Elements of
Dispensational Truth,
Vol. 4

The Sermon on the Mount:
Its Dispensational Place and Meaning;
and,

The Imprecatory Psalms:
Their Dispensational Place
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Preface

It is with thankfulness to our Lord that this fourth book in a series on dispensational truth has been printed. It was, of course, J. N. Darby that brought out the true place of the so-called Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) as connected with the presentation of the kingdom by the One come in humiliation, presenting the kingdom to man’s responsibility as under trial to show that he was not recoverable from the fall -- rather than coming in power and judgment, which still lies ahead.

We shall briefly note numbers of erroneous attempts to place the Sermon in its bearing, none of them seeing that it has its unique place as connected with Christ’s presentation of the kingdom to responsible man (in the persons of Israel) -- but Withal of discriminating use to a Christian. The grounds for the true place of the Sermon will be examined.

We need not engage with the futile attempt of Covenantism to apply the Sermon to the Christian while putting the singing, or use, of imprecations from imprecatory Psalms in his mouth. The imprecatory Psalms have their place in view of the future recommencement of the preaching the gospel of the kingdom -- as at hand -- and the persecution of the future, godly remnant of Jews expecting the establishment of the kingdom. These Psalms have in view the judgment of the wicked in view of the kingdom to be brought in by sovereign power of Messiah. But we will examine the Covenantist attempts to put these Psalms into the mouth of the Lord and the apostles in an attempt to justify the Christian using them.

Roy A. Huebner
Sundry Information

Symbols and Quotations in This Book
Braces { } are used to mark material injected by myself into quotations of others.

In some of the references to Scripture in quoted material, the name of the book has been substituted for ch. or chapter to facilitate indexing. Quoted material has not been changed.

The iconic symbol ◊ placed at the start and end of some material indicates that material is quoted from J. N. Darby. The symbol ◊ is used to mark quoted material from others. These symbols are used where 10 point type is maintained rather than 9 point indented quotations.

Quotations of Scripture by the writer are taken from the translation of J. N. Darby.

Books in this Series in Print

Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 1
Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 2
Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 3:
   The Christian’s Altar, Worship, Assembly, Sanctuary, and Circumcision, With Notice of Two Forms of Messianic Judaism
Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 4:
   The Sermon on the Mount: Its dispensational Place and meaning; and, The Impecatory Psalms: Their Dispensational Place.

Other Projected Subjects in This Series
If the Lord will, other books in this series may be:

The Similitudes of the Gospel of the Kingdom.
Exposition of Romans 9 - 11.
The Kingdom of the Heavens and the Kingdom of God.
Etc.
Part 1:

Sermon on the Mount:

Its Dispensational Place and Meaning
Chapter 1.1

The Place of the Sermon on the Mount

Some Erroneous Views of Matt. 5 -7

Is The Sermon on the Mount the Laws of The Future Kingdom of Israel

In the Scofield Reference Bible (SRB), the Sermon (Matt. 5 - 7) applies:
(1) “literally to the kingdom” (p. 999), meaning the future kingdom, calling it “the law of the kingdom” (p. 1000); and
(2) that there is a moral application to the church of the beatitudes (p. 1000).

Concerning C. I. Scofield’s applying the Sermon “literally to the kingdom,” The New SRB, p. 997, says:

In the sermon our Lord reaffirms the Mosaic law of the O.T.
theocratic kingdom as the governing code in His coming kingdom on earth (5:17) ...

That is not the intent of Matt. 5:17, nor is Matt. 5 - 7 the laws of the future kingdom of Israel.

Is the Sermon on the Mount for the Church, As Such?

A paper by Philip Mauro, “Is The Sermon on the Mount Law? By C. I. Scofield, with Comments By Philip Mauro,” Boston: Scripture Truth Depot (1920), contains C. I. Scofield’s paper as given in that title. P. Mauro’s wholesale application to the Church is really no better. See also his, “The Sermon on the Mount, Is It for Christians?” London: Morgan and Scott (1913). It is not surprising that Covenantists so view the Sermon. It is surprising that the Open brethren publisher, Pickering and Inglis, sought to further this view. In 1957 they printed the third edition of a book by E. L. Hamilton, composed of Lectures he gave
repeatedly at Keswick conventions. He arranged the Sermon under ten laws and introduced them by saying:

There are many other people who tell us that the Sermon on the Mount is not for this dispensation and that the Laws contained therein are not binding today, but are intended for the Millennium, when Christ shall set up His Kingdom upon earth. I quite agree that then, and not till then, will the nations be governed by these laws; but meanwhile Christ’s Kingdom consists, not of nations, but of individuals, those who have been “born again” into the Kingdom, ¹ and to them these commands are given.

The argument that the Sermon on the Mount is not for this dispensation is open to two great objections. First of all, each of these Laws is confirmed in the Epistles, as we shall see in the course of our study. Therefore if the commands in the Sermon on the Mount are not for this age, but for the Millennium, neither are those in the Epistles -- although evidently St. Paul was not of this opinion.

Secondly, these ten laws of the Kingdom are but ten aspects of the New Commandment given by our Lord -- “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). If the Sermon on the Mount is not for this dispensation then the New Commandment of our Lord is not. ² He allows no room for the kingdom of the heavens as a sphere of profession, thus vitiating much of what he says. His interlocking the Lord’s new commandment with the Sermon would show that the new commandment was not actually new, the Lord having given what amounted to that new commandment before He gave the new commandment.

His view of the Sermon puts the Christian under a new scheme of law, with 10 of them as if mimicking the law of Moses, as the ten laws of the kingdom. He is really substituting this for the law of Moses. His assertion that he finds these “ten laws” in “the Epistles,” if true, would prove no more than when we find that the moral content of the law (but not Sabbath-keeping) is found in the NT (see Appendix 1), yet as to the law, as such, the Christian is dead (Rom. 7:4). The Christian is not under

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¹ He allows no room for the kingdom of the heavens as a sphere of profession, thus vitiating much of what he says.

² The Laws of the Kingdom as Contained in the Sermon on the Mount, London: Pickering and Inglis, 1957, third ed.
law (law as a principle), but this writer’s notion would put the Christian under law (as a principle of relationship with God).

Finally, he did not treat the entire Sermon, but selected what suited his purpose.

More interesting is the publication of a book on the Sermon by C. F. Hogg and J. B. Watson, printed at least three times. They also apply it now, stating:

A not uncommon way of evading the difficulties presented by this teaching of the Lord is to postpone it to the future. This device is reminiscent of the captions to the chapters in the Prophets which were formerly printed in the Authorized Version (KJV): all the evils therein were denounced upon the Jew, all the blessing appropriated for the church. The new school prescribes the high moral standard for the Jew in the future, and reserves the assurance of grace and blessing for the Christian now. ³

That seems to be a clever argument but it really is not. The previous book noted assures us that the “ten laws” are found in the NT, so, if true, the NT would have this without the Sermon on the Mount. Moreover, the writers have a chapter 9, “Parallels in the Epistles” (pp. 107-127). Assuming the validity of the parallels that they claim, in effect we have the Sermon in the NT even if we did not have it in Matt. 5 - 7. Why then was their comment about a “device” needed? -- since the NT allegedly has the contents in it anyway? Well, it is a polemical device. ⁴ Additionally, it is not the way to view the Sermon. Interestingly, the writers were taken to task by G. W. Bell in Is “The Sermon” for the Church? ⁴ Besides charging Hogg and Watson with doing some whittling down the true requirements of certain things, he wrote of the dispensational character of Matthew that he was convinced Hogg and Watson had set aside. He rightly pointed out things in Matthew that cannot be applied to the church, and why then simply take Matt. 5 - 7 and apply it in its entirety? Having pointed out numbers of things that are dispensationally true, he concluded that:

The Lord’s ministry was to be obeyed literally by the persons to whom it was then addressed, and also by those who will be in


similar circumstances in a future day (p. 27).

Yes, it was to be obeyed by those to whom it was addressed, but will the future, godly Jewish remnant really be in similar circumstances? No, for when the Sermon was given it also entailed the reception of His Person as come in grace and humiliation rather than in glory, power, and judgment, as He will at the appearing. That presentation in humiliation and grace is past; the situation of the future, godly remnant will be different, as being in the time of Jacob’s trouble, knowing Israel had rejected Messiah, but was coming again in glory and judgment; i.e., in an entirely new character. We must also consider that the imprecatory Psalms will have their place at that time. So, G. W. Bell’s ‘solution’ leaves much to be desired though he says truth when saying that things said in the epistles that are similar to things in Matt. 5 - 7, they are set in a context suitable to the Christian’s position.

For a brief survey of differing “theological interpretations,” where C. I. Scofield’s view receives a relatively long, unfavorable notice, see D. A. Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7, Grand Rapids: Baker, pp. 151-157 (1978). The explanation given herein will hardly be acceptable either. One objection is quite interesting. It has to do with “dispensational interpretation” as a system being imposed on Matt. 5 - 7:

In other words, the movement imposes its theological construction onto the biblical data . . . This, I submit, is true of its interpretation of the entire Bible, but it is more particularly true in its approach to Matthew’s Gospel (p. 155).

In other volumes in this series on elements of dispensational truth, we have been seeing how Covenantism, with its hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy does this very thing as a system imposed upon Scripture -- and here we see Dr. Carson apparently ignoring that fact.


It is the classic statement of the ethics of the kingdom of God . . .

In some cases Jesus uses obviously intentional exaggeration to illustrate the absolute requirements of God’s law (5:29, 30).

Really?


. . . a masterful exposition of the law and a potent assault on Pharisaic legalism, closing with a call to true faith and salvation
Chapter 1.1: The Place of the Sermon on the Mount

(7:13-29). Christ expounded the full meaning of the law . . .

Really?

William MacDonald gives an uncertain sound in his remarks with a mixture of some true and false statements:

This sermon is not a presentation of the plan of salvation; nor is its teaching intended for unsaved people. It was addressed to the disciples (5:1, 2) [true to this point] and was intended to be the constitution, or the system of laws and principles, which was to govern the King’s subjects during His reign. It was meant for all -- past, present, or future -- who acknowledge Christ as King. When Christ was on earth, it had direct application to His disciples. Now, while our Lord reigns in heaven, it applies to all who crown Him King in their hearts {what applies?}. Finally, it will be the code of behavior for Christ’s followers during the Tribulation and during His reign on earth {false}.

The Sermon has a distinct Jewish flavor, as seen in allusions to the council (i.e., the Sanhedrin) in 5:22, the altar (5:23, 24), and Jerusalem (5:35). Yet it would be wrong to say that its teaching is exclusively for believing Israelites in the past or future; it {everything in it?} is for those of every age who acknowledge Jesus Christ as King. 5

The trial of the first man ending at the cross, and God first presenting various things to man’s responsibility before bringing about those blessings through sovereign action in Christ, is missing from the Scofield system and has resulted in numbers of errors in the system.

Matt. 5 - 7 and Matt. 28:20

The commission of Matt. 28:18-20 includes this:

. . . teaching them to observe {τηρεῖν} all things whatsoever
I have enjoined you.

I understand this commission to be for the future godly Jewish remnant, but whether that be so, or if it is a Christian commission, in either case one needs to consider what the words “observe all things” means. It cannot mean that everything the Lord enjoined in the entire book of Matthew is to be carried out since that would involve contradiction of Christianity, or place the future godly remnant of the Jews in an impossible situation. How would you carry out this commandment to the

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disciples:

The scribes and the Pharisees have set themselves down in Moses' seat: all things therefore, whatever they may tell you, do and keep {τηπειτε} (Matt. 23:2, 3).

Are you prepared to do that on account of how you understand Matt. 28:20?

Concerning Matt. 5:25-26, which was a warning of what was impending for the Jews, and which they are experiencing now, how are you keeping this in view of Matt. 28:20? It is difficult to find expositors dealing with this matter. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* has commented on τηπειτε in Matt. 28:20.

In the NT it means: (a) guard, keep watch (e.g. Acts 16:23; Matt. 27:36); (b) keep (e.g. Jn. 2:10; 12:7; 2 Pet. 2:4); (c) keep blameless, uninjured (e.g. 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Cor. 7:37; 1 Tim. 5:22); (d) protect (e.g. in. 17:15); (e) hold fast (e.g. Rev. 16:15; Eph. 4:3); (f) hold, follow, e.g. the law (Jas. 2:10), the sabbath (Jn. 9:16), traditions (Mk. 7:9), the commands of Jesus (Jn. 14:15, 21; 15:10, etc.).

2. Of the 70 occurrences in the NT barely a half are found with the last-mentioned meaning, which is also approximately the case with ϕυλασσω. It is noteworthy, however, that in contrast to ϕυλασσω, with few exceptions (e.g. Mk. 7:9; Jn. 9:16; Jas. 2:10), τερεσφ does not have the force of keeping Jewish or Judaizing (Acts 15:5) tradition rejected by the Christians (cf. the polemical use of para τερεσφ in Gal. 4:10 applied to Jewish customs), but that of keeping a new Christian tradition.

This is set out clearly in Christ’s final command (Matt. 28:20), where the exalted Christ commands the church to keep the new righteousness which he had taught, e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount. It is possible that in Matt. 19:17, in his conversation with the rich young man and in contrast to his legalistic righteousness (cf. ϕυλασσω), and in Matt. 23:3, where he contrasts the Pharisees' teaching and practice, Jesus in demanding the keeping of the commandments meant the better righteousness (Matt. 5:20) and hence the true understanding of the Mosaic Law. If that is so, Matthew consciously uses τερεσφ in contrast to its apparent synonym ϕυλασσω. The same usage is found in 1 Cor. 7:19, where the keeping (τερεσφ) of the commandments of God is to be understood in terms of Christian ethics. In the Pastorals (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:7), however,
Chapter 1.1: The Place of the Sermon on the Mount

\( tērēō \) is used like \( phyllassō \) of the keeping of the tradition. 6

It is mere assertion that Matt. 28:20 means Matt. 5 - 7 (why not Matt. 24:4-44?). The writer’s treatment of Matt. 19:17 and 23:3 is mere manipulation of what the texts say in order to fit the assertion made concerning Matt. 28:20 -- as is the assertion that Matt. 5 - 7 is “the true understanding of the law.” Thus, the writer imposes this allegedly true understanding of the law on the church via Matt. 28:20. It is a legalistic scheme. The Christian is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4).

David L. Turner holds the erroneous view that in Matt. 5 - 7 our Lord was interpreting the law of Moses and this must be applied to the Christian. His valid criticism of John Walvoord’s view does not mean his own view is correct:

28:20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. The mission mandate also involves teaching new disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded. One would expect that the major discourses of Jesus in Matthew would form the core of this teaching. Walvoord (1974:242) certainly errs by excluding Jesus’ interpretation of the law of Moses from what is to be taught and by restricting the word “commands” to the new commandment of John 13:31-35. Since Jesus was a teacher, indeed the ultimate and definitive teacher of the Torah (4:23; 5:2, 17-48; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:34; 21:23; 26:55), it is not surprising that his disciples are to continue in this vein. This teaching is not merely to convey information but to change lives from disobedient to obedient behavior (5:17-20; 7:21-27). 7

He has changed “all” to “major discourses,” and, really for him, this comes down to Matt. 5 - 7, which for him is “Jesus’ interpretation of the law of Moses.” Thus, he is in effect saying that the Christian is under the law of Moses. The Christian is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4).

Concerning Matt. 28:20, J. C. Ryle wrote:

Is the Sermon on the Mount our rule and example? Do we strive to copy Christ’s example? Do we seek the things that He commanded? These are things that must be answered in the affirmative, if we would prove ourselves born again and children of God. 8

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So we do not prove ourselves born again and children of God if the Sermon on the Mount is not, for the Christian, as such, “our rule and example.” He did make an unqualified statement.

Concerning Matt. 28:20, E. W. Rogers wrote:

The “whatsoever” does not relate to the restrictive duties given to the apostles such as those given in Chapter 10 of our gospel, but all non-restrictive duties such as the laws of the kingdom which have been considered.  

Here again Christians are placed under “laws of the kingdom” and it appears he sees no “non-restrictive duties” in them.

It is never well to force a meaning upon a Scripture; so, leaving Matt. 28:20 as a text to wait upon for more exact light, let us consider the true place of Matt. 5-7.

The True Understanding of the Place of Matt. 5 - 7

The Kingdom Presented to Man’s Responsibility in the Person of the Lowly One

All earthly promises given in the OT are first presented to man in his fallen, Adamic responsibility before God makes good the promise. Why? It is to show that man cannot obtain the promises on account of his fallen condition. But God through sovereign grace in Christ will make good the promises, to His glory, while man is abased. God does not bring about His earthly promises as long as the first man, man in the flesh, as such, had a standing before God as under trial (to show he could not attain by his effort). It is of utmost importance that the Christian understand this way of God with the first man. The last of these successive trials of the first man was the presentation of Christ as the meek and lowly One to be

9. Jesus the Christ, A Survey of Matthew’s Gospel, London: Pickering and Inglis, p. 147 (1902). It is interesting that as an adherent of Open Brethrenism, he calls the Sermon “supra-dispersational.” Consistent with this he finds no difficulty with using the so-called Lord’s Prayer (pp. 49-40). Regarding the Lord’s prayer, J. Heading remarks: “Today, similar thoughts would be molded by the fact that the Lord’s sacrifice has been accomplished, and that the Holy Spirit has been given” (Matthew, Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, p. 98 (1984). If so, the sermon is not “supra-dispersational.” He made no comment on what we are discussing concerning Matt. 28:20. A. C. Gaebelein rightly dealt forcefully with the unsuitability of the Lord’s prayer being used by a Christian (The Gospel of Matthew, New York: Loizeaux, p. 138ff (1961) [1910].

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received. Christ come in humiliation was the final, conclusive moral test of the first man. There is no subsequent testing of the first man in order to show that he is not recoverable from the fall by any effort on his part.

The kingdom for Israel was not a mystery concerning which silence was kept in the OT times (Rom. 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3). It was a subject of OT prophecy. But there was an aspect of the kingdom that was not spoken of in the OT; that is the kingdom in a mystery form -- as it is now. The promise of the kingdom for Israel will certainly be made good to Israel, but God has arranged that it be brought in by sovereign power and grace, not because the first man accepted its presentation to him in the person of Christ come in humiliation and grace. So, the kingdom was presented to the first man, but as bound up with the person of the Second Man. Thus, the rejection of the One (the King) who spoke of Himself as “meek and lowly” (Matt. 11:29) entailed the rejection of the kingdom. However, He was accepted by a small remnant in whom sovereign grace acted; but the mass rejected Him. In the order of the presentation of these matters according as the Spirit caused Matthew to write, this rejection is noted in Matt. 12 when the works of power of the Spirit manifested by Christ was ascribed to Beelzebub. Then in Matt. 13 Christ sows; i.e., a new work is begun, and the parables of the kingdom in mystery -- instead of the kingdom being brought in in power and glory -- are unfolded. The hostility to Christ progressed to the point of crucifying Him. In Matt. 12 we may call it a moral rejection, which was formalized at the cross.

God had promised the kingdom to Israel. But as with all the OT promises, before they are made good by the action of sovereign grace, they must be presented to fallen man in his responsibility under trial, to show that he was not recoverable from the fall in order to bring out his state; i.e., the state of the first man. We saw how this was brought out concerning the land promise, for example. It must also be so regarding the promised kingdom for Israel.

Christ was a rock of offense and a stumbling-stone to Israel. The kingdom as bound up with the meek and lowly Lord Jesus did not suit the first man, man in his fallen Adamic responsibility. The Jews read the Scriptures and saw the Messianic reign, as did the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:25, 26). They, however, were objects of sovereign grace, and were preserved, but the mass would not have such a One. Therefore the mass had not the kingdom either.

The situation will be entirely different when the future kingdom is set up, when Christ comes as described in 2 Thess. 1:7 and other
Part 1: The Sermon on the Mount

Scriptures. Christ will not be presented to Israel as at the first time, with the kingdom bound up with His person for presentation to the first man in his responsibility. The presently suspended preaching of gospel of the kingdom will be recommenced after the rapture of the saints and preceding the establishment of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14), preached during that time the judgments of Rev. 6-19. The situation will be entirely changed from when the gospel of the kingdom was preached at our Lord’s first advent.

Matt. 5 - 7 Applies to the Then Godly Jewish Remnant in Connection with the Presentation of Christ in Humility and Grace

A special line of truth is arranged/developed in Matthew’s gospel -- as is true, of course, with each of the gospels. Much of the (conflicting) objections to what follows results from not rightly apprehending this. Saying that Matthew was written with the Jews in view, while true, hardly by itself results in a true apprehension of the governmental/dispensational character of Matthew.

The Sermon on the Mount has in view the godly remnant of the

10. (It may be well here to say a few words on the manner in which the discourses of the Lord would be given to us, assuming the Holy Ghost to record them. For it is the character which would result, not the proof of the fact by evidence, that I now seek. First, it is perfectly certain, that we have a very small portion indeed of the discourses of Jesus. The Holy Ghost would give us those which divine wisdom considered permanently useful to the Church in all ages -- that which brought out great principles and abiding doctrines; and such is in fact the case. Take the sermon on the Mount, Matt. 13, Luke 15, 16, and the discourses in John, and the like: all bring out some special view of Christ’s person, God’s ways with men, or the principles of His rule as Father. Even in the same discourse He would give us, according to the connection in which it was recorded, that part which applies to the subject treated. Thus, supposing it had been said, “They killed at Jerusalem the Son whom the Father had sent,” I might say, if the guilt of favored Jerusalem was in question, “They killed the Son at Jerusalem”; if the mere extent of their guilt in respect of the dignity of His person, “They killed the Son.” If I sought to show the slight of the Father and the contempt of His love, I might say, “They killed the Son whom the Father had sent.” And all these representations would be perfectly true; and in the pursuit of an object, such as God must have in recording these things, my leaving out a part which did not immediately bear on the purpose of God in the revelation would only give a truer force to the words -- more of the sense and meaning, according to the mind and teaching of God. Now each gospel might give only one of these (much more pertinent and instructive, but) incomplete citations; and hence there would be a difference. But so far from there being an inconsistency, there would be a great help to understanding the mind of God in the word (Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 6:273-274).
Chapter 1.1: The Place of the Sermon on the Mount

Jews at the time that John, and then the Lord, announced the kingdom as at hand (literal), the kingdom as prophesied by the OT prophets, not the kingdom alchemized by Covenant Theology (spiritualized). Whatever of its principles and precepts are applicable to the saints now, or to the future, godly Jewish remnant, Matt. 5 - 7 has in view the remnant when out Lord was presented as King to the responsibility of the Jewish nation, as such. It is to be ‘interpreted” as having its special, primary application to that period. J. N. Darby wrote:

Although taking up the Remnant as such, yet I think the Sermon on the Mount, and the tenth chapter must be taken as especially applying to the kingdom as then proposed, and the disciples as then called . . . It may be resumed in a modified way at the end, and doubtless will, but they (i.e., the future remnant) could hardly pray then, “Lead us not into temptation,” for they will be in it, and they {Israel, the nation} have been delivered to the Judge {see Matt. 5:35, 36}. Jehovah will be hardly in the way with them {with the future, godly remnant of Israel} as He was now. Doubtless it (Matt. 5 - 7) will be applicable to them {the future remnant} in principle (as to us {now}), but direct application is to the Remnant then {when our Lord was here}. Only there was suspension, by the Son of Man’s not coming then, of the whole thing {the kingdom}, the Church coming in then meanwhile.

This will not satisfy those who think Matt. 5 -7 has the church, as such, in view. Nor does this agree with C. I. Scofield, who made of this the laws of the future kingdom, though allowing some present application.

To the two on the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus (a wrong direction chosen through discouragement), the Lord Jesus said:

O senseless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25, 26).

The OT had spoken of His death; it also spoke of His glory. The fact is that Christ must do the great work of atonement before the kingdom could be brought in. Yet, in the ways of God concerning bringing out the unrecoverable state of the first man as fallen, God arranged matters so

11. {Those in Matt. 10 who are “worthy” are among the godly Jewish remnant of that day.}
12. {In Matt. 23, their house is left to them desolate.}
that Christ was first presented to fallen man’s responsibility. It was not possible that the kingdom in manifested glory and judgment could be brought in that way. The announcement of the kingdom was a test to bring out the state of the people.

You say that that constitutes the offer of the kingdom as insincere on God’s part; indeed, it is immoral, you say. But you are reasoning from man up to God. It would be so for a creature (for you) to do such a thing, but not for One whose works He knows from the beginning (Acts 15:18). God gave Israel His holy law, knowing not one would keep it. Was that insincere and immoral? It was part of the testing of the first man. Moreover, it is the divine intention to sovereignly put that law into the hearts of the New Israel under the New Covenant (Heb. 8). But first the law was presented to man in his fallen, Adamic responsibility, in the persons of Israel. It was God’s intention to bring into bold relief the lostness of man. The kingdom will sovereignly be brought in in glory and judgment, but first it must be presented to fallen man in his Adamic responsibility (represented in the persons of Israel). The kingdom was presented to Israel as bound up with the acceptance of the meek and lowly Lord Jesus. Thus, His Person became the final moral test of their fallen state. But they would not have such an One. The first man crucified the Second Man. If you hold a theological system imposed upon Scripture that does not allow these things, give it up!

Matthew unfolds matters concerning the kingdom in a special way. That is the reason for placing the Sermon on the Mount early in the book -- connecting it with the announcement of the kingdom -- and the reason for the manner of its unfolding as a whole. It is connected with the special presentation of Christ as King, in Matthew, before His rejection became evident in Matt. 12. It is connected with the presentation of the kingdom as entailing the acceptance of His Person. It has its special place in connection with that presentation of the King to Israel viewed as representing the fallen, responsible man, “the first man” -- whatever application some portions of it, as precepts, may have to Christians or to the future godly remnant of Israel. The Sermon on the Mount had its distinctive place, then, as bound up with the acceptance of the Person of the meek and lowly One, just as the presentation of the kingdom was bound up with the acceptance of His Person come in humiliation and grace.
Where The Sermon on the Mount Fits In

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) has its place in its entirety with the first coming of Christ and the announcement of the kingdom of the heavens as at hand. This is bound up with the presentation of Christ to the first man in responsibility as under trial. It cannot in its entirety apply to Christians as if they are under it (as Israel was under the Mosaic Covenant), nor in its entirety to the future godly remnant that once again will preach the presently suspended gospel of the kingdom. Regarding the future godly remnant, the imprecations in the Psalms have their place in view of the judgments of the kingdom. Indeed, after the rapture of the heavenly saints, souls of martyrs of the future godly Jewish remnant are seen under the altar in Rev. 6:10, indicating that the imprecations in the Psalms have their time of application then. Those souls seen under the altar are not Christian martyrs as Covenantists claim. Moreover, consider the action of the two witnesses in Rev. 11. Are you going to attempt to harmonize that with the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) in its entirety? The two witnesses have a Moses-like and an Elijah-like ministry during the time of power of the final Antichrist of prophecy. The use of the Sermon on the Mount in its entirety to either Christians or the future godly Jewish remnant is a considerable error. Rather, it has its special place as entailed with the presentation of the kingdom as bound up with the acceptance of Christ’s person come in humiliation, not with display of invincible power and glory as at the second advent to earth. We will consider this again later.

That is not to say that no profit from it can be had from Matt. 5 - 7 by either Christians or the future godly Jewish remnant.

There is, then, no reason to believe that in the future the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) will be taught as it was by the Lord, that future epoch being entirely different in character. It had its place in connection with the presentation of the kingdom to the first man in his responsibility while under trial to show that he was not recoverable from the fall. The trial of the first man was concluded by the cross, when the first man as under trial, crucified the Second Man. Subsequent to the cross, there is no further trial such as there was when the Sermon on the Mount had its presentation in connection with the kingdom being entailed in the acceptance of Christ’s person.

Regarding the testing of man, Christ is the last case of God’s addressing the first man in his responsibility to show that he was not recoverable. In view of this great fact, God now calls on all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).
Part 1: The Sermon on the Mount

Below, some matters found in Matt. 5 - 7 will be discussed concerning their bearing as illustrating what has been said as we expand on what we have been tracing concerning God’s ways.

Two Sermons on the Mount

The phrase, “the Sermon on the Mount,” is used to describe Matt. 5 - 7. If we desire to speak in that descriptive manner, then observe that in Matthew there are two sermons on the mount, for there was another one -- Matt. 24 - 25 -- on the mount of Olives (Matt. 24:3). The first discourse is connected with the message that the kingdom of the heavens was at hand. Subsequent to the Lord’s announcement of the mystery form kingdom would take (Matt. 13), the second discourse on the mount was spoken, this one having to do with Christ’s second advent (with three parables of the kingdom of the heavens -- in its mystery form -- interjected in a parenthetical way in Matt. 24:45 - 25:30). Concerning its Jewish part, the second sermon on the mount is related to the introduction of the kingdom with power and judgment as the first was related to the announcement of the kingdom by the meek and lowly Lord Jesus and his forerunner, John. Since the introduction of the kingdom was placed in suspension, and the mystery form of the kingdom was announced by our Lord, we must consider these matters according to the way that the Spirit of God unfolds them through Matthew, for Matthew’s gospel has a distinct design by the Spirit concerning the kingdom.

It was God’s intention to present the kingdom to the people in the form of its being interlocked with the reception of the lowly Lord Jesus, come in humiliation and grace. Him they refused and this entailed a refusal of the kingdom because of its being bound up with His person. This constituted a test of the first man in the persons of Israel and thus the second man was refused and crucified.

The point here is that the two sermons, or discourses, on the two mountains in Matthew, correspond to the two advents of the Lord Jesus; two advents which correspond with His words in Luke 24:25-26:

O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophet have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and enter into his glory?

He had to suffer to lay the righteous basis for all God’s dealings with man. The instrumentality that God used was this:

He was in the world, and the world had [its] being thorough him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own, and his own received him not (John 1:11-12).
Meanwhile as rejected, we read:

Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put
thine enemies [as] footstool of thy feet (Psa. 110:1).

There He is now while the gathering in of a heavenly people takes place
(Acts 15:14; Heb. 3:1; 1 Cor. 15:48). This present work of God will be
followed by:

Jehovah shall send the sceptre of thy right hand out of Zion: rule
thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power (Psa.
110:2, 3)

This is as Psa. 2 and many portions of God’s Word assert. The two on the
way from Jerusalem to Emmaus believed concerning the coming glory but
stumbled at the sufferings that had to occur first, not believing all that the
prophets had spoken.

The glory is, of course, that glory the Jews had to understand from
the prophets -- glory not as spiritually alchemized by the Covenantist
hermeneutic into the church. It is actually the glory of the kingdom reign
of Messiah, in resurrection, on earth. “Enter into his glory” certainly does
not refer to the mystery concerning which silence had been kept (Rom.
16:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3)-- which was still secret as the Lord spoke
these words.

**Overview of the Sermon**

Following is an over-all view of the Sermon on the Mount, by
J. N. Darby.

- This, blessed as is the instruction contained in it, was before the cross
which judicially closed the relationship of the Jews with God, breaking
down the middle wall of partition. We have no hint of redemption in it
from beginning to end, nor of the relationship in which men should stand
to God by it. It gives, and gives most blessedly, the characters which were
fitted to enter the kingdom of heaven just going to be set up. Now that
kingdom was not yet set up, but announced as immediately to be so . . .
But what it does is to give the characters suited to the kingdom, not to
show the effect of its being set up by the rejection and cross of Jesus. It is
not the law, nor is it the gospel. Christ could not preach His death and
resurrection as an accomplished ground of salvation. It is to disciples,
though in the audience of all, that no man might mistake the true character
of the kingdom, nor of those who were to get into it. That and the
revelation of the Father’s name are the subjects of the discourse. The law
and the prophets were until John; since that the kingdom of heaven was
Part 1: The Sermon on the Mount

preached, and every man passed [pressed?] into it. The gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ could not be preached, though long before and now prophesied of. The preaching was that they might receive Him, not crucify Him.

Nor is the sermon on the Mount, as is stated, in a large degree portions of the moral law. Two commandments are referred to which are the two abiding characteristics of sin since before the flood, corruption and violence, lust {Matt. 5:21} and murder {Matt. 5:27}. None other are alluded to, sabbath or any other. And if it were to prove the law a perfect rule, how could it be written to them of old time so-and-so was said, referring to law, but I say unto you, and so teach them quite differently? The whole idea is a delusion. That those who then broke the least commandment and taught men so were not fit for the kingdom is clearly stated, but that is all, and nothing about the law subsisting after Christ’s death. Unless it be in temporal things there is no grace, no blood-shedding to cleanse, no redemption to deliver. The kingdom being just at hand the character suited to an entrance into it is given. Israel was on his way with the Lord to judgment {Matt. 5:25, 26}, and if they did not come to an agreement, they would be delivered up; and so they have been. It is not grace to sinners, but righteousness demanded to be fit to enter, that is, such a walk and spirit as is set forth in the sermon. Charging scribes and Pharisees who were under it with making void the law has nothing to do with putting Christians under it after Christ has died.

As to establishing the law as a system, Christ clearly did not. “He taketh away the first that he may establish the second” {Heb. 10:9}. He is the end of the law for righteousness {Rom. 10:4}. We establish law, for that is the real force of the word, in the highest and only scriptural way. They that have sinned under it will be judged by it, unless indeed redeemed out of that state. Christ’s bearing the curse of the law established its authority, as nought else could do, but did not leave the guilty under it.

The mistake made is this. Many things contained in the law, all in the moral law as usually understood -- say Christ’s two great commandments, and the ten commandments (not now discussing the sabbath which belonged to the old creation, the Lord’s day to the new) -- were obligations before the law and are obligations under Christ (see Appendix 1). But from the law, that is, the enforcement of these obligations by the authority of God binding them on man as his righteousness by a rule of life (and that only is law), or pronouncing a curse on them if they did not keep it, from that (that is, from law) we are wholly and in every shape and way delivered, dead to it. It is adultery, to use the image of Rom. 7, to have to say to it, to call ourselves Christians, if we are not absolutely from under its authority. I learn how God viewed evil and good from it, I can
learn to support true ministers from what is said of oxen, but the law is not binding on me. I learn more of Christ’s sacrifice in detail from Leviticus and other places than from the Gospels; yet I have nothing whatever to say to the law as to them, I am not under it. So of moral obligations -- I learn in the law that God abhorred stealing, but it is not because under the law that I do not steal. All the word of God is mine and written for my instruction, yet for all that I am not under law, but a Christian who has died with Christ on the cross and am not in the flesh to which law applied, I am dead to the law by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4). *\[14\]

**Arrangement of the Sermon**

Each of the four Gospels has a distinctive presentation of Christ (Matthew, king; Mark, servant; Luke, perfect man; John, deity), not to the exclusion of what the others present, as well as a theme(s) (Matthew, dispensational/governmental; Mark, perfection and immediacy of service; Luke, moral order and features; John, light, love, eternal life, the Father, etc.). Harmonies of the four gospels causes loss of the distinctiveness. Concerning the Synoptic Gospels, which emphasis the Lord Jesus as in human office and station, the material is arranged in Matthew with a dispensational/administrative emphasis, while Mark, which gives the perfection of the service of the Lord, is the most chronological, and Luke arranges things in a moral order of connection. This is the Spirit’s work in His instruments whom He selected for these blessed presentations. Concerning the words and works of our Lord, the Spirit, through His instruments, selects and edits in accordance with His presentation of Christ in each Gospel. Moreover, some things may have been repeated by our Lord in different ways on different occasions. In any case, every Scripture is perfect in its place.

The words of Christ given in Matt. 5 - 7 were not spoken in one discourse. It is not stated that they were. They are brought together, and arranged, by the Spirit, through Matthew, to present not Moses and Sinai but Jehovah-Jesus (Matt. 1:21) on another mount, instructing the godly remnant in Israel in righteousness suitable for the kingdom that John and

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He had announced. The arrangement of the material in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5 - 7 is altogether suitable for this gospel which presents Christ as King and brings before us governmental/administrative changes. W. Kelly wrote:

Why do we have the ordinary current of the Lord’s ministry brought before us here in this comprehensive form? The gospel of Matthew is intended to show that, after the Lord had called these disciples, you have His general service given for the purpose of proving the universal attention that was drawn to His doctrine. The Lord had been giving a full testimony every where through all Samaria. Persons had been brought from every quarter; and the Holy Ghost then gives us the grand outline, that follows, of the kingdom of heaven. The circumstances are so arranged by the Holy Ghost as to show the universal attention directed to it. When all are on tip-toe to understand about the kingdom of heaven, then the Lord unfolds it. Matthew knew perfectly well that the sermon on the mount was really uttered long after. He heard it himself. Yet Matthew’s own call is not given till ch. 9. It was subsequently to the call of the twelve disciples that our Lord took His place upon the mountain; but Matthew records it long before. The object is to show, not the time when our Lord uttered this discourse, but the fact itself. There were first, all these mighty deeds that were witnesses to His being the true Messiah; amid then we have His doctrine perfectly brought out. The sermon on the mount need not be considered, historically, as one continuous discourse, but may have been uttered at different times, it is nowhere said that it was all uttered at the same occasion. We have only the general fact that there He was upon the mount, and there He taught the people. It may have been broken up into several discourses, with the circumstances giving rise to this part or that omitted in Matthew. The human mind compares these things together, and finding that in St. Luke different portions of it are given to us at different times, while in Matthew all is given together, instead of confiding in the certainty that God is right, jumps at once to the conclusion that there is confusion in these scriptures. There is really perfection. It is the Holy Ghost shaping all according to the object He has in view. 15

Another wrote:

If it be certain that the Holy Ghost has been pleased to give us in Matthew this discourse and others as a whole, leaving out the

15. The Bible Treasury 3:261.
originating circumstances found elsewhere, it is a fair and interesting inquiry why such a method of grouping with such omissions is adopted. The answer I conceive to be this, -- that the Spirit in Matthew loves to present Christ as the One like unto Moses, whom they were to hear. He presents Jesus not merely as a legislating prophet-king like Moses, but greater by far; for it is never forgotten that the Nazarene was the Lord God. Therefore it is that, in this discourse on the mountain, we have throughout the tone of One who was consciously God with men. If Jehovah called Moses up to the top of one mount, He who then spake the ten words sat now upon another mount, and taught His disciples the character of the kingdom of heaven and its principles introduced as a whole, just answering to what we have seen of the facts and effects of His ministry, entirely passing by all intervals or connecting circumstances. As we had His miracles all put together, as I may say, in the gross, so with His discourses. We have thus in either case the same principle. The substantial truth is given to us without noticing the immediate occasion in particular facts, appeals, etc. What was uttered by the Lord, according to Matthew, is thus presented as a whole. The effect, therefore, is, that it is much more solemn, because unbroken, carrying its own majesty along with it. The Spirit of God imprints on it purposely this character here, as I have no doubt there was an intention that it should be so reproduced for the instruction of His own people.

The Lord, in short, was here accomplishing one of the parts of His mission according to Isa. 53, where the work of Christ is twofold. It is not, as the authorised version has it, “By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many”;

for it is unquestionable that justification is not by His knowledge. Justification is by faith of Christ, we know; and as far as the efficacious work on which it depends is concerned, it is clearly in virtue of what Christ has suffered for sin and sins before God.

But I apprehend that the real force of the passage is, “By His knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness.” It is not “justify” in the ordinary forensic sense of the word, but rather instructing in righteousness, as the context here requires, and as the usage of the word elsewhere, as in Dan. 12, leaves open. This seems to be what is meant of our Lord here.

In the teaching on the mount He was, in fact, instructing the disciples in righteousness: hence, too, one reason why we have not a word about redemption. There is not the slightest reference to His suffering on the cross; no intimation of His blood, death, or resurrection: He is instructing, though not merely in
righteousness. To the heirs of the kingdom the Lord is unfolding the principles of that kingdom -- most blessed and rich instruction, but instruction in righteousness. No doubt there is also the declaration of the Father's name, as far as could be then; but, still the form taken is that of "instructing in righteousness." Let me add, as to the passage of Isa. 53 that the remainder of the verse also accords with this: not "for," but, "and He shall bear their iniquities." Such is the true force of it. The one was in His life, when He taught His own; the other was in His death, when He bore the iniquities of many. 16


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Chapter 1.2

Christ Fulfiling
the Law and the Prophets

(17) Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Until the heaven and the earth pass away, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass. (19) Whosoever then shall do away with one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall practise and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. (20) For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 5:17-20).

Christ Fulfils Not Only the Law but Also the Prophets

Christ’s fulfilling the law does not mean His obeying it any more than it means obeying the prophets. “Law,” here, is not to be understood

17. Concerning “fulfil,” a footnote to the text by J. N. Darby says:

“Give the fulness of. It is not to fulfil a command in the way of obedience, nor to complete another thing by adding to it; but to fill up full some system sketched out, or that which is expressed in the thing fulfilled, as a whole. Thus the doctrine of the Church completed the word of God, made full what was expressed by it. Christ does not here fulfil what is said, nor add to what still remained and was perfect itself; but came to make good the whole scope of law and prophets. The passage has nothing to do with obeying the law. Nor is it here accomplishing a particular prophecy. He comes as the revealed completeness of God’s mind, whatever the law and the prophets had pointed out. Verse 18 forbids the sense of obedience as not to be maintained, though 19
as only the 10 commandments. It includes, for example, all the types. Take Lev. 1-5, for example. He fulfilled them. Both law and prophets are involved in the fulfilling, not only the law. He will make all good to God’s glory, including the prophets and all they prophesied concerning the kingdom with Israel at its earthly center. There is no thought here that our Lord is spiritualizing the 10 commandments or spiritualizing the prophets. J. N. Darby wrote:

It is as clear as language can make it that vv. 17 and 18 have nothing to do, good or bad, with our fulfilling the Law in our walk. Whatever “fulfil” means for the Prophets, it means for the Law. Verse 18 connects it more strongly with that sense than the structure even of the preceding verse. The previous dispensation and revelations of God, He came not to set aside as testimony but to fulfil. They were God’s testimony, not for a permanency, but not as such to be made void. The righteousness of God is revealed wholly apart from law, but was witnessed by law and prophets {Rom. 3:21}. Whatever Law and the Prophets put forth as that which God would have, that Christ met in all that concerned Him, for all is not fulfilled yet. Nor will one atom of God’s testimony pass away as in either -- all will be made good. Am I to fulfil the Prophets? Yet what is here said of fulfilling, is said of law as of prophets. Whatever is fulfilled it is, here, by what Christ came to do. The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us, because we are not under it, by those who walk after the Spirit {Rom. 8:4}.

proves that he was to be condemned who, being under law, broke the commandments spoken of. But this is a consequence; Christ speaks of their authority. All was to be fulfilled in some way or another, not set aside.

18. Notes and Comments 5:73, 74. J. N. Darby wrote:

But, it is said, the sermon on the mount sets up and spiritualizes the law. How long I had accepted the latter as true! . . . Only two commandments are referred to, which raises the question of violence and corruption, the great principles of sin. If it be a spiritualization of the law, the sabbath is left out as having no part in that spiritualization . . . The truth is, it refers to inward principle and obedience . . . Much of it has been fulfilled; some even of the types are not yet . . . how can a divine declaration that all will be fulfilled, apply to my fulfilling it? It is not spoken of as an obligation, but as certain of fulfilment. Have I fulfilled it so that it can pass? Have you, reader? (Collected Writings 10: 296, 297).

It is clear He was not, as Jehovah-Messiah, come to set aside His own law, and His own prophets. He came to fulfil them -- {came} not {to} impose {the law} on others in continuance, but fulfil them. As I have said, of all the ceremonial part He was the substance and fulfilment. Then as to commandments, personally
Chapter 1.2: Christ Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets

The Law and the Prophets are not Yet Completely Fulfilled

The Lord did not do all the fulfilling at His first advent. It is absurd to suggest that dispensational truth puts our Lord in opposition to the OT in any way, or in opposition to the law and the prophets, in particular. Opposition to Covenant Theology entails no such thing. Christ fulfills all. But when, and how? Therein lies an immense difference in view.

On the Covenantist view that the church is the last thing God is doing, Matt. 5:17 requires Covenant Theology to hold that Christ finished fulfilling the law and the prophets in His life and ministry when here, and by the church now. This view forces Covenantists to have all fulfilled, rather than that there remains much concerning the law and the prophets remaining to be fulfilled -- after the rapture of the saints -- in connection with the future Jewish Remnant and Christ’s future appearing in glory and of course He fulfilled the Law. But even when He says: “But I say,” He is not taking up the Law to spiritualize it. In two cases only, He takes up one of the Ten Commandments, murder and adultery, but only as essential parts of His own morality, and given as applying to the state of a man, not his acts, as all through, for this is His subject. And where He seems to change it, yet He fulfils it. Israel was divorced for their sins, yet He returns to God’s original institution which was in the Law too, and will own Israel as Ish (man) and Hephzibah (beloved of God) making good God’s own institution, when the governmental force of the Law has run its course, from Babylon till He takes His power and Israel has paid the last farthing. And breaking or annulling* one of the least commandments* is the same maintenance of the Law in all its integrity, and “least”* is merely fully enforcing it, for Christ came to fulfill it, He went against it, was going against Jehovah, and the very thing He came for. But the word “least” is merely to answer to “least,” for either it gives measure and He who taught against the least would get in, beyond that not -- which is monstrous -- or else he who annulled a greater would be less than he, still in the kingdom.

But is not the thought. “Least” echoes “least,” and it is maintaining every jot and tittle of the Law, even the smallest, which I fully believe, but to be fulfilled by Christ, not carried on, though many things in it may abide, but it must *geneal* never be set aside, but fulfilled by Christ as God’s own word. to say ‘Christ only brought out the true contents of the Law,’ is simply ignorance of what Christianity is, for grace and truth came by Him [John 1:17]. The Law, as a rule, is what man should be for God -- Christianity is what God is for man, and God in Man, and that is our full pattern, and this in general character (not in redemption, and giving up self [is] consequently man’s part) -- we have in the Sermon on the Mount, far away from Law; Matt. 5:44-48. In this, Christ was in life before redemption. But for us the full character is also what He in redemption; Eph. 5:1 (Notes and Comments 5:25, 26).

See also Collected Writings 24:93; Notes and Comments 5:69.

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setting up the Kingdom reign. Certainly Christ came to fulfil the law and the prophets, and will completely do so. It is absolutely necessary that we have His life, ministry, work on the cross, resurrection, and glorification in order to the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. 19 His first coming laid the grand and essential foundation for completely fulfilling the law and the prophets. What remains to be fulfilled could not be fulfilled without what He did at His first advent.

In effect, Covenantism with its hermeneutic of spiritual alchemy perpetrated on the prophets, does away with the coming kingdom of Christ with Israel as a distinct nation on earth, and therefore the Covenant Theology sets aside the fulfilling of the prophets of Israel.

The true inquiry is: what has our Lord fulfilled at His first advent and what remains to be fulfilled in connection with His second advent and kingdom glory here on earth in connection with the development of God’s ways concerning government in the earth? Moreover, each advent has its particular character as part of fulfilling of the law and the prophets. Covenantism jumbles all in confusion. We see theologians and exeges exercising themselves about what the original audiences of the OT texts understood by those texts -- in order to assist in explaining them -- and then observe what Covenantists do with the prophets of Israel in transmuting them into meaning the church. Let us see how O. T. Allis did this in his polemic against dispensational truth about this point:

The Old Testament prophecies if literally interpreted cannot be regarded as having been fulfilled or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age. 20

What here concerns us is the phrase “thy people.” From the Old Testament standpoint this passage like Jeremiah’s [Jer. 30:7] might be regarded as referring exclusively to Israel. But we have seen that the New Testament gives a larger meaning and scope to Old Testament prophecies which seem to be restricted to Israel . . . 21

So the OT prophecies could, as a matter of fact, be “literally interpreted.” It is the New Testament, he claims, which allegedly “gives a larger meaning and scope” (untrue). “Opposed,” not “larger,” meaning and scope is the proper description of the Covenantist view -- which makes

19. Our being “in Christ” has nothing to do with the law and the prophets, though a fruit of Christ’s work, a work which has resulted in much that has nothing to do with the law and the prophets, or covenant either.
20. Prophecy and the Church, p. 238.
void the prophecies of Israel’s prophets. A Jew had no way to understand the prophecies other than literally and as meant for the nation of Israel. *Is not that the fact?* John the baptist would never had been regarded as a prophet had he come preaching a kingdom such as Covenantists envision. *Is not that the fact?* Was God deceiving them by the prophets of Israel who, allegedly, were, according to Covenantism, speaking about the NT church? -- or alleging that the NT gives a larger meaning and scope? But it turns out that the “larger meaning and scope” is not a larger meaning about the kingdom as the Jewish audience could only understand the words, but rather bald-faced contradiction of what the Jewish audience was compelled to understand by “thy people” and the prophecies.

Yes, Covenantism practices spiritual alchemy that transmutes the prophecies into something other than they are, supposedly of more worth than if understood literally. The lead of literalism is supposedly transmuted into the gold of spirituality. (Under the New Covenant all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26) and righteous (Isa. 60:21) -- thus spiritual as well as enjoying the literal kingdom.) We understand the OT prophecies literally (with all due allowance for symbolic and figurative language) and therefore must allow for any necessary further fulfilling of the law and the prophets in the future -- in connection with the coming and kingdom of Christ, because Christ did not establish the prophesied kingdom when He came the first time. It was placed in suspension after being announced as at hand.

*The Law is Not Abrogated*

True dispensational truth asserts that the law has never been abrogated, but that the Christian is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4). The notion of some who say they are dispensationalists, that the law was nailed to the cross, is entirely wrong. In 2 Cor. 3, what is annulled is the Mosaic System (as evidenced by the rending of the vail), not the law. In Col. 2:13, 14,

> And you, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has quickened together with him, having forgiven us all the offences; having effaced the handwriting in ordinances which [stood out] against us, which was contrary to us, he has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross . . . ,

> “the handwriting in ordinances” is a figure of speech for the sentence of death that is written by the law against the sinner. You did not know that

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the law could write? The handwriting in ordinances says ‘disobey and I will kill you.’ That is the sentence it writes; but Christ took our sentence (not everyone’s). So, we died with Him -- and were quickened together with Him, and much more, too -- so that we are dead to the law:

So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4).

The law continues on very much alive and, as law, has a present use (1 Tim. 1:8-11). But the Christian has passed out of the standing where the law applies, as dead and risen with Christ. Not the law, but grace is his divinely appointed teacher (Titus 2:11-15). Moreover, the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) and the rule of the new creation (Gal. 6:15, 16) is for the believing Gentile and for the Israel of God (the believing Jew). That such is our portion was not foreseen by the OT prophets, that portion filling the epoch between the cross and the rapture of the saints -- to be followed by the time of Jacob’s trouble when the imprecatory Psalms will have a rightful place with future, godly Jews.

The law, then, remains, but the Christian, as such, is dead to it by the body of Christ. The Lord indeed came to fulfil it, just as He came to fulfil the prophets, yes, but when? He has done so partially while here, and the remainder awaits until after the completion of the present work of gathering “out of [the] nations a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). After that, He will rebuild the tabernacle of David which is fallen. Then will the Deliverer come and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and so all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:26; Isa. 60:21). Then, under the New Covenant, the law will be written in their hearts; meanwhile, Christ -- not the law -- is written in the heart of the Christian. If you say that the law itself was nailed to the cross, how does it get down to do the work we noted in 1 Tim. 1:8-10, and how will it be written in the hearts of all Israel in the future. It is well to stop compounding explanations to compensate for the erroneous idea that the law was nailed to the cross.

Christ’s Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets Does Not Place the Christian Under Law

Let it be repeated that the Sermon on the mount does not place the Christian under the law. The Christian being dead to the law (Rom. 7:4), the Sermon on the Mount in general, or Matt. 5:17-20 in particular, cannot

23. The handwriting on the wall that Belshazzar saw was a handwriting that pronounce a sentence against him, which was executed on him that very night.

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place the Christian under law. Moreover, how can Christ’s fulfilling the law place the Christian under it?

The text universally alleged to put us under the law is, “I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.” Now what Christ’s fulfilling the law has to do with putting me under it I never could understand. I should have thought that it would have rather been the contrary, and, if fulfilled, there was an end of the matter. Thus He fulfilled the sacrifices, and the rather as He speaks of the prophets, which gives to the word “fulfil,” used as it is as to both, a force quite different from that sought to be made of it. It is a mere fancy, let me add here, that a Christian cannot use every word of Scripture for profit, law and all, without (that is) putting him under law. All that happened to Israel is written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come {1 Cor. 10}, but that does not put us in the place they were in. All that reveals God to me, His mind, His will, His ways, is profitable to me, is light, without putting me in the place of those of whom I read. 24

W. Kelly on Christ’s Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets

Concerning our Lord’s not setting aside the law (and the prophets), but rather fulfilling THEM, a brief survey from the pen of W. Kelly follows, taken from The Bible Treasury, New Series 4: 70, 71, 229, 230.

Christ Came Not to Make Void but Fulfil

Matt. 5:17, 18

From the outset of His ministry our Lord was careful to affirm that He came not to dissolve but to make good divine authority in the law or the prophets. In both He was predicted as the One on whom all blessing depended. He only could deliver sinful and seduced man. He was to be the sacrifice which would justify all previous offerings to God, and render their just interpretation, and furnish their efficacy. Fulfilment of a prophecy is the same word; but the context here points to a larger scope.


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The law and the prophets testified to man’s unrighteousness and to God’s righteousness (Rom. 3:21). But they could not do more. Christ came, not to enfeeble or undo them as His blind enemies thought, but to make good that divine testimony which left the sinner without excuse and gave what God only in His grace could supply. It was far more than even pious men conceived, a mere making up, by His obedience of the law, what men failed in. This had merely been man’s righteousness accomplished by Him for the unrighteous. Here too He has done incomparably more and better. He laid the basis in His obedience unto death for God’s righteousness, that God might be just and justify him that believes in Jesus {Rom. 3:26}. For He who knew no sin glorified God being made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}. Hence God’s grace is enhanced, not frustrated; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ died gratuitously. But it is not so: never was anything else contemplated or revealed but that the believers rest their hope on His death.

God took care therefore that promise should long precede and exist independently of it, as the apostle argues in Gal. 3. This at Sinai Israel in their self-confidence overlooked. Instead of asking for the unconditional promise of grace they undertook to stand on their own obedience. As no sinful man can subsist on such a condition, the law written on stones, even when brought down a second time with types of mercy accompanying, could not but be a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3:7-9). For them it is said in the reading of the old covenant the veil remains unremoved; and the veil is more than on the face, being upon their heart. They did and do not look to Christ, law’s end for righteousness to every one that believes. They strove to stand on a mixture of law and grace, which only adds to the sinner’s condemnation, because the added grace increases his guilt if disobedient. But we look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and are transformed to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit {2 Cor. 3:18}, Who testifies to Him in the glory of God as the fruit not only of His person but of His work. And so the apostle preached the gospel of God’s grace and of Christ’s glory, as he had been converted.

The Epistle to the Hebrews told the Christian Jews that the “new” covenant of which Jeremiah bore witness held out under Christ a better covenant. It did not, like the old at Sinai, depend on Israel as the party on whose fidelity blessing depended. All hung for the new covenant on the Lord’s sovereign grace.
Because this is the covenant that I will covenant for the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: giving my laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they shall be to me for people. And they shall in no wise teach, each his fellow-citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; because all shall consciously know from little of them unto great of them; because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins, and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more (Heb. 8:10-12).

This was no real way to set aside the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them to God’s glory and for man’s salvation and blessing. Christ filled up the gap between God and the sinner for him who believes on Him. The law pointed to Him as the coming One who alone could restore the balance which the creature’s evil had disturbed by weight overwhelming to all but the Savior. He alone could by redemption win and give the blessing which God’s nature loved to bestow and God’s counsels assured in due time. But all this and more Christ was by His word and Spirit bringing in a new and divine life by faith into the soul, before the day arrives when He will transform our body of humiliation into conformity with His body of glory according to the working of His power even to subdue all things to Himself {Phil. 3:20, 21}. It was not mere addition, as if the law and the prophets were not intrinsically complete and perfect for the end God proposed; but He is throughout assumed and predicted as essential to give the blessed result.

For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass (v. 18).

So even the NT speaks of filling up the gap otherwise left in it by the revelation of the mystery of Christ’s headship on high and the church united to Him as His body. And the apostle in Col. 1:25 tells us of the stewardship of God given Him thereby to complete His word. For this was a secret hidden from ages and generations {Col. 1:26}, and quite distinct from the kingdom, the new covenant, or the inheritance of Abraham’s promise. It was a promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel and God’s eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:6, 10) . . .

**Christ, and the Law**

Matt. 5:18-20

We have already seen how certainly and clearly laid down is Christ’s
position in ver. 17. He maintained the authority of the Old Testament.

Think ye not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil.

He came to make good God’s mind therein. This He confirms in ver. 18.

For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall do and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that, except your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens (18-20).

That the Lord obeyed the law is beyond doubt. This is not the meaning of fulfilling. He gave the full scope of the law and the prophets; and He did yet more, for He revealed God in Himself both by words and ways, and disclosed those secrets of the kingdom which were absolutely hidden of old. For His rejection and departure to heaven would and did give it a quite new form; 25 and beyond this the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church had to be made known, involving things still higher and deeper. But nothing in the new could weaken the authority of God in the old.

Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass.

Christ should be glorified in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to baptize the believing Jews and Greeks into one body, the body of Christ, the temple destroyed, the city trodden down by Gentiles, and the Jews scattered over the earth for their sin against Messiah. But even these woes on the chosen race fulfilled the law and the prophets, and in a special way Christ’s word; yet more remains, and darkness still, before the law and the Prophets are fulfilled in the salvation of Israel coming to and out of Zion. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless to the full His long unblest people, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. O haste the day! Assuredly Christ came not to make void but to fulfil.

But the Lord is here addressing His disciples who were still under the law. He is not yet even predicting His death on the cross and the redemption through His blood to which grace turned it in the justifying

25. {He refers to the mysteries of the kingdom, its present form, unforeseen in the OT.}
righteousness of God by faith to be revealed in the gospel. Indeed, as we have often noticed and might through the entire Sermon on the Mount, not one word says He here of this work of sovereign love. He first sets out the characteristics that are proper to the kingdom in vv. 3-12; then position in 13,14; and now the relation, like His own in their measure, to the revelation God had given to His ancient people, however unbelieving and unworthy as a whole. He does not foretell what their rejection of Himself must entail on the Jewish nation, or what God would then do for them or others who believe.

Hence in v. 19 He still speaks to them as the godly remnant that heard His voice and clung to Him, born of God, but under law, and on this side of the cross and its blessed results to faith. Obedience first and last is insisted on. Here He begins with the law; but even in this chapter He goes on to what He is saying to them, which the ancients never heard. He brings in rich additions in Matt. 6 as declaring the Father’s name from the close of Matt. 5, guards them from inward and outward snares in Matt. 7, and ends the discourse there with hearing and doing His words as the rock of wisdom and safety.

As undoing the word justly sunk one to be “least” in the kingdom, faithfulness to it raised to a great place therein. Evidently therefore the righteousness of such as entered must exceed and excel that of the Pharisee (v. 20) who honored tradition, the word of man, to the necessary disparagement of God’s word.

It was the perfection of giving His disciples their food in due season. Many prophets and kings, some even inspired, desired to see the things which the disciples saw, and saw them not; and to hear the things which they were hearing, and heard them not. And greater things were at hand, even that most wondrous of all wonders, God’s work in the cross and the resurrection and the heavenly glory of His Son. But if heaven and earth shall pass, as they are, and not the least tittle of the law and the prophets, how far above these to God’s glory and man’s blessing rise the words of the Lord Jesus . . .

* * * *
Chapter 1.3

Indicators That Matthew 5 - 7 is not Christian, as Such

In order to profit from Matt. 5-7 it is instructive to know what persons are in view and what God is doing. Concerning the setting in Matthew, we have already considered that the passage has in view the introduction of the kingdom prophesied by the prophets of Israel. Obviously, the Jews are the ones addressed, and not Christians, as such. All Scripture is for Christians but all Scripture is not about Christians, though Christians are to learn from all Scripture. There are things that we learn from all Scripture regarding divine principles and the ways of God for His glory to be manifested in Christ. We do well to take heed to His moral ways.

Matt. 5 - 7 has in view the suitable godliness of the Jewish believer for entry into the kingdom, i.e., the kingdom as then announced by Christ to the first, responsible man as under trial, man -- in the persons of Israel -- to show that he was not recoverable from the fall. This announcement of the kingdom entailed the acceptance of His person come as the meek and lowly One.

Here we will consider two passages that show that Matt. 5 - 7 has Jews in view. The first is the warning concerning judgment on Israel and the second is the prayer for the disciples in their then state.

Matthew 5:21-26: Judgment on Israel

In Matt. 5:21-26 we learn something concerning God's way with the old Israel. That passage shows us that Jews are in view, for the nation, as such, was subsequently subjected to the judgment described. We do

26. The nation had already been pronounced Lo-ammi (Hosea 1), i.e., not-my-people, and were under foreign yoke. But the Mosaic system had not yet been set aside, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans lay ahead.
well to observe with J. N. Darby:

. . . I have no doubt that Matt. 5:25 applies to the then position of Christ with the nation, and that nation is now suffering the consequences of not acting on the principle there stated. 27

Israel as a nation has been cast into the prison house of judicial blindness and no blessing. It is the governmental consequence of not making friends with Christ. 28 But when God’s earthly, governmental ways with recalcitrant Israel are concluded, the new Israel under the New Covenant will be brought into liberty and blessing. Another has written on this as follows:

The position of Israel morally, in the sight of God, was very much the one shown us here. There was a murderous feeling in their heart against Jesus. Herod was the expression of it at his birth and it went through all the ministry of Christ, and the cross proved how utterly there was that unrelenting hatred in the heart of the Jews against their own Messiah. They did not agree with their adversary quickly, and the judge could only deliver them to the officer to cast them into prison, and there they remain until this day. The Jewish nation, from their rejection of the Messiah, have been shut out from all the promises of God; as a nation they have been cast into prison, and there they are to remain till the utmost farthing is paid. In Isaiah we have the Lord speaking comfortingly to Jerusalem. “Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” That is, that, while we come into this now; while we through the grace of God receive the fulness of blessing through Christ Jesus now; yet I cannot doubt that there is this blessing in store for Jerusalem; that God in His mercy will one day say to her, You have had punishment enough: I do not mean to make you any longer the witness of my vengeance on the earth. And why is Israel not permitted to this day to amalgamate with the nations? There they remain, kept apart from all other people by God. But God has in store for them this great mercy. “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem . . . for she hath received at the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” This figure we find elsewhere


28. This result has the earth, and God’s ways with Israel, in view, not eternal judgment. That is another matter. No one comes out of eternal punishment after some proper payment (Matt. 5:26), for there is no deliverance from eternal punishment. It refers to a temporal punishment.
beautifully set forth in the case of the man guilty of blood, who fled to the city of refuge provided by God. But the book of Numbers shows us that there the man abode, out of the land of his possession, till the death, not of the man-slayer, but of the high priest that is anointed with oil. The priesthood of our Lord is referred to there. When the Lord has completed His heavenly people and gathered them in where they do not need the activity of His intercession; when we are in the full results of all that Christ has wrought for us, the High Priest shall then take His place, not at the right hand of God, but as the Priest upon His own throne {Zech. 6:13}. Then will be the termination of His present heavenly priesthood, and blood-guilty Israel will return to the land of their possession. I have no doubt that this is the just application of that beautiful type. I cannot understand what proper interpretation there could be of the death of the High Priest anointed with oil, if you appropriate it to a Christian now; but apply it to the Jew, and nothing is more plain. Christ will terminate that character of priesthood that he is engaged in for us now and will take up a new form {the Melchisedec priesthood} of blessing for Israel. 29

The passage cannot be applied to the church, nor can the future, godly Jewish remnant follow the instruction because the judgment will have been true of Israel for over 1900 years by the time that remnant is formed (though they bow in heart to God’s ways with the nation). This passage illustrates that neither the church nor that remnant is under the Sermon on the Mount (though, as said, something can be learned from it), and the future remnant may profit from it, as we also may. Perhaps it may be discerned that this leaves room for the imprecations in the Psalms for that future remnant.

29. The Bible Treasury 3:293.
The Lord’s (The Disciple’s) Prayer
Not a Christian Prayer

Besides the above passage showing that the Sermon on the Mount is not Christian teaching, as such, this prayer had its place at the time it was given to the Lord’s disciples, as quickened ones, while He was with them, and the work of redemption was not yet accomplished. They were not standing on the once-for-all finished work of Christ. The prayer was suitable to their then state. It is not suitable for those who rest on the finished work of Christ and know peace by the blood of His cross. Its present use since the cross sets the quickened soul back on the ground then occupied by the Lord’s disciples; i.e., not Christian ground. The Christian has nearness to the Father that cannot be expressed by “our Father who art in Heaven.” “Abba Father” is the Spirit-empowered address of the Christian as having the Spirit of sonship, even as the Lord Jesus said, “Abba, Father,” in the intimacy of Sonship while in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). We, true Christians, have the Spirit of His Son (Gal. 4:6) indwelling and therefore address the Father as His Son did, in that very intimacy. Thus we, true Christians, express our nearness -- “Abba Father” -- which nearness the address “Father


An answer concerning how these differences are consonant with the inspiration of Scripture was given by W. Kelly:

Q. – Matt. 6, Luke 11. I believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture; but how are we to explain the differences, e.g., in the Lord’s prayer? Why are there such distinct reports of what the Lord uttered? Or were there two occasions with a form not identical? Perplexed.

A. – God’s inspiration, so far from binding the Evangelists to an identical re-echo of our Lord’s words, shows the power of the Spirit in discourse or fact reported, so as to carry out His special design in each Gospel. A simple reproduction of our Lord’s words in all the four might have been done by mechanical skill; but the Holy Spirit inspired each to give us all according to divine design respectively. It was God’s editing with specific purpose, which man, however pious, never could have achieved but by His energy, yet in the style of each. There is a new re-issue of a pamphlet on this prayer, which goes fully and minutely into these differences, and can be had of the Publisher.

(The Bible Treasury, New Series 4: 20)
who art in heaven” does not express, and could not express before the work of redemption had been accomplished and the believer sealed with the Spirit of His Son (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5). For a believer indwelt by the Spirit of His Son to address our Father as “our Father who art in heaven” puts distance where there is none, and really denies that nearness into which the sealed saint is brought by known redemption and the reception of the Spirit of sonship. If you were in the same room with the Father where He is, would you say, “our Father who art in heaven”? Do you come to the throne of grace when you pray to the Father? And where is that throne of grace? In spirit you are there where it is! “Abba Father”! What unspeakable nearness; so near that nearer we cannot be. Indeed, Christ’s place as man, as the Beloved, before the Father, is our place, for the Father has “taken us into favor in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). May we realize in our souls more and more the greatness of it.

Expositors of the Sermon on the Mount who make of this prayer a prayer proper for Christians sealed with the Spirit of Sonship view neither the Christian properly nor the Sermon on the mount concerning its application.

Certainly we may learn from the prayer that the Lord gave to His disciples in their then state. Just as the moral content of nine commandments of the law are found in the NT (not the Sabbath), without the Christian being under the law (see Appendix 1), as such, in any way whatsoever, so something may be gleaned from the prayer given by the Lord to the disciples, without our placing ourselves in their then position, a position for which this prayer was appropriate. J. N. Darby remarked about what has been overlooked:

... it is not, and could not then be, in Christ’s name. The Lord’s own statement is distinct on the point:

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name {John 16:24}.

Now that Christ has accomplished redemption, and gone up on high as the Savior who has finished His work, {and being} our great High Priest, the essential character of true prayer is that it is in Christ’s name; the Lord’s prayer, as decidedly, was not, because it was perfect {in its time and place for the disciples’ position and state}. 31

The Prayer for Disciples

Matt. 6:9-13

(By W. Kelly)

. . . Our Father that art in the heavens, Sanctified be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth, give us today our sufficient bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

If you are a disciple as they were, you too can pray thus, even if like them you could not say that you have in Christ redemption, the forgiveness of your trespasses (Eph. 1:7). Such too was necessarily their state then, for Christ had not yet suffered for sins. But it ought not to be yours now; for the atoning work is done. If then you believe on the Lord Jesus, be it known to you, that through Him is (not promised, but) proclaimed to you remission of sins, and in Him is every believer justified from all things (Acts 13:38, 39). You have not appreciated the alphabet of the gospel, if you know not that once purged you have no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

While in this unformed condition, born of the Spirit but not resting on redemption known as yours (and therefore not yet having the Spirit of adoption {i.e., sonship} {Gal. 4:4-6, Eph. 1:13}), you do well to pray as the Lord taught His disciples waiting for the Spirit (Luke 11:1-3). When the Paraclete was given, they entered into peace and liberty, far beyond their then state (Rom. 5:1-11, 2 Cor. 17, 18); and so may you prove when thus subject and obedient to God (Acts 5:32). Nevertheless, though the standing of a Christian will lead you to pray in the Spirit according to the new relationships {Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5}, how blessed ever is that which the Lord here taught! Do you really know what He meant? Many fail in this. Let us weigh His words.

It is in the First Gospel we hear of the Father who is in the heavens. The aim was to raise the eyes on high of Jews who were used to wait for God to display His glorious power on earth (Isa. 25:9, 31:4, 25: 4. &c.), as He did in measure since the day of redemption from the old house of bondage. Now He is made known as the One who makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, yet with special favor to His sons.

The petitions are seven, and divide into two classes; the first three are of righteousness, as the last four are of grace. This is an order intrinsically due to God, and proper for saints. If lost sinners as such were contemplated, all must begin with sovereign grace. But of this we hear not
in the so-called sermon on the Mount, but such grace shines appropriately elsewhere.

1. And how right, even our hearts feel, is the opening petition, Sanctified be thy name! It is the foremost desire of the renewed, however young in faith. Without this made good, there can be nothing good.

2. Thy (not My) Kingdom come, the Father’s Kingdom (Matt. 13:43) where the heavenly saints shine forth as the sun in risen glory, the dearest object of His love here as Father, Who will have them there with and as Christ, through Whom alone it could be.

3. Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth. This is at the same time the Son of man’s Kingdom, Who will send His angels to gather out of it all offences and all that work lawlessness (Matt. 13:41). It is the earthly things of God’s Kingdom, as the other the heavenly (John 3:12), Christ being Head of the church and over all things (Eph. 1:10, 22).

Then come the petitions of grace.

4. Give us today our sufficient (or, necessary) bread. Thus are they taught to begin with confessing dependence for ordinary wants, as the apostle called us to be content with food and raiment.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. For indeed all saints are bound to judge self and confess sins, as an antecedent spirit of forgiveness is imperative. See Matt. 18:5, Luke 17:3, 4.

6. And bring us not into temptation. So the Lord impresses on the disciples; for He ever knew their weakness as none else did yet (Luke 22:46). To “endure” temptation is as blessed, as “entering into” it is full of danger.

7. But deliver us from evil in general, if not from the evil one in particular. This was not the sifting, or temptation, deprecated in the clause before, which grace may put us through for good, as we see in Peter; but the power of the enemy in drawing into sin against God. The proper desire was to be kept from the evil, or, if one fell, to be restored from it. Grace in no case fails, if a disciple alas! did. Deliver us from evil.

The doxology is an ecclesiastical accretion and therefore uninspired. Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to omit the special title (2), the earthly Kingdom (3), and the final clause (7), as not so much called for in the case of Gentiles. 32

* * * * *

Chapter 1.4

Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount

Outline of Matthew 5 - 7

Matt. 5 - 7 falls into three main divisions. Chapter 5 speaks of the disciple’s character; chapter 6 of the disciple’s divine support; and chapter 7 of the disciple’s discernment. All of this is proclaimed according to Christ’s authority peculiar to Himself.

1. Matthew 5: Christ’s Place over the Disciple and the Disciple’s Character as Suitable for the Kingdom
   (1) Matt. 5:1, 2: Christ Takes His Place of Authority
   (2) Matt. 5:3-16: The Disciple’s Character and Testimony
   (3) Matt. 5:17-20: Are the Law and the Prophets Thus Made Void?
   (4) Matt. 5:21-48: Ye Have Heard It Said, But I say Unto You
      a. Matt. 5:20-26: Killing -- Anger
      b. Matt. 5:27-32: Adultery -- Lust
      c. Matt. 5:33-37: Swearing -- Honesty in the Heart
      d. Matt. 5:38-42: Retaliation -- Resist not Evil
      e. Matt. 5:43-48: Hate -- Love
2. Matthew 6: The Father’s Eye in Secret upon the Disciple, for His Support

(1) Matt. 6:1-18: With the Father in Secret
   a. Matt. 6:1-4: The Father Rejects Hypocrisy in Giving
   b. Matt. 6:5-15: The Father Rejects Hypocrisy in Prayer
   c. Matt. 6:16-18: The Father Rejects Hypocrisy in Fasting

(2) Matt. 6:19-34: The Father With Us, Taking Care of Tomorrow
   a. Matt. 6:19-24: The Disciple’s Object as Going Through the World
   b. Matt. 6:25-33: The Father’s Care of the Disciple As Going Through the World
   c. Matt. 6:34: The Practical Effect Concerning Tomorrow

3. Matthew 7: The Disciple’s Discerning Walk

(1) Matt 7:1-14: Discernment in the Disciples’ Walk
   a. Matt. 7:1-5: Fitness to Judge Discerningly
   b. Matt. 7:6: Discerning Holy and Unholy
   c. Matt. 7:7-11: Asking Discerningly
   d. Matt. 7:12: Discerning Conduct
   e. Matt. 7:13-14: Discerning the Gate That Leads to Life

(2) Matt. 7:15-27: Discerning The False and The True
   a. Matt. 7:15-20: Discerning False Fruit-Prophets
   b. Matt. 7:21-23: Discerning False Miracle-Monger-Prophets
   c. Matt. 7:24-27: Discerning the True Foundation

(3) Matt. 7:24-27: True Discernment -- Hearing and Doing Christ’s Words

(4) Matt. 7:28-29: The Teacher With Authority Peculiar to Himself Has Spoken
Matthew 5:
Christ’s Place Over the Disciples
and The Disciples’ Character As
Suitable For the Kingdom

Matthew 5:1-2:
Christ Takes His Place of Authority

John had preached the kingdom as at hand, the kingdom every Jew was
led by the OT prophets to understand as a kingdom on earth with Israel
at the head of the nations. Our Lord took up the same preaching, but He
was greater than John and could authoritatively unfold the inner
spirituality of the kingdom. Here in Matthew we see Him taking that
place, teaching His disciples with the crowd listening. See Matt. 7:28,
29. This teaching is given in the first part of Matthew, before His
rejection noted in Matt. 12, after which the kingdom of the heavens in
its mystery form is announced.

Matthew 5:3-16:
The Disciple’s Character and Testimony

There are nine blessednesses. They form seven, divided in four and
three, as often the case with seven things, with the two remaining
blessednesses correlating with these two groupings, respectively, as
illustrated below. Spiritual character is set out before the character of
testimony. Is there something to be learned from that order?
The So-called Beatitudes

**SPIRITUAL CHARACTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLESSED CHARACTER</th>
<th>ADDED BLESSEDNESS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Righteous)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Righteous)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. (3) Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, for <em>theirs</em> is the kingdom of the heavens.</td>
<td>8. (10) Blessed they who are persecuted on account of righteousness, for <em>theirs</em> is the kingdom of the heavens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toward God</td>
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<td>2. (4) Blessed they that mourn, for <em>they</em> shall be comforted.</td>
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<td>Toward man</td>
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<td>3. (5) Blessed the meek, for <em>they</em> shall inherit the earth.</td>
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<td>Toward God</td>
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<td>4. (6) Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for <em>they</em> shall be filled.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(Gracious)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Gracious)</strong></td>
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<td>Toward man</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. (7) Blessed the merciful, for <em>they</em> shall find mercy.</td>
<td>9. (11) Blessed are ye when they may reproach and persecute you, and say every wicked thing against you, lying, for my sake. (12) Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus have they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toward God</td>
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<td>6. (8) Blessed the pure in heart, for <em>they</em> shall see God.</td>
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<td>Toward man</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. (9) Blessed the peacemakers, for <em>they</em> shall be called sons of God.</td>
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</table>

Two classes of persecution are noted:

8. for righteousness’s sake; and

9. for Christ’s sake -- involving the grace in Him.

The two blessed characters of righteousness and grace are found in the spiritual testimony which follows in vv. 13-16 -- which divides into v. 13 (righteousness) and 14-16 (graciousness). Is it really surprising that this divine order is thus stamped on God’s Word? Indeed, this order is warp and woof of the tapestry of divine revelation. This is necessarily so, for we read in Scripture that God is light and God is love -- in that order. How often do we have to see this in Scripture, and be told it, before we bring our conduct into conformity with this divine order?
Chapter 1.4: Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount 47

SPIRITUAL TESTIMONY

(Righteousness)

(13) Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have become insipid, wherewith shall it be salted? It is no longer fit for anything but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot by men.

(Graciousness)

(14-16) Ye are the light of the world: a city situated on the top of a mountain cannot be hid. (15) Nor do [men] light a lamp and put it under the bushel, but upon the lamp-stand and it shines for all who are in the house. (16) Let your light thus shine before men, so that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens.

Christians are ever prone to reverse God’s order of righteousness and graciousness. Apologists for the reversal seem plentiful.

Comments on the Beatitudes

Another wrote:

♦ “Blessed are the poor in spirit” [Matt. 5:3]; of such was the apostle who could speak of himself as “less than the least of all saints.” We must distinguish between the kingdom of heaven, and heaven itself. In these principles you get that which will have a very blessed place when the kingdom is set up; but it also contemplates what is during the Lord’s absence. We do not get redemption here nor conversion; these chapters apply to those already in relationship . . . He is here of Whom the prophet Moses spoke, and that work of the prophets precedes the work of atonement as in Isa. 53.

He shall instruct the many in righteousness and He shall bear their iniquities.

The A.V. [KJV] “by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many” is incorrect; it should be “instruct the many in righteousness”: here He is doing it. People try to get out of the difficulty by making the “knowledge” apply to the man, but He is the perfect Instructor and then the perfect Redeemer. To be poor in spirit is to have low thoughts of self, to realize that before God I am nothing, I have nothing, I deserve nothing. It would be quite consistent with standing up for what is due to God.

The Lord Jesus took the scourge of small cords and drove them all out of the temple, for
the wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable {James 3:17}.

First pure. There is no such thing as peace at any price, in the word of God. Holiness and peace -- what God has joined together let not man put asunder.

In the next verse we get a reference to Ezekiel where a mark is put on those that sigh and cry. If not another soul knows it the Lord sees it, but we must not forget that we are also called to quit ourselves like men. The Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, that is the thing. There are only two instances of His weeping -- one, at the grave of Lazarus, and the other, over Jerusalem. We cannot limit His tears to sympathy; at the grave of Lazarus the past and the present were before Him: over Jerusalem the present and the future. The Lord never put forth His power on behalf of man without His sympathy also. If we could do people good we should {i.e., would} be disposed to advertize ourselves. But His miracles were never mere acts of power:

Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.

This is not atonement; Matt. 8:17 applies it to His life. He was not bearing sins in His life; He was the spotless Lamb not yet offered. The Lord sighed deeply at Bethsaida. We can hinder by our unbelief as they did there. Isn’t it a relief to unburden the heart to one we can confide in? There is a little difficulty in the hymn

“It tells of sympathy above, 
Whatever makes us mourn.”

It means what makes us mourn {Matt. 5:4} rightly according to God’s word. We ought to be so thoroughly identified with the interests of Christ that nothing affects us but what affects Him. It is sad of a Christian to say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” We should not advertize our brother’s faults. The apostle says, Fix your eyes on those who walk even as ye have us for an example; but he wept over those who minded earthly things, etc. Instead of Christ’s interests being theirs, many walk after their own selfish gratification: enemies of the cross of Christ. It may perhaps sound a little strange, but I suppose there must be in us a lack of sympathy toward Christ, if we are not affected by His interests. There is no lack on His part of sympathy toward us. It is a wonderful thing when we consider that the Lord in brightest glory above is seeking sympathy with our hearts. He longs (if we may thus speak) for human intercourse; He sought it when below, and He is the same glorified. He had a special delight in gathering His own round Himself. How did Judas know where to find Him in Gethsemane? Because Jesus oftimes resorted
thither with His disciples. Is it not a delight to Him to see us around His word or gathered {together} to His Name? And will He not have us round Himself in glory? If I think of His love toward me it will produce communion: if I think of my love, it is very poor. It is far better to be speaking to the Lord and exposing our ignorance, than to be keeping silence. It is a blessed thing to have earnest desire towards Him, but it is better to be occupied with His desires towards me.

“Blessed are the meek” {Matt. 5:5}. “They shall increase their joy in the Lord.” The meek in the Old Testament had a very prominent place. The meek will He guide in judgment and the meek will He teach His way. Speaking of the Messiah in Isa. 11 we are told He will reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. And again Psa. 37 the meek shall inherit the earth -- of which this is a quotation. There is the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Meekness of spirit produces gentleness of action and words. Gentleness would be represented by dealing tenderly, not using improper force: whereas the meek will not use force at all. 33 There is no one so unresisting as was the blessed Savior Himself. His “gentleness has made” us “great” (Psa. 18). A verse in the same Psalm says,

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself a wrestler. He has no pleasure in the legs of a man, but He has pleasure in those that hope in His mercy. The meek shall inherit the earth. The possessors of the earth now are generally great conquerors, but here is the very opposite; those whom men tread under foot, these are the ones that God says shall inherit the earth, and in a good time. The great and blessed pattern is the One who when He was reviled, reviled not again, etc. You cannot ignore the unrighteousness that is going on but you can commit yourself to Him that judgeth righteously. These features are not found in the natural man at any time. If we turn to Acts 10 we find Peter saying that of every nation (not only the Jews) he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable with Him. This shows there was a work of grace in those that had that character. “An honest and good heart” is prepared ground where there has been a work of grace, and the person brought to see he has a very bad heart. It has been said that the first beatitude here is general and the rest alternately toward God and toward man.

33. {This statement needs modification. The Lord drove out the money changers from the temple, His Father\'s house. In meekness, He never so acted on His own behalf.}
Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

This is deeper than what we had before. Here it is what is due to God that the soul is exercised about. It is not the thought of a soul wanting a righteous standing before God; but the display of righteousness upon earth. Righteousness will reign in the coming day, and the soul is exercised about that which is due to God -- that which corresponds with the revealed mind of God in the Old Testament. If you want really to please the Lord you will be filled; these things can only be true of the children of God. The words,

except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

in a later verse do not mean the righteousness of God in contrast to our own righteousness, but that theirs had come to be mostly ceremonial instead of practical.

Blessed are the merciful (Matt. 5:7).

That is what God is. He delights in mercy, so Micah tells us. Paul, that He is rich in mercy. It is only those who realize that

“Nothing but mercy will do for me,” who will be merciful. You get a picture of the wonderful mercy that has been shown to Israel in the parable of the man that owed a tremendous debt. He was unconscious of the mercy that had been shown to him. Whatever a person does to us, they can never owe us what we owe to God. If we are conscious of that, it will make us tender towards others. But here we do not get what we find in the epistles; we are on higher ground there. Yet, as a rule, there are comparatively few in whom we see these characteristics, and they are obscure.

There are two thoughts in sonship, position and character; here it is character. John tells us we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren; we don't get that here. This is the pure law of the kingdom, so it is, “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven,” but we are called to forgive because we are forgiven. “Obtain mercy.” Paul obtained it when he was anything but showing mercy, when like a wild beast; but I obtained mercy “because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” -- the city of refuge.

“Blessed are the pure in heart,” etc. (Matt. 5:8). If we love it there is that word in the Proverbs,

He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend {Prov. 22:11}.

It will show itself in conversation. The wisdom from above is first pure,
then peaceable {James 3:17}. When the kingdom comes a new heart will be given. The Lord referred Nicodemus to Ezek. 26, 27, born of water in the one, born of the Spirit in the other. He will take away the stony heart that said, “Away with Him”; but the new heart will say, “With His stripes we are healed.” The blessing of the new covenant is not only, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” but “I will put my laws in their heart,” and there will then be a people who shall love the Lord with all their heart. The believer now has a new nature. A new heart is a heart without any reserve. An evil conscience would keep you away. A true heart rests on the knowledge that all is done; so I am able to draw near, not in presumption, but having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. Having had that, it corresponds to a true heart, therefore we come. There is a reference here to the consecration of the priests. I suppose “the merciful” in v. 7 have the sense of mercy shown to them, and that makes them merciful to others. We have seen already how obnoxious to God was the one who had no mercy to others after all the mercy shown to him. Motives are dealt with here and that which is inward.

“Children” of God (Matt. 5:9) should be “sons.” When it is a question of children it is by birth -- not natural birth. Man has lost the title to be called a child of God, but John 1:12 shows us how he can be born again. There the word should be “children”; “son” is different. “Child” sometimes means a minor, but mostly it is character -- in these chapters always character. For instance, v. 48, “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” that is, we are to partake of that character. God said to Abraham, “Walk before me and be thou perfect,” meaning sincere. Perfect has different meanings in scripture. We have to read the context and weigh it. When the Lord Jesus was “made perfect through sufferings” it was not a question of moral perfection, nor could be, for He was always perfect. “Perfected the third day,” is in resurrection.

In Matt. 5:10, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake,” it is a carrying out of the will of God and being persecuted for doing it. We get a higher standard than this for the Christian. Peter says, “If ye do good and suffer for it, and take it patiently,” etc. Nothing but the grace of God can enable us to do that. And I believe that can be shown in little things, in our everyday home life. A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. Why is it “they” in v. 10, and “ye” in Matt. 5:11? The one is doing the will of God, His revealed will; and the other is suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and that is a gift of God. Every true saint of God suffers
with Christ -- not to the same extent, but the Lord Jesus necessarily suffered in a sense like this, and so in measure the one who is born from above and has the new nature. And in a thousand ways we suffer with Christ, but it is not everyone who suffers for Him; that is a gift:

to you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but to suffer for His sake [Phil. 1:29].

In v. 10 it is suffering for carrying out the revealed will of God, that is the righteousness here; and then suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we are enjoined to go forth to Him without the cAMP bearing His reproach, We shall not have this privilege long -- of suffering as identified with Him; of suffering as a Christian. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you,” etc., when He was reviled, He reviled not again. That was the Lord’s path, and He left us an example that we should follow His steps.

“Falsely,” ah! that’s the point. Turn to 1 Pet. 4:12-16. It is a shame for any of us to suffer as an evil doer.

Israel had been the salt of the earth; and here it is not the Christian, that is, not a believer of this dispensation, that is contemplated; it is the Jewish remnant. As far as the church is concerned, when the true saints are gone, the {that} salt will be gone; but it is the remnant He is speaking to here. I take the salt in Luke 14:34, 35 to be connected with discipleship. In that chapter we find the gospel feast -- everything ready; nothing to do, nothing to pay, nothing to promise; only to accept. I get blessing not by anything I give up or do, but as a recipient. God can bless the guiltiest sinner in the fullest love of His heart righteously, because of the cross of Christ. All boasting is excluded, no flesh can glory in His presence. If I am to be blessed it must be in God’s way. I must be a recipient, and then I become a disciple, if the Lord leaves me here. But my discipleship does not improve my title in the least degree. It is a very blessed thing and will have its reward by and by, but it is also a very solemn thing.

Luke 14:26-33. Nothing must be put in competition with Christ. Does this mean a christian is to be a worse father, mother, brother or sister? Not at all. Grace makes them carry out their various responsibilities on a higher level. There is not a single saint of God but has got his cross, which he has to take up -- not the Lord’s cross. Let us not then shrink from it, as naturally we should, for it is in the path of a disciple. If I begin well as a disciple, and then give up like the Galatians -- “ye did run well; who did hinder you?” -- there is no testimony for God and the salt is useless.
While the Lord was here He was the Light of the world, as He Himself says (John 9:5). Now we are called upon, as christians, to shine as heavenly luminaries, as “lights holding forth the word of life.” Our light is reflected light. Eph. 5 tells us whence our light comes,

Ye were sometime darkness, now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.

But we have also,

Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee {Eph. 5:14}.

If Christ does not shine upon us we can give no light. The sleeper here is a child of God in a bad state. I was hearing today of a dear saint to whom some one said, Do you know what it is to be filled with the Holy Ghost? I told them Moses went in before God, and he was there long enough to make his face shine. But the Holy Spirit is careful to tell us that while everybody else knew it, Moses himself was unconscious of it. When Moses thought, so to speak, that his face shone his brethren did not see it. “Who made thee to be a ruler?” Moses was then forty years too soon; now, he is unconscious of it. It is well that we should ever remember this. It is not humility to be always talking about our badness. True humility is forgetfulness of self. It is not a sign of growth in grace and knowledge where there is a disposition ever to bring oneself forward. A city on a hill is seen a long way off, -- miles perhaps; and that should teach us how God has left us here as witnesses for Him. But if our testimony be our object with ourselves as a very bright testimony, it will be but a miserable failure. In proportion as we have Christ before us will our testimony be right.

The Lord is indicating the hindrances to the shining. A bushel is connected with the business of this world, and how many a light is obscured by the business of this world. God has lighted the candle that it may shine for the benefit of others. In another place it says, “nor under a bed.” We must not give way to indolence. It giveth light to all that are in the house, the usefulness of it there. Now then do not let it be obscured by ease, even lawful occupation;

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

This is anything but advertising our good works. Let your light so shine that they may not give praise to you, but glorify your Father. Take a Unitarian. I do not believe the devil deals with such a one as he does with a saint of God. The Unitarian is in Satan’s service; he is thoroughly deluded, building on what he can do, and rejecting Christ; and I have
known some extremely particular about their ways, but does that bring glory to God? No, alas! But what a Christian does, brings praise to God, not to himself. 34

* * * *

**Further Remarks on Salt and Light**

It is important to understand that the preservative character of salt points to holiness in this spiritual application. Salt is always to be present. It points to separation from evil unto the Lord. That ought never to be absent.

W. Kelly’s has some helpful remarks upon these verses (Matt. 5:13-16) in making an application to Christians:

Salt is the righteously preservative principle. It is sharp rather than sweet, but guards from impurity and decomposition. It gives fixity to what is good and wholesome. It proves all things, and holds fast the right. It keeps aloof from every form of wickedness. When then the disciples are called the salt of the earth, the Lord designates them as set apart to God the Father, and in patient continuance of good seeking for glory and honor and incorruptibility at Christ’s coming. They obey the truth, and are to hold fast what they have till then. If they lose the good savor, it is fatal. Saltless salt (and such a change was familiar in those lands) cannot be restored. It is not fit for anything but to be trodden down on the streets, as it often was.

How has it fared with the holy deposit in Christendom? Has the salt there retained its virtue? Did the favored Gentile abide in goodness, any more than the Jew under law? If not, cutting off is the sentence of God (Rom. 11:21, 22). All the more should every faithful soul humble himself, repent, and look to the Lord who is as willing as He is able to make Him stand.

But are we not responsible as “the light of the world”? If it is not the property or power of salt to cure corruption, it is for light to illuminate the dark. It goes out and around. And we may notice it is to “the world” at large here in this appropriate diffusion by grace, as the salt is “of the earth,” the ordered scene of privileges. As being the light, it is compared to a city set on a hill and not to be hid; and not this only, but as penetrating the home, it is as a lamp (not absurdly under the bushel as its extinguisher, but) upon its stand, that all in the house may enjoy its brightness.


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Only let us not forget the Lord’s momentous caution as to this. “Thus let your light (your living profession of Him, Who is the true Light and made you light in Him) shine before men, that they may see (not your inconsistencies, but) your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens.” He means the very reverse of men displaying their benevolent works before their fellows, so as to bring glory to themselves. He would have His own let their confession of Him, the one source of their light, shine, so that men may see the goodly fruits, and therefore glorify not the disciples but our Father in the heavens, the Father of lights, of whom is every good giving, and whence comes down every perfect gift from above.

**Matthew 5:17-20: Are the Law and the Prophets Thus Made Void?**

(17) Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil.

(18) For verily I say unto you, Until the heaven and the earth pass away, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass.

(19) Whosoever then shall do away with one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall practise and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.

(20) For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

In Chapter 1:2 we considered two articles by W. Kelly concerning vv. 17-20 and saw what their real bearing is -- that Christ fulfils the law (in what it states, and in its types and shadows), as well as fulfilling the prophets concerning the coming kingdom.

The law, here, means the entire law as a system, just as the prophets means all the prophets of Israel. “One of these “least commandments” means least commandments of the law of Moses as a system.  

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35. The whole system of New Testament doctrine concerning salvation, the guilt of man, the curse of the law, and redemption by the blood of Christ, rests upon the supposition that the Law is a divine revelation. In like manner the whole argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning Christ’s priesthood, the nature of His atonement, the typification of the gospel in Levitical ordinances, necessarily presupposes the divine origin of the Law.
Part 1: The Sermon on the Mount

Matt. 5 - 7 has in view the announcement of the kingdom of the heavens as at hand and the fitness necessary for entering the kingdom of the heavens -- not of entering heaven where God dwells, but, rather -- entering the rule of the heavens on the earth. There is no Christian gospel (Christian good news, as such) in Matt. 5 - 7. Christianity had not begun and the Christian gospel concerns bringing persons into a heavenly portion. The point in v. 19 is that the law must be kept, kept even in its “least commandments,” by the godly Jewish remnant while waiting for the kingdom of the heavens to arrive. Note well the words*: "I am not come to make void, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). This applies with equal force to “the law, or the prophets” (v. 17). This does not mean ‘the 10 commandments, or the prophets.’ Christ fulfils, gives the fulness to, substantiates in Himself, the law and the prophets. You who take the Sermon on the Mount to be for Christians, using it to place Christians under the 10 commandments as the rule of life, are not facing the fact that the entire law of Moses is indicated.

“Least” is used twice. Whoever did away with “one of these least commandments” of the Mosaic law “shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens.”

The one who then in Israel, while the Law was in force, enfeebled any, the least, was the least in the Kingdom. Disobedience, and taught disobedience to the schoolmaster, was not obedience to the Father, nor the way to coming blessing, nor would Pharisee righteousness do. 36

In contrast to this,

but whosoever shall practise and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.

You who use this to put the Christian under the law, 37 if you think that

(Heb. 8:5; 10:1, &c.). Our Lord also ascribes divine authority to the Law. He refers to it as the highest authority (Matt. 12:5, and Luke 10:25, 26), and speaks of its precepts as "The commandments of God" (Matt. 15:3). According to our Lord’s teaching, the Law is so entirely divine, that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one jot or tittle of the law to fail (Luke 16:16, 17), and therefore is to be violated by none (Matt. 5:19). Whosoever shall break (or, weaken the authority, λύσῃ of one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

To assert the divine authority of the Law more strongly, is impossible.

(The Bible Treasury, New Series 5:268).

36. Notes and Comments 5:69, 70.

37. Mr. M. had better search and see whether the apostle does not guide “Brethren” in
only the 10 commandments are meant, tell us the import of “one of these least commandments” of the 10 -- meaning there is more than one of them that is least -- so tell us two of them that are “least” and why they are least compared to the other eight.

It is one thing for the godly Jew to fail in the “least commandments” and another thing to conduct oneself as did the scribes and Pharisees, who were constitutionally hypocrites. Therefore the warning given by the Lord in Matt. 5:20. Fitness for the announced kingdom of the heavens required that

unless your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

J. N. Darby has a footnote to the word “surpass,” stating:

Or ‘excel.’ It includes the idea of being a better righteousness:
see v. 47.

Well, the ‘righteousness’ of the scribes and Pharisees was merely an external garb of appearance, a coat woven throughout with the threads affirming that the Christian is not under law in Rom. 6, Gal. 5 (latter part), 2 Cor. 3, 1 Tim. 1:9, and many other places of the New Testament. It is untrue that in any of these scriptures the question is about justification. Not so; it is a question of walk, or a rule of life. The apostle is most explicit, and had to guard the truth against attacks similar to those now leveled at “Brethren.” We are under grace, not law; and Christ revealed in all the word of God is the true and full guide of the life. He has given us, not the law which was given by Moses, excellent as it is, but excellent as a rule of death and condemnation, not of Christian walk or worship. Matt. 5 does not contradict the apostle, nor do “Brethren” anything here but seek subjection to the Lord personally or through His servant. For they hold that the Lord did not destroy the law or the prophets but fulfill; and they neither break one of the least commandments nor teach men so, but contrariwise do and teach them by the grace of God. In every way “Brethren” hold that Christianity establishes law. For first there never was such honor put on its sanction as when the Lord suffered death on the cross; and this is the point in the end of Rom. 3, where faith is shown to act thus; secondly, in Rom. 8:4, we learn that the practical result is as real as the doctrine of the cross to faith, for the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, as all Christians are called to do. Yet that righteous requirement of the law is thus fulfilled, by our being under not the law but grace, nor yet by the law’s death (as the Authorized Version has it, following a bad reading in the received text) but by our death to it. Being born of God, we love; otherwise we have not seen or known Him. But if we love God and our neighbor, we fulfill the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law, and for us there is none other. Mr. M. S controversy is therefore with St. Paul; and no Christians really value the sermon on the Mount more than “Brethren,” if so much. Indeed it is strange and humbling that godly men should feel otherwise; for the word of God is plain, and so are the facts before every eye (The Bible Treasury 9:269, 270).
of hypocrisy (Matt. 6:2, 16), solemnly denounced in Matt. 5 - 7 and elsewhere. Matt. 5 - 7 sets forth a righteousness that surely exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And this is not a spiritualization of the 10 commandments, only two of which are mentioned, having to do with violence (Matt. 5:21) and corruption (Matt. 5:27), and Christ places these matters in His own moral teaching with the restriction and character he gives them.

The righteousness that God approves of is what is of divine endowment, wrought in the soul by God. It manifests itself in obedience to God’s word, for the new nature from which obedience flows -- a divine implantation into the soul -- loves God’s Word.

And while Matt. 5:19, 20 have the godly Jew versus the hypocrite in view, the principle of what we are considering applies to the Christian also. The Christian is dead to the law (Rom. 7:4), but he is not therefore given over to lawless conduct, for he is under the law of Christ and of the rule of the new creation (Gal. 6). Just as in Matt. 6 the Lord by His authority laid down certain matters for the godly remnant, likewise in Christianity, though we are not under the law of Moses in any sense, we have divine commandments (John 14:15-21) and also the keeping of His word (John 14:23) and words (John 14:25) with a correspondingly greater blessing for those who clasp to themselves, as precious, the breathings of His heart, as well as direct commands.

Now let us consider an extract from a review of Patrick Fairbairn, D.D., “The Revelation of Law in Scripture,” by J. N. Darby, after taking note of JND’s summary of Dr. Fairbairn’s object, which is actually an excellent summary of the Covenantist scheme:

The great object of Dr. Fairbairn is to show the OT believers with a measure of grace under law, and the NT believers under law with a measure of grace, only larger . . .

Page 222. Speaking of the giving of the Law from Sinai, and the Sermon on the Mount, he says:

The difference between the new and the old is relative only, not absolute. There are the same fundamental elements in both, but these differently adjusted, so as fitly to adapt them to the ends they had to serve, and the times to which they respectively belonged.

38. The third series of the “Cunningham Lectures,” Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 38, George Street, 1869. The page numbers in the quoted material refers to this book.

39. Ibid., p. 59.
What were the ‘promises in the law’? Long life in the Land! Let anyone read the Beatitudes and see the spirit looked for in man for blessing (not required as law at all) and put the Ten Commandments beside them, and say if the same fundamental elements are in both, “but these differently adjusted.” In the first place there are no relationships referred to. A state of soul is described which the Lord pronounces blessed -- nothing is required. There is instruction, warning, no grace announced, but the character described which suited the kingdom, if they would enter, which was just going to be set up.

Pages 223, 224. “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets, I came not to destroy but to fulfil” {Matt. 5:17}. This latter expression must be taken in its plain and natural sense. It means simply to substantiate, by doing what they required, or making good what they announced. “The law is fulfilled when the things are done which are commanded,” etc. Then if fulfilled, it is not “putting others under it,” and it is the sense. But he does not see that the Lord all through is describing the previous character among the Jews, to which entrance into the Kingdom should belong. That Christ maintained the authority of Law and Prophets no one doubts, and, as far as fulfilled, they are fulfilled in Him. The question is, Does He put us under the Law as law?

Page 226.

The kingdom, as to the righteousness recognized and expected in it, was to rise on the foundation of the law and the prophets.

This is exceedingly vague, as his statements are, and hard to take hold of. At any rate, it is not said anywhere, and it is not Christian ground. Now “without law” (choris nomou) righteousness of God is revealed {Rom. 3:21}. As to the Decalogue, they are not “the fundamental statutes of the Kingdom.” This is wholly false. The Law and the Prophets were until John {Matt. 11:13}, since then the Kingdom of God is preached. The Sermon on the Mount is Christ’s giving to His disciples, when multitudes thronged, the principles of which any of the Jews could enter. There is not a word of redemption, nothing whatever of Christianity as such, nor of Christian doctrine, nor of grace -- not one word. The Jews had other ideas. These are His authoritative ones as to what characters suited His kingdom, and nothing more, including the heavenly part in case of persecution, which is supposed even in Daniel. Christ fulfilled the law no doubt -- He was born or came under it; that does not say He put us under it after He was risen and no longer under it, having borne its curse. And the kingdom had taken a wholly new form, the King being rejected and hid in God. And as no redemption, no
grace is mentioned in the Sermon, but the rock is unquestionably personal obedience. It must be supposed that one may disobey a little and get in, only having a little place! Supposing a great one was disobeyed? If it is said “shut out,” what is the ground and measure of Christian entrance into the kingdom? That Christ as I said confirms the law and prophets by His authority, for they can by Him be confirmed as they were by the Transfiguration {Matt. 17; 2 Pet. 2:16-19}, no one doubts. The whole law in every part fulfilled -- ceremonies in the substance -- in Him; and He, not our obedience is the end of the Law for righteousness {Rom. 10:4}. Some things might be carried higher, but not broken. It is Christ giving the true character of what He will have for the kingdom, not grace and redemption. But he knows nothing of the different positions in which Christ stood as the Christ or Savior. Pages 226, 227 are a mere muddle of contradiction from the false position he has taken.

Page 228.

After so solemnly asserting His entire harmony with the law and the prophets, and His dependence on them, it would manifestly have been to lay Himself open to the charge of inconsistence, and actually to shift the ground which He professedly occupied in regard to them, if now He should go on to declare, that, in respect to the great landmarks moral and religious duty, they said one thing, and He said another.

But He says nothing of harmony but of fulfilling. What means “His dependence on them”? One thing clear -- personal righteousness is the ground of entrance into the Kingdom, and, when Christ is dealing with Israel as such, this is the ground He takes, and that He does in Matthew the end of ch. 12. The disciples were to enquire who city or village were worthy, and go there, not seek sinners, nor go into the way of the Gentiles or city of the Samaritans. this the Gospel? {Matt. 10}. If a Jew had taught against any commandment of God, he was going against God's authority -- it amounted to hating his enemies in given special cases, and, such, was.

But it imports to give the true character of this Sermon the Mount for its own sake, and as the stronghold of the legalist. That the Christian can learn there what is pleasing the Lord, is not the question -- that is clearly so from even the Law -- but what is its true character, and whether it puts under law? In Matthew, Christ is seed of Abraham, seed David, Emmanuel, Jehovah the Messiah come into Israel, sent to the lost sheep there, and first even to the nation, born King of the Jews. It is not, as Luke, first the Jewish Remnant, and then the Son of Man traced up
to Adam. It was Jehovah, the Savior to save His people from their sins, before whose face John went to prepare His way, announcing the axe at the root of the trees, and the kingdom just going to be set up. And even he declared, not for Pharisees and Sadducees. The Lord then by His ministry having attracted the crowds, for ch. 4 gives the whole public ministry of the Lord, gives to His disciples, but in the audience of all, what was the character of those who would have a place in the kingdom. But, save supposing the kingdom announced, there is not a word of Gospel in it. It is those who already there amongst the Jews were fit for the kingdom. So Matt. 5:25, 26, is the history of the Jews. The Lord was in the way with them. If need were, the end of Luke 12 proves it distinctly. And He tells His disciples how they were to behave in taking their place. Every Jew knew there was the *alam hoveh* (this age) under the law, and *alam habba* (the coming age) under Messiah. These are the rules for having part in the latter, the Father’s name being withal revealed, but the kingdom not set up. He was rejected, and redemption came in, but of this we have nothing here.

As to details. It is clear He was not, as Jehovah-Messiah, come to set aside His own law, and His own prophets. He came to fulfil them -- not impose on others in continuance, but fulfil them. As I have said, of all the ceremonial part He was the substance and fulfilment. Then as to commandments, personally of course He fulfilled the Law. But even when He says: “But I say,” He is not taking up the Law to spiritualize it. In two cases only, He takes up one of the Ten Commandments, murder and adultery, but only as essential parts of His own morality, and given as applying to the state of a man, not his acts, as all through, for this is His subject. And where He seems to change it, yet He fulfils it. Israel was divorced for their sins, yet He returns to God’s original institution which was in the Law too, and will own Israel as *Ish* (man) and *Hephzibah* (beloved of God) making good God’s own institution, when the governmental force of the Law has run its course, from Babylon till He takes His power and Israel has paid the last farthing. And breaking or annulling “one of the least commandments” is the same maintenance of the Law in all its integrity, and “least” is merely fully enforcing it, for Christ came to fulfil it, he went against it, was going against Jehovah, and the very thing He came for. But the word “least” is merely to answer to “least,” for either it gives measure and he who taught against the least would get beyond that not -- which is monstrous -- or else he who annulled a greater would be less than he, still in the kingdom. But is not the thought. “Least” echoes “least,” and it is maintaining every jot and tittle of the Law, even the smallest, which I
fully believe, but to be fulfilled by Christ, not carried though many things in it may abide, but it must (genetai) never be set aside, but fulfilled by Christ as God’s own word to say “Christ only brought out the true contents of the Law,” is simply ignorance of what Christianity is, for grace and truth came by Him {John 1:17}. The Law, as a rule, is what man should be for God -- Christianity is what God is for man, and God in Man, and that is our full pattern, and this in general character (not in redemption, and giving up self consequently man’s part) -- we have in the Sermon on the Mount, far away from Law; Matt. 5:44-48. In this, Christ was in life before redemption. But for us the full character is also what He in redemption; Eph. 5:1. 40

Matthew 5:21-48: Ye Have
Heard That It Was Said --
But I Say Unto You

Outline

In this third main section of Matt. 5, it is manifested that the scribes and Pharisees had a ‘righteousness’ of outward acts, not of inward reality. This is the connection of this section as following upon Matt. 5:20, where our Lord spoke of the necessity of righteousness that surpassed that of the scribes and Pharisees. This righteousness He now directly addresses. Such righteousness required is not possible, of course, without the new birth of which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus (John 3).

There are five subdivisions in this section, and in them Christ’s commands are given. Note that the Lord is dealing with the inward state, whereas the scribes and Pharisees were satisfied with what was outward. 41 Two matters spoken of in the second table of the law are taken up by the Lord, One who is a greater Prophet than Moses, a greater Prophet who can read the heart and expose its secret workings; One who speaks with authority and orders matters suitably for the kingdom announced as at hand.

The first two subdivisions concern violence (Matt. 5:21-26) and corruption (Matt. 5:27-32) respectively, those sins which, especially

41. We should ever remember that if the inward state is according to God, what is outward will be correspondingly regulated by God's Word.
filling the earth, gave occasion to the flood in Noah’s day: violence and corruption. In Matt. 5:20-26, a spirit of reconciliation, rather than violence, is inculcated by our Lord; and He indicates the present state of Israel as not making friends with the adverse party -- namely Christ Himself -- who, as a result, they killed. Such was the awful consequence of rejecting His word. Next, in Matt. 5:27-30, purity is to be maintained. Here we have:

. . . the most thorough self-judgment, plucking out a right eye, cutting off a right hand, at all cost maintaining purity and holiness. This judgment of self {is} to maintain holiness of heart as against sin, as the other {Matt. 5:21-26}, {was to maintain} grace in holiness.

This is followed by another “I say unto you” (Matt. 5:33-37), one that addresses relationship with God (the first two addressing relationship with man):

As regards God, not voluntarily promising to Him, as a Jew would, but the just sense of His greatness, and our incapacity to do anything, restraining us . . .

The fourth subdivision (Matt. 5:33-37), briefly, gives us:

. . . grace, not resisting evil with legal maintaining our rights, followed by the fifth subdivision (Matt. 5:43-48), going on from the not resisting evil to the full measure of the Father now revealed -- a total change of dispensation, not the Holy Ghost revealing a glorified Christ, and, sent of the Father, the Spirit of adoption, but the Father fully revealed in the Son in grace. This, besides the blessed moral instruction, the fullest dispensational teaching in the revelation of the Father in grace in the Son. But it is wholly Christ on earth, “I have declared unto them thy name.”

42. These are seen in Satan as he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8), and as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). It came out in Eden in that he sought to corrupt the pair, seeking their death as a consequence.

43. Notes and Comments 5:70.

44. Notes and Comments 5:70.

45. Notes and Comments 5:70.

46. Notes and Comments 5:70.
Matthew 5:20-26: Killing -- Anger

(21) Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill; but whosoever shall kill shall be subject to the judgment. (22) But I say unto you, that everyone that is lightly angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment; but whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be subject to [be called before] the sanhedrim; but whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the penalty of the hell of fire. (23) If therefore thou shouldest offer thy gift at the altar, and there shouldest remember that thy brother has something against thee, (24) leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (25) Make friends with thine adverse party quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest some time the adverse party deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. (26) Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt in no wise come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing.

In Chapter 1.3 we saw how Jewish this passage is, how Israel has been cast into the prison house of judicial blinding and no blessing -- which will be removed in the proper time when Israel, as the new Israel, is blessed under the New Covenant. Here, we will look at what we ought to learn regarding the heart’s attitude. W. Kelly wrote the following.

◆ . . . He that formed the heart knows it, as He detects a feeling so contrary to His own nature, not only unbecoming in man, but wholly inconsistent with the peacemakers, the pure in heart, the merciful, as well as the poor in spirit, the morning, the meek, and those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the blessed ones that suit the kingdom of the heavens. How too could it agree with being persecuted for righteousness’ sake? how with being reproached, and having all manner of evil said and done against one falsely for Christ’s sake, yet, rejoicing and being exceeding glad to be thus defamed and ill-used for His name?

But we know that very recently (Mark 3:1-6) the Holy and the True looked round with anger in the synagogue on those who watched with murderous hate, if He would heal a poor sufferer on the sabbath. Instead of shrinking from the issue, He bade the man rise up into the midst. They (the high and the broad) were silent; but the fire of their anger burned to destroy Him, after He also bade the man stretch out his palsied hand, restored on the instant. His holy anger was distressed at the hardening of their hearts who, in the vain confidence of tradition (ever spurious), were thus maddened against the active and blessed goodness of God as a reality among men here below.

Again, John the baptist said to the Sadducees coming to his baptism,
Viper brood, who forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce therefore fruit worthy of repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for father. These were scathing words; but if anger dictated a word, it was unselfish and holy. It was indigation at men who sought a religious form to cover their unbelief and wickedness. And He, whose sandal-thong John counted himself unworthy to untie, pronounced woe after woe on these Scribes and Pharisees, albeit standing highest in Jewish estimation. Blind guides He called them, fools too and hypocrites and serpents; how should they escape the judgment of hell? Was not the blessed Lord fully justified in His words, overwhelming as they were to the highest degree? It was not enmity to tell an evil-doer the truth, that he might repent. Flesh hates fidelity.

If it be objected that so the Lord was entitled righteously to denounce, but no one else may, what are we to learn from one of like passions with ourselves? He on just occasion could say in the Spirit, to an erring saint at Corinth with questions about the resurrection, Fool! as he said before, Wake up righteously, and sin not; for some are ignorant of God: I speak to your shame. So in the next chapter be declares that if anyone love not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maranatha (accursed at the Lord's coming), 1 Cor. 15, 16. The same apostle tells the saints (Eph. 4:26), Be angry and sin not. If one truly follow the Lord and the apostle, anger then is a duty, not a sin; yet one surely has to watch and pray withal.

The source, motive, and aim decide. If of God and for Him by the Spirit, anger has His sanction; if for self, it is evil that exposes to judgment: and so the Lord denounces on its various degrees expressed in a form familiar to Jews. 47

It is no less evident that Jewish disciples as yet under the law are, those addressed. This is as plain in vv. 20, 21 as in those we are now considering. In fact it is the rule in this Gospel as a whole and in the others; and it must be so, till in the death of Christ the middle wall of partition was broken down, and thus the way was opened to reconcile both Jew and Gentile that believed in one body to God, the enmity being slain. The discourse of our Lord anticipates no such unity, nor even the call of the Gentiles, in any one clause. But it is a profound mistake that this indisputable fact takes away the profit of a single word from the Christian, though we stand now in a position of grace which could not

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47. The Bible Treasury, New Series 4:245.
be then. There is the richest instruction morally for every one who honors Him who spoke as never man spoke; a spiritual estimate of unequaled depth for those who know redemption and have the indwelling Spirit to enter in far more fully than those who heard His words of divine truth at the time He uttered them.

Thus the Lord enjoins the disciple who was bringing his gift to the altar, if he remembered that his brother had anything against him, to stop short of his devoted purpose as to God Himself, and be reconciled to his brother, before returning to offer his gift. What tenderness of conscience was looked for, brotherly affection, lowliness of mind, readiness to own wrong, and desire to win an offended brother! It was the very reverse of anger, contempt, or hatred, which He had just treated, as His servant in measure re-echoed at a much later day (1 John 3:11-15). And that reverse was the Jews’ case. For absorbed in bringing their offering to the altar, they were blind to their wrong against Him who deigned to be their brother, with far more than brother’s love, born for adversity as they knew not. But they refused to be reconciled, and persisted in their offering, however offensive to God. It was presumptuous sin, and high-handed self-will under cloak of religion.

What follows points to a still more solemn consideration. Who that weighs scripture can doubt that the Lord in Matt. 5:25, 26 refers to the position in which the Jew then stood with God? This was a far deeper consideration than any other brother aggrieved: their Lord became their brother. The awful truth is that He who loved Israel and would die for them, Jehovah-Messiah, was made their adversary by their perverse disobedience and blind unbelief; and His presence, which had been their salvation and best blessing if received, must bring on the inevitable crisis by their utter rejection and hatred of Him. The Lord at this point avails Himself of the occasion in His infinite grace to urge their agreeing, or making friends, with their adversary quickly, while in the way with him. How His heart yearned over them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! But they would not. Their deadliest aversion was to their loving Messiah.

Hence the case was just about to come before the Judge, and the Judge would deliver to the official the convicted one, and he must be cast into prison till the last farthing be paid. It is no question here of eternal judgment, but of divine government morally on the earth; but all is plainly true of His people found guilty and consigned to suffer long. In that prison still lies the guilty debtor, till his heart turns to the One he despised. Then the word shall go forth, Comfort ye, comfort ye my
people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her, that her time of sorrow (or, suffering) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of Jehovah’s hand double for all her sins (Isa. 11:1, 2). Who is a God like unto Thee, that forgiveth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18). Is not this the true unforced hearing of our Lord’s words? One may apply it to Christian use or unchristian warning. But it is an evil to twist scripture or to complain of those who bow to its full force. Such ignorance has led men into the fable of purgatory. 48 ♦

Matthew 5:27-32: Adultery -- Lust

(27) Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. (28) But I say unto you, that every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) But if thy right eye be a snare to thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. (30) And if thy right hand be a snare to thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell.

(31) It has been said too, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a letter of divorce. (32) But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife except for cause of fornication makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery.

Here are some of W. Kelly’s notes on this passage.

♦ In connection with the light of heaven on the lusts of the heart, the Lord adds His word on the permission of divorce in Deut. 24 {1:1-5}. It is here the woman protected against hard-hearted man. Positive sin in violation of the marriage tie alone calls for divorce. Men abused the

48. *The Bible Treasury*, New Series 4:261-262. [The evil system that uses such a text to further its doctrine of purgatory, along with the others that will form the ecclesiastical Babylon of Rev. 17, 18, is far worse than the Jews who thus sinned, for the sin is against much greater light. So, while we read of Israel’s having received double for her sins (Isa. 11:1, 2), concerning the system called “Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of harlots, and the abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5), we read:

Recompense her even as she has recompensed; and double [to her] double . . .

(Rev. 18:6).

As if in answer to this four-fold recompense, there are the four triumphant hallelujah’s resounding through the vault of heaven (Rev. 19:1-6).]
licence beyond measure, as if the permission were a precept; and any vexation sufficed. But Jehovah hates putting away, as the last prophet testified to the Jews in their evil day.

In Matt. 19 of this Gospel the question distinctly proposed to Him by the Pharisees, Is it lawful to put away one’s wife for every cause? And He answered and said, Have ye not read that He that made from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? He saith to them, Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been thus. But I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth one put away committeth adultery. His disciples say to Him, If the case of man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it hath been given.

Thus was the mind of God made clear. The indulgence of lust is incompatible with entering the kingdom of the heavens. The law forbade the act of adultery; the Lord condemns even the looking licentiously as adultery committed already in the heart. He insisted therefore on the most unsparing decision with all that gave occasion. Was it not better to pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand, rather than the whole body be cast into hell? Here (as in all the chapters of the first Gospel before ch. 13 where He begins as the Sower), it is not seeking sinners in sovereign grace, but saints, as He enjoins on the twelve in Matt. 10, Into whatsoever city or village ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy (v. 11).

So the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5) describes what spiritual characters suit the kingdom, as the end (ch. 7) declares that none shall enter but he that does the will of His Father that is in the heavens. Not even prophesying or miraculous powers, were it casting out demons through the Lord’s name, could be a passport to the workers of lawlessness. Practical obedience of His words alone should stand. The rock here is spiritual reality. His word was incomparably more withering to self-righteousness than the law of Moses.

There is power of God given exceptionally to be above marriage, and live only to Christ here below. But, to far the most, marriage is
God’s order for man on earth. And the monkish rule with high pretension leads into horrible evasion, hypocrisy, and corruption even contrary to nature and abominable. God’s mind is clear from the first; adultery alone justifies divorce.

Hence the necessity would be felt urgently and absolutely of receiving a new nature and an everlasting redemption in the Savior. No interpretation of our Lord’s words here or elsewhere is more radically false than that He puts believers under the law as their rule of life. He is really condemning unbelievers and hypocrites far more stringently than the law did, and those sayings of the elders which took advantage of a legal permission for carnal indulgence and unfairness to a wife who through any cause became less attractive to her selfish husband. Such souls were inadmissible to the kingdom. Only the godly remnant are here contemplated, who abhor corruption as they do violence. The presence of Christ, not of the law given by Moses, was the suited moment for defining the character and conduct proper to the new thing He would set up. He was the standard of what pleased God, and must mark those who are His. “The law made nothing perfect” {Heb. 7:19} was a hard lesson for Jews; it seems quite as hard for those who inherit the traditions of fallen Christendom, and not less for Protestants than Papists.

To be content with being nobody in the world, and despised by its religion, is impossible to human nature; to be mourners as Christ was, feeling for God’s will and majesty where lawlessness pervades; to be meek now, waiting for the glorious inheritance in God’s time, instead of clamorous for our rights; to hunger and thirst after (not ease or wealth, or power or honor, but) righteousness, cannot be without partaking of a divine nature. Harder still was the actively gracious spirit of mercifulness, purity in heart, and peace-making according to God, with the persecutions which such righteousness entails, and especially such maintenance of Christ’s name as effaces ours.

Our Lord accordingly singles out of the Decalogue the two great prohibitions of murder on the one hand and of adultery on the other. Assuredly He came not to make void the law or the prophets, but to give their fulness. He not only went farther than either, but declared that a righteousness surpassing that of the Scribes and Pharisees was indispensable for entering the kingdom of the heavens. He most pointedly sets His word with divine authority, so as to contrast what He laid down far beyond the claims of the law. In the case before us, as looking lustfully convicts of adultery before God, so whosoever put away his wife, save for cause of fornication, made her commit adultery, as
well as him who married her. Thus He established a moral basis, not for
a nation of mixed character, but fit for God’s family and kingdom,
which judged the heart’s evil and allowed no concession to
hardheartedness. And what can be plainer than on this later occasion
(Matt. 19:1-9) His going up to the beginning, long before the law, to
God’s instituted order and word in Gen. 2? There again His own word
is full and final authority, for the Messiah was the Jehovah God of
Israel. Whatever had been allowed by Moses, He is Mediator of a better
covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. It is God speaking
in Him who is Son: “But I say to you” . . . 49 ♦

* * * * *

Brief Excursus on
Unscriptural Divorce and Remarriage

Here in Matt. 6:27-32 the Lord deals unsparingly with the proclivity of
our hearts to indulge lust. Moreover, Christians have abused what our
Lord said, either by attempting to prohibit divorce for the cause of
adultery (i.e., no divorce under any circumstance) or by adding mere
desertion (i.e., desertion not involving fornication) as another basis for
divorce, even labeling their contradiction of the Lord as the “Pauline
privilege,” based on a false use of 1 Cor. 7:15, as if it allows divorce
for mere desertion. The Lord restricted reasons for valid divorce down
to only one from the permission in Deut. 24:1-5 -- to but one cause
alone (grounding this in the created order at the beginning of man’s
history), as W. Kelly said above, and Paul did not contradict what our
Lord said in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9, by adding another cause. See
W. Kelly’s trenchant comments on 1 Cor. 7:15. He emphasizes that the
deserted one (no fornication involved) is not free to remarry.

J. N. Darby wrote (emphasis added):

A person having left and being a long time away is not sufficient,
as they may come back, and the tie had not been broken -- only
that, as to criminality, after some seven years, in England the
courts would not hold a person guilty of bigamy.

On the other hand, according to 1 Cor. 7, I cannot doubt that
the Christian, deliberately deserted by the unchristian partner, was
in every way free, free that is to marry; but it assumes deliberate
forsaking by the one who went away. The Christian was never to


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do it, and if obliged to leave, to remain unmarried or return. 50

Emphasis is added, the statement showing that he held that mere desertion (i.e., desertion without fornication being involved) did not break the tie, and the deserted one was not free to marry another. On the other hand, “deliberate forsaking” (i.e., where fornication is involved) allows remarriage for the one “deliberately deserted.” JND understood 1 Cor. 7:15 to be speaking of “deliberate forsaking.” In actual result, both WK and JND (as well as many others) held the same teaching that there is only one Scriptural ground for divorce.

Our Lord stated this one ground for divorce in the part of Matthew where the gospel of the kingdom was preached at hand (i.e., before Matt. 13). Was there to be this fraudulent “Pauline privilege” 51 for the disciples awaiting the arrival of the kingdom? Then the Lord repeated the one exception (but used the word “fornication”) afterwards in the part of Matthew that has the kingdom in its mystery aspect in view (i.e., the present form of the kingdom in which we find ourselves). 52 Matt. 19:9 may no more be changed by the mythical “Pauline privilege” of 1 Cor. 7 than may Matt. 5:32. The one cause applies whether the king is presented as at hand, or whether it is delayed as now.

The Lord brought the number of reasons for divorce down to one, the one which breaks the marriage tie (i.e., other than death), and grounded it on the created order, but the alleged “Pauline privilege” of 1 Cor. 7:15 increases the number of reasons again.

The Lord said, “whosoever marries one that is put away commits adultery.” Commits adultery when? once only, by the initial sexual act? and then the marriage is transformed into a scriptural marriage after that? That initial act of sin suddenly changes a sinful, unscriptural marriage into a scriptural one? -- namely, from an adulterous union to an unadulterous union? That would be quite a power for sin to have if that were true. That sounds like a convenient form of spiritual alchemy to me. “Commits adultery” signifies an on-going status of such a marriage.

The next effort to get a change in the on-going, adulterous marital

50. Letters 2:130.

51. Another remarked to me that this designation, so used, sounds like salesmanship for a false idea, whereas the true Pauline privilege is found in Eph. 5:22-33.

52. The exception is given in Matthew alone, the gospel that brings before us so much concerning the governmental ways of God.

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status is claiming that repentance changes the status of the adulterous marriage. That at least admits it is an on-going status for a while -- until repentance. Not only does that notion set aside “commits adultery,” but the fact that repentance does not change the on-going marital status is also seen by the following consideration. Suppose two Christians divorce their respective spouses not for the scriptural reason, and marry each other. They are in an on-going marriage concerning which Scripture says: “commits adultery.” After a time, one repents and the other does not. Is the marriage then non-adulterous for the repentant one, but adulterous for the unrepentant one? You see that the adulterous status subsists. 53 The truth is that the marriage status does not change because of repentance, either by one or by both. (Death can change it, of course (Rom. 7:3)). If those involved in such a marriage repent, they are restored to personal communion with God, but they are guilty of having done something that has gotten them into an on-going situation. The status of the marriage continues. The government of God that they have brought on themselves by their sin continues on them, regarding the status of such a marriage -- a marriage against which Christ had warned and whose word they disobeyed. But to break up the unscriptural marriage would be repeating the rashness involved in contracting the adulterous marriage in the first place. To own, and bow under, God’s government, is ever the way for a child of God.

I wrote to a Greek scholar regarding the continuous sense and he responded that the view was “harsh.” (That seems to imply that the text can be regarded as speaking of an on-going status). There are also theologians who say that the idea of eternal punishment is harsh. Not a human thought concerning “harsh” is the criterion but rather a matter of what God’s Word teaches.

I wrote to Dr. Spiros Zodhiates and his assistant called me, stating he was authorized to speak for Dr. Zodhiates about my inquiry and we spoke about this together for some time and were quite in agreement that such was the continuing marital status, but, he added, Dr. Zodhiates would not recommend the break-up of such a marriage, as that compounds the problems already created -- to which I agreed, only I added something concerning the pair bowing to the governmental hand of God on them, something into which they entered voluntarily through

53. A correspondent insisted that upon that one’s repentance, God “sanctifies” the marriage. That is not merely presumption, it is unholliness under the cover of a misuse of repentance.
disobedience to the Word of God, bringing this on themselves. 54

Concerning fellow Christians recognizing repentance and the soul’s personal restoration to God is one thing; the marriage is not sanctified however, and such an on-going marital status may not be connected with the Lord’s table.

There is another condition of marriage which has an on-going result and that is the salvation of a polygamist in a place where the gospel has been newly introduced. Not being husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2), he is debarred, not from the Lord’s table, but from exercising oversight in the assembly -- which prohibition indicates he may be at the Lord’s table. Repentance for having married more than one wife cannot change the marital status and/or allow the exercise of oversight. It is an on-going, polygamous marriage and repentance cannot change it. The man needs to bow under the government of God, and be a father to his children and a husband to his wives. Perhaps this may help some to see the unchanging, on-going status of the marriage begun in adultery, that repentance does not change the marital status, and that the result of consummating a marriage in adultery is worse than being barred from exercising oversight -- i.e., being barred from the Lord’s table, as commensurate with the gravity of the sin. 55

It should be mentioned that a spouse who has been divorced by the other spouse, but not on the scriptural ground, is not free to remarry unless the other commits fornication. A spouse who has been rightly divorced by the other on the scriptural ground is not free to remarry.

{Let} marriage [be held] every way in honor, and the bed [be] undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers will God judge (Heb. 13:4).

Flee fornication. Every sin which a man may practise is without the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body (1 Cor. 6:18).

For this is the [will] of God, [even] your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, (not in passionate

54. Dr. Zodhiates view of the continuous status may be found in his book What About Divorce, AMG Publishers: Chatanooga, 1984.

Recommended is Notes on Marriage and Divorce, by Adrian Roach and also Marriage, Divorce, and Separation, both available from the publisher.

55. The repentant one, say the husband, bowing to the government of God on him, conducts himself as a father to his children and a husband to his wife.
desire, even as the nations who know not God,) not overstepping the rights of and wronging his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, even as we also told you before, and have fully testified. For God has not called us to uncleanness, but in sanctification. He therefore that [in this] disregards, not man, but God, who has given also his Holy Spirit to you (1 Thess. 4:3-8).

**Matthew 5:33-37:**

*Swearing -- Honesty in the Heart*

(33) Again, ye have heard that it has been said to the ancients, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt render to the Lord what thou hast sworn. (34) But I say unto you, Do not swear at all; neither by the heaven, because it is [the] throne of God; (35) nor by the earth, because it is [the] footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is [the] city of the great King. (36) Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. (37) But let your word be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; but what is more than these is from evil.

Again, we draw on W. Kelly.

◆ Thus the Lord goes far beyond perjury or breaking a vow. He prohibits swearing altogether in the intercourse of daily life. Our word therein is to be, Yea, yea, or Nay, nay. That which is more than these has no sanction from God, and is therefore of evil, or the evil one, the enemy of God and man. All such asseveration as the Lord illustrates from the facts of Jewish habit arose from the constant experience of men in deceiving or evading. They therefore resorted to such means of insuring the truth. But these efforts defeated themselves; for we know from a reliable Jewish contemporary of the NT inspired writers that oaths by earth, heaven, sun, stars, and the entire universe, were not counted binding. Only those obliged the conscience which were by God's name direct and express; nay others might be transgressed. As the Lord supposed in those He addresses poverty of spirit and purity of heart, He proscribed absolutely all such swearing as offensive to God and incompatible with the place of His sons.

Nor is it only Jews then, but professing Christians now, that show themselves as indifferent to the Lord's authority as if He had never thus solemnly uttered His mind. Among Protestants there is some little care to avoid profanity by adopting light and foolish exclamations, or by repeating heathen terms derived from their Greek or Latin reading, forgetting that if the idols are nothing, the demons behind them are real.
and evil. Romanists are much less scrupulous. It is sad to think how perverts go farther in excuse for their blasphemous phrases than those born and bred in their vain superstitions.

Take the following proof from the late Cardinal Newman’s Lectures on certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Submitting to the Catholic Church:

Listen to their conversation; listen to the conversation of any multitude, or any private party; what strange oaths mingle with it! God’s heart, and God’s eyes, and God’s wounds, and God’s blood: you cry out, “How profane!” Doubtless; but do you not see that the special profaneness above Protestant oaths lies, not in the words but simply in the speaker, and is the necessary result of that insight into the invisible world which you have not? You use the vague words, “Providence,” or “the Deity,” or “good luck,” or “nature”; where we, whether now or of old, realize the Creator in His living works, instruments, and personal manifestations, and speak of the “Sacred Heart,” or “the Mother of Mercies,” or “our Lady of Walsingham,” or “St. George for Merry England,” or “loving St. Francis,” or “dear St. Philip.” Your people would be as varied and fertile in their adjurations and invocations as a Catholic populace, if they believed as we (Ninth Lecture, p. 232).

It is grace alone which delivers from Popery and even Protestantism, and makes it a divine joy to be a Christian, neither more nor less. Irreverence of every sort, worldly or superstitious, becomes intolerably evil in one’s eyes; and it is the first of duties for the believer to hear these words of Christ and reduce them to practice. But is it not an awful instance of Satan’s blinding power, that while none but the vilest of Protestants would think of excusing his own ungodly badinage, a grave clergyman in his new born (or at least early open) apology for the shameless fooling of Papists should plead so barefacedly, not only for such ebullitions in word, but for turning the Last Judgment into a play of fireworks, and argue for it that “they are making one continuous and intense act of faith” (p. 237)?

But we must carefully remember, that our Lord in no way forbids an oath before the magistrate or judge. This is not of evil; but of good, being of divine authority. For men swear by a greater, and the oath is a term to all dispute as making matters sure. To refuse it is to deny God’s authority in any who represent Him in earthly things, and hence called by His name and translated “judges,” as in Ex. 21:6, 32:8, 9, 28. See also Psa. 82:6. The principle is asserted in Lev. 5:1, to which the Lord, far from setting aside on the mount, bowed when adjured by the high
priest (Matt. 26:63, 64), though silent before.

In like manner James 5:12 with marked earnestness forbids swearing either by heaven or by earth. These were not judicial adjuration, which does not fall under people’s swearing. It was rather being sworn in God’s name. Nor did our Lord any more than His servant prohibit such appeals to God as in Rom. 1:9, 1 Cor. 15:31, 2 Cor. 1:23, Gal. 1:20, or the like. The scruple of Friends or Separatists has no foundation in scripture. 56

**Matthew 5:38-42:**

**Retaliation -- Resist not Evil**

(38) Ye have heard that it has been said, Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. (39) But I say unto you, not to resist evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other; (40) and to him that would go to law with thee and take thy body coat, leave him thy cloak also. (41) And whoever will compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. (42) To him that asks of thee give, and from him that desires to borrow of thee turn not away.

This passage does not mean that if a Christian is falsely charged with sin he may not answer that charge. We must weigh all before God in His presence. Regarding v. 42, if we are followers of God (Eph. 5:1) and we find that He gives with wisdom (1 John 5:14, James 4:3), ought we not to do so as He does? Moreover, we are exhorted to good works for necessary wants (i.e., needs; Titus3:14). Here are some helpful words regarding the passage before us.

◆ Then in Matt. 5:40, it is the spirit of the thing, not the literal turning of the cheek, etc. In the Epistles we have what is even higher -- to be forgiving, not self-assertive, meek and lowly, following the Lord, not answering railing for railing (1 Pet. 2). This should be our character; not yielding, however, where there is evil, for then we ought to be as firm as a rock. Yet should it be a quiet firmness, not a lot of clamor like a horse’s hoof, but like the clean animal which had a divided hoof (Lev. 11). There was never one so unresisting as the blessed Savior Himself. Such a spirit is what the world despises, tramples under foot, and thoroughly misunderstands, they put graciousness down as cowardice, yet never was one so faithful as He who is the pattern of grace. Look at

Psa. 40:9. The great congregation was Israel, when all the males had to appear before Jehovah and He went up with them. “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation” -- the very opposite of cowardice. And quite compatible with the most perfect faithfulness is His meekness and gentleness. The faithful man of this Psa. 40 is the poor man of Psa. 41. I have no doubt, too, the spirit of Christ in the remnant is also there. A greater number have gone astray in the proper understanding of the Psalms than in any other part of the scripture. They call for greater subjection of mind to rightly divide them, than perhaps any other book of the Bible. We shall be kept right if we have the Lord ever before us, as revealed in the word. Christ is the key to it all.

I have no doubt they were making a misuse of that communication: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” It was not for them to avenge themselves, but it was given as instruction to the judges in their administration of justice. But we are called to more than righteousness. The Christian standard is vastly higher than the Jewish.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men has appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly [as to ourselves], righteously [towards others] and godly [as regards God] {Titus2:11-12}.

We should never act unrighteously, but graciously, and godly. The principles of the kingdom of heaven show us we are to act graciously. The kingdom of heaven was “at hand” when the Lord was here; it is in “mystery” now that the King is on high; and by and by the kingdom will be in “power.” What this chapter presents corresponds to much that we get in the Epistles of Peter. For instance,

not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, etc. {1 Pet. 3:9}.

Also

Let your yieldingness be known unto all men {Phil. 4:5}.

It is necessary to remember that every truth has its counter-truth; there should never be yieldingness and graciousness at the expense of holiness.

Follow [or pursue] peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord {Heb. 12:14};

so it is guarded: and these guards we need. The Lord Himself is the perfect pattern. He was pre-eminently the unresisting one; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter! But He Who is the Lamb is the Lion also. And we must remember that now, while we are here and the Lord rejected, we have to show this grace. We shall not always have to show it. What is said of the Lord in Psa. 2, is said of the overcomer in Rev.
2. It is now that we have the opportunity of carrying out these principles which the Lord has revealed as those of His kingdom.

Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:39).

Of course we must be careful that we understand these principles. This is not the spirit of defiance; for in this there may be real pride. It is nonresistance to evil. Look at the dignity of the Lord Jesus when they smote Him. He did not turn the other cheek. We must seek to understand the principle of the thing. Was Paul acting according to this when he said,

God shall smite thee, thou whited wall {Acts 23:3}?

There was only One Who was the fine flour of the meal offering. The greater the pressure the more the perfection of the fine flour is shown out. Even the blessed apostle there failed his impetuosity came to the top. In the O.T. we read,

He who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city {Prov. 16:22}.

A saint of God is not to keep company with an angry man. Grace, however, at once showed itself in the apostle. When they said,

Revilest thou God's high priest {Acts 23:4}?

he said,

I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written,
Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people:

he bowed to the word at once. Let us remember what Peter says, for it is in keeping with the principle here. A saint suffering for what is right, and taking it patiently is a plain instruction for us. What a splendid testimony we should bear if we all carried out these principles! The infidel could not say then that Christianity is a failure. It is the neglect of the word of God that has brought things where they are. It is not the fault of the word, but of the neglect of it. Ah better never to have had a revelation than, with the knowledge of it, to have turned aside from the holy commandment. Spite of all the corruptions of Christianity there is a contrast between those countries which have had but the outward knowledge of Christianity and those that are still heathen.

If any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat [thy inside garment], let him have thy cloak also [the outside one] (Matt. 5:40).

I do not think any of us could make any mistake as to the principle here. Under the law they were not allowed to keep it overnight if the man was
poor, because it was the covering of the bed. For the christian to
prosecute another is unbecoming; and if himself prosecuted, there is the
opportunity to show the difference between the christian and the
worldling. We can always put things into the Lord’s hands.

It is a poor thing for the christian to stand on his rights. If Moses
(Num. 12) had stood for his rights, the Lord would not have stood up for
him; and if we stand for ours, He will not stand up for us. The Spirit’s
testimony to Moses was that He was very meek. 57 He did not resist
them, and, in result, Miriam got the leprosy and needed her brother’s
prayers. As christians we are forbidden to go to law. I believe that v. 4
in Phil. 4 -- the book of christian experience, as it has been called --
would cover much that we have here.

Let your yieldingness be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand,
and this in two ways.

In all these verses of our Gospel we have different examples of the
same truth.

Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain
(v. 40).

If in Matt. 5:39 we have “resist not evil,” here it is “be not overcome
of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Verse 42 has been a puzzle to
many who want to act rightly. I have no doubt the meaning of it is that
we should be liberal-minded. In the OT. the blessedness of this is
pointed out. Of the Lord it is said, “He went about doing good.” We
are to “do good to all men, specially to them who are of the household
of faith” (Gal. 6:10). Where we have opportunity to give, let us
remember, “Freely ye have received, freely give.” But would it be right
to give, if we knew the person would make an ill use of it? Must we use
that as an excuse if we have been victimized? How ready some people
are to borrow? Surely there are counter-truths to guide us in all these
questions. The good man spoken of in Psa. 112 will not only “show
favor and lend,” but “will guide his affairs with discretion.” There is a
guard for us. Suppose a thoroughly lazy man, who will not work though
able, but lives by borrowing -- 2 Thess. 3:10 affords direction for us.
That supposes a man who refuses to work when he can. There may be
an excellent brother out of work, and in need, and it is a privilege to
help such. But Scripture is given us to guide in all cases. It is not a book

57. [Meekness is not insisting on one’s own rights. We must, however, insist on God’s
rights. So did the Lord Jesus.]
of rules, though all scripture is the rule to the christian, and where saints
wait on the Lord He knows how to make plain. There are cases for
exhortation. The very word that says, “From him that would borrow of
thee turn thou not away,” says also, “Owe no man anything”
{Rom. 13:8}. And a christian in a right state of soul would not be happy
to owe any man anything. A christian is not governed by the world’s
standard. If one, for instance, becomes bankrupt and gets a “legal”
release from the payment of his debts in full, is he not still before the
Lord, morally responsible, though legally acquitted?

There was a man (I don’t know if a christian) who, putting up as an
M.P., was found to have been a bankrupt. It is known, however, that
afterwards, being very successful in business, he had invited all his
creditors to meet him. They did so and found a luncheon provided for
them, and, under each of their plates, a check for the unpaid balance due
to them respectively, with 5 per cent, interest added thereto. I also knew
a christian who came back to England from New Zealand in order to pay
all his creditors in full. I would not be hard on a man who had failed and
never had an opportunity to repay; we want to be hard on ourselves and
not on others.

So in this verse we should show a generous spirit, but we need
heavenly wisdom. All these things call for looking to the Lord.

Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother in need, and
shutteth up his bowels of compassion towards him, how dwelleth
the love of God in him? {1 John 3:17}.

We must not forget that side. Yet we must not encourage evil. We may
share a man’s sin by giving to him, as for instance, if we knew a man
would get drunk if we gave him money. There are two words translated
“covetousness” in the NT: one means desiring more than you have got;
the other keeping back what you ought to give. The Lord does not
calculate as men do. The poor widow had cast in, according to the
balances of the sanctuary, more than they all, though they had cast in
something. The Lord still sits over against the treasury.

I think that poor widow is often quoted unjustly. People often say,
“the widow’s mite”; but she had two mites, all she possessed, and she
put in both. We are warned that “the love of money is a root of all evil
{1 Tim. 6:10}, and no doubt christians communities have been great
lovers of money, and all sorts of schemes have been resorted to to get
money. The Lord will not have hypocrisy; He must have reality. 58 ♦

Matthew 5:43-48: Hate -- Love

(43) Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, [bless those who curse you,] do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who [insult you and] persecute you. (45) that ye may be [the] sons of your Father who is in [the] heavens; for he makes his sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. (46) For if ye should love those who love you, what reward have ye? Do not also the tax-gatherers the same? (47) And if ye should salute your brethren only, what do ye extraordinary? Do not also the Gentiles the same? (48) Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The following comments are from the same source as above.

♦ It hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

This latter clause was a deduction, the inference of an evil nature. The law said, “Love your neighbor”; but there was no instruction to hate an enemy. “But I say unto you, Love your enemies.” No one could do this naturally or apart from the grace of God. Only in the knowledge of the grace of God -- that when we were enemies Christ died for us, can we do so. Very lovely is this instruction, when we think of Himself, and the unrighteous way He was treated -- the crown of thorns, mocking, scourging, and nailing to the cross, and then the cry, “Father, forgive them.” A little reflex of this we see in Stephen. They cast him out and stoned him, and he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge {Acts 7:60}. The same grace that enabled Stephen -- a man of like passions with ourselves -- to act thus can enable us. It is very lovely, and meets the Lord's mind. But there is a great contrast between the Master and the servant. Stephen said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” {Acts 7:59}. The Lord Jesus could dismiss His spirit. He only. There is a singular connection between Stephen and the apostle Paul. There you get the beginning of the gospel of glory. The twelve had the gospel of the grace of God committed to them. But Paul says,

The gospel of the glory of the blessed (or, happy) God which was committed to me (1 Tim. 1:11).

The others had spoken of the exaltation of Christ, but of Stephen it is said,

He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of
God {Acts 7:56},

and he bore testimony to it. And the Lord lays His hand on him who was
standing by and consenting to Stephen’s death, and says, “To you I
commit that gospel of the glory of God.” One that acts on the principles
of this chapter will specially I need the Lord’s care and protection. How
the world would take advantage and seek to tread on them! They need
the Lord’s protection and they shall get it. Paul says, when all forsook
him, “the Lord stood by me and strengthened me,” and he was delivered
out of the mouth of the lion. And He is the One we also want. And
unless there is the realization of that we shall not have power to carry
this out.

In Matt. 5:45 it is, not children but sons; “children” is always
connected with birth. The apostle John in his writings never uses the
word “son” for any but the Lord Jesus, with but one exception (Rev.
21:7). When he refers to the saints of God it is always “children.” In the
1st chapter of his Gospel, v. 12,

as many as received Him to them gave He power to become
children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which
were born . . . of God.

So in his 1st Epistle (3:1),

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that
we should be called children of God.

But when it is a question of “sons” it refers to our *position*; and is
connected with redemption in Galatians, while here it is a question of
character. “The sons of your Father” -- “your Father that makes His sun
to rise on the evil and on the good” -- not simply God, but your Father,
and we are called to have the family character and show the same grace,
as sons of such a Father. The one that loves his enemies, and does good
to them that hate him, bears the character of a son of the Father who
makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good. Think how He is
treated and blasphemed, and of the character of man! Yet He treats them
so, and He is “your Father.”

Matt. 5:47, 48. There ought to be a maturity about us to better show
out that family character. There is no such thought here as sinless
perfection. The context must always show the meaning of “perfect.”
God says to Abraham, “I am El Shaddai” -- the all-sufficient One; ‘all
resources are in Me; now use them and be perfect.’ Paul says,
We speak wisdom among them that are perfect {1 Cor. 2:6},
there it {i.e., the word “perfect”} is in contrast with a babe. The Lord Jesus says,
I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be
perfected {Luke 13:32}.

Here He means resurrection. And it is used of us too -- that they without
us should not be made perfect -- that is, perfected in resurrection. In
Phil. 3:12-15 the word is used in two senses.
Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,
but I follow after {Phil. 3:12}, etc.,
i.e., he would not be perfect till he reached the Lord in glory.
Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded {Phil.
3:15}.

So there was a sense in which he was not perfect, another sense in
which he was perfect, viz., a full grown christian, and others with him.
Then again in Heb. 6 --
leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto
perfection {Heb. 6:1}.

The principles are the alphabet; we are not always to be in the A B C
class, but to go on to full growth. Referring back to ch. 5 we find that
they needed that one taught them these principles again. The Corinthians
had never been more than babes; these Hebrews had, and had gone back,
so that they needed milk again and not strong meal, which belongs to the
full grown. So we see by these examples how necessary it is for us to
consider the context in all cases. 59 ◆

Matthew 6:
The Father’s Eye in Secret
Upon the Disciple, for His Support

Matthew 6:1-18:
With the Father in Secret

(1) Take heed not to do your alms {righteousness ⁶⁰} before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.

We may look at v. 1 as prefatory to three forms of righteousness that the flesh hypocritically imitates, and with which the Lord deals in vv. 2-18:

(1) giving of one’s substance to others;
(2) prayer to the Father and the consequent forgiving attitude to others;
(3) looking religious to others.

What is brought before us is “moral principles accordant with His (the Father’s) nature.”

The Lord had said in Matt. 5:20 that for entry into the kingdom of the heavens, righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Here are three occasions where such righteousness is required.

We should also note that righteousness means consistency with relationships. We are to act consistent with what these relationships entail, never something at the expense of what is due God.

Matthew 6:1-4:
The Father Rejects Hypocrisy In Giving

(2) When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (3) But thou, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does; (4) so that thine alms may be in secret, and

⁶⁰. JND says righteousness is read by many, and W. Kelly understands righteousness here.}
Chapter 1.4: Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount

thy Father who sees in secret will render [it] to thee.

The Lord calls the giving of one's substance to others, accompanied by deliberately making it known: hypocrisy. It is self-advertisement. Of course, a hypocrite is cast into the outer darkness {Matt. 25:30}. That is a person who is constitutionally a hypocrite. A child of God is not accounted such by God, but the child of God may act hypocritically. All hypocritical action can only have a reward, if any, here on earth (unless one accounts being cast into the outer darkness a reward). The person so engaged is seeking some present acclaim or honor. That is all the "reward" (cp. vv. 5, 16) he will receive for His hypocrisy. Moreover, it is a dreadfully shameful thing to do, for Christ never did such a thing.

A philanthropist may do what a child of God may do. The acts might be identical, but the motive is different. We see the importance of having the Father before the soul. The mere philanthropist is an unbeliever, but the child of God has the Father's will and directions before the soul.

W. Kelly wrote:

◆ How elevating it is for the soul, in having to do with the relief of distress among men, to act in secret, and in the sight of the Father that seeth in secret as the One to repay! It is not enough to exclude other men. To bring Him in and in secret is essential to the purity of the case. It is He who is above all, and through all, and in us all; and the least of His gifts to us is what enables us to help the suffering and the needy. To leave Him out is the essence of unbelief. To bring Him in is what we as His children owe Him in love and honor, the witness of our dependence, of our gratitude, and of our loyal service.

We have only to look at the ways of men in Christendom, in order to learn where neglect of the Savior's teaching leads His disciples, and the influence of self, not only on the world but on the godly swayed by the spirit of the age. What notoriety! What emulation! What boasting or pride, and even ambition! What a contrast with Him who being rich for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched! And how striking that not in rich Corinth but in the poor churches of Macedonia, scripture tells us of the grace of God bestowed in this way; how in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their free-hearted liberality! It was not even according as the apostle hoped, but beyond; and the secret of it was, that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will. Thus is genuineness of love proved.

But there is another invaluable word of the Lord as to this which calls for our heed. “But thou when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand
know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.” It is not only from others but from ourselves that such doings should be hidden. Self is a subtler evil than men. The action of grace is defiled and becomes a poison to me and a dishonor to God when I think of it with complacency. If rightly done, it was passed to our Father for His remembrance, not ours.

Here lay Job’s failure, which no inflictions of Satan, nor unsympathy, nor yet suspicion, of friends even touched. He was a most gracious man, but he thought of it, and not of God only who wrought in Him. To this he must be and was brought: to boast only in God, judge himself, and submit with all his heart. Part of the lesson was that his left hand should not know what his right hand did. This on the contrary, up to the end of his appeal (Job 31), he knew only too well. But all was changed when, instead of looking at fruits of grace in himself, he saw God in very faithfulness withering up all self-satisfaction. “I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).  

Matthew 6:5-15:

*The Father Rejects Hypocrisy in Prayer*

(5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they should appear to men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render [it] to thee. (7) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as those who are of the nations: for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. (8) Be not ye therefore like them, for your Father knows of what things ye have need before ye beg [anything] of him. (9) Thus therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in the heavens, let thy name be sanctified, (10) let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth; (11) give us today our needed bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors, (13) and lead us not into temptation, but save us from evil. (14) For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father also will forgive you [yours], but if ye do not forgive men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your

offences.

First we have the secrecy of private prayer stressed as contrasted to the public display by religious flesh drawing attention to itself. Self-judgment is always well for us. Such secret prayer does not preclude united prayer (Matt. 18:19; Acts 12:5). Proper balance is ever needful and never obtained where there is not strong self-judgment.

Here (v. 6) is another occasion of “reward” (cp. vv. 2, 16), pious-sounding, public prayers for notoriety as a pious person -- not that public prayer is forbidden. Motive determines its character.

Next there is the warning against vain repetitions, not against repetition. Every word of God is pure! But what is one to think of, for example, professed Christians repeating over and over in a chant-like way:

“Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Blessed be thou and the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

And to whom is the prayer addressed?

The following words of warning by W. Kelly are apropos.

◆ It is quite unworthy of the Father, and even of His children thus to trifle in prayer. There are no doubt occasions for long persistence, as well as earnest repetition, in prayer. Our Lord Himself is the example of thus spending the night through, and of praying over and over again the same words. Neither of these special suplications could be reprehended in others where they are seasonable and requisite. But there is scarce any habit more common, even among believers, than lengthy utterances which are not prayers at all. For they express the individual’s views sometimes of the discourse preceding, his own or some other’s, sometimes of all he can muster of the varied circumstances of the church, or at least his own party, and of all the world outside. Occasionally if not often the one in the attitude and form of prayer forgets that he is speaking to his Father, and slips unwittingly into what sounds like teaching Him the doctrines which delight himself.

These things ought surely not to be. What reverence becomes one by grace entitled to say, Abba, Father! What deep sense of His majesty and holiness who has shown infinite mercy to such as deserved everlasting judgment! How often do we not fail, however favored we may be, in judging self and grieving the Holy Spirit! The royal preacher could say of old,

Be not rash with thy mouth, and set not thy heart to utter anything
before God; for God is in the heavens, and thou upon earth:
therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice through a multitude of words {Eccl. 5:2}.

How much deeper should be our humility whom, notwithstanding a far fuller sense of our evil and of His grace, He calls His children! How sad the inconsistency, if kept from Pharisaic hypocrisy, to drop into the inconsiderate foolish verbiage of Gentiles!

We are brought to God at an infinite cost. We are taught our utter vileness as well as our shameful sins. When we draw near to pray, ought we not to have the hallowing solemnizing effect in weighing our words, whatever the love that invites us into His presence? Then we may be without anxiety as to anything, but in everything make our requests known to Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. He loves that we should confide in dependence on Him. Let us never forget that our Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we beg of Him.

To think that we shall gain a hearing by our much speaking is a dishonor to Him and even to us. 62 ♦

Previously it was pointed out that the prayer given was for the disciples in their then state, as born of God, but before the cross, as not knowing redemption, and not having the Spirit of sonship indwelling whereby we cry Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}. We come before the throne of grace, which is where He is, not here on earth. The prayer given is not a prayer for Christians. After discussing this previously, W. Kelly was quoted briefly discussing the character of the prayer given to the disciples. 63 No doubt this prayer will be quite suitable for the coming godly Jewish remnant after the rapture has occurred and before they are brought into the blessing of the New Covenant.

There is something said by J. N. Darby concerning this prayer that is food for thought.

♦ The prayer taught the disciples by the Lord, is clearly the prayer of the Remnant, but it is not for the Kingdom of the Son of David as such, and supposes, like the Beatitudes, heaven. The Father's kingdom is looked for, which is the heavenly part spoken of in ch. 13, the earthly part being called the Kingdom of the Son of man. It is to be remarked,


63. There is a fuller examination, and a comparison with Luke, in The Bible Treasury 16:3-8, 22-25, 40-43.
it is all for the wants of him who prays, and those in like position, as associated in the same place -- “Our,” no individuality, and no intercession, nor in this the love and power of the Spirit, but common wants, of course perfect in the expression of them. They are contrasted with the Gentiles. But these are everlasting principles of righteousness, not in merely dispensational questions. God’s righteousness, not here justifying, but moral principles accordant with His nature.

It is also worthy of note, that though the Father is addressed in heaven, yet the petitions in the Lord’s prayer refer all to earth. The desires are holy; the utmost desire is that the Father’s Kingdom may come. Heavenly influence owned, heavenly Father’s Name hallowed, but no heavenly hope. Heaven is looked to to bring its influence on earth, to give it its character, but no taking man up there (the doxology has no fit sense). It is assumed that God’s will is done, and perfectly, in heaven, and it is desired that it may be so on earth. It allies itself perfectly to chapter {Matt.} 24. It is the time evil is in the world (not Adam in Paradise, even in thought), but the desire that it may be gone out of it. Luke is more personal: Father, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; give us our needed food for each day; and forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation. This is personal, as to the Father, and personal need as to us, not a Remnant dispensational thing as Matthew ever.

We have His name hallowed (in the personal relationship) His kingdom to come, then for us our personal daily wants met, forgiveness for we forgive, and avoiding being tested by God -- terrible thing, used where humbling and self-knowledge are needed. That is all.  

We come now to Matt. 6:14, 15. Surely we have met both the one of unforgiving spirit as well as the one who forgives on no spiritual basis whatsoever, but rather thinking of being Mr. Nice. Neither is the fruit of the self-judged spirit. There is not balance in divine matters where there is not habitual self-judgment before God. Again we quote from W. Kelly’s series on Matt. 5 - 7.

◆ The Lord was not content with this impressive call for practical grace in the prayer prescribed to His disciples:

Forgive us our debts, as we also forgave our debtors.

He immediately after follows it up with emphasis.

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64. Notes and Comments 5:121-122.
For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences.

There is such confusion in Christendom as to the forgiveness of sins that the true force of the Lord’s solemn words is lost for the most part. The vast majority have so hazy a view of eternal redemption that they fear to believe in the full and abiding efficacy of Christ’s work. The glad news, or the gospel, of God is thus for them shorn of its power. They are no better off than a Jew who brought his offering, confessed his sin, and went away with the comfort that it was forgiven. As he had to offer often, so the ill-taught Christian talks of his need to be sprinkled again and again with that blood, though expressly said to be shed once for all.

What blindness, if we adduce nothing else, to the testimony of Heb. 10! The perfect sacrifice has caused the imperfect to cease. The worshipers once purged have no more conscience of sins; in plain contrast with the Levitical sacrifices, wherein is made year by year remembrance, as the Christian is entitled to remission of sins. Christ came to take away the temporary, and to establish the everlasting. Therefore, when He offered one sacrifice for sins, He for ever [in continuity] sat down on God’s right hand. He had done all perfectly to blot out the guilt of His friends (once His foes); and took His seat as its triumphant proof, from henceforth waiting till His enemies who reject Him and His work be set as footstool of His feet. Then He will come forth and tread them down in their open rebellion at the consummation of the age. But to the Christian the Holy Spirit testifies that their sins and their lawlessnesses God remembers no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin: every thing of the kind is superseded and more than fulfilled in that of Christ.

But here faith fails, because God’s word is not received in its own divine and conclusive authority; and thus are souls defrauded of peace and joy in believing; and entire devotedness to God is curtailed, bought as we are with a price so incalculable. This unbelief is helped on by confounding things that differ, like our text with that complete redemption which rests solely on Christ’s cross. Still more when such blessed institutions of Christianity as baptism and the Lord’s supper were made saving ordinances, not figuratively but intrinsically; and a clerical class was made necessary and of divine right to apply them with due effect to the laity: a figment which outdid the highest claims of Jewish priesthood, and in principle denies the gospel.

But while the Lord does not, here or in any part of His teaching on
the Mount, refer to that redemption which He was to accomplish, He has a weighty lesson to enforce on His disciples in cultivating a spirit of grace. If the Jew in general could not rise above the law in its distance from God, the fear which made the very mediator full of trembling, and the readiness to denounce and curse which it engendered, grace is the atmosphere in which the Christian lives and flourishes. No doubt it is through righteousness; but withal it is grace reigning.

What was it that drew to the Lord Jesus even from John the Baptist? What was it that in spite of a legal environment at length blossomed and bore fruit so sweet in Peter and John and James and a noble army of martyrs and confessors?

What was it that melted Paul’s heart of steel and made him the most ardent and suffering witness to the world of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? What else could begin with the proudest, most self-satisfied, stiff-necked, and rebellious race, and transform them into the poor in spirit, the morning, the meek, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, yea the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and even for His sake, for whom the nation and its high priest judged crucifixion only His due, and so fulfilled the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets?

As it was the grace and truth which gave the disciples life, and would give it abundantly in the power of Christ’s resurrection {John 10:10; 12:24}, so would follow that full and abiding remission which only His blood secures, and this uninterruptedly. But sin indulged does interrupt communion with our God and Father, and needs the advocacy of Christ {1 John 2:1} to cleanse the feet thus defiled, by the washing of water by word {John 13; Eph. 5:26}. His blood retains intact its atoning virtue; but the word is applied by the Spirit in answer to Christ on high, and he that sinned repents in dust and ashes. For this is He that came through water and blood {1 John 5:6}. We need and have both, and cannot do without the water from first to last, as we have had the blood once for all. Whoever ignores, or (still worse) denies, the twofold provision of grace, undermines redemption and muddles the truth of God.

Now the Lord specifies an unforgiving spirit as intolerable to our Father in His daily government of His sons. And no wonder. It is to go back from grace to law, from Christ to wretched self. Hence, as in the prayer, He urges grace toward those who may offend us ever so painfully, and love which He commends to our loyal and tender warning of its lack practically as hateful in His eyes.
For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your offences.

O you who keep up your resentment, and brood over the offences (often exaggerated if not imaginary) of others, beware. You, a Christian, if so, are in utter default of this characteristic duty, as unlike Christ as you can be. Need one say that you are as unhappy as you are hard? Is it nothing to your high spirit, degrading as this is to a Christian, that “your heavenly Father will not forgive you your offences”? Trifle not with so bad and proud a state, and no longer grieve the Holy Spirit of God who sealed you. Let not the sun set upon your wrath, nor give room for the devil {Eph. 4:27}. 65 ♦

Matthew 6:16-18:

The Father Rejects Hypocrisy in Fasting

(16) And when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance; for they disfigure their faces so that they may appear fasting to men: verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (17) But thou, [when] fasting, anoint thy head and wash thy face, (18) so that thou mayest not appear fasting unto men, but to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who sees in secret shall render [it] to thee.

In this case there is more than avoidance of public showmanship involved. Verses 17 and 18 specify a positive step be taken against appearing to fast. Moreover, the word “secret” is mentioned again, twice, as in vv. 4 and 6. What is said here applies in principle to all who fast. Concerning fasting in the NT, the reference given in the note is quite helpful. 66


Chapter 1.4: Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 6:19-34:
The Father With Us, Taking Care of Tomorrow

In the first part of Matt. 6 the child of God is with the Father, in secret especially. Now we come to the corresponding part (of Matt. 6) where the Father is with the child of God. Matt. 6:19-34 may be viewed in three sections having seven parts:

(1) The object as going through the world:
   a. having the right treasure;
   b. having the right discernment;
   c. having the right master.

(2) The Father’s care as going through the world:
   a. having the right One care for us;
   b. having the right One clothe us;
   c. having the right One feed us.

(3) The practical effect concerning tomorrow.

Matthew 6:19-24:
The Disciple’s Object as Going Through the World

HAVING THE RIGHT OBJECT

(19) Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils, and where thieves dig so through and steal;
(20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoils, nor steal; (21) for where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart.

It is very easy to reverse Matt. 6:21 as if it said, ‘for where your heart is there will be also thy treasure,’ from thinking that if my heart is with Christ, my treasure must be in heaven. That reversal is a serious mistake and avoids the self-judgment that we need. Regarding the three matters before us, God has set this matter first. If we have a treasure-heart problem we shall not go through this world as God would have us do, for we are hoarders and self-occupied as fallen.

W. Kelly wrote faithful words regarding this passage

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Christ beyond all others knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He Himself knew what was in man. He seeks treasures on the earth. It may not be gold or property. It may be pleasure or power or position. Some set their heart on fame in letters or learning, in science or art. Some court poetry, oratory, or philosophy. The bar and the bench, the army or the navy, civil government or politics, philanthropy or even the pulpit ordinarily, fire the ambition of others. These objects and all akin which attract the heart of man are treasures on the earth, and beneath the faith to which the Christian is called -- faith in God unseen and eternal. “Love not the world,” wrote His inspired servant,

nor the things that are in the world. If any one loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that detheth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Listen to the Savior's words on the more prevailing snare.

Lay not up for you treasures on the earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves dig not through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also.

The treasures in heaven are the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. On these things we are to set our mind, not on things that are on the earth. For we died with Christ from its best things, the rudiments of the world which Israel had as their religion; and our life is hid with Christ in God. His cross closed all such shadows and ordinances; and therefore is the world crucified to the Christian, and he to the world. If he is truly Christ's, he is heavenly as united to Christ, though he is still on earth, and bears the image of Adam the earthy till He comes.

Be not moved by the unbelieving sneers of those who try to lower as other-worldliness your true objects. These are far above the world, or the habitable earth to come, blessed as it will be when Christ and His saints reign over it. Our proper portion is in heaven and with Christ there. Be not cheated out of that which is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, on which the Epistles enlarge beyond what the disciples could bear when their Master was here, as He Himself tells us (John 16:2).

The wisest of mankind is no judge of what God wills for His
children now. The New Testament is as clear as possible that He would have His own not of the world; indeed our Lord declares that they are not, even as He is not. And as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for those that love Him: them God revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. These are treasures which the Lord calls us to lay up for us in heaven. And nothing can harm them, like earthly treasures by corruption or violence.

Do not say that such an aim is beyond the believer. It would be assuredly, if there were not the grace of God to enable. But we have Christ as Head above, from Whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. His grace suffices one in the most crushing circumstances. And if we have such an Advocate on high, we have One no less divine to work in us here below that we may be strengthened in the inner man. Thus could one of old boast of weaknesses, never of sins, that the power of Christ might tabernacle upon him. 67 ♦

* * * * *

Also, we might take note of the following:

Q. 24. Does Matt. 6:19 forbid Christians accumulating money in banks, burial societies, &c. against “a rainy day” or old age (see vv. 25-34). H.B.C.

A. The verse appears to draw a contrast between earthly and heavenly treasures. A Christian’s treasures are not on earth, and the sooner he knows and believes this, the better able he will be to set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth {Col. 3:2}. Even if he have riches they are not the things which are his own, but another’s (God’s) Luke 16:12. As to the way in which he is to use his riches, whether he is to spend interest or principal, whether he is to have a banking account or no, all this and every other detail must be referred to God, who in His wisdom will guide aright each one who seeks for guidance. We do not think the verse is directed against saving banks. 68

**HAVING THE RIGHT DISCERNMENT**

(22) The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light: (23) but if thine eye be

68. The Bible Student 3:45.
wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is
in thee be darkness, how great the darkness! (Matt. 6:22-23).

If our treasure is on earth, there will our heart be. Why then think that
our whole body would be full of light?

In Scripture’s figurative language, the eye signifies discernment.
Christ Himself is the Father’s object and joy; and He has brought us into
fellowship with His thoughts. Indeed, Christ has taken His place above
and for us He is our great treasure there -- is that so? To be single-eyed,
so to speak, is to have one object filling the soul’s vision -- Himself, the
One who never pleased Himself {John 8:29}.

Verse 22 has to do with guidance from God, with having
discernment concerning what is pleasing to Him. J. N. Darby has some
pointed comments about guidance.

If a child habitually neglected his father, and did not take the trouble
of knowing his mind and will, it is easy to foresee that, when a difficulty
presented itself, this child would not be in a position to understand what
would please his parent. There are certain things that God leaves in
generalities, in order that the state of soul of the individual may be
proved. If, instead of the case I have supposed of a child, it were a
question of a wife towards her husband, it is probable that, if she had the
feelings and mind of a wife, she would not hesitate a moment as to
knowing what would be agreeable to him; and this even when he had
never expressed his will about the matter. Now you cannot escape this
testing: nor will God allow His children to escape it.

If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

As to a convenient and comfortable means of knowing the will of God,
as one might have a receipt for anything, no such thing exists--of knowing
it, I would say, without reference to the state of our own soul. Another
thing--we are often of too much importance in our own eyes; and we
deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such or such a case.
God perhaps has nothing to say to us thereon, the evil being altogether
in the stir we give ourselves. The will of God is perhaps that we should
quietly take an insignificant place. Further, we sometimes seek God’s
will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances where His only will
is that we should not be found in them at all; and where, if conscience
were really in activity, its first effect would be to make us leave them.
Our own will places us there, and we should like nevertheless to enjoy
the comfort of being guided of God in a path which we ourselves have
chosen. This is a very common case.
Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen, that God, in His love, does not always at once reveal His will to us, in order to make us feel our dependence, when there is perhaps in the individual a tendency to act according to his own will. Nevertheless,

if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light {Matt. 6:22; Luke 11:34};

whence it is certain that, if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, That is a poor consolation. I answer, It is rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single, and to walk with God -- not, so to speak, to avoid this trouble in learning His will objectively, but whose desire is to walk with God.

If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him {John 11:10}.

It is always the same principle.

He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life {John 8:12}.

You cannot exempt yourself from the moral law of Christianity.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God {Col. 1:9}.

The mutual connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul: the Lord must be known intimately in order to be able to walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God’s will.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all intelligence, that ye may approve things that are {more} excellent, in order that ye may be sincere and stumble not till the day of Christ {Phil. 1:9-10}.

Finally, it is written that

the spiritual man discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no one {1 Cor. 2:15}.

It is then the will of God, and a precious will, that we should only be able to discern His will according to our own spiritual state; and, in general, when we think that we are judging circumstances it is God who is judging us, judging our state: our business is to keep close to Him.
God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences; and we should thus be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you are seeking how you may discover the will of God without that, you are seeking evil; and it is what we see every day. One Christian is in doubt, in perplexity; another, more spiritual, sees as clear as the day: he is astonished at the uncertainty of the other; he sees no difficulty, and ends by understanding that it lies only in the other’s state of soul.

He with whom these things are lacking is blind, and cannot see afar off [2 Pet. 1:9].

As regards circumstances, I believe that a person may be guided by them; scripture has decided that. It is what it speaks of as being held in with bit and bridle {Psa. 32:9}.

I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye {Psa. 32:8} --
such is the promise and privilege of him who has faith, is near enough to God to understand by a single glance from Him. God who is faithful, has given the promise to guide him thus. He warns us not to be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding of the will, thoughts, or desires of their master. They must be held in with bit and bridle. Doubtless even that is better than to stumble, fall, and run counter to Him who holds us in; but it is a sad state -- and such it is to be guided by circumstances. Undoubtedly, even then, it is merciful on God’s part so to act, but very sad on ours.

Here, however, there must be a distinction drawn between judging what one has to do in certain circumstances, and being guided by them. He who allows himself to be guided by them always acts blindly as to the knowledge of the will of God: there is absolutely nothing moral in it; it is an external force that constrains. Now it is very possible that I may have no judgment beforehand as to what I should do: I know not what circumstances may arise and consequently I can make no resolution. But so soon as the circumstances are there, I judge with a full and divine conviction what is the path of God’s will, and of the Spirit’s intention and power. This requires spirituality, and abiding in communion with God. It is not to be guided by the circumstances, but to be guided by God in them, being near enough to God to be able to judge immediately
what one ought to do, as soon as the circumstances are there . . .

Regarding the wicked eye, W. Kelly wrote:

◆ The “eye” is the index of the nature, not outwardly alone but inwardly.

But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark.

This is man’s condition unless renewed by grace. In this all important respect the Jew, judged by the light in our Lord Jesus, was no better off than the Gentile. They loved not the disciples whom they saw, still less the God whom they saw not. Had they really loved Him that begot, they had also loved him that was begotten by Him. The Lord made this certain and manifest; for in Him was no sin, yet they reviled Him. Grace and truth came through Him, yet they cast Him out as an eater and winebibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners, instead of recognizing the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Hence said He to His disciples when nearing the end of His earthly course,

If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated me before you.
If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, and I chose you out of the world, on this account the world hath hated you. Remember the word that I said to you, A bondman is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep your’s also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But that the word written in their law might be glorified. They hated me without a cause (John 15:18-25).

What comment could be more direct and simple on the wicked eye, and the whole body dark? It is the awful and unremoved evil of the natural man; the mind of the flesh, which is not only death morally, but enmity against God, whose grace is unintelligible to it, no less than His righteousness by virtue of Christ’s atoning death to justify the ungodly, if he believe on Him. The natural man’s faith, if faith it is to be called, is to believe in himself, utterly blind to his iniquity and lawlessness and his total ruin before God.

The very fact that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences, adds, as the words of the Lord Himself prove, immeasurably to man’s guilt. Who so pitiful to failure, who so ready to forgive sins, if they be felt and confessed to Him? But the demonstration of the world’s irremediable evil lies in the undeniable truth that, when God was in Christ reconciling it, it refused all reconciliation; when God rose above all offences, it scorned the boon, buffeted the one who proffered and pressed it on their acceptance, spit His face and crucified Him.

It was no use to make overtures to man. Who could conceive any so great as God had made in Christ. Man was irretrievably ruined. If the Jew boasted that he only was a light of those in darkness, could he deny that he was leader of the blind against the true light, and did his utmost to extinguish what condemned himself no less than the despised Gentile? If therefore the light that was in Israel was thus proved to be darkness, “how great the darkness.” 70

HAVING THE RIGHT MASTER

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and will love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Mammon means riches. Here and in Luke 16:13 the word is personified so as to have the place of a master. In Luke 16:9, 11 it is called unrighteous mammon. The natural man is an unrighteous steward and gives character to what he deals with, hence mammon of unrighteousness. God is not in His thoughts. It is the true disciple’s place and privilege to use the unrighteous mammon, as led of God, in a righteous way. We use it for God, use this world in view of the future above. We are not to desire wealth (though that may come to a disciple). It stands in contrast to the “true riches” (Luke 16:11). Christians with wealth have a word for themselves in 1 Tim. 6:17. They that will be rich (are set on that) shall pierce themselves with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10). Stewardship is an important matter. A divided heart is a terrible heart problem. Unite my heart to fear thy holy name!

Another one says, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father”; but the Lord will not have a divided heart. The Lord is jealous about our hearts. The sinner is often told to give his heart to the Lord, but there is no warrant for this in scripture. It is not a question of bringing, or giving up on the part of the sinner. But

70. The Bible Treasury, New Series 5:148-149.
the christian should give his heart. “My son, give me thy heart” is all right for one in relationship. Here of course it is a question of service, but following and service are intimately connected; so in John 12 it is,

If any man serve me, let him follow me. 71

J. N. Darby wrote:

❖ God has not given us eternal life in order that we might be getting money.

No man can serve two masters, and if you want to be rich, you cannot be seeking to serve God. We may have to do our duty in this world, but it is never our duty to serve mammon and desire riches. 72 ❖

❖ I could not be a magistrate while Satan is the god of this world, for I cannot serve two masters; and if I cannot say on the bench that what Christ says is true, I must be dishonoring Him and serving the world. In the millennium it will not be so. 73 ❖

❖ The affections and duty towards parents are precious and lovely in their place; but the redemption of Jesus has placed us in a new creation, and if He calls us, according to His sovereign rights as Redeemer, to work for Him, we must be wholly given up to it. No man can serve two masters. This is not despising the parental claims; on the contrary, it is recognizing them. If I place myself in this relationship, I ought to recognize it as from God Himself; but then I cannot be entirely at the service of Jesus. Called by Him, I am in another sphere, where family relationship does not enter. If it exists, it is obligatory. This is what was manifested in Jesus. He was subject until He commenced His ministry. From that time He did not know His mother. When His work was ended He recognized her indeed, and with the most exquisite tenderness, even while suffering on the cross. It is not the destruction of the affections, but the power of the Spirit, that carries us into a world of interests of which absorb us. “Salute no man,” said the Lord. “I know no man after the flesh” {2 Cor. 5:16}, said the apostle.

For my own part, even while desiring to use all courtesy (for charity demands it), I am unhappy whenever I find myself on the ground of


human relationships, however lovely they may be: it is not my Master. We have learned that honey does not go with sacrifice. Later we shall have fully developed, and in a better manner, all the sweetest affections; and we have them already in the church. This is the meaning of Mark 10:30. Yet a little while, and the pure affections of the heart will have all their scope, without any movement of selfishness. 74 ❖
❖ Whatever character I meet, Christ is the faithful Witness, the life and the light of man. This faithful Witness owns no goodness but in God. When the young man came to Him, Jesus does not tell him that He Himself is God, for that was not the time to do this. The young man was very lovely, and he thought by adding something to what he had already done he should go to heaven. He came to seek teaching of Jesus, and he gets Him as the end of the law. The faithful Witness touched him. All was laid bare, and the young man’s heart was found given to mammon. 75 ❖

Matthew 6:25–33:
The Father’s Care of the Disciple As Going Through the World

HAVING THE RIGHT ONE CARE
(25) For this cause I say unto you, Do not be careful about your life, what ye should eat and what ye should drink; nor for your body what ye should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment? (26) Look at the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into granaries, and your heavenly Father nourishes them. Are ye not much more excellent than they? (27) But which of you by carefulness can add to his growth one cubit?

W. Kelly wrote:
❖ Anxiety as to the things which the present life needs is natural. All these things the nations of the earth seek after. In God they have no faith, as the Jews professed loudly, but in works denied. But the disciples had the heavenly Father’s name now set before them as the One who is perfect in grace, making His sun shine on evil and good, and sending rain on just and unjust. How true this is! Yet who had affirmed it as a living principle but the Lord on earth, who also set it forth as a model for His own practically, that they might be sons indeed: an astonishing doctrine,

74. Letters of J. N. Darby 1:195
75. Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 34:137.
especially for those, as they were, trained up in the legal ideas of the Jews. So their righteousness was to be, whether alms, prayer, and fasting, not before men but to their Father that sees in secret.

The name of their Father made anxiety about earthly and bodily wants a painful incongruity, and in particular about what kind the supply should be. From Himself the birds read them one lesson, and the lilies another. He nourishes each fleeting creature, He gives the passing flower its beauty.

How much more did He care for His children? It was a touching appeal and carrying with it to every believer the conviction of irresistible truth. They were, they are, called to believe in His sustaining goodness. He never fails in His love: they ought not to fail in resting and counting on it day by day. If tried as to it, let them not doubt that it is for their good. It is impossible for God to lie. Are they to doubt His love Whom the Lord reveals as their Father? He who embraces the least objects of His care will act worthy of His love to the nearest.

Nor does the Lord spare them the humbling proof how little the anxiety of man avails. “Which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?” It was a very small thing if some would count it a very great addition. Yet even for this how powerless is man! Why then be anxious about a garment? The herbage of the field rebukes the vanity of a child of God; for as the Lord called their attention to the lilies, he pointed the moral by the plain fact that God clothed even these transient creatures, lower in the scale than the birds, with a beauty far beyond Solomon’s array in all his glory. Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? Here the Lord urges two considerations which we do well to heed. One is to guard us against sharing the unbelief of those who do not even know God, How compromising to share the thoughts and feelings of the Gentiles! “For all these things the nations seek after.” The other is to assure the doubting heart. “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him: but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered (Matt. 10:29, 30). 76

But here the Lord guards His own from anxious thoughts in their daily life. Sparrows, as He taught later, are cheap enough; yet as not one of them shall fall to the ground without our Father, so He preserves them and other birds great or small without foresight of their own. If such creatures, the unclean as surely as the clean, are the habitual recipients

76. The Bible Treasury, New Series 4: 122
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of His beneficence, how much must His sons be? It is an argument from the comparatively mean and distant to those whom grace deigns to bring into the nearest relationship with Himself. And the Lord’s aim is to impress on His disciples, so favored, the obligation of confiding in the love of their Father without a doubt or a fear. Why should they not, instead of yielding to the anxiety natural to such as either know not God at all like Gentiles, or own Him in an altogether lower way like the Jews?

It seems almost needless to say that the words afford not the least ground for those who alleged a discrepancy with Prov. 6:6-8. For the latter impresses the common duty of industry, and therefore reproves the sluggard from the text of the laborious ant. The former calls the believer to cherish faith’s reliance on the Father’s care, without an anxious thought. The one is as true as the other; but the latter goes deeper and rises higher because of the revelation of the Father’s name to those who believe on the Son.

Then again a strange set of fanatics, both in rather early and in later days of Christendom, made abstinence from labor a counsel of perfection. They claimed to be in a peculiar degree men of prayer, and were called Euchites by those who condemned them. Their boast was neither to sow nor reap; but they could not escape the reproach that they liked the barn and to have it well filled. The germ of this selfishness showed itself among the Thessalonian saints {2 Thess. 3}. But it did not fail to receive immediate discouragement and a heavy blow from the apostle, who could appeal to his own work with his hands where it made for the Lord’s glory. But he also ruled such a claim as unworthy of Him, and a dishonor to such as were ensnared in cheat . . . {2 Thess. 3:6-12}.

The question in Matt. 6:27 exposes impressively the impotence of anxiety to add to our stature the familiar unit of measure. Yet many moderns incline to length of life, instead of “stature.” But this is hardly the place to discuss such a question. The general sense at all events is clear to the simplest. 77◆

**HAVING THE RIGHT ONE CLOTHE**

(29) And why are ye careful about clothing? Observe with attention the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; (30) but I say unto you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one so of these. But if God so clothe the

herbage of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into
[the] oven, will he not much rather you, O [ye] of little faith?
(Matt. 6:29-30).

W. Kelly continued on:
◆ From the birds of the sky in vv. 26, 27, the Lord turns to the lilies of
the field in vv. 28-30: a lesson against anxiety, the former in eating and
drinking; the latter in raiment. Notoriously they comprise the two
branches of ordinary living which so test the masses, not of mankind
only, but of disciples, to whom He addressed Himself throughout His
teaching on the mount. His disciples ought not to forget or distrust their
heavenly Father by such doubts of His loving care over their daily
wants.

And why be anxious about a garment? Consider the lilies of the
field how they grow: they toil not nor spin; but I say to you that
not even
Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. But if God
so clothe the herbage of the field, that is today, and tomorrow is
cast into an oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O little
of faith?

Here as He points, not to birds but to the flowers, He does not speak
of sowing or reaping or storage, but of toiling and spinning: God cares
for the birds without the one, and for the lilies without the other. Were
not His children far more to their heavenly Father than either? N of only
were they God's offspring as mankind universally are, but His children
by grace through faith. It is not that sowing or reaping, toiling or
spinning, might not be a duty, if they had to provide for themselves and
their household, and could earn their supplies by these labors more
readily than otherwise. Even in an unfallen world, Jehovah put Adam
whom He had formed into the garden of Eden to till it and to guard it,
when there was none to hire for the needful work, and he himself might
happily employ his own hands.

Sin brought in sad change, not only for man's soul and body, but for
the very ground on which he trod, as scripture plainly tells us. It was no
longer easy and delightful work, but in toil or sorrow he must eat of it all
the days of his life. And no wonder; since thorns also and thistles it
should yield to him, only to be overcome by the sweat of his face in order
to eat bread. If self will kick against the goad, it only aggravates the case;
if the yoke (and it is not here grievous) be accepted, it is all the better for
murmuring men. There is no deliverance from guilt and sin but through
faith in Christ, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness, and by whom He
gives power to the believer. But for children as yet unconverted as well
as adults in the same state, occupation is a merciful help, against the dangers of idleness and indulgence of lust and passion. Even for the faithful it is good, as declining to work where the person is without means is bad: so much so, that the apostle curiously lays it down, that if a man likes not to work, neither let him eat. This prescription, if duly administered, would in general prove a salutary medicine, and without fail.

Such idlers, apt to be busy-bodies too, are comparatively rare; but not so those who trouble themselves about their clothes. What! after being born of God, and now having redemption as well as life everlasting, and the Holy Spirit to take up our every need and difficulty, not only the Lord interceding for us, but the Father blessing who sent His only begotten Son to and for us when we had nothing but sins? And do souls so favored distress themselves perhaps about clothes, and possibly fine clothes, beyond what becomes a Christian man, woman, or child?

What a rebuke from the herbage of the field, as our Lord interprets it! Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these lilies which, the more they are inspected and by the most powerful means, only the more eclipse the splendor of Israel’s richest king. Yet that lavish beauty of form and color was but a carpet spread for the feet of the poorest Israelite on one day, and on another was fuel for an oven. And this end of its glory was far from being an offence to the Lord. He, who was above all jealous for His Father’s honor in His work uses the double fact to judge nature’s anxiety about earthly things (were they as the lilies ever so beautiful to the eye, yet utterly evanescent too), to banish doubts and distress and unworthy desires, and to establish the heart in confidence of His Father’s present, perfect, and loving care.

It was not the least in His mind to occupy the disciples with the birds of the sky or the lilies of the field as objects of their care, though not a few may abuse His allusions. Nor did He mean by His calling their attention to them, that they should treat cynically what evinces His interest in all the works of God’s hand and the creatures of His will. His aim is that the disciples, under His holy notice of the incomparable goodness of God toward that which is so little in His eyes, should rise up to the Father above them all, and be assured of the considerate and constant love He bears to His own. Are they not peculiar objects of His counsels before a world was founded, now of infinite grace in Himself who for them died and rose, and at His crowning of glory, above not only the mightiest potentates of earth but also the highest principalities in the heavens? Are we to share the anxiety of those who know not God? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things [Rom. 8:32]? No one was
such a sufferer as Christ here below; yet who ever heard a complaint? and who can forget that, when rejected more and more where His mighty acts of goodness and His words of grace and truth still more wondrous were alike despised, and even He had to say, Woe, woe, at that season our Lord Jesus answering said, “I thank thee, Father.” . . . and “even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight” {Rom. 8:32}? So the prophetic Psa. 16 attributes to Him the confession, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage.” And so the apostle, who had the fellowship of His sufferings, and knew afflictions, persecutions, and want of all things beyond any other, is the very one who rises superior to all circumstances, and declares that God affords us all things richly for enjoyment. May we follow, though alas! how distantly, in like faith! 78

**HAVING THE RIGHT ONE FEED**

(31) Be not therefore careful, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we put on? (32) for all these things the nations seek after; for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:31-32).

◆ As the Lord began, so He closed, His charge to the saints against anxiety in the earthly life. He purposely presents the homely commonplace of daily fare and clothing. The birds of the sky He adduces as the witness of bounteous provision without solicitude, and the unequaled splendor of the lilies of the field, as a rebuke to troubled efforts after vain show. The sentiment and the phrase of vv. 25 and 31 are substantially alike; but in the latter He exchanges “ye” and “your” into the more tender and family expression “we.” Each is as it should be, and both make His word only the more touching as well as complete.

The poor as to the world are habitually burdened and distressed on both accounts in their daily and domestic life. But the noblest and the richest spend much time and thought on their food and attire; and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, have their mortifications among the highest. And if, as things are, the majority of Christians are too much like others, it only confirms the wisdom and goodness of the Lord in deigning to say so much to elevate the motives and form the ways of His own according to the mind of God.

Yet there are a few here and there all over the earth who hear His words in this discourse as elsewhere, and seek to do them from the heart. Nor do they fail to find their blessed account in pleasing Him, apart from

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the world and its things, with happy deliverance from all its anxieties and selfishness. Is not this what the Lord here enjoins on all that bear His name? Do these lay His will to heart when temptation arises to settle down in earthly comfort if not luxury and show? Is this consistent with being pilgrims and strangers on the earth {1 Pet. 2:11} awaiting glory on high with Him?

No doubt it is what men of the world do, who mock at faithful stewardship as fanaticism, and ignore being not their own but bought with a price to glorify Him with their bodies. If not their lips, their life says, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die; yet their constant study is to spin out their mortal life, with no real heart for the resurrection, no habitual joy nor practical value for Christ as their life. Is it not to “mind earthly things,” and to forget day by day that

our commonwealth is in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the working of power which He hath even to subdue all things to Himself? {Phil. 3:21}.

“For” as He says, “after all these things the Gentiles seek”: the contrast He seeks in His disciples. O let us too seek it in our ways for the little while, and thus help to impress it on such as wish to make the best of both worlds, a shameless motive and character for those who are Christ’s.

Are we then left without consolation or resource? Far from it. The Lord winds up with blessed cheer to such as seek to be faithful; “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” And is it not the Father’s pleasure to consider every need of every child? Who can pretend that He does not abound in all good things? or that He would not have us to confide in Him, not in ourselves? Be it yours to abjure self, and “cast all your care upon Him for he careth about you.” 79 ♦

Matthew 6:34:
The Practical Effect Concerning Tomorrow

(33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (34) Be not careful therefore for the morrow, for the morrow shall be careful about itself. Sufficient to the day [is] its own evil.


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Someone wrote:

“Therefore take no anxious thought” (v. 31). This is to encourage us to have confidence in the Lord. I suppose the whole life of the Gentiles is taken up with these questions, “What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?” Our Father knoweth that we have need of these things, and He never withdraws His eyes from the righteous. What a blessed thing to have our souls stayed upon Him! What we have had before us here has some connecting link with the training Elijah had when taken to the brook Cherith. The Lord was training him for what we have in 1 Kings 18 that follows. He proved the Lord’s care. The ravens brought him bread and flesh, till the brook dried up. Then he was taken to a widow. The Lord refers to this in Luke 4. There were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent to a Gentile, and you know what occurred. It was a blessed day for her when Elijah came there. But that was not Elijah’s deepest lesson. He learned that God was the God of resurrection. The apostle Paul at Troas (2 Cor. 1) was in great distress; but he too learned that God was the God of resurrection. God gives faith and He sustains faith. Untried faith is no faith. If a person has great faith, he will have great trials. Little faith has little trials. Of the it was said, “Your faith groweth exceedingly.” Abraham’s trial in Gen. 22 could not have come at the beginning of his course. He had been trained for it, and was sustained through it.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (v. 33). This is the summing up of this part. It supposes submission of soul to God’s holy revealed will. “And all these things shall be added unto you.” The great thing must be God’s glory. “God is faithful,” the simple meaning of which is, God is to be trusted.

In the second clause of v. 34 we have “the morrow personified, “The morrow shall take thought for itself” (“the things of” should be left out). How blessed and practical the lesson! Perhaps when the morrow comes, the thing dreaded will not be there; and if it is, God can bring us through it. “I can do all things,” said the great apostle, “through him that strengtheneth me.”

We conclude considering Matt. 6 with the following from W. Kelly.

◆ The kingdom of the heavens is an expression derived apparently from Dan. 4:26. Its inauguration also is foreshown in Dan. 7:13, 14; in v. 22 not only the Heir of all but the heavenly joint-heirs, and in v. 27 the


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“people” under the whole heaven to whom the chief dominion is given. Such will be the manifested kingdom when the Son of man comes with power and glory; and there will be earthly things and heavenly (John 3:12). But He came first as the great moral test in humiliation; and His rejection and cross brought out higher than earth through redemption therein accomplished. This too, refused by the unbelieving people, left the door open for the mystery of that kingdom and its mysteries while the rejected King is on high, and the gospel of indiscriminate grace, till the church is complete. Then all Israel shall be saved on their repentance, and the blessing of all the nations as such shall fully come.

Plainly, “the kingdom of the heavens” is a dispensational phrase peculiar to the first Gospel, as in contrast with the incredulity of the Jews who looked only for an earthly one. Mark and Luke use “the kingdom of God” for it, and in a general sense; John exclusively for what is real. But Matthew, for that very reason, when he does say “the kingdom of God,” does not mean the dispensational view, either in future manifestation or in present mystery, but the power of God ruling in Christ when here, or now in the Spirit’s action morally in those that are His. Hence the same term which is so comprehensive elsewhere has here this force all the more marked because of Matthew’s general employment of the dispensational phrase.

Here occurs the first instance; the others are 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 43, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Be not careful (or, anxious) for the morrow for the morrow will be careful about itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Throughout the discourses on the Mount the Lord is not preaching the glad tidings to the lost but instructing His disciples who already believed. Earthly care is a great bane and unworthy of faith.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Where could they find that kingdom and righteousness most truly, plainly, and fully set out before their souls? Surely nowhere as in Himself. It was even more wondrously by God’s Spirit in His moral power than by His casting out demons.

Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God,

was far beyond all the miracles together that ever had been wrought.

Who but He was the “man that lived by every word of God” unswervingly?
Nor is it too much to ask of such as were born of God. Indeed the principle was always true. Jehovah’s people were to be holy because He is holy. And this applies all the more strongly now that we have the relationship of sons, with redemption through Christ’s blood, and the gift of the Spirit. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; nor yet abstinence from flesh or wine; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit {Rom. 14:17}.

Making God’s kingdom and righteousness our first concern, we are entitled to expect that all the things needful and good will be added to us. For our God and Father never overlooks our wants. If faithful in the greatest and deepest things, He loves that we should confide in Him as to our least things. Do we believe the Lord, that “all these things [about which unbelief worries] shall be added unto us”? Let us not forget the condition: “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” What can be more due to God, or more comely for us as His sons? The Lord’s yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is unbelief, accompanied by loving the world or the things in the world, which produces anxiety, darkness, and doubt, as in the Gentiles who knew not God. If we know Him, and the blessedness of His kingdom, and the perfection of His righteousness, why be careful for the morrow? For the morrow, says the Lord, shall be careful for itself. Has He failed us today, or in the past? What evil has He ever done us, what good thing withheld from us? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Even if the hardest trials come, do we not know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those called according to purpose? 81

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Matthew 7:
The Disciples' Discernment

Matthew 7:1-14:
Discernment in the Disciples' Walk

Matthew 7:1-5: Fitness to Judge Discrimingly

(1) Judge not, that ye may not be judged; (2) for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. (3) But why seest thou the mote that is in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam that is in thy own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Allow [me], I will cast out the mote from thine eye; and behold, the beam is in thine eye? (5) Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of the eye of thy brother.

If we would judge ourselves we would not be judged by the Lord (1 Cor. 11:31). And when we judge ourselves we are not to compare ourselves among ourselves (2 Cor. 10:12) -- the Lord Himself is the standard.

Concerning censoriousness in judging others, v. 2 warns of the return that will fall on the censorious one.

How often has this passage been abused by Christians, doing so while pretending to holiness; how? by quoting God's Word in attempting to hinder judgment of what needed to be judged in themselves. Verse 1 is then used in an absolute sense, wrongly using it to repel needed admonition concerning something they are doing, which is not according to the Lord's mind. They wish to crush the admonition with a spiritually-sounding (mis-) application of God's Word, thus having God's authority for repelling the needed admonition. What pretension! How much in Christendom proceeds under a false spiritual-sounding guise, when it is really unholiness. Such use of v. 1 is unholiness. Moreover, such use of v. 1 is a self-condemning violation of the text, for the misuse of it is wrongly judging the person who is bringing the godly admonition.

On the other hand the proclivity to judge hidden motives -- motives which are not know in fact -- often shows itself. We are instructed to leave the hidden counsels of the heart to God to detect in due time (1 Cor. 4:5). “Judging nothing before the time” refers to
The hidden things of darkness {and} . . . shall make manifest the
counsels of the hearts . . .

In the next chapter (1 Cor. 5) the apostle directs the assembly to judge
those within. It would hardly do to quote Matt. 7:1 to the Corinthians.
Those without, God judges.

Moreover, the same One who spoke Matt. 7:1 also admonished some
to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

The issue in Matt. 7:1-5 is judging motives that are hidden. The
beam in the eye is a relatively large blockage of being able to see
correctly, i.e., discern correctly. What hinders a person from seeing
another correctly? Why, when you judge motives which you really do
not know, you are regarding the other according to your own
imagination -- most likely to his disadvantage. You do not see correctly
and cannot judge correctly. You are not to do this: “Judge not, that ye
may not be judged.” The words of the Lord are very strong regarding
this:

Hypocrite, cast our first the beam out of thine own eye.
You see that your brother is having a little bit of difficulty seeing rightly,
and you want to remove that mote (the small thing) in his discernment,
yet you indulge in judging his motives which you really do not know;
you have a beam in your own discernment. You must deal with that
large, troublesome beam in your own discernment -- that judging-hidden-
motives-habit that you have -- before you can rightly see so as to help
your brother. How get rid of it? Judge oneself; self-judgment.

The awful and frequent abuse of this passage calls for more
comment. The following is from The Girdle of Truth 4:148-152.

◆ These words are often employed to hinder a sound judgment as to the
plain path of right and wrong. If a person is walking in that which I
know by the Word of God to be wrong, I must judge that he is walking
wrong, or give up my judgment of right and wrong. I may trust he may
be misled, or that difficulties and temptations may have overcome him,
and consider myself, lest I also be tempted -- think the best I can of him
-- but I cannot put evil for good or good for evil. There can be no right
motive to do what is wrong, to do what is contrary to God’s will. There
may be ignorance, want of light in the conscience, and I may and ought
to take all this into account, but I cannot say that the person is not doing
wrong.

Woe be to me if for any personal consideration I enfeeble my own
sense that a wrong path is a wrong one. The saint must be very careful
not to allow any sophistry to modify any submission of heart and conscience to God’s judgment of good and evil. As regards the Church of God, the Scriptures plainly declare we are to judge “them that are within; them that are without, God judgeth.” This is no imputation of motives nor habit of forming an opinion on other people’s conduct, which is an evil habit, but the duty of not allowing evil in the house of God. It is positively commanded to us not to allow it.

Again, many apply this to judging whether people are Christians. But this is founded on a fundamental mistake. It is assumed that people are to be supposed to be Christians unless proved to be the contrary. If the faith of the soul be a personal thing and I value Christ, this cannot be. I am not called upon to be volunteering to pass a judgment on the point, whether such or such an one is a Christian; but the person who blames me for saying such an one is a Christian is judging that he is a Christian of course, which is quite false. The Apostle says,

the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.

Believing this, it is a joy to believe that any one has passed from death unto life. That is not a judgment, though the rejoicing of the heart, that faith in that person has brought him into the blessed place of the child of God. It is a most horrible principle that we cannot know who are God’s children, Christ’s disciples. It destroys all godly affections. If the children of a family were told that they could not know, and ought not to judge, who are their brothers and sisters, what would become of family affections? The Lord has said,

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another [John 13:35].

How can this be if I do not know who are disciples, and towards whom this love is to be exercised? We must know each other as children of God to “love as brethren.” He who objects to judging that such and such are God’s children objects to the love of the brethren. He is rejecting the spiritual affections of which the Lord and Scripture so much insist. There is a wrong spirit of judgment. If I occupy myself needlessly in thinking of others and expressing an opinion of them, if in questionable cases I ascribe even in my mind wrong motives -- nay, if I do not hope in such cases that a right motive is at bottom, I am in the spirit of judgment and away from God. If severity of judgment with a person when I am bound to judge he is faulty possesses my soul -- this is not the Spirit of God. But to weaken the plain, unequivocal and avowed estimate of right and wrong under pretense of not judging -- to deny the
knowledge of one another and mutual love among the saints, under pretense that we have not a right to judge, is of the enemy and a mere cover to a man’s conscience to avoid the conscious pressure of that judgment on himself. If saints maintain a divine standard of right and wrong, I must judge them who do wrong to be doing so. I am not always called to occupy myself about them -- then, if unhindered, the spirit of judgment comes in -- but if I am, I must judge according to the Word of God. If I am to love the disciples of Jesus, the saints of God, “the brotherhood,” I must know who they are. If there is a disposition to distrust or to impute motives, then the spirit of judgment is at work. ♦

Let us continue quoting from W. Kelly’s articles on the Lord’s discourse

♦ There ought to be no question of the Lord’s meaning here. No fault was more prevalent then or now. Censoriousness is not only the habitual bane of religious professors, but the snare to which true disciples are too prone. Gracious men who set their face in general against detraction are often bitter against what they themselves dislike, and thus slip into judging motives wrongly like others. He who is Judge of quick and dead discerns every heart, and enjoins what is comely and just on His followers. For this sin tends to hypocrisy; and what saint would regard such a thing lightly? . . .

The indulgence in a hasty, severe, and suspicious spirit provokes reprisals, and such as wantonly impute evil to others in ignorance or unkindness do not fail to bring on themselves unsparing imputation. For here the Lord turns from the lack of confiding in our Father’s care and love, and warns of our danger from many an unkind impression and expression. To surmise wrong motives is itself a wrong. It is natural for such as live in malice and envy, hateful, biting one another; and such once were we ourselves. But since the kindness and love to man of our Savior God appeared (no premium for our deserts), but according to His own mercy He saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior {Titus 3:5}, are we not bound by the family character, the new life relationship as children of God, sons of such a Father? Since redemption and the gift of the Spirit, more can be added now to what the Lord uttered then.

But He reminds us of what we easily forget. If others are a trial to us, are not we a trial to them? Are we not, unless walking according to the light, as dull to see our own faults as we are sharp to notice, and even imagine, wrongs in our brethren? How pungently the Lord puts the
case that we may loathe ourselves!

And why lookest thou on the mote in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye, and, behold, the beam is in thine eye?

The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls thus holily strips us of the mask which failure in self-judgment puts on. For if before God we discern not our own grievous shortcomings and sins, we do not know our brethren with anything like the same certainty and clearness. Love therefore and the fear of God call us each to deem others better than ourselves, judging ourselves for what we do know instead of others for what we know not and ought not to think.

Hypocrite,
says the Lord with severe reproof,

pull out first the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Yet it is well to beware of the too common misuse of our Lord's warning. How often pious persons thereby deprecate any censure of their own position and any care against false doctrine, or evil associations, or responsibility for such discipline as scripture requires! But this is to fail in godliness; which assuredly covers not only personal conduct, but also public walk as members of Christ. The Corinthians were careless in this way and others, which grace has turned to the profit, not only of them, but of

all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
both theirs and ours {1 Cor. 1:1}.

The apostle allows no excuse for carelessness congregationally any more than individually. There is no call to exercise discipline on the evildoers of the world; but Christians have the obligation of dealing with offenders in Gods assembly. Paul, though absent, could not but judge that the wicked person should be excluded. It was due to Christ and His sacrifice. God must be vindicated Whose is the assembly. The saints were bound to clear themselves in the matter, taking up the offender's sin as their own; yet even here his ultimate good was sought,

that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus
{1 Cor. 5:5}.

Do not ye judge those that are within? But those without God judgeth. Put away the wicked [man] from among yourselves (1 Cor. 5:3-13).
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Here we are commanded to judge.

The selfsame principle expressly applies to sins far less gross. Our thoughts and reasonings are to be discarded on the one hand; and on the other God’s authority to be recognized and conclusive. Scripture too is plain that, important as is right judgment of moral evil, the truth is yet more momentous; and this both because to slight and oppose it offends against the Giver, and it ruins those who thus err, while they have a fair appearance, instead of shocking men like immorality or unrighteousness.

Express injunction is also laid down, when the evil is of a more general and public character, as in 2 Tim. 2:19-21:

Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are his; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord’s name depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some for honor and some for dishonor. If one therefore purge himself out from these, he shall be a vessel for honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work.

There is thus no licence to join in what God disapproves and demands us to judge. Conscience, a purged conscience, is exercised, and the heart all the more free to love fervently according to God. 82 ♦

Matthew 7:6: Discerning Holy and Unholy

(6) Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them with their feet, and turning round rend you.

1 Pet. 2:22 helps us concerning this verse.

But that [word] of the true proverb has happened to them: [The] dog [has] turned back to his own vomit, and [The] sow to [her] rolling in the mud.

Dogs encompassed the Lord when He was on the cross. The great dog, the great apostate, Satan, was there also (Psa. 22). Dogs will have their place in hell (Rev. 22:15).

Peter spoke of apostates from the faith returning to the filth from which the light of the gospel (without there being a genuine work of the Spirit in the soul) had turned them. Paul warned: “See to dogs.”

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Recognizing such, we are instructed that what is holy is not for them, nor our pearls. So discernment is need for judging who is a backslider and who an apostate. We may not be able to determine it but the Lord knows those who are His.

In Matt. 7:1-5, we are warned against censoriousness and judging motives. Here, we are warned against abuse of graciousness.

But you say we must “not judge,” and you quote Matt. 7:1, “Judge not that ye be not judged.” This is an important word of the Lord’s, but it is misused to cover our cowardice and want of zeal for the glory of the Lord in not judging sin in ourselves and others. But read on and in v. 6 you will find we are directed not to give that which is holy unto the dogs, neither to cast our pearls before the swine. Is not that an injunction to judge? How can anyone act upon the word without judging? The fact is, my dear friend, there is carnal judging which is only the indulgence of an evil propensity at the expense of our neighbors, and there is a godly spiritual judging which is a duty we owe to the Lord and to each other, and which begins with ourselves. He knows which is which, if we do not. 83

**Matthew 7:7-11: Asking Intelligently**

(7) Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. (8) For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. (9) Or what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask of him a loaf of bread, will give him a stone; (10) and if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? (11) If therefore ye, being wicked, know [how] to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall your Father who is in the heavens give good things to them that ask of him?

These verses are in the context of the previous six verses. Do you want to ask the Father for things while you violate those verses? Would it show spiritual discernment and asking with spiritual intelligence while violating those verses? Is the Father a puppet to be manipulated in order to satisfy the flesh in us?

Perhaps there is increasing intensity in ask, seek, and knock. No doubt the three words address a different felt need. We ask for something for which we sense a need; we seek for something we are

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missing; and we knock to gain audience and be heard.

Substituting an indigestible stone for a request for bread, or a serpent for a fish, are excellent examples of refusal to nourish and perhaps of causing revulsion. Our Lord fed a multitude from a lad’s two loaves and five fishes. This showed out the heart of the One sent by the Father, One who had compassion on the multitude. He supplies our souls also with what nourishes spiritually.

Here, the disciples being addressed in their pre-cross position, once again have the “Father who is in the heavens” as One to whom they should go. The principle of what we have here applies to us on the redemption side of the cross.

First we will have a few words from W. Kelly’s series of articles on the Lord’s discourse and follow that by an article on unanswered prayer.
◆ It is not a sinner needing life and forgiveness of his sins, but saints directed to appeal to God and assured of their Father’s answer of love, whatever their wants be. The Lord had already taught them to pray in Matt. 6 as with alms and fasting, parts of saintly righteousness and due to His name and glory. Here He enforces it as the way in which all they need from above is to be given them. Hence perseverance and earnestness are incumbent. Asking will ensure receiving, yea to every one that asks; seeking will not be fruitless but shall find; and to the still more importunate the door will be opened, which is but shut to exercise faith.

For there may be a matter of importance for the applicant to learn before the request can be granted, as with the Syrophenician woman, so earnest in supplicating the Lord to have pity on her, whose daughter was grievously possessed by a demon. Yet at first the Lord answered her not a word. She pleaded like a lost sheep of Israel’s house; whereas she was a Greek, and had no right of promise with the Messiah; indeed she was a Canaanite, and thus under the curse. But when she drops {using} His title as Son of David, and gathered from His answer to the disciples wherein her mistake lay, she did Him homage, saying, Lord, help me. On this He speaks out, It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the whelps. This did help her soul, for it led her to the secret of sovereign grace on which she at once threw herself, saying, Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering said to her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt. The door opened to her knock. She was deepened and cleared in her faith, as her daughter was healed from that hour.
The Lord also encourages His disciples through the affection which is implanted in a parent's heart. If their Father makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, how does He feel toward His sons? His love surely goes out to them in every request that is for their good, and withholds only what their foolishness asked that must do them harm. Hence He says, Or what man of you, whom his son shall ask for a loaf, will he give him a stone? and if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? Who would not repudiate such mockery of a son's hunger? Thence He draws the conclusive words for their hearts, If ye then, being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask Him?  

R. E. wrote the following

Unanswered Prayers

We desire to say a little about unanswered prayers; it is a subject of interest. Not a few could say, if they were asked, "I have prayed for years about a certain thing, and the answer has not come yet." And they want to know why. That question we will endeavor to answer.

In the first place, some prayers never will be answered -- at least, not in the form in which they are presented. There is the well-known case of Paul. He besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, and yet the request was not allowed. It was better for him that it should not be granted; and so it may be in your case. David's history affords another instance. He greatly desired to build a house for the Lord. It was a right thought, and he would only have been too glad to obtain permission; but it could not be. And yet both Paul and David did receive answers -- Paul received grace so that he could glory in his infirmities, and David had the satisfaction of knowing that Solomon would build the Lord a house. The answers came in unexpected ways. May it not be so in our case? We have received an answer, but the answer assumed a somewhat different shape from the request; and for want of attentiveness we failed to recognize it. John Newton describes an experience akin to this. He says:

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know,

84. The Bible Treasury, New Series 4: 164-165.
And seek more earnestly His face.
Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I know, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair."

Our prayers then may have been answered, though differently from what we anticipated. But there are cases where no distinct answer in any shape has come. We may have asked for a thing that would not be good for us, or that is unreasonable, or altogether beyond us. Of this class is the prayer of the mother of Zebedee's children. She made request that her two sons might sit on the right and left hand of Christ in His kingdom. The Lord had to say to her, "Ye know not what ye ask." Doubtless she thought how fine it would be for her two sons to occupy such an exalted position, where they would be ministered to. The Lord shows her that a greater thing is to minister.

But perhaps we have prayed for right things, such as the conversion of our children or relatives, and many other matters; and still no answer seems vouchsafed. This leads us to mention another reason why our prayers are unanswered. There may be some fault in ourselves. There was a Christian lady whose husband very much tried her in one particular. Instead of conducting family worship, as she considered he ought, he was in the habit of taking exercise on horseback every morning. This went on for a long time, and had been the subject of many prayers. At length a servant of the Lord had occasion to stay in the house. The wife complained to him, told him how often she had made it a subject of prayer, and said she could not understand why God did not answer her prayers and put her husband right. To her intense surprise she was told that it was she who needed putting right, and that doubtless God would have answered her prayers long ago but for something in herself. Accepting the rebuke, she earnestly set about to discover what it was in her that was hindering her husband; and as the result, she soon had the joy of seeing God working with him and bringing him to be of one mind with herself. This is frequently a reason why our prayers remain unanswered; there is something to set right in ourselves. It is ever in accord with God's mind for us to seek the blessing of others, but He loves us too much to bless others and leave us unblessed; for His way is, "I will bless thee" and then "make thee a blessing." And if blessing is withheld, it is a loud call to us to first of all "search and try our ways," and then "turn again to the LORD." Unanswered prayers are often but a reflection of our own state.

The Apostle James gives us another reason why we do not get what
we ask for; he says,

   Ye ask amiss.
   Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may
consume it upon your lusts (pleasures) {James 4:3}.

How searching this is! With all our asking and all our seeming
devotedness, we are after all seeking only our own pleasure! If God
were to answer our prayers, we should only use the answer to plume
ourselves. Is it any wonder we have many unanswered prayers? It may
be the answers will not be long delayed if we are willing for God to have
all the glory. 85

Another reason is that we may be withholding from God, or even
from others, what is their due. This undoubtedly is a very frequent cause
of our prayers meeting with no response. For example, in Mark
11:24-26 we find the Lord, in speaking about answers to prayer,
connects the thought of forgiveness with it.

   What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye
receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying
forsake {Mark 11:25}.

Are any of us cherishing an unforgiving spirit? It will prove a great
hindrance to our prayers being answered. And the same thing will
probably happen if we keep for ourselves what should be given to God.
There is no man so poor as the man who is always saving. It is well to
remember the words of the wise king:

   There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that
withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty {Prov.
11:24}.

And while it is always true that God in His grace deals with us far above
what we deserve, yet in government He deals with us very much as we
deal with Him and with one another,

   With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an
upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou
wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show
Thyself froward (Psa. 18:25, 26).

85. I was once in an assembly prayer meeting and three women came in and knelted
down. Soon they were audibly praying for God to send down "the latter rain" and "we
will give you all the glory." The meeting was brought to a premature end, and at the door
I said to these women: "you believe every verse in the Bible except one, don't you?"
"Yes, all but one," was the immediate response. "And it is in 1 Cor. 14, isn't it?" "Yes,"
they replied. Their prayer for the latter rain was not answered.]
Our prayers sometimes remain unanswered because we ask unintentionally. This is particularly the case in regard to spiritual matters. In the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, there are certain laws and processes; and if we run counter to these we cannot reach the end we desire. For want of knowing this, or remembering it, many have been seeking for years what may seem as far away from them as ever. You may have prayed for a certain blessing many times, and yet the request has not been granted. If the truth were known, it is probable that this matter which is now so great a mystery could easily be explained. These prayers were in the wrong form, or you are looking entirely in the wrong direction.

The case of the Syrophoenician woman illustrates this very thing. She comes to the Lord in her deep need about her daughter, and says,

Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

But He answered her not a word.

Now this was not coldness on the part of the Lord toward her, any more than it is toward you because He may have not answered your prayer. This woman had prepared her request on entirely wrong grounds. The Lord did not send her away, as He does not send you away; but He has something to teach you, perhaps, before He can grant your request, as He had her. She addressed Him as Son of David, a title which gave a Gentile no claim whatever. The Lord could not consistently respond when thus addressed; to have done so would have ignored the distinction God Himself had made. But when she addressed Him simply as Lord, He could listen to her. He is Lord of all. And when, further, she casts herself entirely upon His goodness and mercy, asserting no claim, He cannot refuse her.

O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

May not we, in regard to other matters, be making the same mistake, in principle, as this woman? Take, for instance, the question of the forgiveness of sins. Are there not many earnest, devout people in the world who are praying for forgiveness, and have been doing so for years, and who, if they were asked today if they are forgiven, would sadly shake their heads and say, No; or at best, they have nothing more than a doubtful hope. We are not dealing now with confession of sin in prayer, when a sinner first comes to Christ, or afterward when he has failed; but we are dealing with those, and there are many, who are continually asking for pardon, and ignoring the fact that God is ready and willing to forgive, and overlooking the ground on which He can
righteously do so.

If I am continually asking a person for something that person is offering me, and I overlook the offer, is it any wonder if I miss getting what I want? This is just what thousands of people are doing in regard to forgiveness of sins. They think that forgiveness is to be had by asking, whereas it is to be obtained by TAKING; they think it is to be obtained by prayers and sighs and tears, or religious observances, whereas it is to be obtained by FAITH. They plead with God about it, and do not see it is something God offers them.

Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe [not ask] are justified from all things (Acts 13:39).

And what mean the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when He rose from the dead --

Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46, 47)?

The weary, sin-stricken soul needs to learn that God can never forgive on the ground of asking, but on the ground that Christ has once suffered for sins, and through faith in Him.

Perhaps others have prayed for more faith. This is a common delusion as if some day they would become suddenly conscious of a great increase of that commodity. It cannot be too clearly stated that God does not work in this way. He does not deal out faith to us in bulk. It would be harmful, rather than helpful, if He did. Faith, like money, is increased by circulation; or, like seed, it grows and gathers strength as our physical frame does by exercise. When the disciples on one occasion said, “Lord, Increase our faith,” the Lord Jesus in His reply laid down a fundamental principle which holds good for all time, and which we do well to ponder. He shows it is not the quantity of faith, but just exercising what we have; and He mentions one of the smallest things, and tells them what they would accomplish with just so much faith. “If ye had faith,” He said, “as a grain of mustard seed.”

There are two reasons. A grain of mustard seed is very small in itself, but under certain conditions of soil and atmosphere and sun there is within it possibilities of development. So with faith. And then the least faith brings in all the resources of God. It is not then by asking for more faith that it increases, but, given certain conditions, it will grow as surely as a grain of mustard seed. In Paul’s second epistle to the
Thessalonians he says, “Your faith groweth exceedingly.” ow is this accounted for? By what he is able to say about them in his first epistle. He speaks of their “work of faith.” Faith was in exercise, and consequently it grew exceedingly. (Compare 1 Thess. 1:3 and 2 Thess. 1:3.) Had they been blindly asking for more faith instead of seeing the divine principle that governs the whole matter, their faith would rather have diminished than increased.

In the same way, how often have we prayed to God for more patience. But God does not deal out patience, any more than faith, in lumps. And the sooner we learn that patience can only become ours by a certain process, the better. It is an immense gain when we see that faith and patience and such like qualities are not given at random or arbitrarily, but stand in the relation of cause and effect. They do not become ours by asking, but by a principle as unerring as the law of gravitation. How then do we become patient? There is one simple answer. By the knowledge of God. In support of this assertion we can only just refer the reader to Col. 1:10, 11. By increasing in (or by) the knowledge of God we are

strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto
all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

Do we underrate prayer in this way? No; but we learn to pray for the right thing, and also to seek it in the right way. We learn that the real thing we need is the knowledge of God. We are impatient because we know Him so little; and if we only seek to deal with the impatience, we are not going to the root of the disease, but dealing only with a symptom. No medical man would act in this way with regard to the diseases of the body, nor must we with that which is infinitely higher and more complicated, the diseases of the soul. Let us pray that God would make Himself known, and seek to know Him by studying His Word; and patience will come.

It is not otherwise with regard to rest. How often we are weary and burdened! Perhaps we have often sought rest by simply praying for it. There is One who offers it to us, and tells us how we may find it. We can only have it on the same principle on which He had it; that is, entire submission to the will of God. What God had ordered, He knew was best for Him; and He rested there. And so when He offers rest to us He says,

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls {Matt. 11:29}.
“Meek and lowly in heart” -- here is the secret of all rest.

If the reader will carefully weigh what has been said, he may discover the reason of many an unanswered prayer. While we are privileged at all times to make our requests known to God, yet the one condition of our prayers being answered is asking “according to His will” (1 John 5:14, 15). Of course we may have asked according to His will, and the time may not have come for the answer. God often delays the answer. Prayer was made continually by the church for Peter, but it was only a few hours before the execution was to take place that he was liberated. But while this is true, yet our prayers are often unanswered for the reasons already given. We have been asking for something that would not be good for us, or we have asked amiss, or at random, and overlooked the real thing, to be asked for -- not patience, but the knowledge of God; not rest, but to be meek and lowly in heart. If we grasp these principles, many of our prayers may yet be answered. 86

Matthew 7:12: Discerning Conduct

(12) Therefore all things whatever ye desire that men should do to you, thus do ye also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

The “therefore” points, of course, to what the Lord had previously spoken, including vv. 1-6 regarding a censorious spirit and judging of hidden motives. Such conduct we need to judge in ourselves. It is conduct quite inconsistent with v. 12. Moreover, the conduct prescribed in v. 12 is acting consistently with our expecting God to hear us (vv. 7-11), desiring that He be bountiful to us.

Our motive is not philanthropy, or man’s rights, or “the milk of human kindness,” but the will of God in all things.

This injunction by the Lord is, He said, what the law and the prophets is. It is not as a sage would say, “Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself.” There is a great difference in the two statements.

Verse 12 is a statement of suitability for the kingdom announced as at hand. Christianity goes beyond the law. Let us now look at some comments by J. N. Darby concerning that fact.

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We find God acting according to two great principles -- law and grace. Law is God requiring from man what man ought to be. It takes up all the relationships formed of God towards God and man. The duties were all there before the law was given, but it gave the rule of them, and attached God’s express sanction to them. The law came and claimed from man obedience. Our Lord sums up the whole law in two sentences “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” etc. and, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The law came and claimed from man what he ought to be. It gave no life, no power, deliverance, or object to be a motive; it could not clear the guilty, nor was it any help or strength... although God does help His people at all times. But the law itself could do nothing but demand obedience; and as man was a sinner, and incapable of obedience to a holy law, it was a ministration of death and condemnation. There is no grace in law (the two are opposed to each other), but God’s grace dealt with individuals. The law was a ministration of death and condemnation because it gave from God what man ought to be, and what man is not. If a man’s heart is not exercised towards God, the law does not trouble him much. He thinks he has not done anything very bad; he is no worse than his neighbors; he has not committed any very gross sins. Besides, he says, God is merciful; for he is sure to bring in the thought of a little mercy to meet his need; for deep down in the heart of every man is the sense that he has sinned. He is pretty comfortable, and it is all very well as long as it is a question of natural conscience; not of God’s eye reaching the heart and thoughts. When the law says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” we are at once convinced of sin; we know that we do not. Who is as troubled at a loss to his neighbor he would be at a loss to himself? 87

But again, Eph. 5,

Be ye therefore followers [mimeTai] of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God as a sweet smelling savour.

We are to forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:2). This surely is not law, and we get a principle showing how it goes, in the motive and measure of the heart, wholly beyond it. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” says law; but we are to give ourselves wholly up for others, a sacrifice to God, as Christ did; to lay down our

87. Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 34:432; see also 17:391; 25:112; Notes and Comments 5:37.
lives for the brethren. Again, Col. 3:12-14,

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of
mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, . . . as Christ
forgave you, so also ye.

So Phil. 2:5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus;
and then we have His making Himself, when in the form of God, of no
reputation; and, again, humbling Himself to obedience to death. The
manner or rule of the Christian’s life is Christ, and Christ in forgiving
lowliness and grace. It is monstrous to deny Christ to be our rule of life;
monstrous to reduce the model to the keeping the law. “Forgive” and

Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is
perfect {Matt. 5:48},

make the declaration, that the law is the Christian’s rule of life, a
monstrous denial of practical Christianity. Christ walking in grace is our
pattern and model. The principle of the law is different. It exacts love
from us, and really from the flesh; for it has power over a man only as
long as he lives. The subjective principle of our life is the Second man
with the Holy Ghost dwelling in us (Eph. 4). The doctrine of deliverance
from sin, from the power of sin, is not by a law exacting what is
contrary to it, but our having died with Christ and put off the old man.
Thus, where the question is discussed (Rom. 6:6),

How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? . . .
knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body
of sin might be destroyed.

The whole chapter is the discussion of this point. And the reason sin will
not have dominion over the Christian is, that he is not under law; and we
are shown that obedience in a new nature to God takes the place of law.
We are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we might be
to another, Christ raised from the dead. So in Gal. {2:20}:

I through law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am
crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ
liveth in me.

The law, we read in 2 Cor. 3, is a ministration of death and
condemnation; in 1 Cor. 15 it is the strength of sin; in Rom. 7 the
motions of sin are by the law. It entered (pareiselthê) that the offence
might abound. It was added (Gal. 3) because of transgressions till the
Seed should come to whom the promise was made; but, faith being
come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster. In a word, the diligent
instruction of the apostle is to show that we are not under law, and that
the path of holiness is not that, but our being dead to sin, crucified with
Christ, and His living in us (so Col. 3:9, 10); that we cannot (Rom. 7)
have the two husbands, the law and Christ risen. And, note, the question
in chs. 6 and 7 is not justification; but deliverance from the power of
sin. So Eph. 4:22, 24. This is what the scripture calls learning Christ.
The writer should show us how it is we are not under law, yet it is our
standard and rule of life. It is all very well to say “we have not space to
prove, nor would our readers require to be convinced by proof.”
Quoting one or two texts would not require so much space: can we not
have one? 88

Matthew 7:13-14:
Discerning the Gate That Leads to Life

(13) Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide the gate and broad
the way that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter in
through it. (14) For narrow the gate and straitened the way that
leads to life, and they are few who find it.

“Wide” and “broad” indicate accommodation to the various religious
thoughts of men. The broad way that leads to destruction has a filthy side
to it as well as a strict religious side, and all shades between those sides.
Persons that have entered through the wide gate to the broad way may
view those who have entered through the narrow gate to the straitened
(narrow) way as narrow-minded.

The truth is that it is broad-minded to believe, and appropriate, and
obey, all that God has said in His word; narrow-minded to exclude
anything.

It is so solemn to think “they are few who find it.” Obviously, there
is a warning that the mass of profession is headed to destruction.
“Narrow” -- self-denial -- “life”; “broad” -- self-pleasing in religious
matters -- “destruction”; such is the stark fact in spiritual matters. Christ
and His work on the cross is the gate of all blessing. Thus, one must
look outside himself, have an object outside and above himself as the
formative object for the soul. Our object forms us. Is that Christ?

A brief extract from W. J. Lowe may give food for thought:

In Matt. 7:14, the Lord speaks of “the way which leadeth unto

88. Collected Writings of J. N. Darby 14:297, 298.
life.” So in Matt. 18:8, 9 (cp. Mark 9:43, 45, with v. 47, “enter into the kingdom of God”), and in Matt. 19:17, we find “enter into life,” -- again as a future thing (however near it may be in point of time), and having a direct application to the realization of the blessings of the new covenant to be introduced by the Messiah, -- while leaving the door open (especially as regards the moral import of the expression) for further developments as to what the “kingdom of God” means in its fulness, and what “life” means, when God sees fit to explain it. The passage in Mark especially -- not dispensational like Matthew -- forms a sort of transition between it and John 3, which we shall look at presently . . .

**Matthew 7:15-27:**

**Discerning The False and The True**

False-fruit-prophets (vv. 15-20) and miracle-monger-prophets (vv. 21-23) have religious notions that in effect broaden the straight way and widen the gate, deceiving people that are misled by them into thinking that they are going rightly. Those who follow them are not hearing Christ’s words and doing them (v. 24). The “Lord, Lord,” pretenders carry on their deceptions in Christ’s name, building on sand. The fall will be great as they and their deceived follower reap the just deserts of religious pretension.

**Matthew 7:15-20:**

**Discerning False-Fruit-Prophets**

(15) But beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within are ravening wolves. (16) By their fruits ye shall know them. Do [men] gather a bunch of grapes from thorns, or from thistles figs? (17) So every good tree produces good fruits, but the worthless tree produces bad fruits. (18) A good tree cannot produce bad fruits, nor a worthless tree produce good fruits. (19) Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. (20) By their fruits then surely ye shall know them.

The “but” with which v. 15 opens shows how the Lord’s warning here connects with the warning in vv. 13, 14.

I do not doubt that our Lord, knowing He would be rejected, and

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that the kingdom for Israel would be postponed, had in view not only the
disciples to whom He was speaking, but also that future, godly Jewish
remnant formed just before the kingdom is brought in by sovereign
power. The warnings in vv. 15-20 and in 21-23 will be helpful to them
also (see Matt. 24:4, 5, 23-27; Rev. 13) while the principle of what we
see here is helpful for the Christian meanwhile.

A prophet is the appointed mouth-piece of another. The Lord Jesus
is the great mouth-piece of God, the great Prophet of God. There have
been many antichrists, yet there shall arise the final Antichrist of
prophecy. As there have been many false prophets, yet there shall arise
the final false prophet (Rev. 19:20) who is the second beast of Rev. 13,
the very Antichrist in Jerusalem, henchman of the first, Roman beast --
his prophet. He is the false Christ who sits in the temple of God
(2 Thess. 2).

**Matthew 7:21-23:**

_Discerning False
Miracle-Monger-Prophets_

(21) Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the
kingdom of the heavens, but he that does the will of my Father
who is in the heavens. (22) Many shall say to me in that day,
Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through _thy_ name, and
through _thy_ name cast out demons, and through _thy_ name done
many works of power? (23) and then will I avow unto them, I
never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness.

"Lord, Lord" sounds insistent that there is a real owning Him. It is clear
from what our Lord said that there is such a thing as profession without
reality. It is empty talk, talk not backed by walk, for such do not the will
of the Father who is in the heavens.

The word "many" shows the awful extent of the empty profession.
The proffered proof of three times alleging things done in "_thy_ name"
gets them no happy response. They prophesied through His name. We
just considered false prophets in vv. 15. Whether or not they cast out
demons 90 and did works of power (i.e., miracles) 91 through His name
He does not dispute. He avows two things to them.

90. I recall reading a Pentecostal who says he cast out "the demon of eternal security."
91. One has but to read the surgeon, Dr. Nolan, _A Surgeon in Search of a Miracle_,
concerning Kathryn Kulman to see the sham.

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1. “I never knew you.” So these cannot be lost-again persons because if they never belonged to Christ He could not say “I never knew you,” because He knows His sheep (John 10). He would have had to say, ‘I knew you once, but I do not know you now.’

2. “Depart from me, workers of lawlessness. They were really workers of their own will without any real, however pretended, reference to God. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4) and that is the character of their profession and claims. Who are these persons? -- professed casters-out of demons and workers of miracles?

The disciples were warned of such persons while waiting for the kingdom of the heavens. It was postponed and now we are in the epoch of the kingdom in mystery, and this epoch has had a vast amount of such workers, perhaps never more so than at the present time. They remind me of the foolish oil-seekers in Matt. 25:8-10 as well as of the Laodiceans in Rev. 3:16-17. Such persons will be present at the time of the testimony of the future, godly remnant of Israel (Matt. 24).

The Lord spoke of entry into the kingdom of the heavens. Scripture subsequently enlarges on the subject of the kingdom, which kingdom will have a heavenly department, so to speak, and an earthly one. Meanwhile, then, the mystery form is present. In the millennium, all will be united under Christ. W. Kelly remarked:

The sense of entering into the kingdom of the heavens here is fixed to its glorious estate, not only by “in that day” in the following verse, but by the Lord’s application of it in Matt. 8:11, where its citizens sit in it with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is the more important to note; because His rejection (which soon began to appear) brought in its “mysteries” as in Matt. 13, during which He sits on high upon the Father’s throne, and the kingdom applies to the anomalous state, as in the field or world wherein He sowed wheat and the devil darnel to ruin as a whole. This is the present mixture of Christendom while the Lord is absent above, during which any one can say “Lord” in vain, and wheat and darnel grow together till the harvest time, and the glory come by judgment. 92

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Matthew 7:24-27:

Discerning the True Foundation:
Hearing and Doing Christ’s Words

(24) Whoever therefore hears these my words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock; (25) and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. (26) And everyone who hears these my words and does not do them, he shall be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; (27) and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great.

The previous section spoke of doing the will of the father who is in the heavens. Here the Lord speaks of hearing and doing “these my words.” There is not one atom of disagreement between what the Father says and what the Son says, for they dwell in unspeakable unity.

Prudence and foolishness describe respectively those who hear and do, and those who hear and do not. The time will come for the fool’s house to manifest his foolish disobedience as well as the stability of what the prudent’s obedience to Christ’s words has built. All must be tested as to it true character.

This passage is about obedience, not redemption. Moreover, it seems to embrace all Christ has said in this discourse. What part of it would you exclude?

Matthew 7:28-29:

The Teacher With Authority
Peculiar to Himself Has Spoken

(28) And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, (29) for he taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes.

W. Kelly has given a sketch of the Lord showing His authority in Matt. 5 - 7.

❖ From first to last of the word of righteousness on the mountain, the Lord had spoken as none but a divine person was entitled to do.

And it came to pass, when Jesus concluded these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, for he was teaching them as having authority, and not as their scribes.

The Lord, alone on earth, was qualified to speak with authority
peculiar to Himself. Beyond all others He knew what was in man (John 2:25): He alone here below knew what was in God (John 3:11). On one side He is the Man whom God raised from out of dead men, marked out by God as judge of living and dead, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. On the other hand no one hath seen God at any time, the Onlybegotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father -- He declared Him. He is thus in every way qualified to speak with authority; yet who so lowly?

But the Jews were used, now that the Prophets of Jehovah for four centuries had ceased, to lean on their rabbis. Indeed they had shown the same unbelief in the days of prophets of the highest character; as Isaiah bears witness (29:13). It was with them in Israel, as afterwards in Christendom, a sea of uncertainty, and a conflict of learned or rash opinions. How could it be otherwise when they were thus cheated to give up God’s word for man’s ideas? So our Lord cites this very oracle in His day,

In vain they do worship me, teaching as doctrines men's precepts.

But not so the Lord Himself as He sat on the mount, and taught the disciples, within the hearing of the crowds. This Matthew was inspired to present continuously and in orderly relation for permanent use. He began with the characters, the blessed characters, of such as enter the kingdom of the heavens. Four are righteous, three gracious, each class with its consequent persecution, as being in the age where evil still runs on (Matt. 5:3-12). Their position follows, righteous and gracious, toward those outside (vv. 13-16).

Then from v. 17 to the end of the chapter He proceeds to show that far from coming to make void the law or the prophets, He was here to give the fulness of God’s mind therein, the light of the kingdom before it is established in any for those who bow to Him. The unbelieving and unsubject shall not enter on the new privileges. Not a tittle should in any way pass from the law till all come to pass. To enter the kingdom a real and inward righteousness, of which Christ is the perfection, must be, far exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Next He goes farther, not merely “for verily I say to you” (18) and “for I say to you” (20) but with all the emphasis of superior divine light, worthy of God’s Son,

Ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill . . .

But I say to you (vv. 21-26), and

ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you (vv. 27-30);
and incomparably more searching commandments are applied to the law’s prohibition of violence and corruption only in their extreme forms.

After that the Lord deals with divorce, and oath in ordinary converse (not judicial), putting all in the same highest place of God’s light, with no allowance of human weakness (vv. 31-37). These were matters of righteousness.

In what follows He looks at the higher and deeper claims of grace. Instead of retaliation as in the law of “eye for eye and tooth for tooth,” we hear

But I say to you, not to resist evil, &c. (38-42);

and instead of

Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,

He urges

But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens,

to the point of your being perfect (i.e. in grace), as your heavenly Father is to evil and good, just and unjust (vv. 43-48).

In Matt. 6 He points out the true spirit of the life in alms, prayer, and fasting toward God (their Father that is seen in secret before them) (vv. 1-10); again in calm confidence above the world’s anxiety in ordinary things (vv. 19-34): righteousness and grace are here also.

Lastly, in Matt. 7 He guards against evil thoughts of brethren, and communion with the unclean world; and He counsels confiding dependence on their Father, acting toward others as they desired from them, and holding to the narrow gate and the straitened way (vv.1-14). He solemnly warns against false prophets, whose fruits betray them notwithstanding their fair speech (vv. 15-20). The vanity of profession without vital reality is pressed even where service and gift are pleaded. It is finally compared to the folly of building on the sand, instead of on the rock of genuine obedience to Christ’s words (vv. 21-27).

To any anxious soul let me say, Do not mistake. The Lord is not here showing how the sinner is to get pardon and peace. He is teaching His disciples how they are to walk and please their Father. Confusion here denies salvation by grace, is itself mere error, and can only endanger and ruin souls. 93

Part 2:

The Imprecatory Psalms:

Their Dispensational Place
Chapter 2.1

The Imprecatory Psalms and the Christian

The Psalms Are the Words of God the Holy Spirit

We rightly and reverently treat the Psalms as divinely inspired, as utterances of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ: 94

... David himself said [speaking] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand until I put thine enemies [as] footstool of thy feet (Mark 12:36 -- see Psa. 110:1).

Brethren, it was necessary that the Scripture should have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who became guide to those who took Jesus; ... (Acts 1:16 -- see Psa. 109:8).

... searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which [was] in them pointed out, testifying before of the sufferings which [belonged] to Christ, and the glories after these (1 Pet. 1:11).

O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

The OT spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these

94. We do not "brand such scriptures as the products of an unsanctified and unchristian temper," William Binnie, The Imprecations, God's Forgotten Prayers of Power, Edmonton: Still Waters, p. 6. n. d. However, the Psalms are not Christian, though sanctified, but Jewish, and written by godly Jews, the imprecations largely having application to a future, godly Jewish remnant, formed consequent on the removal of the Christian saints at the time of the rapture.

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sufferings. These glories are not, of course, those bound up with the secret mystery (Rom. 11:25, 26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3) concerning which silence had been kept in the OT times. The glories of Christ spoken about in the OT concern the kingdom over which Christ will rule after God’s work concerning the mystery is completed.

**The Bearing of the Psalms**

The Psalms speak of both comings of Christ to earth. He came to earth to do the work on the cross, a work which righteously assures the future of Israel (John 11:52, 53; Rom. 15:8) as well as laying the righteous basis for the unfolding of the mystery of Christ and the Church. The Psalms have to do with Christ’s work, but not with the mystery as to which silence was kept in OT times. The Psalms also have to do with Christ’s appearing in glory, and it is this with which the imprecations are connected.

The character of His future appearing in glory, then, is altogether different in purpose from the first coming into the world. The imprecations in the Psalms are Holy Spirit inspired utterances that have the kingdom of Christ, i.e., the millennial kingdom, in view. The Psalms have to do with God’s ways in government in the earth. The Psalms have the calling of Israel in view. Israel to be seated -- established -- in the earth under Messiah’s reign before His ancients, in glory (Isa. 24:23). Israel is at the center of God’s ways in government in the *earthly*, so to speak. The Church is at the center of God’s ways in connection with the *heavenly*, and we are seated in Christ Jesus, in the heavenly (Eph. 2:6). The distinction was often drawn by J. N. Darby, from whom the following is quoted.

❖ But the promises as to the earth centered in Israel as a people. When the fulness of time was come, the promised deliverer came and presented Himself to Israel as a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God {Rom. 15:8}. Israel is not gathered. He is a stone of stumbling. Then the promises center, as we have seen, in Christ. Israel has voluntarily forfeited them, and ceases for a time, save by the hiding of God’s face from them, to be the center of His earthly government, and remain, as we know, without their own religion, and without a false one.

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95. {Indeed, there is an aspect of the work of Christ on the cross that provides for the *nation* of Israel (John 11:51, 52).}
Chapter 21: The Imprecatory Psalms and the Christian

Meanwhile believers are called to follow a rejected Lord, take up their cross, and have their treasure in heaven. Though not a sparrow falls without our Father, and all is under God’s hand, yet it is not the time of God’s direct government in respect of an earthly people. In due time God declares He will take up the Jews and Israel again; and while the saints who have suffered will have a heavenly portion, the earth will be governed in peace. But this will be introduced by a time of evil, tribulation, and judgment.

Now the prophecies all declare this, and we must not confound the government of the earth (and the promises made to the Jews and connected with it) with our heavenly hopes. God does not prophesy of heaven, but of events in the earth. These prophecies, while the Jews were connected with the present government of God, were addressed to them to warn and encourage them then; but God, knowing what they were, went on to the end, to the infallible accomplishment of His purpose, knowing that what rested on man’s responsibility must fail. Hence prophecies do apply largely at the time, only they go often on to the end; and are all a part of this large general scheme -- are not of private interpretation, 96 and not only as to Messiah, but as to Jews and Gentiles, all whose history and circumstances at the close of the world’s history are much more fully gone into than the circumstances of the day. Christ’s humiliation is spoken of, His rejection, as we have seen; but then prophecy, as it speaks of the government of the world, once He is gone on high, passes over to His future re-appearing in the world’s government: for this was the subject of prophecy. Hence Christ and the apostles leave out often the last part of a prophecy -- it belongs to the end of the present order of the world -- and stop at its first coming or its effects. Thus Christ says “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” but does not add “the day of vengeance of our God”: this is to come. So Paul, quoting Ps. 68, says “He hath received gifts for men,” but does not add “Yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” 97

❖ Am I to say,

Of thy mercy slay mine enemies --
Happy he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones
(Psa. 137:9) --

96. [See 1 Pet. 1:20; no prophecy is isolated so as to be understood apart from the scope of prophecy.]
That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of enemies, the tongue of thy dogs in the same? (Psa. 68:23).

When the earthly government of God is executed, this has its place. I, a Christian, see, as a general truth, the righteousness of it; and, as regards that government, when God's patience has done everything, as it will, I can rejoice in wickedness being removed. Still this language is not, nor is meant to be, the present language of the Christian. Christ is presented in Psa. 69 (vv. 22-28) as demanding the most dreadful vengeance and judgment on His enemies. Did He, when revealed in the gospels as a pattern for us according to grace, ever express such a wish? His words were, at the very time the psalm speaks,

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Is that,

Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold upon them?

Both will be fulfilled. One is the gracious personal desire of Christ, as we know Him revealed in the gospels; and to this the Holy Ghost answers by Peter,

And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus, &c. {Acts 3:17}.

And this will surely be accomplished in the end of the days.

The other is the association of Christ by the prophetic spirit with the Jewish remnant connected with the government of God, which will bring a just and righteous vengeance on the nation who rejected Him, and with all who clung and shall cling to the word of His servants. And this shall be accomplished too, fully, as the foretaste of it has already come upon them -- wrath to the uttermost, εἰς τέλος. But if we confound the Jewish spirit of the Psalms with the gospel, and take it as the expression of our feelings, we shall falsify Christianity. No doubt I shall find lovely confidence in the Lord in respect of His government of this world, the comfort of forgiveness, the happy confidence of integrity of heart, and remarkable prophecies as to Christ; but where shall I find heavenly hopes, or the union of the Church with a glorified Christ, or even the outflowings of divine grace, as manifested in His person on earth, or the blessed affection which flows from hearts acquainted with these? Where the blessed Spirit of adoption? Every saint knows the touching expressions of piety which the Psalms furnish to us; but no intelligent Christian can turn from the writings of John to the Psalms without
finding himself in a different atmosphere. 98

To this we add some words from W. Kelly:

◆ The Jewish believer had been in the condition of an infant, a bondman under the law; the Gentile never was. It is true he was a bondman, but of a totally different character. His bondage was to idolatry; the Jew’s bondage was to the law. The one, therefore, was under that which, in itself, was intrinsically good, but destructive to him; the other was under bondage to that which was of Satan, and had nothing which linked him to God. The more religious the Gentile was, the more thoroughly was he the slave of Satan. We shall find the force of that shortly. In the case of the Jews, they had been under this system of guardians and stewards: they had known what it was, though really believers, to be only at a distance, far from God, unable to draw near to God and pour out their hearts before Him as children. They were able to cry to Him, to groan to Him: that is what you have in the Psalms, which are full of this blessed confidence in God; but it is the confidence of servants who count upon God to interfere for them, who hope in God, but who are not able to praise Him yet — they are not brought near to Him. Even in some of the brightest of the Psalms they pray that God’s anger may not burn against them for ever.

They do not know that it is entirely put away for them. On the other hand, they enter into the judicial feelings of God against His enemies: they look forward, as if it were a privilege to put down the enemies of God, and ask Him to make them as stubble before the wind — to use them and their dogs that they might drink the blood of enemies — to us a thought full of the most painful associations which all Christians would turn from. Many are even in danger of condemning the word of God because such desires are in it. The language is exactly suited to souls under the law; but now are we under grace, and no longer under law, and we pray for persons that spitefully use us and persecute us; whereas the whole tone of the Psalms, where they speak of the happiness of dashing the children of Babylon against the stone, is anything but returning good for evil: it is evil meeting with its just doom. I maintain that every word in the Psalms is of God — that all these imprecations are divine. Each curse, threat, and warning, all this sympathy with divine retribution, is as much from God as the Christian’s now interceding for his enemies; but they are not suited to the same time nor the same persons, nor is God accomplishing the same end. As long as God carries

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98. Collected Writings 10:24-25
on the day of grace, all these things are entirely inapplicable. They are not what God is bringing out now. They remain true for ever, each always in itself a right thing. But the fact is, that God has now, in Christ, brought in full, sovereign grace; and therefore God puts those who belong to Christ in a position to show forth, not earthly righteousness, but heavenly grace. Righteous rule is in reserve, and yet to be accomplished to the letter; and God will use His people Israel to be the special instruments of executing these divine judgments.

Let us look at the Revelation. Righteous dealing appears after the Church is taken to heaven -- after the twenty-four elders are enthroned and crowned before the throne, representing the heavenly redeemed that God is now calling out of Jews and Gentiles. God then begins to work upon His ancient people Israel, who understand and cry to God and ask Him,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? [Rev. 6:10].

Is not this the counterpart to the tone of the Psalms? Yet are they saints of God. But mark the consequence of confounding these dispensations now. The Bible requires to be rightly divided. If you take up parts of Scripture and misapply them, one way or the other, you will be a workman that needs to be ashamed. Alas! how men pervert the Sermon on the Mount. They see certain words laid down by our Lord for His disciples; they find Him insisting that they were not to resist evil, not to return a blow for a blow, nor to use any earthly means for asserting their claims or vindicating them against personal violence, spoliation of their property, &c.; the very things men resent as an infringement of their right. Were a Christian to make out of this a code for all men now, what could be more contrary to the mind of God? It would be to attempt governing the world on principles of grace. If you experimented thus on men as they are, it would become a far more dreadful bear-garden than even in the times of the great Rebellion, when they tried to act out the retribution of the Psalmist. There, Christians were put under the spirit and principle of the law; but the attempt to put the world under that which was intended for the guidance of God’s children would be still worse confusion. The knave and rogue would be pardoned and caressed, the thief allowed to help himself to as much more as he liked. Evidently such principles never would do for the world, neither were they intended for it. The uninstructed may cry out that this is to take away the Bible, or much of it, but it is a totally false alarm. It is only an effort to lead them to understand the Bible; to teach them the real meaning of its various parts.
The practical point is, that Gentiles, such as ourselves, have been taken clean out of all the condition of sin in which we were. We were not under law, but we were under sin -- in total insubjection to God -- under every kind of evil. It might not be necessarily open, moral evil, but we lived to self, and lived without God, and that is a very gentle way of describing the condition in which all of us have been. These Galatians were under the grossest forms of ignorance and idolatry; but such is the spirit of grace, that they were taken quite out of it all, and, by faith in Christ, made sons of God, without passing through any intermediate steps. They repented, they received the Gospel, they became children of God.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

-- the very word which He, the blessed One, in full communion with His Father, uttered. Think into what a place we are brought! . . . 99 ◆

Some Observations on the Book of Psalms 100

The Scope and Divisions of the Psalms

In answer to a question, W. Kelly, as I suppose, wrote:

◆ Q. What is the general scope of the Psalms and the distinctive character of their divisions?

A. The Psalms, in general exhibit the Lord Jesus, and the godly (properly and specifically from among the Jews) in their mutual relations. He is identified with them and they with Him; brought through darkness, trial, the contradiction of sinners, the often apparent, and in one sense and time the real, desertion of God into security, peace, and blessing. This furnished the occasion, sometimes offered in the past circumstances of


100. Expositions of the Psalms are found in the writings of J. N. Darby and G. V. Wigram, as well as J. G. Bellett, The Psalms Chiefly in Their Prophetic Aspect. The Bible Treasury index lists references to many Psalms. An excellent series of readings on the Psalms is found in Words of Truth, edited by F. G. Patterson, vols. 5 and 6. Also, there is a series on “God’s King” in vol. 1, taking up a number of Psalms. There are also such articles as “Israel’s Preparation for Messiah’s Kingdom” in The Bible Treasury 10. See also on the Psalms in W. Kelly’s Inspiration of the Scriptures (also in The Bible Treasury, New Series 2). These writings are all available on searchable CDs from Present Truth Publishers.
righteous Israelites and of David especially, for the Spirit of Christ in them to launch out into higher scenes and subjects, even the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. At one and the same time, there is an intermingling of the particular things and persons of the day in which these strains were written, and there is the anticipation of the latter-day tribulation, through which the Jewish remnant are destined to pass into the wide field of millennial glory. Thus is drawn out the Holy Ghost’s revealed expression of the feelings and experience suitable to each and all.

The Psalms, consequently, do not bring the Church, as a distinctive body to light, if we expect some indirect allusions which we understand, now that the mystery, hidden from ages and generations, is made manifest. In this respect, they resemble the Old Testament prophecies. But there is also this striking difference, that while the prophets, for the most part, narrate the sufferings and triumphs of Christ as the head of Israel and the Gentiles as predicted facts, the Psalms lay bare the inmost privacy of His and their hearts as brought into exercise by these circumstances. Hence, while the prophecies chiefly reveal the feelings of God about Christ and His servants, the Psalms chiefly reveal the feelings of Christ and His servants about God. There are no doubt large and frequent exceptions, but this is, I think, a generally characteristic difference between these portions of the Bible.

But again, the Psalms are, as familiar to the reader of the Hebrew Bible, divided into five books. Nor are these divisions arbitrary. Various marks are impressed on them by God, which show that this is no Rabbinical fancy. Thus, even externally, it is plain that at the end of Psa. 41, of Psa. 72, and of Psa. 89, we have “Amen and Amen,” next at the end of Psa. 106, “Amen. Praise ye the Lord,” and thence, to the end of all, another class. These, with other common features in the verse where they occur, define the various books.

But the subjects, internally, differ thus:

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41) embraces Messiah’s sympathy with the godly remnant in “the beginning of sorrows.” They are not yet driven out, but are outwardly associated with the mass of people, even in worship. Hence the name of Jehovah is regularly there.

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) views the remnant as no longer in the land, but the object of hostility, not only of Gentiles, but of Jews united with them. The abomination of desolation is set up, and the tribulation is come. Accordingly, God is spoken of as such, save where hope is expressed.
Chapter 2.1: The Imprecatory Psalms and the Christian

Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) is occupied, not with Judah only, but with Israel; and also with a wider range of foreign enemies. It is founded on God’s ways with the whole people.

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) celebrates the bringing Christ again into the world, and hence is the book of Millennial blessedness.

Book 5 (Psalms 107-150) reviews all, opens out the principles of God’s dealings, and of relationships with Him, and gives the grand result of all the discipline, and the subsequent blessing of God. Its thanksgivings at the end are thus the moral answer to the groanings of the Spirit in Book 1. 101

The Nature of the Psalms

J. N. Darby wrote:

This psalm (18) presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the book of Samuel that the occasion of this psalm was the celebration of David’s deliverances from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of the psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the center, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting, link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. 102

101. The Bible Treasury 2:287. It should be observed the the headings of the Psalms are part of the inspired text, and when a Psalm is read in public, those headings should be read. See ibid., 8:224. W. Kelly, feeling strongly about this, renumbered the verses in those Psalms with such headings to make the heading v. 1. See his translation of the Psalms in The Bible Treasury 8 and 9.

102. Synopsis 2:79
The “Messianic Psalms”

A few comments from J. N. Darby concerning what has been called “Messianic Psalms” will be helpful.

Ques. How far are we to look in the Psalms for Christ’s personal experiences?

They are found in Psa. 22 and 69, and, in a certain sense, in Psa. 102, though this latter is more poetical; and we find also in the Psalms certain things in which His heart associates itself, and which He Himself makes use of, as, for instance, “He that hath lifted up his heel against me”; and so also, “Thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption.” There is a mistranslation in Psa. 16:2, where I have no doubt the right reading is: “Thou [my soul] hast said to Jehovah, Thou art the Lord: my goodness [extendeth] not to thee; -- to the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent [thou hast said], In them is all my delight.”

Ques. Might we assume that where in a Psalm an expression clearly refers to Christ, all the Psalm does so?

No; that would never be a safe assumption. 103 ❖

❖ The remnant of Israel therefore call for this execution of judgment on their enemies. They have to do, not with that heavenly, sovereign, abounding grace which gives us a place with Christ clean out of the world (not of it, as He was not of it {John 17} who was loved before the world was founded), but with the government of this world. Objects, no doubt, of grace themselves (and of mere grace, for they have rejected the promises in Christ presented to them in the truth of God, and have been concluded in unbelief that they might be the objects of mercy), still, they are the nation in whom the government of this world centers and in respect of whom it is displayed. Hence they await judgment, and the display of the righteous exercise of that government, and the cutting off of the oppressor and the wicked. Hence Christ (who has entered into, and will in spirit enter into, their sorrows, but was Himself cut off instead of seeing His enemies cut off, accomplishing a better and more glorious work) did not then ask for the world, but for those that were His, and that they might be with Him where He was. John 17 marks the formal contrast of the two systems. He would not call down fire from heaven -- would not execute righteous judgment. It is intimated indeed


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in the Sermon on the Mount that He was in the way with Israel (as in John, that the world had not known Him). Still, the christian path is to do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, as He did.

Hence, while passing through the sufferings, He could only prophetically be associated with the desires and aspirations after judgment which will have their righteous place when the time of public divine government of this world and judgment is come. Hence already in Psa. 2 this is the place we find Him set in. All the psalms are constructed in view of that. Thus the remnant in suffering, calling for judgment, reach back to Him who, though He never sought judgment for Himself, did suffer and will seek judgment for them and execute it -- Himself the center of that center of earthly government divine. He is seen by the prophetic Spirit in the same circumstances, and the cry for judgment is heard. But it will be found that, wherever this is the case, as we have remarked, the remnant, other men, are found besides the Lord Himself.

In principle, any suffering Jew might so speak; only, as Christ suffered above all, the terms used in the Psalms, where the demands for vengeance occur, sometimes rise up to circumstances which have been literally true in Him in His sorrow on earth. But the point of departure of the feeling, and of the whole of what is said, is any godly Jew whatever in the last days. Into that Christ has entered. The proper or exclusive personal application to Himself is only true when it is proved by the circumstances and the terms of the passage. The point of moral departure is always the remnant and their state. He is merely associated with them in the mind of the prophetic Spirit; though, as to the facts, He entered into deeper sorrow than they all. Hence the immense importance of first of all seeing the position and necessary thoughts of the remnant in the Psalms.

Christ is merely associated with them and their position in grace; though He must be the center, and pre-eminent, wherever He is found. There is no possibility of understanding the Psalms at all otherwise. All interpretation is false which does not take this principle or truth as its point of departure. When we get into a prophetic and governmental order, even in the New Testament, we at once find the same demands of vengeance. It is judgment, and not grace. The souls under the altar in the Revelation {6:10} desire that their blood may be avenged; and the

104. {These are souls of martyrs of the godly Jewish remnant, formed after the rapture has occurred.}
holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon.

This important principle then is to be laid down, that, in every psalm in which the godly remnant can have a part, that is, where the Person of Christ is not the direct subject (we have seen there are some, as Psalms 2, 102, and others, which speak personally of Christ), the whole is not to be applied to Christ, nor the psalm itself, in general, primarily. It belongs to the condition of the remnant, and speaks of it; and the principle of God's dealings with them through Christ is often given as the great example of the sorrow of the suffering godly. And hence, in the circumstances it refers to, it may rise up to such as literally depict those through which Christ has passed, so as to show the way in which Christ has entered into their circumstances. This last may be evidently the most important part of the psalm. But this does not change the principle. There may be psalms where the remnant are introduced collaterally as objects of blessing in result, but where a particular part may be evidently applicable to Christ, who only procures that result. 105

A brief survey of the Psalms, by W. Kelly, follows.

"Brief Hints on the Psalms"

by W. Kelly

The special character of the Psalms is undeniable. In no part of scripture is the design of God more evident. This is the more notable, because of the variety of writers concerned, and the profound arrangement of their contributions, not superficially according to source or time, but by a distinct and divine purpose which governs the due place of no less than 150 several pieces, some alone, others in groups, all falling under five large sections, each with its own scope and its marked conclusion.

Of these the first comprises Psalms 1 to 41; the second has 42 to 72; the third contains 73 to 89; in the fourth are 90 to 106; and the last gives us 107 to 150, where the end comes without any form of expressing it as before. The first section, as one may gather from its contents, presents prophetically the general principle of the godly discriminated from the

wicked among the Jews. Yet they are still together for the city and the sanctuary; and the covenant name of Jehovah predominates accordingly. In the second, on the contrary, the godly are a remnant who are severed from the multitude with whom they used to pass along to the house of God, as its opening intimates. They are sorrow-stricken, and ask Elohim to do them justice against an ungodly nation. Here accordingly, as deprived of public and common covenant privileges, they fall back on what God is in Himself, and the abstract name predominates. A striking proof of this appears from comparing Psa. 53 with 14 The third section, which has the divine names more mingled from Elohim to Jehovah, opens and goes through with the introduction of Israel as object of divine goodness, but such only “as are of a pure heart,” with all the nations jealous and hostile coming under judgment. The fourth division, after an appropriate exordium, strikes the note of a psalm-song for the Sabbath, and is filled with Jehovah reigning when He again brings the First-begotten into the inhabited earth; and here with the covenant name we find also the Most High and the Almighty. The last part celebrates Jehovah in the redemption of His people from the oppressor’s hand, and their ingathering out of all countries, east, west, north, and south. It furnishes a believing and moral review of all that had passed, the virtues of the law written thenceforward on Israel’s heart, and an affecting series of songs of degrees, followed after due interval by an ever swelling chorus of Hallelujahs, universal and lasting while earth endures.

As the history of man and of Israel is but the history of sin and ruin, but on God’s part from man’s fall were given communications of grace in prophecy and promise, so we have in the OT this beautiful and central book whose undercurrent is “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them.” Here we have the Holy Spirit providing inspired effusions from the heart and for the heart in sorrow and in joy, that the expression might have a divine savor through mercy and in truth, for His people passing through vicissitudes beyond all others, more favored yet more guilty, in respect not only of the law, but of the Messiah, but at length brought out of all guilt as well as distress unequaled, repentant and meek, into the over-abounding joy of grace and the everlasting glory of the kingdom, when everything that has breath shall praise.

The Psalms therefore obviously and assuredly have the prophetic bearing which is stamped more or less plainly on all scripture. But they have the peculiarity of expressing the heart’s feelings to God, produced by the Holy Spirit in poetic form, when holy men passed through grievous trials, as for instance David particularly, the writer of far the most of the Psalms. But we have the Lord’s authority and that of the
inspiring Spirit that an infinitely greater was the object of God, in some of them personally, in all of them His Spirit. This accordingly gave rise to the richest exercise of heart and conscience in the saints thus tried; which the Holy Spirit produced and clothed in appropriate language for others in similar or even deeper trials, especially those in which the Jew will be involved at the consummation of the age. Deepest of all are those which none but the Lord Jesus could adequately feel and express, such as Psa. 8, 16, 22, 40 &c. Many are the Psalms. on the other hand which anticipate the glory which is to appear, and the triumph not in heaven only but here below for Him Who was rejected and put to shame and by none so bitterly as by His brethren after the flesh.

In the Psalms therefore, beyond every other part of the written word, we have the divinely inspired expression of the hopes and fears, of the dangers and falls, of the confessions and recoveries, of the self-judgment and the thanksgivings, of the praises and the blessings, of God's people. We have the outpouring even of the Lord Himself, alone in atoning for sin, associated with others in governmental affliction, and leading the praise where and when this could be. Who but God could have supplied all this with a vast deal more, and beforehand? Who could have combined the experience of man's trembling and agitated heart, with the consolations of divine grace suited to his state, in a form worthy of God and a bearing for all time, even for that when the groans of creation shall be changed into the joy of the earth in unison with the heavens, and the field shall exult, and all the trees of the forest sing for joy, when the floods shall clap hands and the mountains chant together? For Jehovah will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

The order of the Psalms was a final act of divine inspiration as certainly as the substance of every several psalm. There is an exact propriety in the succession, which in no case could be disturbed without loss, and thus forcibly attests the finger of God. The titles, where given, are significant of a deeper mind than man’s, though naturally unintelligible to such as look only for what lies on the surface. The absence of a title has its meaning, though it may not always be the same.

{The First Section: Psa. 1-41}

Thus Psa. 1 and 2 have no title, not only to link them together, but this at the start as the preface to the first section and indeed also to the entire collection: one laying down the character of the godly man before Jehovah, whose hope is in Messiah; the other, the titles of Christ, as Jehovah's Son and King anointed for His holy hill of Zion, as surely as He will crush the nations and their kings in His day.
From 3 to 7 it is not the godly alone, nor Christ alone, but the Spirit of Christ in the godly. It is not Christ personally, but in His Spirit setting forth great moral principles. Thus in 3 it is faith in Jehovah, howsoever many be hostile; in 4 Jehovah sets apart the godly to Himself and hears him; in 5 it is confidence of blessing through Jehovah’s righteousness for the righteous; in 6 he bows in distress before Jehovah in the sense of His just displeasure and pleads for mercy; in 7 he looks for His judgment falling on the wicked. Ps. 8 closes the group by passing from God’s purpose about Christ to His suffering in fact as Son of man, and even now highly exalted in a wider glory, as in result Jehovah’s name excellent in all the earth.

Again, Ps. 9 and 10 plunge us into the latter-day crisis as the time to which in general the psalms apply, not the period of the gospel and the church. Hence the issue is judgment executed on the quick (hostile heathen and wicked Jews), not the rapture of the saints glorified to heaven. They are a pair, and regard the enemies without and within. And they are followed up by a connected series up to 18 which express in 11-13 the experience and feelings of the godly in those days. Ps. 14 contrasts the character of the wicked and the righteous in view of that day; and 15 replies to the challenge, Who shall dwell with Him then?

Then in Ps. 16 and 17 Christ is seen as taking in grace His place therein, and in righteousness; whereas Ps. 18 identifies strikingly Messiah with His people from the deliverance out of Egypt at the outset till the Abiding One, when He becomes head, not of the church as now, but of the nations at the end of the age. Next come the divine testimonies of creation and the law in 19, then in 20 of Messiah answered in the day of trouble, and glorified in 21; while Ps. 22 is Messiah made sin and so forsaken to God’s glory, resulting in grace flowing out more and more widely, if not then so deeply, till all the ends of the earth turn to Jehovah, and His righteousness is declared to a people that shall be born, on the ground of Messiah’s doing. For after all, as we read in 23, 24, He as Jehovah guards His sheep when evil reigns, and will Himself be owned as Jehovah King of glory in the kingdom and house of Jehovah.

Then commencing with 25, 26, we see confession of sins and integrity of ways united in those that are His, emboldened by His sacrifice to own the truth and pursue holiness: a fresh start for the psalms to come. Whom should such a one fear? says Ps. 27, and (whatever the distress) Jehovah is his shield, Who will judge the wicked according to their deeds, as in 28. Hence the challenge in 29 to the sons of the mighty to own Jehovah, as every one in the temple says, Glory!
Psa. 30 celebrates deliverance: if weeping comes for the night, there is joy at morn. Yet for this Messiah died, 31. Thus only could transgression be forgiven, sin be covered, and true blessedness come, 32; and thus alone could the righteous exult in Jehovah as in 33, its companion psalm, while Psa. 34 rises to a strain yet higher and sustained “at all times.”

The next four psalms, again, contemplate the way and power of evil judicially, also the path of the righteous, as well as a just sense of their sins confessed; while Psa. 39 owns that it is to their chastening, though man walks in a vain show. The section worthily concludes with Christ, after death and resurrection, praising in a new song, faithful in obedience, as also in bearing sins, in word and deed and suffering to the uttermost (40); and blessed is he that understands the Poor One, if His own familiar friend lifted up heel against Him (41).

{The Second Section: Psa. 42-72}

The second section regards the godly remnant as forced to flee and be outside Jerusalem (42). Compare Matt. 24:15, &c. For those within are in league with idolatrous Gentiles, being alike ungodly and, apostate (43). “Arise,” pleads 44. Christ too is no longer viewed in general as graciously in their midst on earth, but gloriously on high; we see in 45. Elohim appropriately is their refuge in 46, but Jehovah Most High is anticipatively celebrated in faith, and this for all the peoples, a great King for all the earth (47). Whatever present things may say, the utter rout of earth’s kings is seen by faith, and Zion is the hill of His holiness (48). Psa. 49 is a homily thereon: that day proclaims the folly of unbelief. Man in honor and understanding not is like the beasts that perish. Their wealth, lands, sayings, glory, come to nought. Only the redeemed abide. The chosen people in Psa. 50 were no better than the world, yea more guilty; but the godly made a covenant with God over sacrifice. In 51 like David they own corruption and blood-guiltiness; they recognize man’s might under judgment, 52, and the folly of “the many” 53. But all the resource of faith is in God, 54, though the wilderness was better than the city traitorous to Christ, 55. Psa. 56, 57 are an evident pair, expressing confidence, and growingly, in that day of danger and distress. So are 58, 59 when God’s judgment is owned as the only means to convince man of fruit for the righteous, and that God rules in Jacob.

In 60 the Jew accepts God’s chastening, but looks for victory. In 61 he cries “from the end of the earth” (and it is mainly for his soul and the king’s life); in 62 with enlarging expectation. In 63 the praise and
blessing and soul-satisfaction rise, though he be still an outcast from the sanctuary. Psa. 64 spreads before God the deadly craft and evil of that day, but is sure of God’s intervention; and also in 65 the outburst then of praise, silent long in Zion. Yea, all the earth shall shout aloud to God; and the godly one who had fled will then go into His house and pay the vows made in trouble, 66. Then 67 closes this group by the blessing of the Jew as the means for all nations to know God’s salvation, never before nor otherwise.

The triumph of God, as Psa. 68 exultingly sings, is in and by Christ ascended on high. So shall His enemies be scattered when He arises; so shall the isolated be made to dwell in a home, and the kings of armies flee, and Jehovah dwell in Zion for ever, and the kingdoms of the earth sing to God: blessed be God! But what was not Christ’s humiliation in order that this should be righteously? This, 69 declares of Him, Who here speaks of being smitten and wounded of Jehovah. Indeed Christ bore reproach for His sake, for which judgment must follow on His enemies. Psa. 70 pleads for His deliverance, but withal to the shame of His wicked adversaries, and to their joy that sought Jehovah, Himself afflicted in order to it. Psa. 71 turns this principle to Jewish deliverance, “old” as they might be, but yet to renew their youth in praise; and so this portion closes with Psa. 72 “for Solomon.” It is not the aged David, the man of war, but the Prince of Peace, Who introduces the rest of God, when the prayers of Jesse’s son are ended. Who can doubt the divine design thus far?

{The Third Section: Psa. 73-89}

The third division bears out its larger character as bringing in Israel and their Gentile foes so plainly that fewer words are here needed. Psa. 73 speaks expressly of the people thus; as 74 of their and His enemies. In 75 Messiah intervenes, judging with equity; when earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved, He bears up its pillars. Can any one doubt Who He is? or when? Psa. 76 speaks of the catastrophe for the kings of the earth when He dwells in Zion; not when His presence shines from heaven to the destruction of the Beast and the False prophet. But there is inward deliverance also as in Psa. 77. And the history of the people is turned more than ever to “instruction” in that day as in 78. But even when Israel is back in the land, Gentile hatred once more breaks out as we see in Psa. 79, and the people are not yet established in the new covenant. In 80 they pray that the Shepherd of Israel may shine forth, and His hand be on the Man of His right hand, the Son of man.

Psa. 81 bids the trumpet be blown at the new moon. It is the
awakening and gathering of Israel, as 82 warns the judges of His arising to judge the earth. Nor will the confederacy of Gentiles, small or great (83), avail against God’s hidden ones; their greed after His holy places will only bring out that He alone Whose name is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. Ps. 84 then points out the blessing, first, of dwelling where Jehovah dwells, in His house; next, of going up thither. Ps. 85 celebrates His favor, though the result was far from complete; for glory is to dwell in the land. Cf. Isa. 4 for Jerusalem. A suited prayer of David follows in Ps. 86; and Ps. 87 contrasts Zion with the passing splendor of earth’s old great ones. But none the less do the godly feel and express in 88 the terrors of a broken law; and they cry to the God of their salvation accordingly. They had utterly failed in their relationship; but the Spirit of Christ in no way held aloof from this righteous affliction, Himself holy and spotless. Ps. 89 is the song of Jehovah’s loving-kindness or mercies, the center of which is the Merciful or Holy One in v. 19. They had lost all but His mercies in Christ, which abide and will yet be theirs “for ever.”

{The Fourth Section: Psa. 90-106}

The fit opening of the fourth section is Moses’ prayer, Psa. 90. The sovereign Lord alone can say to crumbling man, Return, children of men. But this turns on the Messiah, Psa. 91, Whose work brings in the true Sabbath song, 92. Jehovah then reigns, higher than the highest of creatures; and holiness becomes His house ever more, 93. Yet vengeance belongs to Him, dishonored from the first, and most of all at the last, 94. But when the workers of iniquity are cut off, then goes forth Israel’s joyous call to sing to Jehovah, 95, as in 96 all the earth is invited to sing a new song. Is not 97 the answer to that, as 99 to 98 {sic}, where Israel is in question? In Psa. 100 they are all summoned to shout aloud and serve Jehovah with joy. There is no narrowness of heart more. If “we” are His people, enter “ye” into His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Psa. 101 is Messiah setting out the terms of His reign, mercy and judgment. Psa. 102 gives the ground of all blessing in His humiliation, Who was not the cast down Messiah only but Jehovah, as truly as He who lifted Him up; for He is the Creator of all. Then, Psa. 103, what praise in Israel flows out! What praise in creation, Psa. 104! What thanks given in Psa. 105 where Jehovah’s ways of grace are retraced from the fathers down till the sons entered on the lands of the nations! What thanks, in Psa. 106 not less deeply but here adding, “for His loving kindness (or mercy) is for ever.” Grace opens their lips to confess how they had sinned with their fathers, and done wickedly throughout the self-same history, and later still when carried captive.
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Now they say, “Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks to thy holy name, to triumph in thy praise.”

{The Fifth Section: Psa. 107-150}

The fifth division begins with Psa. 107, in substance like the concluding one of the fourth, but adding the weighty facts in vv. 2, 3, and recounting their varied providential past, wise now to understand Jehovah's mercy. Cf. Rom. 11:30-32. Psa. 108 is the joy of the Spirit of Christ when Israel is put in possession of their long forfeited inheritance. Here it is His mercy, truth, and glory. Now in 109 we have Christ rejected but exalted to help the needy, with judgment on the son of perdition first and last. Psa. 110 is David's Son and Lord exalted. Though Priest for ever after Melchisedek's order, He is about to smite through kings in the day of His anger, especially the “head over a mighty land”: the just reply to 109.

In 111 to 118 we have a group celebrating Jehovah successively in His works and wonders; 111, in His commandments and righteousness; 112, in His character and dealings; 113, in praise, all being Hallelujahs; then in 114 is the effect on the earth of the presence of Jacob's God, as 115 is the humbling effect on Israel to His glory, blessed and blessing; and in 106 their love in Christ's Spirit as delivered from death like Jairus' daughter. Again, 117 calls all the nations to praise Jehovah, as 118 closes the set with “His mercy for ever” sung by Israel, Aaron's house, and those that fear Him. Through sore trial Israel had passed, but destroyed their foes; but it was in His name Who set the rejected Stone at the head of the corner; and in His name Messiah coming they bless.

Next in Psa. 119 we have Israel's state shown, the law written on their hearts, and its virtues analyzed fully and distinctively. Then follows the series of fifteen “Songs of degrees,” or steps in Israel's restoration, not yet fulfilled. In 120 the deceitful foe is discerned; in 121 Jehovah is looked to for help; and in 122 Christ's Spirit kindles their joy in worship. Then in 123 their eyes are devotedly lifted up to Jehovah; and in 124 the snare is broken, and they bless Him. In Psa. 125 they confide in Jehovah, peace on Israel: in 126 joy is reaped after sowing in tears, by Christ above all. Psa. 127 is for Solomon, contrasting the house and the city of the rest of God with the Babel-building that preceded, and looking for a blessed posterity. The blessing of Jehovah-fearers duly ensues in 128 and their many afflictions can now, in 129, be calmly remembered with the assurance of shame to all that hate Zion. Then, 130 tells how forgiveness with Jehovah taught them to fear Him, and wait for Him, and hope; as in 131 the moral effect goes forth in subjection of
heart, deepening that hope. Psa. 132 asks Jehovah to remember for
David all his affliction, the figure of infinitely greater; and to arise into
His rest, with answers from v. 14 exceeding every request. Next, 133
points us to the beauteous dwelling in unity that results in the power of
the Spirit, honoring a greater than Aaron in the blessing -- life for
evermore; while 134 ends this series with blessing rising up: night brings
no pause, and Jehovah blesses out of Zion, king and priest being here
together in it.

Psa. 135 is more general praise, though it and the succeeding 136
may be regarded as replying to the psalms of degrees. They are
rehearsals. The first begins and ends with Hallelujah; the second
resounds with Israel’s known chorus.

Special circumstances, of the people’s sorrow, and of Jehovah’s
fidelity to His word, begin in Psa. 137 and 138, while 139 gives the
individual heart-searching in goodness of the Eternal, which encourages
to pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart,” &c. As the last foe
has not fallen before the kingdom is established in peace, we have in 140
a prayer for his fall; as in 141 for preservation and profit by the
discipline meanwhile. It is even more urgent in 142 and in sense of
loneliness. Psa. 143 takes the deep ground that in His sight no man living
shall be justified. It is a question of divine righteousness. So in Psa. 144
“Jehovah, what is man?” Why should He delay judgment and blessing
for him? for Jehovah only has and gives might.

Psa. 145 is the Spirit of Christ in the Jewish saints praising for the
kingdom; and Hallelujah psalms swell in volume to the end. Psa. 146 is
the contrast in the man of Jehovah delivering His people; Psa. 147 His
mercy to Jerusalem and Israel’s outcasts with His blessing of creation.
In 148 it is His praise “from the heavens,” and “from the earth,” with
all therein; as Psa. 149 is His praise in the congregation of the godly (for
such are Israel henceforth). Psa. 150 is praise to El (the mighty One),
everywhere and in all respects, with every instrument and by everything
that has breath. How evident the special design of God, not only in each
psalm but in their arrangement! Man without Him was incapable of
either. 106

* * * * *

The Place of the Psalms for Christians

Having surveyed the prophetic character of the Psalms in connection with the godly of Israel, we may now consider their proper use by Christians. The Psalms, J. N. Darby pointed out, have their place for the Christians only as follows:

- The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God’s people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints -- sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathize with them. Hence a more mature spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensation ally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognize the position to which the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the Christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an
earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more, we miss the blessed and deeply instructive apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be, introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path. 107

The distinction between the heavenly and the earthly people of God must be emphasized regarding the use of the Psalms, just as is the case concerning the OT prophets. Neither the Psalms nor the prophets have the heavenly, our sphere as “in Christ,” in view. The Christian expectation concerning Christ’s coming differs from the Jewish expectation. We have already noted that the imprecations in the Psalms are unsuitable for a heavenly people waiting for the Lord Jesus to come and receive them unto Himself and bring them to the Father’s house above (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:15-18; Phil. 3:20, 21). That expectation stands in contrast with the expectation of the godly Jews whose portion is the kingdom of Messiah here on earth. The imprecations in the Psalms have in view Messianic deliverance of the godly when the kingdom is set up and the righteous reign.

J. G. Bellett has some wholesome words concerning this matter.

But still, in using it, we should remember that, having the Holy Ghost in us, our experiences are to flow from that. Christian experience is the tasting of the fruit of the presence of the Spirit {as Indweller}, and is according to the forms in which, as we are told in Scripture, He acts in

107. Synopsis 2:33, 34.
us. And how rich should that be, when He dwells and acts in us, as an
ilation, an Earnest, and a Witness. What joy of hope, what largeness of
understanding, what strength of faith, should be ours! what sense of the
divine love, when the Holy Ghost Himself is shedding that love abroad
in our hearts! And as this is the due experience of the saint, as far as the
Book of Psalms reflects the heart of a righteous Jew merely, the saint is
now borne beyond it, or beside it. The Psalmist says, for instance,

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy
judgments;

the saint now is to prove, that

perfect love casteth out fear {1 John 4:18},

and that he has

boldness in the day of judgment {1 John 4:17},

So again --

Let me not be ashamed of my hope;

the saint is taught to know, that

hope maketh not ashamed {Rom. 5:5}.

In ways like these, the saint now passes beyond the Psalmist, and walks
in the warmer, brighter light of the New Testament, in the strength of the
Holy Ghost in him.

So, in the 112th Psalm, all earthly prosperity is promised absolutely
to the godly man; but the apostle, quoting that Psalm (2 Cor. 8:8–11),
only states God's power to give prosperity, and prays for a measure of it
in behalf of the saints at Corinth. 108

But many a mistake on this subject of Christian experience has arisen,
I believe, from the wrong use of the Book of Psalms. Many, diligently
and graciously desiring to walk with God, have made it something of a
model for themselves, and sought to have the heart conform itself to the
trials, consolations, and other experiences delineated in it. But this is not
its proper use. It should be read, rather, as the varied picture of the soul
exercised by the Spirit under certain conditions and circumstances. The
circumstance, together with the grace and energy of the Spirit, and not
any effort of our own souls, is to be the parent of the experience.

108. So Peter quotes Hosea; but he does not go on with Hosea to promise the saints now,
as the prophet promises Israel, that they shall have all blessing in the earth — the earth
hearing the corn and the wine and the oil, and they hearing Jezreel; but he exhorts them
to behave as those who are only strangers and pilgrims while they remain in the earth.
(See 1 Pet. 2:10; Hosea 2).
This, I believe, is to be remembered. The Psalms were not models to Jesus. He did not, for instance, go through either the patience or the joy of the 16th and 22nd, as though He were conforming the ways of His soul to certain patterns. These Psalms were rather the inspired anticipations of what the paths of His spirit were to be. The circumstances through which He was passing drew Out His perfect soul in those utterances.

There are, no doubt, many other sources of mistake connected with this subject. But this I have long thought may be observed as one of them. But to return. On the difference in the language of the Psalms and the New Testament, we may say, all this is perfect in its season, but strikingly intimates a difference in heavenly and earthly persons and things. And this going beyond the book of the Psalmist in our experiences, is like going beyond the books of the Prophets in our hopes and calling. For the earth, its people, its judgments, and its glory, are the due theme of the prophets. And heavenly things are not to be expected to come within the mind of the Spirit in the Psalmist more largely than in the Prophets. Saints find their sympathies in this book, and use it for their spiritual comfort, but their calling and glory in the heavens is not the subject of the book. The Jerusalem of the Psalmist is not the heavenly {the new} Jerusalem of Rev. 21, but the Jerusalem in the land of Israel. And the people of this book generally are her people, or that Remnant which our meditations have so largely contemplated.

And let me here observe something more particularly as to this idea of “a Remnant,” so common in Scripture.

It has its formal foundation in the incorrigibleness of man. Man may smart and cry out under the rod, but he returns to his naughtiness again and again. The Book of Judges illustrates this. And Isa. 1 shows us that the idea of a Remnant, as I have said, arises from this. For the prophet there tells us, that those who had been brought up as loved children had rebelled, and that afterwards, chastised as disobedient children, they had refused to repent. They were incorrigible. Piped or mourned to, they had no answer. And upon this the Lord has only to act on the sovereignty of grace, or on the principle of a Remnant -- as the prophet further says,

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been made like unto Gomorrah (Isa. 1:9).

The Lord was constantly, through Israel’s times, exhibiting this sovereignty of grace in the election and manifestation of a Remnant. Such seasons have been called (and justly so) “Revivals.” The times of Samuel, David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, mark so many revivals or eras of spiritual recovery from a state of disease. But the
present condition of Israel tells us, that again the bloom has gone up as rottenness. Their summer is departed. The land and the people witness this. But it is not to be always so. There will be still the greatest revival of all. Those which we have here traced were only the occasional recoveries of a diseased system, which carried the principle of death in it! but this last revival will be effectual, for it will be in the resurrection life and strength of the Son of God. For while nothing in man can be trusted, and nothing committed to man abides, in Him all the promises of God are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20)

And in the time of this last and glorious revival in Israel, there will be a great doing of the Lord, as at such seasons there has always been. Samuel was exercised in heart before he was manifested, and David likewise, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the rest of them, though variously. The Spirit of God was getting ready the instrument ere the hand of God used it. As we read of Samson,

and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp
of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol (Judg. 13:25).

And so, in the coming days of Israel, there will be the secret work of the Spirit again in the election from the midst of the nation.

The Prophets, again and again, tell us the fact, that they, a revived people, will be brought through much exercise of soul; viz., that they will bear the indignation of the Lord because they have sinned against Him -- bewail their leanness and that they are only as grape-gleanings -- wait for the God of their salvation -- remember His former doings -- be an afflicted and poor people, abstaining from iniquity and from speaking lies, and shutting their eyes from seeing evil -- come with weeping and supplication -- be led into the wilderness and there spoken comfortably to -- return and seek God and David their king -- take with them words -- acknowledge their offences -- speak often one to another, &c., &c. All this is given to us, historically, of the Remnant by the Prophets, as the Evangelists give us, historically or as facts, the ways of Jesus. And then, this book of Psalms comes, and in it turn and place, under the same Spirit gives us the hidden path both of Jesus and of this His elect Israel through these circumstances thus recorded by Prophets and Evangelists.

Of this election from the midst of Israel, or the Remnant of whom we have so much spoken, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and others, give us samples. Their righteous souls were drawn out into godly exercise over the state of the nation, and over the oracles of God. So, Josiah is exercised in a day when the judgment could not be averted from the people, but the righteous seed would be preserved (2 Chron. 34).
And as the voices of Haggai and Zechariah animated the people in the work of the Lord’s house, so will revived attention to the words of the Prophets give quickening and direction to the hearts of a kindred Remnant by and by, destined, through grace, to be the sons or citizens of the earthly Jerusalem. (See Ezra 5.)

But the purposed fruit of all this discipline of soul and of all other discipline, is only this -- “to take away their sin” (Isa. 27). For, when all this purifying is over,

the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the

Lord, as in the days of old.

The valley of Achor is to be a door of hope, as it was before (see Josh. 7, Hos. 2) -- from the sorrow and discipline (assuredly through that blood of Jesus which is the only fountain for all sin, whether theirs or ours (Zech. 13:1), is to spring for them joy and honor. Their wilderness is to yield a vineyard, or a garden of roses (Isa. 35, Hos. 2). Achan must be removed, and the land shall then be taken. The rebels must be purged out {Ezek. 20}, and then the flock shall be saved, again lie down as “under the shade of Lebanon,” and David be their shepherd again.

These simple considerations may prepare us for hearing the voice of this people, the true Israel of God in this book. They will, in their day, be led to find in it what will suit the condition of their souls from the circumstances into which their obedience to God will bring them. For the Spirit of Christ, in sympathy with them, has indited these Psalms for their use in their day. And of this, Acts 4:25-27 gives us a very simple and yet very clear instance. For there, the circumstances then around them so form the mind of the disciples (under the Holy Ghost surely), that their souls are at once cast into fellowship with the 2nd Psalm; and, without effort or delay, they get the proper utterance of their hearts through it. This is just a sample of what we mean; and it is a very happy warrant for our saying, that Psalms are prepared by the Spirit of Christ for His Israel in the day of their quickening, which is to be the day of their trials also . . .

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The Basis for Imprecatory Psalms

J. Carl Laney said that the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15) is the basis for blessing and cursing and that “its promises and provisions remain in force throughout Israel’s existence as a nation.” 110

First of all, we do not come to the Abrahamic Covenant until Gen. 15, and promises preceded that, but let it pass. Secondly, Gen. 12:1-3 speaks of God blessing and cursing, not of Israelites doing it. Thirdly, I do not understand how some Scofieldians can assert that the Abrahamic Covenant was in force as long as Israel was a nation. This results in Israel standing before God under the conditional Mosaic Covenant while at the same time standing before God under an unconditional covenant. The truth is that the Mosaic Covenant placed the Abrahamic Covenant in suspension. 111

The conclusion from the truth of the matter, namely, that Israel was not under the Abrahamic Covenant while under the law is that the Imprecations in Israel under the Mosaic Covenant are not based in Gen. 12:1-3 or in the Abrahamic Covenant of Gen. 15. They are based in Israel being under the law. The law was the standard for the imprecations.


111. This has been dealt with in the book, Elements of Dispensational Truth 3, The Christian’s Altar, etc.

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Chapter 2.2

Are the Imprecatory Psalms Suitable for Christian Prayer and Singing?

The Imprecations in the Psalms

THE PSALMS AND CHRIST

In the Psalms, when sufferings from men are spoken of, vengeance is always called for by the speaker. In Christ’s life historically there never was a trace of this, but the contrary. On the cross He prays that they may be forgiven; as in His lifetime He rebuked the disciples for thinking of it, not knowing what Spirit they were of. It is evident that this is of the greatest weight in our judgment of the manner of application to Christ. 112

We must distinguish the heavenly work of Christ in connection with the church and the earthly work of Christ with Israel and the kingdom. As J. N. Darby wrote:

❖ Again in Psa. 68:23,

That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

Now this is vengeance, and not the characteristic work of the power of redemption. This greatly facilitates the understanding of the psalms, for in them we constantly find the Spirit of Christ crying for judgment on His enemies. The dreadful expressions of vengeance in the Psalms apply to the judgment of enemies on the setting up of the kingdom. In Psa. 21:8 we find that in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God there will be judgment upon His enemies, as it is said,

Thy right hand shall find out all thine enemies;

112. The Bible Treasury 17:80.
it speaks of Him as King. But in Psa. 22 there is not a word about enemies. When He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

He was suffering for sin in the way of atonement. When it was that kind of suffering, His soul entered into it, as He, and He alone, could know it. Then I find nothing about enemies, but

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

The principle is, that He takes His place among happy people. The church is altogether above and beyond the kingdom; the church is a happy people associated with Christ in the love God has for Him. The church will reign with Christ over the kingdom, and she now owns Christ as King by right. 113

He says, “Surely, I come quickly”; to which the church responds, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Thus it is very evident that the coming of the Lord to take the church unto Himself, must be something entirely between Himself and the church alone. But it will not be so with the remnant of Israel, for them the execution of the judgment will be needed, in order to their taking their place in the earth. In fact, the Lord’s coming to the earth itself must be attended with the execution of judgment, gathering out of His

kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity

{Matt. 13:41}.

And it is evident that the deliverance of the remnant of Israel connects the coming of the Lord with the execution of judgment upon what despises Him before Israel can possibly get their blessing. And this accounts for the strong cry of vengeance we find throughout the Psalms; take Psa. 94 for instance,

O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.

Now we do not want vengeance in order to be with Christ in blessing. God has given us grace as our portion in every way, and we have to deal entirely with grace. I am not looking for the Lord to come and avenge me on my enemies, for I am expecting to be caught up to meet Him in the air {1 Thess. 4:15-18; Phil. 3:20, 21}. And, that it may be clearly understood, I would again remark, that throughout the whole Scriptures this cry, in connection with the Lord’s coming to the earth, is the

113. Collected Writings 32:403, 404.
language of the remnant of Israel, and not the language of the church of God.

Take Psa. 68:23,

that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the
tongue of thy dogs in the same.

These are not the thoughts that occupy my soul in the contemplation of meeting Jesus in the air. If, through grace, I have bowed to the grace of the Lamb, then I have no connection whatever with that which will come under the wrath of the Lamb. It is Himself that I am expecting for the sake of what is in Himself apart from anything else. So also in the description of the future Jewish times of blessing in Isa. 60:12,

The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish;

while of the New Jerusalem it is said,

The leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations.

Israel is the scene of God’s righteous judgments; the church is the scene of God’s sovereign grace; and it never gets out of this. For the church, as such, never calls for vengeance; it will see the righteousness of the vengeance when God shall avenge the blood of those who have suffered, and rejoice that corruption is destroyed; but its own portion is to be with Christ. The earth will be delivered through judgment; but our portion is to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with Him.  

Covenant Theology, with its doctrine that there is only one people of God, and that the church has existed from Adam (or from Abraham) on, necessarily places imprecatory Psalms in the mouths of saints of the

114. [Now this is vengeance, and not the characteristic work of the power of redemption. This greatly facilitates the understanding of the psalms, for in them we constantly find the Spirit of Christ crying for judgment on His enemies. The dreadful expressions of vengeance in the psalms apply to the judgment of enemies on the setting up of the kingdom. In Psa. 21:8 we find that in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God there will be judgment upon His enemies, as it is said, “Thy right hand shall find out all thine enemies”; it speaks of Him as King. But in Psa. 22 there is not a word about enemies. When He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was suffering for sin in the way of atonement. When it was that kind of suffering, His soul entered into it, as He, and He alone, could know it. Then I find nothing about enemies, but I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” The principle is, that He takes His place among happy people. The church is altogether above and beyond the kingdom; the church is a happy people associated with Christ in the love God has for Him. The church will reign with Christ over the kingdom, and she now owns Christ as King by right (Collected Writings 32:403-404).]

115. Collected Writings 5:306.
Church -- which Scripture does not. After all, if the godly of Israel were part of the church, there you have the evidence that imprecations are properly in the mouths of church saints. Of course, that is a false theological system -- and it ever Judaizes.

Examples of imprecations in the Psalms (108) are:


7. When he shall be judged, let him go out guilty, and let his prayer become sin [be imputed as sin];

8. Let his days be few, let another take his office;

9. Let his sons be fatherless, and his wife a widow;

10. Let his sons be vagabonds and beg, and let them seek [their bread] far from their desolate places;

11. Let the usurer cast the net over all that he hath, and let strangers despoil his labor;

12. Let there be none to extend kindness unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children; etc.

See also Psa. 69:23-25. See Psa. 137:8, 9:

8. Daughter of Babylon, who art to be laid waste, happy he that rendereth unto thee that which thou hast meted out to us.

9. Happy he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock.

Nor is it Christian to purloin Psa. 149:5-9 and press it into Christian conduct:

5. Let the godly exult in glory; let them shout for joy upon their beds.

6. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand:

7. To execute vengeance against the nations, [and] punishment among the peoples;

8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9. To execute upon them the judgment written. This honor have all his saints. Hallelujah!

Exult in glory and shout for joy upon your bed, Christian, for you have far above what the godly Psalmist had in blessing from the Lord; far above even what Israel will have under the New Covenant. But that two-edged sword (or what it stands for) does not belong in your hand. It is not yours, Christian, to execute vengeance on the nations, to bind kings
with chains. “This honor have all his saints” does not mean you. The saints that the Psalmist speaks of are the godly of Israel -- who have an earthly calling. *The appropriation of the Psalms to the Christian Judaizers*. This is what Covenant Theology does in general and here we note the placing such words of imprecation in your mouth as if it is a godly thing to do! **It is instructive that the theology that teaches that the Christian is under the law as the rule of life is the theology that teaches that these imprecations are suitable and proper for Christians.**

J. N. Darby wrote:

... further, the real danger of taking the Psalms as the expression of Christian piety. They are not so. Often they furnish blessed instruction on confidence in God; but he who would take the form of his piety from the Psalms as a whole would falsify Christianity. 116

He said somewhere that many Scriptures have been returned to the Jews -- yes, returned from Christian teachers and expositors who took them from their proper application to godly Jews and made them refer to Christians. Covenant Theology is very guilty of this. With the recovery of the Christian’s true place before God, such books as the Psalms and the Song of Songs, as well as the prophets of Israel, and Matt. 24 also, have been restored to their proper place and meaning -- at least for those who have gotten some light through the recovery of so much truth through J. N. Darby.

It hardly needs to be said, then, that the recovery of dispensational truth brought out the grave unsuitability for such imprecations to be in the mouth, or practice, of a Christian. Those imprecations are suitable for godly Jews under the law, with an earthly hope of being under Messiah’s reign in Jerusalem, the reign of righteousness in the earth. In view of that reign of righteousness on earth, administered from Jerusalem, it is suitable for the godly Jew to call for God’s vengeance on the wicked. That is not suitable for a Christian with a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1), who is himself heavenly, as Christ is heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48), and not of the world, as Christ is not of the world (John 17) etc., etc.). Covenantists do not distinguish the heavenly work of Christ in presently gathering a people *out of the world* (Acts 15:14), and His earthly work following this out-gathering when the fallen tabernacle of David will be rebuilt (Acts 15:16-18). That will be the millennial glory, following the time of Jacob’s trouble during which, as well as

116. *Collected Writings* 17:49.
preparatory to setting up the kingdom, imprecatory Psalms will have their place with the godly Jewish remnant in connection with God’s purpose in government (in the hands of Messiah) in the earth.

Are the Imprecatory Psalms Suitable for Christian Prayer and Singing?

The Claim and Its Basis

The matter before us now is the allegation that the NT sanctions the use of imprecations on the part of a Christian. In his Conclusion to his book, Crying for Justice, wherein he defends the notion that imprecatory Psalms are suitable in the Christian church, John N. Day says:

It is legitimate at times for God’s present people to utter prayers of imprecation or pleas for divine vengeance -- like those in the psalms -- against the recalcitrant enemies of God and his people. 117

Notice the words about such expressions being consistent with OT ethics, but now there is an echo. Implicit in this stating of the matter is the recognition that imprecations in the NT are but an echo of the old, thus not found in the NT as in the OT.

The effort on the part of Covenantists is to show that our Lord, Paul, and Peter used imprecations and thus show that the use of imprecations in the Psalms are suitable for use by Christians. Certainly, Covenantists say, Christians should be taught to pray the imprecatory Psalms as part of their Christian practice. It appears to me that if Covenantism is true, then it would be unfaithfulness to not do so. Israel, or at least the godly of Israel, were part of the church. There is only one people of God, and the church is the spiritual Israel, the Israel of God. Moreover, the Christian is under the law as the rule of life. Do you not see that the imprecations belong to the Christian?

The imprecations found in the NT puts it stamp of approval on this view, does it not? Well, I admit that it is not merely consistent for Covenant Theology to foster such views, but actually necessary to the system. Covenant Theology and imprecating ‘Christianity’ are of one piece, expressions of their “one people of God.” It is consistent with the denial of the distinctive heavenly character and portion of those who are


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heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48; Heb. 3:1) as distinguished from the earthly calling of Israel.

We shall briefly review some NT Scriptures that have been pointed to as being imprecatory, and such being found, it is concluded that therefore Christians should make use of the imprecatory Psalms in their prayers and singing.

If our Lord pronounced an imprecation on someone by quoting a Psalm, that fact would be used by Covenantists to claim that we ought to do so also. Did the Lord, in fact, pronounce an imprecation from the Psalms on anyone, leaving us a model that we should follow in His steps in doing so? No. But, it is said, He did utter imprecations. We shall examine the matter, noting here that it does not follow that if the Lord pronounced a judgment that therefore we ought to do so, or are even capable of doing what He did in doing so. Concerning our Lord, before examining what has been brought forward to justify the Christian pronouncing imprecations on anyone, let us read what Peter gave as a summary of our Lord's life when here:

For this [is] acceptable, if one, for conscience sake towards God, endure grieves, suffering unjustly. For what glory [is it], if siming and being buffeted ye shall bear [it]? but if, doing good and suffering, ye shall bear [it], this is acceptable with God. For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, [when] reviled, reviled not again; [when] suffering, threatened not; but gave [himself] over into the hands of him who judges righteousely (1 Pet. 2:19:23).

We may fail in doing this, but we dare not lower the standard: Christ Himself.

We just read Peter saying:

... who, [when] reviled, reviled not again; [when] suffering, threatened not (1 Pet. 2:23).

Query, what words describe the character of the imprecations that the Lord pronounced? The answer, “imprecations,” evades the issue. What does imprecation mean? The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology says:

Imprecatory Psalms. The psalms containing passages seeking the hurt of someone else (e.g., 5:10; 10:15; 55:15; 109:9ff) and which compel the question whether they can have any place in Christian Scripture. Two background remarks are in place. First, imprecations are found in the NT also, not least the maledictions of the Lord himself (e.g., Matt. 23:13ff) and the apostolic
anathema (Gal. 1:8ff.; cf. Rev. 6:10; 18:20). Second, the notably imprecatory Psa. 69 is used by the Lord Jesus (John 15:25) and of the Lord Jesus (John 2:17; Rom. 15:3), and its divine inspiration is affirmed (Acts 1:16, 20; see also Rom. 11:9ff.). An imprecation, then, is “seeking the hurt of someone,” as well as a “malediction.” But this must be further nuanced theologically. John N. Day wrote:

Certainly in extreme circumstances, Jesus did not hesitate to pronounce imprecation (e.g., Mark 11:12-14, 20-21), and he uttered excoriating woes against hardened unbelief (e.g., Matt. 11:20-24; 23:13-39). Now, although woes may be generally distinguished from curses, they are closely related. They bear a large measure of similarity and partial semantic overlap.

Although not identical to imprecation, a close relationship exists between “woe” and “curse.”

We must not nuance “woes” into “curses,” or imprecations.

What many Covenantists are doing is trying to merge what was not meant to be harmonized/merged. Their use of the Psalms results in merging what refers to His first coming with His second coming. It is necessary to understand that there are two comings of Christ, each with its own character:

1. the first in *humiliation* and *grace* -- presented in the Gospels;
2. the second, His coming in *glorification* and *judgment* to set up the kingdom reign of 1000 years.

The Covenantist merging what is connected with Christ coming in glory and judgment with His being here below in humiliation and grace -- the character to be borne also by Christians while awaiting the heavenly hope -- is their basic error on this issue. It stems from their false notion concerning one church in all ages from Adam on, that salvation is what unifies Scripture, and that the elect of all ages are under the Covenant of Grace. Thus, imprecatory Psalms must be put into the mouth of Christians. Moreover, such notions concerning the Sermon on the mount as:

120. "When we sing the Psalms we join with God's Church of old in a part of its worship that was non-ceremonial as the Ten Commandments," William Dick, in *Psalm-Singers' Conference*, Belfast: Fountain Printing Works, p. 165 (1905) -- proceedings of the Conference, held in Belfast on Aug. 5-8, 1902.
As presented in Matthew’s Gospel, the Sermon on the mount (Matt. 5 - 7) is presented as the grounding expression of Christian ethics, also is a controlling error.

Covenantism is systematic confusion confounded, though clear to them, no doubt, as all error is clear to those who hold error. An excellent example of the merging, rather, muddying, and/or conflation, of Christ’s two comings as depicted in the Psalms, and what is proper to each coming, James Dick in *Psalms-Singers Conference*, said

These prayers, then, for woes unutterable upon enemies are the prayers of Christ Himself. But the difficulty to many minds about this is that it seems inconsistent with His prayer for enemies, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” . . . There would indeed be a great inconsistency if Christ had prayed in the same circumstances and concerning the same persons, “Destroy them,” and “Forgive them.” That the two prayers fell from His lips, we know; and that they represent two different things which He received a commission from the Father to do, we know. He has power on earth to forgive sins, and He has power on earth to execute judgment upon enemies . . . The Psalms themselves present both sides of His Mediatorial character and work in this respect.

James Dick

*Psalms-Singers’ Conference* 122

The reader may excused from thinking that John Dick meant that there fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus while He was here the words, “Destroy them.” Actually, he referred to Acts 1:16 which he dealt with just before the above quotation from him; it was Christ speaking in the Psalms, he says, and therefore he had the brazen effrontery to say, “fell from His lips” as if He said them when here.

Moreover, we must not let pass the statement that:

The Psalms themselves present both sides of His Mediatorial character and work in this respect.

Not the Psalms, and not the Gospels, but Covenantists do this very thing: merging the two comings that Scripture distinguishes and conflating them


into Christ’s mediatorial character and work. In other words, Christ’s work of judgment against the wicked is alleged to be part of Christ’s mediatorial character and work.

The not distinguishing the things in the Psalms that refer to when Christ was here in humiliation and grace from when He will return in glory and judgment to slay the wicked and set up the millennial reign is well illustrated by James E. Adams, who also said:

It is equally fitting, then, that in His Mediatorial character He should pray for their destruction. 123

Here the conflation of the characteristic differences between the first and second coming of Christ is clearly stated. He refers to Ps. 2, which will be executed at His second coming when He sets up the millennial kingdom. In Ps. 1 we have that blessed One before us in His character seen when here the first time -- showing, too, His moral fitness to be the Man of Ps. 2. Ps. 1 has in view the setting forth His character displayed in His first coming; Ps. 2 has in view the character of His second coming when He comes in the character of judgment on the wicked, and sets up the kingdom.

It is obvious that when our Lord was here the first time in humiliation and grace. He did not execute judgment on His enemies. He will do so when He returns in glory and judgment.

There is one more point before we turn to the alleged imprecations by our Lord. After quoting 2 Thess. 1:6-10, James E. Adams wrote:

Did you notice how these New Testament words resemble the Psalms? We have the very essence and fulfillment of all the imprecatory Psalms. 124

Who that holds dispensational truth denies the Christ is the forgiving Savior and also the awesome Judge? Is that the issue? No, the issue is: when does our Lord act as the awesome Judge, not whether or not He is that.

123. Ibid., p. 95.
124. War Psalms of the Prince of Peace, Lessons from the Imprecatory Psalms, Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, p. 41 (1991). David was a man of war; Solomon is a type of the Prince of Peace. I am speaking of God’s earthly ways. David as a man of war portrays the Lord as coming in glory and judgment; Solomon portrays the Prince of Peace reigning in the kingdom. I doubt that there are “War Psalms of the Prince of Peace.” They are war Psalms of the man of war, who prepares for the reign of Solomon. It requires both David and Solomon to set forth, in type, the coming and reign of Christ.
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Our Lord’s Alleged Imprecations

Our Lord and “Woes”

Dr. Adams appears to advocate exclusive singing of Psalms, so I suppose that the worst-case scenario will be painted by him to have our Lord engaging in imprecations. He begins with Matt. 23.

There follows a seven-fold curse upon their heads! The seven woes of verses 13, 15, 16, 23, 24, 27, and 29 all condemn and call forth the judgment of God to fall on them in unequivocal terms. Jesus finally, says to them: “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?” (v. 33). Do we have an inconsistency in the very ministry of the Savior of love? No, not at all. Rather we have here His loving warning to the wicked to repent. For God’s curses will surely overtake forever all unrepentant enemies of Christ. 125

He has defined “woes” as “curses” and so the case is closed in favor of His view. But if woes are not curses, what then? What is the character of these alleged imprecations? “we have here His loving warning to the wicked to repent.” Are the imprecations in the Psalms “loving warning to the wicked to repent”? An imprecation is an expression of love! I would have thought that an imprecation was an expression of holiness. “God is light” as well as “God is love.” On the cross, was God pouring out loving judgments on Christ? Was it not holy judgment? In the statement by Dr. Adams we again see conflation at work -- the Lord’s alleged imprecations are “His loving warnings” -- and we also see that Dr. Adams says that His imprecations are warnings. It appears that imprecations mean whatever is convenient to a Covenantist as long as the system is maintained. The system required that the imprecations in the Psalms appear in the mouths of Christians. Indeed, Christians should pray and/or sing the imprecatory Psalms as part of their Christianity -- while the most extreme form of this, the exclusive Psalmody notion, eschews all Christian composed hymns. After all, Christian hymns contain error and the Psalms do not -- therefore only Psalms should be sung. Of course, the Covenantist view of the Psalms is correct, is it not?

Our Lord and Judas

Dr. Adams continued:

At another time Jesus takes up Psalm 41:8-10 as a pronouncement

of God’s vengeance on Judas, the one who betrayed the Lord’s Anointed One . . . (Matt. 26:23-24).

We all know the outcome of Judas’s traitorous actions. His awful death is described in Acts: . . . (1:18-19).

Have you observed the way in which Peter refers two great imprecatory psalms (69 and 109) to Christ’s betrayer? Jesus’ pronouncement is an echo of the psalms in which Judas’ destruction is requested: “Woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born” (Matt. 26:24). How solemnly does Psalm 41 sound a warning from the now risen and exalted Christ! . . . (vv. 9-10).

Why?

Raise me up, that I may repay them (v. 10).

If we shrink back from the psalms of God’s wrath on the wicked we have not yet understood what took place on the cross!\textsuperscript{126}

There is very much more to the cross than the pouring out of God’s wrath, but that is not our subject here. If we understand the imprecatory Psalms as generally applying to the use of a future, godly Jewish remnant, in view of the millennial kingdom soon to be established by Christ coming in glory and judgment, that is not shrinking back from the Psalms of God’s wrath on the wicked. Moreover, we will never plumb the depth of God’s judgment that fell on Christ in our place, but that does not preclude us from a measure of understanding the awfulness of it (according to our measure), nor does it hinder growth in knowledge and appreciation of that saving work of God, and how His nature was glorified in that work of Christ. Dr. Adams seems to be claiming that only with his view of the Psalms’ application can one properly appreciate Christ’s bearing our judgment on the cross.

I suppose it is obvious to a non-Covenantist that our Lord uttered no imprecation against Judas. Indeed, woe to the man that did that to the Lord Jesus. Did I just write an imprecation against Judas? It would have been better for Judas if he had not been born. Did I just utter an imprecation against Judas? And,

Have you observed the way in which Peter refers two great imprecatory psalms (69 and 109) to Christ’s betrayer?

Yes, we have observed it and find no imprecatory utterance by Peter against Judas. Quoting Scripture explaining what happened is not uttering

an imprecation against someone. And besides Peter saying this, Dr. Adams appears to be claiming there is a warning from the now risen Christ:

How solemnly does Psalm 41 sound a warning from the now risen and exalted Christ!

Psa. 41 sounds a warning from Psa. 41. The risen Christ has not sounded an imprecation. What He has sounded from the glory, through Paul who saw Him there, is the gospel of the glory (2 Cor. 4). Yes, we are aware that God now commands all everywhere to repent because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by that One whom He has ordained (Acts 17:31) -- a warning yes, an imprecation, no. Yes, we are aware that there are warnings of judgment to come. Faithful preachers of the gospel warn sinners when preaching the gospel. Is that pronouncing imprecations? Are gospel preachers busy pronouncing imprecations?

Imagination in divine matters should be condemned, especially when touching the Person of Christ. Concerning Psa. 41:9, 10, there has already passed over 1900 years between the time v. 9 was carried out, and when v. 10 will be carried out. Has Christ been carrying out Psa. 41:10 these 1900 years? Where is the proof? Oh, it must be so if Covenantism is true! The truth is that v. 10 will be carried out when Christ comes in glory and judgment to set up the millennial kingdom. God has not yet requited the evil done to Christ, nor has He appointed Christians to do so, nor has He appointed them to use imprecations. Dr. Adams has not, in fact, pointed out where the Lord Jesus actually did that when here, nor has he pointed to words of the Lord Jesus from heaven admonishing Christians to engage in imprecations. Could it be that the case is just the inverse of what Dr. Adams contends for?

**OUR LORD’S CURSING THE FIG TREE**

John N. Day adds Mark 11:12-14, 20-21 as an example of the Lord’s imprecations. Had he an example, like this unique one, of the Lord doing this with a human being, he would have a case of the Lord pronouncing a curse on a human being. Moreover, because even if the Lord would have done such a thing, it would need inquiry whether or not that authorized Christians to do the same. The case here is that the fig tree represented Israel, Israel having no fruit in the time of fruit. The old Israel, under the Old Covenant, is thus judged. Christian, do you have power and authority to so curse that nation? Note that this case involved no persecution of the Lord, nor reviling, nor threatening.

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* says:
Second, the notably imprecatory Psa. 69 is used by the Lord Jesus (John 15:25) and of the Lord Jesus (John 2:17; Rom. 15:3) . . .

What does “used by the Lord Jesus” mean? Does that mean He used it as an imprecation against certain persons? Let us quote the Scriptures:

If I had not done among them the works which no other one has done, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But that the word written in their law might be fulfilled, They hated me without a cause (John 15:24, 25).

Perhaps by “used” is meant that He quoted from a Psalm that contains imprecations in it, among other things? So what? Where is the imprecation our Lord uttered against someone when here in humiliation and grace? The disciples remembered that it was written, “The zeal of thy house devours me” (John 2:17). Oh, that was quoted from a Psalm that contains imprecations, among other things! So what? But it is written in Rom. 15:3, “The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen on me.” Well, that was the fact. So what? Oh, but it comes from a Psalm that has imprecations in it, among other things! The real question is, where is the imprecation that is being uttered? Let it be observed that we are being treated to what really amounts to obfuscation. Quoting from a Psalm that contains imprecations does not mean an imprecation was uttered against someone.

Our Lord Jesus imprecated the fig tree when He was not threatened. Query: *Therefore Christians may imprecate when not threatened?* These imprecating evangelicals try to use the Lord to warrant the use of imprecations by Christians when suffering, if not when threatened. The imprecatory Psalms have their place with the godly Jewish remnant after the rapture of the heavenly saints, and are used after Rev. 4 which chapter is at the opening of the period preparatory to Christ’s coming in glory and judgment.

**OUR LORD, AND JAMES AND JOHN**

An opportunity to imprecate Samaritans presented itself when our Lord was on His way to Jerusalem:

And his disciples James and John seeing [it] said, Lord, wilt thou that we speak that fire come down from heaven and consume them, as also Elijah did. But turning He rebuked them [and said, Ye know not what spirit ye are] (Luke 9:55, 56).
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The bracketed words may be doubtful as part of the original text, but it is sufficient to know He rebuked them. They had precedent and example in the OT for what they wanted to do, as imprecating Evangelicals do regarding imprecations. It was not the season for imprecating Samaritans, nor is it seasonable for Christians to engage in imprecations now.

“Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, as Elijah did?” is the natural expression of the heart. For vengeance is the manifestation of power. Grace leaves sinful man to enjoy mercy -- will not bring in power, but spares those against whom power might have been exercised. On the other hand, it is God alone who can show grace. 128

It is a very important point indeed as to the understanding the application of the Psalms, that, in the Psalms, as remarked elsewhere, when sufferings from men are spoken of vengeance is always called for by the speaker. In Christ’s life historically there never was a trace of this but the contrary -- on the Cross He prays they may be forgiven -- in His lifetime rebukes the disciples for thinking of it, as not knowing what spirit they were of. It is evident that this is of the greatest weight in our judgment of the manner of application to Christ. 129

Although Psalms 73, which begins the third book of Psalms, refers directly to the temporal judgment of God in Israel, as satisfying the anxieties of heart among the faithful; yet, these anxieties are of all times we shall find something to note here. We see the ungodly having their way, so that God seems to have forgotten, and the heart is envious. But it shows in our case too often that the heart would yet have portion here -- at least a portion here as well as one to come. The sorrow at the power of evil in the world is right, but mingles itself in our minds with liking to have one's own way and judgment in setting it aside. When the will mixes itself up with the sense of the success of evil, it is either irritated or disheartened so as to give up perseverance in good. The ungodly prosper in the world. What a riddle! Where is God’s government? What is the use of good? No doubt it was more directly trying where temporal blessings had been made a sign of divine favor. But Christians are seldom separated enough from this world not to feel the success of wickedness, and a desire to take vengeance on it. Mere indifference to it is utterly evil. Thus the path is narrow, and grace must work in the heart to lead us in it to feel the evil in itself, to

128. Synopsis 2:300.
129. Notes and Comments 3:3.

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feel God’s glory cast in the dust by it; but to abide God’s time and way, as Christ did when He suffered.

There is no place of learning but in the sanctuary. There the will is bowed: there God is known: there the eye is not obscured by the passions of the world, and an ignorance of how to do what God alone could do -- make allowance for any good, have perfect patience with evil, so that judgment shall be simply on evil, and be true judgment on evil without excuse. Our impatience would be nothing of this, even where the evil as such is justly judged. But in the sanctuary will is silent and God is listened to. His ways are right, and we see things with His eye. The evil is worse, the compassion right, the patience adorable, yet the judgment sure; so that the sense of righteousness is not crossed in the heart, though the will of vengeance is; for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. The judgment is righteous because patience is perfect -- far more terrible because there is no passion in it. It refers to God. When we desire that fire may come down from heaven, self is in it. We do not know what manner of spirit we are of; yet, in one sense, they really deserved it. When God awaked in His own just time, they are as a dream. Their pride, pretensions, all is as a departed image. Faith has to believe this, and leave them there.

WHAT DID PETER SAY ABOUT OUR LORD?

In this case we may consider Dr. Day’s appraisal of Peter’s Epistles concerning imprecations. Acknowledging that 1 Peter speaks to Christians as persecuted and suffering, an noting the patience he admonishes the suffering to have, he wants to have imprecautions supplement the Apostle Peters instructions:

First Peter 2:18-23, for example, adures Christian slaves to endure unjust beatings, based on the example of Christ, entrusting their lives and the realization of justice to the God of justice. Blessing and endurance characterize the Christian life (cf. 3:9; 4:12-19) to which the epistle speaks, and, in principle, is the dominant mood of the New Testament and also (in a more subdued tone) of the Old Testament. The imprecatory passages, however, supplement this general tenor, articulating the minor -- yet complementary -- ethic evidenced in extreme instances.

Are we to understand that in “extreme circumstances” the imprecatory passages modify what Peter says? Which imprecatory passages, those in

130. Collected Writings 17:124-125
the NT, or those in the OT, or both Testaments? We would also like to know what those “extreme circumstances” are. Would the stoning of Stephen be one? Would the Lord on the cross be one? Apparently not. What then? Peter wrote:

For this [is] acceptable, if one, for conscience sake towards God, endure griefs, suffering unjustly. For what glory [is it], if sinning and being buffeted ye shall bear [it]? but if, doing good and suffering, ye shall bear [it], this is acceptable with God. For to this have ye been called; for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, [when] reviled, reviled not again; [when] suffering, threatened not; but gave [himself] over into the hands of him who judges righteous (1 Pet. 2:19:23).

Dr. Day is guilty of mitigating the force of what Peter said concerning our Lord, and that we should follow in His steps. The Lord did not utter imprecations when suffering or being threatened. So says the Apostle Peter. When, then, is the right occasion for Christians to imprecate? when they are not suffering? Neither did the apostles imprecate -- except the unique cases of the Apostle Paul’s two complementary imprecations, one having to do with the Person of Christ and the other with the work of Christ, and the third one which is really morally connected with our Lord’s cursing the fig tree.

THE LORD’S ADVERSARIES IMPRECATED THEMSELVES

And all the people answering said, His blood [be] on us and on our children (Matt. 27:25).

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion concerning our Lord and the alleged use of imprecations, His uttering woes (not curses), and His unique cursing of the fig-tree, do not establish the Covenantist’s case for Christians to imprecate, and to use the imprecatory Psalms in prayer and singing, or against someone.

The Apostle Paul’s Alleged Imprecations

1 CORINTHIANS 16:21- 22 AND GALATIANS 1:8-9

1 Cor. 16:21-22, is said to be in harmony with the Psalms, as is Gal. 1:8-9, where Paul “is calling for the damnation of such a one!” \(^{332}\) Is an

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apostolic pronouncement of an imprecation authorization for Christians to use imprecations? Has nothing been learned from the history of Papal use of imprecations, and the hurling of Anathema after Anathema by the Council of Trent? It would be well for Christians to leave pretended imprecatory power to Rome and to him who falsely claims power from Peter, and not partake of such conduct.

The Apostles had Apostolic powers that were confined to themselves. For example, the Apostle had power to deliver persons to Satan, but we do not. In the case of Corinth (1 Cor. 5), it was because of the coupling His Apostolic power with the act of the assembly that the guilty one was delivered to Satan. That was unique, not an example for individuals, or for assemblies, to deliver persons to Satan. It would be arrogant assumption and evil preterise.

Just so, 1 Cor. 16:22 and Gal. 1:8, 9 are apostolic, unique, and not an authorization for Christians to use the imprecations in the Psalter -- nor an authorization to mimic the Apostle. What would be the point for anyone to repeat the apostle’s words as if it is a fresh imprecation? That would be pointless, not to say absurd. Yet Covenantists find in these two complementary imprecations concerning the Person and work of Christ a justification to put Psalm-imprecations in the mouths of Christians.

Note then, the relationship concerning the subject of Paul’s two imprecations:

1. 1 Cor. 16:22 concerns the Person of Christ;
2. Gal. 1:8, 9 concerns the work of Christ.

That is no authorization for others to do likewise, nor is it authorization for Christians to utter imprecations concerning other matters. Paul uttered no inspired imprecation concerning anything done to himself.

Concerning Gal. 1:8, 9, W. Kelly wrote:

I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

And just allow me to state another word or two in connection with the gospel of St. Paul. He is the only one who characterizes his gospel as the glorious gospel. And one may be interested to know that when the apostle uses that phrase, he does not say, “glorious” merely as we use it; he means the gospel of the glory. And the true force of that expression is this: it is the gospel of Christ glorified at the right hand of God. It is the glad tidings that we have a Savior who is risen and glorified. We are called to all the effects of His glory as well as of His death upon the cross. Other apostles never wrote of the subject of the Church being made one with
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Christ; Paul alone did. Possibly, "then, Paul was the only one that was in a position to say,

If one add anything to my gospel, let such an one be accursed.

Although Paul added something to their gospel, they could add nothing to his. The apostles announced Christ as the Messiah and made known remission of sins through His name; but they did not bring out the heavenly glory of Christ as Paul did. He brought out all these truths, and more which they never touched on. That is the reason why he so constantly speaks of "my gospel." Because while, of course, as to the grand truths of the gospel there could be no difference between what Paul and the other apostles preached, there was a great advance in that which Paul preached beyond them. There was nothing contradictory; but Paul being called after the ascension of our Lord to heaven, he was the one to whom it was peculiarly appropriate to make any addition. Till Paul was called, there was something still needed to make up the sum of revealed truth. In Col. 1:25, he says that he was a minister of Christ to complete the word of God, to fill up a certain space that was not filled up. Paul was the person employed by the Holy Ghost to do this. John brought out prophetic truth -- prophecy entirely outside what we have been speaking of, for it reveals the dealings of God with the world, and not with the Church. Therefore, the apostle can insist strongly upon the danger of attempting to swerve from what he had brought out, or of adding anything to it. This is very important. Others might not preach all the truth, but that is not what he so strongly denounces. No person ought to be condemned because he does not unfold the higher truth of God. What we ought to set our faces against is the bringing in of something contrary to the gospel, or mingling the law with the grace of Christ -- putting new wine into old bottles. Some may refer to the Epistle of James; but James never presents the law so as to clash with the gospel, although what he says may put a guard upon souls making an improper use of the solemn warning of the Holy Ghost against mingling the law with the gospel in any shape or form. There will be many occasions for showing how the Apostle Paul refers to it in this epistle. 133

When you are endowed with Apostolic position and revelations, that will be soon enough to imitate the Apostle in this.

Regarding 1 Cor. 16:22, Arthur Pridham remarked:

133. Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, in loco. Also in The Bible Treasury 4:42.
“If any one love not the Lord,” etc. There is a solemn propriety in this malediction on the hypocritical professor of that Name. He does not curse unbelievers, but those who have their portion with the unbelievers (Luke 12:46). Carrying back his thoughts through the diverse topics of this epistle, and reflecting on the doubtful state of some among them, who, though nominally Christian, had not as yet the true knowledge of God, he is moved thus distinctly to invoke the decision of that day when those who have loved the truth they knew, in the living person of their Savior, will be severed finally from those who have loved and served themselves (2 Thess. 2:11-12; Phil. 3:18, 19). Love is here insisted on instead of faith, because its presence or absence is the true test of the genuineness of faith. The state of the Corinthian saints was such as to call for admonition of the strongest kind; and as the epistle began with a protest against the desecration of the Name by which they all were called, through the schismatic will-worship which prevailed among them, it was fit that they should be thus reminded, both of the imminency of His coming for whom they all professed to look, and of what it is that will receive the crown of blessing in that day (James 1:12).

As to the form of execration here employed, it stands in close connection with the formula of saving faith already stated in an earlier chapter. Our sentence then will be according to the present state of our hearts. As we esteem the Lord, we shall ourselves be estimated in that day. If He has the chief place in our hearts, we shall be enthroned with Him in glory. If He has not, then He is practically “anathema” with us, and we shall be “anathema” to Him. No true believer shrinks from such a test; for there is no true believer who does not discover, when examining his heart, that, in spite of all for which he may condemn himself, his love is for the Lord. 134

But he also adds the sternest denunciation of any one who loved not the Lord, under a seemingly familiar Syrian formula. Calvin ridicules the idea of writing so to Greeks in that tongue; but, explain it as you may, such is the fact, which does not seem mitigated by his own suggestion that it was a customary form of expressing excommunication among the Hebrews. To me it appears to go farther still: yet did it not in the least clash with the love which animated and filled his heart, as one sees from v. 28, and especially 24. It is to be doubted indeed whether love can be unfeigned without abhorring evil; and what evil can compare with

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bearing the name of the Lord without real attachment to Him?

Thus the first epistle to the Corinthians ends with a denunciation similar in solemnity to that with which the epistle to the Galatians opens. There the apostle in his zeal for the truth of the gospel impregnates a curse on himself, or an angel from heaven, or any one preaching aught besides what he had preached and they received; here he burns with no less vehemence against any one loving not the Lord, and in the light of His coming too, which goes beyond excommunication. But this in no way interferes with his prayer, that not His judgment but His grace might be with you, as he assures them all of his own love in Christ Jesus. Thus confidence and affection mark this autograph conclusive as well as the gravest warning, the wise and worthy personal message to his beloved children in the faith. 135

**GALATIANS 5:12**

Now we come to something different. Concerning Gal. 5:12, James E. Adams wrote:

“As for those agitators, I wish they would castrate themselves.” Paul wished that his opponents would not stop at circumcision, but would castrate themselves. 136

On the assumption that Paul said such a thing, would Dr. Adams say to those who would oppose his presentation of the truth of such matters as Paul was dealing with, “I wish you would castrate yourself”?

Alfred Marshall translates:

I would that indeed 4will (might) cut themselves off 3the
ones 5unsetting 3you.

W. E. Vine says:

metaphorically, in the Middle Voice, of cutting off oneself, to excommunicate, Gal. 5:12, of the Judaizing teachers, with a reference no doubt, to circumcision. 137


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135. *Notes on the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *in loco.*

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Metaphorically, to separate from the Christian community. It appears, then, that the text is understood in these different ways. I see no compelling reason to not understand the Apostle metaphorically. Literally understood, it would refer to cutting a bodily member, and many take it that way. Dr. Adams does not want a metaphorical use here for that would mean Paul expressed the desire that the Judaizers excise themselves from the saints, instead of castrating themselves.

Many assume that these Judaizers were within the assemblies. Why assume that? It appears that W. E. Vine thought so, since he indicates that it means to excommunicate {themselves}. Are you looking for an excuse to allow evil within assemblies? By saying they were not to be excommunicated by the assemblies, the direction is to the Judaizers themselves, and it has been pretended that they were not to be excommunicated by the assemblies.

They were external troublers of saints, Jewish persons going about attempting to Judaize the Christians -- troubling Paul everywhere (1 Thess. 2:14-16). Would that they excise themselves from any contact with the saints -- metaphorically circumcise themselves from the saints. Why place this in the category of imprecations, except the desire to find them to justify Christian use of imprecations in the Psalter? Moreover, we do well to view 1 Cor. 16:22 and Gal. 1:8, 9 as singular regarding Christianity, concerning the Person and work of Christ -- no other imprecations by Paul but these alone, plus the one considered next.

Let me add that according to Phil. 3:2, physical circumcision now, for a spiritual reason, is considered a mutilation. The concision refers to those claiming the validity of circumcision before God. By a play on words the Apostle names it concision, a mutilation. Jews who profess faith in Christ and have their children circumcised are, according to the Apostle, engaging in concision. We Christians (Jew and Gentile are the circumcision, the spiritual circumcision in Christ (Col. 2:12). Physical circumcision is an attempted addition to a Christian (even he an ethnic Jew) who is already complete in Christ (Col. 2:10). You cannot actually add to what is complete and the attempt to do so necessarily mars that completeness, as far as the tendency of the effort is concerned.

**BUT WHAT ABOUT ACTS 13:9-11?**

But Saul, who also [is] Paul, filled with [the] Holy Spirit, fixing his eyes upon him, said, O full of all deceit and all craft: son of
[the] devil, enemy of all righteousness; wilt thou not cease perverting the right paths of [the] Lord. And now behold, [the]
Lord's hand [is] upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.

John N. Day approvingly quoted John Calvin to have this serve as an example for Christians, wrote:

John Calvin contends that it does: “Thus must we deal with the desperate enemies of the gospel, in whom appeareth open contumacy and wicked contempt of God, especially when they stop the way before others. And lest any man should think that Paul was out of measure angry, Luke saith plainly that the inspiration of the Spirit was his guide.” Indeed, Luke emphasizes that Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:9) as he voiced his cry, leaving no doubt that his readers should regard Paul’s act as right and proper in this context. 139

“Thus must we deal with . . .” How “thus”? You had better be sure that you are filled with the Holy Spirit and also have apostolic power to do as the apostle, causing the blinding, thus giving evidence of the weight of his words. “Thus must we deal with . . .” Well, not so.

Apparently the teaching and singularity of this event is lost on evangelical imprecators, for their search is for justification to put imprecatory Psalms into the mouths of Christians. Let us hear J. N. Darby concerning the meaning of this event, and I quote at length for full context:

❖ Sent forth thus by the Holy Ghost, Barnabas and Saul, with John Mark as their ministering servant, go away to Seleucia, then to Cyprus; and being at Salamis, a town in that island, they preach the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. Whatever therefore might be the energy of the Holy Ghost, He acts in connection with the counsels and the promises of God, and that with perfect patience. To the end of his life, notwithstanding the opposition of the Jews, vexatious and implacable as it might be, the apostle continues -- as the ways and counsels of God in Christ had commanded -- to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. Once brought in where truth and grace were fully revealed in God’s assembly, there was no difference between Jew and Gentile. God is one in His character and fully revealed, and the veil rent; sin is one in its character and is opposed to God; the foundation of truth changes not, and the oneness of the assembly is connected with the height of grace in


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God and comes down to the deep totality of sin, in respect of which that grace has displayed itself. But, with regard to the ways of God upon earth, the Jews had the first place, and the Spirit, who is above all, can therefore act in full liberty in recognizing all the ways of God's sovereignty; even as Christ, who made Himself a servant in grace, submitted to them all, and now, being exalted on high, unites all these various ways and dispensations in Himself as head and center of a glory to which the Holy Ghost bears witness, in order to accomplish it here below, as far as may be, by grace.

This does not prevent his giving a distinct and positive judgment as to the condition of the Jews when the occasion requires it.

Even here, at the commencement of his ministry, the two things are presented together. We have already noticed that he begins with the Jews. Having traversed the island, he arrives at the seat of government. There the proconsul, a prudent and thoughtful man, asks to hear the gospel. Beset already by a false prophet (who took advantage of the felt need of a soul which, while ignorant, was earnestly desirous of something that could fill up the void it experienced in the nothingness of pagan ceremonies, and in its disgusting immorality), he sends for Barnabas and Saul. Elymas withstands them. This was natural. He would lose his influence with the governor if the latter received the truth that Paul preached. Now Elymas was a Jew. Saul (who is henceforth named Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, pronounces on him the sentence, on God’s part, of temporary blindness, executed at the moment by the mighty hand of God. The proconsul, struck with the power that accompanied his word, submits to the gospel of God.

I do not doubt that in this wretched Bar-jesus we see a picture of the Jews at the present time, smitten with blindness for a season, because jealous of the influence of the gospel. In order to fill up the measure of their iniquity, they withstood its being preached to the Gentiles. Their condition is judged: their history given in the mission of Paul. Opposed to grace, and seeking to destroy its effect upon the Gentiles, they have been smitten with blindness -- nevertheless only for a season. 140

Yes, only for a season (cp. Rom. 11:22-31, etc.) will Israel remain blinded. JND has presented the import of this rare, judicial infliction. This one is morally linked with the Lord cursing the fig tree. Both have to do with the Jew, both are singular, and both provide no grounds for

140. Synopsis, in loco. See also Collected Writings 25:369.
imitations.

Then there is 2 Tim. 4:14. The Lord will render to Alexander according to his works; yes, and He will render to all according to their works (Rev. 20:13).

But it should read, “The Lord will reward him according to his works.” Paul did not desire Alexander’s punishment, but he knew enough of God’s ways to know He would deal with him. We know of course, that when the church is gone the godly remnant will be full of the cry for vengeance, and will rightly take up the imprecatory language of the Psalms. 141

**FINALLY, ACTS 13:10-11**

Paul apologized for what he said. God arranged the circumstances so as to bring about the necessity of an apology. It were well had he never so spoken under any circumstances, nor do we know that he ever again did so.

**The Apostle Peter’s Alleged Imprecations**

Acts 8:20a is said to be a “caustic curse,” a “scathing curse.” There must, then, be non-caustic curses and non-scathing curses. Or, is such language meant to bolster a case without merit?

This case involves another unique apostolic power: the power to give the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands (Acts 8:17). Paul, too, was able to do this (Acts 19:6). Evangelical imprecators have no such power.

This case is a complement of the case of Ananias and Saphira, Peter being involved with that case as he was with this one. Both cases involve the Holy Spirit, and both involved money. However, there is a difference in that Acts 5:3 the sin was characterized as a lie to the Holy Spirit. Why so? The Spirit had just shortly before come as a divine Person in a special capacity to form the church and indwell believers. Ananias and Saphira acted as if the Spirit was not present, cognizant of their evil scheme. This was an aggravated sin and was dealt with by death. Indeed, it contained a character which has been a characterizing sin of Christendom.

The case with Simon involves a new period in the Acts after the stoning of Stephen. Stephen’s martyrdom being an important point in the ways of God. Stephen marks the close of the one year in the parable in

Luke 13:8. Moreover, it is Stephen that was the “embassy” sent after Christ now gone to heaven (Luke 19:14). In Acts 7 Stephen traced how Israel always resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). When he testified to seeing the Son of man at the right hand of God, the mouth of the great proto-martyr for Christ was sealed by the inflamed hatred of Christ and His witnesses. Consequently, through the ensuing persecution and scattering, the gospel moved out from Jerusalem to Samaria (see Acts 1:8).

Thus we come to Phillip preaching in Samaria and the case of Simon, who now came face to face with the power of the Holy Spirit. But there is another very important matter and that is that there be no independent Samaritan church. Therefore, in the wisdom of God, the Holy Spirit was with-held from the Samaritans until several Apostles came from Jerusalem to lay hands on them, and consequently they received the Holy Spirit. Thus they could not set up independency from the assembly at Jerusalem.

Simon, whose belief was merely intellectual, based only on the miracles (see John 2:23-24 for our Lord’s distrust of such persons), had no appreciation for what the Holy Spirit was doing in moving the gospel out from Jerusalem and seeing to it that no work of independency was set up as a consequence. There is only one church on earth formed by the Spirit, and added to by the Spirit (though there is a view of the church on earth as viewed in responsible testimony, in which it has failed and been ruined).

The power-hungry Simon, with his intellectual belief, seeing the Apostles communicating the Holy Spirit -- and only an apostle had the power from the Holy Spirit to do so -- offered to buy the power (Acts 8:19). He wanted the Apostolic power to communicate the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. In Acts 5 it was acting as if the Holy Spirit had not come. Here, as the preaching of the gospel enters a new phase in the work shown us in the Acts, and as the Holy Spirit saw to it that, consequently, there be no independent church set up -- thus maintaining practically the unity set up at the beginning -- the incurable, self-centered flesh (Rom. 8:7) revoltingly intrudes itself to obtain Holy Spirit power.

Here we have another singular matter, calling forth the Apostle Peter’s words:

Thy money go with thee to destruction, because thou hast thought that the gift of God can be obtained with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not upright before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and supplicate the Lord,
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if indeed the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee; for I see thee to be in the gall of bitterness, and bond of unrighteousness (Acts 8:20-23).

I notice that Peter was not being persecuted when He said “Thy money go with thee to destruction.” Perhaps this is an example of “extreme circumstances” that imprecating evangelicals speak of, where imprecations are proper for a Christian? At any rate, if you cannot perceive the singularity of this case, you cannot be helped.

An Arminian might try to make a case from this matter of someone being saved and then lost again. A Calvinist would object and might try to obtain from Peter’s words a basis, a warrant, for Christians to imprecate others, and to pray and sing imprecatory Psalms. It depends on the agenda.

Vengeance is Mine

THE TIME OF VENGEANCE

The matter of divine vengeance is frequently found in the Psalms and the prophets of Israel. No doubt the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms and prophets is the Spirit of prophecy. Prophecy has to do with God’s government in the earth. Vengeance looks on to the setting up of the millennial reign of Christ, when there will be a new Israel under the New Covenant.

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We would think that it should have been admirably answered from the NT. Why go to the OT? — let it be well observed why; because the NT does not supply him with the answer he wants.

The prophetic Psa. 83 (see also Psa. 79) is actually the cry of the future godly Jewish remnant in the face of the final attack of the final Assyrian of the prophets, i.e., the King of the North of Dan. 11:40-45 (which read at this point, the little horn of Dan. 8:23-26. “The Prince of princes” will come in glory (Rev. 20) and after dealing with the Beast and the Antichrist, will deal with this power, as latter He will with Edom and other nations, and finally Gog — events taking place during the war [not battle] of the great day of God the Almighty (Rev. 16:14), which was introduced by His coming in glory and judgment, taking place at some time during the 75 day interval noted in Dan. 12 — the time from the 1260th day (from the middle of Daniel’s 70th week) until the 1335th day, upon which the millennial kingdom commences. This is not the venue for details concerning this period of time.

Psa. 83, then, speaks of events occurring after the rapture of today’s saints, when the prophetic imprecatory Psalms come to fulfillment.
“God is light” (1 John 1:5) and this has been expressed on the cross, Christ coming under the judgment due all saints of all ages. The wicked will come under judgment for themselves. If here on earth in the epoch leading to the setting up of the kingdom in glory and judgment, God’s vengeance will be poured out upon the wicked. The godly Jewish remnant in that epoch will have the Psalms and prophets before them. The maschilim will instruct them. They will know what is impending:

The year of my redeemed is come (Isa. 63:4).

There is coming “the day of vengeance” (Isa. 63:4) a period called in Rev. 16:14

The war of [that] great day of God the Almighty.

This is comprised of a sequence of battles. 143

But before this there occurs what Scripture calls “days of vengeance” (Luke 21:22). This refers to the falling of judgments leading up to Christ’s coming from heaven in glory and judgment. The phrase refers to the seven trumpets and seven bowls, and perhaps the seven seals, too. The reverberations of the seventh trumpet contain all within it all that subsequently develops (including the kingdom reign and the time of the dead; i.e., the great white throne judgment) and from the sounding of the seventh trumpet comes the unleashing of the seven bowls, the seven last plagues, in a short space of time just prior to Christ’s coming in glory and judgment. In connection with the pouring out of the seventh bowl, he will come and unleash the day of vengeance. Then will Jehovah settle the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34:8) and sweep the wicked with the besom (broom) of destruction (Isa. 14:23). Besides settling the controversy of Zion, the Lord will also render tribulation to the troublemakers of His present saints, taking vengeance of them:

at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with [the] angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:7-8).

That takes place in connection with Christ’s coming in glory and judgment (Rev. 20).

MEANWHILE, WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY?

J. N. Darby wrote:

143. The notion of “the battle of Armageddon” is a figment of the imagination. There is no one battle. It is a “war” with Christ dealing with a number of enemies sequentially, according to their respective characters.
In the church of Philadelphia, the character of Christ’s coming was put in its true and proper place. Looked at by the church, Christ’s coming is for itself. Christ says, “It is for you I am coming,” and the church’s hope is to see Himself. It is “you” and “myself.” He says, that must be together, constituting the proper church character of hope and accomplished joy. Hence in Rev. 22, after the Lord has gone through the whole prophecy, He says,

I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things, in the churches --

I am the bright and morning star;

and the presentation of Himself awakens the cry to Him to come. He does not say, when warning men, “Behold, I come quickly.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come,” and then, in heart-assuring reply, He says, “Surely, I come quickly”; to which the church responds, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Thus it is very evident that the coming of the Lord to take the church unto Himself, must be something entirely between Himself and the church alone. But it will not be so with the remnant of Israel, for them the execution of the judgment will be needed, in order to their taking their place in the earth. In fact, the Lord’s coming to the earth itself must be attended with the execution of judgment, gathering out of His “kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” And it is evident that the deliverance of the remnant of Israel connects the coming of the Lord with the execution of judgment upon what despises Him before Israel can possibly get their blessing. And this accounts for the strong cry of vengeance we find throughout the Psalms; take Psa. 94 for instance, “a Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.” Now we do not want vengeance in order to be with Christ in blessing. God has given us grace as our portion in every way, and we have to deal entirely with grace. I am not looking for the Lord to come and avenge me on my enemies, for I am expecting to be caught up to meet Him in the air. And, that it may be clearly understood, I would again remark, that throughout the whole Scriptures this cry, in connection with the Lords coming to the earth, is the language of the remnant of Israel, and not the language of the church of God. 144

COALS OF FIRE

14. Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not. 15. Rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep. (16)

144. Collected Writings 5:365-366; see also 5:230, 30:407, 34:233, 326, 238; 16:397; 11:26

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Have the same respect one for another, not minding high things, but going along with the lowly: be 17 not wise in your own eyes: (17) recompensing to no one evil for evil: providing for things honest before all men: (18) if possible, as far as depends on you, living in peace with all men; (19) not avenging yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance [belongs] to me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. (20) If therefore thine enemy should hunger, feed him; if he should thirst, give him drink; for, so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. (21) Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:14-21).

John N. Day wrote:

Although not stated here, the understanding elsewhere in Scripture is that the believer may call on him to do so at appropriate times 19 . . . (Luke 18:7-8), for example, Jesus assured his disciples that God will indeed exact vengeance in response to the cries of his people -- ostensibly their cries for vengeance (cf. v. 3). Likewise in Romans 12:9-21 . . . 20

There are two particular matters to note in his remarks.

1. The first is his impertinent dealing with Rom. 12:9-21, which does not support his assertion, nay, contradicts his assertion. He has forced Luke 18:7-8 against Rom. 12:21. At least he did not enlist Rev. 6:10 or Rev. 11. I assume he brought forward his most weighty Scripture (Luke 18:7-8) in support of his contradicting Rom. 12:21 -- that “the believer may call on him to” execute vengeance “at appropriate times,” which appropriate times Dr. Day has kept secret from us. May it not be that if he had told us “the appropriate times,” that would have manifested the character of his inappropriate remarks?

2. Luke 18:7-8 does not say what he has read into it.

   And shall not God at all avenge his elect who cry to him day and night, and he bears long as to them? I say unto you that he will avenge them speedily. But when the Son of man comes, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?

(a) Is Dr. Day suggesting that God’s elect are crying to Him day and night for vengeance to fall? Is that what God’s Christian elect are doing? Did the evangelical Christians burned at the stake in England do this? Or does Dr. Day restrict this to just a few Christians, or suppose some circumstances for this to occur?

(b) That the Son of man will avenge them speedily does not mean that they are praying day and night for vengeance, or that vengeance will fall immediately, or even in their lifetime. Indeed, why do you think that the passage connects this with the coming of the Son of Man? Is not that the time of God’s vengeance?

Here is what God said to the elect Thessalonians who were undergoing persecution. They were not in the place of rest. He said:

. . . your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations, which ye are sustaining; a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end that ye should be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for the sake of which ye also suffer; if at least [it is a righteous] thing with God to render tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled repose with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with [the] angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (2 Thess. 2:4-9).

When their rest would begin is not stated, but the fact that when the appearing in glory takes place they will be resting. But for them meanwhile, is there any suggestion to them to engage in imprecations?

Vengeance, then, awaits the coming of the Son of man in glory. The Christian knows this.

In verse 19 {Rom. 12} the wrath of man is meant, and the saint is told to yield, letting it alone and not avenging himself. Vengeance belongs to God. The words in the next verse are a citation of Prov. 25:21, 22. The sense of the Hebrew word rendered “heap,” and in other versions “to take, or withdraw,” &c., is literally to “take coals from the hearth to gather them.” The meaning of these two verses amounts to this: leave your enemy to the vengeance of God, let God do it. The exhortation to patience under wrongs naturally introduces the relations of the Christian to the authorities of the world. 146

Heaping coals of fire does not mean to melt the person’s cold heart. “Coals of fire” is figurative of judgment. The wicked treasure up wrath for the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5), and one of the ways he does so is when treated kindly by a Christian in the face of his wicked behavior, and not repent of his sins. It is more judgment on such. This in no wise means an imprecation is uttered against them. Judgment is in the pierced hands of the Son of man, to be executed in the appointed time when He comes

146. The Bible Treasury 2:60.
in flaming fire. Meanwhile, imprecatory Psalms are not suitable in the utterances, prayers, and singing of Christians. 147 The NT does not only not support that notion, it is against it.

**Bless, and Curse Not**

But Dr. Day will have the Christian use imprecations. What did Paul say in Rom. 12:14?

Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not.

See also Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:28. Dr. Day addresses this under the heading “Quick to Bless, Slow to Curse.” It may not be irect to say so, but I dare say wilfulness and presumption are always quite bold. One would have thought Scripture said that, but it does not. Dr. Day contradicts the apostle Paul by a discussion of how to relate, say, Psa. 109 to what Paul wrote. Paul speaks generally, he says, not of “extreme circumstances,” which call for “extreme ethics.” Should Paul have written:

Bless them that persecute you, but not if they are extreme circumstances, then curse them?

Is that not what the argument amounts to? But not really having a Scripture for this theological torturing of the Apostle, he wrote:

This concept of “quick to bless and slow to curse” finds its pattern echoed in the divine and Christian character trait, “slow to anger.”

In Ephesians 4:31 and Col. 3:8, anger (ὀργή, orgē) is considered sin. 148

We read, “be angry, and do not sin: let not the sun set upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26), while James tells us to be “slow to wrath.” So Dr. Day’s pointing out Eph. 4:31 and Col. 3:8 is beside the point. The subject there is what is flowing out of the flesh in us. He himself remarked that the Lord Jesus was angry (Mark 3:5), himself stating that anger is not inherently sinful. “Slow to anger” does not mean “slow to curse.” The Lord was angry and cursed no one. What all this is is theological manipulation to satisfy the exigencies of a human system: Covenantism.

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William Binnie’s Remarks Actually Show
There Is No Case for Christian’s Imprecating

Now hear William Binnie show us an exception to the rule of bless and curse not:

We are to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitely use us, and persecute us. But there are exceptions even to this rule. One of these is pointed out by the loving disciple, in a quarter where, but for his intimation, we might well have deemed the rule absolute.

If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request {1 John 5:16-17}.

And there are other exceptions. It is plain that civil society and its officers are not to walk by the letter of the commandment about forgiving trespasses and rendering to no man evil for evil. The Civil Magistrate is neither obliged, not at liberty, to forgive those who trespass against him . . . 149

The civil magistrate has nothing to do with the directions for the Christian. How absurd to say anything even remotely suggesting that the governments should operate on Christian principles. 150

Is not 1 John 5:16 about a “brother”? Is it not, therefore, a matter of the Father’s disciplinary dealings with His children? What does this have to do with blessing those that curse us and praying for those that despitely use us and persecute us? This matter, and the Civil Magistrate is the sum of the exceptions to “the rule.” What this shows is that William Binnie has no valid exception to the rule. If he had one he would have brought it forward.

W. Kelly had a word of warning:

As lawyers, however, are apt to find in the law more difficulties and stumbling-blocks and evasions than any other class, so do theologians in the written word, to the dishonor of God and the


150. Recall the words of John N. Day quoting the Psalm-Singer’s Conference:

As presented in Matthew’s Gospel, the Sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7) is presented as the grounding expression of Christian ethics (op. cit., p. 94).

Is that what the Civil Magistrate is to follow?

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injury of all who confide in them.  

Imprecations and Vengeance in the Revelation

When we come to the third part of the Revelation (see Rev. 1:18 for the three parts), which is after the epoch of the churches on earth (Rev. 2-3), we have come to what lies yet in the future (Rev. 5-21). And here we come to imprecations of the kind for which the imprecatory evangelicals are looking. Rev. 4 brings us to the prophetic part of the book, having to do with matters that occur after the rapture of the saints. Rev. 4 brings us to the period when the imprecatory Psalms have their proper use as prayers and expressions of righteousness of the godly Jewish remnant.

The Two Witnesses

The two witnesses -- neither Moses nor Elijah 152 -- have a Moses-like and Elijah-like ministry. Moses was the law-giver and Elijah the one recalling from apostasy, two things brought to the fore by the two witnesses. They shall remain in Jerusalem during the last-half week of Daniel's 70 weeks, while the remnant flees. It is the time of Antichrist in Jerusalem and the Beast (Rev. 13:1-11), the coming Roman prince, in Rome, head of the revived Roman empire. Thus there will be left in Jerusalem a testimony (the two witnesses), endowed with imprecatory power and judgment (of a temporal nature, of course), as described in Rev. 11. Another wrote:

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed (Rev. 11:5).

This shows that it was not proper Christian testimony, nor the corresponding practical fruits. It was the very thing the Son would not do when He was upon earth, (save, of course, in the figurative sense of Luke 11:49), and that He rebuked James and John for desiring (Luke 11:54, 55). Here, on the contrary, fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies -- a perfectly right thing when God is about to take the place of Judge on earth. But the Lord does not take that place now. He is saving sinners, and

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152. They are not, as has been imagined, the Waldenses and Albigenses, by some non-dispensationalists. Certainly Revelation is full of symbolic language, but such notions are far from the truth.
otherwise displaying full grace; and as long as He so acts, He does not desire His people to be the depositaries of earthly power. Thus, the miracles of His servants, during this time of the display of His grace, have not been of a destroying nature. The Lord might deal with a person now, because of some sin, as with the Corinthian saints: I do not see why He should not at any time. But it would be foreign to Christianity and contrary to all that it breathes, if a saint, because another was evilly opposed to him, wished his death or injury. Christianity shows that the victory grace gives us is to show love and kindness to one’s enemy. It may be heaping coals of fire upon his head; but that is the Lord’s way -- overcoming evil with good. Yet it is the Lord who here sanctions this destructive power which accompanies the testimony of His Jewish witnesses; for He says, 

I will give power to my two witnesses And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

It is what He means them to do -- what evidently is to be done according to the thought of God. It indicates another condition, and not the Christian called to suffer unresistingly. It is the close of the age when Christianity will have done its work, and the Lord will again begin to act on the Jews. 153

THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

The seven-sealed roll is placed in the hands of the Lamb, alone worthy to open it, for He has overcome (Rev. 5). Yes, the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). In Rev. 6 we see Him opening the roll of God’s judgments, written on both sides. One by one He opens the seals until at the opening of the seventh seal, the roll is fully opened. This brings us to the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel’s 70 weeks. Out of the seventh seal comes what follows.

Regarding the sixth seal, we read an imprecation:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O sovereign ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Rev. 6:10).

These are early martyrs of the 70th week of Dan. 9. Rev. 6:11 shows us that more saints would be martyred. Some think that these are “God’s perfected saints in heaven.” Actually, they are not yet in resurrection but will be so in due time so that they be among those called “the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-6).
Those who think that the Revelation gives the history of the church place these imprecations in the mouth of Christians. The truth is that this will occur in a future epoch and is found in the mouths of those who are the godly in Israel as were the Psalmists in their day. At the present time God is doing a heavenly work. The first coming of the Lord Jesus provided for this. The imprecatory Psalms are not meant to be for the prayers and singing of the heavenly ones now.

THE SINGERS OF THE SONG OF MOSES

These singers are martyrs under the Beast and Antichrist, during their power in the second half-week of Daniel’s 70th week. The souls under the altar in Rev. 6:10, 11 were earlier godly Jewish martyrs and were told that they must wait while others of their brethren would be killed. Here (Rev. 15) are those other martyrs of the future, godly Jewish remnant.

The seven last plagues (Rev. 15:1 -- therefore following the trumpets, note) were about to be poured out. J. N. Darby wrote:

❖ Chapter 15 is a new vision. It unrolls before the prophet another scene, the last plagues or judgments of God, and specially that of Babylon, before Christ comes. The main object of the vision was the seven angels, having the seven last plagues; but, as ever, the saints who have to do with this scene are seen in security before the judgments begin. They have been purified, but have come through the fire of tribulation too. They stand on a sea mingled with fire. They have belonged to the time when the beast and his image were in power, but they had got the victory over it. They seemed perhaps to have succumbed -- it was real victory.

Their song is very peculiar. The song of Moses {Ex. 15} is triumph over the power of evil by Gods judgments. The song of the Lamb is the exaltation of the rejected Messiah, of the suffering One, like whom they had suffered; for it is the slain remnant amidst unfaithful and apostate Israel whom we find here. The song celebrates God and the Lamb, but by victorious sufferers who belong to heaven. What they celebrate are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai (the God of the Old Testament), but who now has manifested Himself in judgment, known by His works that are public for the people. He showed His ways unto Moses, His works unto the children of Israel. His works are celebrated now. They are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the Judge of all the earth. But His ways are celebrated too. There was intelligence of them, as far at least as righteous judgment went. These ways in judgment were just and true. Israel would understand deliverance; and how it came; but Moses knew God’s ways. But this is all. It is not merely celebration of qualities and attributes, as the angels do, nor the full knowledge of God’s work in
salvation by the blood of the Lamb. It is not the heart going up in the
sense of its own relationship, but a celebration of the glory of the Lord,
who would now be worshiped by the nations, for His judgments were
manifested. It was intelligence when judgments were manifested, not
when all was yet to be learned within the veil.

This celebration of what was just bursting forth being made, the
temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened, not
merely the temple with the ark of the covenant seen. That secured the
result for faith, when evil was raging in power on earth; the ark of God’s
covenant secured Israel. It was a testimony opened out, not a covenant
which secured in the hour of evil, but a testimony which made good what
the ark of the covenant secured; for the temple was opened, and the
messengers of judgment came forth -- God’s judgment for the restoration
and blessing of Israel, by the judgment of the Gentiles and all who
corrupted the earth. Cleanliness in God’s sight, and divine righteousness,
characterized and animated this judgment -- clean linen pure and white,
and golden girdles: I apprehend the former, in answer to corruption in
what should have had this -- Babylon (compare Rev. 19:8). That is, it was
a judgment which required it, and was according to it, and also to divine
righteousness. It is not brass burning in the fire-simply execution of
judgment in dealing with men, though that took place -- but God making
good His own nature and character against corruption, the essential
character of the eternal God, which the assembly ought to have displayed;
whereas Babylon was entirely the contrary, and the beast too. The seven
angels judge all according to these characters of God, because it was
really the avenging of what God was, as fully revealed to the assembly;
but the white linen refers, I doubt not, specially to Babylon, 154 though the
men with the mark of the beast would come under the judgment. One of
the four living creatures gives the vials; for it is the judicial power of God
in creation, not yet the Lamb. God’s glory in judgment filled the temple;
and no man could have to say to Him in worship, or approaching Him,
while these plagues were executing. It was the full display of God in
judgment. 155

**REV. 18:20**

Concerning the earth, an epoch preparatory to the coming of Christ in

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154. [He does not mean the literal Babylon, but the Beast as the one who last held the
power committed to the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2).

155. Synopsis, in loco. See also Collected Writings 2:234; 30:385; 34:212; Notes and
glory and judgment had commenced following the pre-Daniel’s 70th week rapture of the saints. These are saints in the glory, when on earth the time of judgments was come. They are “in tune” with what God is doing in His appointed season.

The great whore, the anti-bride, was come to judgment. She is also depicted as a city, as is the true Bride depicted in Rev. 19. In Rev. 17 we have man’s judgment on the whore, but in Rev. 18:8 we have God’s judgment on her and in v. 6 we read “double [to her] double.” i.e., four-fold. After the seven-times repeated declaration of what shall be found no more in her, heaven breaks out in four thunderous hallelujahs. Then shall we shall join together with our brethren, the imprecatory evangelicals, in proclaiming these hallelujahs as we together express unity with the mind of God in that which is seasonable.

**Exclusive Psalmody**

By exclusive psalmody is meant that only Psalms are to be sung by Christians. This, of course we object to, but not only exclusive, but even partial psalmody.

We have already seen that Christians are not to imprecate. Therefore it would be wrong to be praying and singing those imprecations. But more importantly, psalmody in effect denies the Christian’s place before the Father. They are a Jewish, not a Christian song-book.

W. J. Hocking wrote an excellent series of papers on singing, under the pseudonym YOD 156 from which we will consider some lengthy extracts.

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3. Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs

. . . As the term “psalms” 154 has been quoted more than once, a few additional words seem called for upon the use of the Jewish psalter in the worship of Christian assemblies. And it is truly lamentable to think that saints should so far close their eyes to the true character of the Christian calling and hopes as delineated in the New Testament, as to adopt, as the expression of their own hearts, words and sentiments which are utterly incongruous with their own status before God.

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Chapter 2.2: Suitable for Christian Singing and Prayer? 205

It must be admitted by all that the book of Psalms formed an integral part of the religion of Israel, as established in the Old Testament. And if the sacrifices of the temple are superseded, are not its songs? If circumcision is subversive of Christianity (Gal. 5:4), can we without forfeiture of privilege import the psalmody of the circumcised into the very fore-front of Christian worship? It is in point of fact a retrogression from grace to law.

The sharply defined contrast between the teaching of the Old Testament and the New as to worship has already been alluded to in these letters: To enumerate all the points of distinction would be a lengthy task. And here for obvious reasons one or two must suffice.

It must be readily acknowledged that the Psalms are instinct with hopes and promises of earthly and national deliverance which involve the subjugation and utter destruction of the enemies of Israel. This deliverance is to be effected by the advent of Messiah the Prince, Whose mighty power will judge and overthrow the nations and exalt Israel to a place of supreme honor and blessedness in the earth. Righteousness not grace, hope not faith, future not present blessing, vague trust not confident assurance are the prevailing principles in these songs of Jehovah. Moreover the blessing of the Gentiles is ever shown to be subordinate to that of Israel, in contrast to the unity of the Spirit which entirely obliterates all national distinctions (Gal. 3:28). So that the points of contrast are so great and of such primary moment as to preclude the praises of the Jew from being adequate for the Christian, or in any degree suited to his heavenly calling. Their full and proper use in worship is for “that day,” when all Israel shall be saved.

Of course while there is much that is peculiar to Israel and which the Christian cannot intelligently take on his lips to sing to God, there are many portions which have a common reference to Jewish and Gentile believers. The under current of piety and devotion is there for our profit, and will profit us so much the more as we apprehend the true relationship of the worshipers for whose use these songs were provided by God Himself. The New Testament guides as to what is suitable or otherwise. We are authorised to adopt the words of the Psalmist and boldly say, “The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6; Psa. 118:7). But how can the Christian who is enjoined by example and precept to pray for his enemies and to return them good for evil, adopt such language as Psa. 55:15? “Let death seize upon them and let them go down quick into hell; for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.” And this is not an isolated instance by any means. Passages occur throughout which are altogether unsuitable for the lips of the
Christian, though proper for the dispensation they contemplate. Amongst others the following may be referred to as examples: Ps. 2:9; 3:7; 6:10; 7; 9:3, 15; 10:15-18; 11:6; 18:47, 48; 21:9; 28:4; 34:16, 21; 35; 37:2, 9, 20; 40:14, 15; 48; 52:5; 54:5; 58; 59; 60; 66:3; 68:2; 69:22-28; 70; 71:1-13; 72:4; 74; 75:8; 79; 92:9; 97:3; 101:8; 109; 112:8, 10; 132:18; 139:19; 143:12; 144:11; 149:6-9.

A consideration of these and similar passages proves conclusively that the Psalms cannot be consistently used in Christian devotion, containing as they do so much that is utterly opposed to grace. And the following remark is really antagonistic to the truth, though a prevailing sentiment with many.

Surely of all books the inspired psalter commands our choice as a manual of devotion. “These choral songs of Israel,” especially when accompanied with their appropriate music, are well adapted to carry into execution the injunction of the apostle, if indeed this inspired hymn book be not, as some suppose, the immediate object here had in view, “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

It is utter confusion of thought to assume as is here and commonly done that the term “psalms” has an exclusive reference to those found in the Old Testament. And this confusion arises from not acknowledging the entirely different relationship in which the Jew stood from that of the believer now. Israel worshiped God as Jehovah. The Christian worships God as Father. And praise to Jehovah differs fundamentally from praise to the Father, and thus it is the psalms of David do not express the fuller revelations of the New Testament. Do we get anything in the series of songs that implies the knowledge of the Father and the Son? Not a word; for the simple reason that the Son had not then revealed the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18). Now, on the contrary, the very babes in Christ are characterized as knowing the Father (1 John 2:13), thus surpassing the most advanced Jew.

So that the Psalms are utterly inadequate as expressions of the spiritual emotions even of the very young in the faith. It is blessedly true that God speaks by means of them to the believer; but it is a serious perversion of the truth to suppose that the Christian ought to make use of them as a a means of speaking to God in worship and praise.


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4. Making Melody in the Heart

My Dear ____,

You will remember doubtless that in a former letter the exhortation of 1 Cor. 14 was referred to, wherein we are enjoined to sing with both the spirit and the understanding. Christians are expected to be intelligent in the ways of the Lord, and not to be “children in understanding.” There is however another element in singing which is of equal importance. Without the melody of the heart, it is impossible to render acceptable praise to the Lord.

This might be gathered from the general tenor of both Old and New Testaments. But to mark its extreme importance, we find it repeatedly expressed in definite terms. The Psalmist desires more than once to praise Jehovah with his “whole heart” (Psa. 9:1, 11:11, 138:11). And the Christian with his higher privileges and greater responsibilities is not to be behind the Jew. In two of Paul’s Epistles there are special exhortations to this effect: “Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19); “Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (God, R.V.) (Col. 3:16).

The heart therefore must be right before the Lord as well as the mind. Otherwise, though the expressions be as “clear as crystal,” they will be as “cold as ice.” To avoid this it is necessary that both should be in exercise, that the mind should contribute spiritual intelligence, and the heart sacred emotion.

Scripture shows that there is an intimate connection between the two, and that the heart exercises a considerable influence over the mind. When the declension of man from the knowledge of God to the darkness and corruption of heathendom is described, it is first stated that they “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.” It then follows that “even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:21, 28). The heart foolish and darkened was the precursor of the reprobate mind. Again, the apostle prays for the Ephesians that God would give them “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your heart (not, “understanding” as in the A. V.) being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, “ &c. So that it is clear that while the knowledge of God was lost through the darkening of the heart,
the full knowledge of Him is now communicated through the enlightening of the heart. Since the heart therefore is the highway to every true and proper apprehension of the things of God, it is of the highest importance that the heart should be strictly guarded; even as it is said, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). So the apostle writes to the Philippians, “And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7), thus pointing out what alone can form an efficient garrison for the central citadel of man’s nature.

For scripture uniformly teaches that the heart is the core of man’s being. It is the seat of the affections and of the impulses that carry man forward in the path of life. The Lord Himself declared to those who were content to make clean the exterior of the platter that there is a fountain of uncleanness within, which they entirely ignored. It is from the heart that proceeds every thing that defileth (Matt. 15:19). The evil heart of the natural man therefore gives a color to his every action; for it is thence the mischief springs (Matt. 5:28, 1 John 3:15). On the other hand, the heart of the renewed man is so to characterize every action that it may prove good and acceptable before God. As servants of Christ we are to do “the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6). To this end the love of God has been “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). Indeed the very Spirit of God Himself is in our hearts to originate and characterize every affection. This the apostle teaches, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6; 2 Cor. 1:22).

This fact is of great moment to such as have learned the deceitfulness of the natural heart (Jer. 17:9). We are not left to ourselves to produce proper feelings Godward. He Who gives us right thoughts of God and the Father gives us right feelings too. For He is the Spirit of love as well as of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). It is He Who fills the heart with such a sense of the incomparable love of God (Rom. 5:5) that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34, 35; Luke 6:45).

This constitutes the melody of the heart. But while it cannot exist apart from the offices of the Holy Spirit, the responsibility to produce it abides upon the singer, as our text implies. The one who utters the praises of the Lord with the lip is expected to offer concurrent melody in the heart. For the Holy Ghost assuredly will not act unless the believer honors His presence here upon the earth and yields himself to His direction. It is therefore incumbent upon the worshiper to assume
this attitude of faith and dependence in order to secure the operation of
the Holy Ghost without which no sacrifice of praise can be acceptable on
high.

Though running the risk of being considered tedious, one ventures
to point out the further emphasis given to the point now being dwelt upon
in Eph. 5:19. There the saints are exhorted, not to sing alone, nor to
make melody in the heart alone, but to sing and make melody in the
heart. No degree of melody with the voice can become an equivalent
substitute for melody in the heart according to the words before us.

And yet it is painful to think that there are not a few who practically
maintain that a correct mechanical rendering of hymns to God will be
sufficient for Him Who desires truth in the inward parts. Let such
seriously consider the solemn warning words of the Lord to the scribes
and Pharisees.

Ye hypocrites! well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This
people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me
with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they
worship me (Matt. 15:7-9).

They were in fact but “things without life, giving sound.”

It is imperative therefore that along with the tuneful voice there
should be the melodious accompaniment (ἁλλωτριε) of the heart. This
is to take the place of the musical instruments of the temple worship.
The Christian is not invited to praise the Lord with the sound of a
trumpet, with the psaltery and the harp and the high sounding cymbals;
nevertheless his song should be instinct with the pathos and holy
enthusiasm of the inner man. And shall we for one moment compare the
“sounding brass,” the “tinking cymbal,” or even the “pealing organ,”
with the rapturous glow of a fervent soul born of God, and led by the
Spirit into the possession and apprehension of the high and lofty
privileges which the New Testament reveals as the inalienable portion of
the Christian? It will be to compare death with life.

In Colossians we are bidden to sing “with grace” in our hearts.
Grace always expresses the superabundant manner in which God has met
our sinful need. Hence grace is surely calculated to move the soul to its
inmost depths. Those who contemplate the love of Christ, in that He has
washed them from their sins in His own blood and made them kings and
priests to God and His Father, cannot fail to ascribe to Him the glory
and dominion for ever and ever.

Grace, while it establishes the heart (Heb. 13:9) and enables us to
serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28), also
provokes the heart into outbursts of praise and thanksgiving to God. For it is to God we sing in Colossians (R. V.) as the Author of grace, while in Ephesians the Lord is before the soul evoking the melodies of the heart -- "making melody in the heart to the Lord."

And it may surely be said that herein lies the secret of this heart-melody. If any ask, "How may I produce this inward harmony?" the answer is, Let Christ be before the soul. Why does the tongue so often sing while the heart is silent? Is it not because the blessed person of our Savior and Lord is forgotten? The voice joins listlessly with others, but the heart is apathetic and dull or even engaged with the most worthless thoughts. Oh for faith so to realize His presence that in this as in other things we might exhibit a demeanor becoming to us and, if we may so speak, worthy of Him.

May we not say that it was the sense of the Lord's presence in the Philippian dungeon that caused Paul and Silas to sing "songs in the night?" For if the Lord was not in this case the object of their praise, He was, as He always must be, the subject of that praise. Therefore they sang aloud, making melody in their hearts. They were not as those who sing "songs to a heavy heart"; for the presence of the Lord makes even "the tongue of the dumb to sing," and none of His redeemed can be sad before Him. For the light of the Master's face transfigures even circumstances of sorrow into occasions of joy.

Above all things therefore let the heart yield its melody to the Lord. One often sees public notices to the effect, "Voices wanted for the church choir," when, the truth is, hearts are wanted. These, however, cannot be obtained by advertisement. "No heart but of the Spirit taught Makes melody to Thee." It is not the cultivated voice but the renewed heart that the Father seeks. It should be a comfort therefore to those whose singing consists only in making "a joyful noise to the Lord," that they can at any rate make melody in their hearts. At the same time they should moderate the loudness of their efforts lest they tax too severely the keener sensibilities of their more musical brethren; while the latter should endure any harsh grating sounds with cheerfulness and grace, remembering that their own praises are not heard on high for their fine or scientific singing.

The sentiments of quaint Thomas Fuller on this point are good in the main. "Lord," says he,

my voice by nature is harsh and untunable, and it is vain to lavish any art to better it. Can my singing of psalms be pleasing to Thy ears which is unpleasant to my own? Yet though I cannot chant
with the nightingale, or chirp with the blackbird, I had rather
chatter with the swallow (Isa. 38:14), yea, rather croak with the
raven, than be altogether silent. Hadst Thou given me a better
voice, I would have praised Thee with a better voice. Now what
my music wants in sweetness let it have in sense, singing praises
with understanding. Yea, Lord, create in me a new heart (therein
to make melody), and I will be contented with my old voice, until,
in Thy due time, being admitted into the choir of heaven, I have
another, more harmonious, bestowed upon me.

        I am, Yours faithfully in Christ,
        YOD.

* * * * *

The following two hymns by J. G. Deck are from the Little Flock
Hymn Book, 1881 edition,—hymns 27 and 28 (appearing to have
originally been one hymn).

1. Lamb of God, our souls adore Thee,
   While upon Thy face we gaze,
   There the Father's love and glory
   Shine in all their brightest rays.
   Thy Almighty power and wisdom
   All creation's works proclaim,
   Heaven and earth alike confess Thee,
   As the ever great I AM.

2. Son of God! Thy Father's bosom
   Ever was Thy dwelling-place;
   His delight, in Him rejoicing,
   One with Him in power and grace:
   O what wondrous love and mercy!
   Thou didst lay Thy glory by,
   And for us didst come from heaven
   As the Lamb of God to die.

3. Lamb of God! when we behold Thee
   Lowly in the manger laid;
   Wand'ring as a homeless stranger
   In the world Thy hands had made;
   When we see Thee in the garden
   In Thine agony of blood,
   At Thy grace we are confounded,
   Holy, spotless Lamb of God!

4. When we see Thee as the Victim
   Nailed to the accursed tree,
   For our guilt and folly stricken,
   All our judgment borne by Thee,
Lord, we own, with hearts adoring,
Thou hast washed us in Thy blood:
Glory, glory everlasting,
Be to Thee, Thou Lamb of God!

1. Lamb of God! Thou now art seated
   High upon Thy Father's throne,
All Thy gracious work completed,
   All Thy mighty victory won.
Every knee in heaven is bending
   To the Lamb for sinners slain;
Every voice and heart is swelling,
   "Worthy is the Lamb to reign."

2. Lord, in all Thy power and glory
   Still Thy thoughts and eyes are here;
Watching o'er Thy ransomed people
   To Thy gracious heart so dear.
Thou for us art interceding,
   Everlasting is Thy love;
And a blessed rest preparing 159
   In our Father's house above.

3. Lamb of God! Thy faithful promise
   Says, "Behold, I quickly come";
And our hearts, to Thine responsive,
   Cry, "Come, Lord, and take us home."
Oh! the rapture that awaits us
   When we meet Thee in the air,
And with Thee ascend in triumph,
   All Thy deepest joys to share.

4. Lamb of God! when Thou in glory
   Shalt to this sad earth return,
All Thy foes shall quake before Thee,
   All who now despise Thee mourn;
Then shall we at Thine appearing
   With Thee in Thy kingdom reign,
Thine the praise, and Thine the glory,
   Lamb of God, for sinners slain.

159. [Actually, the place is prepared already by our Lord's entry there as victorious man over sin, and hell, and death. His entry there as man prepared the place for His co-heirs. The word "preparing" would better have been "prepared us." Exclusive Psalm-singers, saying we should sing only Psalms because they are inspired and error-free, while hymns composed by Christians have errors, should keep in mind that some things in the Psalms may not be translated correctly. Even-handedness and balance in our judgments is difficult to attain to, is that not so?]
Chapter 2.3

The Christian and Government & JND, Patriotism, Country, and World

The Christian and Government

J. N. Darby wrote:

❖ It is clear to me that a Christian, free to do as he will, could never be a soldier, unless he were at the very bottom of the scale, and ignorant of the christian position. It is another thing when one is forced to it. In such a case the question is this: is the conscience so strongly implicated on the negative side of the question, that one could not be a soldier without violating that which is the rule for conscience -- the word of God? In that case we bear the consequences; we must be faithful.

What pains me is the manner in which the idea of one's country has taken possession of the hearts of some brethren. I quite understand that the sentiment of patriotism may be strong in the heart of a man. I do not think that the heart is capable of affection towards the whole world. At bottom, human affection must have a center, which is 'I.' I can say, 'My country, and it is not that of a stranger. I say, 'My children, 'My friend,' and it is not a purely selfish One would sacrifice one's life -- everything (not oneself, or one's honor) for one's country, one's friend. I cannot say, 'My world'; there is no appropriation. We appropriate something to ourselves that it may not be ourselves. But God delivers us from the 'I'; He makes of God, and of God in Christ, the center of all; and the Christian, if consistent, declares plainly that he seeks a country -- a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. His affections, his ties, his citizenship, are above. He withdraws into the shade in this world, as outside the vortex which surges there, to engulf and carry everything away. The Lord is a sanctuary.

That a Christian should hesitate whether he ought to obey or not, I
understand: I respect his conscience; but that he should allow himself to be carried away by what is called patriotism -- that is what is not of heaven. “My kingdom,” said Jesus, “is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” (John 18:36). It is the spirit of the world under an honorable and attractive form, but wars come from “lusts that war in your members.”

As a man I would have fought obstinately for my country, and would never have given way, God knows; but as a Christian I believe and feel myself to be outside all; these things move me no more. The hand of God is in them; I recognize it; He has ordered all beforehand. I bow my head before that will. If England were to be invaded tomorrow, I should trust in Him. It would be a chastisement upon this people who have never seen war, but I would bend before His will.

Many Christians are laboring in the scene of the {Franco-Prussian} war; large sums of money have been sent to them. All this does not attract me. God be praised that so many poor creatures have been relieved; but I would rather see the brethren penetrating the lanes of the city, and seeking the poor where they are found every day. There is far more self-abnegation, more hidden service, in such work. We are not of this world, but we are the representatives of Christ in the midst of the world. May God graciously keep His own.

1870.

Letters 3:110-111.  

As to the fact of what the world is, when we say of a person, “He is getting on in the world,” is it not well understood? God does not own those relations which constitute the world. All natural and personal dependence can be owned by God. In these we have given directions how to act; in none else. The moment this is departed from, you must get another principle to act on than simple fidelity to the service of Christ.

The place of the Christian is that of implicit obedience to “the powers that be,” even supposing that Nero were king; for he could not touch my portion which is heavenly, and therefore whatever the question be, unless it interfered with my obedience to God, I would not mind, for he could only bring me into “the lion’s mouth,” and this might turn to a testimony; but he could not touch my resurrection life. Unless it were a

160. Concerning “the powers that be,” see Letters 2:492, 493; Collected Writings 19:213 (cathis); 26:190; 30:165; 32:264; 34:203.
question concerning God's honor, I would not come down from this principle and judge of what is right or wrong as to the things of the world. We are told to submit

Whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, a unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well (1 Pet. 2:14).

Whoever is king, he is "supreme"; for there can be no power but of God, or we deny the omnipotence of God. I have nothing to do but to own what God owns. I get my example in Christ, who appealed to none but God; but still in the darkest hour of iniquity, when God's priests were interceding with Gentile power for the crucifixion of His Son, the Lord says,

Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above {John 19:11}.

The power from God was submitted to by our blessed Lord, who committed His cause "to him that judgeth righteously"; and this is our example. I could not be a magistrate while Satan is the god of this world, for I cannot serve two masters; and if I cannot say on the bench that what Christ says is true, I must be dishonoring Him and serving the world. In the millennium it will not be so. Then we shall rule; but I cannot now, because the principle on which power is exercised is not the honor of God. The magistrate is the resister of evil; but God's word is,

If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God {1 Pet. 2:20}.

I would rather have what is acceptable to God than all the civil rights in the world. The duty then of the saints is submission: I know no other, or I must act on the principles which the flesh recognizes; I cannot seek a good object in a bad way. The object must be God's, and the way God's.

The Christian, having a new nature, is entitled to judge all things, and to ask, Does this come from the Spirit, or from the flesh? What is the standard of the new man

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect {Matt. 5:48}.

Christ's example and the Father's perfectness are the principles on which the Christian ought to act, as it is said,

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you {Matt. 5:11}.

How have I drunk into the understanding of God's love? In His having
brought salvation to my own soul? And I am therefore called to be the personal witness to the world that “none is good” {Luke 18:19} but God, and that “He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” {Luke 6:35}.

It is not now, “be perfect with the Lord, thy God.” This has been settled in Christ, but the Father sends me now to present His perfectness to the world. The world is withered in the activity of disappointed selfishness, and wants the beneficence of God. If a Christian gets his heart sunk in the listlessness and vanity of the world, a pretty witness will he be of God’s character to it.

I see the Lord going

about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil,
for God was with him;

seeking not “his own,” satisfied with the Father, and we ought to be satisfied with Him, and not to be seeking our own, but to be seeking grace from the fountain of grace. How can a Christian broil and travail his soul in the things of the world? If the Lord said that there was no rest to be found in the world, it is a foolish thing to seek. There is only rest in Him, who said,

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Fellowship with Christ in the expression of God’s goodness is the place of the Christian.

Strange to have to discuss whether the honor or power of the world belongs to the saint! As it is said,

that no flesh shall glory in his presence {1 Cor. 1:29}.

What is honor in the world? There is no good in it, but that it be given up for the Lord’s sake; this is the only good that I know of. Let me spend every shilling that I have in the service of the Lord, still it will be the mammon of unrighteousness; but the Christian has the privilege of even turning the mammon of unrighteousness into the expression of grace. There would be no money or rank at all if there were not sin in the world. The person of rank is the receiver of respect, and others are the givers: as a Christian I give willingly; but he is the beggar in the world. I do not say this in the spirit of disrespect; that would be quite wrong; for disrespect toward others is ruinous in Christianity. Still the secret of the Lord is that what passes current in the world is given by those who, having heavenly riches, can give freely, because they have nothing to hinder them. Am I in principle to take what Christ did not? Never. If heaven rejoiced over the Son of God and the King of Israel
placed in a manger, what should our feelings as to the honor of this
world be? And yet we know how we should feel under similar
circumstances in this world, where everything is measured by the
standard of selfishness.

Let us remember those words about our Lord,
though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we
through his poverty might be made rich {2 Cor. 8:9}. 161

**Obviously, JND Would**

**Not be a ‘Dispensational’ Christian Zionist**

Oh, the awful blindness that has happened, in part, to Israel (Rom.
11:25). Blinding, hardening, and reprobation follow after a course of
wilfulness in the face of warning. They are not the causation of
wilfulness, but the awful, judicial result of it in God’s moral
government. We see it in an individual, such as the Pharaoh of the
Exodus. We see it in Rom. 1 regarding man. We see it in Israel’s case --
the above two parables in Matthew show this, among other Scriptures.

So, we observe what is transpiring in the middle-East, praying that
there may be those of Israel that God will save by the blood of Christ.
But to join political endeavors to either further or weaken the cause of
Israel is hardly the Christian’s place. 162 Because he was instructed in
God’s Word concerning Israel’s attempt to circumvent God’s
government on them, J. N. Darby anticipatedly wrote:

The effort of the Jews to re-establish their system at the end, in
despite of God, will but lead to open apostasy and definitive
judgment. This will be the time of unequalled affliction, of which
the Lord speaks. But from the time of the first destruction of
Jerusalem by Titus until the coming of the Lord, the Jews are
considered as set aside and under this judgment, in what degree

161. *Collected Writings* 32:264-266. See also 5:135; 34:110.

162. Concerning terrorism, it is a government’s duty to suppress evil (Rom. 13).

Let us keep in mind that the formation of the nation-state of Israel (1948) was
founded with terrorism against the British occupation. Menachem Begin was the leader
of a terrorist group. The book, _Terror Out of Zion_, chronicles these things. When Christ
sets up Israel, it will be by sovereign, divine, and holy judgment. Man is trying it first,
but it will lead to Israel’s greatest disaster, as attempting to circumvent the moral
government of God, just before the Deliverer comes out of Zion, and all Israel will be
saved (Rom. 11:26): i.e., the clearing of all the rebels will take place (Ezek. 20, etc.).
soever it may have been accomplished. 163

It is clear from Dan. 9:24-27 that the seventieth week must run its course before Israel comes into blessing. And blessed they shall be, for the gifts and calling of God are not subject to repentance (Rom. 11:29). 164 But before Messiah comes, their attempts at bringing in God’s blessing before that time will include building a temple and reinstituting sacrifices (2 Thess. 2; Dan. 9:27). But God had said:

Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts saying, Behold the man whose name is [the] Branch [i.e., Sprout]; and he shall grow up from his own place, and he shall build the temple of Jehovah: even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and sit and rule upon his throne . . . (Zech. 6:12-13).

Israel’s temple, built in defiance of God’s moral government on them, will, no doubt, be razed by the final Assyrian of prophecy. This confederacy is given in Psa. 83. 165 In Psa. 79:1 we read:

O God, the nations are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps.

But preceding that destruction, Israel’s wilfulness (except for the godly Jewish remnant) will lead to the acceptance of the final Antichrist of prophecy (1 John 2:18-23) seated in Jerusalem (2 Thess. 2:4) as king in Israel (Dan. 11:36-38), 166 henchman (Rev. 13:11-18) of the coming

163. Synopsis 3:185, 186.

164. The Gentile profession of Christianity is warned in Rom. 11 not to be wise in their own conceit, as if that Gentile profession will not come under judgment as Israel has. We learn in Rom. 11 that the Gentile profession will indeed be cut away, preliminary to Israel’s restoration. That Gentile profession knows what happened in AD 70, that the Jews have been set aside, and thinks that the profession of Christianity will not be similarly judged. That profession will also end in accepting the Antichrist. That will be the apostasy of Christendom.

165. This attack on Israel is noted in Zech. 14:2. More of the details are given in Dan. 11:40 45. This particular confederacy is composed of ancient enemies confederate under the King of the North. (None of this is the mythical “battle of Armageddon.”) It is part of “the war of the great day of God the Almighty” (Rev. 16:14), which is composed of a sequence of battles in which the Lord, returned in glory and judgment, deals with various powers each according to their respective characters and sins—preparatory to the inauguration of the millennial reign which will formally commence on the 133rd day from the middle of the 70th week.

166. “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not; if another come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43). The Antichrist they will receive. Luke gives a moral note on Israel’s future apostasy in Luke 23:31, where “the green tree” means the earlier departure from God, while “the dry” points to the final character of their apostasy.

(continued . . .)
Chapter 2.3: The Christian and Government

Roman prince (Dan. 9:26) who is the first beast of Rev. 13. Jewish sacrifices having been re-instituted (Dan. 9:27), they will be stopped in the middle of the 70th week for a new form of idolatry to be set up (Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Matt. 24:15) -- including:

(1) the worship of Satan (Rev. 13:4),

(2) the worship of the Beast (Rev. 13:15), and

(3) the worship of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2), the second beast (Rev. 13: 11-18), the false prophet of Rev. 20:20. 167

Therefore there must be a Desolator (Dan. 9:27) of Israel, i.e., the rod of God’s judgment, the rod of God’s moral government upon them (Isa. 10), to execute judgment that must exceed what happened in AD 70 and to exceed what happened under Hitler. There is a principle regarding God’s rod of discipline that we should pause to consider:

Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it (Micah 6:9).

Hearing the rod is not the same as feeling the rod. Recalcitrance and stubbornness may feel the rod without listening to its lesson and bowing in repentance concerning its message. (This is true of individuals also). Israel fell under the rod of God’s moral government through His use of the Romans as His rod. What Israel is presently doing, and will yet do, is recalcitrant, refusing to hear the rod, though the pain was great. So, not the Romans, but the final Assyrian of prophecy, will be the rod to smite even harder.

166. (. . .continued)

Another moral characteristic given by Luke is that this will be the epoch of “the seven spirits” (Luke 11:23-26), i.e., completeness of spiritistic apostasy.

The rejection of the revelation of the Father in the Son is given in John 15:24:

but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

In 1 John 2, “the last hour” refers to an epoch, one of the indicators of the fall of the Christian testimony viewed in responsibility. We read:

Little children, it is [the] last hour, and according as ye have heard that antichrist comes, even now there have come many antichrists, whence we know it is [the] last hour . .

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18, 22).

167. This will take place during the 70th week of Dan. 9 (a seven year period). Matt. 24 has in view both half-weeks. Rabbis once (if not still) referred to the period as “the birth-pangs of Messiah.” It seems more appropriate to view it as the birth-pangs of the future, restored Israel. We read that as soon as Zion travailed, the nation shall be born at once (Isa. 66:8).

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Therefore there lies before Israel the time of *unparalleled trouble* (Dan. 12:1; Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 7:14 168) -- and there can only be one unparalleled trouble. 169

At the consummation of the time of Jacob’s trouble, the final Assyrian of prophecy 170 will be the instrumental rod of God’s affliction on Israel, a rod of His moral government. Yet, woe to that rod, for God will break that rod when He is finished using it (Isa. 10:12; 14:25). That rod also will fall under the moral government of God -- in a short, sharp, and summary way. This power is called the King of the North in Dan. 11 (the final King of the North, 171 i.e., the Assyrian, as he is called in the other prophets). In his crushing assault through the land of Israel he sweeps on to the King of the South (Egypt) and even further. But tidings out of the north-east cause him to return into Israel, 172 and there this king of bold countenance (Dan. 8:22), apparently backed by Russia (cp. Dan. 8:24), meets the Prince of princes and is destroyed in the land of Israel, as Isa. 14:25 also says. Cp. Zech. 14:2, 3. God is going to settle matters His way. He will execute the counsel which is purposed concerning the whole earth (Isa. 14:26).

For it is the day of Jehovah’s vengeance, the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34:8).

For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redeemed has come . . . mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I have trodden down the peoples

168. The first four texts speak of the Jews being in it, with Jacob being saved through it; the next speaks of the present saints being kept out of the hour (out of the time) of it; and the final text speaks of Gentiles that come out of the tribulation, the great one, as blessed (cp. Matt. 25:30-40).

169. There are Christians eager to date the writing of the Revelation before AD 70 so as to get prophecies in the Revelation to be accomplished by and in, AD 70, thus leaving no prophecies of the future as we are considering it from Scripture.

170. *Notes and Comments,* vol. 4 contains an article, “The Assyrian.”

171. The designations, King of the North and King of the South in Dan. 11, come from the breaking of the empire of Alexander the Great (who is the notable horn on the he-goat (Dan. 8:5)) into four parts upon his death (depicted by the four horns in Dan. 8:8). The final ruler of one part, to the North of Israel, is called the King of the North; Egypt is meant by the King of the South. Dan. 11 gives us various intrigues of these two powers in the past, but at the end of Dan. 11:35, prophetic events are introduced. The wilful king is the Antichrist in Jerusalem, which lies between the other two powers.

172. The Beast and his armies had moved to Israel to protect the Antichrist (not killed by the Assyrian power), but were taken by the returning Lord (Rev. 20). The Assyrian hears of trouble and returns from the conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia and meets his doom.
in mine anger, and made them drunk in my fury; and their blood
have I brought down to the earth (Isa. 63:4-6).

Finally, after the last power, Gog (Ezek. 38, 39; i.e., Russia), is broken
by the victorious Man of God’s purpose, the 1000 year reign of peace
will commence and the temple of Ezek. 40-48 will be built. The sons of
Zadok, the progeny of faithful Phinehas to whom God gave a covenant
of the priesthood, will officiate. Israel will be the New Israel under the
New Covenant, Isrl all righteous (Isa. 60:21):

Thy people shall also be all righteous: they shall possess the land
forever -- the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that
I may be glorified.

Israel will be restored by divine sovereignty, for all that pleases and
glorifies God springs from His sovereign work and blessing.

The linking J. N. Darby’s name with “Christian Zionism” (i.e.,
present evangelical political action backing Israel) is not, to me, an
unexpected piece of ignorance on the part of Covenantist evangelical
theologians, nor of historians, be they evangelical or otherwise. How
simplistic: why, JND came to America some seven times and spread
“dispensationalism” in the USA. “Dispensationalists” in America are
engaging in Christian Zionism, so JND may seem to some persons to
have been the “father” of Christian Zionism! Then there is the British
“Balfour Declaration” regarding a homeland for the Jews, which tracers-
of-connections might think to trace back to JND, however tenuously.
Why, British dispensational Christian Zionism was exported to America
when JND taught the pretribulation rapture and the national restoration
of Israel! But note, however, he taught that Israel will not be
incorporated into the church. 173 No, to him, Israel would be distinct
from the church and a distinct nation in the earth, under the New
Covenant, from which the earthly government would flow forth. With
an understanding of prophetic events essentially the same as the first part
of this article, and viewing Israel nationally as under God’s moral
government until Christ’s appearing in glory, along with his refusal to
be involved in politics, JND is not a good candidate for father of
“Christian Zionism.” Far from it.

It appears to me that evangelical Christian Zionism has been engaged
in by “dispensationalists” who have picked up some things here and there
from JND, things that did not interfere with their church systems and

173. Before JND, there were Postmillenialists that taught a restoration of Israel to
Palestine, but as converted and part of the church.

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clergy, and who have ignored other things also, some of which would bring the first man practically under the sentence of death, the testing of the first man having ceased with the cross, and consequently that man was declared lost. And this certainly includes rejecting, or ignorance of, what he taught regarding the moral government of God, as well as what he taught regarding the Christian’s place as not of the world, nor of its politics and power, yet rightly acknowledging the authority of government as from God (Rom 13; etc.).

Evangelical, dispensational, Christian Zionism was not, and is not, learned from JND; it is a violation of what he taught.

Are evangelical Christian Zionists ignorant of where present-day Israel is heading? Is not the character of politically supporting Israel in what they are doing actually undermining God’s moral government on the nation, even if unintentional? Our place is to recognize that what Israel is doing is man’s effort to get out from under the governmental ways of God. It does not follow that this means despising Israel.

J. N. Darby wrote:

❖ Prophecy does not speak to us of heaven; faith looks to heaven, and sees what is there. Prophecy is God’s politics, and it saves us from human politics -- a great mercy too. Our portion is Christ Himself. 174 ❖
❖ . . . for I never meddle in politics in any way . . . 175 ❖
❖ I need hardly assure your readers that I have no desire that they should meddle in politics; I do not do so myself, nor do I think that a Christian ought. He believes that God governs, and governs with a view to the glory of Christ, and that He will infallibly bring about His purposes. But it seems to me to be well that Christians should apprehend what they have to look for, and be prepared for it, if the Lord tarry. Did it not concern them religiously, you would have no word from me on such subjects. 176 ❖
❖ When was there ever a time when everything was going on so well, as men speak, such unity among nations as now, or such drawing out of resources? The cry is, “Peace, peace,” by the energies and working of man’s will without God. Man looks for progress in the philosophy, commerce, politics, and comfort of this world, but still there is in his

174. Collected Writings 17:403.
175. Collected Writings 20:290.
176. Collected Writings 32:333.
heart a dread of the consequences of the progress of this self-will. Thus is fulfilled the apparent paradox of Scripture, the cry of peace combined with “men's hearts failing them for fear.” Now men would say this is a contradiction, but it is not; for while men are building up commerce and arts and science in the energy of self-will, who is there among them that would undertake to answer for the state of any nation in three years' time, or for even a much shorter period? Man is afraid of the working of self-will in his neighbor, though he likes to exert it in himself. But the Christian has learned that the question as to the world is settled in the rejection of Christ. At that moment it was all over with the world {cp. 1 John 5:19, etc.}. 177 ❖

❖ I do not mean to say, sir, that we all walk at the full height of the heavenly calling, but we acknowledge the obligation to do so. If anyone fails openly in what becomes a Christian, in point of morality or in what concerns the faith, he is excluded. We abstain from the pleasures and amusements of the world. If we have evening parties, it is for the purpose of studying the word and of edifying ourselves together. We do not mix in politics; we are not of the world: we do not vote. We submit to the established authorities, whatever they may be, in so far as they command nothing expressly contrary to the will of Christ. We take the Lord's supper every Sunday, and those who have gift for it preach the gospel of salvation to sinners or teach believers. Everyone is bound to seek the salvation or good of his neighbor according to the capacity which God has given him. Feeling that Christendom is corrupt, we are outside the church-world, by whatever name it is called. As to the number of those who follow this course I cannot tell you what it is: we do not number ourselves, wishing to remain in the littleness which becomes Christians. Besides, we reckon as a brother in Christ every person who has the Spirit of Christ. 178 ❖

❖ Events are hastening on, dear brother, and yet as to us we are waiting for but one, that our Beloved, our Savior should come. His coming becomes a resource, as it has long been a joy to us, an(1 a reality still more precious, and more near. May we expect it continually; God alone knows the moment. The Christian takes cognizance of the events which are taking place, as a testimony to the one who understands; but his thought, his desire, his portion, is much more within the sanctuary than all that. But is it not true that this voting, as an act of identification with

177. Collected Writings 28:296.
the world (in the very forms which it assumes in the last days), ought to be avoided as a snare by all Christians who understood the will of God and their position in Christ. Always true (I have been acting upon it for twenty years), it is doubly true now. 179

* * * *

There was once a father who found out from God’s Word that there was to be a future, distinct place for a nationally restored Israel -- that Israel would not be part of the church which will have been removed prior to Israel’s restoration, at the rapture of the saints. These Israelites would all be under a New Covenant and they would all be righteous. The father understood the heavenly calling and heavenly position of the present saints, and that they were not of the world. They were seated in the heavens in Christ Jesus, while Israel would be seated in the earthlies, so to speak, consequent upon Christ coming in glory and judgment to set up the kingdom reign. Acting on these truths, this father did not vote and/or engage in politics. He said Christians were not of this world, as his Lord had said in John 17, and that he had a heavenly calling and hope. In fact, this father even denied that clerisy was Christian and he believed in separation from evil unto the Lord, even what some have called secondary separation. He saw many more things too numerous to list here.

This father had a son who was also a Christian. He also saw that Israel would be restored and not be part of the church. But he became a clergyman. He voted, mixed in with politics, and did not practice separation from the world, etc. He did not practice separation from evil unto the Lord as his father had. He did not accept it, as his father taught, that the first man was under trial which ended at the cross, and that the trial of man is over since the cross ended it. He set up a system of seven dispensations during which the trial of man proceeds. Moreover, he made an age among the earthly ages out of the church, while his father had taught that the church is not an age but is above and outside of ages, a heavenly thing -- and that we are in the Mosaic age now. Indeed, he multiplied differences with his father. He involved himself in politics and finally in political support of Israel after it became a state in 1948. What he is engaging in is called Christian Zionism. Much of what his father taught he has denied, rejected, or been ignorant of.

However, some scholars and theologians have pronounced the father

179. Letters 1:130.
(J. N. Darby) to be the real father of ‘dispensational’ Christian Zionism.

My own conclusion is that making J. N. Darby the father of Christian Zionism is absurd and tells us much more about those asserting it than it does about JND. I am sorry to say that virtually every book written by scholars on JND perpetuate many errors, beginning with W. B. Neatby’s hostile polemic, The History of the Brethren.

There are two “Fragments Gathered Up” in The Bible Treasury 8:192 that are apropos here:

Remark the great difference between the Psalmist’s celebration of God’s righteousness, sitting on the throne, judging right, and vindicating the righteous man from the oppressor; and Christ on the cross who was not vindicated on the earth but declares Himself forsaken of God (His enemies, outwardly, having all their will against Him), and then, righteousness being established in a heavenly way, God’s righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

God has not yet made such a government of the earth as can be an adequate measure and manifestation of His righteousness. Christianity does not even contemplate this, but is a display of His
grace to faith calling souls to heavenly glory. The law in Israel did take this ground, but necessarily failed through their rebelliousness. The millennium will be exactly this, when Christ shall be exalted in earth as in heaven to the glory of God the Father.

◆ “THE POWERS THAT BE,”

WITH REMARKS ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

by William Kelly

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).

Human government, it has been justly said, finds its root in the authority which God conferred upon Noah. There was no such thing, properly speaking, in the antediluvian earth. Adam had a most extensive dominion, but no power over life.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man, etc. (Gen. 1:26-28).

There was no authority delegated over man, nor even to deprive the least animal of its life. Hence it was that the murder of a brother did not draw down vengeance from man, though conscience dreaded the retributive blow from every hand.

The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground, said the Lord to guilty Cain; and He set a mark upon him, lest any should slay the fugitive. Then followed a long reign of gigantic and uncurbed wickedness. Finally, a preacher of righteousness was raised up who warned for the space of one hundred and twenty years, when God swept away the corruption and violence of the race in the waters of the deluge.

{Government Committed to Man}

After that catastrophe, a new commission opens. Noah and his sons have the Adamic grant confirmed; but they have much more. Every moving thing that liveth, even as the green herb, should be meat for them, the blood thereof excepted.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man: at the hand of
every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth  
man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of  
God made He man. 180 And you, be ye fruitful, etc. (Gen. 9:5-7).

Evidently, the world was then placed under new conditions, which, in  
their substance, continue and must subsist till a new and yet future dealing  
of God change the face of all things, as may be gathered from 2 Peter and  
other scriptures.

The principle, then, of the divine charge to Noah and his sons  
remains true and obligatory till the day of the Lord. 181 Now what is its  
chief characteristic? Clearly it is God’s committal of the sword, or the  
power of life and death, into the hands of man.

  Whoso sheddeth mans blood, BY MAN shall his blood be shed  
  {Gen. 9:6}.

Such is the true source and basis of civil government. It did not spring  
from social contract. It did not grow by degrees out of family  
relationships. It did not originate in the usurpation of man or of a class.

As God’s command gave it being, it can never cease to be clothed with  
His authority, whether men hear or forbear. If there be any one part of  
the charge which stands most prominent, it is the responsibility of man to  
visit capitally him who sheds man’s blood. Such is the requirement of  
God, grounded upon the fact that He made man in His image. But though  
the reason of the thing might apply from Adam downwards, no such  
power was delegated till Noah. The notion, therefore, of its being, in any  
sort or degree, a right inherent in man, is thus cut off. It is a right of  
God, which He, ever since the flood, has been pleased to entrust to  
human keeping, which those in authority are bound to enforce in  
subjection to Him, and for the exercise of which they must by-and-by  
give account to Himself (Psa. 82).

It is easy to say that God has withdrawn or quashed the commission  
given to Noah and his family. But I ask, where? when? how? and await  
in vain the shadow of a proof.

180. Will it be believed that some have gone so far as to treat these words as a mere  
prediction, and not as a solemn permission and charge on God’s part?

181. {We all know that many are seeking to do away with capital punishment; but what  
do they care about God? The whole order of God is broken up now. Even a beast killing  
{man} should die. Verse 6 gives the reason: “In the image of God made he man”; so that  
it is always true up to the end. Men only think of what fits men; but we as Christians have  
nothing to do with that (J. N. Darby, Collected Writings 19:88).}
{God’s Gracious Calling of Abraham}

Undoubtedly, God revealed other thoughts and hopes to the faith of Abraham and of his seed. With the fathers he entered into a new relationship—a covenant of grace and promise, as proved by (Rom. 4 and Gal. 3)—which did not clash with the previous bond signed, sealed, and delivered, if I may so say, to Noah and his sons. This was a covenant between God and the earth at large; that was a special covenant between God and His own people. By the one, the world’s wickedness was kept in check; by the other, the wandering patriarchs walked as strangers in a land promised to them and their seed for an everlasting possession. The former menace human violence, if need were, with death; the latter led the men who embraced its hopes, pilgrims on earth, under the guidance of a known and almighty Friend. The government of the earth proceeded in its own sphere, wide as all the families of the earth. The calling of Abraham and his seed had its proper and peculiar domain. Between them there was no confusion, much less contradiction.

{Government and Calling Combined in Israel}

It is true that, after the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the principle of government, first committed to Noah, and that of God’s call, first manifested in Abraham, were seen united. In that chosen people, separated from the Gentiles as His witness, God developed His ways as a Ruler. But, alas! at Sinai, instead of confessing their sin, and pleading the absolute promises made to the fathers, they accepted the conditions of their own obedience {Ex. 19}. The result was ruin under all variety of circumstances: the law broken before it was brought down from the Mount, God Himself rejected, failure under priests, under prophets, under kings, “till there was no remedy,” and God at length gave them into the hands of their enemies. During their national existence in Canaan, none can pretend that God relieved Israel from the responsibility of punishing with death.

{The Times of the Gentiles: Government Severed from Calling}

At the Babylonish captivity, God severed the principle of earthly rule from that of His call, transferring the former {i.e., rule} to the Gentiles. The four great empires appeared in succession, as Daniel and other inspired writers predicted and attested {Dan. 2, 7}. The last, or Roman empire, bore sway, as is notorious, when our Lord was born and died; and God began to call His church, chosen from Jews and Gentiles, as one body here below.
Chapter 2.3: The Christian and Government

{The church Has Calling, but not Government}

But it is clear and certain, from the Acts of the Apostles and the rest of the New Testament, that the church in no way interfered with the government of the earth, which God had placed in the hands of magistrates. They had, no doubt, to hear and to bear the reproach of turning the world upside down, and of doing contrary to the decrees of Caesar; but it was false. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world {John 18:36}. They knew it, they had it, and they did not want another. They remembered His own glowing words about them:

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world {John 17};

and they waited for Him from heaven {Phil. 3:20-21}, assured that those who suffer shall also reign with Him {2 Tim. 2:12}. As they never resisted the authorities by force, so they sought in their teachings to uphold, not to weaken, the just place which God of old had assigned them. Hence St. Paul thus addressed the believers in the imperial city:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (rather judgment, as also in 1 Cor. 11:29, where the context is decisively against the idea of “damnation”). For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger [or avenger] to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake, etc. (Rom. 13).

The reigning emperor was a pagan and a persecutor; but clearly that was not the question. The language of the Spirit is so framed as to exclude cavil, founded either on the profession or the practice of the ruler.

There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

What can be conceived more definite on the one hand, more comprehensive on the other? What more opposed to revolutionary movement? It was most wholesome; just in the right place and time. For the Jews were then turbulent, and the Christians were obnoxious in the extreme to the ruling powers. It seems probable that some at Rome, from old Jewish associations, found it hard to own and respect, as of God,
rulers whom they saw sunken in the spiritual and moral degradations of
heathenism. Under such circumstances, if under any, one might have
supposed a priori that God might have revoked the grant of power from
its Gentile holders, if He did not transfer it to the church. But no! The
door is closed against every excuse. “The powers that be are ordained of
God.”

{The Extent of Christian Subjection to Government}

As regards Christian responsibility, it is of no essential importance
what may be the form of government. It may be despotic or
constitutional: it may be aristocratic or republican. Nay, more, in its
profession, it may be Pagan or Mahometan, Popish or Protestant. The
principle or rule, as regards mankind and the earth, remains untouched.
Thus, the Christian is bound to pay allegiance and honor wherever he
may be -- in England to the Queen, and in France to the Emperor; in
Russia to the Czar, and in Turkey to the Sultan; and the same thing is true
of all subordinate authorities. The only limit is that the Christian owes
absolute subjection to God; and therefore when obeying an earthly
government entails -- happily a rare thing -- disobedience to God, it need
scarcely be said that he must obey God rather than man. To resist the
powers is to resist God’s ordinance. The alternative for the Christian,
when he may not obey a human command that involves a breach of God’s
will, is suffering, not resistance. But in general it remains true that to him
who does good, the magistrate, under any government you please, is
God’s minister for good. So said St. Paul in view of an arbitrary and an
idolatrous power.

But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: FOR HE BEARETH NOT
THE SWORD IN VAIN.

That is to say, we have the Apostle, long after Christ had been
extensively preached among the Gentiles, urging the saints at Rome to
submit themselves to the existing authorities, to render to Caesar the
things of Caesar. Of course, if Caesar had sought to corrupt the faith or
destroy the worship of God’s church; if Nero had ordered them to give
up the Lord, positively like Nebuchadnezzar, or negatively like Darius,
their duty had been plain -- not to protest merely, and sin all the while,
but to suffer for righteousness’ sake: they were not to render the things
of God, but of Caesar, to Caesar. But if the State demanded any service,
however hard, Christianity taught them to yield it, if not positively sinful.
If it insulted and persecuted them, still they were taught to pray for kings
and for all in authority,
that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty {1 Tim. 2:2}.

But suppose, instead of doing good, and having praise of the ruler, a man does evil, what then?

Be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain {Rom. 13:4}. Assuredly, if the ruler is not to use the sword, he does bear it in vain. He might as well, or better, not bear it at all; for an idle threat is a proof of feebleness, and a brutaum fulmen brings a ruler, of all men, into contempt. St. Paul, however, anticipates no such dereliction of duty on the part of the magistrate, but warns the ill-disposed that he is God’s servant,

a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

{Christian Truth Confirms Governmental Power Given through Noah}

The passage {Rom. 13} is clear as noonday. It demonstrates that the authority of the sword delegated to Noah and his sons, as representatives of government, is no more repealed or neutralized by the grace of the Christian revelation, than it had been by the righteousness of the Mosaic code. It proves that the Christian is bound to respect that sword by whatever hands it may be wielded. Even if the magistrate were an infidel, if he degraded his office by regarding the popular will, not God, as the source of his authority, the Christian is not the less bound to own God’s authority in him, and to honor him as God’s minister in worldly things, in “the things of Caesar.” It is mere delusion, therefore, to suppose that Christianity deprives a government of the authority to punish evil-doers with the sword. St. Paul, as we have seen, fully recognizes that power, and describes the ruler as one authorised by God to avenge evil. To speak of mercy, amendment, etc., as the sole or chief aim when law is violated and a man is convicted of murder, for instance, is to evince the utmost confusion of thought. For while grace is the central idea in God’s scheme for saving sinners by the cross, justice is and must be the foundation of all earthly government, Jewish or Gentile. Doubtless, in the gospel God can and does justify -- not pardon only, but justify -- the chief of sinners freely, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But thence to infer that a world’s ruler ought to deal on the same principle towards criminals, is, in my opinion, to despise both revelation and reason.

Some, I am aware, find a difficulty because of Matt. 5:38, etc., and similar texts. This is due to a failure in seizing the bearing of these scriptures; for no believer would even insinuate that one part of God’s word contradicts another. Now we have seen Rom. 13 to teach distinctly
that the ruler is to be owned as bearing not the sword in vain; as an avenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil; in short, as God’s minister in earthly things, no less than Paul and Apollos were God’s ministers in heavenly things. This chapter formally sets the Christian in the place of subjection to the powers that be, asserts the authority which God has vested in them, and finally makes it a matter not of wrath merely, but of conscience to the believer. Matt. 5 is in quite another direction, but perfectly consistent with the former teaching. Here the Lord instructs His disciples in their individual path, not their relation to governors, and puts their calling to walk in grace, active or passive, in contrast with the Jews, who were called to act in the righteousness of the law. It is absurd to apply such a passage to a government or a worldly tribunal. If it did so apply, it would prove that magistrates ought to caress and reward every culprit, instead of punishing any.

1 Pet. 2 connects and enforces both truths within a narrow compass. On the one hand, we are exhorted, in vv. 13 and 14, to submit ourselves to

   every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

On the other hand, we are told that this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

   For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffetted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

The latter verses say as strongly of Matt. 5 as the former do of Rom. 13; they teach different but harmonious truths. And the present day is a time when we need to put each other in mind

   to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men (Titus 3:1, 2);

for there is no lack of them that

   walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities {2 Pet. 2:10}. 

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The Lord keep His own in the path of obedience.  

◆

THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

Is it right that a believer should be a politician?

This is the question before us. And to treat the matter clearly, let me state some points that belong to such a character, if they are not the very conception of it.

I understand, then, by a politician, one who takes a considerable and constant interest in the civil government of his own country, and of the world at large. He praises the rulers when he thinks they deserve it, and condemns them when, as he believes, they govern amiss. He lifts up his voice against injustice, fraud, deception, corruption, restraints on liberty. He will resist what is evil as far as he may by law. He exercises every civil privilege to which he is entitled to influence the government of his country. If opportunity were offered, he would take office and power in the world, and exercise it for his fellow-citizens' benefit.

I. How, then, can we tell whether this is right in a believer or not? By looking to Jesus as our pattern. His life is recorded to this end --

leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

Every thing He did was pleasing to His Father.

I do always those things that please Him (John 8:29; Matt. 17:5);

and, since every perfection was found in Jesus, whatever He did not do or sanction is not pleasing to God.

Was Jesus, then, a politician? Did He take any interest in the political government of His country? Did He pass judgment on the persons or measures of the civil rulers of Palestine? Did He stand up for the politically oppressed, and rebuke the political oppressor? Did He exercise authority of any kind in civil matters?

1. His conduct is the very reverse of the politician's. Had He been one, His political feelings must have been peculiarly drawn out by the circumstances of the day. In His days the last shadow of Jewish liberty departed, and His country was oppressed beneath the iron gauntlet of Rome. Such a state of things would have thrilled and agitated to its core the breast of the independent citizen, the lover of liberty. In the gospels we only gather the political changes of the land from the most distant

182. The Bible Treasury 7:171-174.
hints of the narrative.

2. When occasions occur on which, if politics be right for the Christian, the Savior must have declared Himself, He uniformly puts them aside. One of His hearers beseeches Him to engage his brother to divide an inheritance with him (Luke 12:13). Here the politician would have shown himself. Jesus refuses to listen to the matter, or exercise even the lowly power of an arbitrator.

Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you? {Luke 12:14}.

If the Christian’s duty is to take the office of judge or divider, Jesus ought to have taken it as our perfect example of what is right; but He thrusts away with a firm hand the political element of the question, and only warns the disciples against covetousness.

3. John the Baptist. His own forerunner, the greatest of women-born, is slain through the arts of an adulterous princess, and by the orders of an ungodly king. How does Jesus meet the event? Does He lift up His voice against the oppressor and murderer? No. John is imprisoned, but Jesus speaks not of the injustice; he is murdered, but He utters no cry against the cruelty or tyranny of Herod. John’s disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence by ship into a desert place apart (Matt. 14:10-13).

The case is solemnly announced to Him by John’s own followers. As pointedly He is silent. The Savior was no politician.

4. Take another incident.

There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1).

A politician would have been on fire at this national outrage. Religious antipathies met with political. Here was a field whereon to inveigh against Roman cruelty, and to rouse the Jews against a tyranny that trampled on the true religion. A pagan profaning with bloody hands the worship of the true God! What would the politicians of our day have said had a party of the queen’s troops fired into a dissenting chapel while they were at worship, and shot some dead while on their knees? Would not the politician account it almost treason to be calm?

What is Jesus’ reply? “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” The politics of the question are wholly passed by; the moral and spiritual views of the matter is alone regarded. This is an especial -- a most decisive case. Doubtless it made the blood of every native Jew boil with rage; but Jesus drops no word of indignation against the governor’s
crime, nor applauds the Galileans as martyrs for their country. Jesus, then, was no politician.

5. The politician must maintain his civil rights, not only (he would tell you) for his own sake, but to teach authority not to overstep its just boundaries. An unjust demand upon his purse in the way of tax he would esteem himself bound to resist. But how does Jesus act in such a case? The demand of the tribute-money is made upon Him (Matt. 17:24). He proves His exemption, but He works a miracle to pay the demand.

6. A question is raised by His countrymen, and referred for His decision --

whether it was lawful to give tribute to the Roman emperor or not

{Luke 20:22}.

This critical question must have drawn out the politician. Involved in it lay the right of the Romans to rule Judea, and impose taxes at their will. The oppressions of the governor were before His eyes. The Caesar that swayed the scepter was profligate, cruel, a murderer. Yet He bids the Jews pay tribute even to an idolator, and though the emperor might apply the money to the support of idolatry.

Jesus, then, was not a politician. Am I a disciple of His? {Neither, then, am I to be one.}

{It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master} {Matt. 10:25}.

If Jesus did not intermeddle in civil government, it is because such conduct would not be pleasing to God. Jesus neither acted politically Himself nor sanctioned it in others. To be engaged in politics, therefore, either as an actor or speaker, is no part of my duty as a Christian, {else the character of Jesus is not perfect}. But His perfection is my pattern; and therefore it becomes me to refuse, as pointedly as He did, to mingle in politics; for this is my calling -- to be {not of the world}, even as Jesus was {not of the world} {John 17:19}.

II. But did not Paul plead his Roman citizenship when they were about to scourge him? Did he not, when his life was in danger, appeal unto Caesar? True; and the Christian is permitted, therefore, when on his trial, to plead the provisions afforded by the law to save himself from death or injurious treatment. But neither of these points form part of the character of the politician, such as we have described him.

Take the strongest case. Paul and Silas are dragged by interested men before the rulers of Philippi. The magistrates, without any form of trial, scourge them and thrust them into prison {Acts 16:19-24}. What would a politician have done in such a case? Would he not have thought it due to his Roman citizenship to carry the cause to Rome, and to make an example of these
tyrannous magistrates, that all throughout the empire might know that the rights of a citizen were not to be trampled on? Does Paul do so? No. He requires, indeed, that the magistrates should not dismiss them privately, but come themselves and set them free. 183 But he exacts no apology; he lays no information against them. This would have been to act the politician, and this he does not do.

III. Many of the principles put forth in the epistles decide the present question.

1. What is the Christian's position? He is a “stranger and pilgrim upon earth” (Heb. 11:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:11). Then he has neither inclination, right, nor title to political power. By profession he surrenders it. Who may take part in the government of a country? Natives only -- not strangers. What has an Englishman living in France to do with the government of France? But he is, moreover, a pilgrim, and therefore has less reason still. If a stranger may not interfere in the policy of a foreign country, much less one who is not even residing in it, but merely passing through it on his way to another land. To meddle with politics, then, is to put off our character as strangers and pilgrims.

2. To take up the politician's character blinds the Christian as to his true place before God, and mars the testimony which he ought to give to the world. The witness of the Holy Spirit to the world (which, therefore, the believer is to take up and manifest by his word and life) is, that the world is sinful, because it believes not on Jesus, and that it is under condemnation, together with its prince, only spared from day to day by the patience of a long-suffering God (John 16). The Christian is to testify that the Lord Jesus is coming to execute upon it the due vengeance for its iniquity, and that therefore it becomes all to flee from the midst of it to Christ. All who do thus flee to Christ become part of His flock -- the Church, which is not of the world, but gathered out from it.

If, then, the Christian readily surrender the world's good things -- pleasures, privileges, title, -- he lives as becomes the child of faith, and, like Noah, condemns the world. Lot, escaping out of Sodom with nothing but his staff, bore a strong testimony that he believed that the wrath of God was about to descend on it. But how would the force of that testimony have been broken, if he had gone back into the city to purchase a house there? or had Noah, after declaring that in a year the flood would destroy the earth, bought an estate, would not the world have seen the

183. [This had in view the reputation of the gospel they preached. By the magistrates coming personally and releasing them, odium on the gospel was minimized.]
inconsistency at a glance? Would not men have said, “Noah himself does not believe his own message. Why, then, should we credit it? If he believed that the flood were so near, would he buy, and plant, and build?” Apply this, Christians, to politics.

3. At this point the prophetic question comes in. They who think that the Christian should act as the citizen of the world, imagine also (and this fresh error is necessary to render them consistent,) that the world is becoming better, and that in the happier times that are approaching the gospel will, by virtue of the means now employed, prove triumphant every where. Is this the truth? What saith the Scripture? What is the motto of our dispensation?

   Many are called, but few are chosen {Matt. 20:16}.

   God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people
   for His name (Acts 15:14).
And what is the close of it?

   In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to
   seducing spirits (1 Tim. 4:1).

   In the last days perilous times shall come (2 Tim. 3:1).

When the world

   shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon
   them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not
   escape (1 Thess. 5:3).

The world is evil, then, and will be evil when the Savior returns—will be caught in its iniquity, and smitten with His destroying judgments.

4. But if he may not rightfully use his political privileges as the private citizen, much less may he take office in the world. But it is said, “What! are not Christians the fittest persons to hold power?” No; they are of all the most unfit, for they have a Master to serve whose laws are quite opposed in principle to those of the world, and the magistrate must execute the world’s laws, as being the world’s servant. The law of the world, when at its highest perfection, is strict justice. But Christ has to His disciples repealed this, and taught us mercy as our rule (Matt. 5:38-48). Could any worldly government act out the sermon on the mount? When one of its citizens had been assaulted and robbed, could it dismiss the convicted robber, because the Savior commands us not to resist, or to avenge evil? Its principle is, “Punish according to the offense,” and by that it abides. If so, the Christian (if he understands his place), cannot be a judge or wield the power of the world’s law . . . God challenges vengeance as His own. “Vengeance is mine,” it is not, therefore, His saints’ office. But the magistrate is “a revenger to execute
wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4). He, then, who sees this can never consistently touch the civil sword. The saints shall indeed one day “judge the world” (1 Cor. 6:2); but now, because we are the sons of God, the world knoweth us not, even as it knew Him not (1 John 3:1).

5. The same thing might be shown from Paul’s rebuke of law-suits; for these seem matters of necessity almost, as men are apt to account them. How much more, then, would he have rebuked the seeking the world’s privileges or honors? Paul had to counsel the believers in the world’s loftiest, imperial city. He had to indite directions to those who lived amidst the perpetual strife for consulships, praetorships, qumstorships, and every kind of honor. Were the Christians, then, to engage in the struggle?

Mind not high things; but condescend to men of low estate {“go along with the lowly”} (Rom. 12:16).

Is not this decisive?

The epistles show the Christian is to conduct himself as a husband, a father, a master, a subject; but no rules are given to him as a magistrate or citizen. What must we infer, then? That God does not recognize Christians as acting for Him in either of these two conditions. The politician rebukes the real or supposed misgovernors of his country. The Christian is to “speak evil of no man, to be no brawler, but gentle” {Titus 3:2}. He is not to despise government or speak evil of dignities, or to bring against them railing accusation (2 Pet. 2:10; Jude). He is to “show all meekness unto all men.” The politician’s motto is, “Agitate, agitate, agitate!” the Christian’s,

that ye STUDY to be QUIET, and to do your own business {mind your own affairs} (1 Thess. 4:11).

6. To the extent that the Christian is a politician, his heart is engaged with the things of the world; a new thorn is planted in his breast to choke the good seed and make it unfruitful; a new weight is hung about his neck to hinder him in his race. To the extent that he is a politician, he comes under the censure passed upon the false prophets, --

They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them (1 John 4:5).

He is a soldier of Christ, who, contrary to his Captain’s will and pleasure, is

entangling himself with the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:3, 4).

It is the Christian’s condemnation to be living like others. How
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surprisingly strong is that word,

Are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Cor. 3:3).

... Let me exhort the believer, then, to surrender all interference in politics. “Let the dead bury their dead.” Your concern is the kingdom of God; your city, the one to come; your citizenship, in heaven. Refrain from the world’s politics, for Jesus was no politician. Refrain, else you mar your witness to the world, that it is evil and lying under judgment. Are you not a stranger and pilgrim? Then meddle not with that world which you left.

The world is ripening for judgment, and all your efforts cannot improve it in God’s sight. Gather out from its doomed streets as many as you can, but leave the city alone. Lot cannot mend Sodom; but Sodom can -- nay, will -- corrupt Lot. 184 ♦

JURIES AND JUDICIAL OATHS

♦ Q. In a paper entitled, “Remarks on the Gospel of Matthew, chap. 5:17-48,” July number of the Bible Treasury, the writer [i.e., W. Kelly] considers our Lord’s command, “Swear not at all,” as not referring to judicial oaths, which latter he holds that the Christian is not absolved from, the same being administered by a magistrate, in whom, he considers, the Christian is bound to acknowledge God. Now, is the Christian equally bound to obey the civil magistrate, when summoned as a jurymen to try a fellow-creature in a criminal matter, and to unite with his fellow-jurors in returning such a verdict as (if found guilty) would be the means of depriving the criminal of his life? True, it is the judge, not the jury, who passes sentence on the criminal, but the verdict of the latter determines the sentence of the former.

W. B.

A. A Christian could hardly refuse to serve. It is not the same thing as to be a judge. A juryman is only called on, by authority, to state his belief of a fact; and this owns the authority, which of God has a right and is bound to enquire and bear the sword. It is of all moment that Christians should not trench on God’s title to govern in the world, when pleading their Christian place. The magistrate’s place is not theirs, but because they know God in theirs, they are bound to own God in the place of authority in the world. There is this double sphere. They are in one, and have intelligence, and thus are called upon to own God to the other.

Refusal of oaths, as such, imposed by a magistrate is unlawful, I conceive, and unchristian, though individual conscience is to be respected. The same thing that would hinder my being a magistrate (because it is another sphere of God’s authority from that in which I am), would make me own that authority in that place. I do not see that the magistrate goes beyond it in calling twelve men to declare their estimate, as to a fact, of the evidence which can be produced, and this is a jury. The use made of the verdict is entirely the province of the judge. 185

J. N. Darby remarked:

In the beginning of {Deut.} chapter 5 (v. 1), there is the kind of oath that is different from voluntary swearing: “And if a soul sin and hear the voice of an oath” (that is, administered by the magistrate), “and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it” (i.e., give his evidence), “then he shall bear his iniquity.”

The Lord Himself said, “Swear not at all”; so we should not voluntarily take an oath, that is, of our own choice and will. But the Lord Himself when He stood before the high priest, the moment He was adjured, took the oath and answered when He had been silent before. It is not evil before a magistrate to swear, but good; it comes of evil otherwise. I should deny God in the magistrate if I did not answer when he adjured me. But to take an oath of my own will is to bring in God for nothing at all, that is, profanely. So the sin here in this verse is not uttering, that is, withholding evidence. In Ex. 21:6 (and twice in chapter 22:9, and once in chapter 22:8), “judges” is “elohim” -- God, and this because the magistrate is for God: “the powers that be are ordained by God.” We are to submit to them.

As for the manner of taking an oath, the king holds up his hand to take the oath: it is the commonest way of taking it. You are bound by that as much as by anything else. Whatever binds is enough. Only I am adjured by God, because the magistrate represents God. There are questions of swearing which present more difficulty; as for instance going into court and swearing to recover a debt for yourself. This is just a case of conscience; but I make no rules for anybody: people are not entitled to do so. 186

WAR

◆ Take again a peremptory call on a Christian to fight the battles of his country. If he knows his calling, can he join Christ’s name with such unholy strife? If right for one side, it is right for another, or the Christian becomes a judge instead of a pilgrim, and the name of the Lord would be thus compromised by brethren on opposite sides, each bound to imbrue their bands in one another’s blood, each instruments of hurrying to perdition souls ripening in sins. Is this Christ? Is it grace? It may suit the flesh and the world; but it is in vain to plead the word of God to justify a Christian’s finding himself engaged in such work. Will any one dare to call human butchery, at the command of the powers that be, Christ’s service? The true reason why people fail to see here is, either a fleshly mind, or an unworthy shrinking from the consequences. They prefer to kill another to please the world, rather than to be killed themselves to please Christ. But they should not ask or expect christian sympathy with their unbelief or worldly-mindedness. To sympathize with such is to share their failure in testimony to Christ. To deplore the thing while doing it does not mend matters, but is rather an unwitting testimony of our own lips against our own way. 187 ◆

◆ But for the Christian this world is not the scene of his interests, and why fight for what does not belong to him? If a Christian fight in and with the world, (save his own spiritual warfare), he is a mere mercenary. It is the duty of men, as such, to fight, if need be, and repel wrong; and if the Lord uses the world in order to put down revolution and make peace, the Christian may well look up and give thanks. It is a great mercy. But the grand truth as to this, which the believer has to get firmly settled in his own soul, is this, “they are not of the world.” But to what measure are they not of the world? “They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. In John 17 where our Lord repeats this wondrous word, He speaks in view of going to heaven, as if He no longer were on earth at all. Thus, in the spirit of one away from the world, He says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” A little before He had said, “Now I am no more in the world.” His going up to heaven is what gives its character to the Christian and to the church. A Christian is not merely a believer, but a believer called to the enjoyment of Christ while He is in heaven. And, as Christ our Head is out of the world, so the Christian is in spirit lifted above the world, and his business is to show the strength of his faith as above his mere natural feeling.


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Nothing makes a man look so foolish as having no side in this world. Christians do not like to be nonentities; they are apt to wish one way or another to have their power felt. But this is what the Lord delivers us from. 188

◆ Peter and John had before this asked, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you rather than to God, judge ye. Now they all join Peter in his still firmer reply, Obedience must be to God rather than men. This is the great practical principle of faith, as it was the uniform characteristic of Christ in all perfection here below. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God”: not miracles, not doing good, not teaching, not zeal, so much as unqualified and unfailing obedience rendered to God. Yet was Jesus a man approved of God unto them by powers and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in their midst beyond past example no less than present doubt. Yet was He anointed with the Holy Spirit and went about doing good, and healing all oppressed with the devil. The people too were astonished at His teaching, and all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and the very officers sent to apprehend Him declared with truth, Never man spake like this man.

And for burning jealousy for the Father’s glory His disciples could not but be reminded that it was written, The zeal of Thine house lath eaten Me up. But all these had their fit seasons. Obedience was always there, as unfaltering as constant, as lowly as perfect. Nor is there airy principle so essential for the Christian. He is sanctified of the Spirit unto Christ’s obedience as well as to the sprinkling of His blood {1 Pet. 1:2} (as the gospel is for faith-obedience, in contrast with enforcement of law), and his soul is purified by obeying the truth to unfeigned brotherly love; for God chose him to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth. Hence, though he may have sometimes to wait on God for light, obedience is the invariable place and duty of the believer. It is never a question of his rights; he is called to obey. He is bound to be subject to every human institution for the Lord’s sake, whether to the King as supreme or to rulers as sent by him, free but not having his freedom for a cloak of malice but as God’s bondmen. Hence, if collision come between God’s word and the ruler’s requirement, his path is clear: God must be obeyed, but in suffering perhaps, not resistance to authority. He is always to obey, though in some cases it may be God rather than men. Nothing is so humble, nothing so firm. Naturally the believer might be feeble and timid; obedience by grace gives strength and courage. He


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might be self-confident and unyielding: obedience gives distrust in self and meekness in doing God’s will. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for over”; even as sin is self-will or lawlessness, and its end judgment and perdition. Therefore is obedience not only an inalienable duty, bitt the true pathway of power, and the sure means of extrication front every snare of the enemy. So the blessed Lord defeated Satan; and so the apostles now lay bare the tremendous fact that the Jewish heads and people were as wholly beguiled by Satan, as they themselves were in simplehearted subjection to God. Once the elect nation had God in the world, as they had the Messiah in hope. Now that they had rejected their Messiah, they were not only without God like the Gentiles but the proved adversaries of God. They were only “men” like others; and “obedience must be to God rather than men.” 189 ◆

We will conclude with one more out of numerous possible quotations with the following from C. H. Mackintosh.

◆ God is now dealing in grace with the world, and so should His people, if they want to be like Him, and such they are called to be.

   Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).
And again,

   Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour (Eph. 5:1).

This is our model. We are called to copy our Father’s example, to imitate Him. He is not going to law with the world; He is not enforcing His rights with the strong hand of power. By-and-by, He will; but just now, in this day of grace, He showers His blessings and benefits, in rich profusion, upon those whose whole life is one of enmity and rebellion against Him.

All this is perfectly marvelous; but thus it is, and we, as Christians, are called to act on this morally glorious principle. It may be said, by some, “How could we ever get on in the world, how could we conduct our business, on such a principle as this?” We should be robbed and ruined; designing people would take advantage of us, if they knew that we would not go to law with them; they would take our goods, or borrow our money, or occupy our houses, and refuse to pay us. In short, we could


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never get on in a world like this, if we did not assert our rights and establish our claims by the strong hand of power. What is the law for but to make people behave themselves? Are not the powers that be ordained of God for the very purpose of maintaining peace and good order in our midst? What would become of society, if we had not soldiers, policemen, magistrates and judges? And if God has ordained that such things should be, why should not His people avail themselves of them? And not only so, but who so fit to occupy places of authority and power, or to wield the sword of justice as the People of God?"

There is, no doubt, very great apparent force in all this line of argument. The powers that be are ordained of God. The king, the governor, the judge, the magistrate are, each in his place, the expression of the power of God. It is God who invests each with the power which he wields; it is He who has put the sword into his hand, for the punishment of evildoers, and the praise of them that do well. We bless God with all our hearts for the constituted authorities of the country. Day and night, in private and in public, we pray for them {see 1 Tim. 2:2}. It is our bounden duty to obey and submit ourselves to them, in all things, provided always that they do not call upon us to disobey God, or do violence to conscience {Rom. 13; Acts 5:29}. If they do this, we must -- what? Resist? Nay, but suffer.

All this is perfectly plain. The world, as it now is, could not go on for a single day, if men were not kept in order by the strong hand of power. We could not live, or at least life would be perfectly intolerable, were it not that evil-doers are kept in terror of the glittering sword of justice. Even as it is, through lack of moral power on the part of those who bear the sword, lawless demagogues are allowed to stir up the evil passions of men to resist the law of the land, and disturb the peace, and threaten the lives and property of well-disposed and harmless subjects of the government.

But, admitting all this, in the fullest possible manner, as every intelligent Christian, every one taught by scripture, most assuredly will, it leaves wholly untouched the question of the Christian’s path in this world. Christianity fully recognizes all the governmental institutions of the country. It forms no part of the Christian’s business to interfere, in any one way, with such institutions. Wherever he is, whatever be the principle or character of the government of the country in which his lot is cast, it is his duty to recognize its municipal and political arrangements, to pay taxes, pray for the government, honor governors in their official capacity, wish well to the legislature and the executive, pray for the peace of the country, live in peace with all, so far as in him lies {Rom. 12:18}. 
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We see all this in the blessed Master Himself, in perfection, blessed be His holy Name for ever more! In His memorable reply to the crafty Herodians, He recognizes the principle of subjection to the powers that be:

Render to Caesar the things that be Caesar’s; and to God the things that be God’s (Luke 20:25).

And not only so, but we find Him also paying tribute, although personally free. They had no right to demand it of Him, as He plainly shows to Peter; and it might be said, “Why did He not appeal?” Appeal! Nay; He shows us something quite different. Hear His exquisite reply to His mistaken apostle,

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for me and thee (Matt. 17).

And here we get back, with increased moral force, to our thesis, namely, the Christian’s path in this world. What is it? He is to follow his Master -- to imitate Him in all things. Did He assert His rights? Did He go to law? Did He try to regulate the world? Did He meddle with municipal or political matters? Was He a politician? Did He wield the sword? Did He consent to be a judge or a divider, even when appealed to, as we say, to arbitrate about property? Was not His whole life one of complete self-surrender, from first to last? Was He not continually giving up until, at the cross, He gave up His precious life as a ransom for many?

We shall leave these questions to find their answer deep down in the heart of the Christian reader, and to produce their practical effect in his life. We trust that the foregoing line of truth will enable him to interpret aright such passages as Deut. 13:9, 10. Our opposition to idolatry, and our separation from evil, in every shape and form, while not less intense and decided, most surely, than that of Israel of old, is not to be displayed in the same way. The church is imperatively called upon to put away evil, and evil-doers, but not after the same fashion as Israel. It is no part of her duty to stone idolaters and blasphemers, or burn witches. The church of Rome has acted upon this principle; and even Protestants -- to the shame of Protestantism -- have followed her example. The church is not

190. The fact that the tribute money may have been for the temple does not touch the principle set forth in the text.

191. The burning of Servetus, in 1553, for his theological opinions, is a frightful blot upon (continued...
called — nay, she is positively and peremptorily forbidden to use the
temporal sword. It is a flat denial of her calling, character and mission
to do so. When Peter, in ignorant zeal and carnal haste, drew the sword
in defense of his blessed Master, he was at once corrected by his
Master’s faithful word, and instructed by his Master’s gracious act:

Put up thy sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword
shall perish by the sword {John 18:11}. And having thus reproved the act of His mistaken though well-meaning
servant, He undid the mischief by His gracious touch. “The weapons of
our warfare,” says the inspired apostle,

are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of
strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that
exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into
captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10: 4,
5).
The professing church has gone all astray as to this great and most
important question. She has joined herself with the world, and sought to
further the cause of Christ by carnal and worldly agency. She has
ignorantly attempted to maintain the Christian faith by the most shameful
denial of Christian practice. The burning of heretics stands as a most
fearful moral blot upon the page of the church’s history. We can form
no adequate idea of the terrible consequences resulting from the notion
that the church was called to take Israel’s place and act on Israel’s
principles. 192 It completely falsified her testimony, robbed her of her
entirely spiritual and heavenly character, and led her upon a path which
ends in Rev. 17 and 18. Let him that readeth understand. 193 ♦

191. (…continued)
the Reformation, and upon the man who sanctioned such an unchristian proceeding. True,
the opinions of Servetus were fatally and fundamentally false. He held the Arian heresy,
which is simply blasphemy against the Son of God. But to burn him, or any one else for
false doctrine was a flagrant sin against the spirit, genius and principle of the gospel, the
deplorable fruit of ignorance as to the essential difference between Judaism and
Christianity.

192. It is one thing for the church to learn from the history of Israel, and another thing
altogether to take Israel’s place, act on Israel’s principles, and appropriate Israel’s
promises. The former is the church’s duty and privilege; the latter has been the church’s
fatal mistake.

193. Notes on Deuteronomy, London: Morrist, pp. 152-158. He has many more such
notes in this book.

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Chapter 2.4

The Future Godly Jewish Remnant and the Imprecations in the Psalms

Long ago, Wm. Trotter addressed this matter in chapter 15 of his often reprinted work, *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects.*

The Martyred Remnant

*With Remarks on the Earthly Calling of Israel and the Heavenly Calling of the Church*

By the martyred remnant we mean those Israelites, who, in the coming crisis, will at first form a part of that Jewish remnant, whose experience and destinies were considered in our last; but who, instead of surviving the final troubles and entering on the earthly blessedness of millennial times, will be called to glorify God by a martyr’s death. For those who do thus suffer, a higher destiny than that of the spared remnant is reserved. They will pass through death and resurrection into heavenly joys; and as far as the government of the earth is concerned, they will, in common with the Church and with Old Testament saints, share that glory with Christ. Of all this the ensuing pages will furnish Scripture evidence; but in order that the subject may be clearly presented, it is necessary in the first place to direct attention to the marked contrast that exists between the Church and the remnant: nor can this be understood, unless we apprehend the difference between Israel’s earthly and the


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Church’s heavenly calling -- the earthly hopes of Israel, and the heavenly hopes of the Church.

That which, above all else, marks the difference between the Church and Israel, and indeed we may say between the Church and the entire population of the millennial earth, is, that the Church is blessed in Christ and with Christ: Israel and the millennial nations will be blessed by Him and under His sway. The Church is Christ’s body -- His bride, and participates thus in His exaltation to be head over all things both in heaven and on earth. As the body partakes with the head of all the vital energies by which the whole is actuated, so does the Church even now partake with Christ of His risen life, and receive from Him the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and as the bride participates in all that is possessed by her lord, so is the Church, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, to participate in His inheritance of all things. Her oneness with Christ is the great distinction of the Church.

There are many things in which those who compose the Church differ not from saints of other periods, whether past or future. True believers between the day of Pentecost and the descent of Jesus into the air, constitute “the church”; and these, in common with Old Testament saints and millennial saints, are chosen by God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Christ, quickened and regenerated by the Holy Ghost; they are all preserved by almighty grace, and destined beyond doubt to bear in resurrection the image of the heavenly, even as in nature they have all borne the image of the earthly. In these things the Church differs not from other saints. That which distinguishes the Church is her oneness with Christ.

At that day ye shall know [here, upon earth] that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

Of none but the Church could these words be spoken. Of no others could it be said,

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:22).

Israel and the nations in millennial times will constitute “the world,” who, by seeing the Church in the same glory as Christ, are to know that she is the object of the same love -- loved of the Father as Christ Himself is loved. Israel and the nations will be happy, Israel pre-eminently so, under the reign of Christ and His glorified saints; but no distinction can
be more marked, no contrast more striking, than that which exists between the Bride of the Lamb and the nations over which she, with her Lord and Bridegroom, is to reign.

Israel’s distinctive calling is to earthly blessings. The proof of this has been exhibited in a previous part of this work. We only now recall the fact to the minds of our readers. Had Israel been obedient, wealth, power, fame, and prosperity, would have been the tokens of God’s approval of their ways. By their disobedience, their idolatry, and especially their rejection of Christ, they have come under the inflictions of God’s wrath, and that wrath has been manifested against them in all the heavy temporal judgments which have overtaken them. We refer now to God’s dealings with them nationally, in His providential government of the earth. As individuals they are, of course, in common with all men, amenable to “eternal judgment”; and, if not saved “by grace” “through faith,” that judgment will result in eternal ruin. But it is with God’s dispensational dealings that we are now occupied; and Scripture leaves no room for doubt that, in this world, the wrath of God against Israel has been, is, and will yet be, manifested by the infliction of temporal calamities. Prophecy, on the other hand, proves that God’s approbation of Israel, when nationally restored and saved, will be manifested in abundance of temporal prosperity and blessing. Israel’s is an earthly calling: and with Israel, consequently, adversity on earth is a token of God’s displeasure -- prosperity a sign of His favor and His smile.

The Church having no present inheritance, except as one with Christ in heaven, present earthly trials and sufferings are not to her tokens of divine disapproval. Nay, they are as much her proper portion with Christ on earth, as the glory given by the Father to Christ, and given by Him to the Church, is her proper portion with Him in heaven. Hence the sufferings of the Church are her glory.

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church (Col. 1:24).

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (Phil. 3:10).

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also (Rom. 5:3).

Christ esteemed it His highest glory that God should be glorified in Him in His endurance of the cross (see John 14:31); and the Church, being by the Spirit likeminded with Christ, esteems as her highest glory that she
should be “counted worthy to suffer for his name.”

Israel’s calling and that of the Church being so different, it follows of necessity that their hopes also differ. Christ is the hope both of the one and of the other; but He is the hope of the Church as the One who will descend into the air, and receive her to Himself, and to the full consummation of her blessedness with Himself in heaven: He is “the hope of Israel,” as the One who will further descend to the earth, delivering them from the yoke of the Gentiles, executing judgment on all who have oppressed them, and setting up on the earth His glorious kingdom, of which Jerusalem is to be the center, and in which Israel, forgiven and purified, is to enjoy the most conspicuous, distinguished place. Such are the hopes held out to Israel by the Word of God -- hopes which, in their fulfilment, are inseparable from the execution of utter, destroying judgment on all who exalt themselves against God and oppress His people. “The day of vengeance” on God’s adversaries is to be the day of Israel’s deliverance, and the immediate prelude to Israel’s exaltation and full blessing under Messiah’s reign. It is impossible, therefore, for an Israeliite, as such, to desire or invoke Jehovah’s interposition, or Messiah’s coming, for the fulfilment of Israel’s national hopes, without invoking or desiring judgment on the wicked. The hopes of the Church, on the contrary, are quite unconnected with the thought of judgment on the wicked. She is aware indeed that judgment on the ungodly will ensue on her own removal from the earth: still, that for which she waits is not a state of earthly blessedness which judgment on the wicked is to introduce, but her own translation from amid the scene of evil to meet her Lord in the air, and to be, “for ever with the Lord.” This is a hope which the Church, or the saint, can both cherish and express without a thought of the wicked, or of the judgments to be executed upon them. These judgments succeed, and probably at some distance of time, the descent of Christ into the air; they are not the necessary preliminaries of that event, and that event itself is the Church’s hope.

As to the true scriptural hopes of Israel, they are at present in abeyance. So long as the Church is being gathered by the Holy Ghost for her heavenly hopes and heavenly portion, Israel will remain under the judicial blindness which has rested upon that people for eighteen centuries. When the Church has been completed and removed to heaven, and God begins to turn His compassions toward Israel, it is by the remnant only, not by the nation at large, that the true hopes of Israel will be cherished. It is by the remnant that the sins of the nation will be bewailed and confessed -- by them that the coming of their Messiah in judgment and glory will be invoked. The nation, alas! will be as far as
ever from having “a broken and a contrite spirit.” They will still be justifying themselves and despising others; and instead of desiring or invoking the coming of their Messiah, they will have received as their Messiah “the son of perdition!” Deceived by Antichrist at the first, and oppressed by him afterwards, they will persist in their rebellion against God and in their rejection of Christ; and, as shown in our last, they will themselves aid in persecuting their brethren, the godly remnant, many of whom will suffer even unto death. Those who are thus martyred will at first be undistinguishable from the spared remnant. They will have the same calling, the same exercises, the same trials, the same hopes. It is possible indeed that they may make more rapid progress than their brethren; and as the most faithful and decided are likely to be the first victims of persecution, it is probable that such will be their character. But it is their death rather than their life by which they will be distinguished from their brethren who survive the crisis; and as a martyr’s death prevents their sharing the remnant’s deliverance and subsequent earthly millennial blessedness, their faithfulness will be rewarded by a martyr’s heavenly crown, and in this respect they will resemble the Church itself and be associated therewith. But as to their standing, calling, experience, trials, prayers, and hopes while on earth, they have part with their brethren who survive the tribulation, and enter on the earthly blessedness of the millennial reign.

It is well, ere proceeding, to gather up the points we have touched upon, and to present at a glance the differences between the Jewish remnant as a whole, and the Church of God now forming for association with Christ in His heavenly inheritance and glory.

(1) The Jewish remnant, unlike the Church, will recognize the distinction between Jew and Gentile. For the Church this distinction is done away.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11).

But when the Church has been caught up, and the Jewish nation and Jewish remnant are again in question before God, it is evident that the distinction between Jew and Gentile is again in force. Apart from Christianity and the Church, the distinction even now exists. The Jews are given up for their sins to Gentile oppression, and Jerusalem is to be “trodten down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” These times will not have quite terminated when the voice of
the Jewish remnant begins to be heard. You cannot listen to that voice, whether in the prophets or in the psalms, without finding that it recognizes to the full, what for the Church has no existence, namely, the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles.

(2) Unlike the Church, the remnant does not possess the knowledge of salvation as an existing enjoyment. Salvation, as understood by a Jew, is not simply the salvation of the soul as now known to us, but the restoration to him and to his people of God’s manifested favor and protection. This the remnant cannot enjoy while the mass of the nation are ungodly, and either in league with their ungodly Gentile rulers, or by them trodden under foot. Accordingly, those who compose the remnant are represented in prophecy as using language indicative, indeed, of penitence -- concern for God’s glory -- confidence in God’s promises to their fathers, and in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -- as well as expressive of ardent desires for pardoning mercy and the hope of its being bestowed; and for that very reason their language is incompatible with any present assurance of salvation.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God [Rom. 5:1].

In whom we have redemption through his blood [Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14].

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet ... who hath delivered us ... and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son [Col. 1:12, 13].

Such is the language of the Church. With the remnant “have” and “hath” are changed into “shall” and “will.”

He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19, 20).

Our Lord says, speaking of those who received Him on His first appearance,

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life [John 8:12].

Who is among you [says the prophet] that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God (Isa. 50:10).

Such is the prophetic description of the remnant. Even at a very advanced stage of their experience, when they confess

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand.

and yet can add,
But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared --
even then, it is the hope of forgiveness, not its actual enjoyment, which
they thus express. They speak of waiting for the Lord "more than they
that watch for the morning", and the answer by which they are
encouraged in this posture of expectancy is,

Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy,
and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel
from all his iniquities (Psa. 130:3-8).

(3) The remnant, unlike the Church, regard the sufferings through which
they pass as an expression of God's wrath against their sins. Their
sufferings will, no doubt, be extreme. "It is the time of Jacob's trouble,
but he shall be delivered out of it" {see Jer. 30:7}. Of that period our
Lord says, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh
be saved" {Matt. 24:22}. It is in the midst of these unparalleled troubles
that the souls of the remnant will be exercised. It is for righteousness'
sake that they will suffer, both at the hands of their fellow-countrymen
and of the Gentile oppressors: but being a part of Israel, and having
through grace become sensible of Israel's sin, and of the justice of God's
dealings with Israel, they will regard both their own sufferings and those
of the nation as a part of the righteous retribution with which God visits
them -- the dregs, so to speak, of the cup of trembling and of wrath,
which it is the lot of the nation to drink for their iniquities. his double
light, in which their trials may be viewed, gives a very peculiar character
to the experiences of the remnant. Sometimes, when their enemies and
persecutors are in view, there is the expression of conscious rectitude on
the part of the remnant, and an appeal to God to plead for them as
sufferers in His righteous cause. At other times, when their own sins and
the sins of the nation are under review, there are the most touching
confessions of sin, and the acknowledgment that all they suffer is but
what they have deserved at God's hands. Psa. 44 is a remarkable instance
of the former. Isa. 59 and Micah 7 are striking examples of the latter. In
the psalm, the remnant, having glanced at the former deliverances which
God wrought for Israel, and owned Him as their only present strength or
resource, turn to the melancholy proofs of His having forsaken them, and
cry,

But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth
with our armies. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy . . .
. Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the
head among the people.

These are their circumstances. "All this is come upon us," they proceed;
yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy
covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death {Psa. 44:9-19}.

All their sufferings, whether at man’s hands or at the hand of God, have not induced them to forsake God and participate in the fearful idolatry around. Nay, more, it is for their refusal to participate therein that they suffer at the hands of men. All this they plead before God.

If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Then they invoke the Lord’s interposition --

Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and oppression? . . . Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies’ sake {Psa. 44:20-26}.

Here, evidently, the thoughts of the remnant rest on their sufferings at man’s hand for their faithfulness to God; and it seems inexplicable to them that God also should continue to cast them off. In the other passages, the eye of the remnant is upon their own sins and those of the nation, and they can account thus for God’s hiding His face. After a fearful picture of the moral state of the nation -- their feet running to evil making haste to shed innocent blood -- their thoughts, thoughts of iniquity -- wasting and destruction in their paths -- the remnant are heard to say:

Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness . . . We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering, from the heart words of falsehood.

That this passage presents the utterance of the Jewish remnant in days to come, is evident from the fact that it proceeds to exhibit the answer to their cry, in the coming of Christ to execute judgment on His adversaries, and commence His glorious reign on the earth {Isa. 59:9-21}.

In Micah 7 there is evinced an equally deep and solemn sense of the
evil state of the nation, along with the firm expectation of approaching deliverance, and meek submission meanwhile to the Lord’s chastening hand.

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness [Micah 7:8, 9].

(4) Unlike the Church, the remnant desire and ask the destruction of their enemies, and exult in the anticipation thereof. It is thus that their promised deliverance is to be effected, and knowing this from God's word, they plead for its speedy accomplishment. This has been already touched upon, and will demand yet further consideration by and by.

(5) While the Church looks forward to heavenly glory, and her introduction to it when she meets the Lord in the air, the remnant anticipate the rest and quiet and blessedness of the earthly department of Christ’s millennial kingdom. They are “the meek” who are to “inherit the earth.” In Old Testament prophecy, the invariable sequel to the sorrows and trials of the remnant, is the earthly blessing of the nation under Messiah’s reign.

In turning to what is revealed respecting the martyred portion of the remnant of Israel, we shall find that there are three books of Scripture -- The Psalms, Daniel, and the Revelation -- which treat specially of this subject. As to Daniel, its testimony may be at once referred to. It so manifestly treats of Jewish subjects, that our readers will naturally look for information there. But as to the Psalms and Revelation, it may be needful, ere quoting them on our present subject, to suggest some considerations as to the general character of their contents.

No book of Scripture, perhaps, is more prized by the believer, or of more real use to him spiritually, than the book of Psalms. No wonder that it should be so. As has been said,

What sorrows, trials, temptations, groans, prayers, meditations, joys, songs, shouts, and praises do we listen to in this wondrous book. It is the seat of the affections, -- the heart, as it were, of the whole inspired volume. And how many exercises of spirit has it awakened in the saints? How has it soothed and raised the hearts of the Lord’s people, regulated the motions there, and, like the prophet’s minstrel, enabled them to take their easy and happy course again! Such has been, and still is, every day, the gracious ministry, under the Holy Ghost, of this harp of David, this harp of
many strings. 195

These sentiments must find an echo in every Christian’s breast. But this is not all. It is not the variety of the contents of this book which alone commends it to the believer. In all this variety there is what continually reminds of Jesus; and this is its great excellence -- the secret of the charm with which it binds to its pages the eye and heart of the Christian.

As has been said again:

How largely has the Spirit of God traced here the ways of the heart of Jesus! His cries, and tears, and praises, His solitary hours, His troubles from man, and His consolations in God, -- all these are felt here in their depth and power. What was passing in His soul, when He was silent as to man, led as a lamb to the slaughter; what they who then surrounded Him did not hear, we listen to in this wondrous book. His thoughts of men, His worship of God, with all the incense of His various and perfect affections, are understood here. The New Testament tells us that He prayed and sung, but this book gives us His prayers and songs themselves. And besides this, the whole mystery of Jesus, from the womb to the throne of glory, is rehearsed here in its joys and sorrows. We trace it as far back as the “volume of the book.” We read of Him surrendering Himself before the foundation of the world. The deep silence of eternity is broken by His words, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” And from thence we see Him taking up our nature, hanging in infancy on His mother’s breast; then in His life of shame, and grief, and poverty; and in His last sorrows, -- the treason of His companion, the lying of the false witnesses, the deriding of enemies, the spear and the nails and the vinegar, and above all, the forsaking of God. This is all heard and felt here. And then we follow Him in His joys and songs in resurrection, and witness His ascension, and His welcome and honors in heaven. And at last we watch His return from thence to the judgment of the nations, and to His glorious headship of Israel and the whole earth. All this is told out in the Psalms, not merely, as it were, with pen and ink, but in living lines, in those fragments of the heart of the Lord which this book has gathered up. 196

No wonder, we may again say, that the Christian should find such refreshment and edification in the perusal of the Psalms.

But while this is true, and our Christian readers can bear witness to

195. J. G. Bellett. Short Meditations on the Psalms; Chiefly in their Prophetic Character.
196. Ibid.
it, where is there a Christian who has not met with passages in the Psalms which he felt it impossible to adopt as the utterance of his own heart. The book is generally read as though its prayers and cries, its anticipations and thanksgivings, might properly be adopted by any believer of the present dispensation. As to much contained in the book this is doubtless true: but even those who thus read it, would hesitate to say of the wicked -- yea, of any wicked persons, whatever --

Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell:
for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them (Psa. 55:15).

Every Christian must feel that the Spirit of God does not lead him to such prayers and anticipations as the following:

Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth . . . Let them melt away
as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot
his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth,
let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a
woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel
the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both
living, and in his wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth
the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked
(Psa. 58:6-10).

Christian reader, are these the anticipations which the Spirit of God leads you to cherish? We dare answer for you -- No! You may not, indeed, have seen in other parts of Scripture the solution of the difficulty which such passages present. But you have felt the difficulty, and have wondered how such imprecatons can be interspersed among such expressions of fervent, devoted piety as are found in the verses which immediately precede or follow the language under consideration.

And has it never occurred to you, dear Christian readers, that in the gradual unfolding of God's purposes, dispensations have run, are running, and have yet to run their course, so widely different in their character, that what is simple obedience and for the glory of God in one dispensation, may be entirely foreign to the character of another? Abraham's slaughter of the confederated kings -- Moses' breaking of the tables of the law, and execution of three thousand idolatrous Israelites by the swords of the Levites -- Joshua's extermination of the Canaanish tribes -- and Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord -- were all acts of devoted faithfulness, and as such, acceptable to God under the dispensations in which they took place. But what intelligent Christian would think of serving God thus under the present economy? When the king of Israel sent a captain of fifty to take Elijah, and he, quailing before the well-known power of the prophet, implored him, saying, "Thou man
of God, the king hath said, Come down”; the prophet could answer him, “If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.” The prophet, we say, could answer thus; “And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty” (2 Kings 1:9, 10). All this was in harmony with the spirit and character of the dispensation then existing; but when the disciples of our Lord would have imitated Elijah’s example, how did He receive the proposal? “Lord,” said they, “wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:54-56). Here is the full proof, that what God sanctions under one dispensation, may be so diverse from the spirit and character of another, as to be the subject of rebuke to those who desire to imitate it.

This principle of the difference of dispensations is the real solution of the difficulty which all feel with regard to the imprecatory passages in the Psalms. Precious as are its contents, and available (as all Scripture is) for the present use of the believer, it is not in applying to himself all that is written there, that the true use of the book will be found. “This book,” as has been well observed,

may therefore be, as it ever has been, the companion of the saints, where often almost everything else would have been intrusive and uncongenial. But still, in using it, we should remember, that having the Holy Ghost in us, our experiences are to flow from that . . . What joy of hope, what largeness of understanding, what strength of faith, should be ours! what sense of the divine love, when the Holy Ghost Himself is shedding that love abroad in our hearts! And as this is the due experience of the saints, as far as the book of Psalms reflects the heart of a righteous Jew merely, the saint now has experiences beyond it or beside it. The Psalmist says, for instance, “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments,” -- the saint now is to prove, that “perfect love casteth out fear,” and that he has “boldness in the day of judgment.” The Psalmist prays, “Let me not be ashamed of my hope,” -- the saint is taught to know that “hope maketh not ashamed.” In ways like these, the saint now passes beyond the Psalmist; for we are now, in the strength of the Holy Ghost in us, to seek to walk in the warmer, brighter light of the New Testament. In Psalms 112 all earthly prosperity is promised absolutely to the godly man: but the apostle, quoting that psalm (2 Cor. 9:8-11) only states God’s power to give prosperity, and prays for a measure of it on behalf of the saints at Corinth. So again Peter quotes Hosea: but he does not go on with Hosea, to promise the saints now, as the prophet promises Israel, that they shall have all blessing in the earth – but he exhorts them to
behave as those who are only strangers and pilgrims while they remain on the earth (cp. 1 Pet. 2:10 with Hos. 2:21-23).

All this is perfect in its season, but strikingly intimates a difference in heavenly and earthly calling, promises, and hopes. And the going beyond the book of Psalms in our experiences, is like this going beyond the books of the prophets in our hopes and calling. For the hopes and calling of "the one body in Christ" is the mystery hid from ages and generations. Earthly things and earthly people are the themes of the prophets. The full mind of Him who taught them, and who knew the end from the beginning, may at times overflow its proper channel; but still, the earth, its people, its judgments, and its glory are the due theme of the prophets."

Believers, according to the wisdom given them, may differently perceive the notices of the heavenly things in the Scriptures of old. We may expect differences in spiritual discernment. But the Church, which is being gathered for inheritance in heaven as one with the Beloved, is not to be expected to come within the mind of the Spirit in the Psalmist more largely than in the prophets. Saints find their sympathies in this book, and use it for their spiritual comfort, as the words of Jehovah to Moses and to Joshua are used for them by the Holy Ghost in the apostle (see Heb. 13:5). But the calling and glory of the Church is not the subject of the book. The Jerusalem of the Psalmist is not that heavenly Jerusalem which is to carry the glory, and to bear the throne by and by, but the Jerusalem of the land of Israel. And the people in this book, generally, are her people, or that remnant in Israel, which the prophecies of Scripture so largely recognize. The prophets again and again tell us the fact, that this remnant will be brought through much exercise of soul. The Psalms give us this exercise itself. So the evangelists tell us of the fact of the Lord being much in prayer and solitude with God, while the Psalms give us His prayers and meditations themselves. These simple considerations may easily prepare us for hearing the voice of the true Israel of God in this book. They will, in their day, be led to find in it what will suit the condition of their souls, from the circumstances into which their obedience to God will bring them. For the Spirit of Christ, in full sympathy with them, has indited these Psalms for their use in that day. 197

These sentiments appear to us of the utmost importance for rightly understanding this precious portion of God's precious book. They afford, in the hands of the Spirit, the true key to unlock its difficulties and to unfold and apply its treasures. Let us now, commending these remarks to the spiritual judgment of our readers, turn to one of the Psalms (79)

197. Ibid.
which undoubtedly refers to the martyred Jewish remnant in days to come.

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy
temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaPsa. The
dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the
fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the
earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about
Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them {Psa. 79:1-3}.

This is not a mere invasion of Judea and Jerusalem by hostile armies --
it is a persecution of God's servants -- of God's saints -- persecution to
death -- yea, to the death of such multitudes that we read of their blood
being shed like water round about Jerusalem! This could scarcely be the
capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar -- as we know from Jeremiah
that the remnant of that day were preserved and well treated. Besides,
the application of this psalm is to an epoch long subsequent to
Jerusalem's first desolation. "How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for
ever" {Psa. 79:5}? is a plea which could not be urged when Israel was
just beginning to be visited by God's wrath. "Might it not apply, then,
to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and the Roman armies?" To this
we answer, No; and that for two reasons. First, the Christians of that
day, as is well known, escaped the horrors of the siege by a timely
escape to Pella. Secondly, if they had been there and suffered in the
siege, or afterwards, they could not have used the language of this
psalm, such as,

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and
upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name {Psa.
79:6}.

The prayer of persecuted Christians would have been a prayer for mercy
on their adversaries, not for vengeance. "May not the psalm express,
then, the feelings of unconverted Jews either at that or some other
time?" To this we reply, Do unconverted people, whether Jews or
Gentiles, use such language as follows? --

O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender
mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us,
O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us,
and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake {Psa. 79:8, 9}.

This is not the prayer of unconverted people: and yet it is not to
Christianity as now known to us that they are converted. Consider their
next words:

"Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him
be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging of the
Chapter 2.4: The Remnant and the Impeccations

blood of thy servants which is shed \{Psa. 79:10\}.

How different this from “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”: or from Stephen’s cry, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

Nor is it merely the revenging of blood already shed which they implore: there are those still living, who are in the extremity of distress, for whom deliverance is sought.

Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord \{Psa. 79:11, 12\}.

It is evidently the cry of the surviving remnant when their brethren have been slain. They ask that the one class may be avenged, that the other may be delivered; and counting on deliverance, notwithstanding the depths of their distress, they anticipate the rest, and triumph which are to succeed.

So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations \{Psa. 79:13\}.

The psalm we have now examined agrees throughout with all the marks by which we have seen that the Jewish remnant, as a whole, will be distinguished from the Church, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. It shows, moreover, that a large portion of the remnant will be slain as martyrs for God. Their death excludes them from participating, with their brethren who survive, in the earthly rest and blessedness of Messiah’s reign. But are they losers by this? By no means. A martyr’s death is for them the passage to heavenly glory, and to association with Christ when He shall reign over the earth.

Of this we have an intimation in Dan. 7. Our readers will remember the testimony of this chapter as to the character of Gentile rule in its last form, that of the dominion of “the little horn,” whose blasphemies bring on the judgment which transfers the dominion of the whole earth from the four Gentile monarchies to which in succession it has been confided, to the Son of man, and to “the saints of the most High.” It will be found that in v. 18 the words just quoted are in the margin rendered “the saints of the high ones,” -- \textit{i.e.} “the high things, or places.” It is really “the saints of the high places” -- the heavenly saints. Of the little horn it is said,

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time
came that the saints possessed the kingdom {Dan. 7:22}.

It has been common to suppose that the Church is here referred to; and there can be no doubt that the Church will possess the glory of which this passage speaks. But the Church is not the subject of Daniel's prophecy, any more than of the Psalms; and there is no need to confine the title of heavenly saints, or saints of the high places, to the Church. No one can question that Old Testament saints, who lived and died before the Church was founded, or so much as the foundation of it laid, in the death and resurrection of Jesus, will share with the Church the glory of reigning with Christ in His kingdom. And so of the saints whose blood will, in the approaching crisis, be shed around Jerusalem like water. They will be “saints of the high places”; owning the name of the Most High God in heaven, while the earth is yet in the hands of those who deny His claims and attempt to usurp His place. It will be for resistance to such blasphemous pretensions that they will suffer; and though they may not have looked for any portion for themselves above that of being delivered by Messiah's coming, and blessed under Messiah's reign, they will, in result, share the glories of that reign. When the Ancient of days comes, judgment will be “given to the saints of the high places.”

We quite admit that if Dan. 7 had been the only passage which treated of the subject, we should have had less confidence in applying its statements to the martyred Jewish remnant. But having seen in Psa. 79 that there will be such a remnant; having found in Dan. 7 that the little horn will “make war with the saints” -- “wear out the saints of the Most High” -- and that at the close of his blasphemous career these saints of the Most High, or of the high places, will “take the kingdom,” and have “judgment given unto them”; we turn to the book of Revelation, and there find the full confirmation of what is taught with less precision in the Old Testament. Want of space compels us to leave for an ensuing number the remarks we had intended to make on the book of Revelation as a whole. We must now confine ourselves to the passages in that book, which, as bearing on the subject before us, we are about to present to the reader.

In Rev. 6:9, we have, on the opening of the fifth seal, intimations of a time of persecution, in that the prophet of Patmos sees

under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of
God, and for the testimony which they held.

Unlike Stephen, or our Lord, who cried for mercy on their murderers, the martyrs under the fifth seal ask for vengeance, and herein resemble
the martyrs of the Jewish remnant, after whose destinies we are now inquiring.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? {Rev. 6:10}. 

Certainly this is more like a Jewish than a Christian appeal. In its place, however, it is perfect, and fully owned of God.

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled {Rev. 6:11}. 

Here are saints, martyrs, crying to be avenged on the dwellers on earth, but who are told that they must wait yet a little for the time of vengeance, until certain others to be slain, as they have been, have suffered death.

Rev. 11 affords the prophetic history of the “two witnesses,” of whom the Lord says:

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth {Rev. 11:3}. 

The place of their testimony is Jerusalem; for to what other place does this description apply? --

the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified {Rev. 11:8}. 

That Jerusalem was the place of our Lord’s crucifixion, we need not affirm; and the literal Jerusalem in which our Lord was literally crucified is, in Isa. 1:10, “spiritually called Sodom.” As to its being spiritually called Egypt, the statements made as to the two witnesses show the most marked resemblance between its state, at the time of their testimony, and the state of Egypt during Moses’ ministry and Pharaoh’s reign. We are well aware that numbers of learned Christian men take the days in this chapter for years, and regard the sackcloth testimony of the two witnesses as symbolical of the testimony borne by the Waldenses and Albigenses, and others, during the dark ages; and who believe, in consequence, that their testimony is long since finished, and that their death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven in the sight of their enemies long since took place! Into the detailed discussion of such views we are not about to enter. But we would put it to those of our readers who are conversant with the history of the dark ages, whether anything in the humble path of Christ’s witnesses in those days can be made to
correspond with what is here affirmed of the two witnesses?

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth,
and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he
must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven,
that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over
waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all
plagues, as often as they will {Rev. 11:5, 6}.

Let each day be made into a year -- let the two witnesses stand for many
thousands -- let the language in which their power and their actings are
described be understood as ever so figurative; still, what is there in the
past history of the present dispensation to correspond in any degree with
the predictions of this chapter? We are bold to answer, Nothing! and
more than this, we are bold to affirm, that had there been among the
Waldenses and Albigenses anything analogous to shutting heaven that it
might not rain, or to causing fire to proceed from their mouths to destroy
their enemies, or to smiting the earth with all plagues, they would so far
have deviated from the true spirit of Christianity, and failed to be faithful
witnesses for Christ. Alas! there was among them sometimes the
forgetfulness of that word of Christ, “they that take the sword shall
perish by the sword”; but it issued in the fulfilment of Christ's
declaration, not in their being proved invincible, as the two witnesses are
in Rev. 11 till their testimony was finished. No, the dispensation must
be changed, before God's witnesses can rightly act in the spirit, or
perform the deeds, attributed to the two witnesses in the chapter before
us.

The subject of the chapter is the coming crisis, when the Church has
been removed, and the present dispensation of perfect grace has come to
a close. God will not yet, indeed, have taken to Him His great power to
reign -- but He is about to do so -- and before He does, He raises up
these two witnesses to testify in sackcloth at Jerusalem. It is the time of
final Jewish and final Gentile apostasy, when the rulers of the Jewish
nation will have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with
hell; when “the prince” of Dan. 9:27 shall have confirmed a covenant
with the Jews for the one reserved week of Daniel's seventy weeks -- a
covenant which, in the midst of the week, as shown in a previous paper,
he violates, and sets up the abomination that maketh desolate. During
one part of this week, either the former or the latter half, or a portion of
both, 198 the two witnesses prophesy; and God endows them with power
to do so, and makes them invincible till their testimony is completed.
When it is finished, they are permitted to be slain.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that
ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them,
and shall overcome them, and kill them {Rev. 11:7}.

The identity of this beast with the little horn of Dan. 7 we have seen in
previous papers. The connection of the two witnesses with the Jewish
Remnant is too obvious to need pointing out. They are at least a part of
that remnant, and of the martyred portion of it. The beast slays them. The
dwellers upon earth rejoice to have got rid of them. For three days and an
half their dead bodies lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem, while
festivities and merry-making and sending gifts one to another, evince the
delight men have in their death. But the triumphing of the wicked is short.

After three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered
into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon
them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven
saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to
heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them {Rev. 11:11,
12}.

Thus we have, as to a part at least of the martyred remnant, the explicit
assurance of God’s word, that resurrection from the dead and ascension
to heaven, are the destiny that awaits them.

Nor is this all. The beast has other victims of his persecuting rage,
whose death is noticed in the book of Revelation. Rev. 12:11, and 13:7,
15 apprise us that there will be such; and in Rev. 15:2 they are seen as a
distinct company, standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire, having
the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses and the song of the
Lamb. These are the remainder, for whose death the martyrs under the
fifth seal were told they must wait. What a victory is theirs! -- a “victory
over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the
number of his name.” But not only are they presented as a distinct
company of victors in Rev. 15, in Rev. 20:4, we find them associated
with Christ and His co-heirs, and with their brethren, the martyrs of the
fifth seal, in the glories of the millennial reign.

198. We express ourselves thus on this subject, because of having seen ground to hesitate
as to what was expressly affirmed in our former edition, viz., that it is during the first half
week that the two witnesses prophesy. The point is one of deep interest for students of
prophecy, but it does not in the least affect the general principles of prophetic
interpretation, or the general outline of prophetic events as here set forth.

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And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.

The “they” and “them” in this clause, doubtless refer to the great body of the faithful, the saints of all ages, including “the Church” and all the Old Testament saints -- all, in short who are raised or changed at the descent of Christ into the air. But the martyrs of the crisis are not excluded; and lest we should suppose they were, both classes of them are mentioned.

And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.

Compare this with what is said of the martyrs of the fifth seal, and you can scarcely fail to perceive that they are the same. But what of those for whom they were to wait? Ah! the number is now complete.

And [they] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Our space will only allow us to present to our readers this interpretation of the passages which have just passed under review. Let it be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and the Lord give us understanding of His ways. ♦

The Future Godly Jewish Remnant and the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7) was given in connection with the preaching of the kingdom of the heavens as at hand, as bound up with the acceptance of Christ come in humiliation. Thus, it has its own distinctive place and epoch in the ways of God regarding His glory in Christ, in the earthly sphere. We saw that there were principles in it that may be applied by Christians to themselves, but there were things that were not suitable for Christians. The same is true regarding the future godly Jewish remnant. It would be incorrect to transport Matt. 5 - 7 in its entirety into that epoch. It is an epoch when the imprecatory Psalms will have their place. This may be seen by observing the words of the souls of Jewish martyrs when the fifth seal was opened by the Lamb:

How long, O sovereign Ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth? (Rev. 6:10).

Covenantists regard those souls as Christian, of course, and that is
one of their evidences that the imprecatory Psalms are appropriate for Christians. The truth is that this occurs after the rapture of the saints and resurrection of the holy dead at that point in time. 199 “Them that dwell on the earth” is an expression used some 10 times in Revelation and does not denote every last person on the earth. At least pre-millenialists ought to recognize that from the fact that there will be people to populate the millennial earth (Rev. 7:9-17). But Rev. 13:8 says:

    all that dwell on the earth shall do it homage . . .

It is those in the beast’s dominions, the revived Roman Empire, in which the Antichrist (the second beast in Rev. 13) is the Director of Religious Affairs, leading the worship of the evil triad (Satan, the Beast, and the Antichrist). None such worshipers shall enter the millennial kingdom. None with the mark of the Beast will enter.

    During the last half of Daniel’s 70th week, there will be two witnesses who are (1) not some covenantist’s allegation of some that they are the Waldensians and Albigenses), and (2) not Moses and Elijah, or Enoch, etc., but two of the godly Jewish remnant empowered with a Moses-like and Elijah-like ministry (as suitable to the state of matters). The have divinely-given power to strike judgmentally. It is the epoch for imprecatory Psalms, whatever of the Sermon on the Mount might be suitable.

199. The first resurrection is not a point in time but is a class of persons, as “the resurrection of the just” means. It occurs at various points of time, Christ being the firstfruits. This is discussed in detail in a chapter in Elements of Dispensational Truth, vol. 1.
Appendix 1:
The Moral Content of The Ten Commandments and Their Application to the Christian

C. H. Brown gave an address by the above title which appeared in Christian Truth 27:29-36, 57-63 and is transcribed here.

* * * * *

Beloved Brethren, I have it before me this afternoon to take up the subject of the ten commandments and their moral bearing upon the Christian. But first let us read the following scriptures.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16).

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God (Gal. 2:19).

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Gal. 3:10).
But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith (Gal. 3:11).

And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them (Gal. 3:12).

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14}.

Now the reason I have read these verses is this: In taking up the subject of the ten commandments, there might be an inclination on the part of some to think that I was taking them up in a legal way, as though we believers of this present day are under the law. No! we are under grace -- pure sovereign grace -- nothing of legality about it.

Let us turn to the 20th chapter of Exodus where Israel found themselves in the presence of the august law of God, the “ten words” (Ex. 34:28; margin) given to them by Moses at Mount Sinai. Our thought is to trace these “ten words” as we find their corollary in the
New Testament. Of the ten commandments, eight are negative; two are positive; nine moral; one ceremonial.

God’s nature is not subject to change; thus we shall find that the nine commandments that are essentially moral in character have their replica in Christianity. Let us seek to trace them. The first commandment is found in the third verse of Ex. 20,

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

This stands at the head of the list. It is fundamental. It is an essential part of the Jewish economy. So also the Christian revelation preserves this truth inviolate. Let us turn to 1 Cor. 8, the end of verse 4,

There is none other God but one.

How clear and unequivocal is this statement. Now read the 6th verse:

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.

So when a Jehovah Witness comes to your door to challenge your confession of Christ as God, read to him 1 Cor. 8:4-6. We own but one God, but that one God has been pleased to reveal Himself in three Persons. You remember that Philip asked the Lord Jesus,

Lord, show us the Father.

How wonderful was our Lord’s reply:

He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; . . . I am in the Father, and the Father in Me (John 14:8-11).

Now let us turn to John’s first epistle, the last chapter and the 20th verse.

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Oh, how definite! Crystal clear are these pronouncements: Jesus is God. Yes, in Christianity we know but one God. Sometimes He is manifested as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit. (Cf. Acts 5:3, 4.) So in Christianity we find ourselves in hearty accord with Moses’ first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

Going back now to the 20th chapter of Exodus, let us take up the second commandment. We will read from v. 4.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath,
or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments {Ex. 20:4}.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Now turn to 1 Cor. 10:14.

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

See also v. 7.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

We are living in a period which is readying itself for the “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3). The world is going to plunge into the most awful idolatry that it has ever known. The Jews themselves will be sevenfold more deeply involved in idolatry than ever before. (See Matt. 12:43-45.) The rest of the world will follow right along. This trend is apparent today. Have you noticed the rapid increase in the stock of figurines and statuettes for sale in many different kinds of stores? Among such you will see exact replicas of heathen idols. One feels that all this is moving in the direction of having all the materials ready for idol worship and worship of the image of the beast (Rev. 13). When man gives up the true knowledge of God as revealed in the Word of God, he readily falls into idolatry. Such has been his history. Behind the seemingly innocent idol of clay or wood, is the sinister power and presence of a demon. It is really demon worship. Cp. 1 Cor. 10:20. (See Rev. 9:20.) Thus we find in this 10th chapter of 1 Cor. a solemn warning to us Christians to flee from anything that borders on idolatry. Bowing down before images has no place in Christianity. This is in full agreement with the second commandment.

Again back to Ex. 20; this time we shall read v. 7.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

Let us turn to James 5:12.

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

How completely this substantiates the third Mosaic commandment. Let us go a little more into detail here. I do not believe there is anyone
present in this room today who deliberately takes the name of the Lord in vain. But let us notice that James takes the matter beyond this minimum prohibition.

Let your yea be yea; and your nay, (nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

I wonder how many of us here can plead innocence as we hear that exhortation. If you will look up the word “mince” in Webster’s dictionary, you will find the term “minced oath.” . . . This provides a polite way to swear -- a refined method of profanity. It is a grievous fact that many of the Lord’s people fall into the habit, thus ignoring this salutary warning of James. I have here with me a little pamphlet put out by Good News Publishers, Wells St., Chicago. It is entitled “Minced Oaths.” I thought perhaps you would bear with me if I read one paragraph of this tract.

A commonly used interjection is “Gee.” It is capitalized in Webster’s New International Dictionary, and given this definition:
“A form of Jesus used in minced oaths.” Two common words and their definitions are these: “Golly -- a euphemism for God, used in minced oaths; Gosh -- a substitute for God, used in minced oaths.” “Darn, darned, darnation” are said to be “colloquial euphemisms for damn, damned, damnation.” Persons who allow their lips to utter “gosh-darned” quite freely, would be shocked if they realized the real meaning of the word.

To gain the full victory in this matter of obedience to the Word of God we need to make the prayer of David our daily petition,

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer (Psa. 19:14).

I think of you young people, especially, in the matter of forming your habits of speech. When you are young is the time to eliminate all from your conversation that borders on the rough, the uncouth, or the profane. Never allow anything of the kind to creep into your utterances. Let us heed this warning of the Word. Let us guard our speech, in the home, in the school, in the factory, in the office; let it be chaste and pure. Let it be such as can stand the Lord’s examination at the judgment seat of Christ.

In Ex. 20 again, v. 8. Here we have the fourth commandment.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Now I will have to confess that I am absolutely unable to produce anything that answers to that commandment in Christianity. It is not to
be found. Remember, that word “sabbath,” which means “rest,” is first used in Ex. 16:23 in connection with the children of Israel gathering the manna. It was not to be gathered on the sabbath, the seventh day. This day was distinctly declared to be a day of rest. But when we enter the Christian dispensation, or administration if you prefer, we find no directions for the observance of any such day. There is only one mention of the sabbath in any of the New Testament epistles; that is in Col. 2:16.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.

But now notice the qualifying statement in the next verse,

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Evidently the only reason for mentioning the sabbath here is to show that it forms no part of the Christian revelation. On the contrary, it was but a shadow of what was to follow. As far as our day of rest is concerned, we learn from Heb. 4:9 that,

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

We cannot say that the sabbath has been changed to Sunday. The sabbath was always the seventh day of the week; Sunday is the first day of the week, so it could not possibly be the sabbath. So we await our day of rest when the Lord shall take us to His Father’s house, that we may rest in His love. The rest is at the end of the journey.

Some may ask the question, “What about the Lord’s day, the first day of the week; is that not our day of rest?” To this we must answer, “No.” Then what place does it hold in our lives? Does the expression itself not answer the question, “the Lord’s day”? The day belongs to the Lord. It is to be used for Him. It is on that day that we come together to break bread {Acts 20:7}. The term Lord’s day is found only once; namely, in Rev. 1:10. The word {Lord} in Greek here might be translated dominical. So we might translate this verse in Rev. 1, “I was in the Spirit on the dominical day.” Now if we go back to the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we shall find this same Greek word used in connection with the Lord’s supper. Or, it might be called the dominical supper. Now, is it not significant that the only use of this Greek word dominical in the New Testament is in connection with the supper and the day? So the Lord’s supper is observed on the Lord’s day.

The Lord’s day is definitely distinguished from other days by several significant scriptures. Our Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week; He appeared to His disciples on that day; He appeared to them again the second Lord’s day after His resurrection.
{John 20:26}. We note that the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, which was also the first day of the week; the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread {Acts 20:7}; the Apostle told the Corinthians to lay by on the first day of the week their contribution for the collection for the poor saints {1 Cor. 16:1-3}. All these scriptures go to show us that in Christianity the first day of the week completely displaces the Jewish sabbath. How inconsistent it would be for the Church of God to celebrate as their day, that during which their Lord and Savior lay under the power of death and the grave. But how glorious to come together on the first day of the week, the day of His victory over the tomb. How sweet and precious to give to Him this first day of the week, *His* day.

I desire to say something to you young people here today. It grieves me as I go about to find so many of our young folks using the Lord’s day for their ordinary tasks of life. You tell me that you would not think of getting out and cutting the lawn on the Lord’s day, nor, perhaps, would you consider doing your washing on the Lord’s day. But now, let us come nearer home. You say you are in school. Well and good; that is a proper and legitimate part of your life. I hope you do well in your school work. But listen; is your school work of such importance that it can rightfully displace your giving the Lord’s day to Him to whom it belongs? Perhaps you answer, “If I do not study on the Lord’s day, I will not get an ‘A’ grade.” Perhaps not, but even so, which is of more importance to you, an “A” or the Lord’s approval? Let us seek, by the grace of God, to give the Lord His day.

Perhaps some young person is saying, “Well, how then am I to spend my Lord’s day?” I happen to know how some of our dear young brothers and sisters make use of their spare time on the Lord’s day. They find various ways of giving out the gospel. Maybe it is the visiting of institutions for the passing out of tracts and speaking to souls individually about the Lord. Perhaps it is street preaching. With others it is visiting the sick and the shut-ins. Some take a part of the Lord’s day to write helpful letters to Christian friends, or perhaps to unsaved relatives and friends. Others take a part of the day to mail out literature to those whom they think might be helped in their souls by some tract or pamphlet. No, there is no Sabbath, no day of rest in Christianity, but there is a day we may be free to serve the Lord. May the Lord give us a tender conscience that it may be truly His day. (To be continued)

Returning now to Ex. 20, we will read the 12th verse. Here we have the fifth commandment.
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Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon
the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

If we turn to Eph. 6:2 we find this commandment is quoted word for
word. Christianity would not ask less of children than would the law.
How blessed it is when we see the children of Christian parents seeking
to carry out faithfully the request of the Word as given here in the epistle
to the Ephesians. Such will never have cause to regret that they sought
to give their parents this place of respect. God will not be their debtor.
They will reap the blessing of it in their own lives.

In the 13th verse of Ex. 20 we have the 6th commandment,
Thou shalt not kill.

If we will now turn to 1 Pet. 4:15, we read,
Let none of you suffer as a murderer.

God’s standard on this matter of taking human life is no less strict under
the Christian revelation than it was under Judaism. Murder cannot be
tolerated in the Christian economy.

Next in order is the well-known seventh commandment,
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Here let us turn to Heb. 13:4. We will read this verse as translated in
Mr. Darby’s version of the New Testament. I quote:
Let marriage be held every way in honor, and the bed be
undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers will God judge.

Then to 1 Cor. 6:9,
Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of
God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor
adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with
mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,
or extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were
some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are
justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our
God.

Some of those Corinthian saints to whom Paul was writing had been
guilty of these breaches of God’s moral code. But is it not a wonderful
thing that God has found a way through the sacrifice of His beloved Son
on Calvary, to cleanse the vilest of every trace of sin, and make him a
child of God? We are sanctified, set apart for God, justified -- counted
as if we had never been guilty. I have enjoyed so much the little girl’s
definition of justified. She replied to her teacher who had asked her as
to the meaning of that word justified, “It means I am just-as-if I’d never
sinned.” She was right. God so regards us. See v. 11,

Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Notice that the whole trinity are occupied in this transaction. But let us never minimize the seriousness of immorality in God’s sight. He has not changed His attitude one whit from the solemn pronouncement made at Sinai. Listen to His warning today,

Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

We are living in the last days, just near the end 4 of the present economy of grace. There is a general breakdown in standards all along the line. Some of us that are older have seen a tremendous change in our lifetime. Some of you who are young may have the idea that present moral looseness has always been rampant just as it is today. But such is not the case. I am not saying that these things did not formerly occur; they did, but at that time there was a measure of public opinion against them. Those guilty of such wickedness were regarded as in disgrace. But now, if we accept Hollywood as our rule of thumb, such breaches of the moral code are regarded almost as badges of honor. These same Hollywood heroes and heroines do not forfeit their acceptability in social circles because of their conduct. But, dear young people, remember as long as you live, God's standards in these matters do not fluctuate one little bit. He is a thrice holy God, who does not by any means overlook sin. Brethren, let us not let down the bars in these matters. Keep the standard just where God has placed it, and we shall never go wrong. The longer we are left here in this scene, the more difficult it is going to be to adhere to God’s judgment in this momentous matter. God still speaks with the dignity and authority of the God who knows the end from the beginning. His word is, “Flee these things.”

Ex. 20 again, and v. 15 for the eighth commandment,

Thou shalt not steal.

Now turn to Eph. 4:28.

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Stealing is just as much condemned in the Christian economy as it is in the Jewish. The Ephesian church received the highest truth that God gave to any assembly. There must have been a condition there that qualified them to become the depository of such wonderful truth. And yet after having seated them {all believers now} in heavenly places in
Appendix 1: Moral Content of the 10 Commandments . . 277

Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:6}, God has to come down to the humiliating level of the flesh in them, and talk to them about stealing. Such is man! The law stopped with the blunt prohibition, “Thou shalt not steal,” but Christianity goes beyond this and says we are to labor, working the thing that is good, that we have to give to him that lacketh. How lovely! But notice, it is working the thing that is good. Just because you may be working and making an honest living does not in itself clear you. Are you working the thing that is good -- the thing that can have God’s approval? We knew a brother in Christ years ago. He is now with the Lord. When he was converted he was a bartender in a saloon. He was thus making an honest living, but he felt he was not working the thing that is good, so he sought other work, and found it. We do not steal; that is negative; we work the thing that is good, but for what? That we may have to give. That is Christianity. You know the Word of God speaks about “poor saints.” Nor is there any biblical inconsistency in those two words, “poor” and “saints.” Let us then keep them in mind, and so fulfill the will of God.

Now for the ninth commandment, Ex. 20:16,

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The equivalent of this we may find in Eph. 4:25,

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor.

Also note Rom. 13:9,10,

Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The Christian demand in this matter is the same as in the law, but it goes far beyond the law’s demands, and issues in love to the neighbor.

Our last commandment is found in Ex. 20:17,

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s.

Now to Heb. 13:5,

Let your conversation [manner of life] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

This is the one of the ten commandments that slew the Apostle Paul. He seemed to be able to cope with the other nine, but he admits in Rom. 7:7,

I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. . . . For sin, taking occasion by the commandment,
deceived me, and by it slew me.

Paul found out what we have all discovered, that it is as natural to covet as it is to breathe. But, nevertheless, the revealed truth of Christianity condemns covetousness no less severely than did the law of Moses. Oh! the sad tragedies we have seen of saints of God sacrificing everything in order to get on in the world. Covetousness is selfishness.

“Be content with such things as ye have.” Now that does not mean that if you are at present living in poverty, you will always have to live in poverty. No, it is not that; the meaning of this exhortation is that we should bow to our circumstances, and be content in them until such time as God may see fit to alter them. In other words, do not constantly be feeling sorry for yourself because things are not as you would have them. Do not be groaning and complaining; be content. If God may be pleased to better your present circumstances, thank Him for it.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things (1 Tim. 6:6-11).

How true is the Word of God! Have we not all seen the above statements of Scripture verified in the lives of saints? Sometimes our young people feel that they must keep up with the standard of living that they see in the lives of others. And so it becomes just one thing after another to be coveted. The fact that we live in the most prosperous age and land that the world has ever known has contributed to accelerate this desire to have more. The more we have the more we desire to have. There is no stopping place. But, oh, how different is the Spirit of Christ! His was the spirit of giving, not getting. So He taught us,

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Now I am not saying that we are all to give away everything that we have. There was only one man in the Bible to whom the Lord addressed such advice; that was the rich ruler in Luke 18. But the Lord said this to him in order that the young man might be brought to realize what the cancer was which was eating out his own soul -- covetousness. No, brethren, worldly possessions are not the secret of happiness. Happiness is a state of soul. It is the enjoyment of Christ, His Person and His work,
that keeps the heart at rest and in peace.

Now to summarize. In Christianity we are not under law, but under grace. We are not under the letter of the ten commandments. We are under the moral equivalent of them as set forth in the epistles, save in the case of the commandment that was ceremonial; that is, the sabbath. This has no ritualistic counterpart in Christianity. The other nine commandments, as a matter of their moral content, we do have, but not as a matter of “Thou shalt,” and “Thou shalt not.” But we have them as the expression of the new nature that we have as born of God. 200 If we thus respect them, beloved, we shall never regret it. It will be to our good for time and for eternity. The righteous requirements of the law will be fulfilled in us (see Rom. 8:4; JND Trans.) and thus the fruit of the Spirit will issue in love to God, and to all who are born of God.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:10).

C. H. Brown

200. [If I walk after the Spirit, I am not under the law; but the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, meekness, temperance, patience; against such there is no law. I keep the law de facto, by not being under it de jure, because the life and Spirit of Christ make me love my neighbor, and he who does that fulfils the law. It is produced, not imposed. JND.]
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