

SEEKING THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT

Expositions of Some Difficult Parts
of God's Word

A photograph of a cave entrance leading to a snowy forest. The cave's interior is dark and shadowed, while the light from the forest outside creates a bright, warm glow through the opening. The forest consists of tall, thin trees, some with snow on their branches and the ground. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Alfred Dye

SEEKING THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT

Being an Exposition of Some
Difficult Parts of God's Word

by
Alfred Dye

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collection of the Gospel Standard Baptist Library, Hove.

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Publisher's Note

The Gospel Standard Trust issues this book with the hope that it might be spiritually profitable. Although we only issue books we feel set forth a Scriptural standard, there will be differences in opinion and interpretation, and the most gracious of men still have to say, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." We trust our readers will prayerfully "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good", whilst bearing in meekness with any imperfections.

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Preface

Alfred Dye (1851-1930) was born and brought up in Norfolk. He recorded his early life and spiritual experience in his book: *Sovereign Grace O'er Sin Abounding*. He was converted as a young man when, at his mother's request, he went to hear a minister preach at Saxlingham. He was convicted on that occasion through the contents of the verse:

“When Thou, my righteous Judge shall come
To take Thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless worm as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die,
Be found at Thy right hand?”

That this was not just a natural conviction was quickly evidenced by the heart separation it produced. Dye records that the day following, back among his worldly colleagues: “O what a separation in my heart from them! What disgust and holy contempt I [now] felt towards their foolish, filthy conversation!”

Shortly after this, on reading John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Dye longed to go to Bedford, hoping that some of Bunyan's unction would become his. A work errand soon took him to Bedford and while there he turned into a service at Providence Chapel, where John Thornber was then the aged minister. Dye felt, in hearing Thornber preach, that it was as though Elijah had dropped down from heaven, and he records: “My precious soul quite fell in love with him.” He sought baptism at Providence Chapel, and was baptized there by Mr Thornber. Returning home to work, he was severely taunted by his colleagues, but in characteristic fashion he recorded: “Who minds, or would change with the world when he has Christ in his heart? And who seeks

the friendship of beggars and thieves when the Prince of Life entertains him with covenant love and blood every day?"

Dye was exercised from youth (before he was even called by grace) about the work of the ministry. He was first asked to preach by a godly lady in her chapel at Corton. Other invitations followed. Dye felt honour bound to notify Mr Thornber of this, but received the surprising response that Thornber had been expecting him to make an approach about the ministry before then. He was sent out to preach from Providence Chapel, Bedford, in 1874, and was a highly-regarded minister amongst the Strict Baptists for 56 years, during which time he preached 16,327 sermons.

Dye preached first at Pitt Street Chapel, Norwich, for a year, before holding pastorates at The Tabernacle, Norwich (1875-1880) and then at Rowley Regis (1888-1923). Between these times, he was a well-loved supply minister.

In 1875, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of James Muskett, the pastor at Great Yarmouth, and granddaughter of George Muskett, the well-known Strict Baptist minister. Together they had eight children.

A godly man, Dye lived close to the Lord. Unusually, the Lord remarkably appeared to him several times during his life in dreams giving direction in the way. He was a prolific author and poet, producing a volume of his hymns. His ministry was blessed to many, and the reason for this is probably found in what Dye wrote concerning the preaching of the Gospel: "[It] is salvation for the lost, pardon for the guilty, health for the sickly, clothing for the naked, strength for the helpless, comfort for the desolate and sorrowful, — in a word, mercy for the miserable. I longed to tell of the Saviour's love to my fellow-sinners; ay, and so I do now. Whatever the Lord has done with others, he never flogged

me into preaching his Gospel, but drew me with the sweet cords of his eternal love.”

Alfred Dye however was a controversialist. He took some unusual views on matters *not* essential to salvation. For example: he opposed the editor of *The Gospel Standard*, James Dennett, in print, over whether Adam was a spiritual man or not; in doing so he sided with William Huntington’s view of the matter, while Dennett agreed with William Gadsby’s perspective. Dye was also quick to criticise the godly, and to put his opinions in print. His actions did not always savour of the gospel. However, Dye remained an acceptable preacher of the Gospel until his death, and was a frequent contributor to the denominational magazines, particularly *The Friendly Companion*.

What did savour of the gospel about Dye was the witness of his life to the same truth that the Apostle Paul evidenced, “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1: 13-17).

In 1923 Dye felt he must resign the pastorate at Providence, Rowley Regis. He returned to the itinerant ministry. He preached for the last time at Malmesbury on 2nd March, 1930. Two days later, on his return home, he was taken ill, and passed away on 17th March. An account of his last days was published under the title *Grace Triumphant*. It records how when he was asked during his last illness how he was, he replied: “Well, just alive ... but, mind, it is alive for evermore.” Dye had a good hope through grace. He died with the same blessed hope shared with the Apostle Paul: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Despite publishing several books in his lifetime, this book by Alfred Dye was not included. Instead it has been preserved as a manuscript, in Dye's own hand, now in the possession of the Gospel Standard Baptist Library at Hove. The Librarians there, realising its spiritual worth, transcribed the manuscript, and it is now published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications with the kind permission of the Library trustees.

We have made the decision to make no major editorial changes to the work, to let Alfred Dye speak for himself. The original manuscript ends abruptly, with possibly the last page missing. It is left exactly as it stands.

While the publication of this book is an exercise in preserving and disseminating the writings of a godly minister for future generations, there is a more important reason.

The subject matter is vital – the correct use of the Holy Word of God. In this book Alfred Dye ably demonstrates how Scripture can be misinterpreted, misapplied, and solemnly used at times to our own ends. How solemn! While some of that which Dye deals with may not be commonly misapplied today, we are sure that through ignorance of the Scripture it is still sadly the case. Dye wrote this book with a concern for the truth. May each reader be granted the same gracious concern, and find spiritual profit and the 'deep that coucheth beneath.'

Some of Dye's interpretations are not "main stream"; some may be surprising. Not all will agree wholeheartedly with what he writes. Godly ministers err at times – a solemn reminder that they are but men, and need our prayers. Ministers must only be followed in so far as they are followers of Christ (1 Corinthians

11:1). With this Dye himself would have wholeheartedly have concurred. The Lord's people need gracious discernment. Dye sought after that same discernment, and longed for the *personal* teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit. Consequently he could write in the preface to one of his other works: "I do not expect ... that all my readers will quite understand or see everything as I have written; but however I may be misunderstood, this I trust I can say with a good conscience that the experience is mine: *neither borrowed nor stolen.*"

We hope that the perusal of this book might prompt the reader to seek the meaning of what they read in the Bible more carefully. There is only one infallible guide to the Scriptures - the Holy Spirit. The only true way of gaining a correct understanding of Scripture is to prayerfully compare one text with others, seeking the Spirit's light. Sadly, Scripture knowledge today is not as it once was. When families only possessed few books - often *only* the Bible, which they read until it wore out - they were well acquainted with its contents. Naturally speaking they were in a stronger position to rightly compare one text with another and to form an understanding of its true meaning. Whatever the disadvantages we may conceive of our generation, the ultimate source of true knowledge is always the same. The Word has known no change - Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever - and neither has the Spirit of Christ - the Holy Ghost - who leads into all truth. We need to seek the mind of the Holy Spirit in our reading of the Bible. As Joseph Hart said:

Want we wisdom? He must give it;
Hearing ears, and seeing eyes.

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me" (Psalm 43:3).

May the Lord grant that the readers of this book might be patterned by grace on the godly Bereans who "received the word

with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed... of honourable women ... and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:11-12).

Matthew Hyde
2018

The Author's Introduction

Careful reader,

Believing as I have for many years, that many portions of God's Word are by private Christians and ministers too of religion (who are delegated as men of truth) misunderstood, I have at intervals of leisure written the following expositions; all Scripture being from a divine inspiration given, cannot be clearly understood but through their author (2 Peter 1:20,21). And as the most spiritually minded amongst us are but creatures, we may all err in some things relative to divinity. Indeed, although the liner may have crossed the Atlantic or Pacific a thousand times twice told, yea, as a diver may have descended to the bowels thereof as often after hid treasure, yet those seas still lie unexplored. And thus it is with us and God's Word, consequently when I hear of an implication from a preacher, or read of the same in an author, of justice being done with a divine subject, I am apt to think of Bunyan's chicks and with a shell upon their heads.

One of the greatest of blessings - and most needful for us all in order to an understanding of God's Word - is the spirit of humility and meekness. *The meek will (God) guide in judgement: and the meek will He teach His way* (Psalm 25:9). Hence notwithstanding all the advantages of natural wisdom, moral education, and civil learning, God reveals spiritual and eternal realities to babes (Matthew 11:25). And hence, if one has a clearer understanding, a deeper knowledge, and a better gift for exposition than some, to grace the praise is due.

And believing that I have given a little more closely the mind of the Spirit in the portions of sacred Scripture dilated upon in

this work, and that it is a bad thing for citizens of Gospel Zion to be led by blind watchmen, I offer in this publication the benefit of the light, and if after the perusal of what I here present, we see not in all things eye to eye, we shall when the Lord bring again Zion, lift up with the watchmen the voice, and with the voice of Christ sing together for ever (Isaiah 52:8).

Reader, fare thee well. Grace and peace be with thee.

Alfred Dye

1. God's Mark upon Cain

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him (Genesis 4:15).

The Holy Ghost, by the pen of the apostle John, tells us that Cain was of (or out of) that wicked one, and that he slew his brother Abel *because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous* (1 John 3:12). And observe, as marriage is honourable in all, and was appointed for the propagation and well-being of the human race, Cain's nature was neither more vile, nor was he more deeply conceived in sin, nor shapen more exactly in iniquity than was Abel, or any of the rest of Adam's family. Consequently he was, as a religious man seen afar from the devil, Cain was in fact the devil's proto-saint on earth, and very many of his co-religionists there have been, and now are, whose religion takes the rise from spiritual ignorance, unbelief, and pride. And Cain's knowing that God had already cursed the ground because of his father Adam's sin, ought to have known that all that grew out of it would prove an unacceptable offering. And as the Lord, having in order to show the evil of sin, and the need for atonement for it, instituted sacrifice and the shedding of blood, had he have been a believer, he would have followed the example of his father and offered with Abel a lamb. And also had Cain have been a humble soul, he would not for one moment have supposed (as he evidently did) that the toil of any sinful creature could have now the divine approbation. As it was, however, seeing that Abel and his offering was accepted, and that his own person and offering was not, his countenance fell, and hence too, as it was with the first of the devil's saints, it has been,

is, and will be, with them all, any thing and every thing for an offering will do, save Christ's person, blood and righteousness.

It is quite probable that Cain observed the acceptance of Abel and his offering by three things: -

First, by the holy fire descending and consuming the sacrifice (see Leviticus 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; and 2 Chronicles 7:1) showing thereby that God Himself accepts both the offerer and the offerings.

Secondly, Abel's countenance, of which God was evidently both the help and health (Psalm 42:5-11).

And **thirdly**, by the humility of his conversation, for as the Lord Himself, while corporally as man upon earth, could not be hid, (Mark 7:24), we may safely, by a parity of reasoning, say that the blessed effects of His gracious and soul-humbling presence in Abel could not go unobserved by Cain.

It appears that, after the divine interrogation as to Cain's wrath and admonition as to well doing, Cain and Abel conversed together, when the one, as I presume, would refer to his diligence and good works, as also to the beautiful fruit he offered to the Lord, and the other would refer to their sinfulness and consequent unworthiness in themselves, as also of God's graciousness in the atonement. And hence *it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.* The Lord soon interrogates as to the bloodshed, and passes judgement. Cain evidently feels it, and expresses fear of death at the hands of retributive justice, and then as God is, and hath always been, longsuffering with the results of wrath (Romans 9:22). Cain is assured of a prolongation of life, and the mark is set upon his fallen brow.

And the question with us is: Now what was this mark? Or rather: what does it mean? And here observe, as it was seen by God Himself upon Cain's forehead, it was for all of the family to

1. God's Mark upon Cain

observe, and for their guidance, hence lest any finding him (the murderer) should slay him. And as aforesaid, it was set there to show the Lord's longsuffering with the wicked. As also God evidently communed with our first parents, both before, and after the fall, that mark must have shown characters legible for all to read. And as Heber retained in the confusion (or Babel) of tongues the peculiar or original speech or tongue of all mankind spoken, both before and after the deluge, what hath since been known as the Hebrew language must have been the language God used in speaking to Adam. And so forsooth began characters or letters of that language - set in that mark upon Cain's forehead. And as it was (as before said) on purpose to prevent the slaying of the murderer, it seems to me as if they might read something like this: *Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord* (Romans 9:19). And it is as if He said: "This man a murderer is, and is worthy of immediate death, but having a purpose to fulfil, I spare his life." Or as if to Adam He said: "I have, because of the promised seed, and purposes of grace for My chosen, spared his life, you, your Eve, her Abel and her daughters, let Cain therefore go, and leave him in My hands."

A sevenfold vengeance being also attached to breach of this word of our Lord shows to me how hurt Adam, Eve, and all the family were, and therefore how apt to execute justice upon Cain. And I note this too, because the All-wise knows, and did never, nor ever will, use unnecessary words, and indeed how beautiful it is to observe in the genesis (beginning) a gospel precept for the guidance of God's children, and if I can very briefly sum up, a Christian duty, from this mark upon Cain.

It would be thus:

First: for the safety of the community, and because man was made originally in God's own image, there should and must be capital punishment (Genesis 9:5,6).

Secondly: In all business matters with the world take advantage of the moral and civil laws of the state (Acts 25:8-12).

Thirdly: If a professed brother or sister of a church takes advantage (as Cain did in the first church on earth) we should rather suffer ourselves to be defrauded (1 Corinthians 6:6,7), and, as according to the Word, let God Himself repay (Romans 12:19). And I particularly note this because Cain might formally adhere to the rules in the family and worship with them for a time, and while he was expelled from the Lord's presence in the church, he was to be left in the hands of their merciful, all-wise and just God.

2. The Strivings of God's Spirit

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh (Genesis 6:3).

This verse is taken by all Arminians, as also by some low Calvinists, as expressive of the fact that there is in all, or in most persons' souls, at certain periods of their lives, the stirrings of God's Spirit, without making, however, any attempt at showing how far, or in what manner, God may work upon a merely natural or unregenerate person's mind, or how far, during or after the commission of sins. Such may be troubled, and reform their lives, or otherwise do violence to a natural conscience. I shall briefly show that the Holy Ghost is not in a mere natural person's soul, nor indeed does this verse imply even that He is. For observe - the striving is not said to be in man, but with him, and so it expresses a fight or striving outside rather than in them. And observe - the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures, as also the experience of all those that have been wrought savingly upon, tends to the conclusion that every man and woman since Adam fell are by reason thereof like the Ephesians once were: *dead in trespasses and sins* (Ephesians 2:1). Nor could omnipotence itself strive in a dead soul. And hence as a corollary read this: *That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world* (v.12). And ought we not to conclude that those without God are destitute of His Spirit in them?

The mind, then, of the Spirit in these words under consideration seems to be as follows: Mankind generally had practically become so violent in wickedness, and God's way of

morality was so corrupted, He as in punishment prevented Noah preaching of righteousness, or striving by the Spirit against their ungodliness. And to show again how longsuffering the Lord has always been with the wicked – and what a blessed spirit is the spirit of Christ – Noah not only by that spirit strove against their ungodliness in preaching, but went also, and probably very often, and condoled with and exhorted to patience those many poor creatures that were by the violence of the wicked cast into prison (1 Peter 3:19,20). And after all, this mercy of the Spirit of Christ in Noah failed. He removed, as Josephus tells us, up into the woody district, and by faith prepared the ark. And justice after longsuffering had held its arm for a hundred years brought down the deluge, and destroyed them all (Genesis 6:12,13).

Observe also the reason Jehovah gives as to the futility of Noah's striving against ungodliness in preaching: *For (or because) that he also is flesh.* That is as much as to say: carnal, weak, full of evil, and destitute of true fear. And alas, there are very many persons now, and in a profession of Christ's own gospel too, who nevertheless resist as did those antediluvians the Holy Ghost in God's own children and anointed servants. Yea, and more than one of His Ezekiels have thereby become mute (Ezekiel 3:26). And more than one of His Jeremiahs stopped praying (Jeremiah 14:11) because of wickedness presumptuously rampant in hypocrites.

Witness also the destruction of the beloved Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and then subsequently by the Romans, together with the loss of the Jewish ecclesiastical government, and privileges of the word (see Romans 11), with their dispersion persecutions, and sufferings all over the world. And all because of resisting, I say, the Holy Ghost in the holy prophets, Christ, and all His apostles (Acts 7:51,52), all of which proclaim as with a loud, clear, trumpet voice: *Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no*

2. *The Strivings of God's Spirit*

harm (Psalm 105:15). And for my part, as a minister of God's Word of more than forty years' standing, I find that it is not simply doctrine, however sound, nor the preaching of what is called experience, that provokes any particular persecution, but it is rather an insistence upon a godly, humble life and conversation, as becometh the gospel of the dear Lord Jesus, which appeals to many consciences, that the ungodly professors fight against. Yes, it is the spiritual man that is mad (Hosea 9:7). And a minister nowadays with his "My beloved friends" gets on much more comfortably than he that strives against sin, and reproves another for ungodliness (Hosea 4:4).

3. The Nature of Israel's Sojourn in Egypt

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect (Galatians 3:17).

The reason of my writing a little upon this matter arises from the fact that most of God's people have been led, partly through inefficient ministers, and their own inattention of the Word of God, to conclude that the seed of Abraham dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years, whereas when the scriptures are properly explained it becomes plainly evident that they resided there not more than half that time.

First, observe that God, as we may read in the latter portion of Genesis chapter 11, and in the beginning of chapter 12, appeared to, and made covenant with Abraham as he was leaving Ur of the Chaldees in the year before Christ 1921. And then observe the fact that Jacob goes not down into Egypt to sojourn until the year BC 1706. And then observe also that the whole host of his family leaves Egypt, crosses the Red Sea, and has the Law delivered to them in the year BC 1491 - exactly four hundred and thirty years after God had preached the gospel to Abraham. Hence by subtracting this from BC 1706, which was the date of Jacob and his family entering into Egypt, it makes the sojourn there 215 years.

Some of my readers, however, may say: Does it not read in Exodus 12:40 as follows: *Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years?* I answer: Yes, but the emphasis is upon their sojourn generally, and not upon their dwelling in Egypt. And hence, by a parity of

3. *The Nature of Israel's Sojourn in Egypt*

reasoning, as their nationality commenced with the covenant made with Abraham, so must also their wanderings. And in an old paragraph Bible I have by me, it reads as follows: *Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and of their fathers, who dwelt in Canaan and in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.* And this is perfectly correct, and clears the matter beautifully – for the fathers, that is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, sojourned or dwelt in Canaan first, and then in Egypt, and the whole period, dating as Paul in Galatians shows, from the time God made covenant with Abraham, makes it as afore shown just four hundred and thirty years, two hundred and fifteen of which was spent in Egypt. And if the printers of our version had been ordered to put a parenthesis, thus: *Now the sojourning of the children of Israel (who dwelt in Egypt) was four hundred and thirty years,* it would have been much better.

But yet another apparent objection to what I have written appears in the martyr Stephen's words: *And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years* (Acts 7:6). I observe, however, and my readers ought, that the strange land in which Abraham and his seed dwelt is not necessarily the land of Egypt. Hence the apostle tells us that Abraham *by faith sojourned in the land of promise* (which is Canaan, and not Egypt), *as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise* (Hebrews 11:9). And as Abraham was called from his native land, Ur of the Chaldees, or from Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2), Canaan as well as Egypt was a strange country to him. And the fact is clear that he and his seed wandered as pilgrims in Canaan, and were more or less oppressed until their emancipation from Egypt. And it is as evident that the Egyptians in Egypt did not hold the Israelites in bondage as slaves more than 144 years.

Seeking the Mind of the Spirit

Observe also that the four hundred years' affliction of Abraham's seed that Stephen mentions is not four hundred and thirty, and the affliction of that seed for four hundred years commenced at the mocking of Isaac by Ishmael (whose mother Hagar was an Egyptian) just about thirty years after God first made covenant with Abraham. And as the apostle Paul says: *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now* (Galatians 4:28,29).

These things, put together, contradict no scripture, whereas to teach that the children of Israel sojourned in Egypt four hundred and thirty years not only contradicts the apostle Paul, who declares that the Law was delivered at Sinai in the wilderness four hundred and thirty years after God made covenant with Abraham, but throws everything of the history of Abraham's seed into confusion.

Now let me tabulate it:

	Years BC
Covenant God made with Abraham	1921
The delivery of the Law in the wilderness	<u>1491</u>
Years elapsed	430
The persecution of Abraham's seed began	1891
Emancipation from Egyptian bondage	<u>1491</u>
Years elapsed	400
The sojourn or dwelling in Egypt itself began	1706
Emancipation from Egyptian bondage	<u>1491</u>
Years elapsed	215
Oppression from the Egyptian in Egypt began	1635
Emancipation from Egyptian bondage	<u>1491</u>
Years elapsed	144

4. Melchisedec

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils (Hebrews 7:2-4).

Many very absurd and foolish notions are by some sincere but ignorant Christians held respecting Melchisedec, and although the beloved apostle here calls him a man, some question if he really was one. He met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, and Abraham gave him the tithe of all the spoils, whereas if he was not a man, I cannot see how he would appreciate such carnal and material things. Others, while admitting the fact of his being a man, say, as he was without father and without mother, he of course could not have been a man of sinful flesh and blood, as all the rest of us are. Yea, some have gone so far as to say Melchisedec was the Son of God Himself, whereas the apostle constantly makes a distinction between him and God's own Son, in saying that *he was made like unto Him*. We may here remark that, however striking the likeness, it was but a likeness and so forsooth not the Son of God Himself. And a man, who used to hear me preach in Norwich, would have it that this Melchisedec was the fourth person in the Trinity.

Let me therefore now try and briefly explain these verses.

First, Melchisedec was a man – hence the exhortation to *consider how great this man was*.

Secondly, he was also, according to God's word, *King of Salem*, which was afterwards called Jerusalem, and Josephus, the great Jewish historian, tells us that he Melchisedec built it.

Thirdly, he was also, according to that which we read in the Genesis, and in the epistle to the Hebrews, *the priest of the most high God* (Genesis 14:18 & Hebrews 7:1).

And the fact is, as the Hebrews generally say in reference to any person who can give no account of his descent, pedigree, generation or family, "Oh, he is without father and without mother", and as there is nothing in history of Melchisedec's descent etc, nor any account whatever as to when he became a king, or a priest, nor of when he was born, nor of when he died, the blessed apostle pitches upon this, and hence, in order to illustrate the eternity of the kingly grace and Royal Priesthood of Christ, treats of Melchisedec as the greatest and grandest type in scripture of Him that can possibly be. And hence it is I ask: Who can tell us who was the father of Jesus' manhood? And also who is, or was, the mother of His divinity? Who too can give us the beginning of His days as God's eternal Son? Or as the King and Priest of the most high God? And further, who can pick a period to the end of His life, and official capacities of Him as Priest and King? Are not all these things of our precious Jesus undatable and unspeakable? And is not His grace immortal and eternal?

The apostle's object, therefore, in bringing in Melchisedec was evidently on purpose to contrast the Priesthood and Kingship of Christ with that of the Levitical or Aaronic Priesthood. For instance, one knows when Aaron became a priest, as also who was his father, and when he and his sons died, when the law of their priesthood began, and when it vanished away. One can also tell when David became a king, and when he died, and when also the sceptre departed from Judah. In other words, there was, and is, a beginning and an end with all creature kingdoms, kings

4. *Melchisedec*

and priests, but not with God's eternal Son, who stands for ever in the eternal covenant of free grace, as the Head, Husband, Prophet, Priest and King of the ever-living church.

Melchisedec, then, was a real man of sinful flesh and blood with us, and came into this sinful world by carnal generation as the rest of Adam's race. He began also at a certain time to reign in Salem, as also to officiate as priest of the most high God, and after fulfilling God's will here he died. But as none but the Omniscient knows when he began, nor when he ceased, the Holy Ghost makes use of what was and is hidden to all historians to figure forth the eternity, and eternal nature of the Person and Grace of Christ Jesus in His official capacities of King and Priest.

It is doubtless truth that the word "Melchisedec" signifies king of righteousness, and that "Salem" means, as the learned and blessed apostle saith, Peace. And yet to me, as His dealings with us poor ignorant sinners are often very mysterious, we need His blessed Spirit to reveal both Himself and His dealings with us. The Holy Ghost, my reader, is the Interpreter, and when He graciously takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us (John 16:15), we not only see how righteous He is, but our righteousness also in Him, and then Salem's peace follows in the enjoyment of His love, as the price and fruit of His precious blood and righteousness (Isaiah 32:17).

5. Grace and Sin Not Twins

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger (Genesis 25:23).

Having heard it both publicly and privately stated by those who, according to their profession, ought to have been much better informed, that the twins which the church in the Song of Solomon is said to bear, are sin and grace, I have often felt it becomes me to briefly show that they are not. Of course, the struggling of Esau and Jacob in Rebekah's womb, as also her discomfort and anxiety arising therefrom, may be ministerially used to point onto the conflict in the true believer between those opposite principles of sin and grace, I grant. But those opposite principles should rather be shown as in the mother, on account of the children's struggle. At all events, to teach that sin and grace are as twin brothers is to propound the most monstrous and awful foolishness possible.

First, observing a little common sense, we should show that a twin is one of two at the same conception and birth, whereas sin and grace are not so. Grace is, as of God's love to us, eternal, and sin of time, and is also in our fallen nature, and often practically manifest in action long before we are in possession of any grace whatever.

Secondly, a twin is also one of two persons begotten by one individual sire, conceived in the womb, and borne and brought forth by the one individual mother. Hence, to be plain, the Holy Ghost (who is never carnally delicate) saith, *Rebekah ... conceived (Jacob and Esau) by one (embrace) even by our father Isaac* (Romans

5. *Grace and Sin not Twins*

9:10). Grace, however, is of God the Father, as from the womb of an everlasting covenant, and sin is of the devil, and in relation to mankind from the womb of a fallen nature. Grace is also in us as holiness itself, and agreeable with the divine nature, in the regeneration of the soul (2 Peter 1:4). Yea, it is indeed an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23). Whereas sin is lawlessness and iniquity itself, and consequently is ever in violent antagonism and opposition to God's holy Law (Romans 8:7). In a word: Grace is Jehovah's pleasure (Ephesians 1:3,7). And sin is of the devil, its father (John 8:44). Consequently to liken as twins two such contraries or opposites bespeaks the greatest monstrosity as is possible for one's mind to conceive.

Again, Esau and Jacob, being naturally twins, it is just as plain that each was equally involved in Adam's fall, and manifested the same fallen, or corrupted, nature. And while it is also a fact that God, by their struggle in the womb, intended to show Rebekah, and through her complaints to all His saints, the differences and fortunes of the two nations that should from them arise, the principles (as aforesaid) of sin and of grace were more manifested in the mother than in the wrestling of the lads. That is to say, the painfulness of her pregnancy tended to stir up those opposites in her own soul. Nor have we any ground whatever to say there was any grace in little Jacob before she gave birth to them.

The twins spoken of in the Song of Solomon pointed to Christ and His Church, for are not both of the Father's love to us? And as conceived in the womb of His own eternal covenant of free grace? And are not both in the promises, and manifested to us in the application of them to our souls? Yea, in all relationships in which Christ stands in the covenant, is He not manifest - as one with the Church? Well, for an answer read the following: *For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.* And of

one what? Why, one Father, one Mother, one womb, one nature, one spirit, one house, one home, and one glory. *For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, or, as in the Song of Solomon, (collectively) His sister, or spouse, Saying: I will declare thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee* (Hebrews 2:11,12). Yea, and see this oneness expressed also in the following words: *My dove (saith Christ), My undefiled is but one (of the terms); she is the only one (daughter) of her mother (the covenant of grace), she is the choice one of her that bare her* (Song of Solomon 6:9). And observe – as Christ in that song frequently calls the church His sister, as well as spouse, the meaning is that Zion brought forth with the Man-child Christ Jesus, this *Hephzibah* in whom He delights, and in Him the whole church at once (Isaiah 64:4; 66:7,8).

This oneness is also manifest in the labours, sufferings and sacrifices of all the true ministers of the word: *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart* (2 Corinthians 3:2,3). That is to say, not only godly men amongst Jew and Gentile, but all men who might be acquainted with or witnesses of the ministry and wonderful labours and sufferings of the apostles, would read the love of Christ and His church as twins in their hearts. Indeed, that is a very bad reader of the Acts of the Apostles who does not see how pregnant with the love of Christ and His church they were.

6. Esau's Tears

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father (Genesis 27:34).

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Hebrews 12:17).

I should not perchance refer to Esau's tears were it not for the fact of many sincere souls being much troubled respecting them. Yea, even the godly Bunyan was in his early days sorely tried about them – see his “Grace Abounding.”

First, the apostle in Hebrews 12 calls Esau a *profane person who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright*. Subsequently, however, though he was troubled about the consequences of sins, he never had a grain of godliness, nor the least desire for God, nor godly repentance, and therefore never went to God in prayer about any matter whatever.

Secondly, although there are spirituals in the blessing Jacob obtained, Esau never shed a single tear about the loss of them. And it is as evident that the deprivation of the best of temporals caused his great and exceeding cry. Yea, like the bear bereaved of her whelps, or as the man much stripped of his idol gods: “What,” saith he, “have I left?” (Judges 18:24). Whereas all the good things of this poor world are as nothing in comparison with God to a truly gracious soul (Psalm 73:25). In fact, such are for seeking first the kingdom of God, and for leaving the rest, as a single overplus of goodness (Matthew 6:33). And where they find in the field the pearl of great price (Christ) they are for parting

with everything in the hope of possession thereof (Matthew 13:46).

Esau, however, being the firstborn of the twins, Isaac fully intended to bless him in preference to Jacob. Consequently when Esau came in immediately afterwards with his venison, and found that he had been supplanted, and cried out so bitterly, Isaac could not repent or change his mind relatively to the blessing. Hence: *Isaac his father said unto (Esau), Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? And now mark what follows: Yea, and he shall be blessed (verses 32-34). And now follow Esau's tears, all of which, as the apostle saith, found no place of repentance (in Isaac's heart) or as the margin in Hebrews reads: found no way to change his (Isaac's) mind - that is, from blessing Jacob, as Esau, in finding how he was supplanted in the affair, evidently thought he would.*

And in conclusion, I would just say that Satan, knowing by what they say in prayer, how wicked and unworthy subjects of divine grace feel, misrepresents the mind of the Spirit in the sacred Scriptures, and on purpose to add to their affliction. Yea, he uses the law of God for his purpose, and in all manner of ways oppresses and worries each humble soul. Any person, therefore, who feels their lost and ruined condition as a sinner before God, will yet justify Him, and cry for mercy, for the fear of God, for divine teaching, searching, pardon, and truth, whatever such have done, or may have been, or see and feel themselves to be, or however ugly and many their sins - there is not a single scripture rightly understood against them, from Genesis to the Revelation, but rather everything in their favour. Hence: *The meek (teachable) shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek Him: your heart shall live for ever (Psalm 22:26).* And such, whatever their felt

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hardness of heart, or effect of Satan's temptations, have no cause whatever to be troubled about Esau's tears. And again I repeat: Esau was a profane person, and consequently neither repented of his sins, nor sought God all his days.

7. The Reserved Seven Thousand

Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him (1 Kings 19:18).

How often has one heard inconsiderate Christians say of God's aged servants, who may perchance have expressed the fear that there are but a very few faithful ministers of the Lord, "Oh, he is like Elijah, and has got his own spirit. Elijah said there was but himself, whereas the Lord told him He had seven thousand left."

Now, is it, I ask, a light matter to charge God's aged ministers with being influenced with their own or a bad spirit, or to insinuate that the prophet Elijah told a lie? Indeed, if the Wise Man cautions a hearer of God's Word against charging the angel (messenger or minister) with an error (Ecclesiastes 5:6), it certainly becomes all of us to be careful as to what we say of the spirit God's public servants manifest. The fact, however, is plain, that there are thousands of gospel professors in our day of presumption and blasphemy, who have no more fear of setting their mouth against the heavens, or of touching (hurting) God's anointed than the writer has of being some day king of Great Britain. Admitting however that Elijah was, as the apostle James reminds us, a man of like passions with us, and so of course was capable of error, he evidently made no mistake in relation to the number of prophets the Jehovah of Israel then had.

And now observe: that according to what we read in 1 Kings 18 he had quite single-handed faced the wicked Ahab, all the elders of Israel, and all the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and there determined the true and only God. And then, after slaying the false prophets, and Ahab had acquainted his Jezebel

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of it, and she had taken an oath as to his life, he, not realising faith that Jehovah would enable him to face her, flees for his life. And then while under the juniper tree he falls asleep. The angel of Jehovah awakes him, and graciously presents him timely food, and he goes in the strength thereof forty days and nights to Horeb. *And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away* (1 Kings 19:9,10). But of course, according to some of our present day professors, Elijah was in a bad spirit, and told a downright lie, for there were forsooth seven thousand. Well, let us see if that was so.

The word reads: *Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, that when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?* The answer, of course, (if we pay attention to some of our present day professors) must have been: "Lord, I have been telling a lie. I have said that the children of Israel have slain all Thy prophets, and that I only am left out of the lot, and I now pray Thee, O Lord, of Thine infinite mercy to pardon me for my lying and bad spirit." Instead of which, however, and notwithstanding the witnessing of the terrible majesty of the law in the wind, the earthquake and the fire, and of the most humbling and benign

influence of God's mercy in "the still small voice", he repeats the very same words, and again says: *I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away* (v.14).

And now let us observe Jehovah's answer: *And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.* (Mark that: *prophet in thy room!*) *And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him* (v.15-18).

Having shown that Elijah was neither in a bad spirit, nor guilty of falsehood, let us now show what the *seven thousand* were. They were not prophets but private, God-fearing men, who had never bowed the knee to Baal, nor kissed his image. In other words, they were persons who had not in Israel's departure from their God left the true worship of Jehovah. And there is no manner of doubt that the Lord God of Israel now told His troubled and discouraged servant of these *seven thousand* according to the election of grace on purpose to encourage him, and to show that he had not laboured in vain, nor spent strength for naught. As also to show that Israel as a nation was not given over to entire destruction, but that the salt was there to preserve it, and so, notwithstanding Hazael's subsequent severity and Jehu's sweep of the house of Ahab, as also Elisha's sword of the spirit against hypocrisy, there would still be a remnant left who should fear the Lord. And this is just how the apostle Paul treats

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of the matter in Romans 11, for observe that after citing Elijah as to the killing of Jehovah's prophets, and the digging down his altars, and also of Elijah as a prophet being left alone and a fugitive for his life, Paul saith: *But what saith the answer of God unto him? Why - I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men (not prophets, mind) who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.* And then the apostle goes on to say, as an inference: *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (v.3-5).* The idolatry of Israel, the earthquake, the wind, and the fire did not destroy the whole nation. No, there was then, there was also in Paul's days, there is now, and there always will be, a remnant according to the election of grace.

And now in conclusion, however severe it may sound, it strikes me very forcibly that we had better say there are more than seven thousand presumptuous professors and ministers of Christianity in our day that charge God's prophets with a bad and lying spirit.

8. The Sixth Chapter of Hebrews

Having never read an exposition of this chapter that fully satisfied me as to the mind of the Spirit therein, I very briefly now write my own meditations thereon.

According to our sentiments all God's children being loved with an everlasting and infinite and immutable love, and because of that, chosen to obtain salvation in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, as also to eternal glory by Him (2 Timothy 2:10), there can be no possibility whatever of any one of them falling for ever away from the hope of the everlasting gospel.

It has always been a point with me in my feeble expositions of the Word to observe the connection, as also the drift, of the inspired penman. Let us in the first place make just a remark upon the closing words of the preceding chapter. The apostle reproves these Hebrew Christians for their poor attainments. They were still but babes in knowledge, whereas in consideration of the length of their profession, and of the privileges of the word, they ought to have been men able to teach others. And, by the way, if that was the case with those primitive Christians, and when there was such an outpouring of the Spirit, how about us? I am indeed afraid that many nowadays are ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, or if there is grace, and some knowledge of the first principles, there is little or no growth in grace, or in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Leaving this, however, let us proceed.

The apostle saith: *Therefore leaving the principles* (or as he terms them in chapter 5 the *first principles* - or the word of the beginning of Christ) *let us go on unto perfection*. In other words, as unto a more perfect knowledge of Christ - *not laying again the foundation of repentance etc.* That is, not always using milk, as if

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our hearers were always babes in need of light or foundation food. Oh no! A Christian, as he grows, needs stronger meats, and clearer light, and for this purpose Christ's doves fly to their windows (Isaiah 60:8). *And this, saith he, we will do, if God permit (or wills it).*

So - For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gifts, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

Now, for my part, without determining whether the apostle means by *those once enlightened etc.* the children of grace, who have fallen, or shall be left awfully to fall, and to fall away from their profession for a time, and until (when all means of grace fail to renew them again unto repentance) the Good Shepherd goes after them Himself, as after the straggler (Luke 15), or whether He intends by such those who have light and gifts under the operation of the Holy Ghost, without being in possession of the new creation, or without the true grace of God - I say, without a dogmatic statement of which class is intended, it is very evident that he supposes a most desperate case, and that too to stir up God's children to more diligence. And who has any warrant or ability to say how far sin and Satan may draw or drive a regenerate soul? Or how long a time such may be left sinning against light? Or how impossible it is by the usual means of grace to renew such again to repentance? In other words, who can say either how desperately wicked is the human heart, how hardening and deceitful is the practice of sin, or what power Satan may be allowed to exercise over a subject of saving grace?

Looking for a moment, then, upon these characters as awful backsliders, their enlightenment, and gifts, their repentance, and

partaking of the Holy Ghost, was of course real, and in the end saving. And this view seems to me to be most consistent, because, if the apostle means downright hypocrites, or those destitute of a saving repentance, why should he hint at their renewal to such a repentance, seeing, I say, it was not saving, or a thing not of God's covenant of grace? One would think it were almost as well they never had such a repentance. It is true a sow looks better after being washed, but clean as its outward appearance is, it is a swine still, and although a moral deportment is ten thousand times better for the community and for conscience, a spurious repentance, or a mere legal profession, and a hypocritical religion is no more pleasing in the sight of God than a dirty sow. And the apostle's apparent anxiety for the renewal of repentance seems, I say, to indicate their being at first blest with that which is saving.

And again, does not a backsliding child of grace crucify to himself the Son of God afresh, and reopen His wounds, put Him to an open shame before the world? Showing by an awful relapse into sin, as if the most precious blood of Christ was not efficacious or saving? Yea, would not such crucify Him afresh in His members also, and make their poor, humble hearts bleed at their ungodliness? Let the reader peruse what that most mercifully and wonderfully reclaimed (apostate) sheep, Joseph Hart the hymnwriter, has written of himself, as an introduction to his hymns. Does he not call his restoration a sort of reconversion? Reflect also, while you read his own account of his experience, upon what that poor man suffered for his sins against light and the knowledge of the gospel.

One thing is very certain to me, and to all who know themselves, that is - if left to ourselves, notwithstanding grace in the gospel, and the means thereof for our use - our hearts are by nature like the barren heath or land, untilled, that bears nothing

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better than briars and thorns; and we, following the flesh, would soon be rejected by, and a castaway from, the visible church. And as the apostle in this chapter, as also Isaiah the prophet, intimated, the end of this rubbish must be by burning, or a fresh visit to Sinai and Gethsemane. And let the reader observe, the writer has been to Sinai twice. And hence it is we read of the spirit of burning, as also of the Lord washing away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and of purging the blood of Jerusalem (Isaiah 4:4).

True, these Christian Hebrews had not so fallen away, hence there were things relative to their Christian character at the time the apostle writes that *accompanied salvation*, and those things were their work and labour of love showed to Christ's dear name in their faith and patience (verses 9-12). The Lord mercifully preserve us all and help us to cry: *Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe* (Psalm 119:117). *Keep me as the apple of the eye* (Psalm 17:8). And does not the apostle Peter write in the same strain? Does he not show the help of a lively use of the means of grace, and that one evil of despising them is blindness, and that such who despise, by wilful neglect, cannot see afar off, or by faith? Also that such have forgotten they were once purged from their old sins? (2 Peter 1:1-10).

And again, is there not too much glory paid to grace within us, as if that is the thing that keeps us, or as if, if a person is regenerate, and has the same good thing in his heart toward the Lord God of Israel, he or she is quite safe? The apostle Peter, however, by the Spirit teaches first what we feel is truth, namely, that we are *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation* (1 Peter 1:5) – and not exclusively by the grace within. Hence the Spirit not only works in us, but *the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them* (Psalm 34:7). And observe that, as Jehovah's angel encamps round about and

delivers the God-fearing soul, it is not then altogether that gracious fear by which we are kept and delivered. I am, reader, simply pointing this out to show that a gracious disposition, though needful and blessed, is not all that is needful. There is a sly serpent to deceive, and a roaring lion without to devour, and while Zion within hath provision, it is her walls that are called salvation, or rather that we should call her walls salvation, and her gates, which open to let in supplies, praise (Isaiah 60:18). Also that her enemies, after walking round about, and considering her palaces, walls, bulwarks etc. walked away, thinking it an abortive attempt to besiege her (Psalm 48).

In conclusion let me say that, if we ministers were more earnest in preaching, or drawing the features of a saint from practical premises, and what grace and the means of grace lead to, as also what evils or wilful neglect of them issue in, instead of always aiming at comforting our hearers, because they are in possession of grace, we should be more useful, and have less chaff with the wheat, and fewer goats with the sheep. To preach an experience is one thing, but to show the real character of a saint formed by an unctuous and solemn experience of Christ in the gospel is another. Or in other words: a boldness in defence of the security and ultimate felicity of the whole election of grace is one thing, and the consciousness of one's utter unworthiness and entire helplessness against the corruption of our fallen stature, and Satan's temptations, and the humble cry of faith for God to preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom is another. And Mr. Hart puts it in a nutshell:

Faith's a convincing proof,
A substance sound and sure,
That keeps the soul secured enough,
But makes it not secure.