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COMTEMPLATIONS
AND
REFLECTIONS
Of JOSEPH C. PHILPOT
FROM HIS REVIEWS

Contemplations & Reflections
by J. C. Philpot, from his "Reviews"

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PRIDE

J. C. Philpot, 1853

"I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Prov. 16:5

Of all sins pride seems most deeply imbedded in the very heart of man. Unbelief, sensuality, covetousness, rebellion, presumption, contempt of God's holy will and word, hatred and enmity against the saints of the Most High, deceit and falsehood, cruelty and wrath, violence and murder—these, and a forest of other sins have indeed struck deep roots into the black and noxious soil of our fallen nature; and, interlacing their lofty stems and gigantic arms, have wholly shut out the light of heaven from man's benighted soul. But these and their associate evils do not seem so thoroughly interwoven into the very constitution of the human heart, nor so to be its very life blood as pride. The lust of the flesh is strong, but there are respites from its workings; unbelief is powerful, but there are times when it seems to lie dormant; covetousness is ensnaring, but there is not always a bargain to be made, or an advantage to be clutched. These sins differ also in strength in different individuals. Some seem not much tempted with the grosser passions of our fallen nature; others are naturally liberal and benevolent, and whatever other idol they may serve, they bend not their knee to the golden calf. Strong natural conscientiousness preserves many from those debasing sins which draw down general reprehension; and a quiet, gentle, peaceable disposition renders others strangers not only to the violent outbreaks, but even to the inward gusts of temper and anger.

But where lust may have no power, covetousness no dominion, and anger no sway—there, down, down in the inmost depths, heaving and boiling like the lava in the crater of a volcano, works that master sin, that sin of sins—pride! As Rome calls herself the Mother and Mistress of all the churches, so is Pride the Mother and Mistress of all the sins; for where she does not conceive them in her ever-teeming womb, she instigates their movements, and compels them to pay tribute to her glory.

The origin of evil is hidden from our eyes. Whence it sprang, and why God

allowed it to arise in his fair creation, are mysteries which we cannot fathom; but thus much is revealed, that of this mighty fire which has filled hell with sulphurous flame, and will one day involve earth and its inhabitants in the general conflagration, the first spark was pride!

It is therefore emphatically the devil's own sin; we will not say his darling sin, for it is his torment, the serpent which is always biting him, the fire which is ever consuming him. But it is the sin which hurled him from heaven and transformed him from a bright and holy seraph into a foul and hideous demon. How subtle, then, and potent must that poison be, which could in a moment change an angel into a devil! How black in nature, how concentrated in virulence that venom, one drop of which could utterly deface the image of God in myriads of bright spirits before the throne, and degrade them into monsters of uncleanness and malignity!

Be it, then, borne in mind that the same identical sin which wrought such fearful effects in the courts of heaven was introduced by the Tempter into Paradise. "You shall be as gods," was the lying declaration of the father of lies. When that declaration was believed, and an entrance thus made into Eve's heart, through that gap rushed in pride, lust, and sinful ambition. The fruit of the forbidden tree was "pleasant to the eyes;" there was food for lust. It was a tree "to be desired to make them wise;" there was a bait for pride. "They would be as gods;" there was a temptation to sinful ambition. The woman tempted the man, as the serpent had tempted the woman; and thus, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12.)

There are sins which men commit that devils cannot. Unbelief, infidelity, and atheism, are not sins of devils; for they believe and tremble, and feel too much of the wrath of God to doubt his threatenings or deny his existence. The love of money is a sin from which they are exempt, for gold and silver are confined to earth, and the men who live on it. The lusts of the flesh in all their bearings, whether gluttony, drunkenness, or sensuality, belong only to those who inhabit tabernacles of clay. But pride, malignity, falsehood, enmity, murder, deceitfulness, and all those sins of which spirits are capable, in these crimes, devils as much exceed men as an angelic nature exceeds in depth, power, and capacity a human one.

The eye of man sees, for the most part, only the grosser offences against morality; it takes little or no cognizance of internal sins. Thus a man may be

admired as a pattern of consistency, because free from the outbreaks of fleshly and more human sins, while his heart, as open to God's heart-searching eye, may be full of pride, malignity, enmity, and murder, the sins of devils. Such were the scribes and pharisees of old; models of correctness outwardly, but fiends of malice inwardly. So fearful were these holy beings of outward defilement, that they would not enter into Pilate's judgment-hall, when at the same moment their hearts were plotting the greatest crime that earth ever witnessed—the crucifixion of the Son of God!

All sin must, from its very nature, be unspeakably hateful to the Holy One of Israel. It not only affronts his divine Majesty and is high treason against His authority and glory, but it is abhorrent to His intrinsic purity and holiness. It is, indeed, most difficult for us to gain a spiritual conception of the foul nature of sin as viewed by a Holy Jehovah; but there are, perhaps, times and seasons when, to a certain extent, we may realize a faint idea of it. It is when we are favored with the presence of God, see light in his light, and have the mind of Christ. *Then* how do we feel towards our base backslidings and filthy lusts? With what eyes does the new man of grace then view his sinful yoke-fellow—that base old man, that body of sin and death, that carnal mind in which dwells no good thing, that heaving reeking mass of all pollution and abomination, which he is compelled to carry about with him while life lasts? He views it, how can he but view it, except with loathing and abhorrence. But what is this, for the most part, short and transient, and, in its very nature, weak abhorrence of evil, compared with the enduring and infinite hatred of God against sin, though it may aid us in obtaining a dim and faint conception of it?

But among all the evils which lie naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, pride seems especially to incur His holy abhorrence; and the outward manifestations of it have perhaps drawn down as much as, or more than, any other sin, his marked thunderbolts. His unalterable determination against it, and his fixed resolve to bring down to the dust every manifestation of it, is no where so pointedly or so fully declared as in that striking portion of Holy Writ which forms the second chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah. And this is the theme of the whole, "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." (Isaiah 2:17.)

But, besides these general declarations, the sacred record teems with individual instances of God's anger against this prevailing sin. Pride cost

Sennacherib his army and Herod his life; pride opened the earth to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and hung up Absalom in the boughs of an oak; pride filled the breast of Saul with murderous hatred against David, and tore ten tribes at one stroke from the hand of Rehoboam. Pride drove Nebuchadnezzar from the society of his fellow-men, and made him eat grass as oxen, and his body to be wet with the dew of heaven, until his hairs were grown as eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

And as it has cut off the wicked from the earth, and left them neither son nor nephew, root nor branch, so it has made sad havoc even among the family of God. Pride shut Aaron out of the promised land; and made Miriam a leper white as snow; pride, working in the heart of David, brought a pestilence which cut off seventy thousand men; pride carried captive to Babylon Hezekiah's treasure and descendants, and cast Jonah into the whale's belly, and, in his feelings, into the very belly of hell. It is the only source of contention; (Prov. 13:10;) the certain forerunner of a fall; (Prov. 16:18;) the instigator of persecution; (Psalm 10:2;) a snare for the feet; (Psalm 59:12;) a chain to compass the whole body; (Psalm 73:6;) the main element of deceitfulness; (Jer. 49:16;) and the grave of all uprightness. (Hab. 2:4.) It is a sin which God especially abhors, (Prov. 8:13, 16:5,) and one of the seven things which he abominates; (Prov. 6:17;) a sin against which he has pronounced a special woe, (Isaiah 28:1) and has determined to stain it, (Isaiah 23:9,) to abase it, (Dan. 4:37,) to mar it, (Jer. 13:9,) to cut it off, (Zech. 9:6) to bring it down, (Isaiah 25:11,) and lay it low (Prov. 29:23.)

Pride was one of the crying sins of Sodom, (Ezek. 16:49), desolated Moab (Isaiah 16:6, 14,) and turned Edom, with Petra, its metropolis, into a land where no man should dwell, and which no man should pass through. (Obadiah 3, 4, 9, 10; Jerem. 49:16-18.)

But pride is not content with her dominion over the children of this world (Job 41:34), her native born subjects and willing slaves, among whom she rules with lordly sway, at once their tormenting mistress and adored sovereign. Not only does she set up her worship in every family of the land, and reigns and rules as much among the low as the high, swelling the bosom of the blind beggar who holds his hat for a half-penny as much as of that high-born dame who, riding by in her carriage, will not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness. Not only does pride subject to her universal influence the world of which Satan is god and prince, but she must needs intrude herself into the Church of Christ, and exalt her

throne among the stars of God.

She comes indeed here in borrowed garb, has put off her glittering ornaments and brave attire, in which she swells and ruffles among the gay flutterers of rank and fashion; and with demure looks, and voice toned down to the right religious key, and a dialect modeled after the language of Canaan, takes her seat among the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, much as Satan stood up among the sons of God. (Job. 1:6.) And as she has put off her apparel, so has she changed her title, assuming that which shall give her the readiest and most unquestioned passport. "Humility" is the name with which she has newly christened herself; and, slipping into the camp by the most lowly portal, she moves onward, aiming at no lower seat than the throne, and no less weapon than the scepter.

Some, however, of Zion's watchmen, and no one more than the writer of the work before us, have lifted up her veil, found out her real character, and, having first branded her on the forehead, "SPIRITUAL PRIDE," have labored hard, though hitherto ineffectually, to cast her out of the congregation of the saints. But as all their labors have hitherto been ineffectual, and she still dwells in our midst, it may be well to describe some of the features of this dangerous intruder.

1. Ignorance, and that worst species of it—ignorance of one's own ignorance—is evidently a main feature in her face. In this point she wonderfully resembles that stolid brother of hers who is so much in every company—worldly pride. We are all ignorant, sadly ignorant of everything that belongs to our peace; but the first step out of ignorance is to be conscious of it. No people are so thoroughly impracticable, so headstrong, so awkward to deal with, so deaf to all reason, so bent on their own will and way, so self-conceited, and so hopelessly disagreeable, as those unhappy people, whether in the world or in the church, who are ignorant of their own ignorance. Touchy, sensitive, quarrelsome, always grumbling and complaining, unable to lead and yet unwilling to follow, finding fault with everything and everybody, tyrannical where possessed of power, though abject enough where any advantage is to be gained, bungling everything they do and yet never learning to do any better, making up in a good opinion of themselves for the general ill opinion of them by others—such people are the plague of families, workshops, churches, and congregations. When people of this stamp become, as it is called, religious, being all the time really destitute of grace, their pride runs in a new channel, and with a strength in proportion to the narrowness of the banks. In them we

see the disease at its height.

But there are many of the Lord's people who exhibit strong symptoms of the same evil malady. Yet what can be more opposed to grace or to the spirit and example of Him who said, "Learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart?" Where the true light shines into the soul there is a discovery of the greatness and majesty of God, of his holiness, purity, power, and glory; and with this there is a corresponding discovery of our own nothingness, insignificance, sinfulness, and utter worthlessness. This divine light being accompanied by spiritual life, there is raised up a tender conscience as well as an enlightened understanding. Thus is produced self-abasement, which every fresh discovery of the holiness of God and of our own vileness deepens and strengthens. This lays the foundation for true humility; and when God's mercy meets man's misery, and Christ is revealed to the soul, it cannot too much abase itself before his blessed Majesty, nor lie low enough in the dust of self-loathing and self-abhorrence. Humility is the daughter of grace, as pride is the child of ignorance.

2. Another marked feature in this impostress, is her self-deceptiveness. She may not succeed in deceiving others, but she rarely fails in deceiving herself. Thus she usually hides her real character most from those who are under her special influence. They are 'patterns of humility' externally to others—and patterns of humility internally to themselves. Sweet is the incense which regales their nostrils from the admiration of others; but sweeter far is the odor of their own admiration of themselves. Other sins are not so self-deceptive, so self-blinding, so self-bewitching. Sensual thoughts, blasphemous or rebellious imaginations, anger, carnality, prayerlessness, deadness, coldness, unbelief—these and similar sins wound conscience, and are, therefore, at once detected as essentially evil.

But the swellings of spiritual pride, though not hidden from a discerning eye and a tender conscience, are much concealed from those very religious people whose 'amazing humility' and undeviating obedience are ever sending forth a sweet savor to delight their approving nostrils.

3. The grossness and universality of her appetite is a no less prominent feature. Other sins feed only on a limited and appropriate diet. Covetousness is confined to the love of money; sensuality, drunkenness, gluttony, to their peculiar gratifications. But pride is omnivorous! To her greedy appetite, no food comes amiss. Like the eagle, she can strike down a living prey; or, like

the vulture, banquet on putrid carrion. Some are proud of their knowledge, others of their ignorance; some of their consistency, others of their freedom from all tight restraints; some of their gifts, others of their very graces; some of their ready speech, others of their prudent silence; some of their long profession, others of their deep experience; some of their Pharisaic righteousness, others of their Antinomian security.

The minister is proud of his able sermons; the deacon of his wise and prudent government; the church member of his privileges above the rest of the congregation. Some are proud because they attend to the ordinances, others because they are not tied up in the yoke of church discipline; some are proud of the world's contempt, and others of the world's approbation; some are proud of their sophistication and culture, and others of their vulgarity; some of their learning, and not a few of their lack of it; some of their boldness to reprove, and others of their readiness to forgive; some of their amiability, and others of their austerity; some because others think well of them, and others because nobody thinks well of them, but themselves.

Thus, as some weeds flourish in every soil, and some animals feed on every food, so does pride flourish in every heart, and feast on every kind of food. When an apostle was caught up into the third heaven, pride assailed him as soon as he came back to earth, so that it was needful for a thorn to be given him to rankle in his flesh for the remainder of his life, in order to let out its venom. Pride would have been too much even for Paul's grace, but for this messenger of Satan daily to buffet him. Pride set the twelve disciples to argue who would be the greatest; and pride widened, if it did not originate, the breach between Paul and Barnabas.

Pride was the pest of the first Christian churches as well as of our own. The pride of gifts was the besetting sin of the Corinthian church; the pride of legal observances the sin of the Galatian church, the pride of vain philosophy of the Colossian church. Timothy was not to allow novices to preach, for pride was their besetment; and he is especially cautioned against those who will not consent to wholesome words as being "proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." (1 Tim. 6:4, 5.)

None are exempt from pride's baneful influence. She works in the highest Calvinist as well as in the lowest Arminian; swells the bosom of the poorest,

most illiterate dissenting minister, as well as puffs up the lawn sleeves of the most lordly bishop. And, what is far worse, even in those who know, love, and preach the truth, spiritual pride often sets brother against brother, friend against friend, minister against minister. She is full of cruel jealousy and murderous envy, greedily listens to the slanderous tales of whisperers and backbiters, drinks down flattery with insatiable thirst, measures men's grace by the amount of their approbation, and would trample in the mire the most honored of God's servants, that by standing upon them she might raise herself a few inches higher!

The very opposite to charity, pride is not patient, and is never kind. She always envies, and ever boasts of herself. She is continually puffed up, always behaves herself rudely, is ever self-seeking, is easily provoked, perpetually thinks evil of others, rejoices in the iniquity of others, but never rejoices in the truth. She never bears with others, believes nothing good in a brother, hopes nothing good for others, and endures nothing. She is ever restless and ever miserable, tormenting herself and tormenting others, the bane of churches, the fomentor of strife, and the extinguisher of love.

May it be our wisdom to see, our grace to abhor, and our victory to overcome pride!

"I hate pride and arrogance." Proverbs 8:13

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." Prov. 16:5

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The History of an Idol, its Rise, Reign and Progress
J. C. Philpot, October, 1855

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

Idolatry is a sin very deeply rooted in the human heart. We need not go very far to find of this the most convincing proofs. Besides the experience of every age and every climate, we find it where we would least expect it—the prevailing sin of a people who had the greatest possible proofs of its wickedness and folly, and the strongest evidences of the being, greatness, and

power of God.

It amazes us sometimes in reading the history of God's ancient people, as recorded in the inspired page, that, after such wondrous and repeated displays of his presence, glory, and majesty, they should again and again bow down before stocks and stones. That those who had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt had passed through the Red Sea by an explicit miracle, were daily living on manna that fell from heaven and water that gushed out of the rock, who had but to look upward by day to behold the pillar of the cloud, and by night the pillar of fire to manifest the presence of Jehovah in their midst—that this people, because Moses delayed coming down from the Mount, should fall down before a golden calf, and say, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt," does indeed strike our minds with astonishment.

And that this sin should break forth in them again and again through their whole history down to the period of the Babylonish captivity, in spite of all the warnings of their prophets, all the terrible judgments of God, all their repeated captivities, and, what would be far more likely to cure it, all their repeated deliverances, does indeed show, if other proof were lacking, that it is a disease deeply rooted in the very constitution of fallen man.

If this be the case, unless human nature has undergone a change, of which neither scripture nor experience affords any evidence, the disease must be in the heart of man *now* as much as ever; and if it exists it must manifest itself, for a constitutional malady can no more be in the soul and not show itself, than there can be a sickness in the body without evident symptoms of illness.

It is true that the disease does not break out exactly in the same form. It is true that golden calves are not now worshiped, at least the calf is not, if the gold be, nor do Protestants adore images of wood, brass, or stone. But that rank; property, fashion, honor, the opinion of the world, with everything which feeds the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are as much idolized now as Baal and Moloch were once in Judea, and Juggernaut now is in the plains of Hindostan, is true beyond all contradiction.

But what is idolatry? To answer this question, let us ask another. What is an idol? Is not this the essence of the idea conveyed by the word, that an idol occupies that place in our esteem and affections, in our thoughts, words and ways, in our dependence and reliance, in our worship and devotedness, which

is due to God only? Whatever is to us what the Lord alone should be, *that* is to us an idol. It is true that these idols differ almost as widely as the peculiar propensities of different individuals. But as both in ancient and modern times the grosser idols of wood and stone were and are beyond all calculation in number, variety, shape, and size, so is it in these inner idols of which the outer are mere symbols and representations.

Nothing has been too base or too brutal, too great or too little, too noble or too vile, from the sun walking in its brightness to a snake, a monkey, an onion, a bit of rag, which man has not worshiped. And these intended representations of Divinity were but the outward symbols of what man inwardly worshiped—for the inward idol preceded the outward, and the fingers merely carved what the imagination had previously devised. The gross material idol, then, whether an Apollo, "the statue which enchants the world," or a negro fetish, is but a symbol of the inner mind of man.

In that inner mind there are certain feelings and affections, as well as traditional recollections, which sin has perverted and debased, but not extinguished. Such are, a sense of a divine Creator, a dread of his anger and justice, a dim belief in a state after death of happiness or misery, an accountability to him for our actions, and a duty of religious worship. From this natural religion in the mind of man, a relic of the fall, sprang the first idea of idolatry—for the original knowledge of God being lost, the mind of man sought a substitute, and that substitute is an idol—the word, like the similar term "image," signifying a shape or figure, a representation or likeness of God.

Against this therefore, the second commandment in the Decalogue is directed. Now, this idea of representing God by some visible image being once established by the combined force of depraved intellect and conscience, the debased mind of man soon sought out channels for its lusts and passions to run in, which religion might consecrate; and thus the devilish idea was conceived and carried out, to make a god of SIN. Thus bloodshed, lust, theft, with every other crime, were virtually turned into gods named Mars, Venus, Mercury, and so on; and then came the horrible conclusion, that the more sin there was committed, the more these gods were honored. Need we wonder at the horrible debasement of the heathen world, and the utter prostration of moral principles produced by the worship of idols—or at the just abhorrence and wrath of God against idolatry?

But we need not dwell on this part of the subject. There is another form of

idolatry much nearer home; the idolatry not of an ancient Pagan or a modern Hindoo, but that of a Christian.

Idolatry is the very breath of the carnal mind. All that "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," desires, thirsts after, is gratified by, or occupied with, is its idol—and so far as a Christian is under the influence of this carnal mind, this old man, this evil heart of unbelief, this fallen Adam-nature, this body of sin and death—all which are Scripture terms to express one and the same thing—he bows down to the idol set up in the chambers of imagery.

There is an old Latin proverb, that "love and a cough are two things impossible to be concealed;" and thus, though an idol may be hidden in the heart as carefully as Laban's teraphim in the camel's saddle, or the ephod and molten image in the House of Micah, (Judges 18:14), yet it will be discovered by the love shown to it, as surely as the suppressed cough of the consumptive patient cannot escape the ear of the physician.

Nor need we go far, if we would but be honest with ourselves, to find out each our own idol—what it is, and how deep it lies, what worship it obtains, what honor it receives, and what affection it engrosses. Let me ask myself, "What do I most love?" If I hardly know how to answer that question, let me put to myself another, "What do I most think upon? In what channel do I usually find my thoughts flow when unrestrained?" for thoughts flow to the idol as water to the lowest spot in a field.

If, then, the thoughts flow continually to the farm, the shop, the business, the investment, to the husband, wife, or child; to that which feeds lust or pride, worldliness or covetousness, self-conceit or self-admiration—that is the idol which, as a magnet, attracts the thoughts of the mind towards it.

Your idol may not be mine, nor mine yours; and yet we may both be idolaters. You may despise or even hate my idol, and wonder how I can be such a fool or such a sinner as to hug it to my bosom; and I may wonder how a partaker of grace can be so inconsistent as to love such a silly idol as yours. You may condemn me, and I condemn you; and the word of God's grace and the verdict of a living conscience condemn us both.

O how various and how innumerable those idols are! One man may possess a refined taste and educated mind. Books, learning, literature, languages,

general information, shall be his idol. Music, vocal and instrumental, may be the idol of a second; so sweet to his ears, such inward feelings of delight are kindled by the melodious strains of voice or instrument, that music is in all his thoughts, and hours are spent in producing those harmonious sounds which perish in their utterance. Painting, statuary, architecture, the fine arts generally, may be the Baal, the dominating passion of a third. Poetry, with its glowing thoughts, burning words, passionate utterances, vivid pictures, melodious cadence, and sustained flow of all that is beautiful in language and expression, may be the delight of a fourth. Science, mathematical or mechanical, the eager pursuit of a fifth. These are the highest flights of the human mind; these are not the base idols of the drunken feast, the low jest, the mirthful supper, or even that less debasing but enervating idol—sleep and indolence, as if life's highest enjoyments were those of the swine in the sty.

An idol is not to be admired for its beauty or loathed for its ugliness, but to be hated because it is an idol. You middle-class people, who despise art and science, language and learning, as you despise the ale-house, and ball-field, may still have an idol. Your garden, your beautiful roses, your verbenas, fuchsias, needing all the care and attention of a babe in arms, may be your idol. Or your pretty children, so admired as they walk in the street; or your new house and all the new furniture; or your son who is getting on so well in business; or your daughter so comfortably settled in life; or your dear husband so generally respected, and just now doing so nicely in the farm. Or your own still dearer SELF that needs so much feeding, and dressing and attending to—who shall count the thousands of idols which draw to themselves those thoughts, and engross those affections which are due to the Lord alone?

You may not be found out. Your idol may be so hidden, or so peculiar, that all our attempts to touch it, have left you and it unscathed. Will you therefore conclude that you have none? Search deeper, look closer; it is not too deep for the eye of God, nor too hidden for the eyes of a tender conscience anointed with divine eye-salve. Hidden love is the deepest of all love; hidden diseases the most incurable of all diseases. Search every fold of your heart until you find it. It may not be so big nor so ugly as your neighbor's; but an idol is still an idol, and an image still an image, whether so small as to be carried in the coat pocket, or as large as a gigantic statue.

Every man has his idol; but it is not every man who sees it. Few groan under it.

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

**"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from my heart,
And worship only Thee."**

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Communion with God

By J. C. Philpot

Nothing distinguishes the divine religion of the child of God, not only from the dead profanity of the openly ungodly, but from the formal lip-service of the lifeless professor—so much as communion with God.

How clearly do we see this exemplified in the saints of old. Abel sought after fellowship with God when "he brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," for he looked to the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. God accepted the offering, and "testified of his gifts" by manifesting his divine approbation. Here was fellowship between Abel and God. Enoch "walked with God;" but how can two walk together except they be agreed? And if agreed, they are in fellowship and communion. Abraham was "the friend of God;" "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face;" David was "the man after God's own heart"—all which testimonies of the Holy Spirit concerning them implied that they were reconciled, brought near, and walked in holy communion with the Lord God Almighty.

So all the saints of old, whose sufferings and exploits are recorded in Hebrews 11 lived a life of faith and prayer, a life of fellowship and communion with their Father and their friend; and though "they were stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword;" though "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;" though "they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," yet they all were sustained in their sufferings and sorrows by the Spirit and grace, the presence and power of the living God, with whom they held sweet communion; and, though tortured, would "accept no deliverance," by denying their Lord, "that they might obtain a better resurrection," and see

him as he is in glory, by whose grace they were brought into fellowship with him on earth.

This same communion with himself is that which God now calls his saints unto, as we read, "God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," (1 Cor. 1:9,) for to have fellowship with his Son is to have fellowship with him. As then he called Abraham out of the land of the Chaldees, so he calls elect souls . . .
out of the world,
out of darkness,
out of sin and death,
out of formality and self-righteousness,
out of a deceptive profession,
to have fellowship with Himself, to be blessed
with manifestations of His love and mercy.

To this point all his dealings with their souls tend to bring them near to himself, all their afflictions, trials, and sorrows are sent; and in giving them tastes of holy fellowship here, he grants them foretastes of that eternity of bliss which will be theirs when time shall be no more, in being forever swallowed up with his presence and love.

Even in the first awakenings of the Spirit, in the first quickenings of his grace, there is that in the living soul which eternally distinguishes it from all others, whatever be their profession, however high or however low, however in doctrine sound or unsound, however in practice consistent or inconsistent. There is, amid all its trouble, darkness, guilt, confusion, and self-condemnation, a striving after communion with God; though still ignorant of who or what he is, and still unable to approach him with confidence. There is .

..
a sense of His greatness and glory;
a holy fear and godly awe of His great name;
a trembling at His word;
a brokenness,
a contrition,
a humility,
a simplicity,
a sincerity,
a self-abasement,
a distrust of self,

a dread of hypocrisy and self-deception,
a coming to the light,
a laboring to enter the strait gate,
a tenderness of conscience,
a sense of helplessness and inability,
a groaning under the guilt and burden of sin,
a quickness to see its workings, and an alarm
lest they should break forth—all which we never
see in a dead, carnal professor, whether the
highest Calvinist or the lowest Arminian.

In all these carnal professors, whatever their creed or name, there is a hardness, a boldness, an ignorance, and a self-confidence which chill and repel a child of God. Their religion has in it no repentance and no faith—therefore no hatred of sin or fear of God. It is a mere external, superficial form, springing out of a few natural convictions, and attended with such false hopes and self-righteous confidence as a Balaam might have from great gifts, or an Ahithophel from great knowledge, or the Pharisee in the temple from great consistency, but as different from a work of grace as heaven from earth.

How different from this is he who is made alive unto God. His religion is one carried on between God and his own conscience, in the depths of his soul, and, for the most part, amid much affliction and temptation.

Being pressed down with a sight and sense of the dreadful evil of sin, he at times dares hardly draw near to God, or utter a word before the great and glorious majesty of heaven. And yet he is sometimes driven and sometimes drawn to pour out his heart before him, and seek his face night and day, besides more set seasons of prayer and supplication. And yet this he cannot do without peculiar trial and temptation. If he stays away from the throne, he is condemned in his own conscience as having no religion, as being a poor, prayerless, careless wretch; if he come, he is at times almost overwhelmed by a sight of the majesty and holiness of God, and his open, dreadful sins against and before the eyes of his infinite purity. If he is cold and dead, he views that as a mark of his own hypocrisy; if he is enlarged, and feels holy liberty and blessed confidence spring up in his soul, he can scarcely believe it real, and fears lest it be presumption, and that Satan is now deceiving him as an angel of light; if he has a promise applied, and is sweetly blessed for a time, he calls it afterwards all in question; if favored under the word, to see his salvation clearly, he often questions whether it were really of God; and if his mouth is

opened to speak to a Christian friend of any sweetness he has enjoyed, or any liberty that he has felt, he is tried to the very quick, before an hour is gone over his head, whether he has not been deceiving a child of God.

But by all these things living souls are instructed. The emptiness of a mere profession, the deceitfulness of their own hearts, the darkness, misery, and death that sin always brings in its train when secretly indulged, the vanity of this poor, passing scene, the total inability of the creature, whether in themselves or others, to give them any real satisfaction, all become more thoroughly inwrought into their soul's experience. And as they get glimpses and glances of the King in his beauty, and see and feel more of his blessedness and suitability to all their wants and woes; as his blood and righteousness, glorious person, and finished work are more sensibly realized, believed in, looked unto, and reposed upon; and as he himself is pleased to commune with them from the mercy-seat through his word, Spirit, presence, and love, they begin to hold close and intimate fellowship with him.

Every fresh view of his beauty and blessedness draws their heart more towards him; and though they often slip, stumble, start aside, wander away on the dark mountains, though often as cold as ice and hard as rock—with no more feeling religion than the stones of the pavement, and viler in their own feelings than the vilest and worst—still ever and anon their stony heart relents, the tear of grief runs down their cheek, their bosom heaves with godly sorrow, prayer and supplication go forth from their lips, sin is confessed and mourned over, pardon is sought with many cries, the blood of sprinkling is begged for, a word, a promise, a smile, a look, a touch, are again and again besought, until body and soul are alike exhausted with the earnestness of expressed desire.

O, how much is needed to bring the soul to its only Rest and Center. What trials and afflictions; what furnaces, floods, rods, and strokes, as well as smiles, promises, and gracious drawings! What pride and self to be brought out of! What love and blood to be brought unto! What lessons to learn of the freeness and fullness of salvation! What sinkings in self! What risings in Christ! What guilt and condemnation on account of sin; what self-loathing and self-abasement; what distrust of self; what fears of falling; what prayers and desires to be kept; what clinging to Christ; what looking up and unto his divine majesty, as faith views him at the right hand of the Father; what desires never more to sin against him, but to live, move, and act in the holy fear of God, do we find, more or less daily, in a living soul!

And whence springs all this inward experience but from the fellowship and communion which there is between Christ and the soul? "We are members," says the Apostle, "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." As such there is a mutual participation in sorrow and joy. "He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He can, therefore, "be touched with the feelings of our infirmities," can pity and sympathize; and thus, as we may cast upon him our sins and sorrows, when faith enables, so can he supply, out of his own fullness, that grace and strength which can bring us off eventually more than conquerors.

But here, for the present, we pause, having only just touched the threshold of a subject so full of divine blessedness. Such a subject as this, descending to all the depths of sin and sorrow, and rising up to all the heights of grace and glory, embracing fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and fellowship with Christ in his glory, is a theme for Paul after he had been caught up into the third heaven, and for John in Patmos, after he had seen him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; nor even could their divinely-taught souls adequately comprehend, nor their divinely-inspired pens worthily describe all that is contained in the solemn mystery of the communion that the Church, as the Bride of the Lamb, is called to enjoy with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the great and glorious Three-in-One God!

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Name and Fame

By J. C. Philpot

**During his lifetime, Absalom had built a monument to himself in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and it is known as Absalom's Monument to this day.
2 Samuel 18:18**

There is a yearning in the mind of man after name and fame. Shrinking from oblivion, grasping at an earthly immortality, the ambitious heart desires not wholly in death to die. It would not pass away as unnoticed and as unknown as the leaf which falls into the babbling brook, and, after a few whirls, sinks to the bottom with scarce a bubble to mark its vanishing out of light into

darkness. Few indeed care for life eternal—for an immortality of happiness and holiness in the mansions of heavenly bliss; or if there be a passing desire for heaven, it is but to escape hell. But to achieve an immortality among their fellow-men; to be or to do something which shall secure the proud and rare distinction of living after death in the memories and on the lips of successive generations, is a deep-seated feeling in the human bosom.

This, the school-boy feels, who cuts his name on the form, as much as the painter, who longs that the canvas may breathe his name when the fingers which spread it with form and color lie mouldering in the dust; or the poet, who is content to die if his verses live for him from generation to generation. But this coveted distinction is attained by few. "Surely," says the Psalmist, "they are disturbed in vain." "Their memorial is perished with them." But could they obtain their object, it would be but a shadow. No applauding breath of man reaches them in their gloomy abode; no rills of human praise let fall a drop of water from earth to hell to cool their burning tongue. Most names that are remembered and handed down to posterity are of men in whom the Spirit of God was not. They were of the world; their words and actions were inspired by a worldly spirit, and directed to worldly ends. Therefore the world loved them in life, honored them in death, and bestows on them after death the only reward it has to give—an earthly immortality.

But when we view what they were in life, and what they are in death; when we lift up the veil which hides the mansions of the dead, is their lot worth coveting? Alas! no! Their soul is no more cheered by the honors paid to their memory than their mouldering dust is gladdened by the marble monument which stands over their grave. Solomon has already written the epitaph of this admired son of fame, the compendious history of his birth and death, beginning and end. "For he comes in with vanity, and departs in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Yes, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet has he seen no good; do not all go to one place?" (Eccles. 6:4, 6.)

But there are a few, and a few only, who have won a double immortality. Their names, their works, their influence survive them on earth when their happy spirits are bathing in the bliss of heaven. To be a Shakespeare, a Byron, a Voltaire—who that fears God would accept so wide-spread a name to accept with it what we may well apprehend is their present and future portion? Better be the lowest pauper who starves on a parish pittance; better be the shoeless wretch that sweeps the public crossing; better live in a hovel and die

in a hospital, with the grace of God in the heart, than have a world-wide, time-enduring name when the soul is howling in hell.

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**Religion, in some shape or other
by J. C. Philpot**

Religion, in some shape or other, is indispensable to the very existence of civilized society. Crude, wandering tribes, like the Australian negro or the North American Red Indian, may exist without any public mode of worship or any outward acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, though even these poor outcasts have some dim notion of "The Great Spirit;" but man, in a state of society, can no more live without some recognized form of religion than he can exist without laws or government, property or marriage. Society has to be held together from within as well as from without. Law and government, the rights of property and the divine institution of marriage, as clamps and girders, bind together society from without; religion, as mortar, binds together society from within. When society is broken to pieces, it is either by atheism springing a mine from within, or by anarchy battering down the walls from without.

The first French Revolution gave fearful proof of this. It commenced in atheism and ended in anarchy, until, after rivers of blood had been shed, tyranny stepped in to chain up the tigers and hyaenas which were ravaging the land; and one of its first acts was to restore the worship of a Supreme Being. So Socialism, that Satanic plot against God and man, loudly proclaims its abhorrence of property, of marriage, and of religion—the three grand elements of civilized society, without which our fair country would be a wide scene of robbery, carnage, lust, and blasphemy.

But let us not be misunderstood. When we speak of religion in this wide, general sense, we mean by the term not that true religion which is the special fruit of the Spirit. There is a natural religion as well as a spiritual religion. Natural conscience is the seat of the former; a spiritual conscience the seat of the latter. One is of the flesh, the other of the Spirit; one for time, the other for eternity; one for the world, the other for the elect; one to animate and bind men together as component members of society, the other to animate and bind the children of God together as component members of the mystical body of

Christ. True religion is what the world does not want, nor does true religion want the world. The two are as separate as Christ and Belial.

But some religion the world must have; and as it will not have and cannot have the true, it will and must have the false. True religion is spiritual and experimental, heavenly and divine, the gift and work of God, the birthright and privilege of the election of grace, the peculiar possession of the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. This the world has not, for it is God's enemy not his friend, walking in the broad way which leads to perdition, not in the narrow way which leads to eternal life.

But a religion without God is a nonentity; and since Christ has come into the world, and Christianity, as it is termed, is generally established, a religion without Christ becomes a contradiction. As, too, the Scriptures have been translated into different languages and are widely spread and much read, a national creed must to a certain extent embrace what is taught in the Scriptures, or men will instinctively see that the religion professed is not that which the word of God has revealed and brought to light.

But religion having thus become general cannot exist without an order of men to teach it and practice its ceremonies. Hence come clergy, forming a recognized priestly caste; and as these must, to avoid confusion, be governed, all large corporate bodies requiring a controlling power, thence come bishops and archbishops, ecclesiastical courts, archdeacons, and the whole apparatus of clerical government. The ceremonies and ordinances cannot be carried on without buildings set apart for the purpose; thence churches and cathedrals. As prayer is a part of all religious worship, and carnal men cannot, for lack of the Holy Spirit, pray spiritually, they must have forms of devotion made ready to their hand thence come prayer-books and liturgies. As there must be mutual points of agreement to hold men together, there must be written formulas of doctrine; thence come articles, creeds, and confessions of faith. And finally, not to prolong to weariness this part of our subject, as there are children to be instructed, and this cannot be safely left to oral teaching, for fear of ignorance in some and error in others, the very form of instruction must be drawn up in so many words; thence come catechisms.

People are puzzled sometimes to know why there is this and that thing in an established religion—why we have churches and clergy, tithes and prayer-books, Universities and catechisms, and the whole apparatus of an Establishment, from the Queen, the head, down to the sexton, the tail. They do

not see that all these things have sprung, as it were, out of a moral necessity, and are based upon the very constitution of man; that this great and widespread tree of a national religion has its deep roots in the natural conscience; and that all these branches necessarily and naturally grow out of the broad and lofty stem.

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All the devil's tricks!

by J. C. Philpot

Moving in our own comparatively narrow circle, and separated as much by principle as by precept and practice from the seething religious mass which, like a troubled sea, boils all around us, how little do most of us know of that outer world of scheming policy and energetic action which is ever tossing its restless waves against the strong barriers of divine revelation. Dull sounds, feeble echoes, passing whispers, and stray rumors ever and anon reach our ears about Popery, Infidelity, Socialism, etc.—and the pulpit sometimes blows a faint alarm against the awful progress which these destructive agents of Satan are making in every direction; but how few of us possess any clear, distinct, or definite knowledge either of the nature or the advance of these deadly enemies of the truth of God. In some respects this ignorance of ours is a mercy; for, as with our maiden daughters, there are subjects on which ignorance is a blessing and knowledge a blot, and there is deep truth in the well-known lines, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise."

If your situation in life, if your natural habits and circumstances, if your quiet seclusion and little retired cot admit it, or if your sensitive mind and tender conscience shrink from any knowledge of any contact with the outer world, happy in your ignorance, do not desire to lift the veil. It may be your safeguard from many sore exercises and grievous temptations which sadly assail those who are less happily circumstanced than you. Could, indeed, this happy ignorance be depended upon as a safeguard for all, as it is for you, the mercy couched in it would at once be doubled; but, unhappily, in this wretched world of ours, ignorance is no more a protection for those who have to battle with it, than the simplicity of a country bumpkin protects him in London streets from the artifices of frauds.

Since the fall a knowledge of good and evil has been man's inheritance; and

even in divine things the matured Christian is he who has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14.) While, then, we would sternly contend against the principle and practice of 'dabbling in evil' to learn its nature, and would firmly abide by the precept, "Keep yourself pure," yet there is in many cases a disadvantage in being altogether ignorant of what is passing around us, and with which we may unexpectedly be brought into contact, or have to grapple with as if for life or death.

In this world we cannot always live either with ourselves, or to and for ourselves, as if dear self were the sole object of our thought, cares and affection. We have wives or husbands, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and perhaps servants and dependants; or if free from such ties, we are bound up in church fellowship, or the strong bonds of affection with the people of God. In all or some of these we may feel the deepest interest, and most earnestly and affectionately desire their present and eternal welfare. For their sake, therefore, more than for our own, we cannot always preserve our happy ignorance. The most careful and watchful guardian of her daughters is not the mother who is ignorant of human nature and the snares laid for unsuspecting innocence—but she who has the keenest eye to discern the snake's nest in the grass, and crush each egg before it breaks out into a viper. We may have to guard and warn our children against a dangerous companion, or may see a subtle snare of Satan approaching, if not already entangling, a friend or fellow family member, and may be enabled to speak a word which may be owned and blessed to his deliverance from the temptation.

"So that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes." 2 Cor. 2:11

Satan is so wily . . .
his agents so surround us,
their designs are so masked,
their language so plausible,
their manners so insinuating,
their appearance often so imposing,
their arguments so subtle,
their activity so unwearied,
their insight into our weaknesses so keen,
their enmity against Christ and His gospel so implacable,
their lack of all principle and all honesty so thorough,
that the net may be drawing around us, before we

have the slightest suspicion of these infernal plots being directed against us!

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against all the devil's tricks!" Ephes. 6:11

And as we in our ignorant simplicity are unaware of the nature, so are we as little acquainted with the amazing extent of the operations thus going on around us. You read or hear, for instance, good reader, sometimes about nuns and nunneries, and form to yourself, perhaps, some dreamy idea of what a sad thing it must be for a young female to be shut up for life in one of these gloomy abodes, hopelessly subject in body and soul to the will of the superior of the house, if not exposed to the worse dominion of priests and father confessors. But have you any idea of the number of these poor creatures thus immured? What do you think of 10,000 nuns at this present moment in our good old Protestant England? Yes!—in that England whose very life blood is freedom from Popish thralldom there are 10,000 English women tied hand and foot by vows, and under the irresponsible dominion, government, tyranny—call it what you will, of mother superiors, priests, and confessors.

You have also heard, perhaps, of what is called, by a dreadful profanation of terms, "Spiritualism"—that is, the diabolical system of calling up, by some infernal jugglery, the spirits of the dead, and conversing with them. And how many figures do you think would represent the number of believers in this doctrine of devils? "Well," you answer, "perhaps, to take a large figure, one or two thousand." What do you think of five million? Well, then, gentle reader, it seems that you and we have been living in a considerable, and, perhaps, comfortable, state of ignorance of what is going on with such activity all around us. You may be happily secure against such awful delusions by your knowledge and love of the truth, and may tartly say, "What is all this noise about? Why do you want to bother me with all this stuff and nonsense about nuns and devil worshipers? I am not going to be caught in these traps of the devil." No! but that pleasing, amiable daughter of yours, whom you have this evening let go to a little party of friends; what security have you that there may not be among those young people some one who has been initiated into the mysteries of table turning and spirit rapping, and lend her some little book about "mediums and spiritual agencies," which, after your long family prayers are over, she is devouring in her bedroom, with all the zest of a new sensational novel? And her younger sister, that dear little girl, so full of smiles and affection, whom you are so fond of, and as she goes tripping off to school so merrily and innocently, and looks back to give you a nod, your very heart

cries, "Bless the little darling!" how do you know whether some school teacher, or an elder pupil, who is drawing her by kindness to her bosom, is not tainted to the very core with Popish views, and is secretly instilling them into her mind?

Where do you think all these 10,000 nuns came from? Say that half were born Roman Catholics. Now that leaves 5,000 entangled in such meshes as we have named, and perverted from their Protestant faith. And just consider the probable amount of misery which many if not most of these misguided girls caused to their own families before they took so decided and fatal a step as entering a nunnery. Think of a daughter of yours, perhaps the most dutiful and affectionate of them all, (for those are soonest entangled,) turned Papist, withdrawing herself from all your Lord's Day and family worship, viewing you and her mother as heretics, half the day at her beads and devotions upstairs, and running off at every opportunity to confess her sins and all your family secrets and affairs to some young priest. Scores, if not hundreds, of families in this country are thus being racked and torn to pieces by wives or daughters entangled in the nets laid for them by Popery under its various guises. And it is spreading in all directions, entangling the poor as well as the rich, the young as well as the old. The high church party are now drawing off our little village and Sunday schools into some large central school, under a certificated teacher, tainted, perhaps, to the very core with views which are really Popish though nominally Protestant, and thus carrying off the rising generation. We cannot enlarge on this subject, but these hints may show that the danger may be nearer at hand, even to you, than you dream.

But assume that, through the Lord's goodness and mercy, neither you nor yours are exposed to such snares and dangers, and that God's truth is not only your shield and defense, but that his grace or providence is stretched over those near and dear to you by earthly ties. Still there may be many of our readers less favored than yourself, to whom a word of instruction or warning may be seasonable. And even on the supposition that none of those under whose notice our words come need a warning sound, yet they may feel an interest in looking from their peaceful harbor on the storm-tossed sea, where many a ship is struggling and heaving amid the waves, and many a wreck may be seen through the white surf that is beating and curling over the rocks and shoals in the hazy distance.

There are three fearful shapes which Satan now seems to have chiefly assumed to deceive the nations, and though they all unite in denial and

disbelief of the truth of God's Word; yet they each present their distinct aspects, and adapt themselves to the peculiar constitutions of men. These three desperate foes of God and man are Infidelity, Popery, and now this Spiritualism, or rather Devilism. And just observe how they meet and adapt themselves to the various dispositions of the human heart.

Some men naturally possess reasoning, arguing minds, which cannot be satisfied without penetrating into the causes of things, and revolt from everything supernatural, miraculous, and that does not lie quite level with the grasp of our mental faculties. Now these are the men who chiefly fall under the power of INFIDELITY. They do not see what our deepest thinkers are now fully agreed upon, that there are subjects which lie beyond the reach of pure mental reasoning, and which, therefore, can only be received, if received at all, by faith as distinct from logical argument. Rejecting, therefore, everything which they cannot reconcile to their reasoning mind, they fall an easy prey to infidelity; and as this at once sweeps away all those moral restraints connected with an eternal future state which hold others in check—they can, if sensually disposed, indulge in their passions and drink down sin like water. Hundreds, if not thousands of the working classes, and indeed of all classes, and none more so than some among the most educated and refined, are open or secret infidels!

But there is a peculiar class of mind which shrinks from infidelity as something horrible, as indeed it is, and repugnant to our natural conscience. If we may coin a word for the occasion, there is in some people A NATURAL RELIGIOSITY—that is, a disposition to be religious. If they had been born in Turkey, they would have been devout Muslims; if in Italy, they would have become priests, monks, or nuns, and as ready to burn a heretic as their fathers; if born and bred in England, they would be devout churchmen, pious dissenters, sisters of mercy, and so forth—just as the various circumstances of birth and education, habits and associations, might dispose or determine. Now to these naturally religious minds, when fully ripened and blended with a stern spirit of self-denial, which usually accompanies and grows up with it, no system so thoroughly adapts itself as that of Popery—for it just meets and gives full play to that habit of mind which yields, like clay, to every object of superstitious veneration.

Memory recalls to us two striking instances of the two natural dispositions which we have mentioned. We once well knew two brothers. We hardly like to mention their names, though none are better known through the breadth and

length of the land. They were both men of most powerful intellect, refined and cultivated to the highest point by the most indefatigable study, and were distinguished ornaments of the famous University to which they belonged. Where and what are they now? One, the elder brother, whom we knew less intimately, is the most distinguished pervert from the Church of England that Rome has received! The other, once an intimate friend, an eminent professor of classical learning, is now an avowed infidel!

But whence came, humanly speaking, this strange difference, this wide divergence between two brothers of almost, if not altogether, equal abilities and similar education, habits, and associations, so that after acute mental struggles of years the one should finally settle at one pole of the most groveling superstition, believing in all the pretended miracles of the Romish saints, and the other at the opposite pole, denouncing Christianity itself as an imposture? May we not account for it from the constitutional difference of their minds—that the one is naturally credulous and superstitious, disposed to bow to authority, venerating names and ancient traditions—and the other is confident in its own reasoning powers, and determined to accept nothing but what can be logically proved?

But there is a third class of mind quite distinct from the two above-mentioned, though in many points allied to the first, which is naturally visionary, imaginative, ever living in a little world of its own, little disposed to bow to authority or venerate names or places, and still less unwilling and often unable to reason and argue, but very awake and alive to dreams, omens, supernatural appearances, and some breakings in of an unseen world—as distinct from that hard, stern, common-place, every-day world where men toil and sweat for their bread all their lives, and then die, and are thrust out of sight. What the soul is, what is a future state, what evidences there are, reliable and trustworthy, that there is one at all, what has become of departed friends—do they know anything about us, is their spirit ever near us?—many a mind that you little think of, is exercised with these thoughts and inquiries.

But you will say, "Why don't they believe the Bible? That would at once satisfy their minds, answer their inquiries, and clear up their anxieties." Yes, but that is the very thing they neither will nor can do. You can do it, because grace has touched your heart and you have felt the power of the word in your soul. But we are not speaking here of the believing, but of the unbelieving—not of the favored few who have received the love of the truth—but of the masses of society generally, the thousands who wander on without light or life,

guide, guard, or God. Your talking about their reading and believing the Bible is almost like what the little daughter of Louis XVI said to her governess, when she told her that the people in Paris were starving for lack of bread—"Why don't they eat buns?"

You have bread and buns too; and with your well-spread table, your dinner and dessert, your finest of the wheat, and wine on the lees well refined—you can hardly conceive the case of poor creatures starving for bread "who are pulling off the salt leaves from the brushwood, and making a meal of roots." (Job 30:4)—who madly feed upon ashes, with a deceived heart, and a lie in their right hand. (Isa. 44:20.) It is of such we are speaking, for our present object is to show why it is that such damnable errors, as you justly see them to be, find so wide an acceptance, and number their converts and devotees by thousands and hundreds of thousands.

We are endeavoring to explain how it is that Satan has such rule and dominion, and why some are held fast in the chains of Popery, others bound hand and foot in the prison of Infidelity, and others are bewildered and intoxicated with this last gust of smoke from the bottomless pit, this commerce with spirits, or rather with demons and devils, awfully miscalled Spiritualism.

But it is high time to come to our Review of the work at the head of our present article. We may freely, then, say that we have read a good part of it with much interest; and we confess that we had no idea of the vast prevalence of this new delusion, "Spiritualism," until we found it stated in it on seemingly such undeniable authority. Though the title of the work is "Spiritualism"—yet the title hardly gives a fair representation of its contents, for by far the greater part of it is devoted to show the craft, subtlety, and abominations of Popery. This subject was, of course, not altogether a new one to us, as we have read many works on Romanism and yet the authoress—for the work is the production of a lady, has sketched it in striking colors; and if she has not brought forward anything very new, yet she has put together many striking facts, and confirmed her assertions by proofs and evidence drawn from the writings and speeches both of the friends and foes of the Papal system. As far as we can judge, she sincerely loves the great truths of the gospel, and sees clearly and feels deeply the nature and prevalence of those fearful delusions of Satan which she aims to expose, with the hope that she may be made an instrument either of rescuing some of their miserable victims, or of warning others, lest they fall into the same trap.

The chief value of the book, we think, consists in the copious extracts which she has given from various sources of the present practical working of Puseyism and Popery; for what is mainly needed is not loud and sweeping declamation against this and that evil, but facts—solid, well substantiated facts, from which we can draw our own conclusions. Before we can form any right opinion, or come to a clear decision upon any case presented to our mind, we must have substantial evidence, plain facts, solid proofs—or our judgment is but a blind prejudice, a mere crediting reports and rumors, and adopting other people's views without knowing whether they are true or false. But when we get facts, proofs, undeniable evidence—then we move on solid ground, and our judgment has a firm basis to rest upon. These facts our authoress supplies; and thus enables us to see the very inside of some of those schemes of Satan whereby he is deceiving thousands to their perdition.

We who live outside the circle have little idea of what is going on within it. We hear or read perhaps of this or that high churchman, and what is now doing in the very parish church in the town or village where we live; and some friend or neighbor, or the children, may tell us of the late grand Christmas decorations, and the beautiful new altar-cloth, and the lighted candles, and the large flower vases, and the little chorister boys chanting and singing so prettily, and we may carelessly reply, "O poor creatures, with their dead forms!"

But it were well if these ceremonies were but dead forms! Dead indeed they are, dead enough according to our view of spiritual life and death—but in another sense they are filled with a life of their own, most active and energetic, and absorbing the mind and feelings of their devotees to an extent you perhaps little dream of. The old type of churchman has much passed away, and a new generation has sprung up which has almost ousted the quiet, regular orthodox rectors and vicars of our youth or of our fathers, who droned away to their scanty congregations half asleep under the shelter of the high-backed pews. A new spirit is abroad which is not only repairing and restoring churches, but, by resuscitating dead forms, seeks to animate them with a life hostile to the truth of God, hostile to our reformed principles, and is in secret league with Rome against our most prized religious and civil liberties.

A new life—not spiritual, for it is the very opposite; but a life of energy, zeal, and most bigoted, almost furious devotion to views and principles which are the very life blood of Popery, is now at work under these very forms and

ceremonies which seem to you so dead and unmeaning. They are so, and that justly to you; but there are thousands to whom they are signs and symbols of a religion to which they cling with the most fervid enthusiasm. In this consist both their delusiveness to their adherents and their danger to us.

Look at that poor Irish reaper going on a Sunday morning to mass at the Romish chapel. "O," you say, "what a poor foolish fellow he must be to worship a piece of bread!" But under that blind devotion you do not see the smouldering flame which makes him hate you as a heretic, with deadly hatred, and which, if urged on by a Fenian rebellion, would slake itself in your blood. So with these high-church forms—these raised altars, wax candles, intonings, and all the frippery and millinery of priestly vestments—which in the days of our fathers the whole parish would have hooted down as rank Popery. They appear at present to be only forms; but mark the spirit which breathes beneath them, as it sometimes breaks out in the pulpit, and see whether it be not the same as lighted up the Smithfield bonfires in the days of bloody Mary.

Here, then, is the chief value of a book like this. It enlightens our happy ignorance by bringing forward facts which cast a broad light on the doings and dealings of Satan and his agents!

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Countless treasures!
by J. C. Philpot

What a wonderful book is the Bible! What countless treasures of mercy and grace, wisdom and truth, are therein contained—hidden, indeed, from the natural eye, but opened up and revealed from time to time by the Blessed Spirit to the enlightened understanding of the family of God. That the word of God is a sealed book to the great mass of professed Christians—we mean by the term, those who, without any divine life in their soul, are in the habit of attending a place of worship—one or two facts will abundantly show. Though the Scriptures are in everybody's hand, and are read or heard habitually from childhood's hour to old age's lingering decay, not only are they not understood, they are not even remembered. We hesitate not to say, that you may take at a venture, a thousand people in the middle classes of society, of a good education, regular church-goers, and therefore hearing the Scriptures

continually read, and you shall hardly find five out of them who could quote a text correctly, or tell you where it is to be found—at least, beyond some vague idea, gathered from the turn of expression, that it is in the Old Testament or New.

Does not this show that they are heard without the least interest taken in them? Would Shakespeare, or Milton, or Byron, be read in their ears as often, and not be remembered? The words of a foolish song are learned in a few minutes, and caught up at once by every boy in the street. But who remembers the word of God, except to misuse and blaspheme it? One reading gave "Uncle Tom" a firmer place in the memory of thousands than the Bible which they have read all their lives. How little, too, do they seem to understand its meaning! A few plain texts that speak of actions to be performed they may, at first sight, seem to comprehend; but even these they rive and tear from their spiritual meaning, laying them down as duties to be done by all men, instead of fruits brought forth by the Blessed Spirit in the hearts, lips, and lives of the family of God.

But this gross darkness of mind, as regards the Scriptures, is not merely a negative evil; it inevitably produces effects almost more dangerous than the very blindness itself. A blind man, as long as he sits still, may keep from stumbling. It is when he begins to move, to walk, that he tumbles about and breaks his limbs or his neck. So in religion; it is when the blind begin to move, and think they certainly will become religious, that they stumble and fall into one error after another. Without divine teaching, they cannot but go wrong; without divine light, they cannot but fall. We do not say they have not some natural light; but what is seen by them is seen from a wrong point of view; what is done by them is done from wrong motives; their faint and flickering views of right and wrong only mislead them into self-righteousness; and the very duties they try to perform only blind them more to the way of salvation by sovereign grace. Like a man lost in a wood, every seeming step out is to them, but a farther step in; or, like one benighted on a moor, or in a bog, every attempt at extrication wearies and fatigues, but only ends in deeper entanglement.

Ministers of truth are thought sometimes to speak too strongly of the dreadful state of man through the fall; but, in fact, it is impossible to exaggerate in language the blindness and darkness of the human heart; nor can pen or tongue adequately set forth the misery and utter helplessness of a condition such as the Scriptures describe in two most solemn passages—"Therefore

they could not believe, because that Elijah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"; (John 12:39, 40); "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:3, 4.)

Now, contrast with this dreadful condition, so clearly, so graphically described, the state of the soul into which the true light, what the Lord calls "the light of life," has shone. This is beautifully described in two passages of scripture, which we will quote as counterparts of those just brought forward—"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace;" (Luke 1:78, 79); "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.)

Many sweet and simple testimonies are there in the word of truth to this work of the Spirit on the heart, whereby he enlightens it with the light of the living. "The entrance of your words gives light." "In your light shall we see light." "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." "He who believes in me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Happy the man thus enlightened by the Spirit from on high. He no longer walks on in darkness and in the shadow of death. Like Moses, he now sees him who is invisible. As this light penetrates into the dark corners and recesses of the heart—the true "candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

It discovers to him his own case and state as a fallen sinner; and as it shines upon the holiness and justice of God, as revealed in the Scripture, it makes known the breadth and spirituality of the law, the wrath of God due to sin, and his righteous judgment on all transgressors. Nor does the blessed Spirit stop here. He goes on to enlighten the soul to see the way of salvation. His special office is to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them to the soul. He therefore casts a light upon the mercy of God as revealed in his dear Son; shows how the soul is washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness; and not only so, but applies the blood, and brings near the righteousness; and blessing him with a manifestation of Christ, and a testimony to his interest in

him, leads him onward to see more and more of the beauty of his Person, the riches of his grace, the breadth, length, depth, and height of his dying love, his suitability in all his covenant characters and offices, and what he is to all who love and confide in his name.

This same light, we, may further observe, spreads itself over the word of truth, as he reads from time to time the inspired page. We have often thought of the words, "Then he opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Until this is done, the Scriptures are not understood. The eye, indeed, looks at them, but much as it looks at objects through a telescope before it gets the right focus. Everything is dim and distorted, hazy and obscure. Without Christ—the light of Christ in the understanding, and the life of Christ in the heart; without faith in his Person, hope in his mercy, or love to his name, the Scriptures are all a dark enigma. Not a doctrine can be understood, not an experience entered into, not a precept performed, not a promise believed, not an invitation accepted, not a truth enjoyed, without a living faith in the divine Revealer of them all.

The Scriptures are much and widely read, it is true, but merely as a duty, a daily or weekly self-imposed task, a religious performance in which a certain amount of merit is invested. It thus becomes a mere sop for conscience in some, and in others amounts at best to a perusing with the eye a certain quantity of words and letters, chapters and verses, unwillingly taken up, badly laid down. The beauty and blessedness, divine sweetness and inexpressible power and savor, seen and felt in the Scriptures by a believing heart are, to the unbelieving multitude unknown, untasted, unfelt, uncared for. Whatever be the subject, however solemn or weighty—and what can be so solemn and weighty as the soul's eternal happiness or misery?—the word of truth, without a divine application, absolutely makes no impression on the conscience. The threatenings produce no terror or trembling, create no fear or conviction, draw out neither sigh nor groan, no, nor raise up one faint, feeble cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The promises, the invitations, the portions that speak of Christ and his sufferings neither melt nor move, touch nor soften their conscience. The unregenerate heart responds to neither judgment nor mercy. Nothing stirs it Godwards. Hard as a stone, cold as ice, motionless as a corpse, it lies dead in trespasses and sins.

But not so with the heart which the finger of God has touched. It fears, it trembles, it melts, it softens; it is lifted up, it is cast down; it sighs, it prays, it believes; it hopes, it loves; it mourns, it rejoices; it grieves, it repents—in a

word, it lives the life of God, and breathes, acts, and moves just as the Blessed Spirit visits and works in it by his gracious power and influence. Under his teaching, the Scriptures become a new book, read, as it, were, with new eyes, heard with new ears, thought and pondered over with new feelings, understood with a new understanding, and felt in a new conscience.

But apart from any special light which a man taught of God may have on particular passages of Scripture, such, for instance, as have been peculiarly opened up, applied, and blessed to his soul, there is what we may perhaps call a general light on the word of truth. There is harmony in God's word. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. It would be treason against the Blessed Spirit to think there could be any real discrepancy, any positive contradiction, in the inspired page. When, then, we are favored with a spiritual, experimental knowledge of God's truth, it is putting into our hands a master-key to open cabinets closed against the wise and prudent, a clue to guide the feet amid the mazes where learned doctors and studious theologians wander and are lost, a light penetrating and pervading the hidden depths of the sanctuary, on the threshold of which the scribe and the Pharisee stumble and fall.

There is one deep mine especially in Scripture, in which an amazing amount of profitable instruction is stored up, but which, without divine light, cannot be penetrated into and explored, and its golden treasure, for "it has dust of gold," laid bare. We mean the characters of Scripture, what may be called Scripture biography, as distinct from Scripture history. And as the Bible gives us the lives and actions of sinners as well as of saints, of professors as well as possessors, Scripture biography has two phases corresponding to these characters.

Take, for instance, the character of Saul. What a mine of instruction—fearful indeed, but profitable—is laid up in his history! What a description inside and out of a professor of religion, from the beginning to the end of his course! It is the history of a man upon whom worldly honor and a prominent position in the church of God are thrust in spite of himself, wrecked and ruined for the non-possession of grace. It seems as if God would show us in him that the fairest beginnings, brightest prospects, and most signal gifts serve only to thrust a man into deeper perdition, if he has not a living principle of faith, fear, and obedience in his soul. There are in the history of Saul elements of character given, from which, without the slightest exaggeration in drawing or coloring, a full-length portrait might be painted which would make a tender-hearted child of God tremble to the very center.

Take, again, the character of David, as brought out in the same way by his words and actions, and fixing your eye on that point, steadily pursue it through all his history. God seems to have designed to give us in him the counterpart of the character of Saul, and thus to show that, as without grace nothing can save, so with grace nothing can damn. Just where Saul stumbles and falls, David stands. All things, the brightest and the fairest, tend to Saul's downfall; all things, the darkest and foulest, tend to David's rise. Victory and defeat are alike ruinous to Saul; for when he conquers Agag, he destroys himself by sparing him; and when the Philistines prevail, he falls on his own sword. Victory and defeat are alike a blessing to David. If he conquers, as when he slew Goliath, it was, as winning the confidence and affections of the people, a step towards the throne; and if he is hunted as a partridge on the mountains, it is but a wholesome discipline and a needful training him to wear more steadily the crown. Yet, in reading their history, we cannot but own that Saul is justly punished, and David justly blessed. We fully acquiesce in the sentence of each. Nothing in either shocks our moral perceptions of right and wrong. The crookedness, selfishness, hypocrisy, disobedience, murderous, revengeful disposition and conduct of Saul we see justly to draw down upon him the vengeance of God.

Yet we feel, and in this much consists the instruction contained in his miserable history, that human nature being what it is, and circumstances being what they were, he could hardly act otherwise; though, at the same time, we feel that otherwise he would have acted, had he but possessed grace. We read his end, close the book, and tremble; but does the thought rise up as if God were unjust in letting him perish so miserably? Did he not sin against the clearest directions, the strongest warnings; and when once he began to turn aside, did he not go from sin to sin, from murder to witchcraft, until mercy herself turned aside her face, unable to say a word why the stroke of justice should not fall? David, on the other hand, not merely shows the triumph of grace as a saving principle, confirming and establishing us thereby in its sovereign efficacy, but shines forth as a living evidence of what grace is as an active, influential principle. David is not borne on passively, mechanically to the throne, carried as if in a chariot from Bethlehem's sheepfolds to Hebron's court. Grace is seen not merely working in him, but worked out by him. His prayers, his tears, his faith, his obedience, his sincerity, his humility, his confiding trust, yes, and all his fears and conflicts too, are brought out; and what grace is, does, and can do is as clearly seen in him, as what nature is, does, and can do is seen in Saul.

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Christian giving by J. C. Philpot

When God bade Moses set up the tabernacle in the wilderness, as a standing type of the sacred humanity of his own dear Son, (Heb. 8:2; 9:11; John 2:21) he thus spoke unto him—"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." (Exodus 25:2-8)

Thus all the children of Israel might freely bring an offering, each according to his substance, and each according to his willing mind. Being all redeemed by blood and power—the blood of the paschal lamb, and the overthrow of their enemies in the Red Sea; being all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; all eating the same spiritual food—the manna from heaven; and all drinking the same spiritual drink—the water out of the smitten Rock that followed them, which Rock was Christ, (1 Cor. 10:2-4,) they were all viewed as a holy people, (Exodus 19:6; Lev. 21:44, 45; Jer. 2:3) standing typically and representatively as God's elect family. (Deut. 7:6.)

Thus Balaam could say of them in the visions of prophecy—"He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king among them." (Num. 23:21.) Now this was the reason why the Lord asked for and accepted their offerings for the building and service of the tabernacle. As an elect, a redeemed, and a holy people, their offerings were as if sanctified by their standing and position in the covenant made with them and their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To be allowed, then, to contribute their gifts to the tabernacle in which God was himself to dwell, was a high privilege conferred upon them.

If our readers will turn to Exodus 34 they will find a beautiful account of the offerings brought and of the willingness of the people in bringing them,

accounting it so high a privilege, that God would accept their gifts for his own sanctuary and service that they had to be restrained by public proclamation from giving more than was needed for that purpose. (Exodus 36:5-7.)

Now, one main beauty in the offerings thus made, and in the willingness of the people to make them, was that these gifts were measured not by their actual intrinsic value, but by the ability and willingness of each individual giver.

Thus some brought onyx stones, others precious jewels; some offered gold and silver, others brass; some gave blue, and purple, and scarlet, others rams' skins dyed red or badgers' skins; some fine linen, and others goats' hair. If a man had a precious onyx stone, or a costly diamond, or a beautiful sapphire, or a choice amethyst, what an honor, what a privilege, that instead of being kept in a bag in his tent, or shining in a ring on his wife's finger, the onyx should be worn on the ephod, and the diamond or sapphire on the breastplate of judgment when the high priest went to consult the mind of the Lord in his sanctuary. (Exodus 38:9-12; 15-21.)

To what a noble use, too, was the gold put, when instead of, like Achan's wedge, being hidden in the earth, it was made into the mercy-seat or the golden candlestick, or overlaid upon the altar of incense, and the table of showbread (Exodus 25:17, 18, 23-25, 31.) The very goats' hair spun by the women had an honor put upon it as wrought into one of the curtains within which the ark of the Lord dwelt. (Exod. 26:7; 35:26; 2 Sam. 7:2.) When, then, the tabernacle was completed, and consecrated by the holy anointing oil put upon every part, (Exodus 30:22-29,) and especially when it had been filled with the glory of the Lord, so that Moses himself could not enter into it, (Exodus 40:34, 35,) every portion of the sanctuary and the vessels of service used therein were equally sanctified, from the precious diamond to the spun goats' hair, from the polished onyx to the rough badgers' skin. All were equally valuable, equally acceptable, equally set apart from common uses, and dedicated permanently and unalterably to the service of the Lord.

Now for the APPLICATION of our subject, for of course we have not written all this for writing's sake, without any definite train of thought or special purpose. View the matter spiritually. Every one who has been redeemed by blood and power—the blood of the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in delivering him from the power of darkness, and translating him into the kingdom of God's dear Son; (Col. 1:13;) every one who has been spiritually baptized into Christ, and thus put on Christ; (Gal. 3:27;) every one who has fed and is feeding on the hidden manna, (Rev. 2:17,) and drinking out of Christ's fullness the water of life; (John 7:37; Rev. 22:17;) every one who has

been made willing in the day of Christ's power, (Ps. 110:3,) is called upon and may freely offer what he has and is to the Lord's service!

In fact, he is no longer his own, but is bought with a price. Therefore his body and spirit are both God's. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20.) And if so, then his time, his money, his gifts, his abilities, whether natural or spiritual, his very life—and death itself—are not his own, but the Lord's, and are to be freely given and used in his service. Not that any one of us does these things, at least as they should be done, for we are all poor, sluggish, selfish, do-nothing wretches, at our very best unprofitable servants, (Luke 17:10) and few even see or feel that they may or should do them; but it is our privilege and happiness that we are allowed to do them when there is a willing mind and an obedient spirit; and what is more blessed still is that the Lord accepts them. (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5.)

No, more, as in the case of the widow's two mites, it is not the costliness of the gift which measures its value, but the ability and willingness of the giver. (2 Cor. 8:12.) It is in this way, that the lock of goats' hair may be as acceptable as the diamond, and the smallest service done with a single eye to the glory of God and the good of his people—even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, (Matt. 10:42,) may out-value the most princely gift.

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The Work of the Holy Spirit

By J. C. Philpot

Until the Blessed Spirit quickens the soul into spiritual life, we know nothing really or rightly of the truth as it is in Jesus. We may be strictly orthodox in doctrine, may abhor infidelity and error, may be shocked at profanity and irreverence, may be scrupulously attentive to every relative duty, may repeat, with undeviating regularity, our prayers and devotions; and may seem to ourselves and to others exceedingly religious; when, in the sight of a heart-searching God, we are still dead in trespasses and sins. The world is full of such exceedingly religious people. Every church and every chapel can produce samples in abundance of such "devout and honorable" men and women.

No! we may come much nearer the mark than this, for these runners are indeed a long way off the very starting-place, and yet we may still be very far

from the kingdom of heaven. We may have a form of godliness in a profession of truth, may have been suckled and bred up from childhood in a sound creed, may have learned the doctrines of grace in theory and as a religious system, may be convinced in our conscience of their substantial agreement with the oracles of God, may contend for them in argument, and prove them by texts, may sit under the sound of the gospel with pleasure, or even preach it with eloquence and fervor; and yet know nothing of the truth savingly and experimentally, by divine teaching and divine testimony.

Does the Scripture afford us no example of both these characters? Who more religious, more strict, scrupulous, and orthodox than the Pharisee of old? He sat in Moses' seat, as the teacher of the people; he tithed his mint, anise, and cummin with the most scrupulous care; he strained his very drink, that no gnat or unclean worm might unawares pollute him; he prayed and fasted rigidly and regularly; and seemed to himself and to others the prime favorite of heaven. But what was he really and truly? What was he in the sight of God? According to the Lord's own testimony, a hypocrite, a viper, a whited sepulcher, ripening himself for the damnation of hell! And was there no Saul among the prophets? no Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, with a "Thus says the Lord" in his mouth? (2 Chron. 18:10.) no Hananiah, with a declared message from God? (Jer. 28:2.) Did not these men come with a profession of the truth, and claim to be servants of the Most High?

And was there no Demas, nor Diotrefes, nor Alexander in the New Testament? Who were those against whom holy John, fervent Jude, and earnest Peter warned the churches so strongly? Who were those "spots in their feasts of charity, feeding themselves without fear?" Who were those "clouds without water, carried about with winds;" those "trees whose fruit withered, twice dead, plucked up by the roots?"—who else but graceless professors of the truth? It is not then, the form, the letter, the mere outside, the bare shell and husk of truth, that makes or manifests the Christian; but the vital possession of it as a divinely bestowed gift and treasure.

But bearing this in mind as a solemn warning against trifling with the truth of God, or being satisfied with a mere formal recognition of it, let us proceed to see what a blessing truth is when we are put into the vital possession of it.

If we look at the work of the Spirit on the heart, we shall see how, in all his sacred dealings and gracious movements, he invariably employs truth as his grand instrument. Does he pierce and wound? It is by the truth; for the

"sword of the Spirit is the word of God," and that we know is "the word of truth." (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Cor. 6:7.) If he mercifully heal, if he kindly bless, it is still by means of truth; for the promise is, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." And when he thus comes, it is as a Comforter, according to those gracious words, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me."

In fact, if we look at the new man of grace that the blessed Spirit begets and brings forth in the heart, we shall see that all his *members* and *faculties* are formed and adapted to a living reception of the truth. As the eye is adapted to light; as the ear to sound; as the lungs to the pure air that fills them with every breath; as the heart to the vital blood which it propels through every bounding artery, so is the new man of grace fitted and adapted to the truth of God. And as these vital organs perform their peculiar functions only as they receive the impressions which these external agents produce upon them, so the organs of the new man of grace only act as truth is impressed upon them by the power of the blessed Spirit. Has, then, the new man of grace *eyes*? It is to see the truth. (Eph. 1:18, 19.) Has he *ears*? It is to hear the truth. (Isa. 55:3; Luke 9:44.) Has he *hands*? It is to lay hold of and embrace the truth. (Prov. 4:13; Isa. 27:5; Heb. 6:18.) Has he *feet*? It is that he may walk in the truth. (Psalm 119:45; Luke 1:6; 3 John 4.) Has he a *mouth*? ("Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.") It is that he may feed upon the truth, the living truth, yes, upon His flesh who is truth itself. (John 6:35; 14:6.)

Without truth there is no *regeneration*; for it is by "the word of truth" that we are begotten and born again. (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.) Without truth there is no *justification*; for we are justified by faith, which faith consists in crediting God's truth, and so, gives peace with God. (Rom. 4:20-24; 5:1.) Without the truth there is no *sanctification*; for the Lord himself says, "Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth." And without the truth there is no *salvation*; for "God has chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13.)

And as the truth is the instrumental cause of all these blessings, the divinely-appointed means whereby they become manifested mercies, so truth enters into and is received by all the *graces* of the Spirit as they come forth into living exercise. Thus, without the truth, there is no *faith*; for the work of faith is to believe the truth. What is all the difference between faith and delusion? That faith believes God's truth, and delusion credits Satan's lies. "And for this

cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Without truth there is no *hope*; for the province of hope is to anchor in the truth. "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." The two immutable things in which hope anchors are God's word and God's wrath; in other words, the pledged veracity and faithfulness of him who cannot lie. This made holy David say, "I have hoped in your word." "They that go down into the pit," said good King Hezekiah, "cannot hope for your truth." No! it is "the living, the living who praise you as I do this day." And it is "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures," that is, the consolation which the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures affords, "that we have hope." (Rom. 15:4.) Without truth there is no *love*, for it is by "the love of the truth" that the saved are distinguished from the lost. "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." And it is only as we speak "the truth in love that we grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Thus "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" and this is the Person of the Son of God, for "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

How holy men of old sighed and cried for an experimental knowledge of God's truth! "Lead me in your truth;" "Send out your light and your truth;" "O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve me." And when the Son of God came in the flesh, and thus brought down truth into visible manifestation, how those who were born of God beheld his glory, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" How dear also to God himself in his truth! Thus he is said to have "magnified his word above all his name;" that is, exalted and glorified his revealed truth above all his other attributes and perfections. Now, if truth be so precious in itself, so precious to God, so precious to all the saints of God, should it not be also precious to us? It will be so if we have the mind of Christ, and his Spirit dwell in us. But as a love of holiness necessarily includes as well as implies a hatred of, and a fleeing from sin, so will a love of truth contain in it a hatred of, and a fleeing from, error. Indifference never yet was counted a mark of love, whether human or divine. Warmth, zeal, earnestness, devotedness, are not only sure marks of love, but are so intimately interwoven with its very essence, that they cannot be separated from it.

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Experimental Preaching by J. C. Philpot

A ministry without power never was, never can be, profitable or acceptable to the church of God. In what striking language does Paul declare what his own ministry was as regards this point, and the effect produced by it in the hearts of those to whom it was blessed: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." How carefully does he here distinguish between the "word" and the "power" as regards his own ministry; and, speaking of that of others, how he examines it by the same decisive test: "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

This, then, is the grand distinctive and decisive difference between the ministration of "the letter" and of "the Spirit,"—that the one is an empty sound, a mere babbling noise, and the other a life-giving power; that the one genders to bondage and death, and the other ministers grace to the hearers, and works effectually in those that believe. But if a man has never felt the power of God in his own soul, how can he minister power to others? Life and power, dew and savor, must be in a man's heart before they can be on a man's lips. For this special gift and grace of heaven there can be no substitute. Learning, abilities, and eloquence, are not to be despised or set aside, for they may be dedicated to the service of the sanctuary; but they are miserable substitutes for that live coal from off the altar with which God touches the lips of his sent servants. Paul, Augustine, and Luther, had all these three gifts in an eminent degree; nor did they make Paul a less able apostle, Augustine a less admirable expositor, or Luther a less intrepid or successful reformer. But far above and beyond all these natural gifts was that divine power which rested upon them and clothed their words with a heavenly influence to the souls of men.

Now, if this, to us fundamental principle, be not deeply grafted in a minister's

heart, and there kept perpetually alive by the teaching of the Spirit, he will be fully satisfied with a mere letter drift; or if for a while he seem to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," he will almost inevitably, sooner or later, be drawn aside from the path of experimental truth. This, then, is, or should be, the feeling of every servant of God, "I am nothing but by God's making; I have nothing but by God's giving; I know nothing but by God's teaching; I feel nothing (aright) but by God's inspiring; and I can do nothing but by God's working." The deep and daily sense of his own thorough helplessness and insufficiency, combined with a living experience of the grace and strength of Christ made perfect in his weakness, will keep him on experimental ground; and as the blessed Spirit works in him fresh and fresh discoveries of sin and salvation, misery and mercy, ruin and recovery, hell and heaven, so will he give out what is given in; "his heart will teach his mouth, and add learning (the right kind of learning) to his lips."

Every trial and temptation, furnace and flood, every assault from without or within, every rising venom of indwelling sin, and every fiery dart from the artillery of hell, will only root and ground him more deeply in experimental truth, as every storm roots and grounds the oak more firmly in the soil; and every beam and ray of the Sun of Righteousness, with every drop of dew upon his branch, and every shower of rain on his root, will draw him more and more out of pride and self into the light and air of heaven. Thus, night and day, winter and summer, storm and sun, cold and heat, the lowly valley's gloom and the shining mountain top, all combine in grace, as in creation, to carry on God's work, and strengthen and ripen the tree of his right hand planting in the church of God.

As long as a man is thus graciously dealt with, he will be held on experimental ground; and his soul being kept alive by the power of God, and he being *in* the things of which he speaks, a life, power, and freshness will accompany his word; and this will not only commend itself to the conscience of the family of God, but be conveyed with a sweetness and savor to their hearts. But let a minister of truth get into a smooth and easy path, let sin cease to vex him, Satan to plague him, the world to hate him, professors to slander him, and God to bless him, his preaching, though still on the same basis, and still dealing outwardly with the same things, from inevitable necessity will get dull and dry. This leanness of spirit and barrenness of ministry, unless wonderfully puffed up by pride and conceit, he will soon begin himself to feel. He becomes sensible by degrees of a sameness in his preaching. The supply in the tank being so often drawn upon and not fed again and again with a rising

spring, gets lower and lower, and the water more vapid and tasteless, until it seems almost to breed corruption and death in himself and the hearers.

Now here is the turning point with him, whether he is all his days to be to the church of God an old, useless, worn out rain-water butt, or a flowing brook. If left still unexercised, he will soon have little else but staves and hoops; if God turn his hand a second time, and once more deal graciously with him, living water will again flow. But assume the former case. Let the rod and the kiss, the frown and the smile, the affliction and the consolation, the trial and the deliverance be alike suspended; let the Lord for his own wise purposes leave him to settle on his lees; let him remain cold, barren, and dry in his soul, such will be his ministry; and those divine realities in living experience which he once found sweetness in declaring and the people in hearing, now becoming dead and lifeless to him, it comes to this point, that either he must keep going over the same ground over and over again, until, like a tethered donkey, his teeth and hoofs have worn out every blade of grass, or he must break his tether and get something new, for his leanness rises up in his face, and his own barrenness is evidently starving the people.

Some men, either too blind to see, too dead to feel it, or too proud to confess it, resolutely hold on to the same ground. Lord's day after Lord's day, there is the same dead dry prayer, and the same dead dry sermon. Not only is the same old tale told, but in almost the same words, with nothing new but the text. Now this may be called preaching experience, and so in a sense it is; but it is a preaching which beggars the soul; and we do believe that much of the lean and miserable state of many experimental churches is owing to this feeding them on the picked and gnawed bones and the old dry crusts of a dead, worn-out experience. No wonder that such preaching as this is despised, and that people are prejudiced against experimental preaching, when this is considered experimental.

But this no more resembles real experimental preaching than the manna which bred worms and stank resembled the manna which fell with the morning dew, or the dry and moldy bread of the Gibeonites was like the cake baked by the angel for Elijah, or their old shoes and clouted were the same as the shoes of iron and brass which God put on the feet of his people.

Many mistakes are made on this point. There is a creed of experience, as there is a creed of doctrine, which may be learned exactly in the same dead and dry way; there are certain generally recognized and almost consecrated terms, a

set of current phrases, which, having been used in time past by real experimental ministers, have been handed down as a religious Shibboleth, a ministerial stock in trade; and he who has learned this key and obtained these pass-words, comes forward as an experimental servant of God, and puts himself at once, or is put by others, on the roll of the divinely-sent ambassadors of heaven. But as a man does not become the Queen's ambassador to the Court of Austria because he can speak a little German, nor to the Court of France because he can gabble a little French, so it is not a set of experimental phrases which makes a man an ambassador from the King of kings to the Court of Zion.

But many weak, timid children of God cannot see through words into things, and though sensible of increasing deadness and barrenness under the ministry of such men, take all the blame to themselves, reverencing, with almost abject superstition, the minister, because he is a minister, and believing his words must be words of grace because they are pronounced in a certain way, and are so familiar to their ears that they have become consecrated in their eyes with a kind of religious value.

But words at best are but words; and unless there be something more than word, however consistent it be with truth, such a ministry will but make empty the soul of the hungry and cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

But it is hard to come down from the pulpit to their fit place—the pew; thus they still keep on preaching and still maintain the name and credit of being experimental ministers; and highly offended they would be if told they were more of a burden than a benefit to the church of God, and rather plundered than fed the flock of slaughter.

Perceiving this evil, seeing how dead and dry a thing experimental preaching has much become, and observing how lean and impoverished the church of God gets through it, others long to break through the narrow circle in which they have already walked. "We want," say they, "more enlarged views of God's word. Why should we be ever treading the narrow circle of doubts and fears, comforts and blessings? Why be ever tracing out marks of grace, and talking just as our poor old minister used to talk in years gone by? Why not break forth into something different from what we have heard over and over again until we are weary of the very name of experience?"

Now just as a man is in this state of mind, not held down to experimental

things by inward trials, but weary and ashamed of his own leanness and the leanness of others, the letter of God's word seems to open a door out of this worn-out pasture. Some new view of doctrine, or some light upon prophecy, or some fresh discovery, as it appears, of church government, or some insight into the precept, or some entrance into the types and figures of the Mosaic dispensation—it matters not what it is, but a new light seems to break in on his mind. His views, once so narrow and contracted, become enlarged; he reads and studies the Scripture and seems to gather with every reading more and more knowledge. No, the light which thus breaks in, as he thinks, on his mind, is attended with a power which he had not for some time felt. His zeal is kindled, his mouth opened, or his pen seized, and he cannot but give vent to his views and feelings.

This new view of doctrine may be but a revived heresy or a long-exploded error; his light upon prophecy may be merely borrowed from books and authors, or gathered up by himself from a comparison of parallel passages, without one word got on his knees or dropped into his soul; his principles of church government may be altogether visionary and impracticable and his insight into types and figures partly stolen and partly fanciful; or to put it in the most favorable light, all his views may be quite sound and in accordance with the letter of Scripture. But whatever they be, they are not wrought into his soul by the power of God; they are not *burnt* into him in the furnace; they are not made his own by the teaching of the blessed Spirit; they are not revealed and applied to his heart, and thus made part and parcel of a living experience; nor are they received in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit. At best they are but opinions floating in the brain, views presented to the eye of an intellectual religion scanning the Scriptures as a map maker or a landscape painter scans the features of an outstretched tract of country; or a theory gathered from the word, much as a student of history gathers up facts from chronicles and gazettes, and welds them into a compact system of political narrative.

Why, the remedy is worse than the disease! While on experimental ground, he was so far safe, that if he had but little to say, that little was sound. He could coast along the bays and headlands, and knew something about where he was, though the voyage did not reach very far, and was but a going from port to port along the shore. But now he has left all his old landmarks and well-known buoys, and boldly pushed out to sea, sailing up and down the letter of the word, far, far away from the ancient track. A man thus suddenly starting forward, may think himself wonderfully advanced, a very giant compared

with his former dwarfish stature and the stunted forms of others.

But he has made a sad mistake in this matter. Letter is not Spirit, knowledge is not grace, light is not experience, word is not power, head is not heart, parallel passages are not applied promises. One would think that a man's own conscience would convince him that all this suddenly acquired knowledge lacks that sacred dew and heavenly unction which ever accompany the teaching of the Spirit, and that it is too rapid to be real. One would think that a man possessed of godly fear, instead of sailing along in this confident way on the letter of the word, with flowing sheet and outstretched sail, would rather tremble at every rising cloud lest it forebode a storm that might sink his ship, and shrink from the approach of every man-of-war, lest as an unlicensed sea rover and pirate, he should be summarily strung up at the yard-arm.

We speak of what we know and have felt, and are not writing upon these matters in the dark or at a distance. Did our conscience permit, we could sail along with the best of these sea rovers, hoist as high a mast, and spread as wide a sail; but we have a silent monitor within which keeps us on experimental ground—the only ground on which man or minister, preacher or writer, can safely keep. We could, if we were so minded, sail along with them on the sea of unfulfilled prophecy, explain the historical meaning of the Scriptures, fire shot and shell at all doubt or fear, dive into the mystical signification of type and figure, proverb and parable, heap text upon text and parallel passage upon passage, and skim over the surface of the letter like a revenue cutter. A very few minutes would suffice to give us all their faith and all their confidence; for we well know the men and their communication.

But what would conscience say within, and what should we feel to stand up before the church of God in Saul's armor? Could we get it on, like David we should soon gladly put it off, and come to the weapons we can handle, and of which we have proved the efficacy—the sling and the stone, and the shepherd's simple garb. We look, then, at all this heap of words, and we put it at its right figure—0. A cipher will sum up its full value. Men may preach, and write, and set off their enlarged views with appeal after appeal to the written word; (text after text may stud their writings, as dew drops the grass, but if they have not learned what they preach and write in the furnace of affliction, and by the teaching of the Spirit, all such knowledge is worthless and vain. They may think or call it what they please, but we unhesitatingly say, unless learned in the path of tribulation and through the power of God in their soul, Ichabod is its name and Tekel its value.

Bring, then, before us what you may, unless it be stamped by the power of God, we may boldly say, This is not religion; this is not gracious experience; this is not tasting and handling the word of life; nor is it a part of "the secret of the Lord," which is "with those that fear him." "But," say they, "we got quite tired of experimental preaching." Very likely. "And we saw that the people were getting tired of it too." More likely still; that is, of *your* preaching. "And now we are all life." Most likely of all as regards yourself; though we doubt whether the people of God are as lively under your new preaching as you.

But this is no proof that the thing is of God. Ranters are lively; Mormonites are lively; and Sisters of Mercy and fresh-cloistered nuns are lively. Such is the very constitution of the human mind, that all new things sensibly affect it; and therefore new views in religion electrify it out of torpor and dullness. But this is merely a stirring up of the animal spirits, an effect produced upon the mind, the intellectual principle, as distinct from the gracious and spiritual principle. "Ah! but we preach with more power than we did; our hearts are more in it, and we are more earnest and warm." Now, suppose that you had been converted to Popery. Would not there have been the same earnestness, the same fixing of the mind on eternal things, the same warmth, and zeal, and fervor? Most probably much more; but we mention this extreme case to show the effect that any change of views produces on the mind.

We learned a lesson on this subject about 25 years ago, which has been of wonderful service to us. It was just at the time when Irvingism broke out with its gifts of tongues, miracles, etc.; and an intimate friend of ours, then a leader and preacher of name and fame, fell headlong into it. He had gone to London, witnessed what were called the "manifestations" in Mr. Irving's chapel, and came home as confirmed a believer in the divine origin of these things as ever Irving had. But the most striking part was the visible effect produced upon him by the change. Praying and fasting day by day, reading the Scriptures incessantly, preaching and visiting the sick continually, and a most unwearied striving after inward and outward holiness, so wrought upon his mind and body, that the poor man in a few weeks was but the ghost of himself. And what produced all this? What he himself after a while renounced and denounced as a delusion of Satan. Thus being an eye-witness of what a wonderful effect new views can produce, it gave us an insight into natural religion and the deceptiveness of mere zeal, fervor, and fleshly holiness, which has helped us to read some enigmas in the professing world which might

otherwise have puzzled us to decipher.

If we look for stability in any man, it is in a minister of experimental truth. He comes forward as one taught of God, as one who has tasted, felt, and handled the word of life, as one set down and established by the Holy Spirit in the truth as it is in Jesus. He stands up before the church of God as eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, as a guide, an instructor, a counselor, a friend. He is a steward of the mysteries of God, in whom it is required that he be found faithful; an ambassador of the King of kings, and as such, deeply interested in his Master's honor; a servant of Jesus Christ, whose highest privilege is personally to know his Lord's will and do it, and ministerially to make it known to others, for obedience of faith. For one occupying such a post, instability is, to say the least, a grievous defect. If the officer wavers, if the standard-bearer faints, what confusion it makes among the rank and file! To see a minister of truth, then, waver and show himself, like Reuben, "unstable as water," saps the very foundation of our confidence that he is taught of God, throws a discredit upon the whole of his ministry, and creates strong grounds for fear that what he advanced before his change he learned merely in the letter, and not by the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in his soul.

But what makes the instability of a minister of such consequence is, that it affects others as well as himself. Many children of God, though right at heart, are exceedingly weak in judgment; and in their eyes a minister is almost a sacred being, who cannot err. If he be possessed of apparently great spirituality of mind—a thing, by the way, easily assumed, they are overawed by his eminent sanctity; and if he can talk and argue ably and fluently, they are overwhelmed by the waterfall of words, and though really not convinced, yet are silenced into acquiescence.

To our mind one of the greatest mysteries in religion is the difference between the power of truth on the natural conscience, and the power of truth on the spiritual conscience; between the faith produced in the natural mind by the letter of the word, and the faith wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God through the spirit of the word. And yet in this lies all the difference between a professor and a possessor, between the damned and the saved. Here is the rock on which thousands split; here is the grand deceit of Satan as an angel of light—that a man may have all faith, and yet be nothing. Yes; have the strongest and most unwavering faith in his natural mind, generated there by the letter of the word, and yet live and die in his sins an unpardoned criminal, an unsanctified rebel; may have the most implicit faith in Jesus Christ, and

yet die out of Christ; may believe the promise, and have no interest in the promise; obey the precept, and yet be damned for disobedience.

This is the grand key of the cabinet; and he who holds not this key in his hand, be he preacher or writer that attempts to describe the work of the Spirit, will but fumble, for without it he cannot unlock one secret drawer of the heart, or penetrate into any one innermost recess of nature, or of grace. Tremendous mystery, yet not more tremendous than true, that between a spiritual and a natural faith lay all the difference between David and Saul, between John and Judas, and that on it hangs life or death, heaven or hell, unutterable bliss or eternal despair!

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Doctrinal preachers
by J. C. Philpot

Some people cannot understand why the doctrinal preachers of our day should not be as highly esteemed and as greatly blessed as the doctrinal preachers of the last century. They do not see the wide difference between receiving the truth at first hand and at second hand. When Toplady preached election, and Whitefield urged the new birth, they preached what their souls had received directly and immediately from God. It was not with them a second or third running, but the pure blood of the grape. Their souls had drunk of the wine of the kingdom; and, like the apostles on the day of Pentecost, they preached under its influence. Peter preaching Christ's resurrection at Jerusalem; Athanasius contending for the Trinity at Alexandria; Luther declaring justification by Christ's righteousness at Wittenberg; Knox thundering against Popery at St. Andrews; Whitefield pouring out his very soul in enforcing the new birth in Moorfields; Toplady urging election at Orange Street Chapel—all preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

Many ministers now preach just the same truths; but are they equally blessed? No! Why not? Because they have not received them in the same way, nor do they preach them under the same power and influence. Their thunders are mimic thunders; their preaching is rather acting than preaching. Some one asked to see the sword of Scanderbeg, a celebrated warrior against the Turks, which was preserved in a museum. "Why," exclaimed he, "there is

nothing remarkable in this sword." "No," was the reply; "but you should have seen the arm which wielded it." So the doctrines of justification, as preached by Luther, and of the new birth, as urged by Whitefield, may be stated by any white-cravated youth, with a few hairs on his chin. It may be the sword of Scanderbeg; but where is the hand that made it drunk with the blood of the slain? The secret of all preaching and of all writing is the power of the Holy Spirit; and if that be denied, the tongue and pen are both those of the stage-actor!

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Sanctification

By J. C. Philpot

As from the cross flows all *salvation*, so from the cross flows all *sanctification*. What have not men done, to make themselves holy; and by this means render themselves, as they have thought, acceptable to God! What tortures of body, what fastings, scourgings, self-imposed penances to sanctify their sinful nature, and conform their rebellious flesh to the holiness demanded by the law! And with what success? They have landed either in self-righteousness or despair—though at opposite points of the compass.

The flesh cannot be sanctified. It is essentially and incurably corrupt; and therefore, if we are to possess that inward holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," it must be by Christ being "of God, made unto us sanctification," as well as righteousness—sanctifying us not only "with his own blood," (Heb. 13:13,) but by his Spirit and grace. If we believe in Him, we shall love him ("unto you which believe, he is precious;") if we love him, we shall seek to please, and fear to displease him; if we believe in Him, by the gift and work of God, this divine and living faith will purify our heart, overcome the world, produce that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace, give union and communion with the Lord of life and glory; and every believing view of him, every act of faith upon him, and every visit from him, will conform us to his likeness, as the Apostle speaks: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

If, then, we are to feel an inward power sanctifying our hearts, drawing up our minds to heavenly things, subduing our sins, meekening and softening our

spirit, separating us from the world, filling us with holy thoughts, gracious desires, and pure affections, and thus making us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," this inward sanctification must flow wholly and solely from the Blessed Spirit, as the gift of a risen Jesus: as he himself said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:7, 14).

It is not, then, the hair-shirt, the monk's cell, the midnight vigil, the protracted fast; no, nor the soothing strains of the swelling organ, the melodious chant of surpliced choristers, the "dim religious light" of the stained Gothic window; no, nor the terrors of the Law, the accusations of conscience, the tears, cries and resolutions of a heart that still loves sin, though professing to repent of it; no, nor gloomy looks, neglected apparel, softly uttered words, slow walk, holiness of face, manner, and gesture, hollow voice, demure countenance, a choice assortment of Scripture words and phrases on every occasion, or no occasion; no, nor all the array of piety and sanctity which Satan, transformed into an angel of light, has devised to deceive thousands, that can purge the conscience from the guilt, filth, love, power and practice of sin, or raise up that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Like the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, they may, and even that very imperfectly, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; but it is the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, which can alone purge the conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve the living God; and it is the work of the blessed Spirit alone which, by revealing Christ, and forming him in the heart, "the hope of glory," can create and bring forth that new man of grace which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him.

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The Two Natures in a Believer
By J. C. Philpot

Among those branches of divine truth which, without special teaching, we cannot enter into, is, that of *the two natures* in a believer. And yet, though

every child of God must in all ages have been experimentally acquainted with the inward conflict between flesh and spirit, nature and grace; and though authors innumerable have written on such subjects as sanctification, the trial of faith, the strength of grace, the power of sin, the deceitfulness of the heart, the commencement and progress, decline and restoration, of the life of God in the soul, yet how few even of these really spiritual and experimental writers have laid out the truth of the case as made known in the Scriptures, and felt in the experience of the saints! How blind have many gracious writers, as, for instance, Dr. Owen, and most of the Puritan authors, been to the distinctness of flesh and spirit! In fact, as it seems to us, many good men have been afraid of the real, actual truth. Our Puritan ancestors especially, living in a day when profanity and ungodliness ran down the streets like water, and holiness, therefore, of heart and life was powerfully urged as the distinctive feature of the children of God, intuitively shrank from anything that seemed in its faintest coloring opposed to their view of gospel sanctification. They feared to believe, and dreaded to proclaim, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be." They seemed to think, if they once admitted that the flesh, the carnal mind, underwent no spiritual change; in other words, could not be sanctified; it was opening a wide and open door to the worst Antinomianism.

There is a distinction between "the flesh" and "the carnal mind." The flesh is the corrupt principle itself: the carnal mind is the breathing, moving, and acting of the corrupt principle. The flesh is, as it were, the body, the carnal mind the soul of sin; the flesh is the still atmosphere, pregnant with disease and death; the carnal mind is the same air in motion, carrying with it the noisome pestilence; the flesh is a giant, but lying down or asleep; the carnal mind is the giant awake and hurling his weapons of defiance against heaven and earth.

On no one point, it may be remarked, are the minds of men professing some measure of truth so sensitive as upon that of the believer's personal sanctification. You may be three parts an Arminian, and four-fifths of a Pharisee, and men will speak well of you and of your religion; no, many even of God's children will think favorably of you. But be in their eyes one-tenth of an Antinomian, and they will unchristianise you in a moment, if you had the experience of Hart, the gifts of Huntington, the godly life of Romaine, and the blessed death of Toplady. Now, nothing so much exposes a man to the suspicion of secret Antinomianism as his denying the sanctification of the flesh. The cry is at once raised, "You are an enemy to holiness; you turn the

grace of God into licentiousness; you allow people to live as they list; you encourage men under a profession of religion to continue in sin."

Who does not know the charges which they ring on this peal of bells against all who assert that the flesh is incurably corrupt, and cannot be molded afresh, or new modeled, or sanctified, or conformed to the image of Christ, but remains to the last what it was at the first, "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts?" We may oppose to these clamorous reproaches a godly life, a gospel walk, a spiritual mindedness, a heavenly conversation, a filial fear, a tender conscience, a separation from evil, a liberality to the poor and needy, and a deadness to the world of which our opponents profess little and manifest less; but all in vain. The very suspicion that we deny the holiness of the flesh, present or possible, makes us viewed by most of the "very religious" people of our day much as the Protestant heretic is looked upon by the staunch Papist—a kind of horrid being, who may, perhaps, by a death-bed conversion to their views, and a full recantation of his own, escape hell, but who, at present, is in a very awful and dangerous condition.

But leaving these poor ignorant creatures who speak evil of things that they know not, and who are actuated by much the same principle and spirit as those of old who said of the Lord himself, "He has a devil, and is mad; why hear you him?" let us look for a few moments at a very different class of people to whom the mystery of the two natures is but little known. These are the honest and sincere, the tender in conscience and broken in heart of the children of God, who, for want of divine light on this point, are often deeply tried and perplexed, and sometimes almost at their wit's end from what they feel of the inward workings and strength of sin. They are told, and their naturally religious mind, their traditionary creed, and their unenlightened understanding, all fully fall in with what they hear enforced on their conscience, that the sanctification of the soul, without which there is no salvation, is a gradual progress from one degree of holiness to another, until, with the exception of a few insignificant "remains" of sin, which, from some unknown cause, obstinately resist the sanctifying process, the believer becomes thoroughly holy, in body, soul, and spirit. Sin, they are told, may occasionally stir up a bad thought or two, or now and then a carnal desire may most unaccountably start up; but its power is destroyed, the rebellious movement is immediately subdued, the hasty spark, which straight is cool again, is put out at once without further damage, and the process of sanctification keeps going on as harmoniously and uninterruptedly as before,

until the soul is almost as fit for heaven as if it were already there.

Beautiful theory! but as deceptive and as unsubstantial as the mirage of the desert, or the summer evening cloud bathed in the golden glow of the sinking sun. And so those sincere, honest-hearted children of God find and feel when "the motions of sin which are by the law," stirred and roused from their torpid inactivity by its application, work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death.

The doctrine of progressive sanctification, implying, as it does, in the mouth of its strenuous advocates, the gradual extirpation of sin and the molding of the carnal mind into the image of Christ, is to the honest and tender conscience a torturing doctrine, pregnant with guilt, bondage, and despair. To a man who merely plays with religion, all doctrines are pretty much alike. None cause him trouble, and none cause him joy. The holiness of God, the spirituality and curse of the law, the evil of sin, the helplessness of the creature, the sinfulness of the flesh, the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, as long as they are mere doctrines, have no more effect upon the conscience than a narrative of the battle of Alma or an account of the fight at Inkermann. To a professor of religion dead in his unregeneracy, the fall of man is nothing like so stirring as the fall of Sebastopol; and the recovery by Christ does not give him half so much pleasure as the recovery from a bad cold. These are the men to preach progressive sanctification; and none urge it so continually, and press it so forcibly, except, perhaps, those that are living in sin, who are usually the greatest advocates for holiness, either as a mask of their practice, or on the principle of a set off, that, having none of their own, they may get as much as they can of other people's. "In for a penny, in for a pound," is the maxim of a man who runs into debt without meaning to pay.

And so, if a man means to pay God nothing of the obedience and holiness which he urges upon others, he thinks he cannot do better than get into debt as deep as he can. None set the ladder so high as the master who stops at the foot, and urges his man on to the topmost round. None lay such heavy burdens on men's shoulders as those who themselves never touch them with one of their fingers; and none wield so unmercifully the whip as those who have never felt the end of the lash. To all such miserable taskmasters the tried and distressed in soul may well say, "What is play to you is death to us; you are in jest, but we are in earnest; you are at your ease, we are laboring to attain unto what you only talk about. The holiness that you are preaching we are striving to practice. Your flashes of exhortation are but summer lightning,

and your denunciations but stage thunder; while we are at the foot of the mount that burned with fire, and where there was blackness and darkness and tempest.

The sanctification of the flesh that you urge may do for you who have learned your lesson at the academy, and preach what you neither know, nor understand, nor feel—blind leaders of the blind, as you and your tutors are. Such a doctrine lies with no more weight on your conscience than the preacher's gown upon your back, or the gold ring upon your little finger; but it is not so with us, who are daily and hourly groaning beneath a body of sin and death. It is the load of sin that so deeply tries us, and our utter inability to bring forth the holiness that you urge upon our sore and bleeding consciences. It is our base backslidings, our sins against love and blood, our barrenness and deadness; the dreadful depravity of our hearts; our getting every day worse instead of getting every day better, that so deeply tries us: and your doctrine rubs salt into our bleeding, gaping wounds."

To such tried and distressed souls as these, who have been harassed almost to death by the doctrine of progressive sanctification, how reviving and encouraging it is when the mystery of the two natures is opened up to their spiritual understanding, and sealed upon their conscience by the Blessed Spirit!

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**Disease & Remedy
by J. C. Philpot**

As no heart can sufficiently conceive, so no tongue can adequately express, the state of wretchedness and ruin into which sin has cast guilty, miserable man.

**In separating him from God, it has severed him from the only Source and fountain of all happiness and all holiness. It has ruined him, body and soul. The body it has filled with sickness and disease. The soul it has defaced, and destroyed the image of God in which it was created. It has . . .
shattered all his mental faculties;
broken his judgment,
polluted his imagination,
alienated his affections.**

It has made him love sin—and hate God. It has filled him from top to toe with pride, lust, and cruelty, and has been the prolific parent of all those crimes and abominations under which earth groans, the bare recital of some of which has filled so many hearts with disgust and horror. These are the more visible fruits of the fall.

But nearer home, in our own hearts—in what we are or have been, we find and feel what wreck and ruin sin has made! There can be no greater mark of alienation from God than willfully and deliberately to seek pleasure and delight in things which His holiness abhors.

But who of the family of God has not been guilty here? Every movement and inclination of our natural mind, every desire and lust of our carnal heart, was, in times past, to find pleasure and gratification in something abhorrent to the will and word of the living Jehovah.

There are few of us who, in the days of our flesh, have not sought pleasure in some of its varied but deceptive forms. The theater, the race-course, the dance, the sports, the card-table, the midnight revel, "the pleasures of sin" were resorted to by some of us.

Our mad, feverish, thirst after excitement—the continued cry of our wicked flesh, "Give, give!"—our miserable recklessness or headlong, daring determination to 'enjoy ourselves', as we called it, cost what it would, plunged us again and again into the sea of sin, where, but for sovereign grace, we would have sunk to rise no more!

Or, if the 'restraints of morality' put their check upon gross and sinful pleasures, there still was a seeking after such "allowable amusements" (as we deemed them), as change of scene and place, foreign travel, the reading of novels and works of fiction, fine dress, visiting, building up airy castles of love and romance, studying how to obtain human applause, devising plans of self-advancement and self-gratification, occupying the mind with cherished studies, and delighting ourselves in those pursuits for which we had a natural taste—as music, drawing, poetry, or, it might be, severer studies and scientific researches.

We have named these middle-class pursuits as less obvious sins—than such gross crimes as drunkenness and vile debauchery in the lower walks of life.

But, viewed with a spiritual eye, all are equally stamped with the same fatal brand of death in sin.

**The moral and the immoral,
the refined and the unrefined,
the polished few or the crude many,
are alike "without God and without hope in the world."**

We are often met with this question, "What harm is there in this pursuit—or in that amusement?" The harm is, that the amusement is delighted in for its own sake; that it occupies the mind, and fills the thoughts, shutting God out; that it renders spiritual things distasteful; that it sets up an idol in the heart, and is made a substitute for God.

Now this we never really know nor feel, until divine light illuminates the mind, and divine life quickens the soul. We then begin to see and feel into what a miserable state sin has cast us; how all our life long we have done nothing but what God abhors; that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts has been evil, and only evil continually; that we have brought ourselves under the stroke of God's justice, under the curse of His righteous law, and now there appears nothing but death and destruction before our eyes, and unless we poor slaves of sin, Satan, and death were redeemed, we could not be reconciled to God.

And yet, with all this misery and wretchedness, through all this remorse for the past—and dread for the future, there are raised up desires after God—the fruit and work of his grace in the heart. These are the first breathings after communion with God, the first movement of the soul quickened from above towards its Father and Friend.

But whence comes this movement of the soul upward and heavenward? What is the foundation on which a sinner may venture near, yes, as brought near, may realize what holy John speaks of, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ?" (1 John 1:3.)

God himself has laid the foundation in the gift of his dear Son. Had Jesus not taken our nature into union with his own divine Person, there never could have been any communion of man with God. This is beautifully unfolded by the Apostle. (Heb. 2.) "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and

deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." "The children whom God had given him" were partakers of flesh and blood. But this flesh and blood had sinned, was become alienated from God, was tyrannized over by the devil, was subject to death, and the judgment that comes after death, and the fear of death held them in continual bondage. Unless these poor slaves of sin, Satan, and death were redeemed, they could not be reconciled to God, or brought near so as to have any fellowship or communion with him. But the Son of God "took on him the seed of Abraham," that is, he assumed human nature as derived from Abraham; for the Virgin Mary, of whose flesh he took, was lineally descended from Abraham; and thus was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And so "in all things being made like unto his brethren," (sin only excepted, of which he had no taint or stain,) "he became a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Without this redemption, without this reconciliation, there could be no communion. Communion means fellowship; fellowship implies mutual participation and mutual interest. It is not single, but twofold—a community of nature, or interest, or affection, in which each party gives and takes. Thus the foundation of all communion with God is laid in this blessed truth, that the Son of God has taken our flesh; this gives him communion with man. He is himself God; this gives him communion with God. In the ladder that Jacob saw in vision, the lowest part rested on earth, the highest was lost in heaven. Thus the human nature of Christ touches earth with its sorrows, but his divine rises up to heaven with its glory; and man, poor, wretched man, may, by having communion with Christ in his sufferings, have communion with God in his love. John blessedly opens up this in his first epistle—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." (1 John 1:1.)

What had John heard from the beginning? What had he seen with his eyes? What had he looked upon, and his hands had handled of the Word of life? What but the Son of God in the flesh? His ears had heard the voice; his eyes had seen the form; his hands had handled the feet and hands of the Word of life; and not merely bodily, for that would no more have given him life than it did the Jewish officers who bound his hands, or the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross. It was the spiritual manifestation of the Word of Life to his soul, (as he himself declares—"For the life was manifested, and we have

seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,") which enabled him to say, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3.)

Now, as this divine way is opened up to our hearts, we begin to find access to God through Jesus Christ, as "the way, the truth, and the life." Until he is in some measure revealed and made known to the soul, there is no ground of access to God. Sin, guilt, and condemnation block up the path; the law curses, conscience condemns, Satan accuses, and in self there is neither help nor hope. But as Christ is revealed and made known, and the virtue and efficacy of his blood is seen and felt, faith becomes strengthened to approach the Father through him, until after many a struggle between hope and despair, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and this gives fellowship with God.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7

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The depth of the fall
by J. C. Philpot

Most clear and decisive are the testimonies which the Holy Spirit has given in the word of truth to the depth of the fall—so clear and decisive that the wonder is how men professing to receive the Scriptures as an inspired revelation can dispute or deny what is so plainly declared by Him who cannot be deceived and who cannot lie. In fact, the whole testimony of God from first to last—from the page which records the murder of the martyred Abel to that which writes on the heavenly city, "For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie"—is a declaration of what man is as a fallen sinner before the eyes of infinite Purity. What man has done when left to himself, and therefore what human nature is, as a turbid and corrupt fountain, to pour forth such streams of unutterable abomination, is most vividly drawn by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:21-32.

Look at the summing up of the long catalogue of crime, enough to make the

sun hide its face from such debasement of that nature created in the image of God, once so fair and beautiful, so innocent and so pure, in which not a vain thought or sensual desire ruffled the calm of that spotless heart in which the features of its glorious Creator so brightly shone. Compare man in Paradise with the brutal monster, the obscene wretch of the pagan sty thus described—"They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, disputes, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Although they know full well God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them." (Romans 1:29-32)

Can human language paint man's portrait in darker colors? Is there one bright tint to relieve this mass of shade? one fair and beautiful quality to redeem human nature from such unqualified denunciation? But it may be said, Paul is here describing the Gentile world, and picturing the abominations practiced in his days, before Christianity had dawned upon the earth, before that mild and beneficent dispensation had shone into the dark corners of the globe, and put to flight the crimes of heathenism and idolatry. True, he is describing the depths of human depravity as then manifested in the Gentile world, the crimes practiced without remorse or shame by the polished Greek and civilized Roman; and that his description is not exaggerated is well known to every one at all acquainted with the literature of that period. But after all this deduction, the question still recurs—How did human nature come to be so outwardly vile, unless it were inwardly base? How could lips utter words, how could hands perpetrate deeds of such filth and blood, unless the heart first conceived the thoughts which brought forth such horrid fruit? Surely the fountain must be bitter, to give forth such bitter waters; the tree must be corrupt, to bear such "grapes of gall," the wine of which is "the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps."

But has Christianity done so much? Has it reformed mankind and regenerated the human race? It has, thanks be to God, done much for man and more for woman; it has banished into darkness crimes once committed in the light of day; it has alleviated the horrors of war; elevated woman to the side of man, whence she was originally taken; and spread principles of morality and kindness far and wide, which influence the minds of thousands who still live and die in all the darkness and death of unregeneracy.

But beyond this outward reformation—and that most scanty and partial—the heart of man is still a fountain of evil, casting forth its wickedness. It is still corrupt to the very center, foul to the very core—a running, reeking, heaving, fermenting mass of filth and folly, full of deceit and hypocrisy, unbelief and infidelity, murmuring and blasphemy, lust and sensuality, murder and enmity, rebellion and despair, increasing in wickedness down to its lowest depths—for far, far beyond all human sight, unfathomable abysses of crime stretch themselves, which, like a volcano, only make themselves known by the boiling lava which they continually throw up.

One sentence of the Holy Spirit has often struck our mind as depicting more than any other what the heart of man really is—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8:7.) Enmity against God must not only include in its bosom the seeds of every other crime, but be in itself the worst of all crimes. To be an enemy to God must be a most awful position for a creature of his hand to stand in; but to be enmity itself must be the concentrated essence of sin and misery. An enemy may be reconciled, appeased, turned into a friend; but enmity, never. That dies, if die it can, fighting; that is proof against all love; that seeks only occasion by the very kindness of its benefactor to hate him more—hates him most for his goodness; that knows no pity, feels no remorse, is subject to no control, is unappeasable and irreconcilable, and would sooner bear its own inward hell of hate than enjoy a heaven of love.

And when we think for a moment who and what the great and glorious God is, against whom this reptile heart bears an enmity so enduring and so wicked; when we view him by the eye of faith as filling heaven and earth with his glory, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, and yet day after day loading all his creatures with benefits, and to his people so full of the tenderest love and compassion—then to see a dying mortal, whom one frown can hurl from all the pride of health and vigor into the lowest hell of misery and woe, spewing forth, like some miserable toad, his spit and venom against the glorious King of kings and Lord of lords—well may we stand amazed at the height of that presumption and the depth of that wickedness which can so arm a 'worm of earth' against the 'Majesty of heaven'.

But worse than all, to come nearer home, to find our own heart, our own carnal mind, still what the Holy Spirit has described it, "enmity" against the God of all our mercies—that is the worst, the cruelest blow of all!

Men fight against sovereign grace; yet what but sovereign grace can meet a case so desperate as ours? What but a salvation without money and without price, what but the length and breadth, and depth, and height of the dying love of an incarnate God, and the atoning blood of a dear Redeemer can suit or save such miserable wretches! And what but the almighty power and invincible grace of the Holy Spirit can communicate to the soul, sunk so low into carnality and death, that wondrous birth from above whereby it is "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?"

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**The experience of a believer
by J. C. Philpot**

There is a striking similarity between the history of the church and the experience of a believer. Nor is this coincidence casual, but necessarily connected with their mutual position, the body and the members being affected by the same circumstances, and being dependent on the same causes of health or decay. Thus the first is as the volume of which the second is a page; the one being the history of centuries, and the other the record of a life.

This similarity embraces several particulars.

1. The first and main point of coincidence lies in this—that both are dependent for their spiritual life and prosperity on the Lord their Head. The church is his body, of which individual believers are separate members; and without him neither body nor members can do anything. He is "the Way" in which both walk; "the Truth" in which both believe; and "the Life" in which both live.

2. But besides this similarity in point of dependence, there is also a striking resemblance in point of experience. Thus in the history of the church there are certain marked periods, or, as they are usually called, "epochs," of spiritual prosperity when the Lord's presence and power were peculiarly manifested. As these seasons were wholly due to the special pouring out of the Holy Spirit, (according to the Scripture promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon you") they have been termed "effusions" of the Holy Spirit. The first of these, and the type and pattern of all succeeding, though immeasurably exceeding them

in power and glory, was that most memorable one, on the day of Pentecost. The early and the latter rain spoken of in the prophets seem to represent in type and figure the beauty and blessedness of these gracious effusions.

Now, as long as these showers fell on the church, she flourished. It was generally with her a time of outward persecution and trouble; but as her afflictions abounded her consolations abounded also, and she "looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." But when these gracious effusions were withheld, like a field deprived of rain, she gradually declined in fruitfulness. Thus the history of the church presents an alternation of fruitfulness and barrenness, restoration and decline, life and death, summer and winter, resurrection and decay. Herein they experience of the church corresponds with the experience of its spiritual members.

There are few of the children of God who cannot look back to certain marked periods in their experience when the blessed Spirit worked powerfully in their hearts. Their first convictions or their first blessings—their spirit of supplication or their spirit of hearing—the sweet manifestations of Christ—the marked answers to prayer—the love they felt to the brethren—the willingness to make sacrifices and suffer persecution for the truth's sake—these and similar bright and blessed spots in Christian experience correspond in the individual to the effusions of which we have spoken as marking certain epochs in the church. And their coldness, deadness, and barrenness, when the Spirit's influences are withheld, correspond to the periods in the history of the church of decline and decay.

3. A third point of similarity may be also noticed. When the church has declined into coldness and death, the Lord has at all periods preserved in her an elect remnant who sigh and cry on account of Zion's declension, and testify as faithful witnesses against the condition into which she has fallen. Here too the experience of the individual coincides with the experience of the church. In the bosom of a child of God, however low the soul may have sunk into carnality and lukewarmness, there is still a sigh and a cry on account of the abominations. The soul is inwardly sensible of its backslidings, its coldness, deadness, and declension; and conscience, as a faithful witness for God, unbribed and unbribable, unsilenced and unsilenceable, will ever and anon raise up its voice and testify against the forsaking of the Fountain of living waters, to hew out cisterns, broken cisterns, that hold no water.

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The grace of God by J. C. Philpot

What a view the believing soul sometimes gets of the fullness, freeness, suitability, and blessedness of the grace of God, as revealed in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Son of his love; and how it sees it reaching down, as it were, its delivering arms from heaven to earth, enfolding and sustaining in its sovereign embrace all the objects of his eternal choice. To the carnal, the profane, the worldly-minded, lovers of pleasure, anything that breathes of the holy air of heaven is hateful, as condemning their sensuality and ungodliness. They can do with precepts which they never practice, and with commandments which they never perform; but a religion that would save them from the enjoyment of the sins they so madly love, a breath from the holiness and purity of heaven that would lift them out of their darling lusts and divorce them from their beloved idols, is to them a sentence of imprisonment and death—as hateful to their vagrant minds as a prison cell to a thief, or a workhouse has to a filthy tramp.

Grace must begin a work in the heart before there can be any movement of the mind toward it; and the two-edged sword that goes out of Christ's mouth must make a wound in the conscience before the balm of free grace in his atoning blood and dying love can be revealed and applied by a divine power to the soul. But no sooner does the Blessed Spirit open up to a poor law-cursed, conscience-condemned sinner the way of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Christ—and that all is of grace from first to last, than at once his ears are opened to drink in the sweet melody of that joyful sound. There is in salvation by grace such a suitability to all his wants and woes; it is so opened up to his enlightened understanding as reconciling those conflicting claims of justice and mercy which he could not solve, and by which he was racked and torn; it is so commended to his conscience as taking away all merit from the creature, which he well knows can have none—and as giving the whole glory to God, who, he is sure, deserves it all; and it drops with such sweetness and power into his soul as a word of consolation and encouragement, that he embraces it with every tender feeling and warm affection of his heart.

No language can describe the feelings of the soul when it first emerges out of

darkness into light; when it passes from bondage, guilt, and condemnation into peace, liberty, and love. How different are the feelings and the language of a soul under the first shinings in of the Sun of righteousness from the scoffing recklessness of the profane worldling, the rebellion and enmity of the self-righteous Pharisee, and the hard, unfeeling, talkative presumption of the dead professor. The mere 'doctrine' of grace does nothing for the soul. As long as it is a 'mere notion or opinion', it has no more saving or sanctifying power than any other notion or opinion. A man may have an opinion that such and such water is very pure and clear, or such and such wine very choice and delicious, or such and such food very nourishing and strengthening; but if the water be still in the well, the wine in the cellar, and the food at the grocer, and neither drop nor morsel of one or the other reach his mouth, he may die of hunger and thirst in the midst of his opinions.

How many, O how many of those who sit in our chapels amid the saints of God are perishing in their sins with the Bible and hymn-book before their eyes, the sound of the gospel in their ears, the doctrine of grace in their lips, but the love of the world in their hearts! Not so with the soul under the teaching and blessing of God. GRACE is to him "a charming sound," not because the word pleases his ear or the doctrine gratifies his mind, but because its inexpressible sweetness and power have reached his inmost soul.

And as grace suits the young believer, when he first tastes that the Lord is gracious, and feeds on the sincere milk of the word that he may grow thereby, so in every after-stage of his experience, down to the very grave, it is made more and more suitable, and becomes more and more precious to his heart. For as he journeys onward in the path of temptation and tribulation, he has many painful lessons to learn of which the young Christian knows little or nothing. The dreadful evils of his heart, the snares laid for his feet by Satan, his continual conflicts with the unbelief and infidelity, the pride and rebellion of his fallen nature, the grievous backslidings, departures, and wanderings of his heart from the Lord, the experience he has of his own coldness, deadness, and base ingratitude—these, and a thousand other trials and temptations, make grace, in its blessed manifestations, most suitable to the saint of God who has been for any time in the strait and narrow way.

Grace is the spring of all his happiness and holiness, of all his salvation and sanctification, of all his faith and hope, love and obedience. It revives him when dead, renews him when all heavenly feeling seems lost and gone, delivers him from bondage and condemnation, comforts him in affliction and sorrow,

separates him from the world, subdues his iniquities, keeps alive the fear of God in his bosom, draws out prayer and supplication, makes sin hateful and Christ precious, and gives him not only his title but his fitness for glory. And when we come to his last hours upon earth,

"When sickness and disease invade

This trembling house of clay,"

when nature sinks under a load of pain and languishing, what then can support the soul in the immediate prospect of eternity but that grace which saves from death and hell? In fact, when we have a spiritual view of the majesty and purity of God, the unbending justice of his holy law, and our own vileness and pollution, our guilt, and sin, and shame before him, our thorough emptiness of all good, our thorough fullness of all evil, there is not, there cannot be a single ray of hope for our ruined souls but what grace reveals and applies through a Savior's blood.

The grace of God plucks the brand from the burning, delivers the vessel of mercy from the power of darkness and translates it into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

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Spiritual-mindedness

by J. C. Philpot

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

When was there ever more worldly conformity than now? When was there ever more carnality in conversation, more backbiting, slander, idle gossip, tittle-tattling from house to house, levity and froth indulged in without scruple or shame? so that a little feeling, experimental, savory communion with the saints of God, such as profits and edifies the soul, creates and cements a spiritual union, draws the heart upwards to heaven, and makes us love Jesus and the image of Jesus in his people, is almost unknown.

In ancient times, "those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him." (Mal. 3:16.) Their conversation was such as the Lord could

hearken to, and record in his book. But would the Lord hearken to and record the conversation of most professors now, the main object of which is to exalt themselves and depreciate others; and under a thin veil of religious phraseology, put on to blind others and deceive themselves, display little else but the pride and worldliness of their hearts? When was there more general deadness and darkness in the churches, and so little life and power in the pulpit and pew? When were experimental men of God more scarce, and more despised and depreciated; or mere 'prating ministers', who have a gift to speak, but who give little evidence that they either know or love the truth of God, so many and so popular?

But let men say what they will, or be what they may, let thousands combine to lower the sacred things of God to their own sunken level, it still stands a fixed, immutable truth, fixed as the throne of God, immutable as the great self-existent I AM, that "to be carnally-minded is death"—death total in the unregenerate, death partial when the living soul is under its power and influence. And if death total in the unregenerate, it entails all the awful penalties and punishments of death, if life from God does not eventually quicken.

Therefore no mere profession, no formal creed, no sitting under a gospel ministry, no church-membership or partaking of ordinances, no name to live while dead, will rescue from the second death, from the worm that does not die—and the fire that is not quenched, those who are carnally-minded, whatever be their profession, whether of the highest Calvinism or the most groveling Arminianism.

But "to be spiritually-minded"—to live and walk under the blessed power and influence of the Holy Spirit, to have the heart and affections drawn up from this poor, vain scene to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, this is "life," the life of God in the soul, with all its present blessedness and all its future glory, and "peace," for peace and rest are alone to be found in this path of union and communion with a glorified Redeemer. In this sweet spirituality of mind—in these heavenly affections—in this communion with the Lord at his own throne of grace—the life and power of godliness much consist. Unless the heart be engaged in it, religion is heavy, dragging work. Prayer, reading, meditation, preaching, hearing, conversation with the saints, all are "a burden to the weary beast" when the power and life of God are not in them, when the heart is cold and dead, and not under some sensible influence from the courts of heaven.

But when a sweet and sacred influence rests upon the soul, when there is a felt union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, when a word from his lips, into which grace is poured, touches and softens the heart; and faith, viewing his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, love and blood, sympathy and suitability, takes hold of his strength and says, "I will not let you go except you bless me," and he condescends to unveil his lovely face; then there is a lifting up of the heart and affections to the merciful and compassionate High Priest over the house of God. The lusts and evils which cling to the body of sin and death, as the viper to Paul's hand, then drop off into the fire of godly jealousy, "the coals whereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame" against all that God hates; pride and covetousness, fretfulness and murmuring, evil tempers and carking cares, and a thousand God-dishonoring anxieties, hide their hateful heads; unbelief and infidelity, and a whole black troop of doubts and fears are put to the rout; and the Prince of Peace reigns and rules as the soul's only rightful and loved Lord.

Sweet, seasons, but, alas! how transient; how soon fresh clouds gather, fresh storms arise, fresh lusts work, and fresh foes start up from every ambush to try faith and hope and patience, and cast a dark cloud over the soul! We trust we know, from what we have felt in our own bosom, what this sweet spiritual-mindedness is, and what are its blessed effects. It is a key to unlock the Scriptures, for then we read them under the same sacred influence, and by the same divine teaching by which they were written; it is a door of prayer, for under these calm and peaceful emotions the soul, as if instinctively and necessarily, seeks holy communion with God; it is the fruitful parent of sweet meditation, for the truth of God is then thought over, fed upon, and is found to be bread from heaven—it is the secret of all life and power in preaching, for unless the heart be engaged in, and melted and softened by the truth delivered, there will be a hardness in its delivery which will make itself sensibly felt by the living hearer. And it is the power of all spiritual conversation, for how can we talk with any unction or profit unless we are spiritually-minded, and in that frame of soul wherein the things of God are our chief element—the language of our lips, because the delight of our soul?

But to be otherwise—to be carnally-minded on our knees, with the Bible open before our eyes, in the house of prayer, at the Lord's table, in the company of the family of God—what a burden to our spirit, what a condemnation to our conscience, what a parent of doubt and fear whether matters can be right between God and our own soul, when there is such a distance between him

and us! And of all poor miserable wretches, felt or not felt, a carnally-minded minister must be the worst. Death in the pulpit must engender death in the pew. A minister stands there as an instrument in the hands of God to comfort and encourage the drooping hearts of his people, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, to be a means of communicating life to the dead, and reviving the living. But if dead himself, totally dead, can he communicate life to others? And if "as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed," like Miriam when struck by leprosy—a saved man sunk into carnality and death, and that not deeply felt or groaned under as a heavy load—how can he feed the church of the living God?

It is true that the most eminent saints and servants of God have their dead and dark seasons, when the life of God seems sunk to so low an ebb as to be hardly visible—so hidden is the stream by the mud-banks of their fallen nature. Still it glides onward, around them, if not through them—and sometimes a beam of light falls upon it from above, as it threads its way toward the ocean of eternal love, which manifests not only its existence but its course, and that it gives back to heaven the ray it receives from heaven. No, by these very dark and dead seasons, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God; they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie; they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing; that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God; and that all they are, and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace—flow from the pure, sovereign grace, the rich, free, undeserved—yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God! They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness, and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility—that rare, yet lovely garb; cease from their own strength and wisdom, and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

We do not view spiritual-mindedness as a habitual state of the regenerated soul, but one brought forth under special influences, and therefore subject to fluctuations.

The meaning of the apostle in Romans 8:6 is simply this—that the mind, the

breath, the bent and inclination of the new man of grace, is "life," as its main element, and "peace," as the result and fruit of life. In other words, the new man of grace, that "spirit," (John 3:6, Rom. 8:16, Ezek. 36:26,) which is born of the Spirit possesses "life" as its animating, operating principle; and as this life is from Christ and unites to Christ, it enjoys "peace" from its union and communion with him.

But the apostle does not lay it down as a certain fixed principle that the soul of a believer is always spiritually-minded, and that therefore, he always enjoys life and peace. He is, on the contrary, drawing the distinction between the flesh and the spirit in a believer, and showing the essential difference between the two. The one is death, the other life; the one is enmity, the other peace; the one not subject to the law of God, the other obedient to his will and word; the one displeasing to God, the other pleasing in his sight.

Thence he argues that all men walk, that is, think, speak, live, and act, according to the one or the other; and that those who "walk after the flesh," that is, follow out its movements, desires, and dictates, are dead, at enmity with God, disobedient, and therefore displeasing to him; while those who "walk after the spirit" possess and manifest divine life, enjoy peace with God, obey his precepts, and are pleasing in his sight.

But the question may occur to a sincere child of God who knows and feels much of his barrenness, darkness, and death, whether he is or can be spiritually-minded, when he is so rarely in the enjoyment of it, and is often so far from the life and peace which are its attendant fruits. Here great wisdom and holy caution are needed to give a right answer. Many a wretched, carnal, dead professor takes comfort from hearing that the real child of God has his seasons of deadness and coldness, not thinking or caring to think that it is one thing to be always dead, and another to be so sometimes; one thing to see it, and another to feel and mourn under it. How many there are in the professing church "who bless themselves in their heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." (Deut. 29:19.) These are they who feast with the children of God, "feeding themselves without fear," when they are but "clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." (Jude 12.) Much wisdom, therefore, and caution are needed not to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs; on the one hand not to make the heart of the righteous sad, and on the other not to strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life when all his ways are ways of death. (Ezek.

13:22.)

Have we not all much reason to lament our coming short of this sweet and blessed spirituality of mind? Yet how can we know what it is unless we have felt it, or at least some measure of it, in our own hearts? Those dead in sin and the dead in a profession neither know it nor care to know it. It is the living family of God alone who know its blessedness and sweetness, for they alone are born of the Spirit, and therefore walk after it, mind it, and enjoy it. And yet, what life there is in it, when felt! It is the only real happiness the child of God enjoys here below; his companion in solitude, his support in affliction, his comfort in sickness, and his peace in death. For if it be "life," to have it must be an inward well of water springing up in his soul; (John 4:14;) and if it be "peace," it is the enjoyment of Christ's own best gift and last legacy. In fact, in it are all the life and peace of religion, and without it religion is but a name and a notion, without present grace or future glory. How sweet, at such moments, is the word of God! What light shines upon the sacred page! what wisdom and truth appear in every line! what a fullness, blessedness, and unction drop from it, like honey from the honeycomb!

Such was Jeremiah's feeling—"Your words were found, and ate them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart—for I am called by your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jer. 15:16.) Such was David's experience—"How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps. 119:103.) Why is this, but because we are then taught by the same Spirit under whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, and are under the same influences and the same holy anointing?

How sweet, then, is prayer! It is the language of the heart, the ascending breath of the soul, the spiritual sacrifice laid upon the golden altar, and ascends with the incense of the great and glorious Intercessor. (Rev. 8:3, 4.) How sweet, then, is meditation, as spiritual thoughts roll in upon the mind, spiritual feelings fill the soul, and spiritual affections warm and melt the heart. This is to delight oneself in the Lord, (Ps. 37:4, Isa. 58:14,) to feel that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, (Prov. 3:17,) to taste and see that the Lord is good, (Ps. 34:8,) to find how near, dear, and precious Christ is to those who believe, (1 Pet. 2:7) and to see with every look of faith more and more of his beauty and blessedness. No company is now wanted but the Lord's company; and the more the heart is drawn up towards him, the more it receives out of his fullness.

Here is life—the life of all religion, and of all ordinances, preaching, praying, hearing, reading, conversing—spiritual-mindedness is the life of them all. Without it all is death in the pulpit and in the pew. You may have eloquence, ability, sound doctrine, texts by scores, and anecdotes by handfuls; you may have voice, rant, and gesture; and all this may pass for wonderful preaching, when there is not a grain of spiritual life in the man or his ministry. And you may have admiring hearers in the pew, full of vows, promises, and tears, and yet not one grain of divine life in the heart. True religion is "a secret"—it lies between God and the soul; and this secret, which is with those who fear God, (Ps. 25:14,) is having the Spirit and mind of Christ; (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:16;) and thus being "one spirit" with him, as joined to him by this holy tie. (1 Cor. 6:17.)

This brings "peace." Enmity and war cannot exist between friends, and the Lord says to his disciples, "you are my friends." He himself is our peace. It comes through his blood, for by it he has made peace. Spiritual-mindedness implies reconciliation, a being brought near; union and communion, and a resting on the atoning blood and finished work of the Son of God.

The Lord graciously bestow upon us much of this spiritual-mindedness, and thus make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light; for without holiness, of which this is a main part, no man shall see the Lord.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

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**The Sovereignty of God
by J. C. Philpot**

The Sovereignty of God is a great, an unfathomable depth, and needs ever to be approached by the saints and servants of the Most High with trembling steps, and looked at and into with believing, reverent eyes. "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments." "My heart stands in awe of your Word." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." Such is the frame of soul in vital experience, however in our day little known and less regarded, in which it becomes "those who are escaped of Israel" (Isa. 4:2) to look at the sovereign

good pleasure of Jehovah in "doing according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Many fight, with all the desperate enmity and rebellion of the carnal mind, against the bare idea that all men and all things are at the sovereign disposal of the great God of heaven and earth; and others, who are not thus held down hard and fast in the chains of rebellion and error, hold the doctrine of divine sovereignty, if not in unrighteousness, at least in a carnal, presumptuous spirit, which plainly shows that they never learned it feelingly and experimentally in their own souls under the teaching and unction of the Holy Spirit. It is hard, perhaps, to say which of the two is the more repulsive to the spiritual mind—the daring denial of the 'rebellious Arminian', or the flippant boldness of the 'dead Calvinist'. Error is hateful, but truth in a hardened conscience is awful.

The grand and glorious truths which are revealed in the word of God are to be received not as mere speculative doctrines into the natural judgment and reasoning mind—but into the tender heart and living conscience—as the gracious unfolding of the mind and counsel, the will and wisdom of Him who is "greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence by all of those who are about him." And surely of all truths revealed in the Scriptures none is more to be regarded with trembling awe and holy reverence than the sovereignty of Jehovah in electing some to eternal life and appointing others to eternal destruction. We believe this on the authority of Him who cannot lie; but when we look up into heaven, and see its unspeakable bliss and glory, and look down into hell and view its ever-burning flames, we may well pause and say, "Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known." (Psalm 77:19.)

There are those who seem almost to exult in a carnal spirit over the destruction of the reprobate. There is, indeed, a solemn submission to, and a believing acquiescence in the sovereign will of the Judge of all the earth, knowing that he must do right, as Aaron "held his peace" when fire from the Lord went out and devoured his two sons, Nadab and Abihu. (Lev. 10:2, 3.) No, more, there is a holy joy in the conquest of the Lamb over his enemies, as expressed in the words, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets; for God has avenged you on her" (Rev. 18:20;) and, "So let all your enemies perish, O Lord; but let those who love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might." (Judges 5:31.) But this is a very different feeling from a carnal exultation over the lost, which shows a state of mind, to say the

least of it, the exact opposite of Paul's "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for his unbelieving brethren, (Rom. 9:2,) and breathes a language very unlike the prayer of Moses, "Yet, now, if you will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book which you have written." (Exodus 32:32.)

Who can think, without grief and sorrow of heart, upon a dear parent, child, or husband—departed without any evidence of a work of grace upon the soul? When you awake at midnight and think of the departed one, where is your exultation over those fixed decrees which determined his eternal state? Submission there may be and should be to the will of God—but a man must be a very heathen—"without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful," (Rom. 1:31,) who has neither sigh nor tear for his own family—at the thought of their eternal woe.

It is when we look at the sovereignty of God on what we may perhaps call its bright side—its merciful and gracious aspect, as plucking innumerable brands out of the fire, and especially when the decree of election turns its smiling face upon us, that we can rejoice in it, and admire and adore the electing love of God in delivering our souls from the bottomless pit. And not only we who have been made alive from the dead, but every regenerate soul is a living witness of the sovereignty of grace. There is not, there never was, there never will be—a manifested vessel of mercy, who is not a monument of the sovereign electing, redeeming, regenerating, and preserving love of a Triune Jehovah; and this every saint of God feels when mercy visits his heart and he is sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. "Why me? why me?" must ever be the wondering, admiring, adoring cry of every child of God when blessed with a feeling, appropriating sense of his personal saving interest in the precious blood and love of the Lamb!

But there are instances which seem to shine forth with peculiar luster, and to stand out beyond the usual dealings of God as prominent examples of the sovereignty of his eternal love. As in a garden every flower may be beautiful in its kind—and all were planted by the same gardener's hand to deck and adorn his beds—but there may be some which strike the eye as more outstanding in beauty of shape and brightness of color than the other occupants of the garden—so in the church of God there are trees of his right hand planting which display more conspicuously than others—the wonders of his sovereign, distinguishing grace.

Saul of Tarsus and the thief on the cross have always struck our own mind as two of the most striking instances of sovereign grace contained in the Scriptures. Paul—the self-righteous Pharisee, imbued with all the learning and pride of the Sanhedrin, and overflowing with all the persecuting spirit of the murderers of Stephen; and the dying thief—loaded with the crimes of a life of violence and bloodshed, yet snatched from the jaws of hell at the last gasp! Reader, and admirer of the grace of God, can you strike the balance between these two monuments of electing love, and decide which was the more indebted to sovereign grace?

"Ah," but say you, "I know a greater monument of sovereign grace than either." Well, be it so; but next to yourself, can you decide whether Paul or the dying thief was the more indebted to the heights and depths, lengths and breadths of atoning blood and redeeming love? We really, for our part, cannot tell. We look at PAUL before and after his conversion, and wonder at and admire the grace of God that made out of such a pharisee, such a bigot, such a strict consistent legalist, such a bloodthirsty persecutor—a saint so rich in every grace, an apostle so endowed with every fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit. Saul on his road to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," and Paul, with the words in his heart and mouth, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" (Acts 21:13;)—O what grace thus to change the lion into the lamb, the man ready to martyr—into the man ready to be martyred!

But next we turn to the DYING THIEF. Listen with wondering ears and admiring heart to his believing prayer, addressed under such circumstances and at such a moment to the Son of God, in his deepest humiliation, at his lowest point of ignominy and shame, when his very disciples all forsook him and fled, and his glory was hidden under the densest, darkest veil. A risen Jesus appeared to Paul in all the blaze of heavenly glory; a crucified Jesus was hanging before the dying thief in little less shame and degradation than himself and his twin malefactor. O, what faith at such a moment to call him, "Lord," and to believe he had a kingdom, and to desire to be made a partaker of its present grace and future glory! Has not this prayer, believing reader, been mine and yours? Have not we sought to realize the blessed Redeemer as set thus before our eyes? and while we threw all our heart and soul into the petition, breathed forth, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom?" The prayer of the dying thief shines, we must say, in our eyes as one of the greatest, if not the greatest act of faith recorded in the Scriptures,

and only paralleled, we cannot say surpassed, by Abraham's sacrifice of his son.

But let us not think that there are not now walking on the face of the earth similar monuments of sovereign grace. Up that court, in that garret, there is a dying Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Lord has cast seven devils. Down in that coal-mine there is one whom once "no man could bind, no, not with chains," "neither could any man tame him;" but he is now "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." Walking under that hedge, now weeping, now praying, now singing, now looking into his little Bible, is a returned prodigal—a base backslider whom the Lord has forgiven, but who can never forgive himself. Hiding his face in the corner of the pew is that persecutor of his poor broken-hearted wife, now in glory, whom since her death the Lord has called by his grace, and whose tears and sighs show how deeply he repents of his sins against her and Him. While the world is going on buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, God is here and there raising up these monuments of his grace to live forever and ever in his presence, when the world and all the fashion of it shall have utterly passed away.

To a spiritual mind, what sweet food for faith, what a field of holy meditation is opened up in the sovereignty of grace as thus displayed in those wonders of redeeming love which every now and then come under our own special knowledge and observation! To what praise and adoration does it give birth; what openings up of the depths of the Father's love; what views of the fullness and perfection of the Redeemer's blood and obedience; what a sight of salvation as a free, irrevocable gift; how independent of all creature works of righteousness, how distinguishing, how superabounding over all the aboundings of sin and guilt, is grace seen to be; what love and union are felt to the objects of this signal mercy; how the soul is more and more firmly established thereby in the truth of God; and that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy!"

Dare any call the sovereignty of God in his electing love and discriminating grace "a licentious doctrine?" Ignorance coined that lie; and enmity gave it circulation. The sovereignty of grace received into a believing heart has led many a one from sin; it never, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, led one into sin. Many a poor, despairing wretch it has saved, not only from the guilt of sin that distressed his conscience, but from the power of sin that entangled his inclinations, and carried him captive. The same Christ Jesus who is made

to his people "righteousness and redemption," is also made unto them "wisdom and sanctification;" (1 Cor. 1:30;) and those who are "washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," are also "sanctified by the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 6:11.)

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Personal revival of the soul
by J. C. Philpot

It is surprising how our minds alternately, and as if instinctively, sink or rise as various circumstances in ourselves or in others come before our view, or press with weight and power upon our conscience. A few instances on both sides of the question may illustrate this.

For some days or weeks, then, it may be, our mind may have been dark and beclouded; coldness and deadness may have much chilled our heavenly affections; trials and temptations may have harassed our soul; the presence of the Lord may have been much withheld; sin and corruption may have worked within at a fearful rate; and, under a feeling sense of our vileness and sinfulness, painfully aggravated by all these circumstances, we may have cried, almost in a fit of despair, "Can ever God dwell here?" How can the soul that is alive unto God, and living, or desiring to live—continually to his honor and glory, and to walk in the light of his countenance—not but sink into a low spot when all within is so opposed to, or so far from, that peace in believing which is its element and home?

Or, if comparatively free from personal trials, some circumstances of a very painful and distressing nature may have come before our mind, or press upon our conscience, connected with others. Some gross inconsistency in a member of the church has perhaps come to light; or there has been a sad display of anger and temper at a church meeting; or two members have fallen out, and one or both have manifested a bitter, unforgiving spirit.

Or, apart from church troubles—the heaviest of all after personal afflictions, we may, in a solemn moment of prayer and meditation, have had a spiritual view of the general state of the churches of truth, as either torn with strife and division, or much sunk into barrenness and unfruitfulness. Or, to come still more closely home, to a still more tender point, a difference may have arisen

between us and a beloved friend; or where we have looked for sympathy and comfort, under some trial and affliction—we may have met with just the reverse, and so have been "wounded in the house of our friends," learning thereby, in a way of personal though painful experience, the meaning of those words, "The best of them is as a brier—the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge." (Micah 7:4.)

Or if engaged in the work of the ministry, as is the case with some of our readers, we may have been for some time much shut up in the preaching of the word of truth, and may have felt much darkness of mind and bondage of spirit in the house of prayer; if hearers, there may have been much deadness under the preached word; nothing for a long time may have dropped with power and savor into the soul either from the prayer or the sermon; and Satan may have taken great advantage from these things to harass the mind and cast a gloomy cloud over the whole of our experience.

Under these and similar circumstances, which we need not more fully particularize, the soul possessed of the grace of God sinks at times very low; and as we are too much disposed to measure things by our own feelings, as a dark cloud over the sun casts a gloom over the whole face of nature, we look round and begin to say, "Where is there any real religion—any vital godliness—any blessed communion with the Lord, any of that spirituality of mind in which, and in which alone, there is life and peace. Where and what am I, and where and what are others?"

We remember, perhaps, with Job, "the days of our youth, when the secret of God was upon our tabernacle," and say, "O that I were as in months past, when the candle of God shined upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness." "O that the Lord would once more appear—would remove these dark clouds, and shine into my soul, that I might delight myself in him as all my salvation and all my desire."

When the believing soul is thus brought low, made to confess its sins, and look wholly and solely to the Lord, a sweet and blessed change often takes place. There is a breaking in of divine light and life—a revival of faith, and hope and love—a renewed sense of the Lord's goodness and mercy—an enjoyment of his presence and smile—a liberty, an enlargement, a coming forth in prayer and praise—a fresh view of the King in his beauty—a discovery of his grace and glory, of his love, blood, and righteousness, of his sweetness and suitability—with a pressing forward towards communion with a Lord so

gracious and yet so glorious—with a Savior so exalted and yet so compassionate, with a High Priest, once on earth a bleeding sacrifice, and now in heaven such an all-prevailing Advocate and Intercessor.

"Will you not revive us again," cried the church of old, "that your people may rejoice in you?" (Ps. 85:6.) This gracious revival is the answer to that longing cry, to that earnest petition, breathed out of the heart sensible of its coldness and deadness, but unable to revive itself; for as no man ever quickened, so no man keeps alive his own soul. When, then, he who gave his gracious promise, fulfills that promise, "Because I live, you shall live also," and sends down renewed blessings, for having ascended on high, "he has received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them," (Ps. 68:18,) then it is with the soul a returning to the days of its youth, (Job. 33:25,) and these words are again sweetly realized, "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land." (Solomon's Song 2:11, 12.)

Can the soul not but rise when the Lord thus lifts it up? "You have lifted me up, and cast me down." (Ps. 102:10.) He is her Head, her Husband, her All. If he frowns, must she not sink? If he withdraws, must she not mourn? If he smiles, must she not rejoice? What is religion, if there be no union with Christ? If there be union with Christ there will be the fruits as well as the feelings of that bond of spiritual communion; and though absence does not break the marriage tie—as presence does not create it—either in nature or in grace, yet the espoused soul, like the fond wife, who lives and loves, is grieved at the departure—and rejoices at the return of its wedded Lord.

Simultaneously with this personal revival of the soul after a long scene of darkness or a painful season of temptation and trial, or instrumental as a means of producing it—there may arise from without circumstances which, like a favorable breeze, speed the soul onward when she has expanded her sails to the wind. One whom we have long known and loved in the Lord is removed by death, but makes a blessed end; or some signal display of grace appears in someone near and dear to us by earthly ties; a son, a daughter, a sister-in-law becomes most unexpectedly and almost unhopedly manifested as a vessel of mercy—and the heart, is filled with wonder and admiration. Under these displays of sovereign grace, the stony heart relents, and is melted into contrition and love—tears of holy joy flow down the cheek, and blessings and praises ascend out of the heart to the God of all our mercies for this fresh display of the lengths and breadths, depths and heights of redeeming love.

If engaged in the work of the ministry, the Lord perhaps sets his hand once more in a most conspicuous manner to the work, revives preacher and people, gives testimony to the word of his grace in sending a marked deliverance to a soul under deep distress; clothes the word with power to quicken the dead and comfort the living, and makes it fall like the dew, and distill like the rain upon the souls of the people, so that there is a flowing together of heart to heart amid the family of God.

We have particularized at some length the various causes of sinking and rising as experienced in the soul of a saint of God, to show the changes that take place within, and the ebbings and flowings, the lights and shadows of the divine life. Men dead in a profession, with hearts of adamant, and brows of brass—hardened by pride and worldliness—under a mask of religion—may ridicule these changes, and taunt us with "setting up frames and feelings, nursing doubts and fears, gloating over our corruptions, living beneath our privileges, poring over our miserable selves, dishonoring God by our unbelief, idolizing self, and making a Christ of our experience."

Swelling words of this kind, and a whole vocabulary of similar set terms, are as easily shot off from a hundred pulpits, and with about as much real execution as the guns at Portsmouth salute the Queen when she is going to Osborne. The very men who load and fire these pulpit guns, with all their noise and smoke, know no more of the experience of a saint of God than the artillery-men at Portsmouth of what the Queen is debating in the palace with her ministers; but they fire as they have been taught with the ammunition already made for them, and lying packed and handy at their feet. We are not setting up doubts and fears, or canonizing corruption—we are not raking a ash-heap for pearls to set in Jesus' crown—or putting the mutability of the creature in the place of, or side by side with, the immutability of the Son of God and his finished work.

But we say of and to all, in the pulpit or out of it, who, through ignorance or enmity, oppose an experimental religion, "Because they have no changes they fear not God." And if they fear not God, they have not the beginning, much less the end of wisdom; they are not even in the lowest grade of Christ's school, much less teachers or masters. But ignorance will prate, and enmity will revile. It is our wisdom and mercy to heed neither, but "with well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Who that knows the true grounds of Dissent does not smile when a young Puseyite clergyman lets off his

university arguments against "the perilous sin of schism," when Popery is stamped upon every thread of his buttoned-up cassock-waistcoat, and upon every wrinkle of his long coat? Who that knows the firm foundation of the doctrines of grace does not smile when a smug youth, hot from the Academy, thinks he is demolishing in one sermon the rock on which the church is built, and scattering election to the four winds of heaven? And may we, in a similar manner, not smile, or rather sigh, when men ignorant of the life of God, destitute of all divine teaching and gracious influence, hurl their invectives or deal out their miserable, common—place arguments against the experience of the saints? But it is a miserable warfare to be engaged in. He who touches the saints touches the apple of God's eye. Rather let our tongue never more name the name of God, rather let the pen fall forever from our paralyzed fingers than our tongue or finger knowingly speak or write a word against the work of God in the soul of a saint.

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The incomprehensible of God
by J. C. Philpot

What Christ is to the Church, what the Church is to Christ, can never be really known until time gives place to eternity, faith to sight, and hope to enjoyment. Nor even then, however beyond all present conception the powers and faculties of the glorified souls and bodies of the saints may be expanded, however conformed to the glorious image of Christ, or however ravished with the discoveries of his glory and the sight of him as he is in one unclouded day—no, not even then, will the utmost stretch of creature love, or highest refinement of creature intellect, wholly embrace or fully comprehend that love of Christ, which, as in time so in eternity, "passes knowledge," as being in itself essentially incomprehensible, because infinite and divine.

Who can calculate the amount of light and heat that dwell in, and are given forth by the sun that shines at this moment so gloriously in the noonday sky? We see, we feel, we enjoy its bright beams; but who can number the millions of millions of rays that it casts forth upon all the surface of the earth, diffusing light, heat, and fertility to every part? If the creature be so great, glorious, and incomprehensible—how much more great, glorious, and incomprehensible must be its divine Creator!

The Scripture testimony of the saints in glory is that "when Christ shall appear they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is;" (1 John 3:2;) that they shall then see the Lord "face to face, and know even as also they are known;" (1 Cor. 13:12;) that their "vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" (Phil. 3:21;) that they shall be "conformed to his image," (Rom. 8:29,) and "be satisfied when they awake with his likeness;" (Ps. 17:15;) that they shall be "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple;" (Rev. 7:15;) that "their sun shall no more go down, for the Lord shall be their everlasting light;" (Isa. 60:20;) that they shall have "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" (2 Cor.4:17;) and shall "shine as the brightness of the skies, and as the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12:3.)

But, with all this unspeakable bliss and glory, there must be in infinite Deity unfathomable depths which no creature, however highly exalted, can ever sound; heights which no finite, dependent being can ever scan. God became man, but man never can become God. He fully knows us, but we never can fully know him, for even in eternity, as in time, it may be said to the creature, "Can you fathom the depths of God or discover the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of hell—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea." (Job 11:7-9.) But if, as we believe, eternity itself can never fully or entirely reveal the heights and depths of the love of a Triune God, how little can be known of it in our present time state! And yet that little is the only balm for all sorrow, the only foundation of solid rest and peace.

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The love of Jesus for His people

By J. C. Philpot

Love is communicative. This is a part of its very nature and essence. Its delight is to give, and especially to give itself; and all it desires or asks is a return. To love and to be beloved, to enjoy and to express that ardent and mutual affection by words and deeds; this is love's delight, love's heaven. To love, and not be loved—this is love's misery, love's hell. God is love. This is his very nature, an essential attribute of his glorious being; and as he, the infinite and eternal Jehovah, exists in a Trinity of distinct Persons, though undivided Unity of Essence! there is a mutual ineffable love of the three Persons in the

sacred Godhead the Scripture abundantly testifies—"The Father loves the Son;" (John 3:35;) "And have loved them as you have loved me;" (John 17:23;) "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17.) And as the Father loves the Son, so does the Son love the Father—"But that the world may know that I love the Father," are his own blessed words. (John 14:31.) And that the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son is evident not only from his divine personality in the Godhead, but because he is essentially the very "Spirit of love," (Rom. 15:30, 2 Tim. 1:7,) and as such "sheds the love of God abroad in the heart" of the election of grace. (Rom. 5:5.)

Thus man was not needed by the holy and ever-blessed Trinity as an object of divine love. Sufficient, eternally and amply sufficient, to all the bliss and blessedness, perfection and glory of Jehovah was and ever would have been the mutual love and intercommunion of the three Persons in the sacred Godhead. But love—the equal and undivided love, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, flowed out beyond its original and essential being—to man; and not merely to man as man, that is to human nature as the body prepared for the Son of God to assume, but to thousands and millions of the human race, who are all loved personally and individually with all the infinite love of God as much as if that love were fixed on only one, and he were loved as God loves his dear Son. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," is spoken to each individual of the elect as much as to the whole church, viewed as the mystical Bride and Spouse of the Lamb.

Thus the love of a Triune God is not only to the nature which in due time the Son of God should assume, the flesh and blood of the children, the seed of Abraham which he should take on him, (Heb. 2:14-16,) and for this reason viewed by the Triune Jehovah with eyes of intense delight, but to that innumerable multitude of human beings who were to form the mystical body of Christ. Were Scripture less express, we might still believe that the nature which one of the sacred Trinity was to assume would be delighted in and loved by the holy Three-in-One. But we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the point, that puts it beyond all doubt or question. When, in the first creation of that nature the Holy Trinity said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and when, in pursuance of that divine council, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul," God thereby uniting an immortal soul to an earthly body, this human nature was created not only in the moral image of God, (Eph. 4:24,) but after the pattern of that body which was prepared for the Son of God by the Father. (Heb. 10:5.) The Holy Spirit,

therefore, in Psalm 8, puts into the mouth of the inspired Psalmist an anthem of praise flowing from the meditations of his heart upon the grace and glory bestowed upon human nature, as exalted in the person of Christ above all the glory of the starry heavens—"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained—what is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." (Ps. 8:3-6.)

Here the Psalmist bursts forth into a rapture of admiration at beholding how man, that is, human nature, in itself so weak and fragile, so inferior in beauty and splendor to the glorious orbs that stud the midnight sky, should yet attract the mind, and be visited by the love of God; how that nature, "made a little lower than the angels" in its original constitution, yet should, by virtue of its being taken into union with the Person of the Son of God, be crowned with honor and glory, and dominion given to it over all the works of God's hands in heaven and in earth. (Matt. 28:18.) That this is the mind of the Holy Spirit is evident from the interpretation given of the Psalm by the inspired Apostle—"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that you are mindful of him? or the son of man, that you visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crown him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:6-9.)

When, then, the Son of God took our flesh into union with his own divine Person, he not only invested that nature with unspeakable glory, but by partaking of the same identical substance, the same flesh, and blood, and bones, wedded the Church unto himself. This is the true source, as it is the only real and solid foundation of all the union and communion that the Church enjoys with Christ on earth, or ever will enjoy with him in heaven. He thus became her Head, her Husband, and she became his body, his wife. Nor are these mere names, and titles, any more than husband and wife are mere names and titles in their natural relationship. The marriage relation is an unalterable tie, an indissoluble bond, giving and cementing a peculiar but substantial union, making man and wife one flesh, and investing them with an

interest in each other's person and property, happiness and honor, love and affection, such as exists in no other relationship of life. Thus the assumption of human nature made the Lord Jesus Christ a real, not a nominal husband, yes, as much a husband to the Church as Adam became husband to Eve on that memorable morn in Paradise, "when the Lord God brought her unto the man" in all her original purity and innocence, (beautiful type of the Church as presented to Christ in her unfallen condition!) "and Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." (Gen. 2:23.) As then in the marriage union man and wife become one flesh, (Gen. 2:24,) and, God having joined them together, no man may put them asunder, (Matt. 19:5,) so when the Lord Jesus Christ, in the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," betrothed the church unto himself, they became before the face of heaven one in indissoluble ties.

As he undertook in "the fullness of time" to be "made of a woman," she became one with him in body by virtue of a common nature; and becomes one with him in spirit when, as each individual member comes forth into a time state, the blessed Spirit unites it to him by regenerating grace. Such is the testimony of the word of truth. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" (Eph. 5:30;). "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) Her union, therefore, with his flesh ensures to her body conformity in the resurrection morn to the glorified body of Jesus; and her union with his spirit ensures to her soul an eternity of bliss in the perfection of knowledge, holiness, and love. Thus the union of the church with Christ commenced in the councils of eternal wisdom and love, is made known upon earth by regenerating grace, and is perfected in heaven in the fullness of glory.

The church, it is true, fell in Adam from that state of innocence and purity in which she was originally created. But how the Adam fall, in all its miserable consequences, instead of canceling the bond and disannulling the everlasting covenant, only served more fully and gloriously to reveal and make known the love of Christ to his chosen bride in all its breadth and length and depth and height! She fell, it is true, into unspeakable, unfathomable depths of sin and misery, guilt and crime. But she never fell out of his heart or out of his arms! Yet what without the fall would have been known of dying love or of the mystery of the cross? Where would have been the song of the redeemed, "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood?" Where the victory over death and hell, or the triumphs of superabounding grace over the aboundings of sin, guilt, and despair? Where would have been

the "leading captivity captive," the "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in himself?" What would have been known of that most precious attribute of God—mercy? What of his forbearance and longsuffering; what of his pitiful compassion to the poor lost children of men? As then the church's head and husband could not and would not dissolve the union, break the covenant, or alter the thing that had gone out of his lips, and yet could not take her openly unto himself in all her filth, and guilt, and shame, he had to redeem her with his own heart's blood, with agonies and sufferings such as earth or heaven never before witnessed, with those dolorous cries under the hidings of his Father's face, which made the earth to quake, the rocks to rend, and the sun to withdraw its light. But his love was strong as death, and he endured the cross, despising the shame, bearing her sins in his own body on the tree, and thus suffering the penalty due to her crimes, reconciled her unto God "in the body of his flesh, through death, to present her holy, and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight." (Col. 1:22.)

Having thus reconciled her unto God, as she comes forth from the womb of time, he visits member after member of his mystical body with his regenerating grace, that "he may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," and thus eventually "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Eph. 5:26, 27.) Communion with Christ, therefore begins below, in our time state. It is here that the mystery of the marriage union is first made known; here the espousals entered into; (Jer. 2:2, 2 Cor. 11:2;) here the first kiss of betrothed love given. (Song 1:2.) The celebration of the marriage is to come; (Rev. 19:7-9;) but the original betrothal in heaven and the spiritual espousals on earth make Christ and the church eternally one. As then the husband, when he becomes united to his wife in marriage ties, engages thereby to love her, cherish her, feed her, clothe her, count her interests his interests, her honor his honor, and her happiness his happiness, so the blessed Jesus, when in the councils of eternity, he betrothed the Church to himself, undertook to be to her and do for her everything that should be for her happiness and honor, perfection and glory. His own words are, "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies—I will even betroth you unto me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord." (Hos. 2:19, 20.) And again, "For your Maker is your husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." (Isa. 54:5.) "For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons

marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." (Isa. 62:5.)

There must be union before communion, marriage before possession, membership before abiding in Christ and he in us, a being in the vine before a branch issuing from the stem. It is the Spirit who quickens us to feel our need of him; to seek all our supplies in him and from him; to believe in him unto everlasting life, and thus live a life of faith upon him. By his secret teachings, inward touches, gracious smiles, soft whispers, sweet promises, and more especially by manifestations of his glorious Person, finished work, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, agonizing sufferings, and dying love, he draws the heart up to himself. He thus wins our affections, and setting himself before our eyes as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely," draws out that love and affection towards himself which puts the world under our feet.

What is religion without a living faith in, and a living love to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dull and dragging, how dry and heavy, what a burden to the mind, and a weariness to the flesh, is a round of forms where the heart is not engaged and the affections not drawn forth! Reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversation with the people of God—what cold, what heartless work where Jesus is not! But let him appear, let his presence and grace be felt, and his blessed Spirit move upon the heart, then there is a holy sweetness, a sacred blessedness in the worship of God and in communion with the Lord Jesus that makes, while it lasts, a little heaven on earth. Means are to be attended to, ordinances to be prized, the Bible to be read, preaching to be heard, the throne of grace to be resorted to, the company of Christian friends to be sought. But what are all these unless we find Christ in them? It is He who puts life and blessedness into all means and ordinances, into all prayer, preaching, hearing, reading, conversing, and everything that bears the name of religion. Without him all is dark and dead, cold and dreary, barren and bare. Wandering thoughts at the throne, unbelief at the ordinance, deadness under the word, formality and lip service in family worship, carelessness over the open Bible, carnality in conversation, and a general coldness and stupidity over the whole frame—such is the state of the soul when Jesus does not appear, and when he leaves us to prove what we are, and what we can do without him.

He is our sun, and without him all is darkness; he is our life, and without him all is death; he is the beginner and finisher of our faith, the substance of our hope, and the object of our love. All religion flows from his Spirit and grace,

presence and power. Where he is, be it barn or hovel, field or hedge, closet or fireside, there is a believing soul, a praying spirit, a tender conscience, a humble mind, a broken heart, and a confessing tongue. Where he is not, be it parlour or chapel, public worship or private prayer, hearing the word or reading the Bible, all is alike empty and forlorn to a living soul, pregnant with dissatisfaction and loaded with self-condemnation.

It is this inward sense of the blessedness of his presence, and the misery of his absence—the heaven of his smile and the hell of his frown—that makes the sheep of Christ seek communion with Him. He has won their heart to himself by discovering to them his beauty and his love, and they having once seen the glory of his Person, heard the sweetness of his voice, and tasted the grace of his lips, follow him wherever he goes, seeking to know him and the power of his resurrection, and counting all things rubbish and loss that they may win him, and have some manifestation of his love. What is to support the soul under those trials and temptations that at times press it so sore, relieve those cruel doubts which so disquiet, take away those fears of death which so alarm, subdue that rebelliousness which so condemns, wean from the world which so allures, and make it look beyond life and time, the cares of the passing hour, and the events of the fleeting day, to a solemn and blessed eternity—but those visitations of the Blessed Lord to the soul which give it communion with himself? Thus were the saints of God led and taught in days of old, as the Holy Spirit has recorded their experience in the word of truth. Remembering the past, one says, "Your visitation has preserved my spirit" (Job 10:12.) Longing for a renewal, another cries, "O when will you come unto me?" (Ps. 101:2;) and under the enjoyment of his presence the church speaks, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." (Cant. 2:4.)

We are, most of us, so fettered down . . .
by the chains of time and sense,
by the cares of life and daily business,
by the weakness of our earthly frame,
by the distracting claims of a family,
by the miserable carnality and sensuality of our fallen
nature, that we live at best a poor, dragging, dying life.

We can take no pleasure in the world, nor mix with a good conscience in its pursuits and amusements; we are many of us poor, moping, dejected creatures, from a variety of trials and afflictions; we have a daily cross and the continual plague of an evil heart; get little consolation from the family of

God or the outward means of grace; know enough of ourselves to know that in self there is neither help nor hope, and never expect a smoother path, a better, wiser, holier heart, or to be able to do tomorrow what we cannot do today.

As then the weary man seeks rest, the hungry food, the thirsty drink, and the sick health, so do we stretch forth our hearts and arms that we may embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and sensibly realize union and communion with him. From him come both prayer and answer, both hunger and food, both desire and the tree of life. He discovers the evil and misery of sin that we may seek pardon in his bleeding wounds and pierced side; makes known to us our nakedness and shame, and, as such, our exposure to God's wrath, that we may hide ourselves under his justifying robe; puts gall and wormwood into the world's choicest draughts, that we may have no sweetness but in and from him; keeps us long fasting to endear a crumb, and long waiting to make a word precious. He wants the whole heart, and will take no less; and as this we cannot give, he takes it to himself by ravishing it with one of his eyes, with one chain of his neck. If we love him it is because he first loved us; and if we seek communion with him, it is because he will manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world.

Would we see what the Holy Spirit has revealed of the nature of this communion, we shall find it most clearly and experimentally unfolded in the Song of Solomon. From the first verse of that divine book, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," to the last expressed desire of the loving bride, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe, or like to a young deer upon the mountains of spices," all is a "song of loves," (Ps. 45 title,) all a divine revelation of the communion that is carried on upon earth between Christ and the Church. She "comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved," while "his left hand is under her head, and his right hand embraces her." She says, "Look not upon me because I am black;" but he answers, "You are all fair, my love, there is no spot in you." At one moment she says, "By night, on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I found him not;" and then again she cries, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." (Song Sol. 3:4.) Comings and goings; sighs and songs; vain excuses and cutting self-reflections; (5:3-6;) complaints of self and praises of him; (5:7-16;) the breathings of love, and the flames of jealousy; (8:6;) the tender affections of a virgin heart, and the condescending embraces of a royal spouse; (1:7; 2:3-7;)—such is the experience of the Church in seeking or

enjoying communion with Christ as described in this divine book.

O that we could walk more in these gracious footsteps! Whatever be our state and case, if it can truly be said of us what the angel said to the women at the sepulcher, "I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified," we have a divine warrant to believe that, "he is gone before us into Galilee. There shall we see him." He is risen; he has ascended up on high, and "has received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He is now upon the mercy seat, and he invites and draws poor needy sinners to himself. He says, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He allows us, he invites us to pour out our heart before him, to show before him our trouble, to spread our desires at his feet, as Hezekiah spread the letter in the temple.

If we seek communion with him, we may and shall tell him how deeply we need him, that without him it is not life to live, and with him not death to die. We shall beg of him to heal our backslidings; to manifest his love and blood to our conscience; to show us the evil of sin; to bless us with godly sorrow for our slips and falls; to keep us from evil that it may not grieve us; to lead us into his sacred truth; to preserve us from all error; to plant his fear deep in our heart; to apply some precious promise to our soul; to be with us in all our ways; to watch over us in all our goings out and comings in; to preserve us from pride, self-deception, and self-righteousness; to give us renewed tokens of our saving interest in his finished work; to subdue our iniquities; to make and keep our conscience tender; and work in us everything which is pleasing in his sight.

What is communion but mutual giving and receiving, the flowing together of two hearts, the melting into one of two wills, the exchange of two loves—each party maintaining its distinct identity, yet being to the other an object of affection and delight? Have we nothing then to give Christ? Yes—our sins, our sorrows, our burdens, our trials, and above all the salvation and sanctification of our souls.

And what has he to give us? What? Why, everything worth having, everything worth a moment's anxious thought, everything for time and eternity!

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The treasures of Divine truth

by J. C. Philpot

How little do we, for the most part, realize, and daily, hourly, live and feed upon those divine and heavenly truths which we, as Christians, profess to believe!

Take, for instance, that great, that astonishing truth—the incarnation of the Son of God, in its various fruits and consequences, such as his holy life on earth, his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation to the right hand of God. This, the foundation of all our faith, hope, and love, our only refuge in life and death, our only source of consolation here and of bliss hereafter, how little is it realized proportionately to its divine blessedness!

To say we do not realize it, is to say we are unbelievers; for, if faith be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," to say we do not feel a substance in the incarnation of God's dear Son, is to say we have no faith in it or in Him! On the contrary, it is only as we do realize in our own souls the felt blessedness of having a Jesus who suffered, a Jesus who bled, a Jesus who died, a Jesus who was buried and rose again, a Jesus now at God's right hand for us as "the great High Priest over the house of God," that we ever feel anything worth feeling, receive anything worth receiving, or enjoy anything worth enjoying. No, further, it is only as we do realize this blessed truth that the Son of God is in our nature at the right hand of the Father, "able (and willing) to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him," that we ever pray with any faith or acceptance, find any access or sweetness in approaching the throne of grace, or receive any answer to our petitions.

The more deeply our soul is penetrated with "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," the more strongly that our faith embraces, our hope anchors in, and our love flows towards a once crucified, but now risen and glorified Immanuel, the more prayerful, watchful, humble, tender-hearted, contrite, and spiritually-minded shall we be, and the more will every gracious fruit appear and abound in our hearts, lips, and lives. No man, therefore, is worthy the name of a Christian who does not believe in, and spiritually realize in his own soul, who and what the Lord Jesus is as God's dear Son in our flesh; and the more he believes in him as such, and the more he receives out of his fullness "in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell," the more he glorifies him, and is conformed to his image.

And yet it is, for the most part, only at times and seasons that we so realize who and what Jesus is as to obtain any sensible victory over the evils of our heart, the strength of sin, the snares of the world, or the assaults of Satan. Faith, it is true, never dies out of the heart when once it has been implanted there by the hand of God; but in its actings it often seems latent or asleep. Yet as the babe slumbering in the cradle is as much a living child as when pressed to the mother's bosom it receives nutriment from her bosom, so faith is as much a living faith when it slumbers as when it receives out of Christ's fullness grace for grace, and sucks the breasts of consolation.

Still we revert to our starting point—that compared with what is to be believed, known, and felt, we feel and realize comparatively little of the incarnation of the Son of God. How earnestly did Paul desire that he "might know Him, and the power of his resurrection," as if all he knew was but a drop compared with the ocean; and how fervently he prayed for his beloved Ephesians, that "they might comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and might know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God."

That he, who is the Father's co-equal and co-eternal Son, did really lie a babe in Bethlehem's manger, that he really did walk on this polluted earth, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," that he hungered, thirsted, groaned, wept, sweat great drops of blood,

"Bore all incarnate God could bear

With strength enough, and none to spare,"

and then, when by his blood-shedding on the cross, he had offered one, and the only one sacrifice for sin, meekly laid down his life, that he might take it again—can we, can any of us, say that we realize in this suffering and risen God-man, the thousandth or millionth part of the grace and glory, bliss and blessedness, peace and joy, liberty and love, treasured in, and flowing out of him? Consider for a moment, what fruits have already flowed into the hearts of the saints from a risen Immanuel. By faith in him, as the incarnate God, martyrs have faced death in its most appalling forms, and patiently, no, joyfully, endured the most exquisite torments which the most fiendish malice in hell, or out of hell, could devise; by faith in Him as God-man, thousands of despairing sinners have found pardon and peace. The bed of languishing and pain, the lonely garret of poverty and want, the cancer ward of a hospital, the walls of the union workhouse, have all been illuminated by the rays of the cross, so that sickness had no sorrow, death no sting, and the grave no terror.

In the beautiful and experimental language of Kelly—

**"The Cross, it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day;
And sweetens every bitter cup.**

**"It makes the coward spirit brave;
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes its terror from the grave;
And gilds the bed of death with light."**

There are two most blessed subjects of spiritual contemplation as revealed to us in the word of truth. The one is, the Son of God in our flesh—suffering on earth, glorified in heaven. The other is the Church of Christ viewed in her relationship to this once suffering, now glorified Immanuel. What blessed subjects for meditation, searching the Scriptures, believing views of, and sweet experimental realization!

We do feel that whatever leads us to search the Scriptures, to penetrate beyond the mere surface into the treasures of Divine truth therein laid up, and above all, to feel the power and blessedness and to realize by a living faith the present grace and future glory of oneness with Christ, is indeed most profitable.

Here we feel there is in our day a great deficiency with most that fear God. They have a few hopes and many fears; a sense of their ruin and misery, and at times sweet glimpses and glances of the sufficiency and suitability, the blood, grace, and love of the Lord Jesus; but they do not seem to realize, or even seek to realize, what he is in himself to those that believe in his name. To search the Scriptures, as for hidden treasure, because they testify of him; to ply a throne of grace for a revelation of this Divine Savior to their hearts; to seek an entrance by living faith into the mystery of his glorious Deity and suffering humanity, so as to have them brought by the blessed Spirit before their eyes, and into their very souls; to resort unto Him as unto an ever-living, ever-loving Mediator and Advocate at the right hand of the Father, so as to receive supplies of strength and comfort out of his fullness—how short most seem here to come!

If a wealthy and liberal friend were to put into a banker's hands a large sum

of money for us, how eager should we be to draw for what our needs required. Alas! how slow and backward, how unbelieving, and, at times, almost unwilling to resort to the only storehouse of grace and strength, our only hope and help, for the supply of our spiritual needs. Surely, it must be grace and grace alone which can make us feel our need; show us in whom is the supply; draw forth prayer and desire after it, and then bestow what is needed!

Men deny the truth, trifle with it, or are indifferent to it, because they feel no urgent personal need of it!

Now look at the Deity of Christ as a truth which the Holy Spirit has to reveal; and indeed "no man can call Jesus Lord," that is, believe in and worship him as God, "but by the Holy Spirit." Assume, then, all the objections that reason and infidelity combined may urge against it; and if a man has not been tempted and exercised in this point, he has no idea how powerful, how insuperable by all human argument these objections are. But let them be mountains high, and oceans deep, let a deep sense of need be once felt in the soul, and how soon are they swept away, or, at least, their power broken. Lying in yonder bed, in the still season of the night, see that wretched sinner, pressed down almost to despair by a guilty conscience. Look at him writhing and trembling under the wrath of God.

What shall pacify this guilty conscience? Search and examine all the host of duties, rites, forms, and ceremonies. Can any, can all raise up this trembling sinner or speak peace to this troubled conscience? How shall pardon, mercy, acceptance, reconciliation come into it? One drop of the wrath of God, one pang of hell in the conscience, has silenced in a moment all the cavils of reason, all the arguments of infidelity. A sinner truly convinced of sin by the blessed Spirit does not doubt the deity of Christ. We do not say that no fiery darts may glance across his soul, for Satan will harass such a one with all the artillery of hell. But take him in his moments of spiritual distress; though he may seem to himself to have no faith, yet he is a solid believer in the deity of the Son of God. For what he wants, is what Christ only, as the Son of God, can give—deliverance from guilt and despair—hell taken out of his conscience, and heaven brought in.

How earnestly such a trembling sinner calls on Jesus, as the Son of God, to save and deliver him! How he longs for the application of his atoning blood and the manifestations of his justifying righteousness! Where now are the infidel doubts that once perhaps he entertained? Where now any caviling

about his being the Son of God? Lying on his bed or walking up and down his room, in real distress, how earnestly, how sincerely, how believingly he now looks up to Christ at the right hand of the Father, as though he would send forth his desires and petitions into the very heaven of heavens, and bring down an answer from the mouth of the incarnate Son of God. Is not the Deity of Christ expressed or implied by all and every one of these fervent desires? Who but God can hear prayer? Who but God can answer prayer? Who but God can read the thoughts and desires of the heart? With every supplicating breath, with every laying bare of the naked heart before him, Christ is acknowledged and looked unto as God. What a fulfillment is there in this poor sinner's lookings and longings of that gracious invitation, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

Now, what to such a condemned and guilty sinner would be the blood of Christ, if the blood of a mere man? What value, what efficacy, what merit or worth could there be in it to satisfy or save? We say it with all reverence, if Christ be merely a man, his blood could no more cleanse from sin than the blood of the malefactors shed at his side. But being the Son of God and God, no, God because he is the Son of God, infinite merit, the very value and efficacy of Deity, was in and upon that blood, and therefore it "cleanses from all sin." It is true that God can neither suffer, bleed, nor die; but the human nature, assumed into intimate union with the Person of God's co-equal Son, could and did; and the actings, sufferings, sacrifice, blood shedding, and death, being, through this assumption, virtually the sufferings and sacrifice of the Son of God, the merits of Deity were, so to speak, in every drop of that precious blood, and enriched it with the virtue and validity of Godhead. If this be not so, where is our hope?

If sin, in its very nature and essence, be such a violation of the justice of God, that it cannot be pardoned unless that justice be satisfied, search and see what can make this atonement to offended justice? All the obedience of a creature, say of the most exalted creature, a Gabriel or a Michael, is due to his Creator, and cannot possibly be transferred to any other creature, and of all least to a sinful creature. If, therefore, we deny the Deity of the Son of God, we cut off every ray of hope. Atonement for sin stands or falls with the Deity of Christ. If we deny his Deity, we must deny the atonement, for what value or merit can there be in the blood of a mere man that God, for its sake, should pardon millions of sins? This the Socinians clearly see, and therefore deny the atonement altogether. But if there be no atonement, no sacrifice, no propitiation for sin, where can we look for pardon and peace? Whichever way

we turn our eyes is despair, and we might well take up the language of the fallen angel:

**"Me miserable! Which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell!
And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."**

But when by the eye of faith we see the Son of God obeying the law, rendering, by doing and dying, acting and suffering, a satisfaction to the violated justice of the Most High, and offering a sacrifice for sin, then we see such a glory and such a value breathing through every thought, word, and action of his suffering humanity, that we embrace Him and all that he is and has, with every desire and affection of our regenerated soul. All our religion lies here; all our faith, hope, and love flow unto, and are, as it were, fixed and concentrated in Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and without a measure of this in our heart and conscience, we have no religion worth the name, nothing that either saves or sanctifies, nothing that delivers from the guilt, filth, love, power, and practice of sin, nothing that supports in life, comforts in death, or fits for eternity.

The way, then, whereby we come to a knowledge of, and a faith in, the Deity of Christ is, first by feeling a need of all that he is as a Savior, and a great one, and then having a manifestation of him by the blessed Spirit to our soul. When he is thus revealed and brought near, we see, by the eye of faith, his pure and perfect humanity and his eternal Deity; and these two distinct natures we see combined, but not intermingled, in one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Until thus favored we may see the Deity of Christ in the Scripture, and have so far a belief in it, but we have not that personal appropriating faith whereby, with Thomas, we can say, "My Lord and my God."

May the Lord, in tender mercy, enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may see more and more beauty and blessedness in the Son of God, live a life of faith upon him, cleave to him with more purpose of heart, spend the remainder of our days more to his glory, and when death comes, welcome its stroke as carrying our souls to see him face to face, and to be with him forever!

**"Dry doctrine cannot save us,
Blind zeal or false devotion;
The feeblest prayer, if faith be there,
Exceeds all empty notion."**

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**Before we can read to our soul's profit
by J. C. Philpot**

The only real knowledge which we can possess of the truth of God, or of any one branch of that truth, is from a vital, experimental, heartfelt acquaintance with it through the teaching of the Holy Spirit! Men, learned or unlearned, priest or people, may theorize and speculate, may think they see and understand, may reason and argue, preach and prate, talk and write, wisely and well upon this and that point of doctrine, or upon this or that portion of scripture; but unless the sacred truth of God is made known to our hearts by a divine power, and laid hold of by a living faith, we have no true knowledge of, as we have no saving interest in it. How true are those words of the apostle—"And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. 8:2.)

To think that we know a thing, and to know that we know a thing, are two very different things. We must have done with thinking and come to knowing; and this we never can do until the Blessed Spirit seals the truth of God home upon our heart and conscience. The Bible is plain enough. The way of salvation is written in its sacred pages as with a ray of light, and every truth that is for the soul's good, or the Lord's glory, is so traced in the inspired volume, that he who runs may read. This the Lord himself declares—"All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge." (Prov. 8:8, 9.)

But before we can read to our soul's profit these words of truth and righteousness, the veil of unbelief must be taken off our heart, (2 Cor. 3:14-16,) that we may see light in God's light. The truths of the Gospel, if not broken up by a divine hand, lie upon many an understanding as clods of marl upon a field which they encumber but do not fertilize; or, to use a more

scriptural figure, as the seed, scattered by the hand of the sower, lies on the hard, beaten wayside, until trodden into dust by the foot of the traveler, or devoured by the hungry fowl of the air. What good will the purest, clearest, soundest doctrines, even if preached by an apostle, do us unless there be that living principle of divine faith in our hearts which mixes with the word, and so profits the soul? The lack of this was the ruin of those ancient infidels who ate of the manna and drank of the rock, but whose carcasses fell in the wilderness—"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them—but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Heb. 4:2.)

We hold in our hands the divine Gospel of John; we read with wonder and admiration, and sometimes with some little feeling and savor, the sixth chapter; and as we read we see grace and truth stamped upon every line of that sacred discourse where the Lord speaks with such solemn weight and power about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. But what effect did this sacred sermon—the perfection of spiritual and experimental truth, to us pervaded with such a spirit of holiness, to us so weighty and solemn that life or death seems to hang upon every word—what effect did these words of Him who cannot lie produce upon those who heard them drop from his gracious lips? Did it awaken, quicken, regenerate, save, or sanctify them? So far from that, the Lord not seeing good to apply it to their consciences by his Blessed Spirit, it only stirred up their rebellion and infidelity. Their only reply to its heavenly language was, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

We see, then, that it is not truth—the purest and clearest, even when uttered by the Redeemer's own lips, that can save the soul unless applied to the heart by the special power of God. This the Lord plainly showed by the parable of the Sower, where the seed being the same but the soil different, that only which fell into good ground brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Thus, whoever be the sower, it is only when the seed of divine truth enters into the broken soil of a good and honest heart, made so by grace, that it takes that firm and deep root downward which enables it to spring, and grow, and bear fruit upward, to the praise and glory of God.

But when the truth of God is made known to the heart by divine teaching and divine testimony, what a holy sweetness and heavenly savor are then tasted, felt, and realized in it! When thus favored to sit down under the shadow of its Beloved, and find his fruit sweet to its taste, the soul says, with Jeremiah,

"Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jer. 15:16.) The ineffable mystery of a Triune Jehovah; the essential Deity and eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus; the sorrows and sufferings of his agonizing humanity in the days of his flesh; the unutterable glory of his divine Person as Immanuel God with us at the right hand of the Father; the efficacy of his atoning blood; the beauty and blessedness of his all-spotless righteousness; the sweetness of his dying love, that passes knowledge; the fullness of grace that dwells in him as the covenant head of the Church; the stability of the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the firmness of the promises; the holiness of the precepts; the force of Jesus' example; the support of his presence; the whispers of his voice; the sympathy and compassion of his tender heart—how can these blessed realities, in the experimental realization of which the life and power of godliness mainly consist, enter into us, or we enter into them without the unction of the Holy Spirit resting on and bedewing them, and through them resting on and bedewing us?

It is not only utterly useless, but it is highly dangerous, to make ourselves or others wise in the letter of truth when the heart remains utterly destitute of its power. Lace and lawn round the face of a corpse will neither give life nor preserve from putrefaction. The soundest doctrines may be made into grave-clothes for the dead; but "Lazarus, come forth!" may never be spoken to it by the voice of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. Let us beware, then, of unsanctified knowledge, or unapplied truth; for such "knowledge puffs up;" and well may our ears tingle at the solemn warning of the apostle—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1, 2.)

If we have any inward witness that we may fear God; if any faith in his dear Son; if any sense of our sinfulness and ignorance, our earnest, our unceasing desire should be to be led into the truth of God by God himself. "Open you mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law;" "Lead me into your truth and teach me; on you do I wait all the day;" "What I know not, teach you me;" "Give me understanding, and I shall live"—such and similar petitions should be continually rising up out of our hearts and lips, and ascending to the courts of heaven perfumed by the prevailing intercession of the great High Priest over the house of God. The word of promise encourages us to present those supplications unceasingly before the throne. "If any of you

lack wisdom," it says for our encouragement, "let him ask of God, that gives to all liberally and upbraids not; and it shall be given him." And what can be more encouraging for the poor and needy petitioner, waiting at wisdom's door-posts, than the words of the Lord himself—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened."

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In this world of ours

By J. C. Philpot

In this world of ours, just now so bright and beautiful, as the golden grain falls under the reaper's sickle, the Lord himself giving us a fruitful season to fill our hearts with joy and gladness, nothing meets the eye but what is of time and sense. Wherever our lot be cast, or whatever be the place of our temporary sojourn; whether the crowded streets of the huge metropolis, or the busy northern towns, where the untiring giant of steam ever vomits forth his pitchy clouds, and whirls unceasingly round and round his million spindles; or the lonely seashore, where no sound meets the ear but the murmur of the waves against the shingly beach; or the quiet, secluded country village, where, lost amid shady lanes, we may roam and meditate, as if we were alone in the midst of creation; wherever our foot treads, or our eye rests, the world, and nothing but the world, meets our view.

The men and women that we meet on every hand, whether fluttering in the gay robes of wealth and fashion, or the sons and daughters of toil, with poverty and care written on every feature of their face, and stamped on every thread of their dress, all, as they come trooping onward, however they vary in their million points of difference, resemble each other in this, that they live as much for time, sense, and self, as the ox that grazes in the field, or the bird that makes its nest in the bush. As far as we can judge from their words and actions, God is no more in all their thoughts, is no more looked up to, feared, loved, or adored by them, than he is by the swallow that chases the gnats in the evening breeze, or the butterfly that poises its wings over a flower in the noon-day sun. No, worse than this, "all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the seas," all these, though by first creation put under man's feet, continue to glorify God, by still showing forth

the wonders of his creative hand. "They continue this day according to his ordinances, for all are his servants." (Psalm 119:91.)

But man, their original master, man their primitive head, has debased and degraded his nature far below theirs, for he has defiled it to the lowest depths of infamy and shame, and sunk himself and it into a loathsome abyss of pollution and crime, to which the brute creation present no parallel. Listen to that thrush on the topmost bough of yon quivering aspen tree, hailing the morning sun with his tuneful throat. He knows neither sin nor shame; he glorifies the great Author of his being, and is even now singing a morning anthem to his praise.

But that miserable creature of a man, who, all bloated with gin and begrimed with filth, is staggering out of the ale-house, who cannot speak but with a voice hoarse with oaths and strong drink; or that wretch of a woman who, alike polluting and polluted, infests the public street—do we say that the thrush is a nobler creature than these sons and daughters of crime? Why, the very toad that lurks under the bush in the garden, is not only a nobler being, but more glorifies God than this miserable drunkard, and that wretched prostitute.

The bird of the air and the reptile of the ground are what God has made them; in them there is no sin, for them there is no hell. No blasphemy has defiled their mouth; no crime has sullied their feet. The eye of God does not hate them; the hand of God will not smite them. When they have lived their little day they will pass away, and be no more; but the wicked will be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Yet under this seething world of sin and crime hidden by the veil which time and sense cast over all external objects, there are transactions going forward, which are divine and heavenly, daily plucking out of this sea of confusion predestinated individuals, elect men and women, delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The Son of God has a kingdom given to him by his Father before the foundation of the world, and of which he took possession when he rose from the dead, ascended up to heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Of this present evil world Satan is the god and king, for the whole "course of this world" is "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that

now works in the children of disobedience." But Jesus, King Jesus, is meanwhile administering his own kingdom of grace here below, and as such, is continually plucking out of Satan's domain the members of his mystical body, the objects of his eternal love, the sheep of his pasture, and the purchase of his blood.

But this kingdom "comes not with observation," or "outward show." (Luke 17:20.) It is a secret kingdom, a treasure hidden in a field; and the favored subjects of this kingdom, the partakers of its grace, and the heirs of its glory, are, like their once suffering but now glorified Lord, despised by a world of which they are the salt, hated by a world which is not worthy of their sojourning feet.

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Hidden wisdom
by J. C. Philpot

One expression in the word of truth has sometimes struck our mind with peculiar force, as throwing a ray of light on the mysterious ways of the Lord in the present dispensation of his grace. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." (1 Cor. 2:7.) There is a wisdom of God which is not hidden—at least not from the eyes of men who acknowledge God at all, and see the world and all things in it created and sustained by an Almighty hand. All that the great and glorious Creator has designed and executed must necessarily bear the stamp of infinite wisdom and omnipotent power. From the sun in its meridian height to a drop of water in the ocean, from the elephant that stalks proudly in the jungle to the mite that crawls upon the cheese, from the towering oak and spreading cedar to the blade of grass and the moss on the wall—every created object proclaims the wisdom and power of God.

As in earthly things, the counsels of men endued with wisdom display the character of the contriving mind, and are both the consequence and evidence of it; or as in the works of art, the statue or the picture at once manifest the artistic eye or the fashioning hand, so in things divine the wisdom and the power of the Almighty are so stamped in all the works of his creative hand that none but the willfully blind can refuse to see it. David exclaimed, "O Lord, how great are your works! and your thoughts are very deep;" yet he

adds, "A brutish man knows not; neither does a fool understand this." (Ps. 92:5, 6.)

There are still such brutish men, who, brutalized by sensuality and self-indulgence, or sunk into brutal ignorance by infidelity, know not the wisdom and power of God, though they carry about with them, in their own bodies, in their wonderful structure, the clearest evidence of both. But natural men, such as Paley, have been so struck with the wisdom and power of God in creation that they have pursued it with wonder and admiration from department to department, until they have stopped exhausted by the ever new display of both. Who, indeed, that is endued with any degree of thoughtfulness can walk abroad on a clear night, and not feel as if overwhelmed of the contemplation of the starry skies. David felt this when, looking up to the heavens glittering as they do in the East with their myriad orbs of light, he exclaimed, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; what is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him?" (Psalm 8:3, 4.)

The wisdom of God is not hidden in these wonders of his creative hand, for "the invisible things of him (that is, the things otherwise invisible, such as his wisdom and power, greatness and glory) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1:20.)

But "the hidden wisdom" of which the apostle speaks is that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. This is the wisdom of the cross, the mystery of Christ crucified, and the whole dispensation of grace here below, of which the cross is the sum and center, as well as the distinctive mark and symbol. This is the wisdom only spoken among and known unto those who are the matured, established children of God, who are no longer babes, and, as such, need teaching "the first principles of the oracles of God," but "by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (1 Cor. 2:7, Heb. 5:12, 13, 14.) It is their happy privilege to see the hidden wisdom—a wisdom "which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

As then, so now, the princes of this world know not the hidden wisdom of God; for "the princes of this world" are not merely kings and rulers, monarchs envired with all the pride and pomp of state, and governors

endued with power and authority, such as Herod and Pontius Pilate, but the men of mind and influence, the ruling spirits of the period who stamp their spirit on the age. Who are now the princes of this world in our renowned isle? Not merely our temporal rulers, to whom, in all lawful matters, we owe obedience; not merely our excellent Queen, the houses of parliament, the ministers of state, and all endued with legal authority, whom we thankfully acknowledge as the higher powers to whom we are gladly subject, but those less conspicuous in rank and eminence, who really rule and guide the nation by ruling and guiding public opinion, and are princes, if not in title, in real authority and influence.

Our poets and historians, our popular authors, the newspaper press, the great literary periodicals, the speakers at large public meetings, the bishops and clergy, the leading Dissenting preachers, and, not to weary by a long enumeration, all who by station, property, rank, or intellect rule the age by impressing a distinctive stamp upon it, may be included among "the princes of this world," from whom, by a special dispensation, the supremest display of the wisdom of God is hidden. It is hidden from them by divine decree, and as an unalterable part of God's determinate counsel. No advance, therefore, of the human mind in any other wisdom brings it any nearer to this, no, rather, as in the case of two diverging roads, every step takes it farther from it. The advances of human intellect and ingenuity, even in our short span of life, have been stupendous. To converse across the wide Atlantic, the last and latest triumph of human skill and ingenuity, would have been pronounced, thirty years ago, impossible. But men may connect continent with continent, and send the electric spark beneath the rolling waves, and yet remain ignorant of that invisible chain which links together the Son of God in his glory and the contrite sinner in the dust. They may weigh the pressure of the air by determining the rise or fall of a little quicksilver in a glass tube, who can never weigh the pressure of sin on a guilty conscience; may measure the distance of the sun from the earth who can never tell the nearness of the Sun of righteousness to a believing soul; may send messages with lightning speed from London to Paris, yet never receive a message of mercy from the God of all grace to their heart.

And yet the cross is the greatest display of the wisdom and power of God, which could be revealed to the sons of men. That the Son of God, the co-equal and co-eternal Son of the Father in truth and love, should take the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person, and in that pure and spotless humanity should suffer, bleed, and die to redeem his ruined

people from the lowest depths of sin and misery—what a display is here, not only of love surpassing all thought, and grace beyond all expression, but, of wisdom issuing out of such depths that we can but stand upon the brink with holy wonder. To reconcile justice and mercy, fully to satisfy the intrinsic demands of God's righteousness and yet save a polluted worm of earth, to pardon millions of aggravated crimes, and yet not infringe on the spotless holiness of the great and glorious self-existent I AM—what a difficulty is here! what an impossible problem for men or angels to solve!

But the incarnation of the Son of God has solved all these difficulties, and not only so, but has brought God and man together in the person of the God-man. In union with the Father through his Deity, in union with man through his humanity, he is the Mediator between God and men; and thus is brought about that wondrous union of which the Lord himself speaks, and before whose words we solemnly pause with, "O the depth!" "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me."

But a part of this hidden wisdom is that the people of Christ, so dear and near to him as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," should in their time state be conformed to his suffering image on earth, that they may hereafter be conformed to his glorified image in heaven. A mighty work is going on continually on earth, as much hidden from the eyes of men as the depths of the Atlantic Ocean from those who sail over its heaving waves. A people, for the most part poor and ignorant, and always hated and despised, are being prepared for eternal glory! As stones destined to form a noble palace, a work of consummate grandeur and beauty, are gradually hewed into shape in some field adjoining the quarry whence they are taken, it may be across a broad river or arm of the sea to the destined spot where they are built into the precise place designed for them by the architect as their fixed and final resting place; so it is with the living stones of the great and glorious building of which Jesus is both foundation and corner-stone. "I have hewed them by the prophets," says the Lord of his people. (Hos. 6:5.)

But when being thus hewn, what does the world see either of their present grace or of their future glory? What does the world know of the hewing thus going on? The very field itself is hidden from their view. And even those admitted into that field, what do they see for the most part—but the chippings, the dust, and the stones? some just lifted from the quarry, others in various stages of hewing and squaring, and others taken away out of sight,

and borne across the wide river to the mansion above.

Let us not marvel, then, if the members are as much hidden from the eyes of men as their Head was, when here below. When that blessed Man of sorrows was tabernacling in flesh, who—except a few disciples, to whom his glory was divinely made known—knew him, loved him, or cared for him? So with his people now, for "as he is so are they in this world." To be unknown, neglected, hidden in obscurity, or so far as known to be hated, despised, persecuted, and misrepresented—this is a part of the cross. Here are some of the depths of infinite wisdom; here is "the glory of God to conceal a thing," (Prov. 25:2,) which will one day burst forth to his eternal praise. Let us, then, cleave to his cross as our secret joy.

Our proud flesh may be often crimped and mortified by neglect and contempt; but it is good for us to be so—we could not bear the world's smiles; they would seduce into that conformity from which the cross is meant to separate us. May we, with Moses, "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." We suffer but little compared with those who "were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection, and others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground." (Hebrews 11:36-38.)

Compared, too, with our Puritan ancestors, those godly men who by their sufferings and passive resistance to the fury of their oppressors won for us our present religious liberties, what are our persecutions? We have neither their sufferings nor their grace, neither their separations from the world nor their devoted walking with God.

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Unity and Diversity
by J. C. Philpot

Next to the word of life and the preached gospel, and, we may perhaps add,

the conversation of the tried and favored among the people of God, there are few things more edifying to the soul than the records of the experience of the living family. Even in natural biography there is for most readers a peculiar charm. The pulses of human life so beat in unison, heart so echoes to heart in man to man, even as it lies buried amid the ruins of the fall, that most are riveted by any well written, detailed description of the varied circumstances and incidents that have stamped a character on the writer's life. And most have a history to relate, a tale of joys and sorrows, of marked providences and striking incidents, were they able to recollect or willing to detail the varied events that have tracked their path and lie buried in the secret depths of their bosom.

But if this be true naturally, how much more so spiritually! Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," Hart's "Experience," Huntington's "Kingdom of Heaven"—where, in the whole range of spiritual reading, can we find three more edifying books? They are the concentrated kernel of well near everything else that these gracious men of God wrote. "The Pilgrim's Progress" lies deeply imbedded in "Grace Abounding"—the Hymns of Hart in his "Experience"—and the more than twenty volumes of the immortal Coal-heaver in "The Kingdom of Heaven taken by Prayer."

If our books were placed on different shelves according to their worth and value, these would occupy the first, and few, perhaps, be found worthy to stand by their side. But as preachers have been owned and blessed who have not had the gifts and knowledge, power and utterance of Huntington, and writers been honored who had neither the temptations of Bunyan nor the experience of Hart, so there are other records of Christian experience which well deserve a place on the shelves and in the hearts of those that fear God. Where these accounts are genuine, clear, deep, and powerful, they impress the heart and conscience in an indescribable manner. The weighty things of eternity are brought vividly before the eyes—the reality of true religion, the blessedness of those who are taught and favored of God, the fallacy of a dead profession, the truth of the Scriptures, the oneness of the Spirit's teaching—all seem to be impressed on the soul of the spiritual reader when he sees them take this living, breathing form, and thus stamped as by the creating hand of God.

And when we can follow the suffering saints from their first convictions to their deliverance, and then all through the wilderness of temptation to a dying bed, and see the faithfulness of God and the efficacy of his superabounding

grace manifested from first to last, how it makes us admire and adore the depth and fullness of his infinite and eternal love! Grace in the heart of a Christian is thus seen as in the mirror. In the Person and work of the Lord Jesus is grace revealed, in the word of truth is it made known; but it is only as let down into the heart that it is tasted, handled, felt, and realized!

Now grace in the heart of one child of God will ever unite with grace in the heart of another. If there be jars and divisions, if there be dispute and contention in churches and among individuals, let not these be fathered on religion. It is not grace but lack of it that gives them birth and maintains them in being. So far as grace rules and reigns, so far as the life of God is made manifest in the conscience, there is a blessed bond of union among the family of God. This bond of union may indeed lie very deep or be much hidden and covered—the brook of love that once flowed strong and clear may be diminished to a trickling rill—circumstances may separate the chief friends—ministers may be divided, churches split, congregations dispersed, the dearest ties severed—because iniquity abounds the love of many may wax cold.

But love itself can never die, for life and love are so one that love can only die with life, and life the with love. It is one of the three abiding graces; and as faith never ceases out of the believer's heart, nor hope quite dies out of his soul, so love, however low it may sink or cold it may grow, never gives up the spirit. If a man could cease to love he would cease to believe; and if he could cease to believe he would cease to live; and if he ceased to live he would die out of the body of Christ as a dead branch out of a tree. But this we know is impossible with the people, of God. "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand;" "Because, I live, you shall live also."

That there is a great diversity in the experience of the Lord's people must be acknowledged; but there is a oneness, notwithstanding, running through and shining forth amid that diversity. A few moments may not be out of place in glancing at this subject. Oneness, with diversity, is the peculiar feature of the work of God as seen in the visible creation. It is the grand clue that leads the naturalist through the labyrinth of created beings with which we are surrounded, from the stars that spangle the sky to the grass that we tread under our feet. Not to mention God's noblest work, man, created in his own image, after his own likeness, in the features of whose countenance there is the greatest diversity, with oneness of original design and form, there is not a leaf that waves on the trees nor a flower that blows in garden or field that is not different, and yet alike—alike in type and nature, different in size, shape, or

color; alike as a whole, different in detail.

And if natural creation present this beautiful combination of variety and oneness, shall not the spiritual creation bear a similar impress of God's handiwork? That there is a striking analogy between the old creation and the new is most plain. The figures and parables, comparisons, and similitudes that meet us in well near every page of Old Testament and New amply prove this; for were there no resemblance between the work of creation and the work of grace there could be no room for such comparisons.

In true experience, then, viewed as the product of God's hand, there must be *oneness*. It is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized 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. 12:12, 13.) Without this oneness there could be neither union nor communion. In grace as in nature, there must be a face to look at and love. "Your neck," says the Bridegroom to the Bride, "is as a tower of ivory; your eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, your nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus." (Song 7:4.) The graces of the Spirit typified by the features of her face drew forth his love. "Turn away your eyes, for they have overcome me." (6:5.) When we gaze upon a human countenance we instinctively look for features. Without eyes, nose, mouth, and the other features, and these blended and assimilated in some proportion and harmony, it would not be the face of a man but of a monster. In the work of God on the soul, must there not be equally marked features? And do we not look, as if instinctively, for them?

In hearing or reading, then, some professed account of the Lord's dealings with the soul, are we not obliged sometimes to stop and say, "Well, there is something here like face; but where are the eyes, where the nose, the mouth, and chin? Why, with all its roundness and softness, its form and coloring, it is after all but a mass of flesh—a misshapen mummy; or if there be something in it like eyes, they are certainly in the wrong place, in the cheek or chin, and the nose, where the forehead should be. Is this a face to draw forth love? It rather creates disgust." Is there not much of this in the religious world? Taking the word experience in the broad, and, we may say, misused sense, of mere *feelings*, without regard to their source, nature, and end, the world is full of it. Does not the Wesleyan class leader catechize his young brood about their experience? and does not the Romish priest draw forth the workings of the

heart from his female penitents? True experience is not mere feeling, as feeling, but an experience of the power, presence, grace, and teaching of God in the soul. When, then, we examine much that is called experience, it is like looking at what claims to be a human face.

And what are many such countenances? Some are like the *gutta percha* faces—the new toy that amuses children, which can be pulled and squeezed, made long or short, round or square, to smile or frown, and yet always in the end resumes its vacant, unmeaning stare. Hundreds of such experiences are every year manufactured to order. Others possess no features at all—a mere mummy and mass of flesh; or, if any features, all in their wrong places. Liberty before bondage, gospel before law, deliverance before the prison, pardon before guilt, assurance before unbelief, redemption before captivity, mercy before misery; eyes, nose, mouth, chin, and cheeks all topsy-turvy, all in their wrong place. Aye, and some features altogether wanting—holes instead of eyes, or no eyes at all; a cheek all over the face, forehead and chin clean shaved away. How many have what they call faith and yet no repentance, knowledge and no contrition, confidence and no fear, boldness and no humility, praise and no prayer, singing and no sorrowing, rejoicing and no mourning, victory without fighting, resurrection without dying, and glory in prospect without grace in possession! What can we make out of all this? Are we harsh, bigoted, uncharitable, if we cannot admire nor love such an eyeless, noseless, chinless face? Show us real, well-placed, harmonious features, and we can admire and love them; but not a featureless, disfigured countenance—a cross between presumption and ignorance. Let us have eyes, and we shall not inquire whether they be blue or black; a nose, and we shall not be particular as to its shape or size. Oneness without variety would be sameness; variety without oneness would be disfigurement.

Amid, then, all the variety of gracious experience, there is, as in the human countenance, a pervading oneness and a harmony, which, like the key-note of an air in music, runs through and blends the whole. For there is a *variety*, a beautiful variety in the experience of God's family. Each tuneful bird has its own note, each fragrant flower its own smell, each season its own beauty; and each child of God his own experience. Their trials, temptations, afflictions, providences, mercies, miseries, are not made in the same exact mold, nor cut in the same precise pattern. Some sink more deeply, and others rise more highly; some are faint and feeble, and others lively and strong; some are slow, late, and long, others, quick, early, and short; some are cropped in their bloom, and others hang until their leaves get brown and dusky; some promise

well at the outset and perform poorly, others promise but indifferently and ripen better; with some, clouds and rain last nearly all day until there is a glorious sunset, with others, cloudy bars are stretched across their evening rays, though their morning might have been bright and clear; some walk tenderly and humbly all their days, and others bring grief on themselves and others by their carelessness and carnality.

Yet amid all this variety there is oneness. The misery of sin, the vileness and deceitfulness of the heart, the guilt and bondage that allowed carnality produces, the mercy and patience of God and the super-aboundings of his grace, the suitability and preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the emptiness of all created things, the assaults and fiery darts of Satan, the doubts and fears that spring up within when night comes on and the beasts of the forest prowl forth, the cries and sighs that go up unto the Lord when the battle is hot and victory hangs trembling in the balance, the sweetness of the promises as applied to the soul, the certainty and security of the elect, with the other blessed truths of the gospel, as appropriated and realized—in all these features of divine experience, there is a sweet oneness of spirit among all the family of God. To see, to feel, to realize this oneness is to experience spiritual union and communion with the members of the body of Christ. This is the "communion of saints"—an article of the apostles' creed, but to most, as dead and dry an article as the gilded sentence that stands at the east end of a church, or the whole of the thirty-nine articles to a young curate pouncing upon a living as a duck upon a worm.

But the "communion of saints" is as much a living article of a Christian's faith as "the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." This is the mystical tie that knits heart to heart. This Jonathan felt to David, Elisha to Elijah, Asaph to the generation of God's children, (Ps. 73:15), the saints to each other in those Pentecostal days when they were of "one heart and one soul," Paul to the Corinthian believers, (2 Cor. 12:15,) and the early Christians when the wondering heathens said, "See how these Christians love one another."

Here, then, is one of the main benefits and blessings of those accounts of real Christian experience which we are sometimes favored with. They much tend to the edifying of the body in love. They strengthen faith, encourage hope, and draw forth love, tenderness, and affection. The faithfulness of God is seen in living examples, his dealings seem brought near, and there is a sweet testimony that the Lord still reigns, that he has not forgotten the earth, and

that a seed still serves him.

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Scripture

By J. C. Philpot

What a gift to the church of God is the inspired word of truth! Next to the gift of his dear Son and the grace of the Blessed Spirit, may we rank the gift of those "Holy Scriptures which are able to make" the regenerate soul "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." But though it is so unspeakably precious to have in our own language at our side, in our hands, and sometimes in our hearts, the inspired word of Him who made heaven and earth, of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, of Him who by his Spirit and grace enables us to look up to himself as the God of all our mercies, of all our hopes, and all our comforts, yet from the very commonness of the gift, we are apt much to undervalue it. As light, air, water, or even food, clothing, shelter—those indispensable requisites to the support of natural life—are little prized because of daily, hourly use; so the Scriptures, which contain in them the food of the soul, are less valued than they should be, because they are a book familiar to us from childhood. Much in the Holy Scriptures which would strike our minds with astonishment, were it for the first time read, has become so familiar, from constant repetition, as almost to fall listlessly on the ear. The creation of the world and of our first parents; the fall in paradise; the flood, with the preservation in the Ark; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: the history of Abraham; the diversified scenes of Israel's sufferings and victories; or, to come to the New Testament, the simple, touching narrative of the life, sufferings, and death of Jesus, in the gospels—were these beautiful descriptions less familiar from constant repetition, how they would arrest our attention, how they would charm our ears, and seem pregnant with interest in every line! True it is that, then, as now, we should as much need the Blessed Spirit to apply them to our hearts, but we should not read them or hear them read as listlessly as we now too often do.

Have our readers ever considered the wonderful variety to be found in the Scriptures?—we mean the varied form under which God has been pleased to reveal his sacred truth? Let us devote a few minutes to the expansion of this thought, as perhaps it may cast a light on that peculiar mode of instruction which is presented to us in the Song of Solomon.

If it had so pleased him, God might have confined himself to one form of holy instruction, as, say for instance such positive directions as we find issued relative to the tabernacle. (Exod. 25-30.) But as in creation, variety of form, size, color, sheds beauty on all the works of his hands, so in the word of his grace, variety gives new beauties to revelation. Let us consider a few instances of this variety, which may serve more fully to open our meaning.

1. The first and most prominent form is that of *history*, forming, both in Old Testament and New, a large portion of the sacred volume. All events being under his control and directed to his glory, and some being stamped with more evident marks of his special interposition, God has seen fit to record such as in his unerring wisdom should be for the perpetual instruction and edification of the church. But what remarkable features are stamped on Bible history, viewed as a special form of revelation!

Consider, first, its *antiquity*: how it stretches back to the beginning of all time; no, we may say, into eternity itself. What should we know of the creation or the fall, but for the Bible? And if the creation of man in his original purity and his fall into sin and death had not been thus divinely revealed, what a mystery, what a perpetual stumbling-block would this life and this world, with all their sins and sorrows, have ever presented!

But besides the antiquity, what a *certainty* does the historical part of the Bible afford of the circumstances related, and how different in this respect from the fabulous, obscure narratives of heathen historians! What a charming *simplicity*, too, and tender *pathos*, combined, where needed, with *strength* and *energy*, do we find in the historical pages of holy writ! As an obvious instance, how tender, yet simple and life-like, is the history of Joseph. As a mere record of Israel's preservation, a bare outline of Joseph's history would have been sufficient. But what a loss would those beautiful details have been which have given such life and power to that pathetic narrative! The noble speech of Judah, the yearnings of Joseph's heart, restrained until they broke out into such floods of weeping that "the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard;" the tender pathos of those words, "I am Joseph; is my father yet alive?" in which, laying aside all the dignity of the first prince of Egypt, he gave vent to the pent-up affections of 20 years, with a hundred other traits of divine beauty in that touching narrative—where can we find a parallel in works written by the finger of man? The whole history of David, too, and specially his combat with Goliath, his last interview with Jonathan, his flight from Jerusalem, with

his touching self-reproach and submission, his watching at the gate for tidings about Absalom—Absalom the rebel, the incestuous adulterer, yet still Absalom the darling of the old man's heart—with that heart-rending cry, when Cushie, not daring to tell the whole, yet told enough to fulfill his worst fears, "O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—apart from all the divine truths conveyed by this unequaled narrative, who does not feel its consummate tenderness and beauty?

We cannot, from wanting space and other reasons, dwell upon particulars, or in the New Testament we might point out the history of Lazarus with the strongly-contrasted character of the two sisters and the God-Man in the midst, weeping as man, raising the dead as God; the last supper, with the washing of the disciples' feet; the scenes in the garden and at the cross; the walk to Emmaus; the ascension from Mount Olivet, and a thousand other traits in the gospels, as full of tenderness and beauty, apart from their divine character. So, what simple yet noble pictures have we in the Acts of the Apostles! Paul's miraculous conversion; his unparalleled labors and zeal; his boldness when, at the risk of his life, he rushed into the theater at Ephesus; his touching parting at Miletus; (Acts 20;) his noble speeches before Felix and Festus; his voyage and shipwreck—what traits of beauty shine through all his history! As in a noble landscape, or an exquisite painting, or a beautiful piece of music, besides the general effect, a thousand single traits of beauty or harmony start forth to charm the eye or ear, so in the word of God, besides the general sublimity and harmony that are stamped on the whole, innumerable features of beauty leap forth to the observing eye. In creation there is not only beauty, but a prodigality of beauty, from the gleaming stars overhead to the kingfisher's bosom or the butterfly's wing; and thus in the Scriptures there is not merely an exquisite grandeur stamped on the whole, but an overflowing beauty gushing from every page.

2. But *history* is only one form of divine revelation. There are what we may call *devotional* writings. The Holy Spirit, not only inspired men of God to breathe forth prayer and praise, not only taught them to sigh and groan, rejoice and sing, but instructed them to commit to writing those breathings of their soul after the living God. As these divine breathings were usually set to music and sung in the tabernacle worship, they were called "Psalms."* What a manual of living experience, what a standing model and exemplar of vital communion with God, what a perpetual stream of consolation and edification to the church of Christ these divine compositions are and ever have been, it is

unnecessary for us here to mention. From the lowest depths of trouble and sorrow to the loftiest heights of joy and praise, there is no state or stage, movement or feeling of divine life in the soul, which is not expressed in the simplest and sweetest language in the Psalms. They are thus not only a test and guide of Christian experience, a heavenly prayer-book, a daily devotional companion, a bosom friend in sorrow and joy, a sure chart for the heaven-bound voyager, and an infallible standard of divine teaching, but a treasury of strength and comfort, out of which the Holy Spirit blesses the waiting soul.

* The word "Psalms," which is taken from the Greek, means literally the soundings of the strings of the lyre, and thence the divine songs which were sung to stringed instruments.

3. But there is *prophecy* also, reaching forth from the first promise given in paradise down to periods still buried in futurity. Here, as in a continually unfolding roll, are written by the finger of God events of the deepest importance, and especially the sufferings and glory of Christ, and, as one with him, the sufferings and glory of the church. Nor are these prophetic strains mere cold predictions, mere dry, formal declarations of future events. Mingled with the strains of the prophetic harp, flow in the full tide of harmony, promises, warnings, threatenings, rebukes, exhortations, all teeming with that peculiar energy and power which stamp the word of God as truly divine.

Poetry, too, and *oratory*—poetry such as uninspired poet never reached, oratory such as human eloquence never attained to—lend their charms, giving to prophets such as Isaiah language as exalted as their theme. Nor let these be thought out of place. Poetry and oratory, in their purest, highest state, are but the expression of impassioned thought, lofty, burning language being the necessary vehicle of lofty, burning ideas. Thus as the thoughts of God are higher than those of men, the language of God is higher than that of men; and what is called poetry and oratory being but lofty thoughts in lofty words, poetry and oratory are the necessary vehicles of divine thought. To point out a tenth of these beauties of thought and expression would require pages; but as one instance, take Isaiah 63, and read it as a dialogue, which indeed it is, between Christ and the church. The church seeing in the distance a mighty personage advancing, bursts forth with the inquiry, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" The Redeemer answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Why are you red in your

apparel?" again inquires the church, "and your garments like him that treads in the winevat?" The Redeemer answers, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I have trodden them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my clothing." What poetry, what oratory, are here; how sublime the thoughts, how noble and impassioned the language! Similar beauties may be found in almost every chapter.

4. But instruction is also conveyed under a more strictly condensed and *didactic* form, as in the "Proverbs," where the wisest and deepest lessons of moral teaching are couched under short, simple sentences, alike pithy and pointed, and from their concise, antithetical style, easy to be remembered. Happy the man who could direct his moral conduct, we might add, even his habits of life and business, according to the rules laid down in the Proverbs; happier he who can receive the spiritual counsel veiled under these moral rules, and act up to their spirit and divine meaning!

5. Nor are *letters*—that charming mode of communion between distant friends—wanting as another form of divine instruction. The *Epistles*, we know, of Paul and other apostles constitute a large portion of the New Testament. How overflowing with holy affection are these letters to churches and individuals; how pregnant with grace and truth; how richly do they unfold the doctrines of the gospel; how copious are they in promise, how comprehensive in precept, how pointed in reproof; how tender to console, how faithful to warn, how impregnated throughout with heavenly savor and dew! These features are, indeed, so prominent in the Epistles, that it is superfluous to point them out to those who read them with an enlightened eye. But one feature may, perhaps, have escaped the observation of some of our readers, who, dwelling chiefly on single verses, may not have paid much attention to the epistle as a whole; we mean the subtle but strong chain of close *argument* which distinguishes some of Paul's epistles, especially those two masterpieces, the Epistle to the Romans and that to the Hebrews. Take, for instance, the eleven first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Were we called upon to do so, we believe we could point out a logical series of the subtlest and strongest reasoning in those chapters so powerful and masterly, that hardly a word does not contribute a link to the chain:—were it necessary, we, think we could trace out the deeply important subject which he there handles, that is, the justification of the believer, and show the gradual unfolding of his argument, the way in which he supports it from the Scriptures, the decisive conclusion to which he comes, the objections he anticipates and answers, the consequences

he draws, until he winds up the whole with, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" But how many of the Lord's people have read and re-read those eleven chapters, and with profit too, and comfort to their souls, on whom this masterpiece of reasoning, as a complete chain of logical argument, is almost utterly lost. What *oratory*, too, has he poured forth. Read, in this point of view, the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. With what majestic dignity, even in our translation, which is far inferior to the original, it opens; and how it rises and swells, like a noble organ, until it peals forth that full strain, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14.) Look also at Heb. 12:18-24. How beautifully are the two dispensations contrasted! How we seem transported, on the one hand, to the foot of Sinai, until we seem to see the very mountain burning with fire and overshadowing the flames which burst through the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest;" and on the other, carried in spirit to Mount Zion, hovering round which we seem to view the "innumerable company of angels," and on the mount itself, "the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven." Apart from the blessed truth conveyed in these verses, what beautiful imagery, what life-like touches, what breathing eloquence, what sublimity of thought, and fullness yet compression of language, shine through the whole. Again, what a picture of human wickedness does the pen of Paul draw in Rom. 1:20-32. How concise, yet how pregnant the language; how damning the catalogue of crimes; how burning the words that denounce them. What a concentration of thought and expression, the very essence of true oratory, is observable in verses 29-31! And in that acknowledged masterpiece of eloquence, Rom. 8:28-39, how the language keeps rising in power and grandeur, until death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present and things to come, height, depth, and creation itself, are all challenged to separate the elect from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

6. But we are now brought to another form of divine revelation, which we hardly know how to name, lest our meaning be misunderstood, but we may venture to call it a *Sacred Drama*. By the expression we do not mean anything approaching theatrical representation, but the introduction of distinct people and scenes, and the carrying on of a dialogue, in which the parties express their affections and feelings to each other. Our readers will at once perceive that we mean the Song of Solomon. We do; but not exclusively, for we have it shadowed forth in other parts of Scripture, as Job. 1, 2, and Ps. 24, 45. But it is most fully carried out in the Song of Solomon, which is a celebration of the mutual love and delight in each other of Christ and the Church.

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Figures & Metaphors of Scripture

By J. C. Philpot

It is, at first sight, perhaps, somewhat remarkable how little use God has made of argument, that is, direct logical argument, in the Scriptures of truth. To say that he never employs positive, direct argument, would be incorrect, as Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews, has brought forward argument after argument to prove the grand truths which he there so clearly and powerfully lays down. It is true that his arguments are so clothed with divine life and power, and so imbued with the rich stream of vital experience which flow from his heart and pen, that their strict, logical reasoning is not immediately seen, and by most readers is almost wholly unobserved; but if grace and experience give flesh and form, solid argument gives bone and sinew to his weighty statements.

But as a general rule, God does not argue in the Scriptures. To do so, would be unbecoming the exalted majesty and dignity of so great and glorious a Sovereign. He did not argue light into being, nor was the sun fixed in the sky by any reasoning process as to its nature or necessity. He spoke but the word, "Let there be light," and light burst forth at his Almighty fiat. He willed there should be a sun to rule the day, and that glorious orb stood at once in the skies of heaven.

So in the Scriptures, which are a pure revelation of his mind and will, and more especially of his grace, mercy, and truth in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, God does not 'argue' or prove—but 'speaks'. Being a divine revelation, a spiritual unfolding of salvation by the atoning blood and meritorious obedience of the Son of God in flesh, the Gospel, though not against reason—is above it. It is altogether divine and supernatural, and as such is above the province and out of the scope and reach of logical argument. The Gospel of the grace of God is not a thing to be proved, but a truth to be believed; it is not submitted to our reasoning powers as a subject for critical examination, but is a message from God addressed to our conscience, feelings, and affections. For this reason among others, men, fond of argument, and proving everything by strict logical deduction, generally make very poor preachers. They argue and argue, and prove and prove this and that doctrine,

or this and that point, delightfully to their own satisfaction, but for the most part to empty seats and yawning hearers; and while a preacher like Whitefield will, with a striking figure, or a warm appeal to the conscience, make a thrill run through thousands—a Cambridge senior wrangler will have scarce anybody but himself to appreciate his sound convincing argument that certainly there is a God, and that there is a strong probability that the Scriptures were written by divine inspiration.

When the Lord condescends to reason with man, it is on another footing, and with a different language. "Come now, and let us reason together," are his own tender words. But in so speaking, he does not present any logical argument to our mental faculties, but at once addresses the conscience, and the conscience loaded with sin and guilt—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool." And this just meets our case; for it is not by any reasoning process that we come to know that our sins are as scarlet; nor is it by any exercise of our mental powers upon the truth of God that we come to know that, washed in the blood of the Lamb, they are as white as snow. When Christ reveals himself to our soul, then only do we see him and know him; and when he hides himself, we cannot behold him, however sound our judgment, correct our creed, or clear our experience.

And yet, though it is not by reasoning or argument, that we are either convinced of sin, or blessed with peace, yet our enlightened understanding, as the Lord the Spirit shines upon the word, and through the word into our heart, sees admirable beauty and glory in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and in all the grand leading truths of the Gospel. If salvation through the incarnation, sufferings, blood shedding, and death of his own co-equal and co-eternal Son be, as the Scriptures declare, the greatest depth and height of the wisdom of God, (Rom. 11:33, Eph. 3:9—11, Col. 1:26, 27) we must, if we have "the mind of Christ," and are taught of God, see and admire the wisdom thus displayed.

But this we see by "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened," (Eph. 1:18,) to which divinely illuminated understanding the mystery of the cross becomes "the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:24.) We are not fools and dolts; we do not believe wild visionary dreams and fancies; we do not credit tales, legends, and lying miracles; nor are we led blindfolded by priests or monks, or juggled and deluded by that strange mixture of superstition, servile fear, formality, and enthusiasm by which Satan has climbed into the high places of

the earth, and by a false religion, with a million diversities to suit his many-hued worshipers, has barred out Christ and his Gospel. The truth of God, which shines, as with a ray of divine light, in the Scriptures, has been brought with a divine power into our conscience, or, to speak more scripturally, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

It is in grace as in nature. Why does a man believe there is a sun? Because he sees it up there above, shining gloriously in the mid-day sky. He needs no logical argument, no reasoning process to convince him of the existence of the sun when he sees the light and feels the heat of his glorious beams. And how does he know there is a glorious Christ, at the right hand of the Father, a blessed Sun of righteousness in the spiritual skies? Because he has beheld him by the eye of faith as revealed to his soul by the power of God; because he has seen light, and felt warmed, cheered, and blessed by his soul-dissolving beams.

But as the Lord necessarily makes use of human language in the Scriptures, and all human language is of necessity based on the very constitution of the mind of man, it almost inevitably follows that the Lord, in speaking to us as men, addresses himself to the different faculties of our mind. Without professing to lay down a strict and accurate analysis of the human mind, we may say at least thus much, that men can trace in themselves four apparently distinct faculties—reasoning, imagination, conscience, and affections. We can all, in some measure, reason, imagine, feel, and love. To these four different faculties of our mind is all language addressed; and so it is in the language of God to man, as he speaks in the Scripture. To speak generally, argument is for reason, figures for imagination, admonitions for conscience, and a precious Christ and his glorious gospel for the affections.

We just now said that figures are addressed to the imagination, as distinct from the reasoning faculty; but only so that the words of truth may reach our conscience and affections. Let us see this by an example or two. God says to his people, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." He here uses a figure comparing our sins to scarlet. Now by what faculty of our spiritual mind do we realize the striking comparison of our sins to scarlet? The idea of scarlet comes before us as of blood-red dye. We have seen blood; we have seen scarlet; and at once our sins are represented to our view as of a

blood-red hue, as deserving death, of which blood is a standing emblem. But it does not rest here. It comes, through this representation, to our conscience, which feels and owns the sentence true; and then the promise comes— "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"; that is, all their bloody stain shall be washed away, and the soul made as white as the purest snow that stands untrodden by the foot of man upon the mountain top. The conscience being thus purged from guilt, the affections flow out to a sin-pardoning God.

Again, when Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches," we do not apprehend the meaning of his words by any process of reasoning; but we picture to ourselves a vine such as we have often seen against the walls of a house. Our imagination gives a substance to this figure, as representing the union of Christ and his members. We do not need to see a vine actually with our bodily eyes, when we read John 15. The vine has been engraved previously on our mind, through the medium of our eye; and the impression having been once made there, our imagination at once, as if instinctively, recalls the picture thus already made, and gives it a present reality and force. But it does not rest here. As applied by the Spirit, it passes on to the conscience, and, through the conscience, reaches the affections, which, embracing the truth thus revealed, give it a firm dwelling-place in the heart.

This is all that we mean when we speak of figures being addressed to the imagination. We do not mean thereby a wild, visionary, roving, unhallowed fancy, such as poets and artists indulge in. We mean no such carnal fancy or poetical imagination as that; but we are speaking of that sanctified faculty of the mind which, under the influences and teaching of the Holy Spirit, receives the vivid, living impression made upon the heart and conscience by Scriptural figures.

If you doubt or deny our explanation, will you tell us how you are made to feel the power and truth of such a figure as "I am the good Shepherd." You say, "I know nothing about your imagination and all that; I receive it by faith." Of course you do, or you do not receive it at all. But it is faith acting through what is vividly and powerfully impressed on your imagination. Put it in this light. You feel sin, or you feel pardon and peace. How do you feel the guilt and burden of sin? And how do you feel the sweetness and blessedness of peace through the blood of Jesus? "By faith," you answer. Yes, but by faith acting through the conscience; for it is in the conscience that guilt is felt; and it is in the conscience that peace is enjoyed.

So with the affections. You love Jesus and his truth. How did you come to love him? By faith; because "to you that believe he is precious." But where do you love him? In your heart of hearts, your warm, living, heavenly affections. Here, then, is faith working by love, and purifying the heart; that is, as it here means, the conscience. Now, if faith works by the spiritual understanding in receiving and acknowledging the truth; if it works by the conscience in feeling guilt and pardon; if it works by the affections when it makes Christ precious, may it not work by the imagination, that is, a pure, holy, and sanctified faculty, for which we lack the appropriate word, but which is engaged in receiving the truth, through a scriptural figure.

How much the "Pilgrim's Progress" has been owned and blessed! And what is it all addressed to but our imagination? How do we realize the Slough of Despond, and the Wicket-gate, and Giant Despair, and the dark river with the pilgrims passing through, and the glorious city opening its gates to receive them, but by our imagination acting upon these striking figures, and thus giving them a substance and a power to our hearts? If, then, a man says, "Imagination has nothing to do with religion," we answer, "My good friend, you are confusing yourself with words without understanding their meaning. Put your 'Pilgrim's Progress' on the fireback, and the 'Holy War,' and the 'History of Little Faith,' 'Quarles's Emblems,' and many other precious books of a similar stamp; for if you discard the faculty of picturing objects as these spiritual writers have represented them, you need not keep these works as useless lumber on your shelves."

We have entered into this perhaps somewhat dry and uninteresting explanation, because it may seem, at first sight, rather startling to say that there was such a thing as imagination in a Christian heart. But as the Lord has given us imagination, as well as reasoning, conscience, affections, etc., in the work of grace and the teaching of the Spirit, he illuminates, sanctifies, and employs this faculty, to apprehend his mode of instruction by type and figure.

Whether our explanation be correct or not, this one thing is certain, that there is something in figures eminently adapted to convey instruction, and to present truth with peculiar power and force to the mind. For one person who can comprehend an argument, there are hundreds who can understand an illustration; and a figure will be stamped on the memory for life, when a proof will be forgotten in ten minutes after it has been clearly laid down. We need not wonder, therefore, that the Lord the Spirit has so filled the Holy

Scriptures with figure and illustration; and that the Blessed Lord himself, who spoke as never man spoke, so opened his mouth in parables, which are, in fact, but extended figures.

"I have used similitudes," says the Lord, "by the ministry of the prophets;" (Hosea 12:10;) and we need hardly say how striking and appropriate these similitudes are. Look, for instance, at the Song of Solomon. Bridegroom and bride, seem to vie with each other in running through all the range of natural objects conspicuous for beauty and loveliness, to celebrate each other's beauty, and to mingle their mutual loves. Gold, silver, ivory, jewels, beryls, and sapphires as articles of cost and beauty; spikenard, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, and aloes as the chief spices; the rose, the lily, the pomegranate, as the sweetest and purest of scents; the palm, the cedar, the vine, the fig, the apple tree as the choicest of trees; the horse, the roe, the young fawn, as the most beautiful of animals; the dove, and especially the turtle-dove, as the most fond and affectionate of birds; honey, wine, milk, as the sweetest of food; purple and scarlet as the most resplendent of colors—how the Holy Spirit glances, as it were, through all creation, from the sun walking in his brightness to the dove cooing in the shade, to set forth the beauty and glory, the love and loveliness of Christ and the Church.

Whence this rich and bounteous profusion, his almost lavish prodigality of figure, as if the Holy Spirit, in writing this book by the pen of Solomon, strewed, as it were, beauty in every verse from his finger tips, unless figure and emblem were the choicest and most suitable means of conveying a sense of Christ's beauty and blessedness, as seen by the eye of faith in union with his bride? Strip the Song of Solomon of its figures and comparisons, and you make it a mere dead and dry disquisition on the love of Christ and his Church, as much like the exquisite and beautiful Song of Songs as a gate-post resembles a palm or a cedar.

And not only would the Song of Solomon bleed at every pore were its figures stripped away, but the Bible generally, the blessed Bible, on which the Holy Spirit, by figure and comparison, has shed his richest unction, his sweetest and softest dew, would be almost as dead and dry as an Act of Parliament. Where would be Isaiah's glowing imagery, the beautiful figures and comparisons through which the Lord has comforted thousands of sorrowful hearts? Where Jeremiah's terrible denunciations and withering rebukes? Where Ezekiel's emblematic representations—his barber's razor, his food by weight and water by measure, his digging through the wall, his pot with the

seething bones and filthy scum? In a word, not only where would all the life and power of the Bible, but where would the Bible itself be, were the figures gone? In fact, the Bible would not be the Bible were the figures removed or tamed down to dry declarations.

God knew best how to write his own book; and he has filled it with comparisons. Look at the figures which he uses to mark out and distinguish his own chosen people. They are his sheep, his wheat, his jewels, his vessels of mercy and honor, his trees of righteousness, his virgin bride, his house and dwelling-place, his kings and priests, the lot of his inheritance, the members of his body, flesh, and bones; the crown of his head, and the spouse of his heart. The wicked in the same manner are stamped and branded by emblem and figure. They are designated as goats, chaff, tares, vessels of wrath, reprobate silver, dross, swine, wolves, a stench in God's nostrils, a generation of vipers, hatching cockatrice' eggs, and weaving the spider's web; trees twice dead, clouds without water, wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Take the figures on both sides as descriptive of the righteous and the wicked, of which we have given but a faint specimen, and then ask yourself if it be in the power of human language or human thought, except by emblem and figure, to give such force and weight to describe the friends and foes of God. Certainly not. It is God's own language, therefore the fittest, weightiest, truest, best.

When figures are scattered in such rich profusion in the sacred pages, and where a man undertakes to explain all of them in a spiritual and experimental manner, we may well conclude that it is no common or easy undertaking, and that to have the mind of the Spirit in all his exposition, needs no ordinary spiritual man. A great depth of vital experience and a clear insight into the meaning of the Holy Spirit must be given to a man from above who undertakes to lay open figure after figure, and metaphor after metaphor; and not only so, but a great and unusual sobriety of judgment, and a conscience made and kept very tender in the fear of God, to preserve him from running wild amid Scripture imagery. How many light and trifling men have disgusted the saints of God by desecrating the holy figures of the Scripture by their carnal explanations and bold presumptuous intrusion into sacred mysteries, the power of which they had never known or felt; and even good men have sometimes made themselves ridiculous by attempting to open a figure, and have done it so awkwardly and confusedly as not only to destroy the meaning

of the figure itself, but to make one part of their explanation contradict the other, or, what is worse, some grand Bible truth.

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Hymns & Sacred Poetry by J. C. Philpot

If the family of God were individually asked what means of grace had been most blessed to their souls, we think they would answer with one accord, and without hesitation, "The Scriptures." But what next! "The preached Gospel." And what next? "Hymns." That the blessing of God has rested in a special manner upon hymns is unquestionable. Scarcely is there a gracious deathbed recorded where the happy sufferer (how grace harmonizes two such discordant sounds as happiness and suffering!) does not either obtain help and comfort from some verse of a hymn, or does not give vent to his feelings of sorrow or joy in some well-known line. This, what we may almost call the secondary use of hymns, is distinct from, and independent of, their original and primary intention, that of being sung in the public worship of God. But it shows how the Lord honors and sanctions them. They are thus attended with a double blessing.

As sung in the assemblies of the saints, they are not only tributes of praise, and, if sung "with the spirit and with the understanding also," (1 Cor. 14:15), a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, (1 Pet. 2:5); but, by being thus fixed in the mind and memory, they become, as it were, locked up in a storehouse, out of which the Blessed Spirit takes in times of trouble and sorrow such portions as he sees good to apply with a divine power to the heart. For this purpose they are eminently qualified for several reasons.

1. They are, for the most part, truth condensed into a short compass—if we might venture upon such a figure, truth *crystallized*, and thus presented in a clear, transparent shape, purified from all that muddy mass of words with which we in our sermons and writings are so apt to overload and thus confuse it.
2. As being the utterances and breathings forth of the experience of the saints, they become responsive echoes to the cries of the Spirit in the heart of all the subjects of grace; and 3. When they are richly impregnated with the dew and

savor of the Holy Spirit, they are, so to speak, vehicles of grace, performing that office which the Apostle speaks of as the fruit of godly conversation, "ministering grace unto the hearers." (Eph. 4:29.)

By way of testing the truth of this attempt to explain the peculiar beauty and blessedness of hymns, take down your hymn-book, and read through, say one of Hart's, as Hymn 154, Gadsby's Selection. "Much we talk of Jesus' blood," etc.

Now, if we are not much mistaken, you will find the three things we have mentioned brightly shining through that hymn. 1. Scriptural truth presented in a clear, transparent, condensed form. 2. The utterance of the soul, mourning under and hating sin, yet looking up in faith and love to the atoning blood which delivers and purifies from it. 3. A sweet savor and dew of the Blessed Spirit shed through the whole, impregnating it with life and feeling.

Forgive us, dear readers, if we seem to treat you as children, attempting to instruct you, many of whom are better qualified to instruct us; but we write in the simplicity of our heart, not in a spirit of dictation or assumption, but merely tracing with our pen the thoughts and feelings of our own mind; and if we can thus interpret the language of your heart, and put into visible shape what may have dimly laid there, you may read with increased sweetness and pleasure Hart's matchless compositions.

But shall we seem to sit too much in the teacher's chair, a position very foreign to our inclination, if we further attempt to trace a little more fully and deeply the original foundations on which sacred poetry rests?

As in a damaged picture, or broken statue, or ruined arch, there may flash forth sparks of beauty indicative of a master mind, and what it actually was when it issued forth from his creative hand, so amid the wreck and ruin of our fallen nature there are traces of that primeval beauty in which man came forth from the hand of his divine Craftsman on that day when the Creator of heaven and earth looked down with holy complacency on the works of his hands, and pronounced them all very good. Conscience, reason, imagination, memory, language, all the social affections of conjugal, parental, filial love, with every tender, benevolent, compassionate feeling that has ever prompted and sustained those self-denying actions and heart-thrilling words that ever and anon sound through this sin-stricken world as faint echoes of paradise—all are so many relics of the pristine beauty of man.

Shall we then err if, among these remains of original beauty, we place poetry and music? That these two relics of the Fall are deeply imbedded in the original constitution of man is evident from this circumstance, that there is scarcely a nation on the face of the earth, in either ancient or modern times, in which both have not had a conspicuous place. It is, indeed, sadly and fearfully true that sin and Satan have seized upon these two gifts of heaven, and depraved and perverted them from their original intention to their own abominable use. The poetry which should embody in the sweetest, loftiest strains the praises of God has sunk down into a deification of every base lust and passion of man; and the music which should respond to the notes of the heavenly choir has been prostituted to the worship of brutal idols. Grace, then, which, besides its victories in redemption and regeneration, refines also and wins back to God the Redeemer those faculties of body and mind which originally belonged to God the Creator, comes to the rescue; and as she teaches the tongue that once used to blaspheme now to pray, and the foot that once tripped in the midnight dance to carry the body to the house of prayer, so she recovers the gifts of poetry and music, and baptizing them, as it were, in the streams of love and mercy, sanctifies them to the service of her once crucified but now risen and glorified Lord.

Shall we wander beyond the hallowed precincts of the gospel if we give a few moments' consideration to what poetry and music really are? as their being devoted to the service of the sanctuary does not alter their nature, but their use.

POETRY, then, consists mainly in two things:

- 1. Elevated, impassioned thoughts and language.**
- 2. A metrical form which bounds and confines the impassioned language within certain prescribed limits.**

The first is the soul of poetry, the second the body; the one is the flaming incense, the other the censer which contains it; the former is the bounding steed, dashing impetuously on; the latter, the thoughts which check and guide his course. Thus all elevated, impassioned language is not poetry any more than the soul is not the whole man; nor, on the other hand, are metre, rhyme, rhythm, poetry, without elevated, impassioned thought and language, any more than the body without the soul is the whole man. If this be true, then the

more sublime the thoughts and impassioned the language, and the more that metre, rhyme, and rhythm approach perfection, the more beautiful the poetry will be, and more worthy of its name and nature.

The Scripture is full of poetry, and of poetry viewed under these two aspects—sublime thoughts and impassioned expression in a metrical, rhythmical form.

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Unfulfilled Prophecy

By J. C. Philpot

There is, we know, in the mind of many experimental preachers and writers a prejudice against the whole subject of unfulfilled prophecy. The cause of this is not difficult to ascertain. They have seen how many notional professors have made a little smattering of unfulfilled prophecy and a letter faith in the latter-day glory a substitute for the teachings of the Blessed Spirit in the soul. They have also seen how ministers who once promised well have been drawn aside by the study of prophecy from the line of vital experience into dead and dry speculations, and instead of feeding the church of God with what they themselves have felt, tasted, and handled of the word of life, set before them the fruit only of their studious brain, which indeed may inform the judgment but only starves the soul.

They feel also that the choice of the flock, the most tried and tempted, as well as the most blessed and favored of the living family, especially the poor in this world's goods, are willingly strangers to this speculative knowledge, and have proved and are daily proving that there is nothing in it to bless their souls, comfort their hearts, subdue their sins, deliver them out of temptation, break to pieces their snares, or make Christ precious. All this we see and feel, and have seen and felt for years, and can sincerely and honestly say that the study of unfulfilled prophecy in the bare letter, as distinct from the sweet vein of spiritual experience hidden in it—which, by the by, these professors never see—has never communicated a grain of divine comfort to our heart, and has never been made the least blessing to our soul in a way of sensible communication.

We do not say that it has not been blessed to others. There are those whom we

believe to be children of God who have told us that they have found the subject truly profitable to them, and have felt their hearts stirred up, and their affections sensibly loosened from the things of time and sense, by anticipating the near approach of Christ's Second Coming. Thus, others may have found a blessing in it which we may not. But we must acknowledge that we have taken and still do take much interest in it; and this may be the case with others of our readers. It must be acknowledged that there are many subjects of interest to the church of God apart from personal experience. That is indeed the grand point, the indispensable thing, without which all knowledge is speculative, barren, and worthless; but we may be allowed sometimes to look out of our own immediate circle of individual experience and cast a glance at the hopes and expectations of the church. These things do not clash. In the same way as members of a gospel church, besides their own personal sorrows and joys, are called upon and sometimes are enabled to "weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice," who are bound up in the bond of Christian fellowship with themselves, so may the members of Christ's mystical body sorrow and rejoice with the sufferings and hopes of the church at large.

No book in the whole compass of the sacred volume is confessedly so difficult of interpretation as the Revelation of John. This difficulty arises not only from the very nature of the subject, unfulfilled prophecy being necessarily obscure until its accomplishment, but from the symbolical form under which the predictions in it are couched. In these symbols there is this striking peculiarity, that while viewed spiritually they are most simple and expressive, they are, viewed literally, (that is, with respect to their historical fulfillment,) most difficult and obscure. Take, for instance, the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (Rev. 16.) What more simple or expressive figure could there be of the righteous anger of Jehovah, treasured up, as it were, until the iniquities of the world called it down? But when we come to adapt these distinct vials to historical events, and attempt to determine at what period they were successively poured out, and what is their strict, literal accomplishment, then the difficulty commences, and what, experimentally viewed, is most plain and instructive, prophetically viewed is most obscure and uncertain.

The objection, then, immediately arises, "Why attempt an explanation of what, according to your own admission, is so obscure? Would it not be better wholly to abstain from examining so perplexing and uncertain a subject? As the spiritual meaning is so simple and plain, so filled with holy wisdom, so

edifying and instructive, so pregnant with encouragement and consolation, blended at the same time with such solemn warning and admonition, would it not be far better to confine yourself to what is so experimental and profitable, and not puzzle and perplex yourself and us with what is so dark and difficult?" We admit the force of the argument, as is evident from the way in which we have stated it; but may we not have *both*? Preserving to its fullest degree the spiritual, may we not also give a glance at the literal interpretation? Is this forbidden by the blessed Spirit? Does he forewarn us against approaching this holy ground, if at least, like Moses, we put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet?

How does the sacred record open? "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." If God gave the revelation to Jesus Christ, "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass," why should not his servants attempt to understand the things shown to them? And if there be a blessing promised on those who read and hear the words of the prophecy, why should we not seek to obtain a manifested interest in such a promise? Besides the spiritual meaning, there is evidently a prophetic one; and it is equally evident that this prophetic meaning was given for the church to read, study, and profit by. If, then, we keep this literal meaning in its proper place, subsidiary and subordinate to the experimental interpretation, there seems to be no scriptural reason against examining it. But, if it be again objected, that the difficulty of the interpretation must always form an insuperable barrier, may we not reply, that the same ever-blessed Jesus who gave it to John for the express benefit of his church and people can unfold its meaning to our understanding, as well as apply its promises with power to our hearts? But while we speak thus, we at the same time feel so much both the difficulty of the subject and our own incapacity properly to handle it, that it has all but deterred us even from making the attempt; and we therefore trust our readers will bear with us if we come short in laying it open to their satisfaction.

The inherent difficulty of the book has almost necessarily produced a proportionate variety of interpretation. Two striking instances may be adduced to show this. There are interpreters who assert that the whole of the Revelation has been already fulfilled, and that the first three or four centuries of the Christian church witnessed its entire accomplishment;* and there are

those who say that no part has been yet accomplished beyond the first three chapters, and that the whole still remains in the dim and distant future.† We cannot subscribe to either of these views, and hardly know which is the more inconsistent or untenable. If the first opinion were true, it would be the strongest argument which an infidel could urge against the inspiration of the book; for the grand evidence of a prophecy being inspired is its undeniable accomplishment. And if the second view were well founded, not only would the church of God have been left uncared for and unnoticed in the sacred chart of prophecy for above 1,700 years, but it would falsify the positive declaration, which we have already quoted, as standing on the very threshold of the book, that the things predicted were "*shortly* to come to pass." In opposition to these strained and inconsistent opinions, we believe, in common with most interpreters, that much, if not by far the greater part, has been already fulfilled, that an important part is now being accomplished under our eyes, and that the day is fast approaching when there will sound the "great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done!"

There are certain truths of divine revelation which to an enlightened understanding are beyond all dispute or controversy; and on these points, as they are usually of vital, fundamental importance, a preacher or a writer who seeks to edify the church of God cannot express himself too clearly or insist too strongly. But there are other truths which, either because less plainly revealed, or because the time for their being fully understood is not yet come, are proportionally obscure and uncertain; and therefore preachers and writers who would reverently treat the oracles of God must either abstain from them altogether, or if they approach them, must handle them with caution and with the utter absence of positiveness and dogmatism. The truths themselves may be as certain, the obscurity not being in them nor in the mode of their revelation, but in our mind, which for various reasons—as natural darkness, want of divine teaching, unbelief, force of prejudice, cleaving to traditional interpretation, rigid discipleship to some master in Israel—is unable to grasp or enter into them. This is particularly the case with the prophetic Scriptures—which, besides the difficulty which arises out of their symbolical language, must almost necessarily be obscure until their fulfillment throws upon them its clear and unerring light. When that time arises, their meaning will be so clear that the wonder will be they were not before understood.

To make our meaning more clear, let us for a moment suppose a saint of God under the Old Testament endeavoring to penetrate into the meaning of Isaiah

53. To us who can read it in the light of Messiah's humiliation, sufferings, and death, the meaning is plain and clear, and we see the Man of sorrows portrayed in every line. But that before the coming of Christ its meaning was most obscure to the Old Testament saints is evident from the ignorance of the eunuch who was reading this chapter, and his inquiry of Philip, "I pray you, of whom speaks the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"

Now, in the same way as the prophecies which spoke of Christ's first coming were obscure until the Redeemer came as a suffering Jesus, so must the prophecies which treat of his second coming be obscure until he comes as a triumphant Jesus. But, as the prophets and saints of old "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," so surely it may be allowable for us in these last times to search the sacred Scriptures, to see what is revealed in them of the second coming of the triumphant Messiah.

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**Education of children
by J. C. Philpot**

A Magazine for children on free-grace principles has long been much needed. Many godly parents would gladly hail a work free, on the one hand, from the errors of Arminianism, and filled, on the other, with matter useful, instructive, and, to a certain extent, entertaining.

Much is said about the proper education of children, and various systems have each their fervent advocates; but how few people seem aware of the fact that children are their own best educators. Take a child but four years old. What an amazing amount of knowledge that child has already acquired, and that almost wholly by his own exertions. Not to speak of the thousands of surrounding objects which it has become acquainted with and can recognize at a glance, it has learned a language. Consider that wonderful feat. Take a man of five and twenty, of cultivated mind and intellect, land him in a boat on the Feejee Islands, or drop him out of a balloon in the middle of Turkey—will that man at the end of four years speak Feejee or Turkish as well as yon little fellow who four years ago gladdened his mother's heart with his first cry, now speaks English? The Basque, a language spoken in the north of Spain, is

considered so difficult that it is commonly said there never was an instance of a foreigner's having learned it. But a Basque child learns it in four years—a feat you could not perform in a lifetime. And all this, besides a thousand other things, the child has learned when seemingly doing nothing but play and amuse itself.

But, of course, as children grow they need what is called education, that is, instruction in the more orderly and mechanical way. Were it possible to go on with nature's plan, the best mode of education would be still the instructor's lips; but as all human knowledge is accumulated in books, to books recourse must be had to give the child the benefit of this heap.

But besides the dull, dry spelling-book, which by learning to read, throws back the gates of the temple of human knowledge, as the difficulties of reading are gradually overcome, and the minds of children open—we speak here, of course, of intelligent children, a very decided minority—books of another class and description than the formal school book begin to attract their attention. No one can watch their engaging ways, or listen to their interesting talk, without perceiving how alive they are to novelty, how peculiarly impressible their minds are, and eager for information, as their constant questioning shows. To feed this mental appetite—we speak here, perhaps, from personal recollection—they pounce upon a fresh book as a thrush upon a worm. See how a child hangs over its new picture-book; how it creeps into the corner—not then the dreaded place of punishment—sits on its little stool, and devours with its eyes the crude and gaudy colored pictures. What efforts it makes to spell out the wondrous adventures of giants and dwarfs, and what implicit confidence it places in those marvelous legends which, as nursery tales, have come down from our Scandinavian sires, and date from periods of unknown antiquity.

Talk of the dullness and inattention of children! See their glistening eyes at the tale of "The Children in the Forest"! How they hate the cruel uncle, and how they love the little robins who covered their bodies with leaves. Or see them listening to the history of little Moses, or of Joseph cast into the pit, and sold by his cruel brethren. How they remember every incident, and what a deep impression these beautiful narratives make on their minds. What a memory, too, they have! So that if you tell them a little tale of the poor lamb that lost its way, and what piteous adventures it met with until restored to its bleating mother, unless you next day repeat the exact incidents in exact order, the monitor on your lap will soon join in chorus with the breathless auditors round your knee in reminding you where your narrative is faulty. How

susceptible, again, they are to little pieces of poetry. Not to mention the absurd nursery rhymes, which, absurd as they are, so hit the taste and capacity of children, that they are sung alike to little fur-clad Lord John in the duke's carriage, and to little barefooted Joe in the laborer's chimney corner—not to dwell on such nursery rhymes, how comes it to pass that such infantile poems as "Twinkle, twinkle, little star," have such universal currency? There must be something peculiarly adapted to the mind of children in these and similar pieces, to make them so widely known and so universally popular.

It is evident, then, that there is a style of writing adapted to the capacity and taste of children, and it is equally evident that unless the secret of this style is got at and got into, you may write until the world is in a blaze, but you will never get children to read, understand, or care one rush for your books. Many can write for adults, but there is not one in a thousand, nor perhaps in a hundred thousand, who can write for children. It is not merely the language which must be adapted to their comprehension, and this must be good old Saxon English, such as the translators of the Bible and Bunyan used; nor is it merely the absence of all abstract terms and arguments, and of everything dull and prosing, but there must be the presence of that lively, engaging, and interesting manner and matter which at once arrests the attention, and while it interests, informs the mind.

Grace, we know, is supernatural, the special gift of God, and therefore is so far out of the question; but the minds of children are, for the most part, exceedingly plastic and open to impression. How well we remember the events and circumstances of childhood. Our native place, the house we were born and bred in, the fields in which we sported, the hedges where we gathered primroses and violets, the school we went to, with the schoolmaster and schoolboys—why are all these well-known scenes so deeply engraved in our memory? why do they revisit us in our dreams and can never be forgotten while life remains? Does not all this prove the plastic nature of childhood—that as the Egyptian or Assyrian bricks, after three or four thousand years, still bear the impression of the moulder's fingers, so our memory still, for the same reason, shows the prints of our childish feet, simply because the clay was then soft and wet? Should not occasion, then, be taken to imprint on this soft, plastic clay, life-lessons?

Religion, in the high, the only true sense of the word, we cannot teach children. To worship God in spirit and in truth must be the alone work of the Spirit; and as without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith is his

special gift, the manmade prayers of unbelieving children cannot be pleasing in his sight. But why should not the nicest principles of honor, truthfulness, generosity, kindness, industry, and the strictest morality be inculcated? And without ever leading them to hypocrisy or false profession, why should not such fundamental truths as the holiness and justice of God, the strictness and curse of the law, salvation by grace, pardon and acceptance only through the blood of Christ, the necessity and nature of the new birth be laid before them?

Though it was not so with us, yet, from the testimony of others, we believe there are many instances where the Lord begins to work on the conscience in childhood, or at least early youth. Is it wise, no, more, is it merciful or consistent with godliness, rudely and roughly to crush all tender buddings of what may prove real grace for fear of hypocrisy? Holding with the firmest hand and feeling ourselves most deeply the thorough fall of man and the helplessness of the creature, need we be ever dinning in their ears, "Ah! you can do nothing"? Are we so afraid of making them Pharisees, that we would sooner see them Antinomians? They will learn soon enough they can do nothing. The fear is, lest like thousands they learn too soon to abuse the doctrine of human helplessness to sin the more eagerly.

It has often been remarked, and few things have brought greater reproach on the truth, that the children of professing parents often exceed all others in wickedness. In some cases this will happen whatever amount of the tenderest care has been shown, but it is often the result of the parents' own carelessness and neglect, if not worse. Retribution forms a part of God's moral government; and as parents sow they will often reap.

We are perhaps wandering from our subject; but our purpose is to show that there is abundant room for a periodical for children, and our hints may serve to point out what, in our opinion, a child's Magazine should be. Children are very fond of having a little book which they may call their own. And if they pay for it themselves, it is all the more prized. How disappointed they are if their little Magazine does not come on the first of the month. And what journeys they will take to the bookseller's to inquire if it is arrived. All this shows that children will read periodicals adapted to their capacity and taste.

There are several children's Magazines which embrace a fair amount of useful and entertaining instruction; but the dead fly of Arminianism sadly taints their ointment. Could we, then, have a periodical filled with all their good matter and free from their bad, it would indeed be an acquisition. The need of it is certainly felt in the churches.

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The Song of Solomon by J. C. Philpot

There is a great *variety* which God has seen fit to stamp on his holy word. We now purpose, with his blessing, to offer a few remarks on the Song of Solomon, which we have ventured to call a *Sacred Drama*.

The Song of Solomon differs from every other book in the sacred volume, by introducing not merely dialogue, but the people themselves before our eyes by whom it is uttered. This puts, as it were, new life into the subject, and not only sets it in the strongest light, but invests it with the sweetest influence. Nothing can be more beautiful than to introduce the church herself upon the scene, under her scriptural character as a bride, and as such to hear her expressing the tenderest feelings of her heart to her heavenly Bridegroom; and on the other hand, no representation of Christ's love to his church could be more vivid or beautiful than personally to introduce him as addressing himself in language of the purest, tenderest affection to his bride. To hear their mutual expressions of love carried on in a dialogue would of itself be most sweet and expressive; but beyond this, to bring before our eyes various scenes and a course of action by which the alternations of feeling on the part of the bride are brought out in the most varied and experimental manner, must invest the whole with additional beauty.

It is as though we were actually present, and heard from their own lips their mutual declarations of love and affection; rejoiced with the Bride in Christ's presence and mourned with her in Christ's absence. It is as though she spoke for us, and in giving vent to the feelings of her heart, gave vent to ours. Thus her expressions of love and affection become her own, and her admiration of the beauty and blessedness, grace and glory of the Redeemer, is but what we feel, but are unable as vividly and warmly to express. If unable to enter into the fullness of her love and admiration, the deficiency is ours. The experience of the church is here revealed and represented in its fullest and most vivid form. If to us mystical, unintelligible, or fanciful, the lack and the loss are alike our own. It is thus, therefore, one of the most experimental books in the whole Scripture, though there are few, comparatively, and they only in favored moments, who can enter into the experience contained in it. But we

may lay it down as a most certain truth that the more the love of Christ is felt and realized in the soul, the more will this holy book be understood and enjoyed.

But let us now consider a few points which distinguish the Song of Solomon from every other book of Scripture, and see how far they justify us in calling it a Sacred Drama. Every drama has a *subject*; so has the Song of Solomon. This subject is the mutual love of Christ and his church. Every drama has a *course of action* which distinguishes it from mere dialogue, that being merely the expression of thought or feeling between two parties; so has this divine song its course of action. This consists in the varied changes produced in the feelings, words, and actions of the Bride, according to the presence or absence of the Bridegroom. A drama has also usually an *audience*; and this is another feature which distinguishes it from a dialogue. The Song of Solomon has therefore its audience; but the audience here is not, as in theatrical representations, of which the Spirit of God knows nothing, an assemblage of casual spectators external to the drama, but an audience internal to it; in other words, forming a part of the drama itself. This audience consists of the female attendants of the bride, called in the song itself "Virgins," or "Daughters of Jerusalem"; and we are also inclined to think that, as the bride had her female attendants, so the Bridegroom had his male "companions," as they are termed (1:7; 8:13.)

If this view be correct, we may thus lay out the structure of this Sacred Drama:

1. *Subject*, the Love of Christ and his Church.
2. The *Drama* itself, or course of action, the Vicissitudes of that love as experienced by the bride.
3. The *Speakers*, the Bridegroom and the Bride.
4. The *Audience*, the male and female Attendants of the Bride and Bridegroom.
5. The *Scene*, sometimes the Street of the city, sometimes the Private Gardens belonging to the Bridegroom, and sometimes the King's Palace, situated in or near these gardens.
6. Besides these constituent parts of the drama, we have to consider the *Language*, which, as suitable to that species of composition, is highly poetical and metaphorical, and from the nature of its subject peculiarly tender and impassioned.

But we have called it a *Sacred Drama*; and so indeed it is eminently and peculiarly, for it sets forth a subject above all others holy and heavenly, namely, the mutual love of Christ and the church. Would we then draw near this heavenly book, we must put our shoes of carnal sense and reason from off our feet, for it is eminently holy ground; and indeed we here need a double caution, for as the language is much borrowed from the expressions of human love—that tender, we may say inflammable spot of our heart—our corrupt nature may soon turn food into poison.

Two things are, therefore, indispensable to a right understanding of and spiritual entrance into this holy book:

- 1. To have experienced some measure of divine love, so as to understand and feel the sweetness of the tender and impassioned language made use of.**
- 2. To approach it in that holy, heavenly, and spiritual frame of mind whereby carnal thoughts and suggestions are for a while subdued, and divine realities alone enthroned in the soul. Read spiritually, felt experimentally, enjoyed unctuously, this holy book affords a "feast of fat things full of marrow; of wines on the lees well refined." Read carnally, interpreted rationally, felt sensually, it may become poison and death.**

The best Commentator on this *Sacred Drama* is the Holy Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad by him in the heart, the best Commentary.

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Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs

by J. C. Philpot

Singing, when heart and voice go together, is certainly a most delightful part of the worship of God here below. In bestowing upon man the power of singing, as a vocal utterance distinct from speech, the Lord, who made all things for his own glory, doubtless intended that this gift should be a means of showing forth his praise; and therefore all exercise of this faculty but for that express purpose is not its use, but its abuse. Singing is not like speech, necessary to man's existence, or even to his well-being. There was no indispensable necessity that the throat and other vocal organs should be so exquisitely constructed as to produce at will musical sounds; but with the

same wisdom and goodness that prompted the Lord to deck the earth with flowers under man's feet, to regale his ears with the melody of the birds in every bush, to delight his smell with the fragrant odors of the violet and the rose, and charm his eye with the prospect of forest and mountain, lake and valley, stretched out in the far landscape, was he also pleased to furnish him with a capacity to solace himself with sweet sounds, and join with angels in singing his eternal praise.

We merely now see earth as a wreck, and man as a ruined wretch upon it. But amid all the wreck of earth and all the ruin of man, we at intervals catch faint glimpses of what this world was in its original creation, and what man was as he issued from his Creator's hand; and these gleams of beauty peering out of the general desolation, as flowers spring out of the bare face of a rifted rock, serve to show us, in some measure, what were God's thoughts and feelings when, after his six days' work, he looked down from heaven and "saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1:31.) At the end of each day's work God "saw that it was good;" but when, on the sixth and last day, the crowning act of creation was accomplished, and the heavenly Craftsman had made Adam, "in his own image, after his own likeness," to have dominion over the works of his hands, and man walked forth as the ruler of this wide domain, then the Lord saw that "it was very good," and rested with holy satisfaction on the seventh day, which he blessed and sanctified.

Thus the power to sing, the faculty of producing musical notes in melody, and combining them in harmony, was as much the gift of God to Adam as the power of speech; and as by the one, he was able to speak to and with the Lord, and converse with the wife of his bosom, so by the other he could, with her, acceptably sing his Maker's praise. Happy state! for though he could not sing the wonders of redeeming love and atoning blood, nor lift up his voice in thankful notes as a sinner saved by grace, yet could he, in all the purity and innocence, the freedom and happiness of a sinless, sincere heart, tune his song to his great and glorious Creator's praise.

The fall broke these notes asunder; and sighs—not songs; groans—not "thanksgiving and the voice of melody," now came from under the shade of those dark trees where sin and shame, guilt and remorse, had driven our fallen parents. But the fall, though it plunged man into the depths of sin and woe, marred and defaced the image of God in which he was created, and brought death into his body and soul, no more destroyed his natural capacity for singing than it destroyed his faculty of speech; but it perverted both, and

directed them into a corrupt channel.

Sin, the universal spoiler, seized hold of the power of song, as it appropriated the organ of speech, and turned both these noble faculties into instruments of unrighteousness. The scoffer, the drunkard, and the licentious seized hold of song as an incentive to profanity, drunkenness, and lust—as the blasphemers and the liar laid hold of speech to curse and deceive.

But redeeming grace, in reconciling man unto God in the Person and by the finished work of his dear Son, has rescued these original gifts of speech and song, and, by sanctifying them to the service and glory of God, has turned them, once more, like the streams of the south, into a channel of prayer and praise.

The earliest mention, we believe, of singing in the record of truth is the Song of MOSES and the children of Israel after they had passed through the Red Sea and seen the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. This was, indeed, a season to them of triumphant song. In Egypt they groaned; at Pihahiroth they cried out unto the Lord; at Marah they murmured; and at Massah they rebelled; but on the shore of that sea which had proved their deliverance and their enemies' destruction, they burst forth into a universal song of triumphant praise. How, indeed, could they so well express the swelling feelings of their joyful hearts? How could they otherwise, with one unanimous voice, exalt their wonder-working God? All utterance except song—and that one universal song—would have been weak—unworthy of their deliverance, unworthy of their great and glorious Deliverer.

Song is the only mode of vocal utterance in which multitudes can simultaneously and intelligibly join. Speech must necessarily be confined to one voice. "Speak one at a time," is an indispensable command when even two individuals attempt to talk at once. But, song may unite the voices of thousands in one intelligible harmonious chorus. It is, therefore, the only means whereby, without discord and confusion, numbers can unite in openly and loudly praising the Lord, and thus it stands alone as an act of public worship in blending together the hearts and voices of the assemblies of the saints.

What a swelling chorus must have arisen from the assembled tribes of Israel as Moses led the song, and Miriam accompanied it with her timbrel! And in what other way could the *sacrifice of thanksgiving* have been offered by so

amazing a multitude?

But, alas! what is man? As the sweet Psalmist of Israel complains, "Then believed they his words; they sang his praise; they soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel." (Ps. 106:12, 13.) The next time that mention is made of Israel's singing, how different the song, how different the object of their worship! "When Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses—There is a sound of war in the camp. But Moses replied—It's not the sound of a victory cry and not the sound of a cry of defeat; I hear the sound of singing!" (Exod. 32:17, 18.) Wretched idolaters! stupid creatures, to worship a golden calf, and sing the praises of that molten idol with the same voices which had sung so lately the praises of Jehovah! Well might the anger of the Lord break forth against such an insult to his sacred Majesty, after having wrought for them a deliverance so recent and so conspicuous.

But we must not linger over these scenes in the desert, except to notice that as Moses entered the wilderness with a song of thanksgiving, so at the end of the forty years' sojourn he closed his labors with a hymn of praise; for that divine utterance of his heart and lips in which he called the heavens to give ear and the earth to hear the words of his mouth, was, as it were, his dying song; and he spoke it in the ears of all the people, that it might be their enduring national anthem. (Deut. 31:30—32:44.)

Those who have felt the sweetness and power of her strains, who have traveled with her in sorrow and joy, will remember the song of HANNAH; for though the precise words are, that "she prayed, and said," yet it is evident, from the form of the verses, that it was a poetical and musical composition which she sang at the door of the tabernacle, and was thus a public acknowledgment of her praise, which the Holy Spirit inspired her to sing as he afterwards inspired David. And well she might sing and swell on high her notes of praise, with the infant Samuel in her arms and the love of God in her heart. (1 Sam. 2:1—10.)

That singing formed a large and important part of the LEVITICAL SERVICE is very evident from scattered intimations of the practice of the word of truth; and as that was a national and external worship for the multitude as well as a spiritual and internal service for the believing Israelites, musical instruments were sanctioned in the temple, which are quite foreign to, and indeed inconsistent with, our New Covenant dispensation, which requires the pure worship of the heart and lips, not the sounding brass and tinkling

cymbal of lifeless instruments. But even in this the blessed Lord was not unmindful of the spiritual needs of his people in all ages, for he inspired David, Asaph, Heman, and Ethan to write those blessed Psalms which were not only used in the temple service, but have been such a treasure of consolation to his family in all time, and will continue to be so, until time shall be no more.

The temple and its service have all passed away. No Levite now sings in its courts; no high priest now offers sacrifice at its altars. The great High Priest has come, and offered himself as a sacrifice; and offering and burnt offering are no more required. The true priests now are "the royal priesthood"—the saints of God, who, through regenerating grace, offer "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5.) But, the PSALMS still remain as the enduring expression of every gracious feeling of the regenerate heart; as a precious manual of living souls, embracing the whole compass of Christian experience; as a sympathizing friend and faithful guide of the church of God, that can sink with her into the lowest depths of sorrow, or soar with her to the loftiest heights of joy. This wondrous depth and variety of experience, so suitable to all the states and stages of divine life, has made them the daily companion of the family of God, soothed many an aching heart, laid them on many a dying pillow, and inspired the last whisper of many an expiring breath.

It is true that we do not, indeed cannot, sing the Psalms. Song requires poetry, and that such as the natural ear has molded into the form adapted to the native language. Prose cannot be sung unless chanted, as in cathedrals, or in a solo voice, as recitative; both of which are not only highly artificial, but destructive of the combined voices of a congregation. Thus, though the Psalms are Hebrew poetry, and were sung in the temple as poetical and musical compositions, they cannot, as translated into English prose, be sung now in our assemblies, for the form of poetry cannot be transferred from one language to another by simple translation, but must be adapted to the peculiar shape, such as metre and rhyme, which English verse requires. The Psalms cannot, therefore, be sung as they stand in our Bibles; and as to the attempts which have been made to versify them, and thus adapt them to singing, we all know what miserable failures have been the almost invariable result of such attempts.

HYMNS, then, have naturally and necessarily come to occupy the place of the Psalms in Christian churches, and this not only because poetical form is

indispensably necessary to tune, but because they can set forth Christian truth in a way which the Psalms could not possibly do. Until Christ came in the flesh there could be no clear revelation of his Person and work. The Psalms, therefore, though, as interpreted by the light of the gospel, full of blessed truth, are inadequate exponents of Christian doctrine; and we might as well accept the preaching of the Old Testament prophets as fully adequate to the proclamation of the gospel, as confine our singing to the Psalms as amply sufficient for the utterance of Christian truth and the expression of gospel praise. Mr. Romaine used to object to the singing of hymns in public worship, as being mere human compositions. But, with all our respect for Mr. Romaine, might we not ask him if his sermons were not human compositions, and yet he preached them in the public worship of God; and were not the prayers that he read human compositions also? No, the very Psalms themselves, for which he so strongly pleaded, being versified by modern pens, were human compositions also, unless he believed that the same Spirit who inspired David to write them in the Hebrew, inspired Tate and Brady to translate them into English verse.

HYMNS, then, as written by godly men, are to singing, as a part of the worship of God in our Christian assemblies, what the preaching of the servants of the Lord is to the proclaiming of the gospel; and we may add, what prayer by men of God is to the worshiping of him in spirit and in truth. The Lord, in tender mercy, as ever mindful of the needs of his people, has bestowed upon some of his saints and servants the grace and gift of experimental and poetical utterance, and has highly honored with his blessing the hymns written under his teaching and unction. What a treasure, for instance, have Hart's hymns been to the church of God, and how evidently he was especially inspired of the Holy Spirit to write them with an unction, savor, and power, which carry with them their own evidence to every heart that has felt their sweet influence. For the blessedness of hymns is not limited to the use of them in the public worship of God. They form a treasure of spiritual and experimental truth which the Holy Spirit makes use of to comfort the mourners in Zion. Their very form not only gives them a place in mind and memory, but condenses truth into the smallest compass, so as to present it in its very spirit and essence; both of which circumstances, we need not observe, are especially favorable to their application with a divine power to the heart. And as the gracious men who wrote them penned them for the most part under a divine influence, the Blessed Spirit, in applying them with a sweet unction to the soul, is but sealing on the hearts of others what he first wrought by his own grace in the hearts of their composers.

The singing of hymns appears to have been always a part of the service of God in the New as well as in the Old Testament church. The blessed Lord himself sanctioned it by his own presence and example, for we read that, after the celebration of the Lord's supper, when "they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." (Matt. 26:30.) We may believe, without irreverence, that the blessed Lord sang with his disciples their farewell hymn of prayer and praise, and that his holy lips moved in concert with those of his disciples. That the New Testament churches sang hymns in their assemblies is very plain from several places in the New Testament. Paul, for instance, thus writes to the Colossian church—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16.) And again, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5:19.)

Nor was he one who, from defective voice or ear sat tuneless and silent amid the assembled church; but in lifting up his voice it would not be with mere natural melody, or without a spiritual understanding and apprehension of what he sang, for he says of himself, as a worshiping saint, that singing with him was as much a spiritual sacrifice as prayer itself. "What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also—I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (1 Cor. 14:15.) It was thus that he and Silas solaced themselves in the jail at Philippi, when their feet were in the stocks and their backs raw and sore with stripes. The blessed Lord visited their hearts with his presence and love, and "at midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God." Nor were their voices weak through suffering, or restrained through cowardice; for so loudly did they sing that their notes of praise penetrated through the thick walls, into all the prison cells, and the prisoners heard them; (Acts 15:25;) and not only so, but they entered the ears of the Lord Almighty, who, in answer to their hymns of praise, convulsed the earth with a violent shock, which not only heaved up the very foundations of the jail, but mightier work still—rent and tore to its very center the jailer's harder heart!

That singing hymns continued to be a standing practice in the church of God, after apostolic times, is plain from a remarkable heathen testimony; for among the ancient Roman authors that have come down to us, as fragments of the mighty wreck of ancient literature, are the letters of Pliny the younger, in

which, writing to the Emperor Trajan, about the year 110, he says, of the primitive Christians, concerning whom he was, as the governor of the province, making a report to his imperial master, "They repeat among themselves a song to Christ as God." That the practice of singing hymns was of late introduction into the Western church is evident from a remarkable passage in the Confessions of Augustine, (written about A.D. 420,) in which he describes the effect produced on his mind by the singing at Milan:

"The hymns and songs of your church moved my soul intensely; your truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy. This practice of singing had been of no long standing at Milan; it began about the year when Justina persecuted Ambrose. The people watched in the church, prepared to die with their pastor. There my mother sustained an eminent part in watching and praying. Then hymns and psalms, after the manner of the East, were sung with a view of preserving the people from weariness; and thence the custom has spread through the Christian churches."

Latin being the language usually spoken in the Western part of the great Roman empire, the hymns were, of course, written in that language, and were, therefore, fully understood by the congregations; but when the Northern nations broke in upon Southern Europe, and introduced their native languages, Latin became gradually so corrupted by the intermixture that the pure Latinity of the hymns became, in course of time, a dead language. As then Popery began to rise out of the heaving mass, and to subject all the nations to her sway, it suited well her crafty policy to carry on the public service of God in a language not understood by the people. Thus, singing as well as prayer became, for ages, a dead service, in which surpliced priests and white-robed choristers chanted and sang, not in praise but in mockery, of that great and glorious God whom they professed to serve.

But, just in the darkest hour, light broke forth. At the very moment when the Romish church was saying in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow," (Rev. 18:7) the Lord God "who judges her," was raising up an arm to give her a deadly wound. Luther arose; and one great reform, effected by his preaching and writing, was to re-introduce into the public worship of God, the language which all understood. The singing of hymns arose in German reformed churches, and few things contributed more to the spread of the Reformation than the hymns then composed and sung in public and private. D'Aubigne thus writes upon this point:

"From the days of Luther the people sang; the Bible inspired their hymns. It was impossible, in celebrating the praises of God, to be confined to mere translations of the ancient hymns. Luther's own soul, and that of several of his contemporaries, raised by faith to the most sublime thoughts, and excited by the battles and perils which incessantly threatened the rising church, soon gave utterance to their feelings in religious poems, in which poetry and music were united and blended. Thus the sixteenth century beheld the revival of that divine poetry which from the very first had solaced the sufferings of the martyrs. We have already seen how, in 1523, Luther employed it in celebrating the martyrs of Brussels. Other sons of the reformation followed in his steps. Hymns were multiplied, and, spreading rapidly among the people, contributed powerfully to awaken them from their slumbers."

Luther was a thorough German, in possessing a most musical ear and taste; and the same Lord who so richly endowed him with the gifts of writing and preaching furnished him also with great powers of poetical composition. The first hymn which he wrote, to which D'Aubigne alludes in the above extract, had a most remarkable effect. Three young monks who had been converted from Popery were burnt alive, by the Inquisition, in the market-place at Brussels. Luther wrote a hymn upon their death, full of fire and energy which, in a short time, was sung everywhere in Germany and the Netherlands, the beginning of which has been thus translated:

**"No, their ashes will not die;
Abroad their holy dust will fly,
And scattered o'er earth's farthest strand,
Raise up for God a warlike band.
Satan, by taking life away,
May keep them silent for a day;
But death has from him victory wrung,
And Christ in every climate is sung."**

Without preaching, without writing, Luther could not live. His soul was on fire, and the flame burst forth in glowing verse. This ardor of soul is especially manifest in his hymns, and few compositions of a human pen have had such enduring power and effect. One of his hymns, commencing with a line which may be rendered, "A strong tower is our God," has had a power and influence in all Protestant Germany which still continues; for though the Protestants there have lost his spirit and his faith, they still use his name and

word as a rallying cry against the Popery by which they are hemmed in and almost overborne. But upon all his hymns strength of thought and force of language are so stamped, and such an energy of faith, that they stand as distinct from all the other hymns as Luther himself from all other men.

Germany is very rich in hymns, and though they much differ in style from those with which we are so familiar in our own highly-prized English hymn-book, yet there is a sweet, tender, humble, prayerful spirit breathing through very many of them.

We wish to drop a few thoughts upon singing as a part of the service of the sanctuary. We have already said that it is the sweetest, but we must add that it is the most difficult to carry on as a spiritual and acceptable service, and for the following reasons:

1. Of all our public services it is the most mixed. In the reading, expounding, praying, and preaching, the minister exercises a virtual and practical monopoly. It may be good or it may be bad; but it is a monarchy; not an aristocracy as in the prayer-meeting, nor a republic as in the singing, where rebellious voices—rebellious, we mean, against all the laws of melody and harmony, time and tune, are generally the loudest. Unhappily, a discordant voice is the sure fruit of an unmusical ear; and as this unmusical ear cannot detect its own discords, it is unashamed and unabashed at its own tones—tones which jar upon the musical ear worse than the grinder's wheel or the ungreased hay-cart. Could we, then, have our own way, these jarring notes would either be silenced or softened, wholly mute, or lost in the crowd.

2. Another difficulty is, that the Lord's people who should sing, often from lack of ear and voice, cannot sing—while those who for lack of grace should not sing, both can and do sing.

3. Thence arises a third difficulty, which we have never yet seen a way to get over—that through this admixture of carnal voices the service itself becomes a mingled, and therefore, not wholly a spiritual service. But to see it with grief of spirit and almost despair of amendment is one thing; to foster and sanction it is another. We cannot help the carnal part of the congregation singing, but we need not make them; we need not invite voices, male and female, to sing, merely because they can sing, still less stick up as a choir, in the very front of the congregation, and as leading a most solemn part of the worship of God, poor dead and dark "singing men and singing women," whose only

recommendation is a good voice and some little knowledge of music.

4. Congregational singing, not choral, is the only fit service of the sanctuary. A well tuned choir, with their fugues and their anthems, their singing in parts and their selections from Handel and Haydn, may please the ear—but they certainly grieve the heart which has in it any living faith and godly fear. Choral and congregational singing are not necessarily incompatible, but they almost invariably become so through the musical pride of the choir. The choir do not like their airs and abilities, their new tunes and difficult pieces to be drowned, and, as they consider it, totally spoiled by the congregation. They, therefore, often purposely choose difficult tunes which the congregation cannot sing, that their monopoly may be preserved intact, and that the singing may be not to the praise of God but themselves.

And the congregation, continually beaten and baffled by the new and difficult tunes, at last cease to interfere with the singing gallery, which thus at last becomes, like the musical productions at the London symphony—a mere orchestra of performers.

5. The best plan, we think, is the London way, which is for a song-leader to lead the tune and the congregation to follow. When the song-leader has a good ear so as not to drop or lower the key, and has a strong, clear tenor voice, which can lead the tune without faltering, the congregation will be sure to follow, and to follow well too. The false notes of the bad singers are lost in the body of voice which sustains the tune, and the general result is not only pleasing to the ear, but is what singing should be—congregational worship.

6. As singing can be the sweetest and most delightful part of the service—it can be made a total misery. The sweetest hymns may be slaughtered by one loud discordant voice. How often has some horrid voice by its discordant tones—notes we cannot call them—jarred every nerve of my frame, and made me hang down my head in misery unable to hear, think, or pray, and long for the end of the hymn almost as much as the patient under the surgeon's knife longs for the end of the operation. What is the sweetest hymn when thus mangled and murdered? And how grievous to sit in misery and pain even when one of Hart's blessed hymns is so poorly sung—and be obliged to stuff the fingers into the ears to shut out, if possible, the nerve-racking sounds!

7. Tunes should be suitable to the hymns. A solemn tune and a lively hymn—how alike inconsistent! As some singers have no ear, so some leaders have no

judgment. They will choose a lively tune full of repeats to a hymn on the sufferings of Christ, and a slow solemn tune to a hymn of joyful praise. Such people, were they masters of bands, would play a dirge at a wedding, or a Scotch march at a funeral.

8. Our next hint is, that the singing should be neither too fast nor too slow. Too fast is quite unbecoming a spiritual service. Hymns are not to be sung any more to jig time than to jig tune. Gravity, decency, and solemnity become the service of God. The opposite fault is a more common one. To drawl over a hymn makes the singing sometimes insufferably tedious. We have known four verses to take up nearly, if not quite, a quarter of an hour; which, were the singing, as is usual, three times in the service, would take up nearly half the time.

9. One hint more and we have finished our singing lecture—long enough, in all conscience, for all, and far too long for that thin-skinned race—singers. It is a great mistake to sing too many verses. Four, or at the most five verses are quite enough.

Let us endeavor to bear in mind that God is a Spirit, and seeks and requires spiritual worshipers; and were this more on the heart and before the eyes of those who lift up their voices in the house of prayer, it would, under his help and blessing, render it a service more glorifying to God and more acceptable to his believing people.

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Dying Words

By J. C. Philpot

Death sets a solemn and final stamp on the life. The setting sun casts its expiring rays over air, earth, and sky, and tinges the whole prospect with its peculiar prevailing color. Be that hue lurid and threatening, or be it bright and golden, such also is the general tone and complexion of the landscape. Whatever darkness and gloom, mist and fog, cloud and storm, may have marked the day, a beautiful evening, a bright sunset, makes amends, and stamps its character on the whole. In many a tried, tempted believer has this been spiritually verified. A bright sunset has made amends for a day of mist and fog, cloud and storm.

But ah! how different with the ungodly! When the wicked are in full prosperity they are like a river flowing on to a cataract. We view only the wide, gentle flow of waters dancing and gleaming beneath the sunbeam; and the sound of the cataract in the distance is not heard. We see only how the ungodly spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure; and we forget the abyss of misery and woe to which they are hastening. When the waters have fallen down the precipice, and we are stunned with the noise and wetted by the spray, we then see the beginning from the end, and how deceitful and perilous was the river's former flow. Their pursuits and pleasures, sins and follies, all come to remembrance, and we see misery and destruction stamped on all their ways, from the cradle to the grave—from the first rise of the rill to the river's final fall. If connected with us by ties of blood, how painful the thought of their past life and present condition! and if anything particular has marked their end—suddenness or despair, the reflection is too acute to be borne, and it is driven from the mind by any means, if possible.

How different the end of the righteous! Old John Newton, whose remarks usually embody much sound sententious wisdom, used to say, "Don't tell me how the man died; tell me how he lived." There may be some truth in this, but not the whole truth. If it is blessed to live well, it is blessed to die well. If living faith is desirable, is not dying faith desirable? And if victory over the first enemy, unbelief, and over the three middle enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, is so highly prized as God's gift and faith's conquest, why should not victory over the last enemy, death, be still more highly prized as God's last gift and faith's greatest triumph? It is true that we read in the Scriptures much of the life, but little of the death of Job, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and other saints of old. Stephen's blessed end, and that chiefly as connected with his martyrdom, is, we believe, almost the only happy death specially mentioned in the New Testament. And yet it cannot be denied that a peaceful, happy end is greatly desirable, not only for the departing but for those who remain behind; for strength and comfort to survivor as well as to sufferer. The rays of the Sun of Righteousness, gilding a dying pillow, reflect a blessed light over the whole spiritual life of the departed. If there have been circumstances in life, such as infirmities of temper, errors of judgment, a trying path in providence, a doubting, fearing track in grace, which may have cast somewhat of a shade over him, an end marked beyond contradiction by the power and presence of the God of all grace fully dispels it. Former specks and blemishes are lost in the last flood of light; dubious marks are cleared up;

doubts and hesitations are dispersed; and triumphant grace swallows up the last remnant of suspicion. His looks, his words are embalmed in the memory; the tears that flow over him are not bitter and scalding, but soft and tender, mingling holy joy with affectionate sorrow; and his very remains seem consecrated by the spirit—the now glorified spirit, which but yesterday tenanted them. To them affection and respect pay the last services. Faith digs the grave; Hope deposits in it the mortal remains until the resurrection morn; and Love writes the epitaph, on which **SUPERABOUNDING GRACE** is traced in capitals so large as to leave no space for the small print of the good qualities, or the misprint of the bad qualities of the departed.

Nor does the blessing end when the tomb has closed over the pale, cold relics of mortality. Dying words are remembered; and often, like seeds scattered from a harvested sheaf, afterwards spring up and grow. To many a wild son, to many a thoughtless daughter, have the dying expressions of a believing parent been in after life an awakening voice, and made them to feel that there was a power in that still chamber, a reality in religion on that bed of suffering to which they are strangers. As the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, so the last life-drops of a dying parent have often not fallen to the ground like water spilled, but have sprung up into a spiritual seed. Samson slew more in death than in all his previous life; and thus many an expiring parent has done more to slaughter a worldly spirit and a worldly religion in the heart of a child by death in faith, than by a whole life of warning and admonition. Dying words are remembered when the living are forgotten!

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The use of commentaries

By J. C. Philpot

Commentaries upon the Scripture are by many people much objected to. That there is some ground for these objections must, we think, be admitted. Let us, then, examine some of these objections.

1. They are considered *unnecessary*. The Scriptures, it is urged, are written so plainly and simply that he who runs may read. To overlay them, then, with human explanations is not only superfluous, but is to darken the counsel by words without knowledge. If God speak to men, he must speak plainly and intelligibly. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing

froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understands, and right to them that find knowledge" (Prov. 8:8, 9). To need, then, human explanations and learned commentaries, it is urged, would argue *imperfection* in the revelation itself.

2. Besides which, the same blessed Spirit who revealed the Scripture alone can give a spiritual understanding of it. To study commentaries, therefore, it is argued, is to *slight the teaching and work of the Holy Spirit*, and to trust to the wisdom of the flesh.

3. Most commentaries, too, it is objected, are *written by carnal, unregenerate men*, who are necessarily blind to the spiritual meaning, and therefore can only adulterate the pure truth of God.

4. Ministers, too, it is especially urged, should get *everything immediate from God*: and therefore all they get from commentaries is but dead, dry, useless lumber, unprofitable to themselves, and starvation to the living family.

That there is great truth and force in these objections, especially the last, cannot be denied. The tried and tempted, exercised and distressed children of God do not want a sermon nicely picked and culled out of books, but something warm and dewy out of the preacher's soul. Nor do they want sermons dished up out of a commentary, nor a cold hash of dead men's brains, but something hot from the spit. Take away all the scraps that they have picked up from old authors, all the explanations which they have culled from Dr. Gill, all the anecdotes that they have borrowed north, south, east, and west, all the hum-drum common phrases which form their general stock of trade, and leave them nothing but what has been made their own by divine teaching and experience, and it is to be feared many ministers would cut as poor a figure as David's messengers when Hanun had shaved off half their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle.

There is no ministry worth a straw which does not come out of the heart and conscience of the minister. All that is pillaged out of books falls dead and dry upon the hearts of the exercised children of God. If there be *light* in the understanding of a minister, it must be from "the entrance of God's word, that gives light." "God," says the apostle, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor.4:6). If there be *life* in his soul, it must come directly and immediately from him who is "the Life," and

who has said, "Because I live you shall live also." If he have *utterance*, it is the gift of God: "You are enriched by him in all utterance" (1 Cor. 1:5). The Apostle Paul, though so deeply instructed into the mysteries of the gospel, yet so sensibly felt that God himself must teach him how and what to speak, that he begs the prayers of his fellow-believers, "that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:3, 4). If there be *liberty* in the minister's soul, it is from "the Spirit of the Lord," for "there (and there only) is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). If there be *power* resting upon his spirit and testimony, it is the power of God. Stephen was "full of faith and power." And why? Because "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). "Truly," says the prophet, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord" (Micah 3:8). The possession of this power is the only true foundation of the gospel ministry. "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." (Eph. 3:7).

And the apostle expressly testifies that his "speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). If there be *wisdom* in his heart and mouth, it is not the wisdom of the creature and the flesh, but "the wisdom which comes from above." If there be *savor* in his ministry, (and without it what is all preaching but an empty sound?) it is only so as his speech is seasoned with salt; and this is only by grace (Col. 4:6). And if there be a *blessing* attending the word preached, if the dead are quickened, the distressed delivered, and the saints built up on their most holy faith, though a Paul plant or an Apollos water, it is still all of God that gives the increase. God is expressly "against the prophets that steal his words, every one from his neighbor" (Jer. 23:30). And the Lord has promised to give his servants in the needful hour "a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist."

If these positions are founded in Scripture and experience, as we believe none will deny who have any experimental knowledge of the truth, it is very evident that a ministry grounded upon natural abilities, hard study, acquired learning, and upon such materials as are usually found in Commentaries, is not the ministry of the Spirit. Were it so, the spruce academies of Hoxton and Cheshunt would be stars of bright luster in the skies of the church.

"Temptation, prayer, and meditation," says Luther, "make a minister."

These, too, we may add, make the only true Commentary upon the word of God. By temptation and conflict the experience of the Bible saints is entered into and realized; by prayer, and in answer to it, its spiritual meaning is opened up; and by meditation it is turned into sweet and solid nutriment. The heavenly wisdom, the unspeakable majesty and beauty, the divine savor and power, the richness and fullness, the certainty and faithfulness, the suitability and blessedness that are stamped upon the Scripture—these prints of the hand of God can only be felt and recognized as the Holy Spirit shines upon the sacred page. He is the only true Commentator, for he alone can reach and melt the heart; and he is the only true Preacher, because he alone can seal the truth upon the soul.

But giving these scriptural positions the fullest weight, and we do so from our very heart and conscience, may not something still be said on the other side of the question? Because the Spirit of God is the only Teacher, are we to set our face decidedly against all human learning, all commentaries of every kind, and everything written by the pen of man? Does the Lord never sanctify to his own use, to his own honor and glory, and to his people's good, natural or acquired abilities? We did not learn the English language by grace, and yet we preach in English. So it is impossible to say how far God may not use natural abilities in the ministry of the gospel. Gold, silver, and brass, blue, and purple, and scarlet, fine linen, and goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, badgers' skins, and acacia wood (Exod. 35:57), were all freely given to the tabernacle in the wilderness, were all accepted and sanctified by the blood sprinkled upon them (Heb. 9:21), by the anointing oil (Exod. 30:25-29), and the divine Shechinah that filled the sanctuary. No, the very laver of brass was made of the brazen mirrors of the women (Exod. 38:8). All these were severed thereby from common uses, and dedicated to the worship and service of the sanctuary.

May we not apply this to the ministry of the gospel? The servants of God undoubtedly differ in natural as well as in spiritual gifts. But may not both be employed in the service of the sanctuary? Thus, if a man's natural or acquired abilities be gold or brass, rough and close as the skin of the badger, refined as the fine linen, or strong and wiry as the hair of the goat, if sanctified by the Lord for the service of the tabernacle, they may all be used for his glory and his people's good.

Apply this view of the case to the Commentary before us, written by a man possessed not only of great learning and abilities, but of grace and divine teaching, and well instructed into the truth of God. May there not be

something edifying and instructive, something establishing and profitable in the remarks made by him upon the Scriptures? Because ministers without a conscience may pillage from this fund, and pass off the Doctor's explanations as their own, it does not make the remarks themselves less valuable. A stolen sovereign is good gold still, though the pickpocket has filched it, and spent it as if earned by honest labor. In this, as in most other circumstances, it is not fair to argue against the use of a thing from its abuse.

Because worldly wisdom is out of place in the preaching of the gospel, we need not canonize ignorance. If it be "the foolishness of preaching," God does not send fools to preach. Bunyan, Huntington, and Gadsby were not men of learning and education, but they were no fools. On the contrary, they were men of original minds and natural powers which would have made them conspicuous in any sphere. Augustine, on the other hand, Luther, and Calvin were men of deep and varied learning; and in modern times, Romaine, Berridge, and Toplady were hard students. No, to come to Scripture instances, Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians: Daniel was skilled in all wisdom, knowledge, and science (Dan. 1:4; 5:11); and Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Learning, therefore, abilities, and study are, only so far hindrances, and great hindrances too, as they are made *substitutes* for the teaching and wisdom of the Spirit. This is their great danger, and most of all in the self-instructed and half-learned, who have not got so far on the road as to know their own ignorance. With such tall masts and spreading sails, a deal of heavy ballast is needful. But with that there may be less risk of toppling over. There is one test that they are kept in their place—*when they never appear*. Hart earned his daily bread by teaching languages. Where is there a trace of his knowledge of languages in his hymns beyond the admirable propriety and clearness of well near every line? Romaine was a thorough master of Hebrew. But where do we find him, beyond a passing hint in his writings, digging up Hebrew roots and slicing them up hot or cold? Berridge was a tutor of his college, and a hard student. But where in his beautiful hymns are his Clare Hall researches visible? Luther was one of the most learned men of his age; but his German writings are so addressed to the popular understanding, so homely, pointed, racy, and expressive, that they are models of simplicity and strength, without the slightest tincture of pedantry or display, but gushing out of his heart clear, sparkling, and forcible as a mountain stream.

If a man possess natural or acquired ability, it should make him all the more plain and simple, and only enable him, like a skillful mechanic, to turn out his work more sharply and finely. It is only bunglers that can't handle their tools,

who make a parade with the chisel. A man's knowledge should be wrought into his mind, as the mechanic's skill is wrought into his eye and hand. Let the work show the workman, not the tools flourished before the eyes.

If thus kept in its place, if sanctified to the service of God, if used only with a single eye to his glory and his people's good, human learning is not to be despised. It is the application that decides the value. Gold was given to make the golden calf, and gold was given to make the golden candlestick; the one was an idol, the other gave light to the sanctuary.

We may ask this simple question, "Where would have been our English Bible but for human learning?" The Scriptures are written in what are called the learned languages. To translate these into English required an accurate and extensive knowledge of those languages, only to be acquired by long and patient study and labor. So far, then, learning has been used as an instrument in the hand of God for the benefit as thousands. The poorest man, with the Bible in his hand, may say, "Were it not for human learning I should never have read a line in this blessed book." To despise, therefore, human learning in itself, and apart from all abuse of it, is to despise what had been made a signal blessing to the church of God. And we suspect that its greatest despisers are those who do not possess it. Pride is of so subtle, accommodating a nature, that while one man is proud of his knowledge, another is proud of his ignorance. A Commentary, therefore, which explains the meaning of the original, where the translation is obscure, may be no more worthy of contempt or disregard than the translation itself.

Again, there are many ancient customs and rites which may, to ordinary readers, present matter of difficulty. Or there may be types, figures, and ceremonies, the spiritual meaning of which is, perhaps, not very apparent, but which, when explained, may throw a sweet light upon gospel truth. Thus Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews is a Commentary upon the Book of Leviticus.

Again, there may be real or apparent difficulties, even contradictions in the word of God, which may much perplex the mind, and which Satan may make much use of to harass and distress the soul.

Or there may be profitable and edifying remarks drawn from different texts of Scripture, such as Hawker's "Morning and Evening Portions," or Mason's "Spiritual Treasury," and similar works, which, in fact, are but a Commentary on different parts of God's word.

But we may take a wider view still. A minister takes a text, shows its connection, explains its literal meaning, traces out from it the experience of the soul—in other words, makes a Commentary upon it. If his words were taken down, and printed, and read, what are they but an extended Commentary upon a text of Scripture? There was a period in the history of the church when sermons were preached without texts at all; and when the practice was introduced of taking a text and preaching from it, it created much stir in the churches, and great opposition. But the practice eventually prevailed. When, then, a minister takes a text to preach from it, all that he says, so far as it is connected with his text, is but a Commentary upon it. Dr. Gill, we believe, preached a series of sermons on the Song of Solomon, which he afterwards published in a separate form as a Commentary upon that book, and a most excellent Commentary it is.

Now, if souls were blessed in hearing those sermons preached, why might not souls be blessed in reading those sermons when printed? The late Thomas Hardy had a remarkable gift in exposition, and his hearers often preferred what he said on the chapter to the sermon. What was this exposition but a Commentary?

There is, then, if these arguments be worth anything, nothing objectionable in Commentaries themselves, that is assuming, as we here do, that they are written by gracious and enlightened men. It is the abuse which renders them justly objectionable.

5. But one objection remains which we have not touched, perhaps the most formidable of all, and one which especially regards the Commentary before us—the impossibility of one man having such a spiritual knowledge of the whole Scripture as to enable him to write a Commentary upon the word of God from Genesis to Revelation. God the Spirit never opened up, it is urged, the whole of the Scripture to one man; and if he attempt to unfold what he has not been spiritually taught, what is it but dead, dry, human wisdom at best? This is to say, in other words, what is certainly most true, that the best Commentary must be very imperfect, that there are depths in the word of God which no one pen can unfold, and that the spiritual, experimental meaning of a large part of the Scriptures must be left wholly untouched.

But may there not be a little confusion of ideas here? And may not people confound two things certainly distinct? What is applied with power to the soul is one thing, and a general light upon God's truth is another. A servant of God

may not have had fifty portions of Scripture applied with power to his soul, but in his whole life time he may preach from several thousand texts. May a minister preach only on those texts which have been applied with power to his soul? May he not have light upon others, and life, and liberty, and power, and sweetness too?

Mr. Huntington published a little work, in two volumes, called, "Light Shining in Darkness," which we may call a Commentary upon certain dark passages of Scripture. But though, of course, he had light, and, it may be, life and feeling upon these passages, he does not profess that they all came with power to his soul for his personal deliverance or consolation. And is not this in accordance with Scripture precept and practice? What says the apostle? "Having, then, gifts according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion (or analogy) of faith;" *that is*, the preaching must be in strict accordance with the general drift and tenor of God's word. Paul does not confine a minister here to those texts only which have been applied with power to his soul, but requires that his preaching should be in strict agreement with the general tenor of inspiration. "If any man speak," says Peter, "let him speak as the oracles of God;" *that is*, in strict accordance with them. He does not limit him to a few portions of Scripture, but binds him to speak as they do.

Now apply this to a Commentary such as Dr. Gill's. If the Doctor had written no more upon the Scriptures than from the texts which had been opened up and applied to his soul, his Commentary would never have seen the day. But he might have much light upon the Scriptures generally, might have a clear judgment upon the truth of God revealed therein, distinct from certain portions particularly applied. Indeed, his experience of the truth of God in these particular passages would open up the meaning of others, as a master-key opens different locks. "The rain comes down and the snow from heaven to make the earth bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. So shall my word be" (Isa. 55:10, 11). A distinction is here made between personal enjoyment and a ministerial gift. There is in God's word, bread to supply the seedsman's soul, and corn to supply his seed-basket. He may sow a sack of corn before he has eaten all his loaf. The Corinthians were enriched by God in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift; and yet they were, as regards grace, still babes in Christ, who needed milk rather than meat. A man, then, like Dr. Gill might possess a great gift in expounding the word of God who in grace might be inferior to many private Christians.

Besides which it should be borne in mind that the cases of ministers and expositors of Gold's word and of private Christians are widely different. A private Christian needs no more light upon the Scripture than serves for his own comfort and edification. A minister may have to feed thousands, and therefore needs supplies of wisdom and light for others as well as himself.

A commentator, therefore, might have much light upon God's truth, for the benefit of others as well as himself.

Again, all the objections which we have adduced go upon the ground that the *only* use and object of a Commentary is spiritual edification. This, of course, should be the *main* object, but there are other things looked for as well, and certainly very desirable; such as the literal meaning of a passage, the solution of apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, the explanation of ancient customs, and many things which, if not understood, render a passage obscure.

Our own experience, we confess, is not much in favor of Commentaries. Like many others of inquiring minds, we have in times past consulted them. But we must acknowledge, for the most part, with but little profit. The truth, in vital, heartfelt experience, we never attempted nor desired to draw from them; and as far as regards the ministry, we never dared and indeed were never tempted to derive from them the slightest aid whatever.

Every minister, we believe, whom God sends, owns, and blesses has given to him not only an experience of the truth, but a door of utterance to set it forth. Gifts may widely vary in extent and degree, but if man have no divine gift for the ministry, he has no business with the ministry. Many gracious men have brought trouble upon themselves, trouble upon the churches with which they are connected, and trouble upon the churches among which they have gone, for want of a divine gift for the ministry. They can preach *one* good, often one excellent sermon—*their own experience*. There they begin and end. They cannot open up the Scripture, nor trace out the work of God upon the soul, nor describe the in and out path of a Christian, nor take up the stumbling blocks, nor bring out of their text the treasures of experimental truth stored up in it, nor speak to the conscience, nor separate between the wheat and the chaff, nor handle the promise, nor enforce the precept, nor, like a good householder, bring forth things new and old to feed and edify the household of faith. The Lord's people, humanly speaking, are much dependent on a gospel ministry. They need to be instructed, fed, encouraged, comforted, reproved, warned, admonished, led on, humbled, raised up, and the whole work

deepened and strengthened in their soul. To do all this is the end and object of the ministry of the gospel.

Jesus, we read, "is ascended up on high to give gifts unto men," and all "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:7-16.) One little thinks how many of the Lord's people are looking anxiously forward to the ensuing Lord's day, hoping to hear something to comfort and encourage their hearts; and how disappointed they are when nothing comes with power to their souls. A man may be truly gracious, have a good experience, and love and live the truth, have a desire for the glory of God and the good of his people, and by this feeling be led into a pulpit, and kept in it, and yet be rather a plague and a burden than a benefit to the exercised family of God. He may be esteemed and loved as a gracious man, but not heard with any profit; and the consequence too often is coldness, and deadness, or perhaps divisions, in the body of the church, and disappointment or jealousy in the bosom of the minister. There is an electric wire between the pulpit and the pew; but what is the wire without the influence? What is the ministry without the power of God passing through it to the soul? If the Lord then send and furnish a minister, according to his experience and gifts will the Scriptures be opened up to him, will texts be applied with light and life to his soul, will matter spring up in his heart, will thoughts be communicated, feelings be inspired, words supplied, liberty of speech imparted, and an ability, sometimes surprising to himself, given to handle the truth as "a workman that needs not to be ashamed."

Such a ministry as this will be commended to the conscience of God's people, will fall with weight and savor on their spirit, and, as God is pleased to bless it, will carry life and feeling into their heart. A ministry of this kind, gushing out of the preacher's heart and mouth as a spring of living water, is as different from a hard, dead, cut and dry ministry, based on study and premeditation and commentaries, as a living, breathing man from a cold withered skeleton. Cold, dry learning is not wanted in the pulpit. What is wanted there is experience in the heart, life, and feeling in the soul, and such a measure of divine power resting on the spirit as shall clothe the ideas that spring up with clear, simple, suitable language, level with the comprehension of the most uneducated hearer. A ministry of this kind will be fresh, original, stamped with a peculiar impress, and will carry with it a weight and power which manifest its divine author.

Of what USE, then, it may be asked, are commentaries to a minister of truth?

As regards the ministry, none. Nor will any minister, with a tender conscience and the fear of God in his soul, dare to use them for that purpose. But may he never, then, look into them or consult them at all? Never with a view to the ministry, or to supply himself with matter for the pulpit. But suppose he cannot preach without them? Then he has no business in the pulpit at all, and had better at once leave it for the pew. But may he never read them for private information or edification? If something in a passage perplex his mind, and Gill is at hand, may he not take the volume down and consult it? Or may he not for the instruction and edification of his own soul read what Gill says upon a psalm or a chapter of Isaiah? May he not, if he possess them, read Owen's Commentary on Psalm 130, and that upon the Hebrews, or Leighton on the Epistles of Peter? "Give attendance to reading," says Paul to Timothy. May nothing be read but the simple Scriptures? To, say "No," would, we think, be tying him up too tightly. This leads us, then, to two cases in which it would seem hard to deny a minister the use of a commentary. For by parity of reasoning it might be argued that as Romaine, Hawker, Bunyan, or Huntington might furnish ideas for the pulpit, they should never look into "Pilgrim's Progress," or "Grace Abounding," the "Contemplations on the God of Israel," or "The Kingdom of God taken by Prayer," lest there be ideas and expressions suggested by them. And some good men, feeling how almost involuntarily the ideas and words of authors mingle with their own, and that it is a species of hypocrisy to let them escape their lips, have for that reason renounced reading all books but the Scriptures.

We do not wish any one to attach the least value beyond what it is worth to our own feelings on this subject; but as persons can speak best from experience, we will just mention how we have felt in this matter. Were we in possession of a copy of Gill's Bible, which we are not, though we well know the book, we should feel it allowable to look into it under two circumstances:

- 1. Suppose some verbal difficulty in a passage perplexed our mind, we should feel no more scruple in examining what the Doctor said upon it than we should in taking down our Hebrew or Greek Lexicon to investigate the meaning of a difficult word. In nine cases out of ten the difficulty might not be solved by either the commentary or the lexicon so as to satisfy the judgment, but we might, we think, as legitimately see what the Doctor had to say upon it as the dictionary. So far, then, we think we could, without scruple, examine a commentary like the one before us.**

Here let us diverge for a moment to give our view of what a really good and useful commentary should be. It should be, for the most part, but one extended translation. What we mainly want is the literal meaning of a passage—a strictly accurate translation from the original. Now in this very point, which is the main want, commentaries are almost always sadly defective. What we require is not the opinion of the commentator, but *what God has really said*, what is the strict literal meaning of the passage. When the commentator gives *his* interpretation, he almost always darkens counsel by words without knowledge.

But we read sometimes for our own edification; and therefore,

2. We see no objection, *with that object solely in view*, to reading Owen on the Hebrews, Or Caryll on Job, Or Lampe on John, or Gill on the Canticles. A minister's soul is to be edified, instructed, fed like that of private Christians; and as he cannot be always reading the Scriptures, we see no objection to his reading, for that purpose only, the writings of gracious men. We read sometimes, for instance, Owen on the Spirit, and other of his writings, and have often found our soul sensibly edified, instructed, and fed thereby.

An observation which we heard Mr. Warburton make some years ago completely fell in with our own feelings and experience. He said that he could and did read the works of gracious men, as Mr. Huntington's, for his own edification, but never found them, or wished to find them, of the least benefit as regarded the ministry. In the pulpit, he had only what God gave him at the time. This is exactly as we have felt ourselves.

But if for the above reasons we have tied up ministers somewhat tightly, there is no cause why we should rein up hearers in the same gear. And as we presume none would restrict them from reading the writings of gracious men, we might justly plead for this liberty to be extended to their reading what gracious men have written upon the Scriptures. No, of all writings a spiritual Commentary on the Scriptures ought to be the most profitable. In all human writings there ever will be an admixture of infirmity; but there should be less of this in a commentary than in any other, for it is nearest the word of God. It should, therefore, be more simple, more scriptural, more weighty and powerful than any other writing, because it confines itself to pure truth. Supposing, then, in which supposition indeed lies the whole pith and marrow of the question, that a really spiritual and gracious commentary could be found, to debar a private Christian from reading it merely because it is called

a commentary would be to do homage to a word or a prejudice at the sacrifice of his profit. The difficulty is to find such a commentary. We may look far and wide to find it. Scott and Henry are often unsound, and generally very superficial. Whitby is a thorough Arminian and as dry as a chip. Adam Clarke is tainted to the very core with Wesleyanism. Barnes, though his Isaiah and Job are useful books in their way, might be distilled to the very bones without getting a drop of oil out of him. Of all commentaries Gill's is confessedly the best, but it is scarce and dear, and beyond the reach of most purses.

Under these circumstances, we believe it is best to read the Scriptures without any commentary whatever. Dark and difficult passages may indeed occur which we should be glad to understand; but for the most part the Scriptures are so simple and so beautiful, when read with life and feeling in the soul, that a commentary does but mar them. Our own practice is to read them without any explanation or illustration whatever, in their own beautiful simplicity, and scarcely once a year do we look into a commentary at all.

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CONTROVERSY

By J. C. Philpot

Controversy is a subject that we usually avoid, as often tending more to strife and to "minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith." Imputations are made, harsh speeches used, and in the warmth of the moment expressions dropped as much at variance with the precepts as with the spirit of the gospel. The controversial writings of neither Toplady nor Huntington, eminent as both were in grace and gifts, are totally free from this blot. Yet at times controversy is not only unavoidable, but necessary. When Arianism arose in the fourth century, an Athanasius was needed to rebut and destroy it. When Pelagianism sprang up in the fifth century, an Augustine was required to overthrow it. In later days, by the controversial writings of Luther, Popery received a deadly wound; Toplady's sharp pen penetrated through John Wesley's Arminian coat of mail; and Huntington's powerful arguments demolished the moral law as a rule of life to believers. In fact, as there is not a truth which has not been attacked and denied, nor an imaginable error which has not been broached, controversy is inevitable, unless we would see truth trampled under foot.

An important error, we will say, is advanced by some man of name and influence, and sedulously propagated by him and his followers. If not at once detected and exposed, this error gradually gains ground, and at last may become established as a truth. Such was the rise and progress of most of the errors of Popery. They were broached by men of learning or influence, and as all opposition to them was prevented by persecution, they became in time almost universally recognized. Controversy is, therefore, in such cases indispensable, and becomes a blessing to the church. It is in fact, under such circumstances, a necessary branch of "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Controversy has winnowed truth from error; controversy has torn to pieces the robes of Satan transformed into an angel of light; and controversy has established on a firm basis, one by one, well near every article of our most holy faith.

There is nothing, then, in controversy itself intrinsically wrong. It is the abuse, not the use, which has so often made it objectionable. We desire, then, to approach the controversy before us in the spirit of the gospel, and, as far as we have light on the subject, to enter upon it without partiality or any respect of persons, our aim being, not men or ministers, but truth. It is a subject, to our mind, of weight and importance, as involving vital, essential truth. It is not a mere strife of words—a dispute about non-essentials, but touches the very foundation on which the church is built. This is, therefore, our main reason, as it must form our chief apology, for introducing the present controversy into the pages of the "Gospel Standard."

As our object is not men, but truth, we shall take no notice of any harsh speeches made on either side. Truth is not forwarded by such weapons, and, in our judgment, both parties have erred here.

The truth, on this momentous subject, can only be found in the Scriptures. All arguments, therefore, founded upon mere natural reasoning—all assertions that this or that view is absurd, irrational, improbable, or impossible, must be laid aside.

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POETRY

By J. C. Philpot

There is in poetry—we mean true poetry, something inexpressibly charming to those with whose natural tastes it is in accordance. To understand, admire, and love it, and much more to write it, is a natural gift of comparatively rare occurrence, and which, even when found, exists in very different degrees in different individuals. This natural gift, whether confined to simply understanding and enjoying it, or expanded into a power of poetical composition, may be cultivated and improved by study and practice, and may be refined to a high degree by industry and exercise, but can never be communicated by them where it does not originally exist. In this it much resembles music and drawing. If there be no natural ear for music, no practice can enable a person to sing correctly; and if there be no natural taste for drawing, all instruction will fail to make the pupil an artist.

So it is with poetry. No man can ever be a poet, in the real sense of the word, who does not originally and naturally possess the rare gift of a thoroughly poetical mind; and we much doubt if any one has even a dim perception of the exquisite beauty of poetry, or any acquaintance with the peculiar feelings that it kindles, unless his mental faculties are of a similar cast. As a proof; two men shall read the same lines. To the one, they shall make the blood leap in his veins, flush his cheek, fire his eye, and melt his heart into tears. The other shall think them very good and very pretty, but see and feel no more in them than in a page of Robinson Crusoe. So two companions in travel shall see at the same moment, for the first time, the majestic range of the Alps spread before them in all their matchless grandeur. The one is speechless with rapture and admiration; the other thinks them very pretty, but, being tired and hungry, thinks much more about his dinner. Which of these two is the poet, which the man of prose? As, then, some people are naturally incapable of understanding and admiring a beautiful landscape, so others are naturally incapable of understanding and admiring a beautiful poem.

But if to understand and enjoy poetry requires a special gift, how much more is a larger endowment of the same peculiar faculty needed to pour forth strains which shall at once proclaim their writer a true and genuine poet, and not a mere versifier. In fact, it is not so much one gift as an assemblage of many gifts, and these rarely united, that is required to constitute a true poet. He must possess great and original powers of thought, an active and thoroughly poetical imagination, feelings highly sensitive and acute, affections deep and strong; and these must be combined with a musical ear exquisitely attuned to sound, a rich and varied vocabulary of language, and a thorough acquaintance with the laws of metre and rhythm. His mind, by original

constitution and long continued study, must resemble a musical instrument of exquisite manufacture, which is susceptible of every tone and responsive to every touch; and he must be a skillful performer upon it, thoroughly acquainted with all its powers, and able to evoke at will every note through its entire gamut. He must himself feel, deeply feel, every thought that arises in his mind, and almost every thought to which he gives utterance must be the vivid expression of this feeling.

To move and stir the sluggish minds of others, he must have his own mind moved and stirred to its lowest depths; and he must, as it were, first bathe his words in the inmost recesses of his own heart, and then bring them forth all dripping with the feelings by which he himself is agitated. He should be able to clothe his ideas and feelings in the choicest and most musical language; and the whole, both in design and composition, should be under the control of a chaste and refined taste, so that nothing gross or vulgar, low, far-fetched, or obscure, should mar the delicacy and beauty of his thoughts and expressions. Though what he writes will often be the fruit of the greatest labor, it should from its ease, appear thrown off spontaneously and without the slightest effort; and, however highly polished by continual corrections, his verse should show no trace of the file.

But the question at once arises, "If this is to be a poet, where will you find one? You have set up a standard neither necessary nor attainable." To set up a standard is one thing; to require full compliance with it is another. It is with poetry as with every other product of the human mind or hand. Unless we set up an ideal standard of beauty or excellency, we can have no definite rules of judgment, nor any adequate and trustworthy points of comparison; and without these, we are no judges whatever whether such and such a poem is poetry, or such and such a writer is a poet. And this is just the case with most readers. Having no standard in their own minds, or any poetical taste of their own, they cannot distinguish between mere verse and real poetry. Of course, in this as in every other product of the human mind, there are degrees of excellence, and a man may be a good poet who is not a great one.

In fact, the gifts required for first class poetry are so great, that though the world has in all ages been flooded with verses, there are scarcely a dozen great poets. Excellence in any suit is so rare that for the same reason there never have been many great musical composers, or great painters, or great sculptors, or great orators. But to take a kindred instance; in music, there may be and are people who can sing very sweetly and accurately, who are not

first-rate singers, and individuals who can even compose with melody and harmony, do not rise to the highest class of musical composers, so in poetry there may be and are writers who are sufficiently led to shine and to please who are not poets in the highest sense of the word.

But it is time for us to leave the ground of poetry as poetry, and speak of it as attuned and adapted to the utterance of Christian thought and feeling. The hints we have dropped are meant to show that poetry, whether secular or religious, must emanate from a peculiar assemblage of original mental gifts, and cannot be learned like farming or arithmetic, as well as to beat down that vain and conceited notion that every copy of verses put forth by any or every scribbler is poetry. A man may tag rhymes all his life, and leave behind him volumes of poems and piles of manuscript, of which the first is only fit for the trunk maker, and the last for the butter merchant. A poet is as different from a mere verse maker as a Handel from an organ grinder, a Michael Angelo from a stone mason, or a Raphael from a traveling portrait painter.

But what a proof of man's degradation and desperate wickedness it is, that this noble gift of poetry, the highest exercise, in one sense, of the intellectual faculty, the harmonious combination of the most subtle and exquisite tastes, which should only find their truest utterance in singing the high praises of God, should be prostituted, for the most part to the service of the devil. Sin and Satan have seized the lyre, which, as touched by the fingers of David, sounds the pure songs of Zion—and have dragged it down from heaven to hell. Naturally fitted, as we see in Holy Writ, to be a handmaid in the service of God, she has been made to subserve the vilest passions of the human heart. Lust and bloodshed, under the names of love and glory, have been her chosen themes; and thousands have been stimulated into crime by her magic tones chanted in the worship of these twin deities.

In our own days, for instance, what a dreadful influence for evil has Lord Byron's poetry exercised upon the minds of thousands of the young and imaginative. What gloomy infidelity, what hatred of all restraint, what pride and selfishness, what contempt of everything holy and spiritual, have his powerful verses engendered or nurtured in many a bosom. Youth is the season for those deep impressions which influence a life; and to a mind of poetical cast there is sometimes a force in one stanza of his glowing verse, which, imprinting itself on the memory as in letters of fire, burns and smoulders, until it gushes forth in lava streams of words and actions. We are not speaking here at a venture, but of what we have seen with our own eyes in days long

gone by, for we have personally known those who apparently owed their ruin, body and soul, to the influence of his poems.

To the young and ardent of both sexes, to the romantic and imaginative, to the meditative and melancholy, especially when under the influence of that strongest of all human passions, love—how seductive is that poetry, which, in all the magic of verse, reveals and embodies their deepest and most secret feelings; and how almost at will the enchanter can beguile their thoughts and desires into the channel of his own headlong passions. What the Bible is to a child of God their idolized poet is to them. They hang over its pages, learn by heart its lines, are continually repeating to themselves favorite passages, until they drink into the very spirit of the writer, and adopt him as their model and guide.

Would that religious poetry exercised the same influence upon the children of God that secular poetry has exercised in all ages upon the children of this world. To a certain extent, and in a different way, we thankfully acknowledge that it does. The blessing, for instance, that Hart's hymns have been made to the church of God is incalculable. We name him, because, besides his rich and deep experience, and spiritual unction and power, he evidently possessed a large share of poetical gift. That there is something in the very form and language of poetry is indisputable; for else how is it that a verse, or line of a hymn, if it describe the experience of the soul, produces an effect which the same thought would not produce were it expressed in simple prose? The circumstance cannot be well explained, but the fact remains that there is something in the poetry itself, through which, as an instrument, the Blessed Spirit touches and melts the heart.

But independent of their qualities as poetry, spiritual and experimental compositions in verse have a power peculiar to themselves. Tried indeed by the standard that we have set up, few of our most admired hymns can be called poetry—at least, not if Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron are poets. But they possess what these poets had not—a secret power over the soul, a power contrasted with which, weighed in a spiritual balance, all their gifts are as valueless as time compared with eternity. When we have read the most beautiful compositions of earthly poetry, what impression do they usually leave behind? One so abhorrent to the spirit of Christ, that, in a spiritual frame, a Christian cannot read or even look at them.

We are conscious to ourselves of two distinct feelings and tastes—one that

would revel in poetry such as we have attempted to describe—the other that would turn away from its carnality and worldliness with abhorrence; one that would despise the baldness of many a hymn dear to the church of God, the other that would feel and love the experience which it unfolds. For this reason, we feel it exceedingly difficult to appreciate poetry strictly religious. Having read in former days so much of first class poetry, as well as being naturally fond of it, we are too much inclined still to read religious verses as literary compositions, and to weigh them in the same balance as Homer or Shakespeare; and though our spiritual mind calls out against it, and would look at them with gracious eyes, yet we own there is a continual tendency to demand in them some of those qualifications which give to secular poetry not merely its charm but its very being. We offer this explanation and apology if we should seem to have dwelt too long, or insisted too much, upon poetry as distinct from religion.

Indeed, as poetry deals so much with mere natural feelings, and draws its deepest and most intoxicating draughts, not from the well of Bethlehem or the pool of Siloam, but from the turbid springs of human passion, a spiritual poet is almost cut off from the main fountain of poetic thought and expression. A carnal poet may wander at will, unchecked by conscience or godly fear, amid every field of human thought and passion, and pluck flowers for his poetic wreath from the very brink of hell. But a Christian poet can dwell only on those themes which the Holy Spirit has sanctified, and every thought and expression must be under the powerful restraints of a conscience made tender in God's fear.

Debarred from the use of "strange fire," the writers before us have rather sought to fill their censers with coals from the brazen altar. Their aim is nobler and higher than any carnal poet ever dreamed of; and if they have clothed their thoughts and feelings in verse, it is not to bind their brows with wreaths of poetic laurel, but to express their own experience of sorrow and joy for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God. As gracious men, and as personal friends, both of them have a claim upon our affectionate sympathy and interest; and if we cannot rank them in the highest class as poets, we are glad to esteem and value both them and their productions as imbued with the spirit of the gospel.

As poetical contributions, Mr. Sears' compositions certainly claim the higher place, and are generally written with much ease of versification, and force and warmth of expression. Though his main object was doubtless to give utterance

to his own feelings and desires, yet he has evidently paid much attention to the structure of his verse and the correctness of his rhymes. In some of his verses there is an easy, animated flow, and a command of poetic imagery and expression which evince a natural gift in that direction. But it has higher qualifications. There is a prayerful spirit, mingled with confession, breathing through them, which makes them very suitable to the tender in heart and contrite in spirit; and though doctrinal truth is not prominently put forward, yet, to use John Newton's figure, it sweetens the whole.

The people of God instinctively feel and recognize what is spoken or written under divine influences and as to them that alone is true eloquence which speaks from heart to heart, so that to them is alone true poetry which is imbued with unction and savor, and reaches their feelings and consciences.

The Christian poet leads to Gethsemane and Calvary, not to the regions of sin, death, and despair. Who would choose a Byron's fame to have a Byron's end? Happier far are our friends who have devoted their poetic powers to the service of the sanctuary, and, instead of seeking the applause of dying worms, have made their end and aim the glory of God.

**Songs in the Wilderness. By the late William Brown, Minister of the Gospel—
(July, 1868.)**

How continually it happens that good men and approved ministers of God's word pass away and leave no memorial behind them beyond that affectionate remembrance which still remains in the hearts of those by whom they were personally known, or to whom their ministry was owned and blessed. It is pleasing, then, when we can possess some memorial of them of a more fixed and permanent character than those reminiscences which grow weaker and weaker every day.

We are glad, therefore, to welcome this little memorial of so worthy and excellent a man, and of so acceptable a minister to those who knew and loved the truth as our dear and esteemed friend, the late Mr. Brown. In this little book we have a twofold memorial of him, each in its way singularly expressive; for we have in it not only a photograph of his face and person, strikingly like him, as the frontispiece, but we have a photograph also, as clear and as striking, of his mind. Thus there meets us, at the opening of this nicely gotten-up book, the representation of his outward man, strongly recalling to our remembrance his manly, intelligent, and yet subdued features, and in his

poems as clear and vivid representation of the features of his inward man.

Besides the clear and sweet line of experience which runs in a very marked manner through these "Songs in the Wilderness," there is more of a poetic vein in them than we often find in the compositions of good men, who would almost seem to think that such minor considerations as poetical language and correct rhymes need scarcely to be attended to in comparison with clear statements of doctrinal truth, and a bringing forward of living, sound, and gracious experience. Were, indeed, the choice to lie between poetry and experience, between what Mr. Hart calls "tinkling sound" and "rich savory meat," we could not for a moment hesitate which to prefer. But why should we not have both, or at least why should real poetry be thought by some out of place in the setting forth of God's truth? In ancient days, when the Holy Spirit inspired godly men to sound forth God's praise, he did not disdain to clothe divine thoughts in a poetic dress. Indeed, so striking is the poetry of the Old Testament that worldly critics to whom the theme is distasteful have been compelled in every age to acknowledge the beauty of the form. No, even in later days, when such inspiration has ceased as moved the men of God whose compositions are recorded in the inspired word, we yet often find gracious thoughts and feelings, to use Milton's expression, "wedded to immortal verse."

It is worthy also of observation, that almost all our most approved hymn-writers, and almost all whose compositions have found a permanent place in the books and hearts of those who know and love the truth, possessed considerable poetical gifts. There is a charm in true poetry quite independent of mere poetical language, though, of course, that has considerable effect. This sublimity of thought, aptness of comparison, beauty of figure, vividness of illustration, are all distinct from the mere poetical form of rhyme or metre, and of a much higher character, for they remain when these are lost. We have a striking illustration of this in the Scriptures, those parts of them we mean which are strictly poetical. None of them have the forms of our modern poetry, such as rhyme, and metre, but how full they are of all the highest and truest characteristics of true poetry. Take, for instance, the song of Moses at the Red Sea. What poetic fire animates it! with what strength and vividness of expression, what striking contrasts, and what surprising force and beauty are the thoughts and ideas expressed! Observe the following verse—"And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." (Exod. 15:8.) We seem to see the waters gathering together at the blast of

God's nostrils; we seem to behold the floods standing upright as a heap, and the depths congealing themselves in the heart of the sea. But the enemy appears in sight; we see the chariots and the horsemen, and we hear their language, anticipating a speedy and thorough triumph—"The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." (Exod. 15:9.) "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil." What a determination! "My lust shall be satisfied upon them." I will take full vengeance, and bathe my sword in their blood. We seem to see them pressing on and drawing their swords, as they rushed through the heaped up floods and the congealed depths.

Now observe the contrast—"You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters!" (Exod. 15:10.) How we seem to hear the roaring of the wind and see the sea loosening itself on each side! See how it covers them; see how they sink as lead in the mighty waters. Then hear the loud burst of holy triumph—"Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Is not this true poetry, the best and highest form of it? Will our readers kindly excuse this digression into which we have been drawn by our desire to show that the highest Scripture truth may be clothed with the greatest poetic beauty, and that the soul of poetry may exist where we have not the body?

It is in vain, of course, to compare human compositions with the inspired word of God; but let none think that true poetry is out of place in a hymnbook.

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Roman Catholicism
by J. C. Philpot

Though we cannot say that we have that extreme dread of the revival and reign of Popery among us which many good men have long felt and expressed, yet we would be second to none in our abhorrence of it. Every effort is now being made to commend the poisoned cup of Popery to the lips, for the Romish harlot, though much battered and worn, especially in her own land and on her own throne, still carries in her hand the golden cup which is full of abominations and filthiness. The piety of her holy virgins in the nunneries of

this land, among whom are some of England's noblest daughters; the devotedness of her monks toiling, as in the Charnwood forest, to make the wilderness blossom like the rose; the zeal and earnestness of her priests, serving night and day at her altars; the large amount of almsgiving daily distributed; her ancient and splendid ritual, set off and adorned with all the bewitching accompaniments of music and incense, at once to charm and take captive the three senses of sight, hearing, and smell—these are some ingredients of the drugged wine-cup, which she has for ages presented to the nations, and is now holding to the lips of our wealthy isle. Many have been seduced to drink of this cup, not knowing that to drink was death. It, is well, therefore, to tear off from time to time, the veil with which she hides her features and to hold her up in her real colors.

Popery may well be called "the masterpiece of Satan." Its singular adaptation to man's fallen nature, its flexibility, its deceptiveness, its subjecting to its dominion and casting into its peculiar mold every mind which submits to its influence, its pride, prejudice, and bigotry, its persecuting, demoniacal enmity against the saints of the Most High, its perversion of the word of God, its lying miracles, its gaudy pomp and show, its hardening, searing effect on men's consciences, the license it gives to sin, and its undying hatred to the gospel—all these features stamp Popery as the masterpiece of that Enemy of God and man, who combines the subtlest intellect with the most infernal malice.

As a divine influence accompanies the gospel when it is made "the power of God unto salvation," so a Satanic influence accompanies the doctrines and practices of Popery. Of this we see daily instances in those who are justly called perverts. Men of the highest, acutest, and most logical intellect, believe the living legends of Romish saints, invented in the dark ages, and put their pretended miracles on a par with those in the Scriptures. Men, who previously shrank from the least approach to falsehood, no sooner embrace Romanism, than they outvie even Papists themselves in Jesuitical equivocations; and those who once stood forth free men, no sooner crouch at the feet of a priest than they sink into the most abject bondage, not daring to read, or inquire, or examine on which side truth or error lies. All these circumstances show that a peculiar influence accompanies Romanism, which will account both for its daily spread and amazing power.

All error, like common slander, is either based on truth, is mixed with truth, or passes current for truth. It would not otherwise get into circulation. Who would take base coin unless it resembled the true? The way to get a lie

believed is to mix a dash of truth with it. A naked lie soon dies of cold and starvation; but a lie clothed with the garment of truth finds many a house to take it in, and almost becomes one of the family before it is exposed and turned out of doors. So with the doctrines and practices of Popery. They are so based on truth, mingled with truth, or dressed up in the garb of truth, that their deceptiveness does not at first sight appear.

Take, for instance, the institution which is making great progress in this country—that of monasteries and convents. On what truth is this institution based? On separation from the world, its ensnaring pleasures and employments, and entire devotedness of body, soul, and spirit to God. What can seem better at the first glance? If the salvation of his soul is and ever must be to the awakened sinner the main concern of life; but if, from the weakness of the flesh, he is overcome by the temptations of the world; if prayer, meditation, searching the Scriptures, Christian conversation, nurture the life of God; if solitude, fasting, hard labor, seclusion, be means of subduing the rebellious lusts of the flesh—if these premises be true, who can well deny the conclusion, that a monastery is the very place where every grace and fruit of the Spirit may best flourish, and sin be most effectually repressed and subdued? It was on these principles, apparently so scriptural and true, yet really involving radical error, that monasteries and nunneries were founded.

See how truth and error are mixed together in these principles. To be separate from the world is good; it is a divine precept and truly Christian practice. But to come out of the world in spirit and to come out of the world in person are two different things. The apostle has settled this point, 1 Cor. 5:10; "for then must you needs go out of the world," which a Christian is not called on to do, but to continue in it in person and calling, though in heart and spirit separate from it. God looks to the heart. One man may go out of the world into a monastery and have his heart full of it, as indeed it must be without the grace of God; another may continue in the world and yet by grace be utterly, in heart and spirit, separate from it. But these blind guides know no other way of coming out of the world than shutting a man up in a monastery, like the prisoner in a penitentiary, and no other way of crucifying the flesh than spare diet and the whip.

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The Church of England

by J. C. Philpot

But admitting the necessity of some acknowledged form of Christianity, and allowing certain benefits to spring out of a National Establishment, the question arises—Whether we might not have the benefits without the evils, and whether the Church of England does not do us, as a nation, more harm than good. Religion, as a bond of society, would not perish were there no endowed Establishment to maintain it. Look, for instance, at the United States, where there is no established church. In no country is there more regard paid to the outward observances of religion; no, so much so, that it is hard to tell which is more ardently worshiped—the dollar or the form of godliness.

Humanly speaking, one of the greatest barriers in this country to every improvement is the National Church. As regards, for instance, the great question of the present day—the education of the people, she thwarts in every possible manner a sound and general system of instruction by seeking to thrust upon every school her obnoxious Catechism; by demanding that every schoolmaster should be a bona-fide member of her pale; and by setting up a paramount claim to educate every child in her system and creed. She thus thwarts and defeats every attempt towards a better and more general scheme of education, and would sooner, like a Chinese mother, that her children should not walk at all, or be cripples for life, than that their infant feet should not be squeezed into her narrow shoes.

Where able, too, she carries on a vast amount of persecution and of unfair influence. The poor, especially in country places, she sometimes buys over by presents of money, coal, and clothing, and sometimes persecutes by excluding them from a share in those favors which should be given indiscriminately. "To keep their church" is, in her eyes, the greatest virtue of the poor, and to attend the meeting the greatest crime. Nor are her power and influence limited to the poor. Those who are by their position independent of her favors, she awes by her lordly frowns; so that there are scarce any to be found above those engaged in trade and manufactures who dare to be anything but Churchmen, on account of the "vulgarity" of dissent in her aristocratical eyes. All this, we know, in the wisdom of God, is for the good of the church of Christ, which is to be despised and persecuted, as was her divine Lord and Master; but this no more diminishes the sin and guilt of the proud aristocratical Establishment than, because Christ was to be rejected of the Jews, they committed less sin in rejecting him.

Such as have never been within her pale, or have not been trained up at the great public schools and Universities of the Church of England, have little or no idea of the deep-rooted, we may say, fanatical attachment which burns in the bosom of her children—a love as blind, but as deep and ardent, as fired the bosom of Paul for the traditions of the Pharisees when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel or held the clothes of the witnesses who stoned to death the martyr Stephen. Those who have been cradled in dissent, their eyes not being blinded by this idolatrous enthusiasm, see, and see truly, her errors and corruptions, her worldly character and domineering spirit. Calmly and coolly comparing her with the scriptural marks of the church of God, they perceive in her scarce one feature of the bride of Christ; and instead of her being a chaste virgin espoused to the Lord the Lamb, they behold her gathering lovers to her embrace as shamelessly and as indiscriminately as Aholab and Aholibah.

Were we to judge merely from what floats on the surface, we might think the National Church was tottering to its fall. The very world is now crying out against the sordid avarice and shameless rapacity of her bishops, and against the miserable evasions and subterfuges which they employ in order to appropriate to themselves large sums beyond their assigned incomes. Puseyism, that twin-sister to abhorred Popery, on one side is eating as a gangrene into the very vitals of Church of Englandism; and Infidelity, on the other, is rapidly infecting the literature of the country and fearfully spreading among the masses. But underneath this apparent weakness she conceals an amazing vitality and strength. Like some aged asthmatics, who seem always dying, but gasp and cough on until ninety, burying two or three crops of hale, hearty youths, the Church of England has been wheezing and panting and seemingly all but expiring again and again, and yet appears to be getting stronger and stronger every year. Churches are rising by hundreds in every district, and the Universities can hardly supply students fast enough to minister in them. Who can solve this enigma, that while, for many just reasons, the Church of England is daily falling into well-merited contempt, her power is increasing?

Without using harsh, unbecoming expressions, we think that the streets of our great towns will afford a solution. There is a miserable class of females who are justly condemned by the virtuous of both sexes, but whose numbers show that their nets are not spread in vain for the vicious. The Scripture compares a false church to a harlot. It is the easy virtue of the National Church which makes her so generally acceptable. So indulgent a mistress suits well the

racing lord and fox-hunting squire; and her benignant smiles, if they do sometimes cost the farmer five shillings an acre, or his opulent landlord £50 for a new organ, yet they cheer them with hope of heaven when they die, if they are but constant in their attentions to her as long as they live.

The attachment, then, of worldly people to a worldly religion is no great mystery; it is no riddle for a Samson to put forth, or requiring a Solomon to solve. There is a greater mystery, a harder enigma than this—how gracious men, servants of the living God, believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus, can remain contentedly in her embrace. Toplady, Romaine, Berridge, Hawker—what burning and shining lights were these! Yet were they members and ministers of the National Church, and never seem to have been troubled with doubts or scruples as to her scriptural character and position. They lived and died honored of God, and their names are embalmed in the hearts of his children. But they are gone, and have left neither son nor heir; for where is there a minister now in the Church of England who is worthy, we will not say to stand in their pulpits, but even to open for them the pulpit door? There are a few who preach the same doctrines; but where is the savor, and power, and, above all, the blessing of God which clothed the ministry of those eminent servants of the Most High? Nor indeed is it to be expected. God has worked, and still, in a spiritual sense, does work miracles; but it is not his ordinary course of action. A man may be found alive under a snow-wreath, or in a tomb; but we do not expect to find many there, or that those thus found should be very warm or very lively. Surrounded with ice and the cold damps of the sepulcher, we need hardly wonder that there are so few living ministers in the Church of England, and that those few manifest so little vitality or strength.

The system is so deadening that, were it possible to extinguish the life of God, there could be no living men in her. Some, once known to ourselves, did appear at one time to possess life, but the event, we fear, has proved that it was not the life of God. Sin, we know, dulls and deadens the conscience, and few sins do this more effectually than what we may call religious sins. Many men, it is to be apprehended, have gone into the ministry of the Establishment with tender consciences, doubting and fearing whether they were acting right in the step they were taking. When the occasional services have come before them for performance, their lips, perhaps, have faltered as they thanked God for regenerating the sprinkled infant, or taking to himself some miserable drunkard.

But by degrees their conscience becomes less sensitive; the words are pronounced, more glibly and boldly; inward checks are less and less felt; and arguments arise, or are suggested by others, to keep quiet that intruding voice which speaks so very uncomfortably. The young curate is presented to a living; a wife is taken; and, in due time, olive branches of greater and less dimensions spread themselves round the vicarage table. Hedge after hedge, wall after wall are built round him as he advances onward into middle life. By degrees he drops his Calvinistic creed, and becomes a more acceptable preacher to the gentry and rich tradespeople. He imbibes a little Puseyism, and talks of "our venerable church" and its "admirable liturgy," is made a rural dean or an archdeacon, and settles down into a thoroughly worldly man, an enemy of God and godliness, a determined hater of all dissent, and, where he can, a persecutor of the saints.

But take another case. Let us reverse the process. In steel engraving, the iron plate is, at one stage of the process, hardened into steel, and at another the steel plate is softened into iron. We have seen how the iron is hardened into steel; let us now see how the steel is softened into iron. Take the case of a man who has entered the ministry of the Establishment, as most do, for a piece of bread, without any breath of divine life in his soul. Let the Lord, sooner or later, commence a work of grace in his heart, and lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet in his conscience. Let him be brought, through convictions of sin and distress of mind, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and have a manifestation of God's mercy and love to his soul. Let him now worship God in spirit and in truth, and walk before him in godly fear, will not, must not, his eyes be in a measure opened to see and his heart be made to feel what he is surrounded by? Lazarus dead in the sepulcher saw not its darkness, felt not its coldness, smelt not its odor; but Lazarus, living, came forth out of them all. But Lazarus was bound hand and foot with the grave-clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin, until the liberating word came, "Loose him, and let him go." So we trust there are a few living men, whose hands and feet are bound round with the gown, and their faces swathed about with the surplice, but to whom, in the Lord's own time, the liberating word will come, "Loose him, and let him go."

A man in the Establishment with the grace and fear of God in his heart is in a very trying position. He may not have strength to come out, and yet has a burdened conscience while continuing in. We would desire to sympathize with such; and our desire is, that they would seek counsel of the Lord, and neither on the one hand harden their consciences by doing them continual violence,

nor on the other take any step without beforehand well counting the cost. To give them right counsel is most difficult, and well-near impracticable. Suppose, for instance, we say, "Stay in," we should seem to counsel them to continue in wrong doing; and suppose we say, "Come out," unless we can give them grace and faith we might lead them to take a step in the flesh. The Lord alone, the wonderful Counselor, can either show them how to act or enable them to do what his gracious Spirit prompts. Unless rightly brought out, they will have little comfort themselves, and be of little benefit to the Church of God.

Among the many objectionable things in the Prayer Book, there are few, if any, worse than what is called the Catechism. As a compilation of Christian doctrine, it is one of the poorest, most meager skeletons that could well be put together, and, compared with the Articles, Burial Service, and some of the Collects, a disgrace to the Prayer Book. The author of "The Christian Year" speaks of the "soothing influence" of the Prayer Book. Most soothing indeed it is, and it has soothed tens of thousands into the sleep of death! The laudanum of the Catechism is dosed out drop by drop in every parish school; and most soothing it would be to the poor little things who are compelled to take it, were they able to swallow it; but its greatest advantage is, that they cannot understand it. It is with them a mere exercise of verbal memory, and they gabble over their abracadabra as school boys repeat by rote their Latin grammar, or the little cathedral choristers chant the Nicene Creed.

The author of the work before us has drawn his sword very valiantly against this misshapen idol; for, like most heathen idols, which seem worshiped with fervor proportionate to their ugliness, the Catechism is the great idol of the patron and patronesses of parish schools. His language is perhaps a little too strong in places, but he no doubt felt that to root up and hack to pieces such an idol required some vigorous and repeated blows.

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The ministry of the day

By J. C. Philpot

It cannot be denied that the ministry of the day is generally very light and superficial, not merely in opening up and unfolding the teachings of the Blessed Spirit in vital experience, but in setting forth with clearness, weight,

and power the glorious truths revealed by the same Holy Spirit in the pages of the Gospel. Without wishing unnecessarily to condemn or depreciate any laborers in the vineyard, and it is a matter for much thankfulness that there are still men of grace and gifts who are made a blessing to the churches, we cannot be altogether blind to the real character of much that in our day passes for preaching of the Gospel; and in nothing does it seem more deficient, than in fullness, weight, and solidity.

Taking a broad view of the ministry of the day, without fixing our eyes on any particular minister or ministers, so as to relieve our thoughts and words from all personalities, may we not, in all Christian faithfulness and affection, ask, "Are there many such faithful and wise stewards whom the Lord has made rulers over his household to give them their portion of food in due season?" But besides being a steward of the house, the minister is, or ought to be, the shepherd to feed, the guide to lead, the instructor to teach, the monitor to warn, the counselor to advise, the reprove, where needful, to rebuke. May we not look around and say, Where shall we find all, or anything like all, this?

Take one office of a minister—to teach the people committed to his charge. What little solid instruction is usually gained from the pulpit, so as to build up the soul on its most holy faith. We are not speaking of the doctrinal preaching of the day, which is no doubt all very correct, so far as it goes; but of that weighty, solid opening up of the truth of God, which instructs as well as edifies the soul; which gives it matter for subsequent prayer and meditation; which sends it home full of solemn thoughts and feelings, and spreads abroad a holy savor upon the heart.

How often does the gracious hearer come on the Lord's Day to his earthly courts with a real longing desire for spiritual food. He may not, perhaps, be under a very heavy trial that needs a special blessing, or under a temptation that makes him so to reel and stagger that he is crying out for a very clear and marked deliverance, but he has that general sense of his poverty and need which makes him long for some spiritual food. He comes with a tender, prayerful spirit, for he has been on his knees in his bedroom, and has been favored with some earnest breathings for a blessing on the word to be preached, and has read his Bible that morning with a feeling which has softened and melted his heart. Glad to be released from the toils and anxieties of the week, he sallies forth to the place of worship, and feels a sweet and solemn pleasure as he meets his dear brethren once more in the house of prayer.

The first hymn rather suits his feelings, and he hopes it is the beginning of a good day with his soul. He lifts up his heart for the minister as he stands up and opens the word of God. But O, how carelessly and hurriedly, blundering over the simplest words, and getting through that beautiful psalm, or that sweet and solemn chapter, just as a schoolboy recites his lesson, does he read that divine book. And then the prayer—the same, word for word, over and over again, as dry and as unfeeling, as careless and as irreverent, as if there were no dread Majesty of heaven to be feared or adored, no sins to be confessed, no mercy to be sought, no Jesus to be loved, no grace to be supplied. Surely, surely he who supplicates for so many fellow saints, yet fellow sinners, should have something more to bring before the throne of grace than a few threadbare, worn-out petitions which all the hearers know by heart.

And then the sermon, all confused and indistinct; no straight lines in doctrine or experience, but the old thing over and over again; from which neither instruction nor encouragement, neither reproof nor comfort, can be gathered, and in which there is nothing clear but the preacher's intense self-satisfaction, who sits down as if he had preached with all the gifts of a Gadsby, and all the unction of a Warburton. What must be the feelings of a hearer who really needs, and feels he needs food for his soul, under this sad, sad exhibition? We may seem severe, but, not against any good and gracious man, however small his gifts, who, with a single eye to the glory of God, speaks in his great name. There will be in that man, if he has not much variety of subject or of expression, a life and a power, a feeling and a savor which will refresh the soul, if it does not much instruct the mind, or enter very deeply into the heart.

It is against the imitators who, without grace or gifts, think themselves qualified for any pulpit or any people, that we speak. Whether truly, let others judge. It is a very solemn thing to stand up in the name of the Lord, to be his mouth to the people; and when we consider what a work it is to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood, well may any man, whatever be his grace or gifts, say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When a man gets into a pulpit, he says thereby, "I stand here to instruct you, to feed your souls with the truth of God, to lead you step by step to the heavenly Canaan, and to be made a blessing to you, as you individually need it." But if he can do none of these things; if really gracious, spiritual hearers return home again and again uninstructed, unblessed, he may call himself a servant of God, but the King of kings does not seem very clearly to stamp his

broad seal on the assertion.

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Walking with God

By J. C. Philpot

The prophet Amos, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and thus speaking for God, puts a very pointed and pregnant question, where he asks, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3.) The inquiry thus launched forth, and permanently embodied in the word of God, embraces a very wide scope, and is true naturally as well as spiritually. Take, for instance, two people in ordinary life—one quiet, reserved, studious, fond of retirement and solitude—the other noisy, boisterous, devoted to pleasure and gaiety, a sportsman and a gambler. Can these two men be bosom friends and intimate associates? As much as sheep can willingly lie down with dogs, or doves nestle with vultures. There must be a similarity of tastes, inclinations, tempers, and habits, before such a mutual pleasure can be taken in the society of each other, as shall result in any close or permanent intimacy.

Can God, then, walk with man, or man walk with God, except they be agreed? The thing is impossible, God and man continuing what and as they are. God is holy, man unholy. God is infinitely pure, man desperately wicked. God dwelling in the light which no one can approach unto, man sitting in the very darkness and shadow of death. Yet, according to the testimony of the sacred record, Enoch walked with, and pleased God; (Gen. 5:22, Heb. 11:5;) Abraham was the friend of God; (Isa. 41:8;) and Corinthian believers were the temple of God. (2 Cor. 6:16.) Thus it is plain from God's own unerring testimony that there is a way whereby God and man may become agreed, and as such walk together; for not only may man walk with God, but God can also walk with man, according to his own promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." They thus walk together—God walking in them, and they walking with God. Are they, then, agreed? They are, or how else could they walk together, if the inspired question of Amos is to stand firm and true?

There must be an agreement in love and hatred. What God hates we must learn to hate; what God loves we must be taught to love. Sin is the especial object of God's hate; and it must be the special object of ours. Christ is the

especial object of God's love; and he must be the object of our heart's warmest, tenderest affection. Pride, hypocrisy, presumption, self-righteousness, the lusts of the flesh, covetousness, oppression, and persecution—in a word, everything worldly and wicked, earthly, sensual, and devilish, is and ever must be hateful and abominable in the eyes of infinite Purity and Holiness. If not made hateful to us, where is the agreement, where the walking with God? Humility, brokenness, godly fear, tenderness of conscience, spirituality of mind, singleness of eye to God's glory, separation from the world, faith, hope, love, submission, and resignation to the divine will, filial obedience, and heavenly fruitfulness in every good word and work—if these, and all other graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, are pleasing and acceptable to God, must they not be also to us, if we are to walk with him in holy agreement?

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A divine religion

By J. C. Philpot

Our great desire for ourselves in personal experience and in all that we bring before our readers, either as written by our own pen or that of others, is a faith which stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. We dearly love vital religion; we embrace, with all the affections of our heart, the power of God, as put forth in a sinner's soul; we see more and more the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of a religion in the letter and in the flesh, and we see more and more the beauty and blessedness, the grace and glory of a revealed Christ, and of his divine kingdom set up in the heart. Husks and shells are all that the letter gives. Marrow, fatness, honey, milk, wine, yes, more, the very flesh and blood of the Lamb—this heavenly food in the eating and drinking of which is eternal life, the Holy Spirit gives to the hungry and thirsty saints of God, when he applies the living word with a divine power to their hearts.

Get, dear friends, a taste of the sweetness and blessedness of a divine religion, and it will kill you to all other. It will be a light in your understanding, to see the miserable end of a graceless profession; a life in your soul, to stir you up to seek more and more of the inward kingdom of God; a power in your affections, to fix them more on things above; and feeling in your conscience, to depart more and more from evil.

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The will of Christ

By J. C. Philpot

In that most sublime and touching prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father before he shed his precious blood on the cross, there is one petition, or rather an expression of his holy will, which is full of unspeakable blessedness.

"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24.) The change from 'petitioning as a Priest' to 'willing as a King' is very remarkable, and casts a gracious light on the nature of Christ's mediatorial intercession at the right hand of God. On the footing of his covenant engagements, atoning sacrifice, and finished work, as well as from the perfect equality of his divine nature with that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, he utters the expression of that sovereign will which was and is identically the same with the eternal will and fixed decrees of his heavenly Father.

And O, how full and comprehensive, how gracious and condescending is the will of Christ as thus expressed! How it embraces in its firm and sovereign grasp all the members of his mystical body, all the sheep of his pasture and the flock of his hand, all that the Father gave him to be eternally his own! Yes; all the countless millions who before the foundation of the world were given him as his joy and crown, as his eternal inheritance, as the delight of his heart, and the promised reward of his incarnation, sufferings, and death, were included in this expression of his holy and unchanging will.

Whatever be their state and condition here below, whatever sins and sorrows they may have to sigh and groan under, whatever opposition they may encounter from earth or hell, this will of Christ holds them up so that they cannot fall out of his hand, or be deprived of their glorious inheritance.

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Unity & Diversity

by J. C. Philpot

The blessed Redeemer, in that most solemn and comprehensive intercessory prayer which he offered up, as the great High Priest over the house of God, on the eve of his sufferings and propitiatory sacrifice, besought of his heavenly Father that there might be manifested union among his immediate disciples—"Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one as we are." (John 17:11.) And not for his own peculiar disciples only, whom he was about to leave, did the blessed Lord intercede with his heavenly Father that they might be one as the Father and he are one, but his holy soul poured forth its interceding breath that the same blessing might be granted to all his future disciples—"Neither do I pray for these alone, but for those also, who shall believe on me, through their word; that they all may be one; as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20, 21.)

We have used the words "manifested union" among his disciples, for it was not for abiding and invisible, but for evident and visible unity and harmony among his people that the Redeemer prayed. The former already existed as a substantial reality, and could therefore neither be increased nor impaired. It was established in the heavens far above all the roaring winds and waves, the ebbing and flowing tides of this restless sea of time here below. In eternity, before all worlds, the members of Christ's mystical body were united to him by everlasting decree as their covenant Head; and therefore this union is necessarily unalterable and immutable—"Your eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect, and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." (Ps.139:16.)

But not so with that manifested and visible union which, in a time state, cements together the members of the mystical body of Christ. That is subject to much fluctuation; that waxes and wanes, ebbs and flows, rises and sinks, according to the spiritual state of the members themselves, and the gracious operations of the Blessed Spirit on their hearts. The Lord, therefore, prayed to his heavenly Father that that secret and spiritual union might be manifestly visible; and that not only to the saints themselves, the blessed partakers of his grace and the destined heirs of his glory, but to the world itself in which they now live, and by which they are on every side surrounded.

But this could only be accomplished by certain clear and visible fruits and

effects, which should stand forth as indubitable marks, and be possessed of sufficient weight and force to bear down prejudice and suspicion, and convince a selfish world that Christian love is not a name and pretense, but an undeniable reality. As the world cannot penetrate into the heart, and indeed has no eyes to see the work of the Spirit there, the inward union of the saints of God can only be made outwardly manifest by the harmony and concord which they display, the love and affection, the mutual sympathy and forbearance which they manifest, by the actions of Christian kindness and liberality which they show to each other under the most trying circumstances, by the tender regard which they display to one another's character, their consideration of each other's feelings, their generous interest in one another's welfare, by owning each other as brethren, by walking and associating together as such, and being separate from all others, however admired and esteemed.

By these visible fruits and effects, and by the whole tenor of their walk and conduct, as evidently springing from a deep-seated and ever-flowing fountain of love and affection to one another as partakers of his grace, his heavenly Father would be glorified, and the world would believe that he had sent him; for though he was no more on earth to be a pattern of love, he would leave a people upon it as his representatives, to manifest that he lived at the right hand of the Father, and sent his Spirit down to conform them, in all ages, to his own loving and lovely image.

But now compare the present state of things with this prayer of the blessed Redeemer, and with the fruits and effects of the union for which he prayed as we have thus faintly sketched them. Cast your eyes round in this or that direction, or fix them upon the churches of truth, as it is useless to look anywhere else, for if not found there, the union sought for will be found nowhere. Those who do not know the truth do not know the Lord, who is "the truth," as well as "the way and the life;" and most certainly those who do not profess the truth cannot know it, for "with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Looking, then, at those who profess the truth, so far as they come within the sphere of our observation, and we are able to view their state and character with an impartial, unprejudiced eye, can we say that this unity is very bright, distinct, or clear? The lamentation of most good men, and the complaint of godly people generally, as far as our observation extends, would lead to the conclusion that it is not with the churches now as it was with that of

Thessalonica—"But as touching brotherly love you need not that I should write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another." (1 Thess. 4:9.) The ancient exclamation of the heathen world was, "See how these Christians love one another." Does the world say so now, or is its exulting language, "See how these professors bite and devour one another?"

Has, then, the prayer of our great High Priest for manifested union among his believing disciples fallen to the ground? Was Jesus, whom the Father "hears always," (John 11:42,) unheard, unanswered in this one request, this most important, this most earnest petition of his holy heart and mouth? How can such a supposition be consistent with the words, "You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips," (Ps. 21:2) and many other passages of similar import? We must not admit, for a single moment, such a doubt to take possession of our minds. How can we, indeed, entertain such a thought in our bosom, if we have any regard for the Scriptures of truth, or any faith in the veracity of him who cannot lie? But the question still recurs—Is the oneness visible? Is there manifested union among the people of God? Are there not many divisions and disputes even among the true disciples of the Lord, the real followers of the Lamb? In gospel churches do peace and harmony generally prevail? Are there no secret heart-burnings and jealousies which too often break out in words and actions? Are even all the ministers of truth, the sent servants of God, united together in one unvaried tie of love and affection? These, from their very position, are leaders, and should be examples to the flock. In them, above all others, should this union be clearly manifest; and having a larger experience, for the most part, of trials and temptations, and being peculiarly exposed to the assaults of their unwearied foe, they seem more especially called upon to sympathize with one another, as well as to mutually comfort and encourage each other in the arduous work in which they are engaged.

Knowing the state of many churches, do not our words almost sound as irony, and rather as a description of things as they should be—rather than as they are? What then? Must we fall back on the same spot of unbelief and infidelity? Has the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ utterly fallen to the ground? and did the Father not hear the Son? (Heb. 5:7.) No! that cannot be. How, then, shall we explain the mystery, unravel the knotted coil, solve the difficult question? Thus.

There is a substantial union among the living family which underlies all differences. It is with the members of Christ's mystical body as with the

members of our natural body. What a difference of form, feature, shape, and completion distinguishes individuals from one another! Where, out of the whole human race, can we find two people precisely alike? Yet how much greater their resemblance than their difference. Take man—any man, of any race, of any color—and place him by the side of an animal. How at once it is seen that an impassable gulf separates the lowest man from the highest animal; and that of any two men, taken at random from the wide-spread members of the human race, the greatest difference is but as nothing compared with the general resemblance. May we not apply this figure to the living family of God?

It is true that there are many differences among them, all which tend much to impair union, for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" but these differences are as nothing compared with their points of resemblance—as spots on the face of the sun, which sensibly impair neither his light nor heat. The differences are visible, because they lie on the surface, as freckles and wrinkles are seen on the face, when bones, muscles, arteries, and nerves—the real stamina of the body, are unseen. The differences which exist among the Lord's people are for time, their agreement for eternity; their strife is but the fruit of the flesh, and will perish with the flesh, but their union is a fruit of the Spirit, and will last when the flesh is returned to its native dust.

Compare what you feel to a child of God, one really and truly manifested to your conscience, with what you feel to a worldling, to a Pharisee, to a dead professor. You must be sensible that if not perfectly united to him "in one mind and in one judgment," yet you agree with him far more than you differ, and that in all the grand fundamentals of truth, and in all that concerns vital godliness, you are one. You have a feeling, too, of love and union with him which you cannot, perhaps, define, but which is not the less real. But with the Pharisee, the worldling, the dead professor, you have not one point of union or agreement, and you feel that while they are what they are, you and they are separate, both for time and eternity.

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The man and his ministry
by J. C. Philpot

To judge of the ministry of a man of God, it is neither sufficient nor fair to

take one part or period of his preaching. It must be viewed as a whole. What he was in youth, when full of life, warmth, and zeal; what he was after a longer, deeper experience, when greater maturity of life, and a riper judgment had softened what might have been harsh, without impairing its strength and faithfulness; what he was in declining years, when much family affliction was added to bodily infirmity, and, as a ripened ear of corn, he was being prepared for the heavenly garner. No due estimate can be formed of a minister's grace and gifts, power and life, usefulness and acceptability to the Church of God, by taking him only at one portion of his ministerial career. Take, as an instance, those two eminent servants of God, Mr. Gadsby and Mr. Warburton. We only knew them personally after they had been many years laboring in the vineyard. What Mr. Gadsby was when he first went to Manchester; what Mr. Warburton was when he first settled at Trowbridge, were both quite different from what each was thirty or forty years after—not different in doctrine, not different in experience, not different in any one vital point of the truth of God; but different, as in nature a man of sixty differs from a man of thirty. Bodily powers decline, the mind becomes less active, youthful zeal is, in a good measure, cooled, and all this change exercises an influence on both the man and his ministry.

Would it not be unfair, then, to take a man of God at his first entrance upon the work, and say, "What this man now is, he ever shall be; I form my judgment of him from what he now is, and I do not mean to alter my opinion of him, whatever he may hereafter be, or however he may himself alter? He is a boy now, and a boy he always shall be." But, view the opposite extreme. Take the same man forty or fifty years afterwards. He is now an old man, with many of the weaknesses and infirmities of old age. You hear him now. "He is an old man," you say, "and always was an old man." Now take him at another period—in middle life, when naturally and spiritually he is in his prime, his youthful zeal moderated, his judgment matured, his experience enlarged, but, the infirmities of old age not yet come on. Will you now say, "I have him at last, just as I would have. He never was young; nor ever shall be old; he always was, he always shall be in my mind, just what he is at this present moment?"

But would this be fair any more than before? He might still lack much of what was beautiful in youth, when his bow abode in strength and the fresh dew rested on his tabernacle; he might still lack the softened tone and affection, the gentleness and meekness of old age. Is it not, then, unfair to take any one portion by itself; and must we not, if possible, take the whole of a man's

ministry, from first to last, before we are in a position to form a right judgment upon it?

But we have another element from which to form a sound opinion. There is no better testimony of a man's ministry than the character of his hearers. If they are light, frothy, and vain, full of doctrine in the letter, but devoid of savor and power, without a vital experience of the things of God to humble and break them down into humility and contrition, but puffed up with pride, ignorance, and self-conceit, is there not the clearest evidence that such is their minister? "Like people, like priest," is a proverb neither dead nor buried.

But take the converse; let them be a solid, weighty, truly gracious people, many of whom are possessed of a deep experience, others much tried and exercised, and others well established in the truth of God who, as a body, can only permanently cleave to and love a ministry that can feed, instruct, and comfort their souls. Show us this people for a number of years cleaving closely in affection to one minister—it may be idolizing him too deeply, and from the warmth and esteem they feel towards him scarcely allowing there is any one but he who can feed the church of God—but show us such a people, and take him with all his and all their faults and failings; we will show you a savory well-taught man of God over them.

This we view as one of the strongest testimonies, if not the very strongest testimony, of what a man's ministry really and truly is. Gifts may draw a crowd of light and flighty hearers; talent and ability may raise admiration; friendliness and kindness may engender affection; and strict consistency of life may procure esteem; but none of these qualities singly, nor all combined will bring together and keep together for a number of years, a body of gracious, feeling, experimental hearers. To have such, a man must be able to feed the church of God, and must be thoroughly commended to their consciences as the mouth of God to their souls.

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**The dead profession of the day
by J. C. Philpot**

"An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land—the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have

it so, but what will you do when the end comes?" (Jeremiah 5:30-31)

When the outward and visible church of Christ has become deeply sunk into a carnal, lifeless profession, the Lord has generally been pleased to raise up a testimony against a state of things so evil in his eyes, so contrary to his revealed will and word. Is she not a city set on a hill? Shall she then sink into a valley amid mist and fog? or if she retains her seat of eminence, shall she become so beclouded with smoke that she is no longer seen from afar, and the Lord not testify against her? But as he invariably works by instruments, and "surely will do nothing but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets," he qualifies and commissions his own ministering messengers, into whose heart and mouth he puts his word, to sound an alarm in his holy mountain, that his own people may be aroused out of their sleep, and that those who will not hear may be left without excuse.

There cannot be a more striking instance of this general truth than the case of the prophet Jeremiah. It is scarcely possible to read his prophecies with an enlightened eye without seeing into what a state of dead, and we may add, wicked profession the people of God in external covenant were sunk in Judah and Jerusalem, just previous to the Babylonish captivity. Sin ran down the streets of Jerusalem like water, for "as a fountain casts forth her waters, so she cast out her wickedness." (Jer. 6:7.) So rife was falsehood that, "from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealt falsely;" so glaring was open sin that they "assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses;" and so prevalent was idolatry, even in the midst of the holy city, that "the children gathered the wood, and the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded the dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven." (Jer. 5:7; 7:18; 8:10.)

And yet in the midst and in the very face of all their crying sins and aggravated iniquities there was an amount of profession and a height of confidence springing out of it which seem to strike us with amazement at their blindness and obstinacy. Because, as the descendants of Abraham, they were the people of God by external covenant; because their fathers had seen his miracles and eaten manna in the wilderness; because there were priests and prophets among them; and because the temple reared its stately front in their midst, they viewed themselves as a holy nation and thus privileged to commit sin with impunity. How sharply does the Lord reprove this awful state of profession where he says, "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by

my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?" (Jer. 7:9, 10.) But, so confident were they of the favor of the Lord that even when, by the mouth of his true prophets, he denounced his judgments against them, they would not believe his words, but said, "He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine." (Jer. 5:12.)

But who encouraged them in this deceptive confidence? The very people who, as professed servants of God, should have testified against it—the prophets and the priests. What a state of things is opened up in the following verses— "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; My people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?" (Jer. 5:30, 31.) To whom should the people look for instruction but to the prophets who professed to speak in the name of the Lord as inspired by his Spirit, and to the priests whose lips should keep knowledge, and at whose mouth they should seek the law? for they were the messengers of the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 2:7.) Was it not, then, "an appalling and horrible thing" that these very prophets should prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and that the people, instead of detecting their hypocrisy and hating their deceit, should love to have it so, that they might be more comfortably deceived and enjoy their sins with greater quietude of conscience?

To testify, then, against this deceitful profession, to warn the elect remnant against being entangled in it, and to leave the rebellious and the unbelieving without excuse, the Lord raised up the prophet Jeremiah, put his words in his mouth, and set him over the nations and over the kingdoms, "to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down" all dead profession, as well as "to build and to plant" the truth of God in contrite spirits and believing hearts.

It is not however our present intention to dwell upon the character of Jeremiah and the circumstances under which he prophesied in the name of the Lord in those evil times in which his lot was cast, our object being rather to name him as an instance of one raised up by the Lord as a witness against the dead, wicked profession of his day than to draw out the distinguishing features of his personal experience or prophetic ministry.

We continually see what a deep insight many sharp-witted men have into the motives of human conduct, and how keenly and cuttingly by word or pen they can lay bare the thoughts and actions of their fellow men. How truthfully and

yet how ruthlessly will they tear off the cloaks and wrappers under which poor human nature vainly seeks to hide its deformity, and with what eager delight will they expose to public view its hideous ulcers and sores. But these very men, while in the language of most withering scorn they are expressing their detestation of the shams of this hollow world, are its veriest slaves. So a man may see and denounce the state of the professing church from a mere natural keenness of perception and a moral honesty of purpose, and yet himself be a slave to sin or under the dominion of pride and self-righteousness.

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Mere notional knowledge

By J. C. Philpot

The distinction that we are drawing between a gracious knowledge of the truth—and a mere notional knowledge is plain enough to every discerning child of God. He carries daily in his own bosom a test which discovers to him the difference between the knowledge which puffs up—and the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which is eternal life. He deeply feels that "the anointing which teaches of all things and is truth, and is no lie," widely differs from a few speculative notions; and that the heavenly wisdom which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy," as far exceeds a natural, notional knowledge of the truth as the reality exceeds the counterfeit, and precious metal worthless dross and clay.

The one, he sees and feels, is grace, the other nature; one is spirit, the other flesh; one is power, the other form; one is light, life, liberty, and love; the other darkness, death, bondage, and enmity; by the one Jesus is revealed and made experimentally known, the kingdom of God set up in the heart, and Christ formed within, the hope of glory; by the other, pride and self are set up, the flesh pleased and gratified, and a name to live substituted for the work of faith with power. By the one, sin is repented of and forsaken; the world put under the feet; and every fruit and grace of the Spirit brought forth into living and active exercise. By the other, the heart is deceived; the conscience hardened; sin indulged; the strong man armed kept in possession of his palace; the flesh gratified; and the world loved and eagerly pursued.

By the one, the saints of God are highly esteemed and dearly loved—their company sought after, their trials and afflictions sympathized with, their infirmities borne with, and they esteemed the excellent of the earth, with whom we wish to live and die. By the other, the real people of God are despised and hated, their company avoided, their experience misunderstood or misrepresented, and the heady, high-minded, dead, and lifeless professors preferred before them.

Need we say more? Who that has eyes to see the state of the professing church, or is favored with any spiritual discernment to distinguish between the living family of God and those who have a name to live but are dead, will not say that these things are true

The point at which we have been aiming is to show the blessedness of that spirit of wisdom and knowledge which the Lord bestows on his people and to distinguish it from that mere speculative, natural, and notional acquaintance with the truth, which is commonly called head knowledge. Now, this heavenly principle, this gracious, enlightened apprehension of the spiritual understanding, needs to be fed and nurtured that it may not gradually pine away for lack of suitable nourishment, but rather thrive and grow. Various, indeed, are the ways which the Lord employs to strengthen and sustain this heavenly principle, such as temptation, trials, afflictions, a daily cross, and a continual conflict. But his chief means, and that to which all others are but subordinate, is the word of truth. The promises applied with a divine power to the heart; the invitations and exhortations scattered up and down the sacred page; the grand and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, shining like so many brilliant constellations in the skies of the inspired record; the testimony everywhere given in the Scriptures to the Person and work of the Son of God, from the first promise in Eden to the closing prayer, "Even so come Lord Jesus;" (Rev. 22:20;) the opening up of the word of truth by the light, life, and power of the Holy Spirit; and the sealing evidence afforded thereby that these are the true sayings of God—such is the food of that heavenly understanding which the Lord bestows on his people.

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**Truth & Error
by J. C. Philpot**

There are two things which every child of God has the greatest reason to dread—the one is evil—the other is error. Both are originally from Satan; both have a congenial home in the human mind; both are in their nature deadly and destructive; both have slain their thousands and tens of thousands; and under one or the other, or under both combined, all everlastingly perish but the redeemed family of God.

Evil—by which we mean sin in its more open and gross form, is, in some respects, less to be dreaded than error, that is, error on vital, fundamental points; and for the following reasons—The unmistakable voice of conscience, the universal testimony of God's children, the expressed reprobation of the world itself—all bear a loud witness against gross acts of immorality. Thus, though the carnal mind is ever lusting after evil, thorns and briars much hedge up the road toward its actual commission; and, if by the power of sin and temptation, they be unhappily broken through, the return into the narrow way, though difficult, is not wholly shut out. David, Peter, and the incestuous Corinthian fell into open evil, but they never fell into deadly error, and were not only recoverable, but, by superabounding grace, were recovered.

But error upon the grand, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith is not only in its nature destructive, but usually destroys all who embrace it.

As, however, we wish to move cautiously upon this tender ground, let us carefully distinguish between what we may perhaps call voluntary and involuntary error. To explain our meaning more distinctly, take the two following cases of involuntary error by way of illustration. A person may be born of Socinian parents, and may have imbibed their views from the force of birth and education. Is this person irrecoverable? Certainly not. The grace of God may reach his heart, and deliver him from his errors, just as much as it may touch the conscience of a man living in all manner of iniquity, and save him from his sins. Or a child of God, one manifestly so by regenerating grace, may be tempted by the seducing spirit of error breathed into his carnal mind by a heretic or by an erroneous book, and may for a time be so stupefied by the smoke of the bottomless pit as to reel and stagger on the very brink and yet not fall in. Most of us have known something of these blasts of hell, so that we could say with Asaph, "My feet were almost gone, my steps had well near slipped;" but they have only rooted us more firmly in the truth. These are cases of what we may call involuntary error.

But there is voluntary error when a man wilfully and deliberately turns away

from truth to embrace falsehood; when he is given up to strong delusions to believe a lie; when he gives heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and seeks to spread and propagate them with all his power. These cases are usually irrecoverable, for such men generally wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; error so blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts that they cannot or will not see anything but what seems to favor their views, and at last they either sink into a general state of unbelief and infidelity, or die confirmed in their deceptions. It is scarcely possible to read the Epistles of the New Testament, especially those of Paul to Timothy and Titus, and those of Peter, John, and Jude, without being struck by the strong denunciations which those inspired men of God launched, as so many burning thunderbolts, against error and erroneous men. Any approach to their strong language, even in opposing the most deadly error, would in our day be considered positively unbearable, and the grossest lack of charity. It is, with most, an unpardonable offence to draw any strong and marked lines between sinner and saint, professor and possessor, error and truth. The ancient landmarks which the word of truth has laid down have, almost by common consent, been removed, and a kind of right of common has become established, by means of which truth and error have been thrown together into one wide field, where any may roam and feed at will, and still be considered as sheep of Christ. It was not so in the days of Luther, of John Knox, and of Rutherford; but in our day there is such a general laxity of principle as regards truth and falsehood that the corruption of the world seems to have tainted the church.

There was a time in this country when, if there was roguery in the market, it was not tolerated in the counting-house; if there was blasphemy in the street, it was not allowed in the senate; if there was infidelity in the debating-room, it was not allowed in the pulpit. But now bankers and merchants cheat and lie like costermongers; Jew, Papist, and infidel sit side by side in the House of Commons; and erroneous theology and German divinity are enthroned in Independent chapels. It would almost seem that Paul, Peter, John, and Jude were needlessly harsh and severe in their denunciations of errors and erroneous men, that Luther, John Knox, and Rutherford were narrow-minded bigots, and that it matters little what a man believes if he be "a truly pious" man, a member of a church, a preacher, or a professor. Old Mrs. Bigotry is dead and buried; her funeral sermon has been preached to a crowded congregation; and this is the inscription put, by general consent, upon her tombstone:

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

But if to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints be bigotry, let us be bigots still; and if it be a bad spirit to condemn error, let us bear the reproach rather than call evil good and good evil, put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Here, then, we resume our subject, hoping, with God's help and blessing, while we contend faithfully for the truth as it is in Jesus, to advance nothing that may be in the least inconsistent with his sacred word, and desiring his glory and the good of his people. But as Abraham, when he went up the mount with Isaac, left the young men and the donkey at the foot; as Moses put off his shoes, at God's command, when he stood on holy ground; so must we leave carnal reasoning at the foot of the mount where the Lord is seen, (Gen. 22:14,) and lay aside the shoes of sense and nature when we look at the bush burning with fire and not consumed.

Four things are absolutely necessary to be experimentally known and felt before we can arrive at any saving or sanctifying knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus—

- 1. Divine light in the understanding.**
- 2. Spiritual faith in the heart.**
- 3. Godly fear in the conscience.**
- 4. Heavenly love in the affections.**

Without light we cannot see; without faith we cannot believe; without godly fear we cannot reverentially adore; without love we cannot embrace him who is "the truth," as well as "the way and the life."

Here all heretics and erroneous men stumble and fall. The mysteries of our most holy faith are not to be apprehended by carnal men. Spiritual truths are for spiritual men; as the Apostle beautifully says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit—for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2:9-10.) It is, therefore, utterly impossible for men who are "sensual, having not the Spirit," to understand any branch of saving truth, much more the deep mysteries of godliness. We must be taught of God and receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, or we shall never enter therein; and it is for those who have been so led and taught that we mainly write.

Whether we set forth truth or whether we expose error—and we can scarcely do the one without at the same time performing the other—the word of God must ever be the grand armory whence we take the weapons of our spiritual warfare. This is both apostolic precept and apostolic practice. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17.) "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." (1 Pet. 4:11.) "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Cor. 10:4.)

We have little hope of convincing those who have drunk deeply into the spirit of error. The poison is already in their veins, vitiating in them all that once seemed like truth and simplicity. As infidelity, when once it has got full possession of the mind, rejects the clearest evidences from positive inability to credit them—so error, when once it has poisoned the heart, renders it forever afterwards, in the great majority of instances, utterly incapable of receiving the truth. Against every text that may be brought forward in support of truth an objection is started, a false interpretation offered, a counter statement made, an opposing passage quoted—the object evidently being not to bow down to truth, but to make truth bow down to error; not to submit the heart to the word of God, but to make the word of God itself bend and yield to the determined obstinacy of a mind prejudiced to its lowest depths.

O what a state of mind to be in! How careful, then, should we be, how watchful, how prayerful, lest we also, "being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from our own steadfastness." (2 Peter 3:17.) A tender conscience, a believing heart, a prayerful spirit, a watchful eye, a wary ear, a guarded tongue, and a cautious foot, will, with God's blessing, be great preservatives against error of every kind. But to see light in God's light, to feel life in his life, to have sweet fellowship and sacred communion with the Father and the Son, to walk before God in the beams of his favor, to find his word our food and drink, and to be ever approaching him through the Son of his love, pleading with him for his promised teaching—this is the true and only way to learn his truth, to believe it, to love it, and to live it.

No heretic, no erroneous man, no unbeliever ever stood on this holy ground. That childlike spirit without which there is no entering into the kingdom of heaven; that godly jealousy for the Lord's honor which makes error abhorred and truth beloved; that tender fear of his great and glorious name which leads the soul to desire his approbation and to dread his displeasure; that holy

liberty which an experimental knowledge of the truth communicates to a citizen of Zion; that enlargement of heart, which draws up the affections to those things which are above, where Jesus sits at God's right hand—these, and all such similar fruits of divine teaching as specially distinguish the living saint of God, are not to be found in that bosom where error has erected its throne of darkness and death.

On the contrary, a vain—confident, self-righteous, contentious, quarrelsome spirit, breathing enmity and hatred against all who oppose their favorite dogmas, and thrust down their darling idols, are usually marks stamped upon all who are deeply imbued with heresy and error. They may be very confident in the soundness of their views, or in the firmness of their own standing, but God rejects their confidences, and they shall not prosper in them. (Jer. 2:37.)

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Attacks on Biblical Truths

by J. C. Philpot

There is scarcely a truth of divine revelation which has not been at some time disputed, and against which a whole army of arguments has not been from some quarter arrayed. Some of these disputants have denied the very existence of God himself; though one would think that they had but to cast their eyes upward, and look at the glorious array of heavenly orbs above, or to view the earth spread as a landscape at their feet beneath, to convince them that all they beheld, as well as the very power of vision by which they saw them, must have been created, and must still be maintained by a divine hand.

Others have denied the necessity and truth of a divine revelation of the mind and will of God, and have framed a thousand arguments to disprove the necessity or deny the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, though it is self-evident that God being in heaven and we on earth, he must manifest himself in some way to our minds that we may see, know, and worship him acceptably.

Others have denied the Deity and eternal Sonship of the Lord of life and glory, and have found or forged the strongest levers that the subtlety of human reason could devise to uprear the very foundation of the faith, hope, and love of the church of God. To degrade the Son of God from his eternal birthright, and to spoil the members of his mystical body of all that they have

and are by virtue of their union with him has been with some as much a labor of enmity as to exalt and magnify him is with others a labor of love.

Others have fought almost with the malice of demons against those eternal transactions of covenant love whereby the elect were blessed with all spiritual blessings in their glorious Head, and have sought to snatch the reins of the government of the world, out of the hands of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, that they might commit them to the blind, three-headed idol, Luck, Chance, and Fortune, and thus reduce all events to that chaos of confusion, that wild and desolate region of uncertainties in which their own dark minds wander in endless mazes lost.

In all these daring attacks, these vigorous and unceasing onslaughts upon truth, one circumstance would be almost amusing, were it not a spectacle too sad to create a smile—and that is the pleasing self-satisfaction which the various assailants enjoy in their own breasts of the triumphant nature of their attacks. Half a century ago, thousands of people in France were taught to believe that the battle of Trafalgar was, on the part of the French navy, a glorious victory; and hundreds of thousands now believe that the invasion and conquest of England might be achieved in a single day and by a single battle. But England still sits as Queen of the Isles, in spite of foreign boastings, and will, we trust, with God's blessing, long so sit, in spite of foreign attacks.

So TRUTH is not to be beaten down by books and pamphlets. She may be invaded, assaulted, attacked, and self-applauding writers may persuade themselves that they have given her the finishing stroke; but she lives, and ever will live, for he who is himself "the Truth," as well as "the Way and the Life," maintains her by his own almighty power, and sustains her by his own invincible grace.

The ordinances of God's house we do not put on the same exalted level with those truths relating to the eternal Sonship of Jesus which we have been lately defending in our pages. The salvation of the church is not wrapped up in its ordinances, nor are they what the Church of England, adopting a Romish name as well as a Romish doctrine, calls "sacraments generally necessary for salvation." Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not saving ordinances, and therefore do not stand in the same commanding position as the Person of the Son of God, his atoning blood, justifying obedience, and finished work. None interested in the atoning blood and finished work of the Lord the Lamb can perish; but a man may be baptized, as was Simon Magus, and perish in the

"gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity;" or may not be baptized in water, like the dying thief, and yet be with Jesus in paradise.

Nor do we put on the same level those who deny or dispute the nature or mode of baptism with those who deny or dispute the grand foundation truths of our most holy faith. Good men and great men too—men eminently taught of God and abundantly blessed to the church of Christ, such as Toplady, Romaine, and Hawker, in the Establishment—and Huntington, Brooke, and Jenkins, out of it, did not see, much less practice, baptism as we see and hold it. But though we cannot follow them where we believe they did not follow the Lord, and think they were on this point erroneous or deficient, we do not the less esteem or love them for the grace of God manifested in them.

Still we cannot and must not part with any portion of revealed truth because great and good men did not hold it; nor because we see with them eye to eye, and feel heart to heart upon nine-tenths of divine truth, must we sacrifice or relinquish the remaining tenth, because upon that point we are compelled to differ. It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful; and if baptism, as we see and practice it, has been manifested to our conscience as an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should be unfaithful to him and unfaithful to our own conscience, if we did not, when necessary, defend as well as observe it.

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Enduring monuments
by J. C. Philpot

A desire not wholly in death to die, but after the mortal frame is returned to its native dust, still to survive in the mind and memory of those whom we leave behind, is evidently a feeling deeply imbedded in the human bosom. Nor is this desire confined to the individual heart which seems to covet for itself an enduring remembrance even when it shall cease to beat; it is equally shared in by surviving relatives and friends. From the lowliest gravestone in the country churchyard to the noble mausoleum in the nobleman's park, or the richly-sculptured monument in Westminster Abbey, the desire is equally made manifest, as an all-pervading feeling, that the departed should not be utterly forgotten on earth.

But of all enduring monuments, none abide the corroding tooth of time like those memorials which the deceased have reared to themselves by their own genius or their own abilities. Stone decays, brass rusts; and were it not so, names as names are soon forgotten; but the works on which genius has impressed its ineffaceable stamp live from generation to generation. This is true not merely in nature, but in grace, and applies not only to those works which are handed down by applauding hands, from age to age as a nation's literary treasures, but to those writings also of gracious men which instruct and edify successive generations of the family of God. Many eminent saints have lived of whose former existence no trace now remains; many deeply-taught, and highly-favored ministers have preached whose very names are now utterly lost. But the same God of all grace, who wrought in their hearts to believe, prompted others of his saints and servants to leave on written record either their experience or their testimony to his truth; and thus, though dead, they yet speak, in their writings, to the church of Christ. Their souls have long entered into rest, and their bodies have long moldered into dust; but they still live in their writings; and their words, which otherwise would have perished with them, are even now as goads and as nails fastened in our consciences by the great Master of assemblies.

Men who have lived to themselves all their lives, and never done any real service to God or man, as if they would grasp earth even when forced by death to leave it, seek to perpetuate their memory by monuments of stone and brass, for no living witnesses of their bounty or their benefits rise up to call them blessed; but the faded letters and mouldering stones soon testify that their memorial has perished with them.

But where grace has sanctified genius or talent, and employed them in the service of the sanctuary, as laboring with the pen for the glory of God and the profit of his people, not only are the names of such writers embalmed in the memory of the righteous, but as long as their writings endure God is glorified and his church edified by their works. There might have lived in the seventeenth century preachers as powerful as Bunyan, and ministers as deeply led into the mysteries of truth as Owen; but they have left behind no "Pilgrim's Progress," or "Communion with God," to instruct and edify the church of Christ for succeeding generations. In the last century Hart was not the only reclaimed backslider; Newton not the only converted infidel; Berridge not the only pharisee brought to Jesus' feet; but these men of God still live in their writings, while their fellow-sinners, and yet fellow-saints, for lack of such enduring memorials, are on earth remembered no more.

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Books which will never die by J. C. Philpot

There are books which will never die; and the reason is because they contain in themselves, we will not say the elements of immortality, for nothing is immortal below the skies, but what we may term the seeds of an ever self-renewing life. In the literary as in the vegetable world, there is a wonderful and almost infinite quantity and diversity of growth. Thus there are annuals and perennials, shrubs and trees, books, though few in number, which have the knotty strength of the oak—and books, but much fewer still, which have the enduring life of the cedar.

There are also plants fair to the eye, but, like the poisonous nightshade, bearing deadly fruit to the taste; and there is a fungus growth, the product of a corrupt press, spreading itself far and wide to taint the blood of the rising generation with principles of infidelity and sin.

There never, perhaps, was an age in which there was so large an amount or so great a variety of books on every subject which can exercise or instruct or delight the human mind; and as with men, so with books, every year adds its thousands to the already existing population. Yet out of this countless progeny of books—how few survive even their birth, dropping, as if stillborn, from the press—how few attain to youth or manhood—how more rarely still do any reach a vigorous old age, or, as if they had drunk at the fount of life, renew their youth like the eagle. One in a thousand may outlive a century, but all the rest, at different stages of their life, sink into the tomb of perpetual night.

But amid this general decay, this mortality and death among the books, almost as certain and as sweeping as mortality and death among men, a few works never die, and for the reason which we have already given—that they contain in themselves the seeds of an ever self-renewing life. It does not lie within our province to notice those productions of human genius, either in dead or living tongues, which are handed down from age to age to instruct or delight generation after generation; but the same principle which we have laid down will apply to all books, whether worldly or religious, which have won to themselves an enduring inheritance.

There is in them all that appeal to the common principles of our nature, that meeting of the needs, the sorrows, the desires, the aspirations, the hopes, the fears, the feelings and passions of the human bosom, which, vivified by the power of genius in works worldly and secular—or lighted by fire from heaven in books spiritual and religious—renders them independent of all the mutations of thought and time, and makes them virtually imperishable. This is what we mean when we speak of them as containing in themselves a self-renewing life.

But though the death among the books would, if duly recorded, be the largest and most wearisome of all obituaries, yet, after all, strange though it may appear to say so, their mortality is more apparent than real, and a greater benefit than an injury to general society. Books, like men, naturally and necessarily grow old; and how would the busy, laboring, active, and thriving commercial world, fare if all its manifold and intricate business were carried on by old men instead of the middle aged and young?

So with books. New books are needed, as young men are needed, to carry on the business of life; and as the father survives in the son, who is better adapted for fresh modes of business, so the old book survives in the new work which is better suited to the habits and feelings of modern thought. Old geographies, old histories, old cyclopaedias, like old almanacs and old directories, become necessarily obsolete and practically worthless; and so similarly thousands of books die a natural death, and perish of sheer decay.

And who would wish them to live, or stretch forth his hand to save them from a deserved death? In this world, corrupt as it is, few things really die but what ought to die. Who would wish to snatch from death and oblivion, what is alike corrupt and corrupting? Multitudes of so-called religious books are no more worthy of preservation than the tales and novels which fill the shelves of a railway bookstall; and therefore justly perish as being as much founded on false principles in religion as novels are on false principles of human conduct and life.

Now contrast with these abortive productions of the modern religious press—our old, our grand, our noble, our blessed Bible. How many works have been written against it in every age to overthrow its claims to inspiration as the word of the living God; and how every argument which learning could suggest, or research discover, or malice aim, or ingenuity invent, or wit point,

has been hurled against the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. But where are they all? Dead, buried, and forgotten. We may apply to them the words of the prophet—"They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore have you visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." (Isa. 26:14.) Who now reads the works, or even knows the names of Hobbes, Collins, or Tindal, men who in their day were like Strauss, Renan, and Colenso in ours, deadly opponents of the inspiration of Scripture—Goliaths of Gath—in their own and their admirers' opinion?

But God has made their memory to perish, while the grand old Bible stands, like him of whom it testifies, the word of God, which lives and abides forever. Such, also, will be the fate of those infidel books and their infidel writers that are making their little stir in our day, and with their great swelling words do but foam out their own shame. God will do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon, who perished at Endor; they became as dung for the earth.

But, as distinct from such books as these and their native kindred, which in a more subtle form spread abroad the same principles, and therefore perish, justly perish as under the blight of an eternal frown, we seem to have some reason to mourn over the death and dissolution of many works of a past age which seemed worthy to live. How many books, for instance, of the old Puritan writers are now dead and forgotten; and yet, as we read the writings, so edifying and so instructive, of Owen, Sibbes, Goodwin, etc., we almost wonder that the church of Christ could ever let them die.

But either from lack of spirituality in the church itself, or from their style not being suited to the present age, or their not being ready at hand, how rarely are these masterpieces of sanctified intellect read either by our ministers, or our people. Thus there seems to be a term of life even to the best of books. Slowly but surely they sink into the grave, and if some struggle on a little longer than their brethren, it is only to be borne in the end to one common cemetery.

Whence, then, comes it to pass that any resist the common doom? It will be found that if any survive the general dissolution—and we know there are those which have outlived centuries—it is only those which, as we have said before, contain in themselves the elements of a self-renewing, and, therefore, indestructible life.

No author has ever survived his own day who has not been gifted with a vivid, original, and life-like style—for what is wearisome to read, is soon not read at all.

Such an author is never dull, never prosy, never commonplace, never confused, never unintelligible. The buoyancy of his style is remarkable, and bears his books up so that they never become wearisome. Seasoned with heavenly salt, and enlivened with the most sprightly and original sallies of wit, they possess a peculiar freshness, so that they become neither dry nor moldy.

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**Bring the books too
by J. C. Philpot**

"When you come, bring my coat that I left in Troas with Carpus; bring the books too, and especially the ones made of parchment." (2 Timothy 4:13)

A minister who would profit the family of God needs to have his own heart well established by grace, and to find his happiness and home in the precious truths which he brings before the people. But he needs food for himself as well as for the people; and what he brings before them must have been first tasted, handled, and enjoyed in his own heart, or it will not profit and edify them. Besides which, unless there be more or less of continual exercise of mind upon the things of God, his ministry will get cold and vapid; there will be no fullness or variety in it, no point, pith, or power.

But many of the servants of God cannot read the works of good men; some for fear of stealing other men's thoughts and words; some from an inability of mind to read and digest anything but the Bible; some for lack of means to possess their works; and some from sheer laziness and a lack of that deep interest in and love to the truth which is necessary for profitable reading and meditation. But you will say, "Do you wish me then to hash up dead men's brains and bring before the people what I have pilfered from authors?" By no means. This is what no honest man would or could do, for his own conscience would fly in his face and accuse him of theft and dishonesty. "But what is the difference," you will urge, "between reading good men's writings and getting instruction from them and bringing that before the people, and stealing their words downright at once?"

A good deal of difference. We remember well an observation made to us in private conversation by our dear and esteemed friend, the late Mr. Warburton, for it so exactly agreed with our own experience that we have never forgotten it. "I often read," said he, "Mr. Huntington's works, for my own soul's profit, but I never can make the least use of them in the pulpit. There," he added, "I must have it all my own, and just as the Lord is pleased to give me." This is the very distinction we are drawing.

A minister's own soul needs feeding and instructing. The Scriptures, we well know, must be the grand source of all his instruction. This is the pure undefiled well of heavenly truth at which thousands have drunk, and yet it flows still as full, as divine as ever. But there are many points on which ministers, as well as others, need instruction that they may have clear, sound views of the truth, and be well and firmly established in it, able to contend for it, and to defend it against all errors.

Now, we firmly believe that, if instead of yawning and lounging their time away in sloth and idleness, or gossiping from house to house, they would apply their minds to reading, prayer, and meditation, live more alone, commune more with their own heart, be more separate from everything worldly and carnal, and give themselves more to the work, when out of it as well as in it, in the home as well as in the pulpit, they would find the benefit of it, not only in their own souls, but in the exercise of their ministry. A cold, lifeless, indifferent heart—though at various times, every servant of God has to mourn over his coldness and deadness—but a heart habitually cold, lifeless, and indifferent, and rarely otherwise, cannot be expected to warm up and cheer the drooping desponding, hearts of the family of God.

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Letters

by J. C. Philpot

Letters, especially when written to beloved friends in the Lord, draw forth much of the inmost experience of the writer's heart. The very freeness of correspondence unlocks those bosom secrets which are often almost necessarily held back from a public congregation. You know that your friend will not abuse your confidence, betray your secrets, or make you an offender

for a word. As you write, your friend comes before your mental eye, affection softens your heart towards him, the springs of inward feeling gradually rise, and they flow forth, according to the gift bestowed, in streams upon your paper. It is this freedom of communication and this writing out of the fullness of the heart which give letters by the saints and servants of God such a peculiar sweetness and power. Not being intended for the public eye, they are specially adapted for private reading.

We can take up the book of letters, or lay it down, read a long letter or a short one, without straining the mind or distracting the attention. If it suits us, we go reading on, letter after letter, as we have often done with Mr. Huntington's Letters. If it does not suit heart, time, or place, we can but lay the book down. It is a patient visitor, not jealous of a rival or sensitive of neglect, but bearing any amount of rebuff, coldness, or silence, and ready to speak again only when asked to do so.

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Religious news
by J. C. Philpot

Moving on in our own quiet track, and simply seeking, so far as the Lord gives us grace and wisdom, the spiritual edification of our readers, we rarely take any public notice of the various events and movements which are passing in what is called the religious world. Several reasons combine to induce us to observe this course, and to close our pages against the introduction into them of religious news.

First, we have long seen the evil of that spirit of gossip and news-mongering everywhere so prevalent, and are therefore determined, with God's help, not to do anything to foster it. Secondly, we are well convinced that if we once opened our pages to these subjects, as we could not always secure truthful and faithful accounts, being necessarily dependent for them upon the communications of correspondents, we should soon be overwhelmed with a flood of replies, explanations, contradictions, etc., which we could not well reject without unfairness, or insert without these weeds stifling our crop.

But, thirdly, we have found in our experience that in all this "news of the churches," as it is called, there is little else, spiritually viewed, but barrenness

and death. It may, indeed, for the moment amuse our carnal mind, and gratify that love of news which is so deeply imbedded in us all, to read what is going on in the churches; and could we believe the truth of the glowing accounts thus presented to our view, and that the Spirit of God was really at work in the various chapel-openings, anniversaries, tea-meetings, etc., recorded, it would be matter of rejoicing to our inmost soul.

But when we know, not only by our own observation, but the general confession of all possessed of spiritual discernment, at what a low ebb vital godliness everywhere is, and see how shallow and superficial, to say the least, the religion contended for in these "newsy" periodicals is, what barrenness and death then appear stamped upon the whole! We do not impute willful deception to the writers and collectors of this religious news, nor doubt the truth of their statements, as recording certain events and facts. But, what we doubt is whether the power, the presence, and the manifest blessing of the Spirit of God rest upon these chapel-openings, etc., as they represent and would make us believe.

Truth is all of a piece, consistent with itself and with the word of God. It is 'the simple' who believes every word. (Prov. 14:15.) We are bidden to prove all things, and hold fast only that which is good; (1 Thess. 5:21;) not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. (1 John 4:1.) We are bound, therefore, to try and examine the accounts thus presented to us, and hold them up to the searching light of truth. When, then, we read the lavish flatteries bestowed upon minister after minister—a point that we shall have presently to speak more upon, the glowing coloring, to say the least, thrown over almost every recorded event, the suppression of everything unfavorable, and the strong 'party spirit' pervading the whole, we may well ask the question—Is this scriptural?

Does the word of truth sanction this giving flattering titles to men? (Job 32:22.) Paul could say, "For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or had greedy motives—God is our witness. We didn't seek praise from people, from you or from anyone else." (1 Thess. 2:5, 6.) Can these time-serving publications, for so we must call them, filled as they are with the grossest flattery, say the same? Are the Acts of the ancient Apostles written on the same plan as the acts of the modern apostles? Does the Holy Spirit ever lavish praises upon the gigantic abilities of Paul, the wonderful eloquence of Peter, the sweet consolation which distilled from the lips of Barnabas? We know that these men of God were thus endowed, for they made it manifest in every place

by the sweet savor they carried with them of the knowledge of Christ. But our modern apostles—what would we know of their gifts or their graces, their gigantic abilities, their wonderful eloquence, their sermons so full of consolation, and the blessings which fall in such copious showers with every sermon—unless we were told so in the pages of some religious periodical?

We shall, doubtless, be considered by many very severe thus to speak of these religious newspapers, for they are really nothing else—and very bigoted and narrow-minded, because we cannot receive with implicit faith the glad tidings which they bring of the power and presence of the Lord being in their midst. To justify, therefore, ourselves in thus speaking of the religious news presented for our acceptance, we will give some extracts from a periodical calling itself the "Gospel Guide;" and let us see into what paths of truth and blessedness it would lead us were we to follow its guidance.

"In conclusion, I would say, for one, I am proud of Mr. James Wells, for in him we see the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion to the altar of divine service, the prophet's communings with the spirit-world, the apostle's self-abnegation in seeking the good of others; indeed, in him is concentrated the zeal of Wycliffe, the daring of Luther, the sagacity of Calvin, the imagery of Bunyan, the discrimination of Toplady, and the spirit of the Master."

What wretched flattery is this? If, your stomach can bear it, do, good reader, read this extract again. Was there ever a man or a minister, who lived and breathed the breath of life, that combined in himself the patriarch's abstraction from the world, the priest's devotion, the prophet's communings with the spirit-world, and the apostle's self-denial? Wherever was there one man in whom were concentrated the best qualities of Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, Toplady, and all crowned with the spirit of Christ?

Does the author really believe what he writes? Is it his calm, deliberate judgment that Mr. James Wells is that unheard-of paragon of all natural and spiritual excellence, that phoenix who combines in himself the greatest gifts and graces of the greatest saints and divines who ever lived? If he believes this, if this be his serious and deliberate opinion, what amazing ignorance of everything naturally or spiritually great, to think that any one man, can combine in himself such a constellation of heavenly gifts—gifts and graces not to be reckoned up by simple addition, but to be calculated by the multiplication-table, for if the shining qualities of ten men meet together in

one man, he is not only ten times as great as any one of them, but a hundred times, from the strength and force of their combination and concentration.

If he does not believe it, and writes all this bombast merely to please Mr. Wells—who, by-the-bye, if he has but the common feelings of an honest man, would, we would think, kick such a flattering article out of his house with both feet—as servile adulation, fulsome flattery, and base, wretched toadying!

If we speak strongly, or even severely, on these points, it is because we are thoroughly disgusted with the late flatteries so profusely heaped upon him, and feel called upon to show their deceptiveness and falsehood; for if we do hate anything, it is "shams."

What fruitfulness to God or man, can there be in flattery and deception?

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Autobiographies
by J. C. Philpot

What is called autobiography, that is, the life of a man written by himself, has always in it a peculiar charm, especially if the incidents recorded are striking, and the writer has the faculty, given to few, of presenting them in a clear, graphic, and vivid form. A heavy, dull, confused style may make the most remarkable incidents in action, wearisome in narration; and as we often see in our private communion with Christian people, the best experiences may be spoiled by the badness of telling them. No author has ever survived his own day who has not been gifted with a vivid, original, and life-like style, for what is wearisome to read is soon not read at all. Here Mr. Huntington peculiarly shines. He is never dull, never prosy, never commonplace, never confused, never unintelligible. The buoyancy of his style is remarkable, and bears his books and letters up so that they never become wearisome. Seasoned with heavenly salt, and enlivened with the most sprightly and original sallies of wit and humour, they possess a peculiar freshness, so that they become neither dry nor moldy.

But there is another reason why autobiography to most men has a peculiar charm. As God has fashioned our hearts alike, and as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man, every reader seems to read more or less of

his own history in the narrative of another. If we have not been in precisely the same, we have been in similar circumstances, and, what he felt in such or such particular crises of his life, we have felt, if not with the same intensity, at like periods of our own history. There are few readers also in whose real life, or in whose waking dreams, if their actual history has been but commonplace, there has not been a tinge more or less marked of what, for lack of a better word, we may call romance.

There has been some blighted youthful love, or early bereavement of an almost adored object, or some deep-seated, unrequited affection, or some cruel desertion, or some violated trust. As the gray-headed and the middle-aged appear to our young folk, it never strikes their mind that these grave old fogies were once young, and that under their cold, as they think, bosom the fires of their youth still sleep under the ashes. It is these sleeping fires which autobiography stirs, and thus interests as deeply the old as the young.

Have you, aged reader, no secrets under that grave exterior which you carry? Had you no struggling childhood, or oppressed youth; no incidents never to be forgotten, in which you were a great sinner or a great sufferer? Now these passages in your past life, as they at the time stirred up the secret depths of your heart, have they not left behind indelible impressions which again and again recur, sometimes in your dreams when the buried past becomes a risen present, and sometimes in the thoughtful meditations of your waking mind, when, in a melancholy mood, you brood over the days that are forever gone!

How many things have we in times past said or done which we have kept buried in the silence of our own bosom! There are secrets which husband never tells to wife, nor wife to husband, daughter to mother, or sister-to-sister, brother-to-brother, or friend-to-friend. And as in many cases it would not be right or expedient to confess them, so would it be little else than treason against friendship and confidence to seek to extract them. And yet our inward consciousness that we have a history of our own makes the self-narrated history of another so interesting as often meeting us in those very points in which, concerning ourselves, we preserve a prudent silence.

If then, autobiography is interesting to all, how much more is the pleasure and interest of it increased to that heart where grace has set up its throne; and if our life history has been especially marked by providential interposition, how strengthening to faith it is to read of the providential dealings of God in a still more marked manner with others of his living family. The lines, too, of

providence and grace are usually so blended together, or rather so closely interwoven, that, like a compact web, they mutually strengthen each other. The same God, who is a God of providence, is also a God of grace, and usually appears most conspicuously in the former as he deals more clearly in the latter. When faith is low, or when trials and afflictions do not abound, his providential hand is little seen; but as afflictions are sent, and faith is given with them, then once more the out-stretched hand of the Lord is seen and recognized.

Nor let any one either misunderstand or quarrel with our expression "romantic," even as applicable to religious biography. Look at the history of Jacob, or the history of Joseph, or the history of David. The love of Jacob for Rachel, the meeting of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt, the parting of David and Jonathan, when "they kissed one another and wept one with another—with David weeping especially hard." Cold must be the heart which does not respond even naturally to the life-like touches of these romantic incidents.

By romantic we do not mean anything connected with novels and romances—but those incidents of life which are distinct from mere commonplace events and stir up the deep feelings of the human heart. In this sense much, Huntington's "Bank of Faith" is truly romantic, and owes to it much of its beauty as well as its popularity and charm. Something peculiar was stamped upon its author from the very first. His very birth—offspring, as he was of a double adultery, his starving childhood, his early yet, in its consequences, miserable and disgraceful love, his wanderings when he fled from the strong arm of justice in hunger and almost nakedness, his call by grace and his call to the ministry, with his persecutions and sufferings at the coal barge and the cobbler's stall—have not all these incidents, told by himself in his own inimitable style, thrown around him a peculiar halo which, if we call it romantic—we merely mean striking and removed from commonplace?

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Death-beds
by J. C. Philpot

"The memory of the just is blessed;" and never more so than when they have made a blessed end. To those who love them in life, their memory is doubly dear when embalmed in the fragrance of a happy death; and even from those

who hated and persecuted them living, their dying testimony has sometimes extorted the passing desire, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

The voice that sounds from the dying chamber, where, amid weeping friends and sinking nature, grace manifests its last and strongest triumphs before swallowed up in glory, must ever forcibly appeal to feeling hearts. The same solemn hour awaits all. What, then will be their feelings; what then their manifestations; what then their strength and consolation; what then their faith, hope, love, joy, and peace; what views then of the Lord Jesus and of their saving interest in him; what calm in death, what support through death, what glory after death?—what living soul does not, at times, ponder over these deep and solemn realities?

Every happy and peaceful death-bed, then, is not only a proof of the Lord's faithfulness to the departed, but a source of strength and encouragement to the living. As far as regards him, he is at rest. Pain of body, anxiety of mind, afflictions in family or circumstances, powerful temptations, the fiery darts of the wicked one, and, worse than all, the plague of sin within, will trouble him no more. But we, who are left behind in this valley of tears, who have still to struggle onward, amid fightings without and fears within, may some times be encouraged by his peaceful end to press on against every outward and inward obstacle, casting ourselves wholly on Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

The death of the righteous at all times, but especially when it has been signally attended by the presence and blessing of the Lord, has something in it peculiarly softening and solemnizing. And if it be one whom we have known and loved, and we have ourselves been eye-witnesses of the solemn yet blessed scene, the effect produced is indeed far better felt than described.

Their frailties and imperfections are all buried in the grave. What they were as sinners, we forget; what they were as saints we only remember. If, during life, we have not in all points seen eye to eye; if in some things we have thought them wrong; if they have manifested any of those imperfections and corruptions which we feel working in our own bosoms—when the presence and love of their Lord and God have shed a sacred halo over their closing days, all these passing shades are swallowed up in that glorious light.

It, may, too, have been with them spiritually as we sometimes see naturally. A

gloomy morn may have ushered in a stormy day, and only transient gleams of light may have burst at intervals through the lowering sky; yet, at eventide, the winds are hushed, the clouds disperse; and for some little time before the sun touches the horizon, the heavens are clear, and the bright orb of day sheds all around his dazzling beams before he is suddenly lost to view. And when gone, the golden twilight still remains, as the reflection and remembrance of his departing glory. So, many a saint who has had little else but temptation and trial, with but few gleams of comfort, perhaps, during the greater part of his spiritual course, has, on a dying bed, shone forth a blessed spectacle of what the grace of God can do in that trying hour.

If such we have seen, and felt any measure of sweetness and power at the sight, some rays of the departing glory seem to reach us; and the remembrance afterwards of what we have seen and felt in that still chamber is as the twilight—the object gone, but the rays remaining.

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The ways and dealings of God by J. C. Philpot

The ways and dealings of God with his people, in providence and in grace, are usually in the outset shrouded in mystery, and yet in the end shine resplendently forth as stamped with the most perfect wisdom, mercy, and grace.

When Luther, on his return from the Diet of Worms, was seized by armed men in masks, and carried off to the lonely castle of Wartburg, it seemed as if his life and work were both about to be suddenly extinguished. The consternation of his friends was almost unparalleled. "A cry of grief," says D'Aubigne, "resounded through Germany. Luther has fallen into the hands of his enemies." But in that quiet retreat, hidden alike from friend and foe, he had time and opportunity to translate the Scriptures into his native language, and thus deal Rome a far heavier blow, and advance the cause of God a thousand times more than if he had been permitted again without molestation to occupy his pulpit at Wittenberg.

When Bunyan was haled to prison, and his labors in the gospel were thus suddenly and violently brought to a close, this heavy stroke would doubtless

appear, both to himself and his attached people, an utter extinguishment of his light and usefulness. But should we have had his "Grace Abounding," or his "Pilgrim's Progress," if it had not been for his gloomy cell in Bedford Jail? Has not the church of God the greatest reason to bless the wisdom of the Most High in permitting ungodly men to triumph for a season? For though they might stop his tongue which could not reach hundreds, they set loose a pen which has been blessed to thousands.

When Rutherford was torn from his beloved Anwoth, and ordered to confine himself to Aberdeen; when his tongue was thus forcibly silenced, and he forbidden to speak in the name of his dearest Lord, what a gloom it cast over his soul, what a dark cloud gathered over his fondest hopes. He had, he says, "but one joy," that of preaching the gospel, and that gone, all seemed gone. But where would have been the richest portion of his letters but for his imprisonment? His ministry at Anwoth, however powerful in itself or at the time abundantly blessed, was restricted to a small village and to a scanty district; and, however it might be subsequently enlarged by his visiting other places, was necessarily confined to that day and generation. So fully, also, was he there occupied, as we have already seen, with the labors of his ministry, that the use of his pen in private correspondence must have been greatly limited. But at Aberdeen not only had he abundant leisure to write to his numerous friends, but his very trials there and deliverances, his exercises and blessings, furnished his heart with matter suitable and edifying to the people of God in all generations; and his pen was thus made the pen of a ready writer, not only for the narrow circle of a few Scottish friends, but for numbers then unborn. The light placed on this candlestick could not be hidden. Its rays have shone far and wide beyond the Scottish border; and for the last 200 years have these powerful letters been as goads to stir up living souls to take the kingdom of heaven by violence.

No, even as regards that very flock which then lay so near to his heart—his church and congregation at Anwoth—we may well believe that the life and power with which his letters to them were impregnated, and to which his forced absence doubtless instrumentally much contributed, might, and probably were, more blessed to them than his preached discourses. The love and affection felt towards him, enhanced by his persecutions and exile for their sake, would make his letters eagerly read by those to whom they were addressed; from their real worth and intrinsic excellence they would be passed from hand to hand and religiously preserved, as their being at this day extant abundantly shows; their heavenly warmth might kindle a flame in

many a cold heart, and their force and energy stir up many a sluggish bosom, which had remained dull and unmoved under the sound of his voice; and thus his letters might be more blessed even at Anwoth than his sermons, and his absence be more valuable than his presence. All this we can now clearly see and can admire it in the wisdom of God.

It argues, in our judgment, a great narrowness of mind, as well as extreme ignorance of the diversified dealings of God in providence and grace, to chalk out a certain rigid line for his saints and servants to walk in—a line, that is, more narrow and precise than the Scriptures warrant—and then condemn or cut them off because their every step does not move in exact accordance with it.

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The precepts of God's Word by J. C. Philpot

Some ministers neglect the precept almost as if it did not form as much a part of God's revealed word as the promise; and others legalize it. But precept and promise are alike gospel, when the soul is under the sweet and blessed operations and influences of the Holy Spirit. Without his divine, and sanctifying, and softening influences, what is promise, or what is precept? The first distills no sweetness; the last constrains to no holy obedience. The first little touches the heart; the last little moves the conscience. Each, indeed, remains the same in the word of truth; the one, still full of grace, the other still full of direction; the one pointing to the life of Jesus above, the other to the life of Jesus below; the one tending to produce fruit within, the other to produce fruit without; the one encouraging us to believe, and the other to obey. They are not dissociated in the word of God; nor are they ever separated in experience.

When we feel the sweetness of the promise, we feel the power of the precept; when we love we can obey. And when our obedience to the precept flows from gospel motives, under divine influences, and towards heavenly ends, then and then only do we obey the precept aright. All other obedience ends in self-righteousness. How careful, then, should ministers be to handle the precept aright! And this they only can do when they themselves are under the influences of the Holy Spirit, filling their souls with humility and love,

softening and melting their hearts into a conformity to the image of Christ, and breathing into them the tenderest affection for the people of God.

But to take the precepts and make them up into a scourge, to flog therewith bleeding consciences, will never bring glory to God. It may produce a monkish obedience, a fleshly holiness; but it will never raise up the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Good men sometimes have erred here. Seeing the low state of the churches and the carnal lives of many professors, they have been stirred up as with holy zeal to scourge them into obedience by the precepts. But they have usually toiled in vain; carnal professors will remain carnal still. Chaff was never yet threshed into wheat, nor goats beaten into sheep; and while every stroke tells upon tender consciences, it falls upon seared ones like the snow-flake or the eiderdown.

But admitting that the children of God can be forced into obedience, thereby, is that obedience acceptable? Does Jesus want the service of the slave, or the obedience of the son; the duty of the servant, or the affection of the bride? "If you love me, keep my commandments." "The love of Christ constrains us." "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, affections of mercy." Promise and precept, love and obedience, grace and its fruits, a believing heart and a holy life, affections in heaven and separation from the world, the fear of God and a departing from evil—are all blended in the word, as they should ever be in the heart, lips, and life of every Christian minister.

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**A miracle of grace
by J. C. Philpot**

Every regenerated soul is a miracle of grace. To quicken, to convince of sin, to bring to the bar of judgment, and thence, by pouring out a Spirit of grace and supplication, to the throne of mercy, to reveal Christ, to deliver the soul from death, the eyes from tears, the feet from falling, is as much an operation of Divine power as to create a world—or to raise the dead from the grave!

But there are cases where the Lord seems to work these miracles of grace with a more abundant and unusual display of Divine power. To call the crude fisherman of the Galilean lake to be a disciple and an apostle was really as much a miracle of grace as to convert the learned pupil of Gamaliel. But the

conversion of Paul was accompanied by circumstances outwardly more supernatural and miraculous than the call of Peter. Augustine was directed to take up and read the Bible that lay at his side by a voice from heaven so audible to his outward ears that he at first thought it was that of a boy calling in an adjoining garden. Huntington, in his little tool-house, had a manifestation of Christ clothed in garments dipped in blood. Who can doubt the veracity of these men, when the whole tenor of their subsequent lives bore the strongest witness to the genuineness and reality of their Christianity? It is true, that in these extraordinary cases we want stronger evidence than seems requisite in the more usual and ordinary operations of Divine grace. But where that evidence is given, and there is no reason to believe the individual is a deceiver or deceived, to refuse assent to unusual displays of God's grace, merely because they differ from or surpass our own experience, would seem to be a refined species of infidelity.

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Sunday Schools
by J. C. Philpot

Education is one of those questions which have fought their own way into general acceptance. The benefits and blessings of ignorance have lost their numerous advocates; and though, as Laplanders wonder how any can live out of Lapland, preferring their own murky sky and oil-lit snow huts to the suns of Italy and the palaces of Venice, so there are those still who, in a moral sense, love darkness rather than light; yet it is a generation scanty in number and weak in influence. The Laplanders are fast passing away. It is true that there is a party, more numerous, perhaps, and influential than is generally thought, who, with the architecture of the middle ages, are seeking to restore the darkness of the middle ages. Let us not be deceived on this point. It is not merely the arches and windows, the porches and pillars of bygone ages which the Puseyites, lay and clerical, are seeking to renew, in all their exact detail, in the new churches that are everywhere studding the land. These are but symbols of a yearning after mediaeval times, when superstition debased the people and exalted the priest; when amid the thick darkness that brooded over Europe no object was allowed to be seen but the illuminated dome of St. Peter's; when men were not allowed to look into the word of God for instruction, or to the Spirit of God for light, but a living oracle was set up as Christ's vicar on earth, a feeble old man at Rome, cradled in monkery, and

fed up from childhood with the subtle policy of Italian wiles.

The weather-vane is but a piece of tin, but it shows the direction of the wind; the whirl of dust is but the movement of a few grains of sand, but it is the herald of the approaching storm. Coming events cast their shadows before. The barn-like churches and chapels of the last century showed the ascendancy of Protestantism, whose distinctive feature is to prefer the substance to the shadow, the word of God to form and ceremony. The recurrence to mediaeval models shows the desire of recurrence to mediaeval times. Thus, as in the turning vane we behold the changing wind, and in the whirling dust view the lightning stroke, so may we see in the tracery of a Gothic window the setting in of a flood of Popery.

It is our wisdom not to disregard the signs of the times. The child playing on the sands does not see how steadily and stealthily the tide is rising to engulf him, and gathers cockle shells until escape is cut off. Thus slowly and stealthily does Popery seem to be advancing, while most seem unaware of its progress.

But we must acknowledge that at present the danger does not seem immediate. Against an enemy like Rome it is well to be warned in time, for far-seeing is her policy, deep-laid her plots, unscrupulous her measures, innumerable her agents, and undying her determination. That she is bent upon what she calls the conversion of England is unquestionable, and that to achieve it she would wade up to her knees in blood is undeniable. That too she has made great advances of late must be admitted. Many of the aristocracy, more than is generally known, especially of the female portion, have already received the wine cup of Babylon from Puseyistic hands, and though not professedly Catholics are really more bent upon restoring the palmy days of Popery than many actual Papists.

But admitting all this, if we regard the spirit of the age, the spread of education, the diffusion of knowledge, and the power of the press, the conviction is forced on our mind that, things continuing as they are, a return to the Popery of the dark ages in this country is impossible. The arrogant pretensions, the lying miracles, the persecuting spirit, the intolerant bigotry, the priestly ambition of Rome, as carried out in former days are so diametrically opposed to the spirit of the times, that it seems next to impossible that Popery, unmitigated Popery, the Popery of the dark ages, should ever wave its banner over free Protestant England. The eyes of

England must indeed be put out and her noble heart crushed before she can lick the dust of Rome as in the days when monks lashed the naked back of our second Henry at Becket's tomb. The light of ages must indeed be quenched in our native land, her schools closed, her printing presses burnt, her parliaments silenced, her railways ploughed up, her armies scattered, her ships sunk, her looms burnt, her factories and workshops closed, and she a French province, sunk down into Ireland's rags and Ireland's ignorance, before the proud priest of Rome shall put his foot on her neck. What England may become we know not. The glory and riches of the modern Tyre may pass away like those of ancient Tyre. But England as she now is never can become a Popish country. English freedom and English intelligence, such as we now see them, must be utterly overthrown before Popery can be in this country what it is in Spain, Italy, or Ireland.

The danger that more immediately threatens us is from the other quarter. We are not now threatened with the dethronement of intellect—but its deification. The peril now before our eyes is not that superstition should restore the reign of ignorance, but that education should supersede religion, and the schoolmaster abroad should strangle godliness at home.

Time was when Sunday Schools were unknown, when the children of the poor ran wild in the streets uncared for by parent and instructor, and grew up semi-barbarians, without being able to read or write, or possessing the common elements of education. If ignorance, according to the Popish saying, be the mother of devotion, how devout must these uncombed specimens of humanity have been. Devout indeed that generation was not, but most devoted it was—to cock-fighting, the skittle ground, the ale-house, and the race-course. Read they could not, but swear they could; they could not write their own names, but were thorough masters of the vulgar tongue.

Now, to take these young barbarians into the Sunday School, subject them to its quiet discipline, teach them to read and write, accustom them to attend a place of worship, detach them from the gross sensual vice of their fathers, did no other effects follow, must be excellent. Kept in its place, limited to its true object, the Sunday School is a most admirable institution. But when, as is too often the case, the Sunday School is made the nursery of the church—great evil arises.

It is a great evil to consider the Sunday School the nursery of the church. Let that principle once pervade a church, and the big boys and girls will clamor to

be let out of the nursery and sit at table with the family, as much as the growing sons and daughters of the squire at the hall expect at a certain age to leave the nursery for the dining-room.

Thus is the standard of religion lowered, and the new birth slurred over, the work of grace tacitly set aside, and that deceptive thing called "early piety" set up.

The next step is to turn the Sunday School teacher into a minister the leading feature of whose ministry will be to trace the beginning of all religion to the Sunday School, instancing himself as a example of youthful piety, and holding it out as an encouragement to the elder boys that they, if very pious, may become ministers too. And who shall say that the taller girls, when they see a well-dressed lady looking up so admiringly to the pulpit, may not think within themselves, "Was not she once a Sunday School girl, and why should not I become one day a minister's wife too?" When such are the rewards of piety, who can wonder that the land overflows with it?

It has been stated that we are opposed to Sunday Schools. This is not the case. We approve of them highly when applied to their proper use. It is their abuse that we are opposed to. No man who has children can be opposed to the education of children; and no one who is a friend of the poor can be opposed to what is often the only means of educating the children of the poor. The last man to depreciate education as education is he who has known the advantages of it.

But education has its perils as well as its benefits. In past ages Satan worked by ignorance; in the present he works by intellect. Before Luther and the printing press, Satan, as an angel of darkness, shrouded his movements by the diffusion of universal ignorance. In modern times, as an angel of light, he works by the diffusion of knowledge.

The spread of education presents two sides, both destructive of vital godliness. On the one hand, intellect working by secular education threatens to swallow up external revelation by infidelity; and on the other, working by religious education to swallow up internal revelation by Sunday School piety. As the church always partakes more or less of the spirit of the age, the people of God are thus exposed to two temptations; those whose heads are active and hearts cold to be seduced into a pursuit of knowledge apart from godliness, and those whose heads are dull and hearts warm to mistake creature piety for spiritual,

supernatural religion.

Few people, we believe, in a profession of religion have stronger leanings than ourselves to pursuit after and love for natural knowledge. But we know its snares and temptations, and how unsanctified knowledge hardens the heart and deadens the soul. If one lesson more than another has been impressed on our conscience, it is the spiritual, supernatural character of vital godliness, and the utter worthlessness of everything in the kingdom of God but the special teaching of the Holy Spirit! Natural knowledge is one thing, spiritual knowledge is another. A wide gulf is fixed between them. Nature at its best is but nature still; and education, whether elementary as at the Sunday School or learned as at the University, does not and cannot sanctify the natural heart, or transmute the old Adam into the new. If this broad line be not maintained, the Sunday School may produce more harm than good.

What then should the education be that is pursued in the Sunday School? Should the education be wholly secular and worldly? Should the children be merely taught to read, and should all religion be discarded? Should the Bible be set aside, prayer neglected, the voice of singing not be heard, the name of God not be mentioned? If so, how would the Sunday School differ from the socialist meeting? Because we cannot regenerate the children, are we to banish the name of religion, and as it were ignore its very existence? Is there not a medium, and we believe a scriptural medium, between fostering hypocrisy and practicing heathenism? Timothy knew the Scriptures from his youth. Lois, then, and Eunice must have made him read the Scriptures. This indeed was the express injunction of God in the Old Testament—"Only take heed to yourself, and keep your soul diligently lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but teach them your sons, and your sons' sons; especially the day that you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." (Deut. 4:9, 10.)

And if in the education of children all religion is to be ignored, what means the New Testament injunction to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? We cannot say with Chillingworth, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," for besides the Bible outwardly we need this blessed Spirit inwardly—but we can say, "The Bible and the Bible alone is the book of the Sunday School." The children should be taught

that it is the inspired word of the living God—the word by which they will be judged at the great day. The truths too revealed in the Bible should be laid before them, such as the immortality of the soul, the creation and fall of man, the dreadful nature of sin, the certainty of death and judgment, the Godhead, sufferings, atonement, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the necessity of the new birth, and the awful consequences of dying in a state of unregeneracy.

A good Sunday School teacher will never be at a loss for a topic of oral instruction—the main course to be pursued. The parables of the Lord Jesus, the figures and emblems of Scripture, the customs, manners, seasons, feasts, rites of the children of Israel, the ancient prophecies, with their fulfillment, the history of Joseph and his brethren, the wanderings in the wilderness, the book of Ruth, the account of David and Goliath—but not to particularize, what a field of instruction is there in the Bible for the Sunday scholar, from the least to the greatest. Banish the Bible from the Sunday School! What will you substitute? The history of Tom Thumb and Jack Hick-a-thrift? Or dreary lessons of dead morality? No!—let the sacred word of God be the book of the Sunday School. We need not, to exclude hypocrisy, exclude the Bible—if so, the next step might be to exclude the Bible from the chapel. Because we cannot treat children as Christians, we need not treat them as heathens. So let them sing hymns; their little voices are sweet, and let them use them. But they should not be taught hymns that are couched in language of appropriation. What more grating to the ear of one that fears God than to hear the words, "My Jesus has done all things well," burst forth through the windows of the Sunday School?

The late Mr. Gadsby, who was a sincere friend to education, and especially to Sunday Schools; having for many years a large one in connection with his chapel at Manchester, much felt the impropriety of allowing the children to sing hymns, which none but believers can, without hypocrisy, use. He therefore compiled a selection expressly for Sunday Schools. In the preface to this selection he thus expresses himself.

"As one part of the service connected with Sunday School Teaching is singing, I have often thought a little Selection of Hymns was desirable. It is true I have seen several designed for that purpose, but most of them contain Hymns that do not appear to me to be true, and, as such, I could not give them my sanction; and all of them which I have perused lead the children to appropriate some of the truths they contain in a way which none but true

believers can justly do.

"The design of this Selection is to give a statement of the real truths of God, and yet in such a manner as to be a means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit (if it be his sovereign will), to impress their minds with the solemn reality of them, and the essential necessity of being quickened by, and taught of God, before they can enter into his glorious kingdom."

This principle, which we consider a sound and scriptural one, does not involve any serious loss. It is true that there are many hymns which are thereby, wholly or in part, necessarily excluded from the Sunday School, but many excellent hymns remain.

And here we may perhaps be allowed to give our views of what a Sunday School hymn book should be. As the Bible is the Book of the Sunday School, so should the Bible be the sole foundation and source of the Sunday School hymn book. Mere dead, dry, moral lessons about cleanliness and good temper in jingling rhyme, like some of the infant school sing-songs, should be discarded as worse than useless. Deep are the impressions; lasting the remembrance of songs learned in childhood; and, as many of the Lord's people know by painful experience, it is almost impossible to forget what rhyme and tune have so deeply burned into the memory. Who does not find some foolish, or worse than foolish, jingle, heard in ungodly days, haunting the mind? Looking forward, then, to the time when Sunday scholars will become men and women, the hymns should not be childish nonsense about clean face and hands, duty to teachers, and being good little boys and girls, but the solemn truths of the gospel, clear from the language of appropriation. Such hymns as,

**"When Adam by transgression fell;
The fear of the Lord is clean and approved;
Whatever prompts the soul to pride;
The moon and stars shall lose their light;
Happy the men that fear the Lord."**

are not only sweet and savory to the children of God, but eminently suitable for a Sunday School. They contain no language of appropriation which in unregenerate lips is little short of profanity, and yet clearly and experimentally set forth blessed truth. Nor should we limit the range of our vision to the Sunday School as if its present occupants were to be always children. A few years will make them men and women and send them forth into the whirlpool of life. The time, then, may come when the Lord may visit

by his grace some of these grown-up scholars.

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The work of the ministry
by J. C. Philpot

"None but he who made the world," said John Newton, "can make a Christian;" and none but he, say we, who makes a Christian can make a minister. It is not possessing what is called a gift in prayer, or even having some light on the word, and some power of expressing ideas with force and clearness; or being endued with zeal and earnestness, and a desire for the glory of God and the good of souls, that constitute we will not say a call to, but even a fitness for, the ministerial office. A man may have good natural abilities, a competent knowledge of the scriptures, a clear, sound, doctrinal creed, and some good measure of gracious experience, and a gift with his pen or tongue to set forth what he has known and felt, and yet not be fit for the work of the ministry.

In order to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood, there must be a special ministerial gift, and that continually kept up and fed by supplies from the only Fountain of light and life. Everything else wears out, and sooner or later comes to an end. Good men, whom God never made nor intended to make ministers, may have spiritual gifts, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 12:4, and as possessed of such may be very useful and acceptable as private Christians, as members of churches, in reading, and prayer, and conversation, in holding office as deacons, or even in a small way as occasional 'supplies' in little country places, or in visiting the sick, and by speaking a word in season to the tried and tempted. These gifts and graces of the Blessed Spirit they may in some measure possess, and yet not have that continued supply of heavenly wisdom and utterance, or that power, authority, and unction which are required for the work of the ministry, so as to be made a real and permanent blessing to the church of God.

For the Lord's sent servants have to go on, as well as begin, to plough from morning to night, and acre after acre, and that from year to year, as well as put the plow-share into the first furrow. How then can they go on in a work so important and so peculiar unless continually enriched from above with fresh accessions or renewed supplies of spiritual knowledge, holy wisdom, heavenly

instruction, divine life and power in their own souls, and above all with the special blessing of God resting on their word and their testimony? Without this new, fresh, and continued supply from above, renewing their youth like the eagle's, and reviving their soul as well as their ministry, sooner or later all they once seemed to possess comes to an end. Gifts wear out; zeal declines; the old expressions, from constant repetition, lose the charm of novelty, and are found irksome; the often-told anecdote becomes stale and wearisome; the past experience has been related until none care to hear it; the congregation drops off in number; the church declines; and all without and within become as stagnant as the green-mantled pool.

But what can the poor man do? He has given up his trade or business; has a large and increasing family; other churches and congregations care little to have or hear him, for a minister unacceptable at home is not usually acceptable abroad. Yet he must go on hammering away at the old irons, going through the same round of prayer and preaching, until he and all around him sink into a state where all life and power seem lost and gone.

Now we know that this is a true picture, though not a very favorable or flattering one, of many churches and congregations; but this, in some instances, is not the worst feature of the case; for this is a state of things which especially paves the way for the introduction of error.

Thus far, then, we have assumed the case of a good man, but one not called to the ministry. But now view another case—that of a gifted man without humbling grace, and see with us how this wearing away of gifts places him in a perilous position, as regards the floating errors of the day. The decline of the church and congregation being generally and tangibly felt in more ways than one, for thinning pews mean a diminishing salary, it becomes plainly seen that in order to stand at all some change is needful, something new and fresh to stir and rouse the minister and people from their present state of declension.

This needed novelty, this longed-for change is found at once in one or more of the various errors of the day. There is something in these errors peculiarly fascinating to the natural mind. It suits the reasoning faculties, especially if a man be naturally fond of argument and contention, intoxicates the mind with pride, makes it drunk with the spirit of delusion, and, as we have often thought, acts on the mental faculties.

Now, when a minister of good natural abilities has drunk down an error, say, the denial of the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord, or the doctrine of non-

backsliding, or that of non-chastisement for sin, or that of the pre-existence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus Christ, his whole mind becomes infected with the poison, and, like intoxicating drink, it seems to put new life and spirit into him. It gives him quite a new field to walk in, rouses his mind to unwonted energy, imparts a freshness to his views and a new train of thought and expression, all which pass off for a blessed revival from the Lord, and these intoxicating feelings, which are merely a spirit of delusion, or the influence of Satan on the mind as an angel of light, are unhesitatingly set down as the work of the Blessed Spirit upon the heart. There is such a thing as the light of error, what the scripture calls "the sparks of our own kindling," as well as the light of truth; and as the children of light see light in God's light, and read truth in the light of truth, so the children of darkness read truth in the light of error. It appears to their deluded minds as if a perfectly new light were cast upon the scriptures. This is "walking in the light of their fire, and in the sparks that they have kindled;" (Isa. 50:11;) and as this fire gives warmth as well as light, they warm themselves at it, and say, "Aha! I am warm; I have seen the fire."

The error, as thus preached with zeal and energy, and, as it appears, with new and unusual life and liberty, begins to spread. Some of his leading men, perhaps his rich, influential deacons, have either long secretly held or now drink down the error from his lips, and become drunk with the same spirit of delusion. From all this working together arises a temporary flush of prosperity; a new connection is entered into with ministers of the same views; there is an exchange of pulpits; gifted but erroneous men get admission; and in a short time, with the exception of a few of the real children of God, who from their poverty have no weight or influence, the whole church and congregation are drawn into the whirlpool of error, and concerning faith often make utter shipwreck.

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A minister should not to be too sensitive
by J. C. Philpot

Mr. Isbell, both as a man and as a minister, was much beloved by his friends and those to whom his ministry had been blessed. He was naturally of a highly sensitive disposition; and if this made him acutely feel neglect and unkindness, it was compensated by a proportionate warmth of affection when it met with a

suitable return from friends. It was this kindness, this amiability, this willingness to oblige which endeared him to his friends more than falls to the lot of many ministers. And yet this sensitive, affectionate disposition, which we cannot but admire, had, in his case, as in others similarly gifted, attendant inconveniences.

A minister should not to be too sensitive. If he is to feel every slight, and be deeply wounded by every arrow, directly or indirectly aimed at him, he is on the continual fret. His friends dare hardly speak lest they should hurt his mind, and his enemies are glad that he has a mind which they can so easily hurt; and thus friendships are cooled or lost, and enmities made irreconcilable. We have often thought that if we were as sensitive as our departed friend Isbell was, and felt as acutely as he did the scourge of the tongue and pen, we must have sunk long ago under the missiles thrown at us from every side. Whether our skin be naturally more tough, or has become hardened by war, we will not say; but this we know, that if our mind were as tender as our body, and we felt the cold blasts from the mouth of man as we feel the cold blasts from the mouth of the wintry east wind, we would not be fit to hold the helm, or even stand on the deck of the ship which we are now steering through the eddying waves.

It was not that he was deficient in faithfulness, for he was a remarkably bold speaker, and never truckled to any man, in public or in private. Nor did he show his feelings by warmth of temper; but an unkind word from a friend, which some would no more regard than a passing breath of wind, wounded him to the quick. We may often admire what we do not envy. Warm, sensitive, acute feelings are very beautiful, but not very desirable. A word, a look, some unintentional neglect, an unanswered letter, a hasty remark, a tart reply, so wounds your sensitive friend, as he so broods over it, that, perhaps, it costs you his friendship for life. And as this sensitiveness often costs him his friends, so it lays him open to the attack of enemies.

We speak thus, not to disparage the dead, but as a word of counsel to the living. Brother ministers, we have all much to bear with from friends and foes. Our blessed Lord had to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and was forsaken by his disciples and friends. But he has left us an example how to act that we should walk in his steps. If, then, one who has had to bear much from friend and foe may give you counsel, he would say, "Be not too sensitive. Be firm, be faithful; but bear with your friends, and bear from your enemies. We have found the benefit of both."

But if our friend and brother Isbell was too sensitive, it was well balanced in his case by affection; and there was this advantage, that while he chiefly suffered from the one, his friends benefited by the other. He had also a very forgiving spirit, and was thus, if soon offended, easily conciliated; nor could he do enough for his friends, and especially those of them to whom his ministry had been blessed, and who for the most part were as much attached to him as he to them. Our dispositions are often well balanced and mutually corrected. Sensitiveness without affection makes a man a selfish wretch; balanced and corrected by affection, it gives warmth to friendship, though it will sometimes turn it into partiality. On every side are extremes, snares, and dangers.

**Sensitiveness without taking offence,
affection without partiality,
boldness without bitterness,
gentleness without giving way,
cautiousness without cowardice,
faithfulness without fury, and
contention for the faith without compromise of the spirit of the gospel—how desirable, yet how rare are such qualifications for a servant of Christ.**