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WHAT IS "HARDSHELLISM"?

By S.C. Phillips

It will not be necessary for many of our readers to be introduced to the writer in the general framework of that faith commonly termed "hardshell." To others, it seems only fair to say the writer does not come to this unbiblical term without a certain amount of bias. He has not always been so classified, but was first accused of "preaching hardshellism" when it became known in the "New Testament", or Sovereign Grace churches that he preached that one had to *first* have an impartation of spiritual life in order to effectually and spiritually *hear* and *believe* the Gospel of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. After observing the courses of action by fellow ministers and in reaction to the "duty -faith" which they coupled with "Calvinism" — the writer, in time, located that great body of people who loved and rejoiced in the full sovereignty of the Eternal Godhead — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, he willingly and joyfully submitted to that awful "epithet" of hardshellism, and by the grace of Almighty God was enabled to cast his lot with the suffering saints of the most high God.

At this juncture I should point out the definition and historical aspects of the word "hardshell": First: by definition, a hardshell is: "Adj. uncompromising, confirmed — a conservative." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, G. C. Merriam Co., 1974)

For such men, guided by the highest standards of intellectual scholarship, a Hardshell is someone who is firm, well established, and fully persuaded upon a point at issue; and as such cannot in good conscience yield to a compromise which weakens or destroys his position. Surely, in the context of divine revelation of the truth of God, every child of God is commanded to be uncompromising and confirmed in the

defense of the “faith once delivered to the saints.” “Therefore, my beloved brethren, *be ye steadfast, unmoveable*, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (I Cor. 15:58) In the face of their adversaries — who in truth are also adversaries of God and all righteousness - they are thus exhorted, “Be ye sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: *whom resist stedfast in the faith*, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

Therefore, poor afflicted outcast before a self-esteeming world, hold fast that which God has so freely of His grace committed unto you by His revelation. It is no dishonor to be a “hardshell”; but rather, it is an honor you cannot have deserved, to suffer for His Name’s sake.

Second: historically, the etymology of the word “hardshell” as it is related to religion in America, developed over the *extent* of the redemptive work of Christ. It had no direct relationship to the subject of *regeneration* at the beginning of the Old School — New School Controversy. The New School followed the theory of Andrew Fuller that the death of Christ was *sufficient* for all mankind, and *efficient* for the elect only. This gave them the motivating impulse to advance their mission enterprise world-wide. But the Old School foresaw the consequence of such a theory and insisted upon unity of the *scope* and *design* of His blessed redemption. Simply stated, the central issue was whether Christ Jesus shed His blood for the full and complete free salvation of all the elect people of God *only*; or whether He died merely to make possible the salvation of all of Adam’s posterity. The issue was not a controversy in American churches until the introduction of Fuller’s humanistic and sentimental desire to

convert the world to Christianity. This theory was introduced precisely during the Great Enlightenment and the benevolent surge of social reform emotionalism of the nineteenth century. It captivated the sentimental and utopian element in England and America. But the overall tone of this movement was totally contrary to Biblical revelation. There can be no room given in true religion for the overthrow of the eternal justice of God as displayed in the damnation of the wicked, reprobate, and base generation of Adam’s posterity. True “Calvinists” adhered to the Scripture. To yield to Fullerism was to overthrow the faith once delivered to the saints, and to destroy the foundation of divine revelation and experiential salvation by the effectual work of the Spirit of God. There was (nor is) no compromise of this issue. Either Christ died for all of Adam’s posterity, or He died only for some. And if He died for all without exception, then the record of Holy Writ was uninspired and Christianity a false religion; for the record of divine revelation was, and is, that Christ died for His people, who were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. If He died for all of Adam’s race then there can be no election of grace. If He died for all without exception, and if any perish, He miserably failed, and His Divinity is made a lie. In that issue, there was but one viable position for the elect of God, and that position was “hardshellism” — uncompromising, unyielding, stubborn, and tenacious.

In America, the advocates of unlimited atonement were most ably supported by William Staughton, Recording Secretary of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, founder and first president of the Baptist Board of Foreign and Domestic Missions, and Mr. Luther Rice. William Staughton was the organization initiator of the movement, and issued the call for the first convention of Baptists to meet in Philadelphia in 1813. The

appearance of the Arminian Congregationalist preacher, (turned “Baptist”) Luther Rice; having been rejected by the Baptists in England, and arriving in time for a newspaper promotion by William Staughton, was introduced to the delegates as they assembled in 1814. He was the most capable beggar for money to be found in America, and was made the first Agent of the Board for this end. It was Rice, who while driving his buggy to collect money, reportedly saw a bright light at noon-day. And it came to him how he should organize the loosely knit Baptists into a mighty organization. The “revealed” design was very simple. It was nothing less than the old Consociation of the Puritan Congregational Church in which he was reared, educated, and excluded. It was that organization which first sent him out as a “missionary” to India. It was Rice whom Gilbert Beebe exposed with documents for robbing the treasury of the Board for his own designs, and so embarrassed the Board that they had to reassign him to other work to prevent his sticky fingers from getting into the Baptists’ till so readily!

The Board set out as its first task to collect all the minutes of Baptist associations in America. They were aided in this task by the historian David Benedict (the founder of the first Sunday School in America in 1820; and the first to place instrumental music in a Baptist church; and the first to have a trained choir). That work was completed in 1814, and the *first* appeal for mission support can be found in the minutes of Baptists associations of 1814, 1815, and 1816. Who were those mission supporters? Look at the associational records. The list includes Regular Baptists, Separate Baptists, Particular Baptists, Freewill Baptists, General Baptists, Six Principle Baptists, and Sabbath-day Baptists. Thus, the missionary organization became catholic, or umbrella, embracing any kind of “Baptists” willing to join in the unified effort to

“missionize” the world. With this kind of structure, doctrinal truth had to be compromised for the sake of unity — hence, “anti-hardshell”!

The premise of the Fullerite movement was that millions of heathen were dying and going to hell, merely because they did not have the gospel (according to Fuller and party — Arminianism) preached to them. Lying beneath that premise was more than they at first dared to admit, i.e., these, who could be saved (if they had the means) were elect people of God, and these elect would go to hell unless the Gospel was preached to them. It is this premise which is the father of “gospel regenerationism.” It forced a modification of Calvinism immediately among the adherents of the missionary system. God did not, they reasoned, choose individuals particularly to salvation; rather, He chose a *plan of salvation* which made His *invitation* an honest one to those who were reprobates. It was squarely on this point that the word “*Hardshell*” came into usage.

Gilbert Beebe, John Leland (who was present at the first meeting of the Philadelphia Board) and the host of predestinarian Baptists over the country took the Fullerites to task. All of the leading Fullerites had in time past been familiar with the doctrine of sovereign grace. They had all, to the man, been ordained by old school churches which were predestinarians holding to what was known as the Five Points of Calvinism. The Fullerites, to the man were betrayers of Christ and the truth, and the Baptist faith. And Beebe had no mercy on them in his defense of the faith. Debates raged all over the American frontier between the two parties. And the Predestinarian Old School party quickly found that the most devastating way to prick a nerve was with the declarative statements of Christ and the apostles. “He SHALL save His people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21); “They SHALL hear My voice” etc. A Fullerite dreaded being

faced down by a “Thus saith the Lord” which most of his hearers knew full well he had once espoused!

Through these debates, the doctrine of free grace was refreshingly brought forth to the edification and love of multitudes — many who had not heard them in past decades as the ministry had become diluted with moral issues. The Predestinarian Old School Baptists grew rapidly, and many new churches sprung up in the wilderness. The Mission party offered an easy and simple (and often simple-minded) alternative to the necessity of the New Birth for natural religionists, and they also grew rapidly. It is this, perhaps, which explains how the Baptists, in general, became some of the largest bodies of religion in America today. The movement helped purify Predestinarian Old School Baptists by driving the Arminian and nominal believers into the Mission camp. The movement strengthened the doctrinal foundation of the Old School party, and in the end, by the grace of God, led to a period of some of the greatest and soundest ministries with which the church has been blessed in America. It was in this separation that those ministers who defeated the Fullerites with the SHALLS of the Scripture were first termed “Hard Shall Preachers.” Quickly, they were dubbed “Hardshells” and this word moved into the vocabulary of Americans and our dictionaries.

Just a brief comment may be useful here. In the past few months a new term has been introduced. Only time will tell if it becomes permanent. The term is “New Hardshellism.” It is well when a new term is coined that it should be more accurate than the old term which it replaces. The author of the new term gave its definition as being the same as “Old Hardshellism” except that it referred to those free grace Missionaries who believe (as the “Old Hardshells”) that regeneration was by the Spirit without the means of the gospel. This writer begs to differ, based upon the true

origin of what is being called “Old Hardshellism.” Old “hardshellism” was applied to the defenders of *Particular Redemption* and *Limited Atonement* of Christ for the elect only. It did *not* involve the doctrine of Holy Spirit regeneration, per se, for even the New School party gave lip service to this truth for a time. A better definition of “New Hardshellism” would be: “belief by those who have newly been taught by the Holy Spirit that the Eternal Godhead is *One*, and in perfect harmony in the *attribute of sovereignty*.” It is in fact applied to those free grace ministers and believers in the new free grace movement who have been taught that God the Father is Sovereign in all things, and in His choice of the objects of His love; that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Eternal Son of God, and that He exercised His full sovereignty in the full and complete redemption of those whom His Father gave to Him in the covenant of grace before the world began (Eph. 1:4-6); and, the Holy Spirit — one in essence with the Godhead — is sovereign in applying the accomplished redemption of Christ to the elect in their regeneration, calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. Unless I have misunderstood these brethren (whom I have met personally), this is in fact what they are contending for so sweetly and so powerfully before their hearers — and I will add: which hearers appear to be receiving with joy and edification in the most holy faith.

Since it is said that these “New Hardshellers” have no Scripture to support their belief in the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in giving life to dead elect sinners, I offer, for them, a good reply from the pen of an “Old Hardsheller” —none other than Gilbert Beebe. If the predestinarians can prove conclusively that not ONE TEXT used by gospel-regeneration advocates will support their carnal decision-making (though called by any other practice) scheme, surely, the

defense of that scheme will be exposed as foolishness.

In the following pages, we offer these selections for the readers' consideration. If any are interested in reading more on the subject, please acquire the *Editorials* of Gilbert Beebe from the Signs of the Times, Inc., P.O. Box 1250, Salisbury, Md. 21801. Ask for Volumes 3 & 4, which are now in print. The best issues on the Great Baptist Separation are found in volumes 1 and 2, which are now out of print; but they may be found in libraries and archives. These volumes contain the exposures of the Rice issue and Judson's Arminianism.

MEANS

By Gilbert Beebe, 1846

(Editor's Remarks: We appreciate the Signs of the Times for permission to reprint these old articles from their past historical pages. We seldom cut any of them short, but for brevity, we leave off the first two queries by the New School Baptist to Beebe, and go directly to the *challenge* in Query 3, which deals with the doctrinal issue at hand, i.e., does the Scripture teach gospel regeneration in the texts supplied by the Missionaries for that position? We have in times past put together a booklet of these articles, as *The Sovereignty Of God In The Great Commission and Holy Spirit Regeneration*. Anyone wishing a free copy may write S.C. Phillips, Rt. 4, Box 157, Quitman, Ms 39355 and we will supply them while they last.)

3. The third proposition has the form of a *challenge*, rather than of a query, and our querist takes firm ground not of a pupil instruction without controversy, but of one whose mind is fully made up on the subjects involved. "If the brethren can reconcile the difficulties which he has started, "&c Thus it seems he would task the anti-means party

with means to use in his own conversion, and if he cannot be convinced without the use of means of his own appointment, he will not be converted at all. This is ultra ground; it is going the whole figure. But has he really determined that the Lord shall riot convince him of error in any other way? Alas for such rashness! For our part we know of no *anti-means party* in the church of God. The church is a unit, one body, not a heterogeneous mass of factions, and although her borders may be infested with the retailers of heresy, she to whom the sacred name of *church* belongs has but one Lord, one faith, one baptism. She is called in one hope of her calling, and all her children are taught of God. Those who cannot bear her doctrine, though they may have a name to live, are dead, and belong not to her.

4. "*The entrance of Thy word giveth light.*" A strange passage this to prove that God depends on means, or makes use of means in quickening dead sinners! What is the Word? How doth it enter? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This Word is eternal life, living and abiding for ever where it enters; and having entered, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." In Him (the Word which enters) was life, and the life was the light of men. Well might the Holy Ghost through the psalmist declare, "The entering of it giveth light." But how does it enter? "God who commanded the light to shine *out* of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (II Cor. 4:6) The vulture's eye cannot perceive the application of means, as they are called, in this. Reference is made to the creation of the world. What means did God use when He commanded light to shine out of darkness? "Let there be light," He said, "and there was light." He spake the word, and it stood fast; He commanded, it was done. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven,

and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall MY word be that goeth out of MY MOUTH; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isa. 55:10, 11). Those who believe that God regenerates, quickens and communicates light to the dead, independently of means or second causes, ask for no *stronger testimony* than we have in the very text first quoted for the refutation of this glorious doctrine. We certainly should doubt the evidences of regeneration in any man who would tell us that the entrance of the word which giveth light, in the sense of the text, was designed to mean the words of ministers or saints in preaching, warning or exhorting dead sinners. When, where and how has a dead sinner ever been enlightened but by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost? The natural or dead man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Cor. 2:14) God has hid these things from them; and they cannot see the kingdom, nor the things of that kingdom, except they be born again. (John 3:3, 7) That an interchange of ideas from one man to another, even in a natural or unregenerate state, may enlighten the natural judgment of man in theories of religion, and cleanse them externally like a washed sow, or purge them like a sickened dog, and leave them still with all their unclean propensities, unchanged, to return to their vomit or wallowing in the mire, is not denied; and that the operation of means will produce mocking Ishmaels and carnal, graceless professors of religion, is very apparent; but the sons of God, the heirs of glory, are “born of an incorruptible seed,” by the entering of that word which *liveth* and abideth for ever. Nothing can be more clear than that they only

who are begotten of God are the sons of God, while they who are begotten of means are the children of means.

5. The next text which we are required to harmonize with our view of salvation alone of God, is Hebrews 4:12. *“For the Word of God is quick [or life] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a DISCERNER of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in HIS sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the EYES of HIM with WHOM we have to do.”*

If our correspondent had told us wherein he thought there was a want of harmony, we might direct our remarks to such difficulties, but for our life we can see no discord between this Scripture and the doctrine we hold. If he has brought this text forward to apply to words which are preached, or articulation of sounds from the preachers’ voices, he has greatly mistaken the text, as nothing could have been farther from the apostle’s meaning, or more remote from the subject of Gospel rest, on which he was treating. The Word of God is vital, or quick; but not the word of man. “It is the Spirit,” says Jesus, “that quickeneth, the flesh, (or means) profiteth nothing. The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,” or quick. (John 6:63) Now if brother Sperry has preachers out in Ohio who can speak life-giving words, words that are quick, or quickening, let them go on and raise the dead and cast out devils, and so demonstrate that they have the power which they claim; but let them not appeal to the Bible, for that Book bears testimony against their presumptuous pretensions, and stains the pride of human ambition. Let it not be forgotten that that Word comes only from the mouth of God; and it comes not thence as the result of means, but it comes as comes the rain and snow. What means would brother Sperry propose to

produce rain or snow? and if human means cannot produce an *effect in nature*, how shall they be effectual in things which are of a *spiritual nature*? His words are such as never man spake. No man's words can *discern* the thoughts and intents of the heart, nor divide asunder the soul and spirit, but the Word of God can do all this.

6. "*Is not My word like fire,*" saith the Lord, "*and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*" All that are born of God know that God's words are as represented in these figures, but they also know that man's words and man's means are nothing like these figures; hence this passage we use to prove the opposite of what is called the means doctrine, unless we can be made acquainted with some system of means by which we have power to cause God's words to be so spoken as to break the rocks, divide the seas, open the doors of death, and close the gates of hell.

7. "*The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.*" But can men utter the voice of the Son of God? If not, how shall they use that voice as a means of saving sinners? Can that voice be uttered by any but Him who called Saul, and who calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out? "*I will cause My glorious voice to be heard, and will shew the letting down of My arm,*" &c., saith God. Will the admirers of the doctrine of means tell us whether that causes what they call first or second cause? God will not only utter His voice, but He will CAUSE it to be heard, and we confidently affirm that there is not another or a second power in heaven, earth or hell, that can cause the voice of God to be heard. We will say to brother Sperry in relation to this text, as Jesus said to the means using Jews, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth," &c.; but what means does brother Sperry expect shall be used to produce either the

utterance, or the effect of that voice.

8. "*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*" Why so careful to keep back the other part of this text? "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are Life,*" and that exclusively of all fleshly power or means. Can the words of Jesus of spirit and life be spoken by any other than Himself, or can others say to the winds and to the waves of the sea, "Be still!" and be obeyed?

9. "*In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel*" (I Cor. 4:15) This text being the only one that has the slightest appearance of favoring the means doctrine, requires a careful investigation. The grand question involved is whether Paul was contending that the children of God, as such, were begotten by him, that he had regenerated them, had begotten them by proxy, or whether he used the term in the same sense as that in which he speaks of fathers and mothers in the church of God. One thing is beyond dispute that is in this text; he claims to be the father of such as he said he had begotten. No begetting of his could make them the children of any other than himself, nor did he claim beyond this. He says that he begat Onesimus in his bonds, and in the same sense he claims Onesimus as his own son. In the same figure of speech he claims Timothy and Titus as his sons. Not that he claimed to have been the cause of their regeneration any more than he was of their election, or redemption. The Corinthian brethren had many, or might in Paul's supposition have had ten thousand instructors in Christ Jesus; yet they had not in the same relation and figurative sense. He does not claim that he was the instrument which God had used in begetting them, or that his preaching had been an instrumental cause or means of their regeneration, for that would not have constituted them his children, nor him their father. To us the sense of the

apostle's words imply that their standing being like that of his own in Jesus Christ, by the election of grace, the redemption which is by the blood of Christ and the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, God had bestowed on him apostolic gifts, by which he was to occupy the distinction among his brethren of a father in the sense of the figure wherein he also spake of having travailed in birth for the distracted saints at Galatia, until Christ should be formed in them. (Gal. 4:19) But, it will readily be perceived that travail had no illusion to their regeneration, as they had experienced that work long before, and the matter in which he travailed in birth for them, was that which formed the ground on which he called them his little children. As the children of God, Christ had been previously formed in them, they had began in the Spirit, had run well, &c., but they had become disordered by heresy, the means doctrine had got in among them and had bewitched them, and the apostle travailed for them until they should be restored to Gospel order. Those who can believe that even Paul can or could produce the quickening and regeneration of a soul, must be strangers to the work. We once held a public debate with an Arminian Presbyterian preacher, who contended that Paul actually regenerated all the members of the Corinthian church, but we never expected to have lived long enough to hear the absurd and ridiculous assertion made by a professedly Old School Baptist.

10. *"Of His own will begat He us, with the word of truth."* (James 1:18) Instead of honored instrumentalities, the whole power of producing the conception and consequent birth of the children of God is in this text accredited to "His own will" alone, that is, to the sovereign, immutable will of God, which proves the position we have taken in the preceding item of our reply. In the sense in which they were begotten of God, they were not begotten by Paul. Perhaps the means

venders will try to make some capital of the words "with the word of his power," construing the word of His power to imply instrumentality. One of two things must be intended by these words: "With the word," they were begotten by the Father of lights, spoken of in the context. Christ is the only begotten of the Father; but as a begotten emanation from the Godhead, He is the life of His people, Head of His body, the church, Mediator, &c.; as God He is self-existent, equally with the Father; but as the life and immortality of His spiritual body, He is the beginning of the creation of God, and the First-born of every creature; and in this sense He only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, [not even by the magic power of means] whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. Now the one production of spiritual life was what we understand to be the begetting of both the head and the body, so that if Christ as the Word is intended by James, the saints have a common origin with Christ their Head, and both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Or, secondly, if by the "word of truth" we are to understand his word, as used in Isaiah 55:10, still there is no room for Arminians to introduce a particle of means. The world was created by the same word. God said, "Let there be light." It was by the omnipotence of His word that all things came into existence, and we may with the same propriety talk of God's having used means in the creation, as in quickening His children.

11. *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever."* (I Peter 1:23)

This is about the last text we would have expected to see brought forward to prove that the sons of God are born of such corruptible

seed as means, works, instrumentalities, &c. How any enlightened christian can think that the words uttered by men are spirit and life, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, that they are an incorruptible seed, and that they live and abide forever, is truly more than we can comprehend; and to believe that such is the case, requires a stretch of what is called charity, beyond our ability. Is it possible that any who are born of God can believe that the incorruptible seed is communicated by what they call second causes? That seed which results in a spiritual birth, must of necessity proceed from a spiritual source. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It is, so even in the unchanging laws of creation; to every tree and herb as well as to the animal creation God gave seed in itself for the propagation of its kind, but in no case seed in one tree or plant to produce those of another and different species. (Editor's note: I Peter 1:25 says: "And this is the *word* which *by the Gospel* is preached unto you." It is clear that the "word" in the text treated above is that "word" which is the object of Gospel preaching, rather than the Gospel itself).

12. "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.*" What system of means men can make use of to bring the law of the Lord to act in the conversion of souls, is not stated; but if any is required it would contradict the plain declaration of the text, that *the law* is perfect; for that which is perfect cannot be improved or made efficient by something out of itself. Can the advocates of means tell us what means are used in putting this law in the inward parts of God's new covenant people, and writing it in their hearts? The law is itself the governing principle which controls the affections, desires, hopes and emotions of a heaven born soul. God Himself imparts and implants it. No part of the work is left to depend on contingencies.

13. "*He called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" *Not by our preaching*, nor by our use of means. What then is the Gospel? It is the *power of God unto salvation* to every one that believes. It is Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The Gospel is the thing preached, not the preaching. Strange that the distinction should be lost sight of by any who have ever felt its power. The Gospel calls all who are saved, but the preaching of it has no such power. It was often preached by Christ and His apostles where it only occasioned the gnashing of teeth; but the Gospel itself never failed, whether preached or otherwise applied to the soul, to produce salvation perfect and complete.

14. "*Ye are clean through the word I have spoken unto you.*" Shall we then understand that when our Lord speaks in the salvation of sinners, that He is only assaying to save them by the use of means? As well we unite with the Arminian general atoners and conclude that the shedding of His blood was a means used to endeavor to procure the salvation of sinners, and dispute what the Holy Ghost has said, that "by His stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53)

15. "*Thy word hath quickened me.*" This is the very position occupied by those who deny the doctrine of means. His words they are spirit and they are life. His word, and nothing short of it, can quicken. He says unto the soul that is in its blood, "Live," and that almighty word produces life (Ezek. 16:6), as when He said unto Lazarus, "Come forth," or to the tempter, "Be still," and there was a great calm.

16. "*Look unto me,*" (*not to means*) "*and be ye saved.*" Who are called on to look, the living or the dead; those who have eyes, or those who have no eyes? The context says, "I said not to the sons of Jacob, seek ye My face in vain." In calling His people to look to him alone for salvation, He gives the reason; for,

says He, "I am God and there is none else." It takes a God to save a sinner; if means could do it there would be no necessity to call on them to look away from means, and from everything else, to Him who says in the same connection, "I am God, and beside Me there is no Saviour."

18. "*Preach the gospel to every creature,*" (not only to the regenerate.) The words in crotchets are added. That the preaching of the Gospel is ordained by Christ there is no doubt, whether the commission authorized the apostles to whom it was given to preach it to the old creation, or to every creature of the new creation, does not effect the present argument. It was to be preached, not used as a means for the regeneration of sinners. If the Gospel, which is Christ, had not the power in itself without a system of collateral means, our Lord would not have prefaced that commission by a declaration, "All power in heaven and on earth is given into My hands; go ye, therefore," &c. If part of the power were in the Gospel, and part in means to be used, how could all power be in the hands of Jesus?

19. "*So shall My word be that goeth out of My mouth,*" &c. How shall it be? "Like the rain, and like the snow," and are they, are either of them produced by the use of means? What nonsense!

20. "*And He said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*" That Jesus called, qualified, sent forth, and went with, and worked with His apostles with signs, &c, none will dispute; but that this display of His power and Godhead either says or implies that He is in need of means, or anything else to secure the great work of salvation, is denied.

We have noticed the twenty passages of Scripture which were brought forward to

sustain the doctrine of means and find them all decidedly sustaining the opposite sentiment. And we have a right to believe that these Scriptures are principally relied upon by the advocates of the means doctrine, or our correspondent would not have pledged himself to yield up the point if it could be made to appear that these Scriptures were in harmony with what he calls the anti-means doctrine. If we did not know that, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and that nothing short of divine power can deliver from the power of darkness, we should expect him immediately to give up the point. But there are some other arguments with which the letter is closed, which require our attention.

It is not the word "means" that we object to, but the unscriptural use which is made of it, in dividing the honor of our salvation with what that word is used to signify. This is what grates upon our ear, for we are taught both by the word and by the Spirit, that salvation is of the Lord. But we can find no system of means appointed of the Lord to be used by men, in the use of which God has promised to aid them in their efforts to save sinners. It would not, therefore, remove the difficulty to change the name. (Ed. — As it was later to "Gospel regeneration.") Retaining the heresy is what we object to. The name has often been changed, and under a multitude of names the abominable doctrine has been wrapped up, and its deformity partially concealed, ever since the days of Cain.

Mr. Sperry's reply did not yield the point, but rather was the same we all yet hear. In essence, it was "If the gospel is not used in regeneration, then why bother to preach it?" Beebe's reply here follows.

The old stale Arminian hobgoblin

difficulty is brought to bear against the doctrine of salvation alone of God, that, if the means doctrine is not true, there would be no use whatever in preaching, praying, exhorting, or anything else. This is what all Arminians consider a “knock down argument.” Old Cain saw no use for Abel to live any longer if his doctrine was approved of God, and the utility of the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, the preaching of the Gospel, the prayers which are indicted by the Holy Ghost, together with everything belonging to the order of the church of God is not only questioned, but absolutely denied by our correspondent, who virtually charges the Head of the church with having instituted these things as useless lumber. May we not retort. “Nay, but who art thou. O man, that repliest against God;” that darest to denounce what He has appointed; and pronounce those things useless which have never been without their use among God’s dear children. Feeding the flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood, is denounced as useless, unless such feeding can be used as a means of making sheep. Prayer in which living souls hold converse with heaven, and breathe forth the desires, confessions, thanksgivings, and adoration to God, is considered useless unless it can be made a machine for either raising the dead, or of so operating upon the unchanging God as to cause him to aid us in the regeneration of sinners. Exhortation which is enjoined on the saints, has no utility with those who hold the means doctrine; and finally nothing else, of any use whatever, if the opposite of the Arminian stuff be true. Well, our correspondent may depend on it, the opposite of this heresy is truth that shall stand when heaven and earth shall be dissolved, and when time shall be no more, and if there are those who profess godliness who cannot love it, we bless God there are others who have been made to love it and to live upon it.

Our correspondent is mistaken in

anticipating that we will say that we hold to ALL such means for building up, establishing, and comforting new-born children. We deny the application of the term *means to the institutions of the Gospel*; they are *gracious provisions* for building, comforting and establishing the saints, but they are NOT the means of doing that or anything else. Means is the name for a sort of machine used by workmongers, by which they expect to set the grace of God in motion; but preaching the Gospel of Christ, praying, and every exercise belonging to the Gospel, are put in motion BY GRACE. *This is the grand difference*; the means doctrine reverses the order of things so as to even place the institutions of christianity under the *control of men*. Men turn the crank, use the lever, the wedge and the screw of means and heaven arid earth obey. Our eating, drinking, and breathing, are not the means of our living, but the effect; for if we were not alive before we ate or drank, we should never have the one nor the other. We wish to set our face against the sly, insidious, God dishonoring doctrine of God’s *helping men to regenerate sinners*, because it is untrue, and no lie is of the truth.

If our brethren in the west who have been led away with this filthy trash, only wish to express the idea that preaching, praying, &c., are appointed for the comfort, establishment, &c., of the saints, why do they raise so much clamor about it, seeing there are none who dispute such a position? But from what we understand them to mean and to say, we can make nothing more or less of their doctrine than down-right Arminianism. But hold! Here comes another query, viz.

21. “*Can you prove that God sends His Spirit in the one case and not in the other?*”

We have already said we believe that God is both Alpha and Omega in all that He does in creation, providence and grace; we do not believe that He is second to us in *any* of His operations. Instead of sending His Spirit to

second our motions in any thing, He, by His Holy Spirit, quickens dead sinners, unaided by men or angels; and by the same Spirit He raises up His ministers, and they are directed by His Spirit to preach, and all the “exercises of His children are produced by the Spirit,” which Spirit is uncontrolled, unbiased and unaided by them.

22. “Pray, what comfort or joy do the children of God enjoy from preaching, if God does not accompany the word by His Holy Spirit?” This is to us a hard question; for we know of no Gospel preaching where the word is not *administered* in the Spirit. The preachers words may often be at random, cold, lifeless, and carnal, but such is *not Gospel*. The work of the Spirit is riot to warm up awl enliven the cold, dull pratings of the minister; (!!) but the Spirit prepares the preacher, provides the message, gives the door of utterance, and at the same time prepares the hearers to hear, and their hearts to rejoice in the truth thus *ministered* unto them.

23. If it is His good pleasure and will to send His Spirit with His word to comfort His children, why not send His Spirit with His word to awaken dead sinners?” The word which quickens dead sinners is itself *spirit*, and it is life; the testimony of those who have experienced the life-imparting power of that word comforts those who are prepared by the Holy Ghost to receive the testimony. But the *testimony* is one thing, and the *thing testified of* is quite another. The word testified of can quicken the dead and comfort the living, but the mere articulations of a minister’s voice can do neither. Sometimes the term “Word.” in the New Testament means Christ, as in John 1:1; sometimes it means the quickening operation of the Holy Ghost, as where Jesus testifies, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the *words* which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” In this sense the word is spoken of in

connection with the regeneration of the saints. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of an incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” If brother Sperry only intends to be understood that God sends His servants to preach Christ, and at the same time sends His Spirit to quicken dead sinners, and qualify them to hear and profit by the word preached, we shall not differ; but if he contends that the preaching of the Gospel by the ministers of Jesus is a means to procure the quickening operation of the Spirit, we must differ. Indeed the same Spirit that sends the minister of Christ, and enables him to preach the word, is the same that quickens the sinner, and qualifies the living saint to profit by the preached word. But one is not to be regarded as a means or instrumentality for procuring the other. Thunder is not a means for procuring rain, neither is rain a means for procuring thunder; yet God in providence often sends them together. The Spirit is not the means, but the CAUSE of God’s ministers preaching; so neither is the preaching of the Gospel the means, but the effect of the Spirit’s operation.

Again, our correspondent says, “God is not limited.” Certainly not as to power to execute His sovereign and eternal purpose, and therefore He cannot require means to aid Him in the quickening of His redeemed people; but we are NOT, consequently, to infer that He has no fixed and definite mode of communicating life to the dead; that He effects this, sometimes in one way, and sometimes in another, as sometimes through means, sometimes by means, and sometimes without means. He has revealed to us but one way of salvation, and that is altogether of, by, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. The case alluded to by brother Sperry of the remark of an anti-means preacher would be more in point if the anti-means man had not involved the doctrine of *means* by his *if*. “There is,” says brother Sperry, “but one way for every

child, or heir of promise, to be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and that way is fixed in the eternal mind, unalterably fixed." We understand him to mean that there is one way for *each*, or perhaps as many ways as there are children or heirs to be brought to know the truth; but while we admit there is or may be a variety of circumstances connected with the experience of the children of God, we contend that there is but one way, fixed, unalterably fixed, in the eternal mind, for bringing all the children and heirs of promise from death to life; and that one way is by immediately communicating life to them, without the aid of any intermediate cause, power, agency, means, or instrumentality whatever; and we are equally sanguine, with him, that God will be frustrated in the accomplishment of his designs — He will not be!

The allusion made to John Bunyan's being awakened through a lewd woman is begging the question, for he has not proved that God did awaken or quicken John Bunyan through a lewd woman, or through any other name or medium than Jesus Christ, and we should be very sorrowful, while the testimony of Christ is before our eyes, that "no man cometh to the Father but by Him," to have brother Sperry prove that John Bunyan or any other person had received life and salvation through a lewd woman; at such proof heaven would be astonished, and earth would tremble. We do not dispute that *after* John Bunyan was quickened by the Holy Ghost, he might have received some of his first impressions concerning his sinful and lost estate from a lewd woman, or from any other circumstance; but at the same time it must be confessed that if he had not been previously, or at least simultaneously, quickened by the Spirit, the circumstance of the lewd woman would have passed without making any unusual impressions on him. The first thing seen or sensed by a living person cannot be the cause of his having life, but it is an

evidence that he is alive.

Perhaps the most extraordinary passage in the whole letter of brother Sperry, coming as it does from a professed Baptist, is this, "FOR TO CONTEND THAT GOD CANNOT, OR *DOES NOT*, GIVE FAITH UNTIL A MAN IS REGENERATED AND BORN AGAIN, IS REPUGNANT TO THE WORD OF GOD." Well, we do contend that God does NOT GIVE FAITH TO AN UNREGENERATE PERSON. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; and what hope has a DEAD sinner? It is the evidence of things not seen; and what does the UNREGENERATE man see? Without it he cannot see God. Without being born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." The unregenerate man is a natural man, and the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And faith is one of the things of the Spirit of God; for "the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," &c. If God gives faith to a sinner before he is regenerated, then faith is NO evidence that a man is born of God; and what evidence can any person have that he is a child of God, if God gives it to unregenerate men? If this position could be established it would prove that faith is by no means peculiar to God's children, and Abel may be in hell! The illustrious catalogue of saints mentioned in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, &c, might after all have died and gone down to hell in an unregenerate state. If

unregenerate men are the recipients of faith, all these may have been unregenerate men. If such a sentiment does not deny the faith, we know not what language can. Is it possible that a heaven born soul can breathe out such doctrine?

In support of this position, namely, that God gives faith to men *before* they are regenerated, this text is brought, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him." We have never met with even a professed Arminian who would contend that the coming to God mentioned in this text had reference to the work of regeneration, much less that sinners must profess faith as a prerequisite to regeneration. (Ed. note: This was written in 1846. Today, this theory is widely held by Arminians and not a small number of Calvinists.) The same text is prefaced thus: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe," etc.

This text is in perfect harmony with the words of Jesus. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The whole epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," and the whole theme of the inspired writer was to show the distinction between the legal dispensation of carnal ordinances and its worldly sanctuary, and the dispensation of the Gospel, and that the law was not of faith; its provisions were, the man that doeth the things enjoined by the law should live by them. But the righteousness which is by faith speaketh on this wise, "Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring Christ up from the dead," &c. Although under the old covenant of works, much was to be done of manual labor as a sort of means of temporal prosperity, yet under the Gospel no means are to be used to bring

Christ down, or to bring Him up, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Now seeing that it is with the heart man believeth, we ask, is it with his old heart of stone, his unregenerate heart, that man believeth unto righteousness, or is it with his new heart and new spirit which God has promised to give His people? "He that cometh unto God." Does the unregenerate or the regenerated man come to God believing that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? If, as brother Sperry contends, it is the unregenerate man preparatory to his regeneration, let us not forget that "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." Hence, if an unregenerate sinner comes to God it must be by Christ as the only medium of access, for He is the only way. And if a sinner can have faith, and can come to God through Christ, without regeneration, to qualify him to see the kingdom of God, what need is there for regeneration?

We call on brother Sperry to turn to Hebrews 11:6, and read his text, and with its *whole connection*, and then say if he himself believes soberly that unregenerate men can possess that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; by which the elders obtained a good report, and through which we understand the worlds were made by the word of God, &c. The allusion made to Paul's being sent to some places, and not suffered to go to others, shows he was subject to the government of the Spirit, and NOT that the Spirit was, through some magic power of means, governed by Paul. He was truly sent to places where God had *much people*, but he was not sent among them to use means for their regeneration. Philip was not sent to quicken and regenerate the eunuch; that work was performed by the Holy Ghost, and Philip was sent to preach Christ to him, and to baptize him. "Feed My sheep," "Feed My lambs."

Feed the flock of God, is the commission; but the ministers of Christ are no where directed to make sheep, or to use means for increasing the flock of God.

“And what business, suppose ye, the apostle Paul would have amongst a parcel of dead sinners?” It was the business of the apostles to go where they were sent, and to tarry wherever the Lord commanded them to tarry; but if the Lord had intended to make it the business of Paul to regenerate the much people in that place, He would have told him so; but he was not so informed. The events showed that Paul was to preach the Gospel, and “He that had an ear to hear, was to hear what the Spirit said to the churches.” Paul had no ears to give to those who had none; but he had a message for such as were, by the quickening operation of the Holy Spirit, prepared to gladly receive the testimony which he bore. If the preaching of Paul had been a means used for quickening dead sinners, why were not all to whom he preached exercised alike? Will not the same cause, under the same circumstances, produce the same effect? But Paul’s preaching was invariably, to the Jews, a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them that “*are called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Until God called sinners from death unto life, Gospel preaching was unto them a stumbling block, and foolishness, a “savor of death unto death,” far enough from being a means of quickening them. The allusion also to the vision of Ezekiel, of the valley of dry bones, is equally unavailing for the purpose of proving the efficiency of means. All these dry bones were the whole house of Israel, who say, “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts.” Therefore the Lord bade the prophet prophesy, and say unto them, “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O My people, I will” —what? use the prophesying of Ezekiel as a means of raising

you out of your graves? Not at all. Ezekiel was not to raise them, nor to help raise them; neither was God about to raise them through the means of Ezekiel or his preaching; but Ezekiel was to declare what God had said that Himself would do. “Say unto them, Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.” The Lord purposed, the Lord spake, and the Lord performed; and all that Ezekiel had to do, was what all God’s ministers have to do - to testify of the grace of God, tell of God’s purpose, of His promise, of His power, and the deadness, dryness, inability and utter dependence on the life-giving power of their sovereign God. Strange that a professedly Old School Baptist should wish to divide the quickening power between God and means.

Having noticed, as we believe, every item of the communication of brother Sperry, we will say in conclusion, that we have endeavored to use “great plainness of speech,” without designing to employ one word of unkindness. We honestly believe, as our remarks will show, that the means doctrine, as it is called, is a heresy of no trifling magnitude. That it has been suffered in the all-wise providence of God to annoy the churches for the purpose of purging the Old School community of corruptions, for the trial of the faith of the saints, and that its final tendency will be to relieve our churches from excrescences (abnormal outgrowth - Ed.) which do not belong legitimately to the mystical body of Christ, we have no doubt. Many have attached themselves to the Old School Baptists, simply because they were opposed to the popular institutions of what is falsely called benevolence, and not from a

unity of sentiment with the primitive saints in regard to the doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. If in any part of our reply our language should seem unnecessarily harsh or severe, let it be remembered that we have been urged by the author of the communication which we have received, to publish it. We have not sought for an occasion of controversy, but on the other hand held back until we were confident that our backwardness to go into the investigation was being construed by the means party into a tacit endorsement of their heresy. We sincerely hope that such of our brethren as have become bewildered with this mischievous means doctrine, may be enabled to compare it with the Scriptures, and with their own experience, and be no longer like children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Towards brother Sperry, as an old and valued correspondent and faithful friend of the *Signs of the Times*, we entertain the kindest feelings and profound regard; but for the doctrine embraced in this communication, we feel unmingled regret that any of our dear brethren should be captivated by it. May the Lord deliver them from all error, and lead us all by His unerring Spirit into all truth, for His mercies' sake. Amen.

COMMENTS

Again may we remind you to check your address labels for your expiration date. To us, it is important. We are poor folk, and can't sustain too much expense over a long period. If you do not wish the paper, merely mark on it "return to sender" and it will come back at our expense.

If you enjoy the paper and find it of profit to your hearts, then it answers our purpose. You can help us by passing your copy on to others who love the truth of free and sovereign grace; sending us names and

addresses for samples; and mentioning it to others. Whenever you have a heart indicted before the throne of grace, please remember us, and the whole church of God everywhere. — Ed.

THE LORD DOING WONDEROUSLY

By John Rusk

(Continued from March issue)

II. Having treated a little of the discoveries which God's elect have of God in the law, and the dreadful conclusions which they draw: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God;" I say, as we have shown the dark side, let us now take a view of the bright side, according to promise, namely, reconciled *in Christ Jesus*. As the Lord shall assist me, I will enlarge a little upon the sight we have of God, what He is to us in Christ His Son; and O that I (from my heart I speak it) may feel and see what I write, and also my reader feel and see what he reads, that the Holy Spirit may testify of Jesus and glorify Him, and then the time will not be spent in vain. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now we discover that God is *love, mercy, pity, compassion, good, gracious, long suffering, kind, a promise-making and a promise-keeping* God, and that all His glorious perfections are *all on our side*, to guide and guard us all our journey through, and land us safe in everlasting glory above, to celebrate His glorious perfections to all eternity. We will go over these things a little.

"*God is love.*" And this love was set upon us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. Hence the church of old breaks out, saying, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love," &c. Here we have the *eternity* of God's love; "*I have,*" in the past

tense, “loved thee. And the duration is everlasting: “With an everlasting love, and, therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” This love is *sovereign, unchangeable, free, and eternal*. The blessed effects of it are a being drawn to Christ Jesus and receiving from Him all the benefits and blessings which flow to us from His sufferings and death. “No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him.” (John 6:44) Thus the Father with loving kindness draws us to His Son, in whom we are chosen before the world began. (Eph. 1:4) But again, This love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us; and it casteth out of the conscience all slavish and servile fear; so that now, instead of viewing God as an angry Judge, we see Him as a Father; and instead of His appearing a consuming fire, He now is discovered and we see Him to be a fountain of living water; and in this endearing character the Lord Jesus speaks of His Father to His disciples: “The Father Himself loveth you,” &c.; “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom;” “Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these (temporal) things.” This love, as I said, is *sovereign*. No cause, therefore, can be assigned why God should love us and not the non-elect, for we are all fallen alike, only that He works all things after the counsel of His own will, and that it was because He would love us. It is also unchangeable as God Himself, and He never alters. All our repeated backslidings and revoltings never make Him change. He is fixed in all His purposes of grace; and though He will visit our sin with a rod and our iniquities with scourges, yet His loving-kindness He will not utterly take away, nor shall His faithfulness ever be permitted to fail. (Psa. 89:32, 33.) It is also *free*; for no works can possibly merit it, it is quite free, a free-grace gift in every sense of the word; so that the happy recipients of it have nothing in themselves whatever to boast of; and this

secures all the glory to God, while they are completely humbled in the dust: “I will love them freely.” (Hos. 14:4) But it is also *eternal*. O to consider of eternal love! We are lost in the thought that, when millions of ages are rolled over, it is only as it were beginning, — eternal and everlasting love. But, lastly, it is *full*; and, therefore, we are to be filled with all the fulness of God; and our God, as John says, is love. Our treasures of grace will then be filled with this love to the full: “I will fill their treasures.” Cheer up, fellow-traveller, the best is all to come. May we say with Manoah’s wife, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not show us all these things.”

We see Him as a God of *mercy* in Christ Jesus. The mercy of God is the same as His love. Hence you read that “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.” This mercy is discovered to us in the regenerating and renewing of us. Regeneration is putting living principles into our souls; and what can renewing of us be but drawing forth these principles into exercise? “Of His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration;” washing away our blood as the prophet Ezekiel says; “and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;” or as the prophet adds, “anointing us with oil.” So that we are thoroughly washed and cleansed; and a better crop arises up to the glory of God, springing from the new man. You may watch this work going on in a preached Gospel. You shall go under the word with such hardness, enmity, unbelief, pride, covetousness, and a whole train of every evil, or all evil things too bad to mention, and the word shall be attended with such power that it carries all before it, and you shall come away not like the same person, but find a meek, quiet spirit, soft and tender love in your affections to God and His family, humility, faith in lively exercise, and your heart open to God’s cause. And thus we are cleansed with the washing of water by the

word, either preached or not preached. This is mercy in the displays of it to the needy soul. In the same way it is when we get rid of despair, slavish fear, terror, bondage, guilt, condemnation, a legal working spirit, with various other troubles. In all this, and much more, we see God as a merciful God; plenteous in mercy, and ready to forgive. What a glorious view David had of the mercy of God! No doubt he was sorely tried by the enemy, that as God left Saul so He would leave him also; and, therefore, God gave him this promise: "I will not take My mercy from David as I took it from Saul." and David is continually glorying in this: "Who remembered us in our low estate; for His mercy endureth for ever." Yes, and he finishes a whole psalm, 26 verses, and every verse ends this way: "His mercy endureth for ever." (Psa. 136). And indeed, you will find him upon this more or less all through the Book of Psalms.

But again. He is a God of *pity*. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." This pity of the Lord is discovered to us when labouring under many sore afflictions, so that we are pressed beyond measure; we know not what to do, nor which way to turn. We are oppressed every way, — in family, in body, in circumstances, and in soul. And now is the time for the Lord to pity when none else can or will. He pitieth us at first when cast out in the open field (this world). When none eyes pitied he looked upon us and said unto us, "Live;" and He is ever the same. He lightens these heavy burdens, sends us help in providence from unexpected quarters, gives health by degrees to the body or to the family, or strength to bear us, gives us the consolations of His Spirit, and speaks a word in season to us when weary and ready to give up all for lost.

Again. This pity is manifested towards us

in taking us from the heathen; sprinkling clean water upon us, and cleansing us from all our filthiness, idols, and uncleannesses; giving us a new heart, a new spirit, and taking away the stony heart and giving a heart of flesh; calling for the corn and increasing it, and laying no famine upon us; multiplying the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field, and bringing us to loathe ourselves in our own sight for our iniquities. Now the Lord says, "I had pity for mine holy name which the house of Israel had profaned;" which pity led Him to all these things. (Ezekiel 36:21-38)

But again. The Lord is *good*. You shall sometimes be in troubles every way — what David calls "walking in the midst of troubles." You shall try various ways to extricate yourself, but all is in vain; for who can make that straight which God has made crooked? and therefore your "purposes are broken, even the thoughts of your heart. You call upon the Lord, but things go on just the same; arid for years you shall be in this rough and painful path, while some shall destroy themselves who have hardly any trouble compared with yours. How is all this to be accounted for? I answer, It is wholly owing to the goodness of the Lord in keeping you. "The Lord is good; a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." (Nah.1:7) Thus we are held fast by His power, miserable and wretched as we are; which clearly proves that the Lord is good. Moreover, as a God of providence we can see His goodness. Man, in his natural state, may say, as I have heard many say, "The Lord is good;" but they have no meaning. It is only a cant word with them; but not so with us; for He leads us to watch His goodness in providence, and He deals so wisely with us as not to let us have much of this world at once, but deals it out little by little; and really this is the best way; and He so sanctifies it that we are helped to bless and praise Him for His goodness, while those who have more than

heart could wish are thankful for nothing, but all the year round are blaspheming their bountiful Benefactor. The Lord is good, in His providence, to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works; and Paul tells us that He doeth good in giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. (Acts 14:17)

Once more respecting God's goodness. Though we are bent to backslide, and are continually revolting from Him, yet He is so faithful and true to His word that He will do us good in all His dealings towards us; and many times He is doing us good when we conclude it is not so. He does us good when He chastens us for our sins. "It was good for me that I was afflicted," said David. Yes, and it is good to be kept short in providence, to be tempted of the devil, to be despised by men, to be weak in body. In short, all crosses and trials "work together for good." Now, as these afflictions are the ground-work of spiritual prosperity, so the Lord will do us good here also; for they that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; and therefore hear His sweet language to His poor, tried, afflicted family: "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger and in my fury and in great wrath, and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely, and they shall be My people and I will be their God, and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me for ever; for the good of them and their children after them; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good. Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring all the good that I have promised." (Jer. 32:37) Now do you not see God in all these three things as being good, yea, abundant in

goodness and truth, in that He is a stronghold to keep you in all troubles, that He is good in providing for you in temporals and in appearing for you again after sore trials, turning your captivity and rejoicing over you to do you good?

But again. We see that our God is a *gracious* God. I shall here be very brief, and therefore merely say, grace in the fountain is nothing but the sovereign love of God fixed upon a chosen number of people from all eternity, who are plunged by sin into the greatest depths of misery, and exposed to everlasting damnation; grace was the cause that the Father sent His Son into this wretched world; grace was the cause that the Son of God undertook such a great work; grace brought Him through it all, and He declared, "It is finished!" Thus grace removed every obstacle out of the way. Justice is now satisfied, the law magnified and made honourable. Mercy and truth have now met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; and in God's own time He makes all this known to every chosen vessel. Hence He sends His Spirit, who is the Spirit of grace and supplication, and He quickens the sinner. This is *life*, or quickening grace; and such feel their need of Jesus Christ. He then raises them to a hope in God's mercy, called "a good hope through grace." Then there is pardoning grace, justifying grace, restoring grace, saving grace; and at last grace terminates in glory; for "The Lord will give you grace and glory." Thus briefly we see God as a gracious God, and are at a full point in these things.

But I pass on to the next particular; and that is this: We see God *long suffering, kind, a promise-making and a promise-keeping* God. I am sure if we look into this world and see what dreadful wickedness is going on from day to day, open blasphemy with every other branch of ungodliness both in young and old, and the abominable pretensions to religion, which at best are only a solemn

mockery of all that is good, the errors of all description that keep abounding also; truly God is long suffering that He does not crush us to atoms as a nation or nations, and send us to hell. But to come nearer home. Let you and me look at ourselves even since we have known the Lord. To look at myself, my past and present life, and the vile abominations that work daily in me, I really am astonished and wonder at His long suffering to me as an individual; but this is His covenant name: "Long-suffering." Paul calls it "the forbearance of God;" and as for His kindness, it is as wonderful. To see the outward mercies that He loads the wicked with, the care and protection over all men outwardly — He is called the Saviour of all men. He gives them health, strength, riches, honours, &c.; but they are stone-blind to that God who gives them all they have. Nevertheless, we can see God in all this and much more, and can say with David that he daily loadeth us with his benefits, not dealing with us after our sins, nor rewarding us according to our iniquities, but crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. These things do so endear the Almighty to us as is beyond all expression. He is a *faithful* God; and having made many exceeding great and precious promises, all of which are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, He will surely fulfil them all; for He is a *promise-making* and a *promise-keeping* God. Men may be in great power, and promise to others great things; but man is only mortal at the best. His breath is in his nostrils. Besides, a little thing, even while he lives, may turn him; for man is a changeable being; and not only so, but he may lose all his property and power. There is nothing certain in this life. Riches make to themselves wings and flee away. But God is the reverse of all this. He lives for ever; He is unchangeable, and never can lose anything; for all riches, spiritual and temporal, are His, and He is almighty. He has made promises to

His elect, unconditionally. "Faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it." Were you to search narrowly the holy word from Genesis to Revelations, you would find it all to be a transcript of His faithful promises. Some are fulfilled and all shall be; and thus a poor tried soul, as he travels on, is to watch God's hand in providence, in His judgment on the wicked, and in his own spiritual experience, and he will clearly see, at certain times, that the Lord his God is long suffering, kind, a promise-making and a promise-keeping God.

But again. We see God in a way of *security and safety* to us, that all His glorious perfections are on our side, to guide and guard us all our journey through this world, and land us safe in everlasting glory above, to celebrate His glorious perfections to all eternity. Therefore those perfections of God, which at one time we trembled at, viewing them as against us, now are all for us in Christ Jesus; as, for instance, justice, holiness, righteousness, truth, power, unchangeableness. These perfections of God used to alarm and greatly terrify us. Now, if it be asked, "How is it possible that all the glorious perfections of God can be on our side?" I answer, It is because the Lord Jesus Christ, by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the glorious realms of bliss, has so removed sin out of our way that we are in the sight of God the Father, as considered in Christ, as though we never had sinned at all; and, therefore, these glorious perfections cannot be against the believer, seeing he is perfectly righteous by the imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence you read, "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" that "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" that "it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed;" which is in close union with His unchangeableness: "I am

God, and change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” From all which we clearly see God, in all His perfections and attributes, on our side, He having accepted us in the Beloved. He declares Himself “well pleased for His righteousness’ sake,” &c.

In the next place, they all stand as so many bulwarks to guard and guide us all our journey through. This shows we have many enemies who wish our destruction, all of whom are conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ. 1, *Sin*: “He made an end of sin,” &c; 2, *The Law*: “Christ has redeemed us from its curse;” 3, *The World*: “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;” 4, *The Devil*: “He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil;” 5, *The Old Man*: “Knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him ;” 6, *Death*: “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” Therefore it is that God is pleased to *guard* and *guide* His people. And we have His promise, “I will be a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst.” “God is our refuge and strength,” &c. “No weapon formed against thee shall prosper.” God is there to *guard* every believer, however weak and feeble. The whole mountain was filled with chariots of fire, to protect the prophet Elisha; and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has promised to be our keeper. “None shall pluck them out of My hand, nor out of My Father’s hands. I and My Father are one,” - one in essential divinity.

Now I really believe that both Manoah and his wife were delivered in soul; both knew experimentally what liberty is; and yet they were not at this time both under one influence. Manoah appears at this time to be straitened in spirit, having a measure of that teaching which I showed of God in the law. Hence he says, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God;” while his wife stands more under the sweet influence of the Gospel, seeing God as on their side; therefore she

says, “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.” By the burnt-offering and meat-offering I understand mystically two things: 1, Christ as a sacrifice to divine vengeance, enduring the wrath of God: “He made His soul an offering for sin;” 2, That He now becomes our food, “His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed. Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.” Hence He is called the fatted calf which the prodigal fed upon; the Lamb slain: “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” This is a sweet-smelling sacrifice, well pleasing to God; and when, by faith, we eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feel a thankful heart to God the Father for the unspeakable gift of His dear Son, this is “offering up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Manoah’s wife could see in the victim Justice inflicting the stroke upon Christ. She well knew that without shedding of blood there was no remission, and that the blood of beasts was of no avail; “but seeing the fire consume the sacrifice, here she saw that Jesus must endure God’s wrath, and by its ascension up that it was acceptable to the Father. Now the eye of faith could see all this; and what cause have we to wonder at this, seeing that Abel, Abraham, and Moses all had this glorious sight? “By faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;” “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad.” He saw the victim in his son, Isaac, and afterwards in the ram caught in the thicket by his horns; in the knife, the sword of justice, the fire, the wrath of God, and his interest in all, which filled his soul with joy. “He rejoiced to see My day;” that is, the day when I should remove the iniquity of all my elect people: “He removed the iniquity of that

land in one day.” This day Abraham saw with the eye of faith, and was glad. This gladness was the holy unction or anointing of the Holy Ghost, called the “oil of gladness.” Again, “By faith Moses kept the passover and sprinkling of blood,” lest He that destroyed the first-born should slay them; and “by faith he saw Him that is invisible.” Now, said Manoah’s wife to her husband, trying to encourage him, “would the Lord have showed us such things as we have discovered with the eye of faith, and have accepted a burnt and meat offering at our hands, had He been pleased to kill us?” No, verily, He would not; “nor would He have told us such things as He has about the child that is to be born, and how we are to act.” And, indeed, it all agrees with what our Lord said to His disciples in the days of His flesh: “Henceforth I call you not servants, for a servant (under the curse of the law) knoweth not what His Lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.

Finally, I would wish to encourage every weak believer, because I feel myself so very weak. Then observe, there are four things the Lord will show you: 1, Your *own heart*, in a greater or lesser degree; all do not see it exactly alike, but all see it in a measure, and also the dreadful state of this world; 2, He will show you the *spirituality of His law*. Some feel much terror, and others do not; yet they all find out that the law is spiritual and themselves carnal, sold under sin; 3. He will show you that you *cannot help yourself* by all that you can do, that when the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots, then may you who are accustomed to do evil learn to do well, and that there is salvation in no other Name but in the Lord Jesus Christ: and He will bring every thought (upon this head) into captivity to the obedience of Christ, till at last you will expect it no other way. “Well,” say you, “bless God, I can go thus

far.” Very good. Then the fourth thing is this, that *Jesus Christ is your Saviour*. “Ah,” say you, “I cannot come up to that; that is what I want.” Yes, and that you shall surely have. You have acknowledged what I have said in the first part. and so you shall in the second; for, as Paul says, “You have acknowledged us in part, and I trust you shall acknowledge us to the end;” and when this takes place you will again say with Paul, “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Then you will know that you are accepted in the Beloved: then you will know that God the Father has received Christ in your stead as a *burnt-offering*, and then He will be a *meat-offering to you*. (Selected from the *Gospel Standard*, September. 1871.)

NOTES

The Little Zion Association of Independent Predestinarian Primitive Baptist churches of Mississippi will convene in their district meeting June 17, 18, 19 (Third Weekend) at Palestine Church in Laurel, Mississippi. The meeting house is located on Bush Dairy Rd, and old Highway 16 North (Audabon). Lovers of free grace should enjoy visiting, and you would be welcome.

We greatly appreciate the names and addresses you have provided us, and all your tokens of support. We have received several letters and articles which we hope to print in the next issue. Thanks.