactly suited to *our needs*. Here is a remarkable phenomenon: God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul; He also breathed into the Scriptures: and therefore they are a living Book, one which has upon it the dew of perpetual youth. Herein it differs from all other books: the writings of men soon become out of date. Take any other writings as old as the Pentateuch—three thousand five hundred years—and what do you find? Why something to be placed in a museum, side by side with the Egyptian mummies.

The literary relics of antiquity have no application to our own times. They are musty documents relating to a state of society long since passed away and buried in oblivion: they are of no practical worth *to us*. How striking is the contrast! Here is God’s Word for us today, exactly suited to our own needs. It is suited to every age, to every clime, to every class. And why? Because in and through it there speaks the voice of Him who changes not. Millions of books have been written since the Canon of Scripture was closed, yet today we know no more about the origin of life, the nature and duty of man, the character of God, or the future, than did the readers of Scripture two thousand years ago!

Third, let me call attention to *its historical narratives*. Everything about the Scriptures is unique: even the history found in it is so. In the first place, it *contains* that which no other records, namely, a satisfying accord of the creation of the heavens and the earth—which is in marked contrast from the cosmogonies of the heathen. It furnishes a satisfying explanation of the origin of man and how he became a sinful creature—which is in marked contrast from the fables of antiquity. We know nothing whatever of the first fifteen hundred years’ history of the world apart from the Scriptures. In the second place, its *omissions* are equally striking. Its method of chronicling events is entirely different from all human histories. It ignores those events which are most interesting to men of the world, and which govern the pen of all human historians—the great empires of antiquity and men of renown are passed by in silence, or mentioned only so far as they bear on the main subject.

In the third place, consider the history *of Israel* recorded in Scripture. Had the Old Testament been the product of uninspired Jews, a desire for applause had caused them to magnify the exploits and courage of their nation, and their victories had been trumpeted as the result of *their* unparalleled military skill and valour. Why was not the capture of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan attributed to the brilliance of Joshua and the bravery

of his men? Never is a single victory ascribed to *their own* prowess. Nor are their successes ascribed to the mere partiality of God, but rather did He bless their arms when they were subject to His will, and caused them to suffer defeat when they had followed a course of disobedience.

Fourth, the fact of *personal confirmation*. Those who submit themselves to the authority of the Scriptures obtain an inward proof of their Divine Authorship. In his own experience the Christian finds a personal corroboration of the teachings of God's Word: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light" (Psa. 119:130) is verified in his own soul. "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16): this he has proved for himself, so that he is able to affirm "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25). In like manner, he now knows for himself that God hears and answers prayer: he has daily evidence in his own life that the Divine promises are reliable. Again; he reads "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9): this also he *knows* to be true, for such is his actual experience inwardly.

Let me now anticipate an objection. Since the proof for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures is so clear and abundant, why is it that the great majority of our fellows refuse to receive them as God's Word? why is there such a widespread unbelief of their authenticity and authority? It is not because of the lack of plain and decisive testimony, but because men have so long abused the eyes of their souls that they cannot perceive its glory. But this only *verifies* their teachings, and shows that the unregenerate are just what the Scriptures declare them to be—possessed of a carnal mind which is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and who love darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

But the mere fact *you* are fully convinced of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, is no proof, in itself, that your *heart* is right with God—the Devil believes the same! Those brought up under sound teaching are in danger of mistaking orthodox views for a work of Divine grace in the soul. Finally, since the Scriptures *are* the Word of God, they have unique claims upon us, and demand unquestioning submission from us. They contain far more than good advice or wise counsel: they utter the commands of the living God which we disregard to our eternal undoing.

N.B. The above is a digest of the editor's first address in Scotland: in Bethany Hall, Camelon, Falkirk.

Good News.

The Lord, in His abounding goodness, granted us a record November so far as gifts were concerned; so that on the 30th, after paying every bill promptly, we closed the year [1935] with a nice credit balance, which we have carried forward to 1936. Hallelujah! We serve a great God and He is greatly to be praised. We have been much encouraged by letters from *praying* friends. Our principal difficulty is the decreasing circulation: we are finding it extremely hard to obtain enough interested readers to justify our continuing to publish. Please do what *you* can to make this magazine known to God's people. We also rejoice to report that doors are beginning to be opened for us in Glasgow for oral ministry.

[Brother Pink's comments to his readers over 60 years ago!]