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“PEACE, PEACE TO HIM THAT IS FAR OFF, AND TO HIM THAT IS NEAR SAITH THE LORD”

By Frederick W. Keene

“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.” — Isaiah 27:17.19

The history of the Twelve Tribes of Israel is full of instruction to those who fear the Lord. This highly favored nation had committed unto them the oracles of God, and the setting forth their peculiar pre-eminence Paul says, “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen.” Moses declared that such should be the exaltation of His people in the sight of the surrounding nations that they would exclaim, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” Then he spreads before assembled Israel their peculiar blessedness and exaltation: “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and great terrors, according to all that the Lord our God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else besides Him. Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee: and upon earth He shewed thee His great fire, and thou heardest His words of the midst of the fire. And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out the nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, forever.”

Well may Israel’s blessedness be crowned with this song, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the Shield of thy help, and who is the Sword of thine excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” (Deut. 33:29)

But they rebelled and vexed God, they often turned aside from Him and corrupted their ways; they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. Then the Lord pleads with them face to face, and declares that their conduct was more inconstant and shameful than the nations of the Gentiles. “For pass over to the isles of Chittim and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be any such thing: hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for that

which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jere. 2:10-13) “Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me: the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.” (Isa. 1:2, 3)

Shall such a sinful, ungrateful nation be cast aside by God? Let this be the answer of His Sovereign Grace: “Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.” (Jer. 51)

Having glanced at this picture of typical Israel, let us come to our text as applicable to the true and spiritual Israel of God. That one born again, called by God’s grace unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, who has been made to feel the burden of sin, and then has tasted the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are all forgiven, should go on in a froward spirit in forbidden paths, is a dark and shameful mystery. That among the children of God such behavior is to be found, is evident from the testimony of the Scriptures. It is humiliating, heart-saddening to read of this and that signally blessed child of God falling into outward iniquities, wandering far away from the statutes of the Lord, but, O how our hearts melt and glow with affection to them, and to our God, when with broken and contrite hearts, with cries and tears, they are turned to Him who forgiveth transgressions and sin because He delighteth in mercy. (Micah 7:18) Many, very many of the children of God are mercifully preserved from what may be described as outward sinfulness.

In the eyes of their fellows, there appears

to be nothing froward, hut among these so graciously kept from portraying the depravities of their natures, there are those to whom at Limes in their invisible life the language of the text is applicable: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

"For the iniquity of his covetousness was wrath, and smote him." "His covetousness. This covers a very extensive field of our sinfulness. The vain delights of earth appeal with much power to the depravity of our natures. The child of God learns that there are lustings in his flesh which, if not restrained, are capable of finding gratification in all that is in the world. (John 2:16) Having such a nature in us we are easily allured by temptations to walk in the iniquities of covetousness. Ah, unless the flesh is crucified with the lusts thereof, we shall ere long find ourselves numbered with those who "pant after the dust of the earth!" (Amos 2:7)

What a picture! Here is one with all eagerness reaching forth, pursuing lying vanities, till in the chase he is panting with his exertions to grasp the illusive prize, for this covetousness is as a raging thirst which the open mouth, parched tongue. and panting breath only the dust of the earth can quench. "They pant after the dust of the earth." This is surely the antithesis of "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." If covetousness be not constantly mortified through the gracious power of the Spirit of God, it will grow, and the iniquity of his covetousness will soon be apparent in the life of that one.

Covetousness contains in it innumerable iniquities, it will shrivel us up, it will shut up the bowels of compassion, it will at length so harden our spirit, and it will say, "it is no matter who sinks so long as I swim; though others are grieved, afflicted and have manifold adversities, of what moment is it so

long as I am not touched?" We may say we pity the poor and needy, but do we help them? Do we in acts as well as words feel for them?

Perhaps we excuse our covetousness by casting the blame of the adversity upon the afflicted and needy, saying of them, "It is their own fault, they brought it upon themselves, they should have done differently, and they would not thank me if I were to assist them;" and so in very selfishness we shut up the bowels of our compassion. Shut up! Perhaps at this state selfishness has so taken possession that it would be hard to find any bowels of compassion to shut up. O, when one is going on as a very slave of the iniquity of his covetousness, there will be no visibility in us of the likeness of the compassionate Saviour!

I tell you, beloved ones of God, there are avenues of covetousness that are very hateful, and I have not had to go outside of my own poor life to see and feel them. Little things in my own experience, known only to the Lord, have made me hate myself, to hang down my head, to blush, to hide my face away from the Lord; I have felt too mean for Him to look upon. It is not in vain that Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." It is that spirit in us that reacheth after that which will benefits us; it is self, first, last and all the time; it is self-gratification, and in its broad aspect covetousness is that which in any degree witnesseth a departure from the fulfilment of the "royal law, according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (James 2:8) How do you stand, guilty or not guilty? So comprehensive is the iniquity of covetousness that Paul says, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Rom. 7:7) Well may one exclaim, "I have seen the end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceedingly broad." (Psa. 119:96).

Though covetousness is in the natural hearts of all the human family', yet through

God's reigning grace there are times when it is crucified, and in some Christ-like lives of the dear family of God it is so hidden, so subdued, that they are ever sacrificing themselves for their fellows, ever seeking the comfort, welfare and exaltation of others, and the last thing thought of is themselves, they are so unselfish. Have you not had glimpses of such ones? Are they not lovely? Then, by way of contrast, look at yourself. Perhaps some of us are blind, and can neither see the beauty of others nor the ugliness of ourselves. "For the iniquities of this covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." That the Lord should thus be wroth very plainly reveals the character of God. We behold Him, the Holy One, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon sin. (Heb. 1:13) Ah, we could not have faith in and reverence a God that hath pleasure in wickedness! (Psa. 5:4) Yes, one of the dearest revelations of God to our hearts is that He is holy and righteous, and hateth wickedness. With what affection therefore do those who are taught of the Lord cleave to Him, and each one adoringly call Him the "Lord my God, mine Holy One." (Hab. 1:12) "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."

"And smote him." The chastisements of the Lord are twofold; there are chastisements from within and chastisings from without. The Lord chastiseth His people with the rod of men. (II Sam. 7:14) The Assyrian was the rod of the Lord's anger. (Isa. 10:5) The wicked is His sword. (Psa. 17:13) He smote His people with temporal adversities, and His outstretched arm blasted their possessions with rust and mildew; He sent among them the cankerworm, the caterpillar and grasshoppers, and thus Jacob was made small. (Amos 7:2) "I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth." (Hosea 6:5) Ah, the prophets of the Holy One

are not always declaring pleasant things unto Israel, but sent of God and inspired of Him they bring heavy tidings, they speak against us! (Jer. 31:20) The word of the Lord as a sharp axe cuts and hews us, and we are sorely wounded, our sins are shewn us, and as our iniquities are spread before our faces we are cut down and slain by the revealed displeasure of the Lord, and as the slain in Ezekiel 37:11, we say, "Our bones are dried, our hope is lost; and we are cut off for our parts."

The trials and afflictions of His saints are oftentimes the smiting of the Lord, His Fatherly chastenings. These trials that come upon us from without all have a voice, and blessed it is to have the hearing ear to hear the rod, and the Lord our God Who Fiath appointed it. (Micah 6:9).

Then there are inward smitings, the strokes of the Lord's displeasure in our conscience, the guilt of our lives as a smiting rod removes far from us all felt spiritual blessedness. What a difference there is between a good conscience towards God and an evil conscience. The one is darkness, guilt and affliction the other righteousness, peace and blessedness in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God.

Saith the Lord, "And smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart."

Truly the way of the transgressor is hard, for when the child of God transgresses, the Lord, his God, will shew him hard things. (Psa. 60:3) The blessing of the Lord is that lie makes His face to shine upon us. (Num. 6:25) and the prayer of the humble in heart is. "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." Oh, in the smiles of His lace there is comfort, healing and strength!

We are animated to worship and praise his name, and prove so wondrously that the light of his countenance is the health of our countenance. But when He hides Himself and

is wroth. when His face we cannot see, when we are excluded, and shut out from His presence, with no looks of compassion, with no pitying glances of a Father's love, then we are wretched outcasts —“Mine outcasts.” (Isaiah 16:4)

Then also to have the dreadful knowledge that our God is wroth, to learn that we have provoked him to anger with the iniquities of our covetousness, and that our sins have hidden His face from us, what then? Shall we not turn unto Him that smiteth us, shall we not bow down in contriteness of heart, seek reconciliation with our God? Is not this becoming us as children of the Most High? Oh, it is becoming of us. but so strong are the depravities of our flesh that unless divine help is afforded us, we shall be driven headlong, and the terrible testimony concerning us will be, “He went on frowardly in the way’ of his heart!” In spite of the prickings of his conscience he went on in the paths of folly, “in the way of his heart,” and he would have gone on to perdition if the Lord had not in due time hedged up his way that he should not find his paths. (Hosea 2:6) It is a vain thing for one born of God to think to live in fleshly self-gratifications, for such paths are the former lusts of our ignorance, (I Pet. 1:4), so unbecoming, so dishonoring to our God. What would become of us miserable sinners, but for God's reigning grace? Are you going on frowardly in the way of your heart? Take a thought, examine and see. Are you striving against sin? (Heb. 12:4) Are you crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts? Though you may veil your life so that our fellows cannot know it, you cannot screen your ways from the eyes of the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity. However fair our lives may be in the sight of mortals, to God all things are naked and open.

“Great God, from Thee there's naught concealed;

Thou see't my inward frame;

To Thee I always stand revealed
Exactly as I am.”

“I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” One of the sacred, awe-inspiring, yet comforting things that has entered into my life has been this, “Thou God seest me.” Sometimes amidst afflictions and temptations in my infirmity I have thought God seeth not, He has no regard for poor, harassed, sinful me. Then it has dawned upon me that the eyes of the Lord are upon me. He seeth, He knows all my anxieties, all my oppressions, all the rugged troubled scenes that I am passing through. “He knoweth the way that I take.” (Job 23:10) O this has quieted, rested, comforted me, and I have again been strengthened to hope in the Lord!

And when my feet had well nigh slipped, when sorely tempted to the indulgence of my sinful appetites, O what a defense, what salvation I have found in the precious thought being given me that our Heavenly Father seeth me! Ah, I have been ashamed and pained in His sight, but my wounded heart has turned with affection to Him whose eyes are upon me, and I have said, “Ah, Lord, Thou seest I am a poor, vile sinner - so weak, so apt to be enticed into iniquities; have pity upon me, forgive me, hold Thou me up and I will be safe!” “I have seen his ways.” His selfishness, the iniquities of his covetousness; I have seen his perverseness, going on frowardly in the way of his heart. How unlovely! Ah, wretched, wayward child, thy feet are not comely now! Where are thy shoes that make the feet of believers so beautiful? (Song 7:1; Eph. 6:15) “I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” What! heal him — such an ungrateful, unprofitable, froward sinner? O this is matchless grace! This is the everlasting love of God our Heavenly Father. Thus saith the Lord, “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have

mercy upon him.” (Jer. 3 1:20) “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” (Isa. 66:13) Such Scriptures very blessedly reveal to our faith the depth and tenderness of Jehovah’s love to His people. Thou art high and holy Lord God Almighty, Thy glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of Thy praise. Thou art infinite in Majesty, O thou art far, far above our highest thought. “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Mindful of man— sinful, rebellious man?”

“Pause, my soul, adore and wonder!

Ask, O why such love to me?

Grace hath put me in the number Of the Savior’s family,

Hallelujah! thanks, eternal thanks to Thee.”

There is grace in the Lord to heal our foul backslidings. He has His own efficacious ways of turning His wayward children unto Himself again. He has His way of hedging up our way with thorns that we cannot find our paths where formerly we walked in the selfishness of our flesh; instead of gratification we meet with thorns that make the way painful. Our very selfishness becomes briars and thorns to lacerate our conscience. Thus torn and wounded we become ashamed and humbled over our departures from the Lord and His truth. The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and this is shown in most graciously bringing our guilty, chastened souls to repentance, and we are brought in godly sorrow to sigh and mourn before Him. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” (Psa. 51:17) O this contrite heart is all the fruit of the Lord’s graciousness! without His divine work in our souls we should still be going on and on most frowardly in the evils of our nature. But now in the Lord’s healing-time there pours forth from our contrite hearts sighs and supplications for the forgiveness of our sins.

“Of this the best of men have need,
This I, the worst, receive.

It is in very kindness that the Holy Spirit shews us our iniquities, and so effectually brings us to loathe, to mourn over and to turn from all sinful gratifications. This repentance has very blessed fruits described by the apostle in II Cor. 7:11: “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yet, what indignation, yet, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yet, what zeal, yea, what revenge.” During this time of healing the child of God finds that in himself he has “no healing medicines,” (Jer. 30:13), for his wounds, and his soul under divine leading will cry to the Lord, “Be merciful unto me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against Thee.” (Psalm 41:4) Though in our backslidings we have gone far, far astray from the paths of sacred communion with the Lord, yet He will not cast away His people whom He foreknew. One of the most affecting scenes in which the tender, immutable and everlasting love of God to His people is portrayed is found in Jer. 3:14-23: “Turn, backsliding children, saith the Lord: for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God.”

This, O believers, is the voice of thy Maker, who is thy Husband; He will not put thee away; He will never write thee a bill of divorcement, for He hateth putting away. (Mal. 2:16) And here He is pleased to represent Himself to our faith as the constant, loving Husband, Who cannot - will not - part with His church, and Who now in His undying, unquenchable love seeketh after His sinful, backsliding people. He will win back His wife to Himself again, though she has treacherously departed from Him.

Let me present the picture again, and may you with eyes of faith and love look and look and feast upon it: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." As fellow creatures one may love another, but here, in the new covenant, is Jehovah, our Maker, and His church, creatures, insignificant, less than nothing and vanity, (Isa. 40:17) base things, things that are not, (I Cor. 1:28) unholy, ungrateful, unprofitable, corruptible mortals, and yet to such, His chosen ones, He says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn thee." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." O, I have need of the almighty and gracious power of the Holy Ghost to believe that I am one that God hath so loved!

And if we are so loved, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:35-39) "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." Ah, the wayward, the prone to wander" need the Lord their Shepherd! He will lead His flock like a shepherd. And where does He lead the humble, contrite ones? He leads them in paths of righteousness for His name sake. He leadeth us, we are drawn away from the iniquity of our covetousness, from the follies of our flesh, from that selfishness so inherent in our poor earthly lives. O, we need every day, all the time, this divine drawing, or else we are drawn astray, we are pulled back and drawn down in the paths, the realms of the depravities of our fleshly hearts. The Lord takes hold of His people by revealing in their souls this and that precious truth of the doctrine of Christ, and as their hearts are captivated, feasted and consoled by these openings up to them of the heart of the Lord their God they are constrained to follow on to know the Lord. We are led in the paths of

righteousness, led through the wilderness, through our every day cares and vexations, over the rugged and rough places, through temptations and trials, through floods and flames, and thus drawn and led we are found worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

"I will restore comforts to him and his mourners." Ah, when we are turned aside to pursue lying vanities, we forsake our own mercies; our souls are then bereaved of the consolations of the gospel, for we cannot be walking after the flesh and in the spirit of Jesus Christ at the same moment; we cannot be feasting the depravities of our flesh and sitting at the King's table at the same time. The flesh may intrude, it may dare approach us even when we feast at the banqueting house with our dear Redeemer, but our heart will be shocked and will cry out, Begone! O while we are tasting the comforts of Christ Jesus we shall not be found indulging the lusts of the flesh, but in love to our dear Lord Jesus, and in hatred and loathing of all iniquity, we shall be found crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts.

"While we are led in Thy embrace,

There's not a thought attempts to rove;

Each smile upon Thy beauteous face Fixes,
and charms, and fires our love."

It is truly blessed to have once more the comforts of our covenant God. All is of grace, for these new covenant mercies are restored to God's chastened children without money, and without price. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him." (Hosea 14:4) And while His comforts delight our souls in our fervent gratitude we say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." (Isa. 12:1).

COMMENTS: Throughout this country there is a growing re-examination of the faith

and practice of the New Testament Church. Clearly there is a need for such in our apostate age. When we consider that in any one century of the so-called Dark Ages more free grace baptists were put to death than now exit in our own, it becomes apparent that we are living in the darkest age of the Gospel dispensation!

The following article is submitted by William Santamaria. He, like many of us, came through the theological schools of modern so-called “Christian thought”, and by the sovereign grace of God was graciously led to free grace and the excellency of that salvation which is in Christ. Like so many of our elders, that experience led to a keen awareness to worship God in the manner that He has established for His church; and he too was led unerringly to the Predestinarian Old School Baptists. He worships with the old Welsh Tract Church, the oldest church in America preserved through the centuries here from the blight of Arminian will-worship.

His article printed next is well worth consideration by all our readers, whether they be free grace New Testament Baptists or Predestinarian Old School Baptists. We hope the reader will examine his contribution seriously, and measure it by the witness of truth within the heart.

DAGON UPON HIS FACE BEFORE THE ARK OF THE LORD

being a contrast between that will-worship of men seen in the worship of Dagon and that Highway of Holiness spoken about by the prophet Isaiah shown by the Ark of the Lord, showing God is sovereign in matters of worship, and that God has shown in His Scriptures the all-sufficient way of Worship.

By William Santamaria, 1983

It is clear from all that God has told us about our wicked hearts in His word that we, when left to ourselves, do not know how to worship Him. The only way we can know

how to worship Him properly is if He tells us how. He must tell us what pleases Him; what we are to say in prayer (although not necessarily the exact words), in our hymns, how we are to celebrate His death and resurrection as well as what motivation is to be in our hearts when we do these things. Yet it is also true that even after God has told us how we are to worship Him, this in itself is not enough. His Spirit must *enable* us to worship Him in the way we ought. Without the Spirit making us able we are as hopeless to worship Him aright as if there had never been any instruction given to us in the Scriptures. Indeed, without this *continued* ministry of the Spirit in making us able, we would wander away from the true *form* of worship and invent our own ways of worshipping God, who, at this point, would no longer represent the true God of the Bible. Knowing this, we ask a very basic question. What is our standard for the proper worship of God? How shall we determine whether a certain act, ceremony, doctrine, or overall practice is proper to the true worship of God? There can only be two answers to this essential question. How this question is answered will, or at least should, have tremendous implications for everything else we say and think about God. Both answers claim to use the Bible as their standard. The first answer we hear is that anything can be done or instituted in the worship of the church that is not forbidden by the Scriptures, either through some direct command or some general principle. With this idea, a local church could lawfully institute new religious rites, ceremonies and institutions that were not found in any Apostolic churches. This mentality defends its differences with the Apostolic model on the supposition that with the times new “ministries” must be developed to deal with new situations which will arise. These new “ministries” are not limited to the advent of new vehicles for proclaiming the

Gospel message (such as television, radio, telephones, printing press, etc.), but also include *new institutions* and practices which are labeled “ministries”, which they purported to have spiritually edifying power as “instituted means” for the salvation of souls.

The second answer (which is mine) sees things quite differently. The idea here is that the local church has NO authority to institute ANY NEW practice or institution that was not found or practiced in the Apostolic church. This answer says that all the ceremonies, practices, and institutions of the church were instituted by *God Himself, through the Apostles, at the time of their ministry on this earth*. Thus the church has no authority to do anything of any inherent religious significance which is not commanded by Scripture, either by direct command or necessary consequence. This answer I believe to be the teaching of the Apostles as well as of the Old School Baptists as a group.

Some who object to this second approach say that we are hiding behind the word “religious” using it in different ways at different times in our argument. They would say that everything in the universe is religious in that it praises God and attests to His power, or that all the acts that men do ought to be done for the glory of God and could, therefore, be called “ministries”. One would not wish to argue with this point since Scripture says all of this (Psa. 19; Rom. 1:21; II Cor. 10:17). Yet to leave the matter rest at this point would be misleading. There are matters which are not “religious” in the *narrow sense of the term*. Paul himself spoke of these matters in I Cor. 7:32-34 when he said, *“He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that*

she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” Here Paul makes a distinction between “the things of the Lord” and the “things of the world.” When the word “religious” is used here it is being used in the narrow sense, of things which are directly related to religion and the local assembly such as prayer, singing of hymns, preaching, etc. Involved in the term “religious” is anything which claims to be a “means” for the edification or salvation of anyone.

This principle of worship is questioned by some who claim to believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. How this can be is hard to conceive. If they believe that *salvation* is not a combined effort between man and God, but that it is totally unto, of, and from God, how can they believe any less about the worship of God? How can they believe that men can contribute anything to the worship of God when it comes to its form? How can such little regard be had for the wisdom of God in thinking that God would not make it clear to His people at all times all that is necessary to worship Him aright? What a high regard for time to think that in some epochs God would be worshipped in a better or lesser way depending upon the recently invented “ministries” that epoch offers! What a high praise to the human mind to think that some men worship God better than others due to their greater imagination in devising new “ministries” and “outreaches”!

Some might try to dull the force of these questions by claiming that it is the Spirit of God which plants these new ideas in the minds of His people and thus that men are not really contributing to the worship of God, but that God working in them does the contributing. Yet this does not void the questions just asked. These so-called “spirit planted” ideas are not based upon the Word of God but upon the personal feelings of those

who believe this teaching which they *attribute* to the Spirit of God. Thus there can be no standard for other christians by which to judge these experiences in a positive manner, as to whether they are according to the will (revealed —S.C.P.) of God or not. All we can do is to make sure it does not violate any biblical “Thou shalt not.” Why one may ask, can other christians not judge these ideas? Because to judge these ideas would assume that the Word of God *explicitly* tells us all that we need to know and do to worship God whether through direct command or necessary consequence. Since this is the very issue at question, anyone who would attempt to judge this idea from the Scriptures (as we are to do in all matters of worship) would automatically disprove it. If a believer in Christ cannot turn to his Master’s words to judge something, where shall we turn? All then becomes an opinion of one man judging the opinion of another. Also, these “new ministries” and “outreaches” usually require money and establishment of new positions (youth director, director of christian education, bus captains, minister of visitation, etc.). This would mean that according to this erroneous view the true form of worshipping God can be established, or at least improved, by more personnel and more money - This is the philosophy of the world. This is the way great corporations are built, but NOT the way the church of Christ is built. If salvation is so exactly worked out by God that it does not depend upon carnal “imaginative” ideas of men, could God have the form of his worship to an~’ less detail? If God has made it clear all that men need know to be saved (and He has), can He be any less exact when it comes to the essential matter of worshipping His name?

Are the Scriptures our all-sufficient guide to faith and practice? Peter thought so when he said that according to Jesus’ divine power he had “given unto us all things that pertain

unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (II Peter 1:3) This divine power has been the force which wrought not only the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit, but also that “more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in the dark place, until the day dawn and the day star, arise in your hearts.” (vs. 19) All things are given to us that are needed for godliness and eternal life. Paul further made this point clear. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16). What is the purpose of Scripture? “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works’ (vs. 17) If some would question the use of this passage in saying that although the Scriptures are profitable, they are not the ONLY thing we need, then it must be asked what they will use to supplement the very words of God? If anyone believes that the Scriptures are not totally sufficient for all we need know about the true form of the worship of God, then let them cease to call themselves Baptists and go back to the Mother Harlot Rome which has always questioned the total sufficiency of the Scriptures and “supplemented” it with relics, the worship of saints, miraculous appearances of Mary, indulgences, confessions to priests, the infallibility of the Pope and all other sorts of priestcraft; because all these objections lead only to mere variations of the papists inventions just mentioned.

Phariseeism is the worse form of false worship. One classic example of this false worship is found in Matthew 15. Here the Pharisees were astonished at the disciples’ lack of obedience to the “traditions of the Elders.” Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for three things. The first was that they violated the commandments of God by MAKING EXCEPTIONS to them that God did not

allow, such as the example given by Christ of the refusal to honor their parents by using the excuse that all their extra money had been promised to God as a gift (Corban, vs. 3-6). The second item was their inner deadness in contrast to their seemingly outer purity, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (vs. 8). The third item, however is the one that hits closest to the point of this article. They also interposed their ordinances and rituals in between the commandments of God. (Vs. 9) Even though these ordinances did not violate some specific command of God and dealt with such seemingly innocent items, such as the washing of cups and hands, they were a great evil. Why? Because their ordinances were given religious meaning by being regarded as ceremonial purifications which they contended somehow pleased God. Also, they were being imposed on the consciences of men as if they had been given by God; thus attempting to endue the words of men with the same power and authority as those of God. Men were being condemned and judged for failure to keep the whim and ideas of other men. What does all this prove? Simply that Jesus would not have condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for inventing their own commandments, if He had not believed that God had given the Jews all the commandments they needed to worship God aright, up until the time when He was to die and resurrect. Thus for men to legislate any new laws or practices of their own was a grievous sin.

Some will continue to object to the principle of worship which we and all Old School Baptists hold by citing that if we limit ourselves to the practice of the apostles in everything, we might as well ride in chariots, disregard all modern conveniences and revert back to first century life in Palestine. All this objection does is betray a lack of

understanding of the principle that has been set forth here. Technology has never assisted the work of God; otherwise, we would be saying that an educated American has the capability of worshiping God better than a simple African peasant. A distinction must be made between the message of the Gospel and the vehicle which may deliver it, such as a preacher, a radio, a television, paper, magazine, etc. As long as the vehicle is not somehow made into some sort of "ministry" which implies for it religious significance in and apart from the Gospel message itself, then the principle of worship set forth here has not been violated. Thus a car can be used to take people to church, yet a car is not inherently religious. The Signs of the Times (magazine) proclaim the Gospel, yet remains simply a magazine which, as such, has no religious significance of its own, unable to save a single soul or edify a single believer. God did not begin to use magazines as an instituted means of salvation with the advent of the Signs of the Times, or any other magazine devoted to religious truth.

What is the essential distinguishing point between Old and New School Baptists? Is it gospel regeneration? No, because there are men who are in New School churches who deny this doctrine. Is it the doctrines of grace, such as election, particular redemption, total depravity (including a denial of the natural/moral inability distinction)? The answer is again no, because there are churches in the New School group which believe these doctrines. Is it the requirement of baptism when coming from an outside group of a different faith and order? No, because the Landmark Missionary Baptists also require this of those wishing to join their religious organizations. The essential point about Old School Baptists is that they believe all these things from an *experiential*, as well as a "doctrinal" position. and also that they believe that any religious group that institutes

religious acts, ceremonies, doctrines beyond those the Lord has provided in His word are not true churches of Christ. This is why they are called “Primitive” or “Old School”, which is intended to refer to the primitive apostolic model of a local church. With the grace of God, and only by it can we hope to remain in this stand despite the ridicule of the modern religionists.

If any imagine that we here are presenting our own ideas, then let them hear well the words of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith of 1689 (same as Old London, 1642 in essence—S.C.P.), which Old School Baptists have regarded are the best *human summary* of the teachings of the Scriptures, and which New Schoolers abandoned in 1832 (for the revised New Hampshire Confession), if not in it’s letter, certainly in it’s spirit.

“The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of man, or the suggestions of Satan under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.” Welsh Tract, the oldest Primitive Baptist Church in America, adopted this confession in 1701, and has not found reason to abandon it since.

The danger denounced in 1832 is not any weaker today. If anything, it is stronger. We must not ever believe that these things have been denounced enough. Each generation must again take the sword of God, that shining lamp in the darkness, and wield it against the enemy of God until we see our Lord face to face and that one against whom we truly war cast into the bottomless pit reserved for him from eternity past.

Dagon represented, and still represents, a false god and a false form of worship. The ark of the Lord was, and is the true way. May Dagon always fall prostrate before the Ark of the Lord.

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THE LORD DOING WONDROUSLY

By John Rusk

“And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.” Judges 13:22, 23.

“And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren.” And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman and told her that she should conceive and bear a son. She was not to drink wine nor strong drink. After receiving particular orders, she went and told her husband. Then Manoah entreats the Lord that the man of God might come again; and God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel came again to the woman in the field. Her husband was not with her, but she ran and told him, and he comes, and asks particularly how they were to order the child. She was not to drink wine nor strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. Manoah asked liberty, and took a kid with a meat offering and offered it upon a rock to the Lord; and Manoah and his wife looked on, and the angel did wondrously. A flame went up from the sacrifice, and the angle ascended in the flame. After this Manoah and his wife knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And then come the words of our text.

Now I shall endeavor to prove, 1, that Manoah and his wife were both real believers. It appears clear to me, from the account we have, that both Manoah and his wife fear God and were both Christian (regenerate) people

before this took place. The woman appears stronger in faith and more established than her husband. Then they are prevalent with God in prayer: for Manoah, it is said, entreated the Lord, and said, "O my Lord!" He addresses the Lord as his own, in humility: and this can only be done in real faith. When Thomas, after so much unbelief, cried out, "My Lord," &c., Christ told him that he believed, and believing is the exercise of faith.

But again, Manoah not only addresses the Lord as *his* Lord (no doubt he and his wife were both together at the time) but he *entreated* the Lord. Now this shows us that he was poor in spirit, had been well humbled, knew his proper distance as a sinner. "The poor useth entreaties." (Psa. 18:23) David was one of the poor ones. Hence he says, "I am poor and needy." He also entreated the Lord: "I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart." And Christ says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now as Manoah entreated the Lord and addressed Him as his Lord, and by his thus entreating manifested that he was poor in spirit, and as the poor in spirit are blessed of God, and whom He will own in the great day, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father;" this shows he was a believer, for "as many as are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

But again. You may see in the answer which the Lord gave to Manoah's prayer that they were believers; because John says, "This is the confidence we have in Him" (and confidence is faith), "that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us;" and if He heareth us we know that we have the petition we desired of Him. Now God hearkened to Manoah, and the angel came again to his wife; so that though it is said that Manoah prayed, yet it was in union with her, for the answer came to them both. Moreover, you may see also *obedience*. They are both particular in receiving orders about the child, and no doubt punctual in fulfilling them,

because it all came to pass; and this is the "obedience of faith." (Rom. 1:5:16:26)

Again. Their offering which they offered being accepted, proves to a demonstration that they were believers; for if not, it would have been rejected. Hence you read that "God had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and his offering He had not respect." But why this great difference? I answer, first, election as it respects Abel, and rejection as it respects Cain: and secondly, faith in Abel, but unbelief in Cain. Hence, observe, it is said that God had respect unto Abel first; there is election; and to his offering because offered in faith, looking by faith to the Messiah that was to come; while on the contrary, unto Cain and to his offering God had not respect, - not to Cain; there is rejection; nor to his offering, for "the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord," and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." But "by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," &c. The excellence wholly consisted in faith; for, literally, Cain's was as good as Abel's (sic), only Abel in faith looked to Christ, and Cain trusted in his own obedience.

I shall now leave the account of Manoah and proceed further, as it respects all real believers in general. I will mention some of the ways in which the children of men have a discovery of God; which consists in His attributes and perfections as well as the works of His hand; and this is coming a little nearer home.

First, in the works of creation; as the apostle Paul tells us: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1:20) and no man that properly surveys the works of creation, — of man, beasts, birds, and all creeping things, together with all the fish of the sea, the plants of the earth and all its fruits, together with the terrestrial globe, the starry heavens, sun,

moon, &c., the rivers, sea, &c.; I say these things, with many more, clearly prove the great Creator of all, unless a man is wholly given up to the devil and hardness of heart to deny it. But.

Secondly, God is seen as a God of providence, in that He provides for all the human race. It is He that giveth the early and latter rain to bring forth the precious fruits of the earth. (James 5:7) "The eyes of all wait upon Him, and He giveth them their meat in due season. He openeth His hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." (Psa. 145:16) The holy word plentifully shows all this; and it is obvious enough to all. It is He that can send plenty, and it is He that can send a famine for man's sin: "A fruitful land maketh He barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." (Psa. 107:34)

But I shall not enlarge here; but come more to the meaning of our text and to Christian experience; which I shall take up in two particulars:

I. The views a Christian has of God *in the law*.

II. The views he has of Him as *in Christ Jesus*. In this twofold point of light God's family see God; sometimes in the one and sometimes in the latter; not only at their first conversion, but *till death*; and it is needful to enforce these things, and that we are as likely to have a discovery of God in the law *afterwards* as at first. Nothing regular can be fixed here, for God works in a sovereign way.

I. Under this head I shall take notice of five things: 1. The *holiness* of God; 2. *His righteousness*; 3. *His terrible majesty*. 4. *His justice*; and 5. *His immutability*; for God's family see Him, at times, in all these five things in a broken law. I will a little enlarge upon them, and show as I go on that such discoveries always occasion the same conclusion as Manoah made in our text: "We

shall surely die, because we have seen God;" and I will prove it as clearly as possible from the experience of Bible saints.

I. Then, the *holiness* of God. He is "glorious in holiness." His law is declared to be holy. "The law is holy, just, and good." It is the perfection of His holiness in that law which discovers our sin: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Here it is that we learn that we are quite opposite to God and His law, being unholy with the rest of mankind. The prophet Isaiah had a dreadful and alarming view of the holiness of God in the law: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim, each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." And then we are told the effect all this had on the prophet: "Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." You see that a sight of the holiness of God in the law discovered to the prophet his sin; for this light showed him all his uncleanness, his filthy heart and life, and that he was a lost man, in and of himself; also the state of those amongst whom he dwelt, — "a people of unclean lips;" the same light which showed John that "the whole world lieth in wickedness.

2. The *righteousness* of God. God is strictly righteous in all His ways, works, and actions, quite opposite to us. (John 17:25) His holy law is the rule of righteousness which we have all broken. Now when He opens our eyes to see that the law is spiritual, this terrifies us greatly, because we always considered that it

only had to do with outward things; and when this law is brought home to our conscience, all false hopes give way. Then we find that all our righteousness is filthy rags; for the light of God's Spirit shows us our ugly picture and how contrary we are to God's righteous law. A wanton eye we find is adultery; hatred in the heart is murder; and the thought of foolishness is sin; and we see that we are shut out of the kingdom of God for want of a perfect righteousness; for "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God nor of Christ." We can clearly see that God's ways are equal and ours unequal, and go on a long time trying to alter ourselves; but we appear worse and worse. We pray God also to help us; but he shows us more and more our filthy ragged righteousness, that it is a bed too short and a covering too narrow. This is seeing God. Joshua, the high priest, was well acquainted with this discovery of God. He was clothed in filthy garments, and Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. The publican also dared not to lift up his eyes to heaven.

3. The *terrible majesty* of God. This is another thing which we see. O! I can look back and remember the dreadful views I have had of the Almighty; which are greatly increased in this way, the true light shining upon the old man of sin, and showing us our past and present life. Terrible texts of Scripture also are applied that appear quite against us; and sometimes all this shall take place when it is a storm, windy might or dreadful thunderings and lightnings. I have felt as if I should be consumed altogether. And this David found, and said, "O that I had wings like a dove, I would hasten my escape from this windy storm and tempest!" He felt it spiritually if not literally. Also, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? And whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" Read the whole 139th Psalm. Job also, when God answered him out of the whirlwind, and asked him many

questions, as recorded in Job 38, about the foundations of the earth, the sea, the wicked, the thunder, lightning, rain, treasures of the snow, the beast of the earth, and leviathan, or the devil, Job was terrified and declared as follows: "Now mine eye seeth Thee." Such a sight as lie never before had had. And God asked him, "Have the gates of death been opened to thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" Of all the dreadful views and feelings we have, nothing is to be compared with this view of God arrayed in terrible majesty. The Israelites had it at the giving of the law, as you see in Exodus: "And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mount smoking. And when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off; and they said unto Moses. Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." (Exo. 20:18-21) It was something of this discovery of God that Manoah had in our text, when he uttered these words: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

4. *His justice*. This sword of justice threatens us from day to day. The first account we have of it is that it was placed at the east of the garden of Eden, after the fall of our first parents: "So He drove out the man, and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. 3:24) "If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me." (Deut. 32:4 1) Now, having such deep discoveries of our vile hearts, none others appear such enemies as we; neither do any others appear to hate God as we do; and, therefore, we expect that the sword of justice will cut us down as cumberers of the ground. Again: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things

written in the book of the law to do them.” “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, and in his heart departeth from God.” What, then, can you and I expect? We have not continued in all things nor in anything written in the law, consequently this curse reaches us, if God be true. And do we not trust in man and make flesh our arm, and depart continually (we do in heart) from God? Then certainly, if we believe that God is just, who says, “The soul that sinneth shall die,” and “I will not forget any of their works,” we must expect His curse. “My sword shall be bathed in heaven, and come down upon Idumea and upon the people of My curse to judgment.” (Isa. 34:5) Job says he escaped with the skin of his teeth. All this is a seeing God’s various perfections.

5. Again God is *immutable*. This, at such times, appears very alarming to think that God never can change. “He is without variableness or the shadow of turning, and what His soul desireth even that He doth.” In vain, therefore, do men expect that God will not be so strict, that *sincere* obedience (as they call it) will do, instead of *perfect* obedience. No! All that God hath said shall surely take place. He will by no means clear the guilty; so that all His threatenings will take place, either on the head of the sinner or the head of the Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ. But as Christ is hidden at this time, glad should we be to find some other way of escape; and when we find there is none, we would rejoice if we were like the beasts of the earth, not accountable to the Almighty. O! If we never had been born! Or could we but be annihilated! But, no! We must endure to all eternity (as we conclude) the wrath and vengeance of an angry, sin-avenging God.

(Part II, To be continued April Issue, includes an enlargement on the sight of God the elect have in His love, mercy, pity, compassion, goodness, graciousness, long-sufferings, kindness, and promise-making and promise-

keeping.)

LETTER FROM NIAGARA FALLS

From Robert Fekete

(**Note:** The little band of saints in N.Y. were fairly recently called by the grace of God from Catholicism. Through much tribulation, trials, and sufferings, they were effectually taught the precious truth of the freeness of grace in Christ Jesus and given a living hope in him. It was from the pages of old issues of the Gospel Standard that they learned much about the Old School Baptists. We believe we have found them well established in the experimental inward unction of the Spirit, and sound in the faith once delivered the saints. We commend them to our brethren every where.)

Dear Brother Stanley,

As the rain falls upon a small dry parched garden to give it refreshment and strength to grow so your letter came upon us. The time and arrival of your letter (though written earlier) was no mishap but of the excellent providence and grace of the great God Almighty.

When your letter was read aloud in our midst it was attended with the Spirit and power of God. The speaker, brother John Orzolick, trembled as he read; the listeners had silent tears streaming down their faces. But the trembling was not of fear, but of love. The tears were not tears of sorrow, but of joy unspeakable. The Lord so moved in my heart as to cry silently to the Lord thanking Him for His mercy which no human depths can reach. Also, as we sought the Lord in prayer, He gave us an unfeigned heart to go before Him boldly to the throne of grace. Dear sister Helen quivered and cried as she prayed along in silence with one of the members as he prayed aloud to the Lord. So dear Brother, we

thank you for your epistle of love to usward. May the Lord bless you! But we most of all thank the Lord; for your written words alone, if not attended with the power of God, would have been fruitless. To the Lord belongs all honor and glory and power for ever.

If you could have been here. I feel we would have all fied to the front to embrace you with tears of joy and gladness.

A brother has left being very discouraged in the way. As we love him so dearly, we are very perplexed and troubled in soul. Though your letter helped greatly. Sometimes we, or I, get so caught up in our own self problems arid afflictions that we become forgetful and neglectful of others. May the Lord forgive me of such pride and lack of concern. If only I were aware how downcast our brother was in spirit, then “maybe” I could have helped. But alas, if one brother is in darkness, how can he be his brother next to him who is also in darkness. May God be gracious and cause his light to shine forth, not dealing with us bitterly anymore. Let us be called by “Naomi” (which is pleasant) and not by “Mara” (which is: the Lord bath dealt bitterly).

We have now been gathering together on Saturday’s (besides Sundays and Wednesdays) to seek the Lord in prayer, per. adventure He may give us in units a spirit and heart to pray. Brother John Palazzo once asked me a question. “Would you pray for me if I asked you? Well, my answer quite unconcernedly was, “Sure, why shouldn’t I.” Then he told me he once asked you, brother Stanley, to pray for him and you replied. “If the Lord moves my heart to do so.” And, dear brother, I must agree with you. For what good is a prayer if not attended by the anointing oil and sweet incense of the Spirit of God. It would be no better than a Pharisee who for a pretense prays long hours aloud. I fear I have gone to the Lord much too often in a formal legalistic attitude; thus in vain. Nonetheless, though, we are to pray one for another, pray

without ceasing. All of the Lord’s prophets and apostles in ages past have been men of prayer. Who in this day and age has experienced such solemn prayers as David, or Jonah in the belly of the whale, or has gone to the Lord in a spirit of thanksgiving as that of Hannah? Oh, I would to God He would be as gracious to us and grant His blessedness of prayer in our hearts!

There seems, at the present, a little revival going on in our assembly; more unity, love towards the Lord and each other; sorrow and grief are giving way to gladness and joy; unrest is being replaced by the presence of peace, and deadness is being removed by a life in Christ. Though we have much to be desired, the Lord is at present being gracious to us. I pray and trust the Lord will continue to remove us from our dead state of spirituality; that He may lift us up on eagles’ wings to the top of His Mount; that His banner may be raised for the good of His glory and honor; that He may keep us ever humble and seeking communion with His Dear Son Jesus Christ.

I would like to speak of a member in our church who is unable to write, though would if he could. He is my brother in the flesh and spirit, brother Charlie. He has a problem reading due to his eye-sight — being nearly blind. But beyond this, he has abilities beyond the greatest of speakers and writers. He has a very quiet, meek spirit, compassion, and an unfeigned love; always looking at the best in others, thinking himself lower esteemed. But bless the Lord, he has encouraged me many times. I grieve much when he has fallen into the world and have become very joyful when he seeks Godly living. The world may consider such a one as of low estate, yet if he has salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ, he is esteemed in the kingdom of God as great. It has many times taught me that the Lord is no respecter of persons. That having even a crumb from the Lord shed abroad in his heart

is (in the eyes of the Lord) a greater wisdom than all of the wisest men in the world combined. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." And why did the Lord so graciously work? "That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." So, dear brother, when I consider brother Charlie, it brings to remembrance what I am without the Lord — nothing — yea, a speck of dust on a dung hill. He is often my standard when I do speak, that my speech may not be with wise words of the world, or of things complex for only the scholarly Bible student. But of the simplicity that is in Christ; to be able to bring forth, as Christ did in simple terms and examples, the salvation of God. I am quite weary of all the debates and arguments that are only for the wise and scholarly. May we ever be found speaking Christ crucified and risen, and not found arguing matters which glorify the flesh. I, at one time, left my first love and it was a very grievous experience. So I wish never to get side-tracked again (the Lord willing) from the preciousness that is in Christ Jesus our Lord; that we may be found growing deeper in the grace of God, going on the perfection "to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, "that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God."

So, may the Lord who dwells between the two cherubims above the mercy-seat grant you his blessing and His grace.

A most unworthy servant of the Lord,

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Dear Brother Dearman,
(and any other brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ)

Many thanks for the two sample issues of your fine publication. The Predestinarian. I inclose my check for an annual subscription.

I imagine you got my name from W.T. Berry, whose "Old Faith Contender" I enjoyed for some years before he retired. I was sorry to see him discontinue publication (and I wrote him so), and am glad to see you "pick up the slack", so to speak.

I ask for your prayers. I've been out of work for five months, with very poor prospects. But I trust our Lord to "put me in my place," the place He would have me. He has been humbling me of my pride, self-centeredness, and self-sufficiency, all of which I have needed, along with patience — also not one of my virtues, heretofore.

I am an avid reader of the Puritan writers (and of our century, Arthur W. Pink), as modern day Christian (?) writers and writings do not give forth the whole counsel of our Sovereign God, to whom all glory and honor belongs!

I also sent the first sample issue of your magazine to the Chapel Library, Box 1335, Venice, Florida 33595, run by Chaplain and Mrs. Lawrence Nelson. They are a sovereign grace tract and lending library you may or may not know about. (We are familiar with their work — Ed.)

I pray our God and Saviour Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified in your ministry and lives.

Ed Kokesch

P.S. – Up this way there are no Strict Baptists, Primitive Baptists, Puritan Reformed, or other denominations/churches teaching God’s Sovereign and Free Grace. The mainline churches are liberal, social gospel, and works oriented. The R.C.’s control much of the political and religious life up here. The so-called fundamental Protestant churches are mostly Arminian. The few Dutch Reformed and Lutheran churches pay “lip service” to Luther and Calvin and are mostly worldly. So I have no church fellowship or pastoral reference, and little real Christian fellowship. Care to write?

NOTE: We are more aware now than when we first began publication how many there are in like circumstances with the above correspondences. There are precious few today that appear to love the truth and godliness, but in our areas in the South there are sufficient number to form churches. Pray for them.

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Editorial Dept..

Enclosed are articles in “Reformed Witness,” mailed to me that I think are particularly good, especially the article quoting Benjamin B. Warfield, “Selected Shorter Writings,” about the natural man’s rebellion being in the hands of an absolute God. Warfield states, “A God who could or would make a creature He could not or would not control, is no God. The moment He should make such a creature He would, of course, abdicate His throne.” The whole brief article is such an accurate statement of divine sovereignty that it is worth publishing. Warfield was about the last of the great old school Presbyterian theologians, a very godly man.

The proclaimed word of God is not a means of regeneration, which is due to a direct act of the Holy Spirit, but it is a means to set forth the faith to be believed. Christ said, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” Thus as we read the New Testament (the Gospel and Acts especially) we find that men usually proclaim first the Gospel. Thus in the presence of the proclaimed word, the Spirit regenerates and enables the elect sinner to believe the proclaimed word of God, and thus be *converted*. Lazarus was *dead* and could not aid in being made alive. But Christ commanded men to take away the obstruction, the stone. Then He cried, “Lazarus, come forth.” Then He commanded men to *loose* him from the grave clothes. We are to proclaim the word of God that removes obstructions of false doctrine, misapprehensions, etc. We are to, with meekness instruct those who oppose, states Paul, that perhaps God may give them repentance. Then after men receive life by a direct act of the Holy Spirit we are to help them out of the grave clothes of the old man by Gospel instruction, etc. God does what we cannot do, but commands us to preach the Gospel to every creature, which is to last to the end of the age, for He promises to be with us in this matter unto the end of the world (age). Thus I understand the matter.

The Protestant Reformed withdrew from the Christian Reformed when they compromised the Gospel that men call Calvinism (which their theologian Hoeksema says he hates to call an “ism”). The Christian Reformed added a statement to their creed that God loves the non-elect and gives them (nonsaving) common grace which enables Him with well meaning intention to offer them salvation (which of course He has provided only for the elect). Now the Protestant Reformed say the Gospel is a savor of life unto life to the elect, and death to death to the reprobate. It certainly is illogical to

have God offer with well meant intentions the Gospel salvation to the reprobate and give them a half-power, but no power to come to Him! This idea has now been also proclaimed in The Presbyterian Journal, and anybody who rejects this view is called a “hyper-Calvinist.” Also people with an “exaggerated view” of God’s sovereignty by the same writer are described as hyper-Calvinists. So then Calvin himself must have been a hyper-Calvinist! Since God is eternally and absolutely sovereign how can His sovereignty be exaggerated? There was God and nothing. He could have set up an infinite variety of universes, in any order of time or way He chose. He chose this order of things. Since He is absolute in wisdom, knowledge, power, whatever is the final end of the universe must have been His first intention.

Yours truly, Walter Branning.

SOME THOUGHTS ON PREDESTINATION By Benjamin Warfield

“A great man of the last generation began the preface of the splendid little book he was writing on this subject, with the words: ‘Happy would it be for the church of Christ and for the world, if Christian ministers and Christian people could be content to be disciples —learners.’ He meant to intimate that if only we were all willing to sit simply at the feet of the inspired writers and take them at their word, we should have no difficulties with Predestination. The difficulties we feel with regard to Predestination are not derived from the Word. The Word is full of it, because it is full of God, and when we say God and mean GOD — we have said Predestination.

“Our difficulties with Predestination arise from a, no doubt not unnatural, unwillingness to acknowledge ourselves to be wholly at the disposal of another. We wish to be at our own

disposal. We wish ‘to belong to ourselves,’ and we resent belonging, especially belonging absolutely. to anybody else, even if that anybody else be God. We are in the mood of the singer of the hymn beginning, ‘I was a wandering sheep,’ when he declares of himself, ‘I would not be controlled.’ We will not be controlled. Or, rather, to speak more accurately, we will not admit that we are controlled.

“I say that it is more accurate to say that we will not admit that we are controlled. For we are controlled, whether we admit it or not. To imagine that we are not controlled is to imagine that there is no God. For when we say God, we say control. If a single creature which God has made has escaped beyond His control, at the moment that he has done so he has abolished God. A God who could or would make a creature whom He could not or would not control, is no God. The moment He should make such a creature He would, of course, abdicate His throne. The universe He had created would have ceased to be His universe; or rather it would cease to exist — for the universe is held together only by the control of God.” — Reformed Witness.

GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN PREDESTINATION

If God is the sovereign God, Whose counsel stands forever, Whose will can never be frustrated, and Whose purpose is not disannulled, then we must conclude that His will and determination is sovereign, particularly in salvation. It is not he that man is the one who determines, by his own will, whether or not he will be saved. Certainly man must come to God by faith in salvation. Surely, he must seek God, love *Him*, and serve Him out of a *willing* heart. But ultimately, if God is sovereign, salvation must depend solely upon *His* sovereign choice. For

He is the infinite Creator Who has the right and the power to do with His finite creatures exactly what He pleases — even with respect to our eternal destiny. Thus the apostle Paul asks, “hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath afore prepared unto glory?” (Rom. 9:21-23) God is the sovereign Potter and we, His creatures are the clay. Just as an earthly potter has sovereign power over the clay, to make it into whatever he pleases, so God sovereignly makes us into whatever He pleases.

He makes some to be “vessels of mercy” which He has “afore prepared unto glory.” These are God’s elect people, those chosen by Him to salvation in Christ. Of these people the apostle says, “But we are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation..* (II Thess. 2:13). Before the world was created, God in His eternal decree and counsel selected certain ones to be His special people. To these people God, in His mercy, grants faith and repentance, and all the blessings of salvation, so that they are called “vessels of mercy.” Thus we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. ..*” (Eph. 1:4) Oh, indeed, we choose God, but only after He has chosen us and grants unto us the *power* to choose Him! Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you...” (John 15:16).

The apostle Paul also refers to “the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” For if

God is sovereign, His will must not only be the determining factor in salvation, but also in destruction. God not only selects some to be saved and glorified, but He also appoints others to “destruction.” Jude refers to these people when he speaks of “certain men crept in unawares, who were of old *ordained to this condemnation.*” (vs.4) The apostle Peter refers to them as “Being disobedient: whereunto also *they were appointed*” (I Pet. 2:7). To these people God does not grant faith and repentance, so that they continue in their sin and wickedness. He looks upon them, not in love, but in His wrath. Thus they are referred to as, “the vessels of wrath.”

No wonder the Scriptures declare, “So then it is not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that *runneth*, but *of God* that sheweth mercy.” (Rom. 9:16) Our salvation can never be based upon either our works or our will. If we trust Christ as our Saviour and have the hope of glory within us, it is because of but one thing — God’s sovereign will and good pleasure which appointed us to glory. For our God is the God, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*” (II Tim. 1:9) “His own purpose and grace” is nothing less than His gracious decree of election which is the fountain of every saving good. — Houck, in Reformed Witness.

PREDESTINATION

By Silas Durand, 1901

One says, “If the advocates of the theory of unlimited predestination object to the application of their theory to all the acts and movements of beasts, birds and creeping things, as well as the acts of all men, as working together for good to them who love God, they should cease to misapply Scripture

to brace up their dangerous doctrine.”

That doctrine which is founded on the Rock does not need bracing up. But does the brother (sic) forget the many instances recorded in the Scriptures, in which the acts and movements of beasts and birds and creeping things, as well as the acts of wicked men, were especially directed by the Lord to the fulfillment of His wise purposes? Does he forget that there is a special covenant made for His people in the Gospel day’ “with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground?” (Hosea 2:18) What is there worthy of ridicule in the belief that even the mote which flies in the sunbeam, as well as the sparrow in the sky, is directed by the Lord? The frogs and insects were important in the execution of God’s judgments upon Egypt. The frogs and flies and caterpillars filled the land of Egypt, but their movements were so directed and controlled that not one, not even one of the lice, could passover the line that divided Egypt from Goshen. The Lord sent fiery serpents to punish Israel, ravens to feed Elijah, and two bears (only two) to vindicate the character of Elisha as a prophet. The lion must slay the disobedient prophet, but could not tear his body nor hurt the ass; yet he must wait quietly by until the other prophet should arrive to witness the fulfillment of God’s word by him. (I Kings 8:14) Also in other cases it is recorded that lions were directed and controlled by the Lord. (I Kings 20:36; II Kings 17:25; Daniel 6:20). It was not by chance that Herod was eaten by’ worms: the angel of the Lord was sent to smite him with that fearful judgment. Also the viper was directed to fasten upon Paul’s arm, that the Barbarians might know that he was an honest man. (Acts 28:3-6) The dove was returned by the Lord with the olive leaf, and the flight and time of every sparrow is so bounded and controlled that “one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” (Matt.

10:29)

To me this is a most precious doctrine. It is glorious to know that in all events, and over all things, “The Lord God omnipotent doth reign.” As in the case of Job, so in the case of all the Lord’s people, he designs all their trials, and cause and manner of them, and no enemy can go beyond the limits of God’s purpose in his power to afflict, and all the wicked designs of men and devils shall result in the final good of the Lord’s people, and in His own declarative glory. Jesus said to Pilate. “Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.” So Job recognizes only God’s good hand in all the evil that came unto him through the devices of Satan, saying, “Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?” So Joseph said to his brethren, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his way’s past finding out.” “For of Him, and through him, and to him are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.” — *Fragments*, page 97.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

We appreciate the names and addresses and subscriptions our readers have been sending us. Many of those receiving the magazine express a joy in knowing there are a people who love the things expressed in the selections we print. Some express thanks to the Lord by someone sending them the paper.

From time to time we hope to share some of these letters with you; especially those that express soundness in doctrine and inward spiritual experiences.