

Commentary on Esther by Elder John R. Respass

FIRST CHAPTER OF ESTHER

THE GREAT FEAST

THE FEAST OF SEVEN DAYS

DUTY AND PRIVILEGE

MERCY IN THE GOSPEL

VASHTI'S FALL

GENERAL REMARKS IN CONCLUSION UPON THIS POINT

THUS VASHTI DISHONORED THE KING

WHAT IS DONE MUST BE ACCORDING TO LAW

WHERE MUCH IS GIVEN, MUCH IS REQUIRED

THE SENTENCE

THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAW NECESSARY

A QUEEN NECESSARY

THE CALLING

THE ONE CALLED IN SPIRIT

PURIFICATION

THE KINSMAN'S SOLICITUDE

RECONCILIATION

ESTHER'S FEAST

ALL MEN ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

DANGER OF BAD HABITS

CONCUBINES

IN OFFICE

DUE TIME

[AS THY DAY THY STRENGTH SHALL BE](#)

[LOVE NEVER FAILS](#)

[GOD APPOINTED OVERSEERS](#)

[JACOB AND ESAU](#)

[THE BATTLE](#)

[SIBEOLETH AND SHIBBOLETH](#)

[THE LYING SPIRIT](#)

[MORDECAI IN SACKCLOTH](#)

[ESTHER'S SACRIFICE](#)

[ROYAL APPAREL](#)

[OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS](#)

[A SLEEPLESS NIGHT](#)

[THE DECREE](#)

[WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT!](#)

[THE JEWS IN SHUSHAN](#)

[THE EXECUTION OF THE DECREE](#)

[THE FEAST OF PURIM](#)

## **Commentary on Esther by Elder John R. Respass**

### **FIRST CHAPTER OF ESTHER**

The reader should carefully read the first chapter of the book of Esther, as that is the text of the present discourse.

It will there be seen that Ahasuerus was king and reigned over one hundred and twenty seven provinces, from India even unto Ethiopia. Provinces are conquered states or countries, more or less remote from the capital. The king's empire was very great, but did not extend, though large, over all mankind. In that respect it represents God's moral government in the world.

This government does not, even in this advanced day, extend over all the earth. Whilst it is true that God rules in nature over all mankind, savage as well as civilized and enlightened people, saints and sinners,

the savage nations have not been subjected to the moral or civil law of civilized nations, and are not therefore provinces of the moral empire of God. The enlightened nations of Europe and America are provinces of God's moral government; but the savage people are not, and are therefore unrestrained by civil law. They are under savage and barbarous rule, in which there is no protection of life, liberty or property, but the weaker is dispossessed and oppressed by the stronger; they have no systematized industry; no school houses and cities; no family government and female chastity, but are thriftless, ignorant, lazy, fierce and brutal, living chiefly by plunder and rapine. Few if any of the children of God are ever found amongst savages, but are, as a rule, to be found scattered in civilized countries, as the Jews were in the empire of Ahasuerus, and as the people of God are today in Europe and America. Even the tribes inhabiting the promised land, though to some extent civilized, were largely expelled before the Jews were put into its permanent possession. Savage tribes once inhabited this country, some of whom yet remain on the frontiers, but are receding and fast perishing out before the advance of civilization. When they were in the possession of this whole country there were probably no children of God amongst them. It is true they had some sort of religion or superstition; they believed in the Great Spirit and expected after death a translation to happy immortal hunting grounds. But they were unworthy the fertile lands on which they idly roamed, hunting either game for subsistence, or their savage foes for plunder and murder. Their religion exercised no moral and beneficial influence over their lives, but rather fostered their indolence and brutality. If their belts were strung with the scalps of enemies and their fame trumpeted as bloody handed braves, great rewards were expected in the happy hunting grounds of eternity. But when the Indians' fullness had arrived, America was discovered, and thus God gave vent to the over-burdened and oppressed population of the Old World. Many of the persecuted people of God, in company with multitudes in quest of wealth and adventure, found refuge from religious persecution in this Western world, and soon an empire of free people sprang up, subduing the savage empire into a province of God's moral government.

These nations to whom the gospel went by the apostles and early Christians, though heathen in a Christian sense were by no means savages. They had organized governments, and in some of them much enlightenment and refinement; and though ignorant of the ceremonial law of the Jews, had some knowledge of the moral law by nature. They had protection of life and property, courts of justice, splendid cities and large commerce; they had great poets, orators, statesmen, sculptors and philosophers. Indeed the spirit of their morality exceeded, as we may believe, in many places, that of the Jews in the days of the Saviour. In this respect Ahasuerus reigned over the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of his empire; as God reigns over civilized and enlightened nations of the earth; and not as he reigns over all the earth in the law of nature.

The law of nature by which the savage hungers and thirsts sickens, suffers and dies, is the same by which the moral man and Christian hungers, suffers and dies. This law is over all; but the moral or civil law, by which the weaker is secured in his life, liberty and property against the stronger, is not over the savage. He is unrestrained.

The Jews in the great empire of Ahasuerus were the only citizens under the spiritual government of God, or the law of faith. And as Jews were then, so Christians or believers now are the only citizens of civil governments under law to Christ. In common with all citizens they are subject to the laws of the country

in which they live, and entitled to all its privileges, but are at the same time under spiritual law, or the responsibilities of faith, of which other citizens are ignorant. While it is the duty of all citizens to obey the laws of the country, it is doubly the duty of the Christian to do so, even if he has no property at stake needing protection, because God commands his allegiance to established governments. It is his duty by the law of faith. For the same reason the Christian is required to keep the law of nature, in not sinning against his own body in excess; in drunkenness and gluttony because a violation of nature's law destroys life and health. The moral law embraces the good in the natural law, and the spiritual law the good in both laws. We think, therefore, it may be laid down as a rule, to which there may of course be exceptions, that God's spiritual people are always to be found, in their organized capacity, in civilized countries, and that they possess in spirit, though may be unlearned in letters, the highest order of civilization; and that it may be considered a truth that the temple of truth and holiness arises, as of old, upon the threshing floor of the Jebusite, as civilization rises upon the ruins of barbarism. That is to say, when Christianity is rooted in a country and brings forth its fruit; barbarism, with its vices and brutality, gives way and is extinguished by its moral influences. In this respect Christianity is a blessing to the world. We have in the South now in our midst, a considerable number as we believe of God's children in the colored people, who by means of slavery have been civilized and by God's grace made Christians, whilst probably not one has been made a Christian by all the efforts of missionaries in Africa. If in God's purpose and providence a sufficient number of these colored Christians should return to Africa to subdue by their influence and control that country, a province may there be so subdued to civil law as to give place to the church of Christ in that benighted land.

We think it may also be assumed as true, that the church of Christ will not long exist in any country in which morality is uprooted. Because though it in a spiritual sense be but tares, the wheat will be uprooted with it; and that oftentimes such governments are spared, though the people have become greatly demoralized, for the sake of the church in their midst. But the increase of immorality in a nation is a token of its moral decay, which presages its final overthrow when the light of the church is withdrawn.

## **THE GREAT FEAST**

King Ahasuerus made a great feast. It was a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Medi; the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him. There was at least one Jew in this feast. But it was not a spiritual feast; else there would have been none present but Jews, as when the church rejoices in spirit. But this was a feast in which all rejoiced; Jews as well as others and others as well as Jews. It is well enough to say now that a Jew then represented a spiritual man, or a believer. It was a feast of which both believers and unbelievers could partake; like the common blessings of life, as fruitful seasons, good government, peace, plenty and prosperity. We would rejoice in wise rulers and in great and patriotic statesmen; we would rejoice if the burdens of the people were even now lightened by our rulers. In this country Christians have great cause of thankfulness for liberty of conscience; for wisdom given men of the world in the arts and sciences in the utilization of steam, electricity and the printing press, and for thousands of other blessings accruing to them from the wisdom given men of the world. The believer partakes of these blessings as well as the unbeliever. It is true it may be with a very different spirit, as the multitude and disciples partook of the loaves and the fishes; the disciples with a

spirit of poverty, humility and thankfulness, and the others as of something to which they were entitled by their zeal.

This feast was according to the state of the king, and designed to "show the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty," and was therefore a great feast. To his chief men, his princes, nobles and servants he gave a feast of 180 days, but to others that were present in Shusan the palace, both great and small, a feast of seven days. Much more therefore was given his princes, nobles and servants than to the common people, and much more therefore was required of them. This is true in worldly gifts as well as in spiritual. God has given to some men great minds and great advantages in moral, mental and physical culture; great advantages in worldly position and wealth for the benefit of society at large, and even for the benefit of the church. These gifts should not exalt, but humble the recipients of them; but it is often the case that men are puffed up by that which should humble them, being destitute of the right spirit. True wisdom is always accompanied with humility; the wiser one is the humbler he is; the more he knows the more he feels his insufficiency. Only the wise know that they knew nothing only as God has given to them; and therefore they feast to the honor of his excellent majesty in showing in themselves the riches of the glorious kingdom of grace. They eat to the king's honor. This feast was according to the state of the king, not only in the repast, but in the dignity and number of the feasters. Should we give a feast it would be according to our state our social, worldly and spiritual position. It would not become us to give a feast that a poor man could give, for we should in it dishonor ourselves and our guests. Nor would it become us to give one that a worldly man in our social position might give; For he could give a ball and have fiddling, dancing and frolic; but should we do so, we would reproach our God, dishonor ourselves and our brethren. Nor would it become us to give a feast that a rich man could give. A feast given by us would be that of a private citizen, but one given by the Governor would be according to his public state or official position, as the head of the government, and would therefore show the glory of the State, as well as the honor of its head. A feast given by the President would be greater than that of the Governor, because as the Governor feasted judges and legislators, the President would feast governors, senators and national judges. The appointees under a governor would not be as great men as those under the President. His guests therefore would be greater, and great as they might be, they would be but as satellites revolving around him as the central sun and reflecting his glory. A spiritual feast, or a feast in the church, shows the riches of our glorious King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the honor of his excellent majesty, and not our own glory. The humbler one is the more he reflects the glory of God.

Ministers, or princes in Israel, should feast the church, or preach as God has given them to preach, and thus they will show the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty; that is, they will comfort others with the same comfort wherewith God or the King has feasted, taught and comforted them. The higher one's position in the world or church the more is required of him; not that he is required to be more faithful, but to be faithful under greater temptations. A simple laborer in the field would not have the temptations to worldly pride and vanity that he would if he were rich and in high position in church or State; and to put him in a high place without any previous preparation for it would be to place him from whence he would surely fall. But if he were prepared by 180 days of teaching, suffering, learning and temptation he would be able to stand. More wisdom is therefore given

to those placed or called of God to high places, the princes and nobles so to speak, amongst men and saints because it is essential to the position. But even they have none to spare, and what they have is to glorify the King in showing the riches of the King and kingdom who has called them from ignorance and darkness into the light of his glorious kingdom.

It is our duty to render honor to whom honor is due both in church and State. Paul had worldly qualifications as well as spiritual and knew how to demean himself before kings and great men of the world; other ministers had equal spiritual gifts, but not equal natural and acquired ability, and were not therefore qualified to do the work assigned Paul. That much more was required of him than others of less qualifications, and this Paul testifies to, saying, "I preached more than they all, and yet not I but the grace of God that was with me;" that is to say, he was made able to do it and was therefore required to do it. The same was required of others; they were required to do what they were able to do, neither more nor less. Paul when before Agrippa, rendered him honor as to a great man, though he was the apostle of the King of kings and Lord of lords; he did not feel it his duty or privilege to be wanting in respect to a great man of the world, even if he were a stranger to God's grace. And whilst he did not present himself cringingly before him, he did come before him with due respect and humility, and was glad of the opportunity of speaking of Christ to a man versed in affairs as Agrippa was. When King Agrippa said to him, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," Paul did not mock him for his ignorance of spiritual truth, but meekly answered him, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

These princes and nobles who were feasted, fed or prepared and qualified for the high places to which they were called were not all of equal ability; that is they were not all trained for the same work. They were great in their several lines or departments; one was versed in finance, another in diplomacy, in law, in statesmanship, in oratory, in military tactics, in agriculture, in science and art. One may have been strong in one special thing and very weak in things in which another was strong. Haman was a great statesman, for he was the king's prime minister, but he was weak in moral principle and a corrupt man. So it is in the church of Christ. One may be an able minister, but very weak out of that special calling; and we think this is generally the case. But the main thing is that he should be fit for the position he is in, and not that he should be fit for every other or any other position. We should think that even a very able minister would make but a poor politician. The church may call a member to the ministry, but she can't qualify him for it; he may be a successful farmer, lawyer, doctor or teacher, zealous, well educated and eloquent, but he will not be useful in the ministry, unless he has been called and prepared by the great King of saints for that work.

But though there is a difference in the gifts of men in the world, and of ministers in the church, they are all the King's servants. King David had thirty chief captains, three of whom were chief over them, and Joab chief of all. Joab had an armor bearer and ten attendants, who carried his artillery and baggage. It was his charge to signal by trumpet an advance or a retreat. To have despised his authority would have been to despise the king's authority. If the other captains had combined against him from envy, it would have been treason to David. Not one of them was qualified to fill his position. Ambitious Absalom stole for a moment, through feigned love and humility, the hearts of David's subjects, but he was slain by Joab, when perhaps not another one of all the king's captains was strong enough to have done it. The

church may be, and has been beguiled from David or Christ by theological schools, and things of that sort, and entangled, but she has always returned to him when Absalom was slain, and there has always been a Joab to do it. It is nothing that his sun went down under a cloud; he served David well, even if there was much of self-service in it. It required just such a man as he was to do the work he did.

True and devoted ministers are entitled to honor from the church, and it is and should be faithfully rendered them; but if men are thrust into the position unqualified for it, it has a tendency to lower its dignity and bring it into contempt. Because it is reversing God's order, which cannot be safely done, either in church or State. To put a man into a position for which he is not qualified, is to require more of him than he is able to perform. It would be wrong to entrust a man with a school, store or farm, destitute of capacity to manage it; and certainly it would be a greater harm to entrust a man with the ministry destitute of qualifications for it. The farm would involve both parties, the owner and manager in loss, and beget hard feelings, if not strife. And the owner would be more to blame than the incapable manager, because more had been committed to him. The church has her duty to her pastor laid down in the law of Christ; but if she fails in duty to him, he must not fail in duty to the King; because that would be doing like her, and there would be less excuse for him than for her. He must approve himself as the minister of the King or Christ, "in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned," &c-II Corinthians 6.

We had a man once managing a little farm of ours, and one day he told us that Tom, Dick and Harry, all wanted to plow, and there were but three plows to run, and he wished to plow too, and how about it? We told him that he must do what they were unwilling to do; that he was chief and must be the least; that their interest in the crop was in their wages only, but his was in the success of the crop, and he was therefore under greater responsibilities than they were, and that he must labor in that spirit. Wisdom is profitable to direct; and if there were none to direct, there would be no necessity that more wisdom should be given to one than to another. But for one destitute of wisdom to direct another wiser than he, would be to reverse God's order; would be folly and setting folly in dignity. There is too much in this day. No man likes to be required to pay out more money than he is able to pay, because he is made poorer by it; but it is hard to find a man who feels incapable of filling any office to which he may be called; but if he is incapable, he will be as one paying out more money than he is able to; he will become poorer by it; "it will not be for his honor." If God has committed a dove or pigeon only to one, then that is all that is required of him to offer, and all that will be accepted of him. If he offers more, it is not offered to God, but to his own pride and vanity...not to the honor of the King's excellent majesty. But if a kid is given, he must offer the kid; nothing less will be accepted. Should a dove be offered by one who is able to offer a kid, it will be an offering to his covetousness or indolence, and unacceptable to God. But if a bullock be given then nothing less than a bullock will be accepted. Whatever is offered must be the best God has given us, or of the ability God has given. There is often hesitancy about joining the church for lack of more evidence, or a greater experience; but he who has a dove can offer it in humility, and with a deep sense of poverty, when probably a kid would exalt him and render his offering unacceptable. But when one really has a bullock to offer, he would prefer it to be a dove. For example, if he has been guilty of adultery or drunkenness, he has a bullock to offer in confession and would then be glad if it was some

smaller thing, as but a dove. But the general tendency is to make offerings less than they ought to be. It is often the ease in contributions that doves are given when bullocks ought to be offered.

## **THE FEAST OF SEVEN DAYS**

This was also a special feast, and embraced all, both great and small, that were present in Shushan the palace. It was given in the court of the garden of the king's palace, which was magnificently festooned with white, green and blue hangings, with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble. There were also beds, probably couches for reclining, and they were of gold and silver upon a pavement of variegated marble. It must have been bewildering in its magnificence even to the king's servants accustomed to some extent to the riches of his glorious kingdom. A total stranger in that presence would no doubt have been like the man at the feast without a wedding garment, he would have been speechless. There could have been no toleration of folly in any guest at such a feast as that.

"And they gave them drink in vessels of gold (the vessels being diverse one from another), and royal wine in abundance according to the state of the king; and the drinking was according to the law; none did compel; for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure."

The vessels were different in shape and size, but they were all of gold and were the king's, as there are different gifts, but all of God. If the vessel was small and held but little, he to whom it was offered could bear but little; but if larger, it was because more was needed. That which, as to quantity, would but cheer one, might inebriate another. Some have more grace than others because they need more; their trials and temptations are greater. As thy day thy strength shall be. Those who drank, drank all as unto the king's honor and glory, and their hearts were cheered. He who gives but a cup of water to a disciple for love of God praises God and gets comfort to his own soul. He who in his weakness is but able to speak a word of common comfort to a troubled fellow-servant, both scattereth and increaseth, dispenses good and receives good.

## **DUTY AND PRIVILEGE**

The drinking was according to law; there was no compulsion. It was not the duty of any man to drink the king's wine, but the privilege of all to drink it. Had the king commanded it, it would then have been the duty of all to drink it, and the privilege of none to refuse it. It is the privilege of an unmarried man to marry a wife, but not his duty; that is to say, he is not compelled by law to marry; he may or may not, as he chooses; he violates no law if he does, and none if he does not; it is his privilege. But if he does marry it is his duty to support his wife and children. He may use any lawful means in their support; he may be a lawyer, doctor, farmer, mechanic or merchant, or may engage in any other lawful pursuit for their support; but if he is a Christian there are lawful pursuits in which he may not engage; he may not keep a tippling shop and be the means of crazing his fellow-creatures, inciting brawls, demoralizing young men and sending old ones home infuriated with whisky to maltreat their families and squander their living. This is no Christian's privilege, because it violates his duty to God and his fellow creatures. No privilege may violate a duty; if privilege and duty conflict, privilege yields to duty. No privilege absolves us from duty, but every privilege enjoyed entails additional obligations. It is not our duty to go in debt, it is our privilege; there is no compulsion of law; we may or may not as we choose. There may be a compulsion



of necessity, as there was in drinking the wine; but if we do go in debt it is our duty to pay our debt; it is not our privilege to evade its payment even if the law of the country affords the means of evasion. If iniquitous laws prevail the righteous mourn. Ammon, when he violated his sister Tamar, despised her; so men despise law when they outrage justice. Mercy is lovely, but mercy at the expense of justice is a harlot by the wayside luring the simple and vicious to destruction. There must be no compulsion in mercy, it must be voluntary and unforced, otherwise it is robbery and extortion. It is not our privilege to extend mercy at the expense of justice. Our mercy must be at our own expense, and not at the expense of others nor to the injury of society. If we are charitable and give alms to the poor it must be of our own and not the goods of another. Our fleshly sympathy should not influence us so as to cause us to set the law aside. Joshua stoned Achan to death, not because he hated him, for he probably deeply sympathized with him, but because the safety of Israel and the glory of God required the faithful execution of the law, and it was not therefore his privilege to pardon him. But it is our privilege to dispose of our own as we please, and not even then to the injury of others. The householder who gave a penny apiece to those who wrought but an hour, did those who bore the heat and burden of the day no injury, because he paid them according to contract, and it was his privilege to give the others that much or more if he pleased, but it would not have been his privilege, if doing so had rendered him unable to pay the others the penny agreed upon. Let their needs have been ever so deep and his compassion ever so great, it would not have been his privilege to have afforded them relief at the expense and to the injury of those whom he agreed to pay. It would have been unjust, and would have been mercy at the expense of justice, which is robbery. Nor would it have accorded with the king's honor, or "shown the riches of his glorious kingdom," to have provided wine at this feast at the expense and to the injury of others; let those needing the wine been ever so infirm and feeble, he could not have relieved them. It is our privilege to publish the GOSPEL MESSENGER, but not a duty—that is, there is no special command for it; nor is it a church institution, else there would have been a command for it. But it is not our privilege to publish heresy in it; if we do, we are amenable to the church for violating the king's law. Nor does the publication of this magazine relieve us in any degree of our duty to the church, either as ministers or members, no more than our farm does. It is your privilege to subscribe for it, but not by reading it to keep away from church, or be freed any church duty, or Christian duty to the poor, ministers or others, or reading the scriptures. But privileges simply impose greater obligations, as drinking the king's wine did upon those drinking it.

## **MERCY IN THE GOSPEL**

The mercy in the gospel of Christ provided for the poor, needy, helpless and infirm, is not at the expense of justice or in violation of the holy law of God. It would not have been to the glory and honor of God for it to have been so; if so, it would not have shown the riches of grace or of the glorious kingdom of Christ, but its poverty and destitution. But so rich is this kingdom in grace, in justice and mercy, that the feast costs the sinner nothing, absolutely nothing! not even so much as a contrite tear; for if it had cost him even that much, he could never have paid it. But it cost the holy Saviour a life of bitter sorrow and inexpressible humiliation and a shameful death, all that justice should not be violated in extending mercy. Therefore mercy, as the wine at the feast, is provided at the King's cost; and though many feel no need of it, many do, and to them it is an unspeakable blessing and no injury to others. The drinking was according to law, and none therefore were forced by the king's officers to drink, and none were

forbidden. Those who drank, drank from necessity, as the publican prayed from necessity, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner." But this necessity did not arise from the king's command; his mercy in providing it did not create the necessity for it; it was provided to meet and supply their needs. It shows the riches of his glorious kingdom. So grace is forced by law upon none; to force it is to violate the King's command. The publican could say, and did say in spirit, feeling humiliation, shame and penitence for his sins, "God be merciful to me a sinner," but to have forced one to have said the same thing, who felt no penitence, should have been to make him confess what he did not feel, and to have violated God's law in bearing false witness. The gospel is forced upon none and forbid to none, but is free to any and all who may feel the need of it. It costs the sinner nothing.

## VASHTI'S FALL

Vashti's fall followed her feast, and could not, therefore, have been, in spirit, a feast in honor of the king. It was in his name, but not in his spirit, else it would have augmented rather than have diminished her humility, reverence and love for him. Her lack, as we have shown, was not in moral, mental or physical beauty, and must, therefore, be sought in some other qualification. To us it is plain, that it was in spiritual qualifications she was lacking. She had ability to fulfill all the moral and mental obligations incident to her position, but her position as queen involved her in spiritual obligations, or the obligations of faith, for which she was not qualified. Her sin, therefore, consisted in assuming obligations for which she had no fitness, and her aspirations in seeking them were fleshly and sinful. Not that it was sinful to be moral and cultivated in mind and person, but in assuming from these excellencies the ability to do the works of faith; as if one of blameless morals, of great mental powers of unsurpassed learning and high social position and wealth should, upon these qualifications only, join the church and be baptized, and thus assume to do the works of faith destitute of the Spirit. The works of faith, prompted by such a spirit, would be a feast to the flesh, and augment fleshly confidence, self-dependence and self-righteousness. They would not only be unacceptable to God, but would be sinful in his sight; because whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. And even a Christian and a member of the church may be guilty, in some degree, of sin in this respect. If one should assume to preach who I had not been called of God to that solemn and responsible work, he would, in the long run, be of no profit to the church, and very probably disgrace himself and confuse the church. It would not matter how cultivated in mind and morals he was, and how blameless in life, he would fail-fail from having assumed obligations for which God, the Spirit, had not qualified him. Saul, the first king of the Jews, is AN ILLUSTRATION IN POINT.

He was called to the high position of king of the Jews from his natural qualifications. He was a head and shoulders higher than any other man in all the land. In strength and courage, moral and physical, he was ahead of any, and seemed, therefore, the best prepared to contend with and overcome the strongest enemies that might come against them. But they overlooked the fact that Israel, a spiritual people, would of necessity have spiritual enemies-enemies that the most perfect moral and mental strength could not overcome, and that could be overcome by faith only; and also, that faith is born or begotten of God, and is not a product of mental and moral training.

Saul did indeed obtain victories for Israel, but they were victories over enemies that were weaker than he was. He could obtain no victories over enemies that were stronger than he was, for such victories could be obtained only by faith, and of that he was destitute. He had no such experience as David, who

cried, "O Lord, deliver me from my enemy, for he is stronger than I am," and hence did not know how to fight in faith. He could do moral and mental fighting, but not spiritual fighting. He did not know how to fight Goliath of Gath; he was not able to do it, though he had assumed the ability to do it. Israel, under him, fled forty days in dismay, until Saul's lack was found in David. God prepared David for that work of faith, and he slew the giant, but not in Saul's armor, but with God's weapons; nor to the glory of Israel, but to the glory of God. The power of God and the wisdom of God was shown Israel that day in David's victory. Israel could not then, nor can the church now, prepare a member to do any more than she can do herself. The prevalent opinion of the religious world, that to contend successfully with infidelity -we must educate our preachers, is the same opinion that called Saul to the throne on account of his natural or worldly qualifications, and which was exploded at the battle of Shocho, when Israel, cowered, trembled and fled in dismay from the giant of Gath. Saul was a giant in Israel, and Goliath a giant of the world. If Saul had great natural powers, Goliath had greater; if he had strong armor, Goliath had stronger. And so it was but a reliance and trust in natural powers in both. If the church should rely upon such things, she would not differ from the world that relies upon them; she would not be relying upon God, but upon the world, and would be a kingdom of the world. But Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Saul also assumed ability to slay the Amalekites, as God had commanded; but he spared that which God had commanded to be destroyed. He spared Agag, the king of Amalek, and it was nothing that he slew all the rest. He could not understand the necessity of slaying Agag. But Samuel, a man of faith, did understand it, and could not spare him; his faith forbade it. All the works of Saul, in slaying that which he did slay, were as if he slew nothing, or as if he had spared all. As Arminians teach when they say, We are saved by God's grace, and we can do nothing good; that we are helpless, and our good works do not save us; that God has done all that is necessary to be done, but we MUST ACCEPT THE TERMS OF MERCY OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL, thus giving man the ability to do all at last, and setting up Agag, or the flesh, as king, and sparing him whom God slays in the Christian experience, as Samuel did, that Christ alone should be exalted in the heart as King. That is to say, it is all the work of grace-from the least work to the greatest-from the first to the last; sparing nothing in man, for everything in him is under sentence of death. It is not part works and part grace, but all grace, from the first to the last. Agag is slain, and Christ is set up higher than Agag. This Samuel had learned by experience, but Saul had never learned it. David had been taught it by the Lord whilst in the wilderness with his father's flock, and he could overcome by faith enemies that were stronger than he was. We do not need faith to overcome enemies weaker than we are; these we can overcome in our own strength. Over such enemies and such only could Saul triumph. He had struggled with and overcame temptations to vice and immorality; he had lived an orderly life, and had been attentive to his father's business, which were all good; but un sanctified, or not of the Spirit, they only exalted him, and increased his self-confidence and self dependence. But David had not only struggled with those enemies, but had struggled with his natural depravity in the lion and bear, those fierce beasts of prey that make darkness hideous with their brutal cries, as the depraved passions that lie hidden away in the dark recesses of the human heart. Of the strength of depraved nature, the mere moralist knows nothing; against such beasts mere moral resolutions, are but chaff in the wind. Only those who stand by faith in Christ can have the victory over them in the hour of temptation. In a word, there must be spiritual culture, without which mental and moral culture and training are nothing in spiritual responsibilities.

It is in vain to educate your children-vain to train them in mind and morals, with a view that it will prepare them for heaven. They must be born again; they must have spiritual life. But we would not be understood as disparaging education and morality, for we do not so design; but would teach that nothing short of God's grace will regenerate them, and without which they will be lost, even though they were taught to speak with the tongue of men and angels, and had all knowledge and knew all mysteries, all their moral, mental and physical culture would be as a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal in their eternal salvation. Nor will it do our children any good to teach them to assume responsibilities for which they are not qualified. It would be requiring more of them than they would be able to perform, and our love for them should forbid such a requisition upon them. No prudent father would put his son into a worldly position even, for which he is not prepared, and much less should he put him into a spiritual position for which he is unqualified; that is, to put him into the position of a Christian, or induce him to assume the responsibilities of that high calling because of his moral and mental ability and training; for instead of doing him good, it would be a positive injury to him. The calling of a Christian is the highest one in the world, as the calling of Vashti was the highest in the empire of Ahasuerus; and if she, possessing mental, moral and physical culture in its highest excellence, fell for lack of capacity to fill it, is it reasonable that one now, with equal capacity, shall attain to an excellence of which she fell short? Nay; though one "be full of wisdom and perfect in beauty;" "though thou hast been the garden of God; though wast in the holy mountain of God, and hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of flue ;"if thy wisdom and beauty are such as lifts up thy heart, "I will cast thee down."-Ez. It is absurd to say that the assumption of Christian obligations will prepare men to fulfill them; that is to say, by joining the church one gets to be a Christian.

Hurrying people into a profession of Christianity and imposing obligations upon them simply because of their mental and moral training, and for which such training does not and cannot prepare them, is an injury to them, to religion and society at large. It is not inspired by the word of Christ who taught that the cost must be counted up, whether one with ten thousand could contend successfully with one with twenty thousand against him. But the effort of this day is to hurry people into these great responsibilities without deliberation. It is not therefore a matter of wonder that many thinking men look upon Christianity as a failure, seeing they judge its truth from such examples as Vashti, or those who have been called to assume its high responsibilities from moral and mental education, destitute of its Spirit. It is to be lamented that those who possess the true Spirit of Christianity are but little known in the world, and when known are looked upon with scorn. Their voice is indeed unheard by the world, and is as but the voice of one crying in the wilderness. But the Sam Jones' of the day give voice to the craze of the age, manifesting the gross spiritual darkness of the so called Christian world. But it seems to be a law of God that his truth is manifested in the world, not by numbers but by the character of the few professing it in the Spirit. It is said that one drop of nitric acid will dissolve a pin, but diluted in a tumbler of water its power is destroyed; and so by Christianity, its true and proper influence upon mankind is destroyed by dilution-by so many assuming its obligations destitute of its true Spirit.

## **GENERAL REMARKS IN CONCLUSION UPON THIS POINT**

As we found in David the lack in Saul, and in Esther the lack in Vashti, so in the gospel we shall find the lack in the law. The wisdom of David was of a much higher order than Saul's, and being greater,

embraced all that was good in Saul's, as the greater embraces the less. David's was divine wisdom; he was taught of God and was therefore enabled to achieve what no man could by human teaching and excellence. This is why wayfaring men, though fools in worldly learning, do not err in divine things, whilst princes of worldly learning stumble and fall at the word. It is not of course to be understood that because an unlearned man possesses spiritual wisdom, that he has also worldly knowledge and understands the sciences. He may be wholly ignorant of letters or earthly wisdom, which is itself of God, but infinitely inferior to the wisdom from above which conforms the sinner to the divine mind, humbling his heart. One learned in the sciences would be a prince even amongst Christians, in that sort of wisdom; but it would not by any means change his heart and prepare him to fulfill the responsibilities of faith. He could safely assume the responsibilities of a professorship in an institution of worldly learning and sustain himself; but he would be, with all his learning, as incapable of honoring Christ in Spirit as his Saviour, as the unlearned Christian would be incapable of explaining the law of gravitation. A man may be a very learned man and a very wicked man; a community of learned men might be an immoral one; but a community of real Christians, though deficient in worldly learning, would be a moral society; moral from principle, and thus be a benefit to society. We repeat that Christianity produces the highest order of civilization; because it checks effeminacy, waste, extravagance, hypocrisy, idleness, oppression, and builds up industry, honesty, economy, and all morality and robustness of thought and action. Christ teaches him neither to Waste his time nor his substance; and that it is as much his duty to provide an honest living as it is to be baptized.

A great many so-called (ministers not alluded to) Christians of the Vashti type, think they may go to meeting weeks at a time and neglect their business, and that God approbates such idleness because it is religious, as if religion consisted in going to meeting and ended when meeting was over. But the truth is that Christ's religion is as much in the field, the store-room and work shop, as it is in the church house; and no church house religion is worth a penny that does not abide with a man in all the business of his life. A Christian would be glad to spend a great deal of his time in the public worship of God with his brethren; he would esteem it a great privilege, but his Christian duties as a husband, father or child, often forbid such enjoyments. He does not go to meeting as if he conferred a favor on God by going, but the privilege of going he esteems a favor of God to him. There is all the difference in the world 'between the mere outward going and the going in Spirit. The mere outward profession will fail in time of trial and persecution, whilst the profession in Spirit will be intensified by trials and persecution. He who goes merely in form can give it up without regret, whilst he who goes in Spirit has no rest in disobedience. The one is a mere convenience whilst the other is a necessity. David had faith; by this he succeeded where Saul failed; he persevered when Saul turned back. Saul could quit, but David could not. The mere letter disciples could turn back from Christ, but the Spirit disciples could not; they could not give up eternal life, and therefore could not turn away from Christ; the others having it only in form or profession, could do without it, especially when it involved them in trials and persecutions. The religion of the Hebrew children brought them into the fiery furnace, but the trial did not destroy them; it rather purified them; but it destroyed those who cast them in, because they had no faith; the children had faith and quenched the violence of the fire. Thus they honored the king, whilst Vashti, being destitute of faith, dishonored him. David shouted in triumph, but Saul fled in dismay. David's righteousness, strength or faith was of God, but Saul's was of Israel; as our unspiritual educated theologians are encased in

armor provided in the armories or shops of the church-so-called; in theological schools designed to equip and send forth champions against the giants of infidelity, and from whom they fly as Saul fled from Goliath, and as they have in these late days fled from Tyndall and Huxley in evolution. They cannot stand against them, and those only can stand who have faith; faith that God has given, that puts to flight the armies of the aliens under mere human reason and learning.

### **THUS VASHTI DISHONORED THE KING**

She disobeyed him when her obedience would most have honored him. She would have honored him, and delighted in it, had she have had the spirit of her profession: His great men, princes, nobles, and servants, were gathered together to behold her beauty; to see her in royal robes with the crown upon her head; and when every one was upon the tiptoe of expectation, and listening with, bated breath for the first footfall of her approach, lo! every eager face radiant with expectation, was covered in blank dismay; every head was bowed in shame by Vashti's audacious disobedience! The king was set at nought and treated with contempt with his whole empire. The offence was a grave one; the highest that could be committed, because committed by the most exalted subject; therefore the king was wroth, and his anger burned within him. It may be thought, without reflection, that the offence was a small one, a simple refusal to show her beauty to the king's princes and servants. But if it were a little thing, so much the greater was the offence, because so much the easier to have done; a little thing that the lowest peasant in all the empire would have been glad to have done, but one which the most exalted woman, even the queen and wife refused to do. Shall her punishment be less because the thing required was little to do? It ought to be greater, because a thing impossible was not required. There was no excuse for her disobedience, because she had aspired to and assumed all the responsibilities of her high position. It seemed to be a little thing that our great father Adam did that brought death into the world and all our woe. He assumed to keep the law given him by his Creator; and it was a thing seemingly easy to do, but a little thing to refrain from. No necessity of his being required its violation; he was physically, mentally and morally perfect; subject to no pain or ill, and could remain in that happy state as long as he refrained from eating the forbidden fruit. But he disobeyed and lost all; he was not now what he was before, and could never be again. Before he was rich and lacked nothing; had no pain or fear of death; but now he is bankrupt and cursed with pain and want, to end in death; and is at enmity with his Creator, charging him with his sins and woes.

### **WHAT IS DONE MUST BE ACCORDING TO LAW**

Then the king said unto the wise men which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment, who saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom. What shall we do unto the Queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the King Ahasuerus; and Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen, hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king; for this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes when it shall be reported, The King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti, the queen, to be brought in before him, but she came not.

The king was wroth, but it did not precipitate him into a violation of law in punishing Vashti; because that would have dishonored the law and brought the king himself under the penalty. Mercy cannot be extended to the sinner in violation of law; mercy extended to the sinner is according to justice and at Christ's expense; he satisfied the law honoring it in his life and death. We may forgive a man a debt if we will and are able to do it, but the law that binds the debtor to pay us cannot do it, nor force us to do it; if it should, then justice would be outraged, and we be wronged as well as society at large. It would be a sin against the whole community. But we could not forgive a man who committed murder; because that it is a sin not simply against us, but a sin against society also, against all classes of society. The king could not forgive it without atonement being made for it; because he of all men should be the last to violate justice of which he is the fountain head. He would not be actuated by feelings of private resentment or personal hatred against the guilty murderer, but by a righteous vindication of law. When we say that we could not forgive the murderer, we do not mean that we could not have compassion for him, but his sin is one against others as well as us, and not as an offence against us alone. If a member of the church sins against the church, no single member can forgive it; he could forgive a sin against himself, but not one against others. The whole church can forgive him upon his making satisfaction; but the whole church could not forgive his sin unless it were a sin simply against the church; but if it was not only a sin against the church, but against society also, as murder or theft, the church could not forgive it-that is to say, by forgiving it, relieve him of the penalty due his crime by the laws of society or government. That he will have to suffer, not from the church, but from the government. Christ forgave the thief upon the cross, but did not relieve him of the penalty of the law for his crime. If a member of the church gets drunk, the church may forgive him upon proper penitence and confession; but if he gets involved in debt the church cannot relieve him of that debt, even though it takes his bed from under him, unless she pays the debt herself. There was once a man burned to death by a mob, and though he deserved death for his crime, the mob violated the law in taking his life. Because the law that prescribed the penalty- due his crime also required that he should be tried and executed by law, and not by a mob in violation of law. Men inflamed by passion do not know law and judgment, and it would soon be that not only the wicked were murdered by mobs, but they would soon murder the innocent. Law and order would soon be done away; and there is a growing tendency that way, brought about, no doubt, by laws with, a show of mercy at the expense of justice and right, conjoined with the thousand other evils of the times. Such things tend to the disintegration of society, to the destruction of the civilization of ages and the remission of the world to barbarism. But the other day we see men boldly in one of our large Western cities proclaiming anarchy. Indeed, many things in this day seem to require a contempt for and a violation of law. The enfranchisement of the colored people seem to many, to require, for the safety of society, the suppression of their votes; but the law requires that they should be counted; and it is right and best in the long run that they should be; and no Christian should be guilty of connivance in fraud at the ballot box any sooner than in the counting-house or court-room. He who would cheat a negro will cheat you if his necessity requires it; and he who would cheat one for you will cheat you if it should seem necessary.

There is also a strong tendency of labor against capital, .and capital against labor; the rich against the poor, and the poor against the rich. And this is also against law and order; not only of society, but of the church. If the poor are oppressed, and they are, no doubt, as an almost inevitable consequence of the

concentration of the wealth of the country into the hands of a few, they are taught by the Lord not to take the law into their own hands to spoil the rich and divide their wealth, but to be patient unto the coming of the Lord, for it draweth nigh. Take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and patience. Harken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of The kingdom which he hath promised to them That love him. "Behold, we count them happy which endure."-James 5

So, in the church every guilty one must be tried according to gospel law. If one brother injures another, it would not be according to law for the injured brother to report it to the church, or any one else without first having seen his offending brother alone, and sought of him satisfaction; and, failing in that, then to take others with him, and after failing in that step, then to report it to the church. No matter should be judged beforehand-that is, before this process had been taken-as it is often unfortunately done, when one says before trial, "I have got no fellowship for Brother C, and if the church does not exclude him, I will quit, the church," &c. That is a violation of law itself, and should be so adjudged by the church. The law of the church is a law of love, and should be administered in love and faithfulness; but, unfortunately, it is sometimes so perverted under a fleshly zeal, that it becomes murder, though executed in the letter. This is generally the case when done in hot haste, trampling the admonition of "letting patience have her perfect work," under angered feet. None should be cast out or condemned without a hearing, if a hearing is possible. The object is to save if possible, and to maintain the dignity and righteousness of the law as necessary to the peace and safety of the church, and never to gratify any personal revenge. The church should be governed by the law of Christ in all her dealings; she should, not be governed by any custom or tradition in violation of that law, or not in accordance with the law of Christ. To the church, and the church alone, is committed the keys of the kingdom, and for any other body to execute the laws of Christ in discipline, is to usurp power over the church and violate Christ's laws. To retain the guilty in the church after due process of gospel law without reparation being made and satisfaction given, is for the whole church to partake of the guilt. As under the law, contact with a dead body defiled a Jew, so under the gospel, association in church, fellowship with the known unclean, defiles the church.

If the king had condoned Vashti's guilt or left her unpunished, it would have been for him and his whole empire to have partaken of it, and hence there would have arisen contempt and wrath for him, the law and empire; society would have been destroyed. She must be punished; the honor of the king, the majesty of the law and the peace and safety of society required it. It was not simply a sin against the king but against all the provinces and all the people, high and low in the king's provinces. If she had sinned against him simply as a wife he could possibly as a husband have forgiven it; but she sinned against him not only as a wife but as a queen also; she could not be forgiven as a queen, for as queen she represented others and sinned against them. As such she wronged the prince and the peasant, the captive Jew, and the Mede and Persian "native, and to the manor born." Had a poor peasant woman disobeyed her husband it would indeed have been wrong, because it would have wronged her husband and children; but it would not have wronged a prince or noble, but only those beneath her in position and whom she represented in society; those who looked to her and were governed by her example. The effect of her disobedience in comparison with Vashti's would have been but as the trickling of a little



rivulet going dry, to the swelling of Jordan increasing in volume and overspreading the land. Vashti represented all classes of society, poor and rich, noble and ignoble, Jew and Persian. Her obligations and responsibilities were so great that a deflection in her from right conduct would have been woeful in its final results had it passed without punishment. So a Christian represents in a certain sense all classes of society, and hence bad conduct in one would be far more reprehensible than the same conduct, even in an upright and intelligent man making no profession of Christianity.

### **WHERE MUCH IS GIVEN, MUCH IS REQUIRED**

Bad conduct in an intelligent man of high social position would be worse than the same conduct in one of less intelligence and influence. We said once to a friend of our; who was running a little store, and dealing in whisky to colored people for sacks of corn, cotton, etc., that his intelligence and social position forbade his doing that kind of business; and that others would do it if he did not was no excuse for him; that others might do it and not sin against society as he would by doing it; and that the conduct of those in ignorance and low position in life had but little effect upon society; but when such conduct swayed those invested with great responsibilities to society, then, indeed, was society corrupted in its fountain head, and its thousand polluted streams would infest the land with its moral poison; as the human family was corrupted in Adam, its head and representative, and spread his polluted offspring over the face of the whole earth. If the fountain head be corrupt, then will the streams be corrupt; nor will they be pure until the source be made pure. The position of a Christian being the highest one in human society is therefore invested with the greatest and most solemn responsibilities and obligations to God and man. The church member has not only his obligations as a Christian, but those also of a citizen, parent, husband, wife and child; of the church is required, as was of Vashti, not only moral, but also spiritual responsibilities. Vashti, as queen, represented the captive Jews-the chosen people-and hence arose her spiritual responsibilities. She also represented the Mede and Persian, and hence arose her moral responsibilities. But in the obligations of a Christian to Christ are embraced his obligations to society as a citizen, husband, parent, wife, child, master, subject and ruler. That is to say, if he is faithful to Christ, he will be faithful in his moral, legal and natural obligations, as well as in his religious obligations. The church is the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. She does not borrow her light from the world, but reflects the light derived from Christ, her king, and her light therefore glorifies him. She may not borrow from the world, lest she become the servant of the world; but she may lend to the world, and thus the world becomes her servant. As a wife, Vashti was under obligation to honor her husband, but much more as a queen. As a true believer, even before he joined the church, was under obligation to live a proper life, so he would be under the greater obligation to do so after he joined. It would have been a sin against Christ for him to have gotten drunk before he joined the church, but to have gotten drunk after he joined the church would have been a sin not only against Christ, but against the church also. The woman whose unchastity whilst unmarried, which would have only disgraced herself, would, after she was married, not only disgrace her but her husband also; and if she had been a member of the church, would have also reproached the church.

As a queen, then, Vashti not only sinned against the king, but against the princes, nobles, and all the people of the king's provinces, and therefore the honor of the king and the safety of the empire required her punishment. For her to escape would be to license all; for her to be punished would be for

all to fear. If the queen is not spared, who will escape! Thus the law is magnified and its holiness vindicated.

And the law of Christ in the church must be sustained, even if the bishop, pastor or minister is cut off for his sin; and indeed he should be the last one to escape. The bishop or pastor being highest in position, and greatest in responsibilities, represents all beneath him, and when, therefore, he sins, he not only wrongs the deacons, aged members and young members, but society at large. It would be a much greater reproach to the church to see a preacher drunk than it would be to see a young member, or even a deacon or an aged member drunk. A little folly in one having reputation for wisdom is like dead flies in the apothecary's ointment, causing that which was designed to send forth a grateful odor, to emit a nauseating stench. The stench of a hog-pen would not be nearly so bad, because we expect it there, but we do not expect it in the apothecary's ointment; nor do we expect it in preachers, deacons, aged members, nor in fact in any member of the church; but least of all, in the bishop or pastor of the church. "The preacher does it" is an excuse for much wrong doing. The influence of the example of the minister over his flock is almost incalculable. If the light be darkness in him, how great is that darkness! It is not to be understood that theft or fraud in the bishop is a worse sin in the sight of God than theft or fraud in a young member of the church, or even in one making no profession of Christianity; as adultery in a woman before she married would be no greater sin, in God's sight, than it would be after she was married, but in the latter case it would be a sin not only against God, but against her husband also, because her obligations are increased by marriage. The obligations of a bishop to the church and society are greater than those of a deacon; and those of a deacon greater than of the aged members, and of the aged members greater than of the younger members, and of the younger members greater than before they joined the church, and of a true believer, not a member of the church, greater than of one who has no faith. To whom much is given much is required, both naturally and spiritually. There is in this day much contempt for religion, because those professing it do not honor Christ in their profession and conduct; and it is because they do not love him, though joined to him in word or the letter, but not in spirit. The wife who loves her husband desires his honor; and the Christian who knows Christ in the spirit, is bound to honor him in faith as well as conduct; he honors him if he sins, in confessing his sins, thus taking his sins upon himself and ascribing holiness to Christ.

## **THE SENTENCE**

Was: If it please the king let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

Thus for her own sin she was covered with disgrace and shame, and her last state was indeed worse than her first; it would have been better for her never to have been exalted to her high estate than to fall from it after being exalted. Her fall was irretrievable, her condition hopeless. The law that doomed her to everlasting shame and contempt was irreversible; it could not be altered. Behold the goodness and severity of God! The integrity of the king and empire required it, there was no remedy. The effect of the punishment would be when the decree was published that all wives would give their husbands honor, both small and great. It was published throughout the empire that every man should bear rule in his own house. Is it a good thing naturally that every man should bear rule in his house? It certainly is,

because he is the head of the house, and the head should rule. Laws giving wives separate estates from the husband have bad effect upon society; in fact any law reversing God's law injures society. Any law in the church reversing God's law injures the church. The husband and wife are one, and should be one, and no law should be made having a tendency to divide their interest or emasculate the man and put him under the government of the wife. It would be a pitiful spectacle to see the husband subject to the wife; and much more should the husband of the church, the Lord Jesus, bear rule in his own house. lint the religious tendency of the age is to a separate, estate for the church from Christ; that the church is to keep her own riches or righteousness that was vested in her before she married Christ, or joined the church. Sarah honored Abraham, calling him lord, that is ruler, so the church shall honor Christ, calling him Lord and be subject to him, knowing none other beside him. The commandments of men; or institutions of men, are dishonoring to Christ, as if a wife should do the commandments of some other man besides her husband; and doubly so when her husband had charged her not to do it. In vain, says Christ, ye worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; because it is thus we become the servants of men, by obeying them. The church should be swallowed up in Christ, should go as he goes, as the Israelites marched in the wilderness should rejoice in him and be subject to him in all things. His wisdom should be hers, and sufficient for her; his righteousness hers, she needs no other; no other sanctification or redemption. Outside of him she has nothing; in him all things.

### **THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAW NECESSARY**

After these things when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what was decreed against her; then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of the king's chamberlain; and let their things for purification be given them; and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king and he did so.

Vashti's punishment appeased the king's wrath, as the punishment of a criminal appeases the wrath of the State. The king did not delight, in a personal sense, in her affliction any more than the judge who represents the majesty of the law delights in the pain inflicted by him or the law upon a criminal; but his delight is in the maintenance of law and order, or in other words, in the safety of society or government by the execution of law upon the guilty. The judge dare not yield to his love or fleshly sympathies in behalf of the guilty, else he would cease to be a judge and fall himself under its penalty. But he must enforce the law, even if it should be against his only begotten son. So the Father enforced the law against his only begotten Son; he spared him not, but, delivered him up to wrath; and by his stripes were his people healed. Sin was found upon him, as the representative and head of his people, and he says himself that it was just and that he ought to have suffered. And so are his regenerated people made to feel and say that their condemnation is just, and thus are brought into unity with him in death and life. No other woman in all the empire could have suffered in Vashti's stead; not the noblest woman or the grandest princess, or a thousand of them, or all of them in the empire, could have suffered in her stead; or if they had it would have availed nothing, and sin would still have attached to the throne. It would have been an honor to the princess to have suffered for the queen, and would have exalted her;

but the queen only would it humble. Only Moses, of all the Israelites, could have led Israel out of Egypt; to him it was a humiliation to be their leader; to any other Jew it would have been an exaltation. He had to come down from the throne of Egypt to be the head of servants, and thus, though their head, was the least of all. When David was moved to take the census of Israel-to do it in a wrong spirit-and the wrath of God was upon Israel, none other but David could by sacrifices appease the wrath of God. Araunah, as a king, offered David oxen for burnt offerings as a gift, but David dare not accept them, saying, "Nay; but I will buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing." If David had accepted Araunah's gift it would have been Araunah's sacrifice and not David's; it would have been an honor to Araunah and no humility to David; but it must be offered by him whom it would humble, and David only, of all Israel, could it humble; for he was their head and he only could sacrifice for them. So it was with Christ; he was set up as the head of his chosen people from everlasting, and he only could offer for them. And he was humbled to the death of the cross; and all whom he represented were humbled or saved in him, and are, have been and will be brought to experience to some extent his humility, and be meek and lowly in heart.

Without law there can be no society or government, neither civil or spiritual; or if there is, it will be of little worth. The ignorant, lazy and thriftless Indians on our frontiers are without law and society, as were to some extent the Canaanites, the aborigines of the promised land. In those nations in which the current of public opinion is to set wholesome laws aside, society is more or less demoralized and threatened with destruction. In a church in which the laws of Christ are not enforced there can be no good order, peace or prosperity. The design is to save and not destroy; not to injure, but to benefit the church. As with the natural body the right arm must be cut off to save the body, so in the church, the most prominent member must be cut off when necessary, to save the balance. The empire would have been destroyed had the king retained Vashti in her position with the guilt of her disobedience upon her, and therefore for the safety of others she must suffer; not, however, in her case, for the sins of others, but for her own.

### **A QUEEN NECESSARY**

It was not designed to do away with a queen for the king and empire, but an unworthy one. A wife and queen was necessary, and therefore the king's servants, those who ministered to him, said that which pleased the king when they prayed him that officers be appointed in every province of the empire to gather together unto the palace at Shushan all the fair young virgins that the maiden which should please the king be made queen instead of Vashti. They felt the necessity of a queen worthy the king; a king whose reverence for law was too great to spare even Vashti, with all her loveliness. They knew that a queen in her place must possess qualifications superior to those of Vashti. The outward qualifications of mind, morals and person, they could discern, but the higher and essential qualification, the regenerated spirit, and without which all others were vain, the king only could discern; and in whom he discerned it, with that one he would be pleased and would crown her queen. She would be crowned queen as the good tree is crowned with good fruit, because the tree had been made good.

## THE CALLING

All the fair young virgins were therefore called out of every province. There is more than one kind of calling. There is a holy calling, or a calling of the Spirit; and there is a fleshly calling, or one according to nature. They did not believe the simple calling would qualify any of the fair young virgins for the high position to which they aspired; but that the one to be chosen queen must be called, and whether that calling was a spiritual impulse, the irresistible call of the Spirit, or the call of ambition in search of worldly honor or not, the king only would be able to discern. All would profess to honor the law and reverence the king; Vashti did that; but the test was whether that was from the heart and from experience, or merely from the lips. There must be no lack; the one to be chosen must be perfect, and being perfect she would please the king. We might be outwardly very humble, and profess it with our lips, but God only would know whether we were so in heart; and he would know that we were not so in heart, if we had never felt the spirituality and holiness of his law and our own vileness.

If a thousand of us should make such professions, and one only of the thousand was in heart what he professed, that one of the thousand only would be accepted or chosen, because the only one fit for the position and qualified in soul to honor the holiness of God's law; the law that condemned him. The king, as the law, requires perfection, and will be pleased with nothing less; but does not supply or provide it, though demanding it. Perfection is required by the law and supplied by Christ.

So, many fair young virgins were called. It was a high position to which they aspired, and doubtless every one of them felt qualified for it but the one who was qualified. She, of all of them, was called by a different spirit from them; with her, the call was a necessity; with them a gratification; she couldn't live without it. She was like the woman who was called by necessity to cry to Jesus, saying, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" And though he answered her not a word, and the disciples besought him to send her away, yet she could not be discouraged; she couldn't go away, but cried, "Lord, help me!" She felt her unworthiness, but her needs were so great that she couldn't go back, (Matthew 15). But many are called by the spirit of the rich young man who went to Christ asking what good thing he must do; and like him, they can go back; they can get along without Christ. A drunkard and gambler may be called by ruined health and fortune to sobriety, and thus repent of his dissipation; but it is simply a reformation of conduct, and not a change of heart. But it is such a change as might be mistaken for regeneration by others, as well as himself. Nineveh had a call that made her reform as a city and saved her, in a temporal sense, as a city. A nation may change its policy and thus save its national life. Worldly aspirations may call men to burn the midnight lamp in toilsome study for years and years, for honor and praise of man; it may call them to the carnage and death of the battle field; to apparent self-sacrifice in the service of their country; to giving their goods to feed the poor; and even their bodies to the stake, and to go as missionaries to heathen lands, infatuated with the idea of saving souls from hell. Love of money calls men to hard labor, struggles and sacrifices of life and health; and it may be possible that love of money has more to do with some Primitive Baptists than they are aware of. We have feared it has with us. Still, men have been called by the Spirit to toils and sacrifices for Christ and the church; to sobriety and honesty; and by love of country to the battle-field and to lives of self sacrifice.

In all this great empire then shall purity of heart be found? Shall we find it in the moral world, with all its mental culture, its advance in art and science? If we do, we shall find that it is not native or born of it,

though in it, as Esther was. Christ was in the world, but not of it. His kingdom was not of this world. Paul had outward moral perfection, but not the spirit of it until he had Christ's spirit; and when he had that spirit, he was fit for union with God; fit to honor the law in spirit that he honored before in the letter, and in the keeping of which he exalted only himself.

There was great zeal in the king's officers searching out the most beautiful virgins in all the provinces, each hoping to secure the prize, and thus gain honor and promotion; or if not zealous of honor, of the king's glory and the good of the country. We reckon, therefore, there was hardly ever seen before such an array of beautiful maidens as was gathered together in Shushan, the palace. But be the number ever so large, and their beauty and excellence ever so great, there could be only one of them chosen; there was only one of them qualified in the spirit for the high position.

### **THE ONE CALLED IN SPIRIT**

Now, in Shushan, the palace, there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity by the king of Babylon. And he brought up Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother; and she was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter. So it came to pass when many maidens were gathered together into Shushan, that Esther was also brought unto the king's house to the custody of the keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased the chamberlain and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such other things as belonged to her; and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the women.

Now, Esther differed from any other maiden called to the palace. She was a Jew, and the only Jew; a captive and the only captive, and an orphan. As a Jew, she was of the chosen people; and her preparation for, and exaltation to, the high position to which she aspired, were the results of her predestination to it, and not the cause of it. Being a Jew, she came in the spirit of a Jew, or of a spiritual man, which a Jew represents, and in which spirit not one of the other virgins came.-Romans 2:29. They came in their own spirit, or the spirit of nature. She was a captive, had experienced the power of sin and the holiness of the law in her captivity; and knew what it was to be brought into captivity to the law of sin; she had experienced a change from one country or condition to another condition; this none of all the other fair young virgins had experienced, but were in the country or condition in which they had been born. They were as Moab, by whom the unregenerate are represented. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone in captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."-Jeremiah 48:11. She was an orphan and an adopted child of her kinsman, Mordecai, and was, therefore, a child of promise. When she was accepted or chosen by the king it was because she was qualified for the place; as when one is received into the church as a member, it is because the church deems such a one fit or qualified for the church. The church believes that such member is of the elect of God, and in consequence of that election has been redeemed, called, purified and qualified for the position. Upon these grounds the church accepts the member, and not upon the grounds of eternal and particular election. If one were to come to the church and profess to believe in election and predestination, and show no evidence of inward purification, the church would not receive such a member into her

fellowship. All these maidens went through a course of PURIFICATION in the letter, whilst Esther only went through both the purification of the letter and spirit.

## PURIFICATION

Purification literally means making clean. The Jews in the Saviour's day seemed to know nothing of a necessity for any cleansing save a ceremonial cleansing of the outside. They could not comprehend Christ when he taught them that the heart must be purified; and that the man was blessed whose heart was pure or purified. Blessed are the pure in heart, or the purified in heart, for they shall see God; not those purified outside, but those purified in heart. He taught the same when he said, "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good." The religious world to-day have 'much the same notion that the Jews had. It is taught that you must join the church and be baptized, and you will be saved; that it will be the means of salvation. But joining the church and being baptized must be a work of the heart, and then it is a work of righteousness; then the work is the work of a man blessed of the Lord. No outside cleansing; no purity of conduct will purify the heart; the heart must first be purified by regeneration, by penitence, prayer and faith, and then the purification will be as the purification of the sons of Levi. God alone can purify the heart; it is the work of the Spirit upon and in the heirs of promise. And he (God) shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi (the redeemed elect) and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. (Malachi 3) The outward thrust comes from the inward purification or the inward work of the Spirit. The baptism of a believer, whilst it mainly represents his death to sin and self-dependence and self-righteousness, and his resurrection to life in Christ, also represents a washing or purification, as when Paul was told to "Arise and be baptized and wash away his sins." It is a consecration to Christ in a literal sense, prompted by the work of the Spirit in the heart, and is a result of a purification of the heart. The indwelling of God's spirit in the heart by penitence, prayer, and faith, sanctified it and set it apart as the temple of the Lord. Thus God purifies or prepares his people for his use or holy purposes. Outward seeking and purification will never touch the heart; or if it does, it will only lift it up in greater pride and condemnation. The crab-apple tree in its native forest will bear crab-apples; and if it be transplanted to a field and manured and cultivated it will only bear more bushels of the same fruit. Its nature is the same with all its cultivation. So it was with these fair young virgins. They were brought in their natural condition to the king's palace, and the purification of twelve months only made them more prolific of natural fruits. But with Esther it was different. She was called there by the spirit of her kinsman. Outwardly, there was but little difference between her and the other virgins. They were all fair, all outwardly anointed with the same ointments, but Esther's was from the heart, whilst theirs was in the letter only. Esther was conscious of something of which they knew nothing. She had a secret in her heart of which they were ignorant—a plague from which they were free. She was a Jew and felt and feared the shame of it. She could not tell it; it seemed to be in the way of her desires. As if one today should be seeking God's favor, but the consciousness of sin seemed to be in the way. Oh, if I was not a sinner, then I might be saved! But I am a poor Jew, or sinner; the poorest of all the Jews; for I have nothing, nothing at all. The publican could not so much as lift up his eyes to God, but smote upon his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner! This sense of her unworthiness humbled her heart and gave her a meek and lowly appearance, which gave her favor with Hegai, so that he preferred her to the best place of the house of the women. How the heart of the child of God goes out to the meek and lowly penitent. It is seen even in their faces, so

that the sadness of heart even in their faces entreats favor of God's people. It is irresistible. The penitent does not design it, but he can't help it. There is no deceit in it, for it is a purification of the countenance from the heart. If the other virgins had this meekness, it was of the flesh, and not of the heart; they were not ashamed of it, but proud of it. But with Esther it was different. She was a captive; she was bound; she needed and felt the need of a deliverer, and that she could not live without it, though in no sense worthy of it; and that none could deliver her but the King. To her he became, as her purification progressed, more and more necessary. It was with her a matter of life and death and she sought it not the less eagerly because of her unworthiness; but the greater her sense of unworthiness the more deeply she felt the need of it. It was with her as with the man slayer flying to the city of refuge; he must gain the city or perish. He could not turn back because the avengers pursued him; it was from them he fled at first, and it was from them he continued to fly. The cause that started him to fly continued him flying; nor could he stop until he found safety in the city of refuge. So Esther could not turn back; the necessity, the irresistible call of the Spirit that started her ever continued with her. She had nothing to go back to; if she lost now, then all was lost!

### **THE KINSMAN'S SOLICITUDE**

And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house to know how Esther did and what should become of her.

Mordecai was not an unconcerned spectator of her trials, but was indeed afflicted in all her afflictions. He was anxious for her and for his people. It is a matter of wonder sometimes to the world that the people of God can pray, and have trouble, sorrow, and anxiety; and it has been said, if I believed what you do, that I would never have any trouble at all. Well, it does seem a little strange sometimes that we have trouble; but only the people of God who have real soul trouble. Satan thought the doctrine of Christ was a doctrine of licentiousness and presumption, and told Christ to cast himself down from the pinnacle Of the temple, because it could not hurt him; for if what is written is true, it can't hurt you, for it is written "He shall give his angels charge over you to bear you up lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone, &c. That is, as Satan understood, it will not hurt you to cast yourself from the pinnacle, for he will bear you up; or do as you may do and you will you saved any how. That is the way Satan believed it, and the way he yet believes it. And, whilst it is true that "what is to be will be," it is also true that the doctrine of grace is a salvation from sin, and the Spirit works a hatred of sin in the heart and a fear of God, and never works presumption in it. That is the work of Satan as he attempted it with Christ. Satan did not understand the use of the doctrine of grace, but thought that all the use there could be for it was to allow a man to sin, and would doubtless have loved it in that sense. If he had have experienced David's troubles, his narrow escapes, the power of his great enemy Saul, and his own weakness, when he was made to cry out that he would one day fall by his hand, and that there was but a step between life and death, he could have understood the worth of the doctrine of God's grace, when spoken to David, "I have given my angels charge over thee, and they shall bear thee up" I am keeping you. That is why God's people love the doctrine of immutable love and infinite power, because it is necessary to bear them up in the conflicts of sin. So that to be a child of God is to have solicitude and concern; Christ had it, and his people will have it when they have his Spirit. But it is of Him and not of their own spirit.



Mordecai loved Esther; she was his adopted child and kinsman and she was in trouble, and he could not love her and be unconcerned and she troubled. Naomi was concerned for Ruth, and sought her rest; and so identified was she with Ruth in her troubles, that Ruth's rest would be her rest. She couldn't be easy and Ruth in trouble; but when Ruth had rest Naomi had rest in her rest; and Ruth's child became Naomi's child. She had joy in Ruth's joys. And old Christians now have joys in the joys of penitent sinners; they, when they have passed that age of bearing, bring forth in those for whom God has wrought a concern in their hearts. They can neither bring this concern on nor put it off; it is in them a work of the Spirit, as it is in the penitent sinner. The Church of Christ cannot bring on a revival; her travail, like Sarah's, is a work of the Spirit and not of the flesh. Hagar's was fleshly, but Sarah's was of God. But when Zion travails she will bring forth; her concern is of God, as Mordecai's was for Esther; and it will prompt prayers to God, anxiety for the upbuilding of the church, and will be a travail of soul in Christ' Spirit as Christ did for the church himself. We cannot have this concern for our own children only as the Lord begets it in us; and then it will be a trouble for others as a trouble for ourselves. We may have it for a stranger and not for our own children even. It is the work of God in us, and it was in Mordecai a work of God to be concerned for Esther as it was a work of God in Esther to be concerned for herself. So God gives ministers concern for the church, and they are troubled and are made to feel "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." They get comfort in the church's comfort, are comforted together by their mutual faith. So they are made to walk every day before the court to see what will become of those, for whom God has concerned them. O, that Zion might travail, and that. God would turn our captivity! And then Jacob would rejoice and Israel be glad.

## RECONCILIATION

Now when Esther's turn came to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai, the King's chamberlain, appointed.

Esther's turn to go in unto the King like David's to go in before Samuel the prophet, came last. Whilst all the sons of Jesse were called before the prophet, only one of them was called by the spirit, and prepared for the high position to which he was called. David was sent for as the last and the least, and was anointed fresh from the sheepfold to be chief or first in Israel. Samuel, the servant and prophet of the Lord, did not know himself which of Jesse's sons God had chosen and called to the high position only as the Lord revealed it to him When the first and elder son Eliab came in before him Samuel said: "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me;" but the Lord said to him, "Look not on his countenance or the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Samuel could give to David only the things God had appointed for him; nor as a faithful servant could he withhold them from him or bestow them upon another. To have anointed either of the other sons would have been disobedience to God, and brought the word and spirit in conflict, as if to say that he was chosen whom the spirit had not called and prepared. The word and spirit always agree, and will always accept him whom God has prepared. To have anointed another would have been withholding from David what God had given him, and from Israel that which God had given her in David, which would have been a crime both against David and Israel. For the blessings God had treasured in David for Israel could come through no other channel; Israel had already experienced a failure in seeking them in Saul. To have anointed Eliab, the elder, would

have been to seek in him that which God had put in David only; as if to seek in the law that which God has put in the gospel; and been as taking one Saul from the throne and putting another in his stead. People may now substitute, for salvation, the works in the gospel for the works of the law; they would not now expect men to be saved by sacrificing sheep and oxen, but substitute joining the church and baptism for such sacrifices, and whilst the name of the work is changed the spirit is the same. And whilst it is true that God appointed works he never appointed any work of man as a means of his eternal salvation, neither under the law nor gospel; that gift was given the church in Christ before the world began, and Christ was the -anointed of the Father as the depository of that grace for his people; as David was anointed by the prophet as the head of Israel, because God had prepared him and called him to that special work whilst in the wilderness, and his anointing, therefore, was a manifestation of the work for which God had prepared him. And having this work committed to him, it was required of him as it was required of no other, and could be fulfilled by no other. He, of all the son's of Jesse, could only feel the responsibility of the work; and to have anointed another would have been to require something of him that he could not do.

Esther, as David, was the last to go in unto the King, and was made first or chief, because in spirit she was chief; chief in humility and loveliness of spirit, and in her own esteem the least of all, and thus prepared to serve all, or be queen. She who serves all must be least of all, and thus the least is the greatest and the last the first or chief.

Esther's concern was not so much as to her outward appearance as it was to her heart; with her the paramount desire was to be right in heart. She had no desire to attain the high place and not be right in heart; that to attain it thus would not bring rest to her soul, and that was the thing she desired and without which she could not do. It was not that she might attain it, and then keep it by better works and efforts than already made by her; for she had done her best; but the irresistible desire of her heart was to get it, whilst in her soul she felt that without grace she could not keep it. Here was a desire she could not get rid of, and a fear and trembling with it that almost appalled her. She had learned by experience that she had no strength or goodness, and if kept in righteousness it must be of grace; of God and not of herself; and, therefore, the question with her was, am I in spirit in union with the king? is my desire of the Lord or of the flesh? Is it for worldly good or spiritual good? and, if of the Lord, then my diligence and service will be of him, and he will retain me in the place to which he exalts me. As if you had involved yourself .in obligations to live a certain life against which there are the strongest natural inclinations and temptations; and time and again you have been ready to fly your obligations, when by some seemingly fortuitous circumstance you have been prevented and saved from destruction, and have been made to thank God that he kept you from sin. So at last you are made to distrust self and lose confidence in the flesh, and are made to look, of necessity, to God to keep you faithful instead of to yourself, and are made to say in heart instead of as once you said, "I will do right and live right and keep God's favor," you say, "O Lord, keep me in thy favor aid then I shall live right, and my living right shall be of thee, and thee only." Then, instead of praying, "O Lord forgive me and I will do better," we pray "O Lord forgive me and keep mc from sinning against thee." "Except," said one of experience in days of old, "the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Esther was prepared to see that her starting, it right, must be of the Lord; her continued seeking of him, else she would turn back; and that at last, when brought into union with him it must be of his spirit, as the drop of rain returning to the ocean from whence it sprang. "That it was grace that taught her heart to fear," and that it all depended upon him from first to last. In this spirit she could not require or desire anything not appointed her by the king's chamberlain who as the king's servant and minister, would appoint her nothing for which she was unprepared in spirit, and which would not minister to the king's honor. Her acceptance and the king's honor were linked together; that is, his word would bestow upon her that for which she was prepared in spirit, and that there would be unity of word and spirit, and unity of king and Esther. She knew in the honesty of her heart, that nothing could be appointed her by the chamberlain that would minister to her own honor, and that anything appointed her for good, must be of grace, and minister to the king's honor; that the very little hope and desire she had was not of herself, but was of a spirit contrary to her pride and self-righteousness. Thus she could not go in with exalted notions of self, but in self-abasement, feeling the holiness of the law that condemned her, and if accepted that it must be an act of absolute grace to her, and if refused an act of absolute justice. In this spirit she could not be Arminian. The chamberlain as her friend, (for she had his favor) would withhold nothing from her that he could lawfully and in faith bestow upon her; but to appoint anything for her for which she was not prepared in spirit, would be vain for her and dishonoring to the king. A young woman suffering intensely under conviction for sin, once sent for us in the hope that we could relieve her; but we could only give her the things appointed, by the King for the troubled penitent; we could not give her the peace appointed for the believer; and this she realized before she received the peace. In a few days God relieved her, and when she came to the church with such things as God had appointed for her, she was received by the church and baptized, and thus the church gave her the things she desired and that were committed to the church for believers. But the church could have bestowed upon her nothing for which God had not prepared her; nor would she have been content with acceptance with the church and rejection of God. The church cannot bestow baptism and other gospel blessings upon infants and unbelievers, for God has not appointed such things for them. It is true that sometimes men creep into the church unawares-wolves in sheep's clothing-with evil intent, and obtain privileges of which they know they are unworthy; but they are right in appearance; they have a sheep's clothing but a wolf's heart, and deceive the church, but God is not deceived. Such men, no doubt, always tell a big experience, for they would not counterfeit a little one. A big experience, we have thought, is more apt to be false than a little one. Some of the children of God have such little ones that, like Samuel, they have to be told, as he was by Eli, that it was the call of God to them. Unity with God is the most exalted state into which a child of God is brought in this life. Paul had learned to be content in whatever condition he was in. He had learned how to be up and to be down, how to be abased, to suffer want and to abound; because however his frames and feelings might change, he knew that God did not change, and that he cared as much for him in want as in abundance; and that his times and changes were in his hands, and that all things were made to work together for his good. If there be ill in state, church or family, he knew it could not be and God not regard it; and that he ruled over all kingdoms, both material and spiritual, and that none is able to withstand him. If a child of God be in sorrow and want, it is not unknown to Him; that he is of more value than many sparrows, and not one of them falls in death without his notice. And whilst this spirit rules in the church and amongst ministers, there will be no envying and evil; for none will require anything not appointed them, and none withhold from any that

which is appointed them of God. Thus there will be humility, love and equality. No brother will seek the place appointed of God for another, but will prefer his brother in honor and in lowliness of mind esteem his brother better than himself. Here, then, is a preparation for a spiritual or gospel feast, even ESTHER'S FEAST.

## ESTHER'S FEAST

And the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces and gave gifts according to the state of the king.

Esther's feast was a Jewish or spiritual feast, and was, therefore different from Vashti's which was fleshly. Vashti's was provided by herself to her own honor and the dishonor of the king. Esther's was provided by the king, glorified him and gave release or rest to the provinces of his empire. Vashti could not have feasted with Esther, nor could Esther have feasted with Vashti, any more than the self-righteous pharisee praying in the temple could have rejoiced with the penitent publican. The penitent woman who so humbly and affectionately washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed them, had a feast that angered and disgusted the hard-hearted pharisee who beheld her. Some of the same sort of Jews in prophetic days made feasts of swine's flesh-unclean meat or false doctrine. Feasting upon that sort of meat increases self-righteousness, so that they said then as now, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou."-Isaiah 65:5. Even the mere letter of the truth, if feasted upon without the spirit, is a fleshly feast, and increases self-importance and hardens the heart. If one rejoices in the doctrine of grace because he thinks it licenses him to the least sin, it is a feast to the flesh, and will harden the heart and blind the eyes. It will tend to substitute the letter for the spirit, and engender a worship that is mere formalism or ritualism: it will tithe mint, anise and cumin and kill out love, mercy and judgment. It will boast of its strict conformity to the letter, and glory in that instead of God, and have a feast in honor of the flesh instead of Christ. Love will die out. In Esther's feast there was a release or rest to the provinces of the king's empire. The poor and oppressed rested from their burdens. So Jesus taught in person, saying, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. The Jews were time poor in the king's provinces as penitent sinners are the poor now. They had been rich, but it was when they were in a very different condition or country. But they had been led away as captives from their olive yards and vineyards to find the rest or release they could not find in their own land, surrounded by their own wealth. They never dreamed of finding it in that way, or that they were giving up all for it when they were led weeping as captives to a strange land. Nor did we, when we were allured and brought into the wilderness-the place of destitution and poverty-to receive all we sought in the valley of Achor (sorrow). To the poor, burdened Jews, it was a feast, a day of joy and rest. To the poor naturally, it was probably a day of natural release, but to the Jews it had a twofold significance.

Our worldly trials are closely allied with our spiritual trials; because it is natural for us to think that worldly adversity is a sign that God does not care for us, and thus we are double burdened. Some months ago, as vile as we are, we were burdened in this way for a length of time. We grew very miserable, until one morning before day on our bed, we had been wondering what would become of us and our children, if things went on as they had been going on for the last few years. We were frail in body, getting old, and our property, which was once valuable, like the property -generally in the South

was daily depreciating; that we had never been trained to any pursuit or profession to make a living, and were now too old and feeble to learn one. So we were tossed in a tempest in the midst of the sea. We felt at times ready to murmur and say our lot was hard; and then to say, we cannot be a Christian else it would not be thus with us; or if thus, we would -take it joyfully; and though we had been devoted, at least outwardly, to the church and the cause of Christ, yet we were coming to nothing even there; for our love -seemed to have died, though our diligence was ever so much; we were hard hearted and distrustful, and filled with evil surmisings; that we loved none and no one loved us; and that everything we put our hand to withered at our touch; that our mind was doubly burdened; that we were sawn asunder with conflicting desires and given up to vain and filthy thoughts until our misery was great upon us. And what will become of us in the future? For we have done our best, and have grown worse and failed, and what will the end be? It suddenly occurred to us, what does Christ say about it? Do we believe in him at all? And we were, after a pause, ready to say, yes, we believe in him, and if so, believe his word; and he teaches us that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; tomorrow will provide for flue things of tomorrow. Is that true? And if so, why do you trouble yourself about to-morrow, seeing that by taking such thoughts you can't alter it? We had rest; we were released from the burden and had -a feast for several days. Thus we looked up; we dread death and it is a monster-but the dread will be made less by fiery trials. As the things of the world are less loved by us, so the loss of them will be less cared for and as they grow less to us, so the things of God will grow greater to us, and thus our spiritual desires will swallow up, in a great measure, our worldly cares. As little by little we learn that our treasure is not here, but in that country to which we are journeying, so we will more and more look up and lay up treasures there; for our heart will be there; and as it is there, so much is it dead to the world; and as it is deadened (mortified) to the world, so we rest from our burdens. -And if Christ is made our ALL-and he must be all or nothing-we have all things in Him, though we have little or nothing in the world but afflictions, trials and sorrows, yet in them we have Christ and can sometimes rejoice in tribulations. Then we have rest, even in the midst of the furnace. It is a Sabbath day, a rest to our souls. But if our hearts are filled with surfeiting and banqueting, with love of the world, and pride and vanity, with much store laid up for many days then the summons to death will be to death indeed, but to him who is poor and needy, tried, tempted and weary, a captive wandering to and fro, and desolate. We hope the summons will be to lay down the burden of sin to eternal rest. There will be nothing to leave but sin and sorrow.

When God gives us such thoughts, he gives us a feast; but we cannot provide it ourselves. They feast him who has nothing but his hope ahead. But to him who has his good things, who has built new barns in which to store his goodness and riches, it is anything but a feast. Thus the poor feast upon what is laid up in and by Christ; upon the doctrine of grace, whilst the rich are sent empty away. That which feasts the poor, famishes the rich; that which the poor love, the rich hate. Thus the prodigal son feasted whilst the self-righteous home son raged. The hungry penitent had a joy that the self-righteous and thrifty home son despised. And thus it ever is.

Christ teaches us how to make a feast. And he, of course, teaches us the way he did. He says when you make a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. He came to save his enemies.

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, for they cannot recompense thee. No works in that feast; no meeting on the half-way ground; no pay for what they eat, nor expectation to pay. Then he said unto them, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, saying, come, for all things are ready; and they all, with one consent, made excuse. They were all well-to-do people-they had property. One had bought -a piece of ground, and that kept him away; another five yoke of oxen, and that him, and another was well off enough to marry, and that kept him. They weren't poor enough for the feast. How is that teaching compared with the doctrine is now taught the world? The fact is that those who feast upon Christ must be poor and helpless; and that none would ever be of his own natural will. -Many things we might say here, but space forbids. That was the pharisees. Then the servant was sent out into the lanes and streets, where the poor and the outcast live, and carried in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind of the Jews, we suppose, and yet there was room. But the house must be filled; and the servant was sent out into the highways and hedges to compel them to come. There is where we were found, if we have ever been brought in. It was by compulsion. Now this was a poor, helpless set at that feast. Not one man there who could have got there himself, and not -one able to pay a cent for what he got. If these well-to-do people had have gone, it would have been in their own esteem a great condescension, and the feast would have been to their own great goodness and humility in eating with such a crowd of poor, despised beings. Christ teaches us that such men will not go-that they cannot, that only such go to Him as have nothing; neither righteousness, wisdom or ability. To such as these the gospel is made a feast by the grace of God. The lame take the prey.

## **ALL MEN ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD**

"When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai sat in the king's gate."

It must be borne in mind that these virgins were the pick of the king's empire. In physical, mental and moral beauty they were at the top, and had no equals. Their lack of spiritual grace or faith did not destroy their mental and moral beauty, nor lessen their obligation, nor do away with, in any degree, their accountability to the king in those things in which they were gifted. There had been much given them in mind and morals, and much, therefore, was required of them. Cain and Abel, the two first-born of the human race, made offerings unto the Lord, and Cain's was rejected and Abel's accepted. This enraged Cain, and the Lord said to him, Why art thou wroth; if thou doest well shalt not thou be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. We see, therefore, that Cain's obligation to God did not cease with the rejection of his offering; that though he was incapable of making a spiritual offering, or one in faith, that he was not thereby relieved of making such as he was able to make; nor deprived of the blessing accruing from it. Natural and moral blessings accrue alike to saint and sinner in offerings to the natural and moral law. The idle and thriftless Christian, following after vain persons will suffer the same as idle and thriftless sinners. A drunken Christian's headache will not only be as bad as the sinner's, but his heartache will be ten fold worse. Cain was not, therefore, licensed to murder his brother by God's rejection of his offering, and His acceptance of Abel's; but was under the same obligation to God as before to reverence and obey Him and love his brother. Abel's acceptance did Cain no injury, nor would the acceptance of Cain's offering have done him any good; it would not have changed his condition, or made him in heart any better a man than before. It would have been an injury

to him, in making him believe that he was what he was not. It was not the offering of either of them that changed the heart, but it was the changed heart of Abel that made his offering differ from Cain's. Nor would the acceptance of Abel's offering have influenced him to despise Cain and caused him to think that he was naturally better than Cain, but it would rather tend to increase his obligations to do him good, even good for evil. Man is not relieved of obligation to God as his creator and sovereign by election; the gifts bestowed by God upon the Elect do the world no harm, nor do they lessen the world's obligation to God. It is a vain and sinful thought arising in man's mind when he says, "If election is true, I may do as I please, and I shall not be judged;" for he will be judged and righteously condemned for sins for which he is responsible, and it will be as just as Cain's was. He will not be condemned for inability to offer spiritual offerings, or offerings in faith to God, but will be condemned for sin. And sin is the transgression of law, and the unregenerate, not being under the spiritual law, are not condemned for spiritual transgression, because they cannot be guilty of it. The regenerate can, because they are, by regeneration, under it. But the unregenerate are under natural and moral law, and can, therefore, transgress or sin and be condemned for it.

Man in his best estate, before he fell by transgression, could not have offered a spiritual offering to God. This cannot be done by a mere creature of God, but only by a regenerated creature or child of God. The creature must be born again to offer in faith. But as said, moral and natural gifts involve like responsibilities. The gift of life, of time, involve all in obligation to improve the time profitably; and we sin when we waste it in idleness and profligacy. The gift of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, bring all, both saint and sinner, under renewed obligations to reverence and honor our Creator.

In times past God suffered all nations, except the Jews, to walk in their own ways, nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons; in time of that ignorance God winked at- that is, he blessed them with natural blessings, notwithstanding their vice and immorality; but now, in the end of the world, he commands all men every where to repent of their immorality; because, having taught them better, and thus augmenting their obligations, he requires better of them, failing in which he will now judge or punish them for that at which he before winked. This is a moral repentance and the fulfilling of moral obligations to God as individuals and nations. And hence is the reason why Chorazin and Capernaum should have more intolerable punishment than Tyre, Sidon and Sodom; because these cities had moral advantages above those heathen cities, and yet with them they were worse than the heathen. That which would be intolerable to one man, would be but little torment to another. The sin that torments the Christian is a pleasure to the hardened profligate. When an individual or nation to whom God has given special favors perverts them, turning them into a curse, they are like Israel under Rehoboam, who suffered a whip under Solomon, but under his son they were chastised with scorpions.

## **DANGER OF BAD HABITS**

When a moral man breaks the hedge that morality throws around him, a serpent bites him, and thus weakened, he is in danger of falling, like the Gaderene, into a legion of vices, and becoming a hardened profligate. The mother (II Kings 7) who boiled her son and ate him, did not come at once to a so diabolical and unnatural crime, but slowly and by degrees. When the thought first suggested itself to her

mind, she no doubt repelled it with horror; but day after day of scarcity and hunger, and pinching starvation, gradually wore away her repulsion, and familiarized the (at first) horrible thought until her conscience and heart were hardened for it, and she could consent to the sin that at first she would have died before doing. When at our first boarding school, we remember the horror we felt the first time we saw card-playing. We would not enter the room, but stood at the door looking with amazement at the men engaged in so impious an act. We had been taught that playing at cards generally led to gambling, and that gambling led to lying, cheating, drunkenness, and often to murder. But in, perhaps, less than one month we had learned to play. One step led to another, until we could bet a little, and afterwards could lie and cheat, and swear to it. We were never much engaged in such things, except in idle hours at college, but we went far enough in it to know what it would lead to. The gentle boy, with downy face as soft and sweet as an innocent girl's, takes his first social drink in a tipling shop, and blushes almost scarlet as he thinks of his mother's fond embrace of a moment ago; but in a few months, with full-mouthed profanity, he can gulp down glassful after glassful, and swagger hollow-eyed in the vilest dens of shame. Alas, if we knew how many boys have gone from their first bar-room drink to the chain-gang or gallows, and how heart-broken mothers have gone down to the grave on account of them, we would be inspired to warn the young against them more than we do. The heart of a Christian can become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin so that he can, in his eager greed for money, listen almost unconcerned to the plaintive cry of the poor and needy. To what depth of shame and degradation men may go, little by little, we cannot tell; but low enough for the contemplation of it to fill us with horror. Think of the awful degradation of the people of Sodom! "Men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." A city so given up that not even five moral men were to be found in it. From a habit of little exaggerations men may be gradually led into bare-faced lying. A man may have a horse to sell and misrepresent his age and qualities, and not tell a direct lie, but still deceive his neighbor. But deception is lying. We heard of a man once who lied in this way when called upon for money. He named one of his pockets "the world," and would say he had not a cent in "the world." And he was silly enough to think he could say that and not tell a lie, when it was indeed as bad as a bare-faced lie. So a man may lie religiously by professing to feel what he does not feel, or by professing to be better than he is or worse than he is. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find"-Proverbs 20:6. A man is faithful only when he speaks and acts under the influence of the Spirit.

## CONCUBINES

These virgins could not, after having been so elevated as to go in unto the king, have been the lawful wives of any other man, at least of any man of less than kingly dignity. They had been rejected as wives and queens, but that did not divest them of the high responsibility of their calling. A great man may be unfit for the church, and yet be well qualified for usefulness as a ruler and teacher of men; spiritual gifts are not required of him, but mental gifts are. Whilst he is not a son or child of God, he is none the less a servant of God. Naaman, the Syrian, was a great man of the world; not only a man cultivated in mind, and morals, but one who had the courage of his convictions. He could reprove a demoralized public opinion though the multitude was against him, and God gave moral and civil deliverance by him. He served God in that sense before he was changed; and so did Paul. But after he was brought to the prophet in Israel, and was humbled and cleansed by grace, he was then a son of God and also a servant



of the king of Assyria. But his service was now in a different spirit than before; his service to the king of Assyria was a service to God in spirit, and was the service of one who serves in love, which will never fail. Vashti's service was only a letter service; the Jew's service as a nation under the law failed, because it was only a service in the letter and not in spirit. Had it been in Spirit they would never have been broken off and cast away. These virgins, with all their excellence, were only united to the king in the letter, and their service could only be a letter service; it could not be spiritual. They were not wives, but concubines. Their standing was upon their works, and not upon their faith; and such works were acceptable to the king as long as they were right in the letter, but the moment there was a failure in that they fell. But it was not a falling from grace or love, for that they never had. The wife could not be put away; we say could not, because there would be no disposition in the husband to put her away; for being united in love, there would be no disposition in either of them to be separated. Separation would be the most heart-rending thing either of them could contemplate-what man loving his wife can think of her death without an unspeakable pang to his soul. They are as Christ and the church are, one.

Under Moses a husband could put away his wife for an uncleanness that did not perhaps amount to a sexual crime, by giving her a bill of divorcement; but under Christ it cannot be done. Because under Moses it was a letter union, but under the gospel it is a union of spirit, so that a man cannot put away his wife and marry another, except for sexual crime. And sexual crime in the wife shows that the marriage was never one in spirit or in love, and never more than a state of mere concubinage on her part.

Whilst the union of the king and concubines was not one in spirit, it was one however involving them in great responsibilities, and of such dignity, that infidelity to its obligations was a sin of such degree as to shame the king and empire. Absalom by the crafty counsel of Ahithophel went in unto David's concubines in sight of all Israel to strengthen his rebellious and patricidal cause by an act so infamous and unpardonable that his followers might know that the breach was irreparable, and reconciliation with his father impossible. Hagar's service to her mistress was acceptable until her son Ishmael mocked Isaac and sought the inheritance; then she was put away; for the slave or servant could not inherit with Isaac the free-born son. The service of the moral law is good in its place, but when sought to be made meritorious in eternal salvation it is put away, because it would displace Christ and his grace.

So at this time every one was put in his proper place, for the Jew, Mordecai, sat in the gate. The spirit of the law was enforced. When Paul felt the spirit of the law he cried out I am carnal sold under sin. He was not what before he thought he was. He now and ever afterward felt the need of Christ.

## IN OFFICE

"Then Mordecai sat in the king's gate."

This was a trust of honor and great responsibility even for a native born subject; but for a member of that despised, impoverished, subjugated race, the Jews, it implied a trust and confidence of the most exalted character. As if, in these days of political and personal corruption and office-seeking, an humble Primitive Baptist should be sought by the people for a high position, and be entrusted with great power and responsibility in spite of his despised religion, it would be an expression of public confidence in his

integrity and capacity far in excess of that in one selected of a popular religious faith. It should be an indication of good for the country, and the manifestation of a great need of, and a strong desire for, honest and faithful civil service. It would be the office seeking the man, because of his fitness and the public need, and in which contempt for his religious faith would be swallowed up by confidence in his integrity. A Christian, impelled by the right spirit, will rarely if ever seek an office of honor simply for the honor of it, but will rather avoid, if possible, responsibilities both in Church and State. In fact, he will accept office in State as in Church, from a sense of duty to God. People of the world are not actuated by this spirit, but by the spirit of the world; and they may be, and often are faithful from motives of patriotism, honor, self-esteem and aspirations for future and higher elevation. It is, therefore, a rare thing for a genuine Christian to be in high office; not only because of his unpopular faith, but also because but few of them are qualified for high places. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," etc.-I Corinthians 1:26. So when they are rightly invested with such trusts, it may be considered providential, or of God. It was in this spirit that Esther sat as queen upon the throne, and that Mordecai sat in the king's gate. He was a Jew (Christian, or spiritual man) there as he would have been in his worship in the temple; as in the temple his offerings and sacrifices were to God, so in the king's gate his obedience was to God. So Esther was a Jew (spiritual) upon the throne as queen, and a Jew as the king's wife. Her responsibilities to God were not diminished by her high calling, but greatly augmented. As a Jew she was required by law to God to be faithful as a queen and faithful as a wife. As Jews, their first, highest and only service was service to God, and that prompted and required fidelity to natural, moral and civil responsibilities, as well as religious or spiritual responsibilities. In fact, spiritual responsibilities embrace all responsibilities. They were faithful, therefore, not because the king's law required it, but because God's law required it. A Christian man is faithful to civil and moral law not because he expects to be saved by it, but because God requires it of his people.

## DUE TIME

Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her; for she did the commandment of Mordecai like as when she was brought up with him.

Hence Esther obeyed Mordecai whilst queen as she did when a child in his ho use; that is, no high worldly honor elevates the Christian above the need of the Spirit; but the higher the place in. Church or State, the more the need of the continued attendance of the Spirit. And therefore the child of God cries as Moses did: If thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence; and therefrom springs his fear of responsibilities. Because, however much his flesh may covet honor, he is afraid to seek it unless the Lord gives it; because he knows that without the Lord, it would be a plague and snare, and in the long run a shame to him.

Esther did not tell she was a Jew, because Mordecai had charged her not to do it. The time to tell it had not come, and she could not tell it in the Spirit, before the time. . There is a time to all things; a time to confess and a time not to confess; a time to be born and a time to die. To be born before the time is an abortion, and to die before the time is suicide or murder. Christ's time to die came, and he said the hour or time is come and in due time, the time his death was due, he died. But our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and when the time comes to speak, do or suffer, we will do it in the Spirit. Moses

thought his time to deliver the Israelites came forty years before it did; and he killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian forty years; but when God's time came he returned emptied of his own strength and self-confidence, and loath to do the work he once so hastily sought. There was a time to shout whilst marching around the walls of Jericho, and it was when God bade them shout; "when I bid you shout, then shout." Some people can shout any time and with such people one time is as good as another, because God is not in it with them at any time. Some can exercise faith at any time, and rejoice at any time, and mourn at any time, but as for ourself, we can do nothing in the Spirit, only as God bids us.

However wise a child of God may be and exalted in. the church or world, he is as dependent upon the Spirit as the most lowly and ignorant. Esther upon the throne was as dependent upon the Spirit, and as poor in Spirit as the most lowly Jew of all the captivity. But the time to confess it was when it would do good to confess, and when it would be confessed in Spirit or from necessity. That is God's time, and when done in that time he gives the victory. A confession made to a brother or the church that justifies our wrong doing or palliates it, is not made in God's Spirit and does no -good, but harm. It is made before the time that is the confessor has not been sufficiently bumbled. It is an abortion. When sin is confessed in the Spirit the flesh is abased and Christ is exalted; there is no boasting, no justification of self, but a putting of the rope around our neck and going to the executioner, and throwing ourself upon his mercy. This may be feigned, but not when we are charged by the Spirit to do it. It would have been boasting in Esther to have proclaimed before the time that she was a Jew, and have tended to dishonor the king's choice, and been as if to have said that the king chose her because she was a Jew; which would be as if we should say that God chose us because we were sinners. This God did not do; and to say he did would be to say that God loved sin, which we know he does not. To say that the king chose Esther because she was a Jew, would be to say that he hated morality and loved immorality; because the Jews in captivity were as the publicans and sinners in Christ's day. The -self-righteous despised them and would have nothing to do with them, and were offended with Christ because he received them and ate with them. But they loved Christ and the pharisees hated him, as they do to this day; because they believed he set the law of God aside in having compassion upon sinners. But that was not true; Christ did not set the law aside, nor undervalue their morality; he commended it, but taught that it would not save them; that they must be born again; and that a regenerated publican and sinner was in advance of them, notwithstanding the sinner's past uncleanness and the ceremonial cleanness of the pharisee; because the penitent publican was right in heart, whilst the pharisee was right only outwardly. Esther was right in heart, though she was of the despised Jews; and it is that in a spiritual sense, which makes a Jew- one right in heart. In her heart there was a secret that none but the spiritual can know or reveal; it is not one that the law imparts, but one taught by the Spirit, and which honors the law. This secret was in Esther's heart, and could only be revealed by her in the spirit of her kinsman when he bade her. To have proclaimed it before the time, would have been of the flesh, and been boasting of that of which she should have been ashamed. No convicted sinner can boast in the Spirit of being a sinner; but it is made to confess it with penitence. It would have been pharisaical in Esther to have boasted of being a Jew. For a Primitive Baptist to boast of being a Primitive Baptist, and of his honesty and uprightness, is a species of pharasaism; and especially so, if he is somewhat high in the world and boasting of it as if it was great humility in him to be one. It would be like a boy whistling whilst passing a graveyard at night; whistling to make as if he was not afraid, but really whistling because he was afraid. Sometimes we have

thought some of us were afraid of doing something like somebody else, though it was a good thing to do, lest we should not be different from others, thus making our difference a boastfulness and self-righteousness; when in fact we should be glad that the influence of truth regulated even the outward conduct of others in doing even a worldly good. The difference between us and the religious world is a difference mostly of spirit, as it was with Esther and the other virgins. We dare boast of nothing; our mouths are closed, and when opened in defense of and in obedience to the truth, it is of necessity, and not in anywise to the honoring of the flesh.

The king did not choose Esther because she was a Jew; being a Jew had nothing to do with his choice, any more than our sins had to do with our election, which was nothing at all. God did not choose us because we were sinners, or because we were not sinners; neither because we were penitent or impenitent, or moral or immoral. True, we are made penitent, but that and all the graces of the Spirit, are the outflow of God's eternal love. He chose us in Christ before we fell in Adam; our fall in Adam did not affect our standing in Christ, for grace was given us in him before we fell in Adam, and when the time came it was manifested-in due time Christ died for the ungodly; not because he loved our ungodliness, but because he loved us, even whilst dead in sin, with a love that our ungodliness did not affect. We cannot boast of our unrighteousness, but of his mercy to our unrighteousness; to boast of it is to glory in sin. When the time came Esther, though upon the throne of the empire, revealed to the king her identity with her despised kinsmen, the Jews. It was for them as well as herself that she did it, and thus through the spirit of Mordecai she offered herself in their behalf. It was no boast, but a death to boasting.

### **AS THY DAY THY STRENGTH SHALL BE**

In those days while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth and sought to lay hands on the king, Ahasuerus; and the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther, the queen; and Esther-certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter it was found out; and therefore they were both hanged on a tree, and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

With Esther's elevation to the throne came Mordecai's to the king's gate. He had been her eyes, so to speak, whilst a child in his house; he watched over her in her girlhood; and when she had been brought with the other fair young virgins to the king's house, he walked every day before the court of the women's house to know how Esther did and what should become of her. His love and solicitude for her were not diminished by her age, dignity or increased responsibilities; as she seemed to be removed from him by her elevation, so was he elevated that access to her should not be cut off. Thus he watched over, strengthened and protected her. It is often the case that the children of God fear to assume public responsibilities, or join the church, lest they be left to themselves and reproach Christ; but he has promised to be with them, saying: As thy day so shall thy strength be.

As he was with Esther in her private character, so was he with her in her official character, in Mordecai. As he was with her as a child in his house, so was he with her as a wife and as a queen in the king's house. With the wife's care is a wife's love; with the mother's a mother's love; and with the queen's responsibilities is the queen's spirit; so with the member of the church; as God elevates him so he

strengthens him. Ministers fear the great responsibilities of the sacred calling, lest they shame the cause of Christ; they fear to go forth in his name, with no money in their scrip, or supplies of wisdom to carry with them, lest they be left in confusion; fear to go forth destitute, forgetting that in that spirit alone will they be brought to the poor and destitute in spirit; to the house of their Master's brethren. As God was with us in our spiritual childhood, so will he be with us in all to which he calls us; as our trials and responsibilities increase, so will he rise up to meet with and deliver us in them. It was not needful that Mordecai should be in the king's gate whilst Esther was a child in his house, as it is not needful we should have the grace of a church member before we join the church, or the grace of a minister before we preach, or dying grace before we are to die. But when Esther was taken from his house and put in the king's house-when she was made not only a wife, but a queen-then it was needful that Mordecai should be in the king's gate. As Esther had official responsibilities, so it was needful that she should have official grace; because she would have official trials and enemies. Therefore, whilst Bigthan and Teresh were plotting, Mordecai was watching. They had access to the king's ear; but Mordecai had access in Esther to the king's heart, because the king loved her. They watched at the king's door, but Mordecai had access in Esther to the king's bedchamber, and even to his bed itself. They were so nigh the king that they felt no need of approaching him in Esther, and therefore knew not how to approach him and speak to his heart; but Mordecai and the Jews were so poor and far off that they could only approach him in Esther; the only access any could have to his heart. Thus Bigthan and Teresh were too rich to need Esther, and Mordecai and the Jews were too poor to do without her. As the children of God are made to feel the constant need of Christ whilst the self-righteous feel no such need, and despise the poverty that does. Bigthan and Teresh were honored counselors-were the king's familiar friends, to whom was entrusted the king's person-they were to him as Ahithopel to David; and like Ahithopel, in time of trial they forsook him and sought his life; sought to destroy the friend that had honored and enriched them. Like the Jews in Christ's day, they were exalted by that which should have humbled them, and smote the hand that fed them. And like people now upon whom God has bestowed great gifts of mind and morals, they glory in them to their own honor, and not to the honor of God, their benefactor. Publicans and sinners, upon whom comparatively little of such advantages were bestowed, and who were destitute of morals, honored and revered Christ, whilst the self-righteous and haughty Pharisees, upon whom much had been bestowed of mind and morals, loathed and despised him. The penitent prostitute kissed the feet of Jesus and washed them with grateful tears, whilst the hard-hearted Pharisee looked on with supercilious contempt. Thus it was that those who seemed to be the nearest to the king were farthest from him in heart; and those who seemed farthest from him were nearest to him in love. Hushai, the Anchite, though seemingly farther from David, was nearer than Ahithopel; the one was nearer in the letter or profession, but the other nearer in soul, and when the letter fails the heart is found true. In Esther Mordecai and all the Jews were made one with the king, as no other people, not of Esther's kindred, could be. They were linked together in one, and the weal of one was the weal of all, and the woe of one was the woe of all. The king loved Esther and she loved him; and Esther loved Mordecai and the Jews, and the king loved them in Esther, as the Jews loved the king in Esther.

## LOVE NEVER FAILS

The conspiracy of Bigthan and Teresh was known to Mordecai, and he durst not hold his peace. He was bound, both in letter and in spirit, to make it known to the king. His obligation as the king's servant in the gate required it; and should that be insufficient of itself, and he should fail of legal duty, his love to Esther, his child, and to his brethren, forbade his silence and compelled his crying out. He could not hear to see the destruction of Esther and his kindred; it would be his own destruction. He came into the king's gate for such a time as that, and was there according to the king's law by the spirit; because the obligations of his high calling were such that no man in the flesh could fulfill them; no man not related to Esther, the queen, as he was, could approach the king in her as he could; and unless the king was so approached in heart, he would hear no word against his trusted and honored servants. It was, therefore, with Mordecai not merely an obligation of the law to the king, but one of love to Esther; he loved her, and fidelity to her and his kindred involved fidelity to the king also; and whilst, therefore, he might have been faithless to the king as Bigthan and Teresh were, his love forbade faithlessness to Esther. Because, if the king should fall: Esther, as his wife and queen, would fall with him, and with her, all the Jews. Thus it is with Christians to God's law—they are made faithful to the letter by the Spirit, and cannot in any in time of trial and temptation be faithful short of the faithfulness inspired by the Spirit. Bigthan and Teresh and the Jews are examples of this truth. It was with Mordecai as it was with the twelve and Jesus. When the letter disciples forsook Christ and turned back, the twelve could not do it. There was something in them that forbade it, that did not forbid the others, and of which the others were destitute. As there is something that makes a man love his own wife and children, though others may dislike them; that makes a mother cleave to her own son, though he may have disgraced himself and dishonored her. It is the spirit; the kinship and identity of soul. It is that which makes a child of God cleave to Jesus, though he feels so vile and unworthy; and to the doctrine that the world hates; loving it whilst others bate it; defending it whilst others seek its overthrow. Because to him it is a necessity; with him it is Jesus or death. It is a matter of grace, and because of grace. He is changed in heart and will be faithful wherein others are faithless. He will be faithful to the law that condemns him, and declare its righteousness, and is thus prepared to receive God's mercy as an unmerited grace, as an amazing grace! So was Mordecai faithful to the king that had led him away from his country and wealth, and impoverished him in a strange land. He was faithful because he knew it was a righteous retribution for his sins, and in soul was made to love that holiness that condemned I sin in him. And especially so, as he experienced in Esther the king's love for the poor, sin-stricken and impoverished Jews; and was thus made rich in faith; though having lost all things in themselves, yet, in the king's love they had all things. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Other refuge have I none,

hangs my helpless soul on thee.

But what a secure refuge it is when we can see it! But most of the time we are like the prophet's servant when surrounded by a host of the chariots and horses of his enemies (II Kings 6) He cried out, Alas, my master! What shall we do? And the prophet said, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them; with them is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see; and he saw and behold the mountain was full of

horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and be deliveth them.

## **GOD APPOINTED OVERSEERS**

The bishop or pastor of the church over which God has given him the oversight, watches over her in love, as Mordecai over Esther; he does it not for love of money, or filthy lucre, nor for honor. He thinks more of the cause than he does of any mere opinion of his; he will not distract and divide them about incomprehensible things, or things not essential. He may seem, at times inconsistent, as Paul did about circumcision in circumcising Timothy, (Acts 16) and in declaring himself a Pharisee before the council (Acts 23); but it was because he thought less of himself than he did of the success and prosperity of the cause of Christ, and could patiently wait God's time to bring order out of confusion. He did not hold his peace when the Spirit impressed him; he did not shun to declare the whole council of God, and to warn every one, day and night, and from house to house, even in tears. He never forgot that it was Christ's cause, and that Paul himself was nothing. He would not be the head of any faction and have any baptized in Paul's name. He had none called Paulites, after him. To him Christ was all in all, and Paul, Peter and Apollos nothing but ministers given the church by Christ.

The bishop or pastor may not divest himself of the, responsibility God has laid upon him by shifting it upon the church. If he has been taught the truth he is to teach it to the church; if danger is shown to him he is to show it to the church. God has put it upon him by giving him knowledge of it. Nor, indeed, can any member of the church to whom sin in another is known against the peace, order and purity of the church, hold his peace, if he loves the church. God requires it of him to make it known; to hide it is to partake of its guilt. If false doctrine is taught, all may not detect it, but by whom it is detected, of him it is required to expose it in love. Aquilla and Priscilla first took Apollos aside and expounded the truth more clearly to him, and he, like a child of God, meekly received it. There is no need to fear doing right if it be done in the right spirit. It may be a cross to bear, but it is to be borne for Christ's sake; it may be dangerous, and in a sense death, but we are to die for one another. But it must not only be done in the right spirit, but it must be done according to law, or the letter. It must be done, not as an individual act, but as a member of the church; our self is not to be known in it, but Christ. Nor are we, if opposed, to take it as personal opposition, and get angry, but as opposition to the truth we represent; nor are we to forget that others are interested in it as well as we, and that it is as much their cause as ours. We are not to make ourselves big, but little; and he is least who is nearest the king in spirit, and biggest and most self-important, as Bigthan and Teresh, who seek the king's place, and is furthest from him in heart or love.

Mordecai communicated the matter to the king through Esther, that is in the spirit of love and not of the flesh. He communicated it to her not as to his child, but as to his queen; so is the minister to deal in the church; not as her lord and master, but as her servant. And Esther, as the queen, certified it to the king in Mordecai's name. It was all done officially, or according to law. There was no resort to any unauthorized tribunal to try the matter; no appeal to any higher court than the king's court; no having the matter before a synod or an association. There was none higher than queen, as there is none higher than the church; and to resort to any other body than the church, is to dishonor the church and Christ,

and to put the servant on horseback as the prince, and to put the prince on foot as the servant. It is to overturn God's order.

Bigthan and Teresh had a fair trial in the king's court as every member must have in the church and the church only. To be tried and condemned by any other tribunal is a usurpation of law, and punishable by the law. If a member has a standing in any church with which another church is in fellowship, he is to be recognized as orderly until the church-not an Association- deals with him, and if his own church does not deal with him after having been notified that he is disorderly, and which charge has been sustained by gospel proof, then fellowship for the church herself may be withdrawn. This order maintains the dignity and supremacy of the church, and no other does or can. When, therefore, Bigthan and Teresh were fairly tried they were condemned and executed according to law, and the honor of the king and queen preserved.

## JACOB AND ESAU

After these things did Ahasuerus promote Haman, the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Haman was an Amalekite, the natural enemy of the Jews, between whom war had been declared from generation to generation. The Amalekites were descendants of Esau, and therefore the kindred of the Jews, the descendants of Jacob. Generated in the same womb, the struggle began with them before their birth, and was perpetuated in their descendants. They were the heads of two nations, one of which was beloved, chosen and blessed of God, and the other hated. Jacob and Esau, though brothers in the flesh, were as different in spirit as if of two distinct families. As the Primitive and Arminian or Mission Baptists, though alike in name and the letter of the faith, they are as different in the spirit of their faith as Jacob and Esau. They are two distinct nations, and there can be no alliance between them, any more than there could have been between the families of Jacob and Esau, or between Jacob and the family of Heth. Jacob could not intermarry with Heth as Esau could and did; he could intermarry only with the daughters of his own people. Some brethren have thought it not improper to receive the official acts, as baptism for example, of the Arminian Baptists, because they hold, with us, to the doctrine of immersion; whilst in reality, they are as different from us in the spirit of immersion as the Methodists are; and are more dangerous, because they seem more alike us, and hence are more apt to mislead us. To receive their official acts would be to say that Esau had the birthright with Jacob, or was with him equally invested with the official headship, or pre-eminence. In the family of Isaac, as in the elect nation or Church of Christ, there can be but one head, as there is but one name, given under heaven amongst men as her Saviour; but one to whom the preeminence is given amongst his brethren, and to whom all must bow, both those in heaven and those in earth. From him, as the head and life of his people, flows all grace, which grace is made pre-eminence in the faith, and works of faith, of the church or elect nation. His people are blessed in him as Abraham's seed were blessed in Jacob; they are chosen in him as Isaac's seed were chosen, not in Esau, but in Jacob, and he could, therefore, be the only proper head. To elevate Esau with him to the headship would be to do away with the election of grace in Jacob and substitute the works of the flesh for the works of the Spirit. This the Arminian Baptists do, and to it the Primitive Baptists refuse to bow, as Mordecai in the king's gate refused to bow to Haman. To receive their official acts, therefore, though done right in the letter or form, and in that respect according to the



king's commandment, would be to elevate the letter or flesh, and Esau, to a higher place than the election of grace; would be to put works over grace; Esau over Jacob; Haman over Mordecai; the flesh over the spirit and the law over the gospel. But God always makes grace preeminent; it was made thus in the call of Abraham, in the conception and birth of Isaac, in Jacob blessing Isaac—not according to his natural birth but according to the election of grace, before he has done any good or evil.

Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate his venison; but Rebecca loved Jacob. As a trained hunter, Esau doubtless stood high in his day as Haman did in his. Hunting, at that early age, was probably the best school for physical and mental development, and therefore, the avenue to honor and worldly promotion. Esau soon grew to despise his birthright—that is, to despise being a dweller in tents and a minder of flocks, and little, in any respect for their religion. It was too tame and pretentious for the ambitious hunter. There is sometimes seen in this day, the children of Primitive Baptist parents, who get up in the world become ashamed of the religion of their parents.

Poor weak Esau! If he had never gotten up in the world, he would not have been ashamed of his parent's religion. His pride and vanity made that a curse that should have been a blessing to him; that which should have humbled him, and prepared for usefulness to his family. The boy to whom his father had given the advantages of wealth and education will sometimes look down upon his old-fashioned and unpopular religion; and esteem himself as too wise to give up the world for so poor a thing.

It is to be feared that even Christians may themselves become puffed up from their worldly advantages, to their own injury and the hurt of their brethren. But those whom God has bestowed the birthright of grace, will condescend to men of low estate and will not arrogate to themselves spiritual authority on account of worldly advantages. It is possible that it may be the parent's fault that their child has so little respect for their religion. The Lord help us!

The father may love too well his son's venison....he may unduly stimulate his child's love for the honors and riches of the world and those worldly pursuits that shall wean his affections from the father's house. We may have so little home religion and so much love for this world ourselves, as to teach our children by example that the world is to be preferred to Christ. Our children are not as often seen at our meetings as the children of parents professing godliness should be. We remember once a brother who did not have time to go himself to meeting, but on the following Monday we saw that brother, with his wagon loaded with his family, whipping up his mules to the circus, in time to see the street parade.

Isaac was proud of Esau; and it is natural that a Christian father even should be proud of a son who had achieved honor in the world, and risen to be a Governor or member of Congress. He overlooked plain, simple Jacob, whose fame had not spread beyond the family circle, whose care had not exceeded the bounds of his father's flock, and whose struggles with beasts had been only with the enemies of his father's lambs. His days passed silently away in the obscurity of his mother's tent; his struggles, wrestlings and cares were hid from all eyes save God's and his mother's. To his mother's sympathizing heart he no doubt poured out his sad complaints, thinking too little of himself to parade them before others. He was not above his people, but loved them and revered their religion in his humble way,

and gave himself for them. If he had aspiration to achieve honor, as Esau, in capturing game in distant field or mountain, it was struggled with and suppressed for the sake of his mother and her God. Whilst Esau was capturing and making a prey of wild beasts, and feeding his father with his own renown, Jacob was struggling with and keeping self under, to the glory and praise of God's grace. He learned to be gentle with ewes great with lamb, and to lead the flock beside the still waters and into green pastures. Not for the flocks of Heth was Jacob concerned, but for his father's flock. The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him as with Esau.

Esau's meat (religious food) was prey taken by his own strength, stratagem and dexterity, with sling and bow; his study was the haunts and habits of the beasts of the forest, and he had learned to out-wit, out-wait and entrap them. In this he achieved honor. In this profession-which was self-gratifying-he endured cold, hunger, fatigue, and many privations; he suffered as Jacob did in keeping Laban's flock-drought by day and frost by night-but in a very different spirit from Jacob; Jacob's was from necessity, or of faith, and was a denial of self, as David's was when he guarded his father's flock in the wilderness, and rescued the lamb from the lion and bear. Esau's strength, dexterity and endurance were of the flesh; there was no self-denial, dependence and helplessness in his struggles, and no praise to God in his triumphs. If he delivered lambs, or the helpless and defenseless, it was not because he loved and pitied them, but for the honor of doing it; if he brought savory meat to his father, it was not for love of his family, or their God, but for the love of the honor and praise it got him.

But he grew to be a prince among men, for he who has learned to tame, subdue and control wild beasts, (his own passions) has learned to control men, and men become his prey. Thus did this strong man run well; but it come to pass one day that he came in weak and faint; he had taken no venison, and his endurance was put to the test; he was weighed in the balance and found wanting. Disappointed in his expectations, his pride and vanity were so mortified that he was ready to die. He came to Jacob's tent, and his pot was boiling, and he fain would eat of Jacob's pottage. And shall it be that the simple-minded shepherd shall prove wiser and stronger than the accomplished athlete and cunning hunters. And wherefore, save for the wisdom given him from above, according to God's eternal purpose? And thus the timid dweller in tents takes the prey that the practiced artisan, the nimble-footed and dexterous archer failed to overreach; and Esau, so famed in hunting, so familiar with danger and death, so inured to fatigue and hardship, lays all his spoil down at the feet of plain Jacob-giving it all for one mess of pottage. How superior, when tested, is Jacob's wisdom to Esau's! And how weak and foolish is the wisdom of the world, when compared to the wisdom from heaven! How poor the training of man and the flesh to the teaching of the Spirit; and the trust in man to the trust in God. Esau, trained in the flesh, of long endurance, of practiced eye and inflexible nerve, crouches, subdued by hunger as the wearied deer had crouched to him; and at last, in whose worldly wisdom had overwrought his inferiors, and beguiled them to his feet, is himself entangled in his own toils at Jacob's feet; so that after all the sacrifices he had made, and the sufferings he had endured to establish his own wisdom and righteousness, he lost the birthright by the very means be employed to secure it; and for Jacob the election obtained it, so that he knew it was by grace and not, of works, and thus boasting was excluded from his heart, which is indeed the birthright of grace. But Esau was ready to die if he could not boast, and so his birthright went for a mess of pottage. Jacob preferred the birthright to the pottage and Esau

preferred the pottage; grace was a necessity to Jacob, but not to Esau. Jacob desired a good thing, and Esau an evil thing, and as, therefore, condemned for selling his birthright; and the church is warned against such fleshy conduct, and charged to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

We were speaking not long since to some persons dear to us, and said, "You have been living in Butler several years, and have had opportunity of hearing the truth preached at least three times a month, but you have hardly averaged twice that sum in a year; and the opportunity is passing away, and the time may come when you will desire to see one of the days of the son of man and shall not be able." A short time ago we got a letter from a young kinsman in Texas, who wrote in substance that he hadn't heard a Primitive Baptist sermon in several years; that he would have gone fifty miles to hear Elder Rowe when he was there, but did not know of it until the time had passed; and that now it seemed to him that he could set and hear us preach a whole week. He was raised to manhood in this county, and in access to gospel preaching every Sunday, but then the opportunity was not appreciated. Thus, in a sense, many despise their birthright, selling it for a morsel of worldly ease and pleasure. And Christians are warned of this spirit and reminded that Esau, though he sought to get back what he had lost, could not recover it. How like Esau many of us have been; and many have been the tears vainly shed over lost opportunities. The many opportunities, with the ability we have had, to minister to others in their poverty and distress, and have let them slip, passing away forever, leaving to us vain regrets over a wasted life. How many have died regretting on their death-bed that they had never joined the church! But Esau did much, and Jacob did comparatively little; but the little Jacob did was more than all Esau did. The little that Jacob did honored his mother and showed his love for her; Esau went to distant field to honor himself with honoring his father; but Jacob staid at home and minded the flock because he loved his mother and her God. Esau showed in the works he did that he loved the praise of the world; Jacob in not doing them that he loved his mother better than the world. Though the bargain was made, and sworn to by Esau, yet he struggled to evade it, and to influence his father to bestow the blessing upon him anyhow; and Isaac would, no doubt, have done it had it not been for Rebecca, to whom the Lord revealed before their birth that Jacob was the chosen and beloved of God, and that Esau should be subject to him. Rebecca's work was therefore a work of faith, and by it Isaac was convinced so that he bestowed the blessing upon Jacob contrary to the flesh. Jacob afterwards bowed to Esau, but it was simply rendering obeisance to him as a worldly prince; a rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. This Jacob does yet. It is not the thing done we have so much objection to, but the design of it and the spirit prompting it. Works for worldly purposes and the good of society we respect and render aid to; but if these works axe given a religious character, and are done as means of soul-saving, then we dare not bow to and reverence them; because they are substituted for Christ. We believe in and advocate temperance and sobriety, and detest drunkenness, but if we must advocate temperance and oppose whisky lest some soul for whom Christ died should be lost by it, then we dare not cooperate with such religion; because it is fleshly and dishonoring to Christ, as making abstinence from whisky more efficacious in the salvation of the sinner than his righteous obedience. But we believe in temperance in Christians, and that their temperance should honor Christ; and we try, as a people, to discourage intoxicating drinks as a

beverage, and to be used mainly as a medicine, as Timothy was charged to use them for his often infirmities.

The execution of Bigthan and Teresh for their evil works gave Haman, who doubtless made himself conspicuous in their trial, a good opportunity for elevation in the king's court by his zeal and good works for the king's safety. Mordecai was overlooked whilst Haman was in exaltation; and it is always the case that when works are done in the flesh, and men are honored in the flesh for doing them, that the spirit of the truth is unknown in them; and, like Haman, works are set up over grace. Not that the works are wrong if in the right place and spirit, but wrong because in the wrong place. The servant on foot is useful and the prince on horseback useful, because each is in his right place. But put the servant in the prince's place and the prince in the servant's place, and God's order is overturned, and both are injured as well as society—the servant is puffed up and the prince dwarfed. Put grace first, as God does, and works under grace, and all will be right; the works will then glorify God and humble man. But put works as the cause of grace and we put the cart before the horse; and the cart can as easily pull the horse as works cause grace; but put the horse before the cart and the horse moves the cart. Ye are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that ye should walk in them. It is very easy to unduly elevate works and become vain of them instead of grateful for them. Primitive Baptists have reason to be thankful to God for the character he has given them for honesty; but if they become vain of it they will be scourged for it. One is not a Christian because he pays his debts, but he pays his debts (if he is able) because he is a Christian. Good works are not the cause of grace but the result of grace; but when Haman is exalted they are set up above grace, and to this the Jew will not bow.

## THE BATTLE

"And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate bowed and revered Haman; but Mordicai bowed not nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants said to Mordicai, why transgresseth thou the king's commandment. And when they spake daily unto him and he hearkened not unto them, they told Haman to see whether Mordicai's matters would stand, for he had told them he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordicai bowed not then was Haman full of wrath."

Amalek was the first of the nations and the first enemy Israel encountered in the wilderness. During all their long servitude in Egypt they had had no trouble with Amalek; nor could they until they had been carried out of bondage. In Egypt they were the servants of Pharaoh and were not required to fight, but to work; they knew nothing of struggles save for natural or worldly things. The children or heirs of God whilst in nature know nothing of spiritual wants and have no spiritual struggles, but are the willing servants of sin making no war against it, never having been brought into contact with it as an enemy; but when freed from sin and made the servants of righteousness the warfare begins and continues until the end of their lives. In nature or unregeneracy they are free from warfare, or rather free from righteousness; free in the sense that acts of righteousness are not required of them, that is acts of faith or that obedience to God that can be rendered only of faith, and such obedience as cannot be rendered by the servant of sin or the unregenerate. For illustration, baptism is an act of righteousness when performed by a believer, because God requires it of believers of his children; but before they are made believers it is not required of them, nor would God accept it of them; because in that condition, as the servants of sin, they are free from righteousness. The Jews in Egypt, as servants of Pharaoh, were free

from Moses, nor was service to Moses or God required of them until freed; because no man can serve two masters, nor is it required of him to do it. Whilst in Egypt they were conscious only of the power of Pharaoh, and to fulfill their daily tasks was all the obligation they felt, and with that performed they rested. But their rest was the rest of a slave. They knew no more of the power and enmity of Amalek than the unregenerate man knows of the power of sin in his depraved nature. But after he is born again and freed from sin and is made a child of God he encounters Amalek as the Jews when thrust out of Egypt encountered him in the wilderness. It is only those who have been thrust out of Egypt, who could stay no longer and could no longer find rest in their daily tasks, and when doubled tasks were beyond their ability to do; and who have been made dead or cut off from Egypt at the Red sea and then experienced life to God in his power and love in freeing them from Egypt and destroying their enemies, it is only these who are brought into contact with Amalek. Their last troubles in Egypt were very sore, unendurable, so they left from necessity; and the thought with them was no doubt that if ever freed from them that they would never have any more trouble; and that to be made free and have a country of their own and be kept by the Lord was to live in ease, plenty and free from struggles; and if they had been told that they would be poorer in the wilderness than in Egypt they could not have believed it.

Their life after freedom was not such a life as they expected, nor has it ever been to the children of God. They rejoiced in the Lord at the Red sea, and were thus being disciplined for the struggle with Amalek; the heavens that had been shut up to them in Egypt were opened to them, as they were opened to Jesus in his baptism in preparation of his struggle with Satan in the wilderness. We would not say that Jesus could not have encountered Satan before his baptism, but his baptism was certainly the antecedent step to the struggle; or in other words that the struggle could not have preceded the baptism; it was, so to speak, an invasion of the enemy's territory, rendering the struggle inevitable. Whatever is done under the prompting of the Spirit antagonizes Satan and involves a struggle with him. It is certain that the Saviour's baptism and the Father's approval did not weaken him; but it rather strengthened him for the encounter. Nor did the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red sea render them less able to fight Amalek, but was really a preparation for it, and without which there would have been no struggle with him. The greater the manifestation of God's power and love in our liberation from sin, the greater will be the struggle with the enemy; because the more we appreciate freedom from sin the greater will the loss of it be felt, and the greater the loss the harder will be the fight to keep it. Thus the enemy is strong as we are strong; if we have strong faith, it implies hard battles. When the prophet ate twice in short succession it was that he had to go forty days on the strength of that meat. There is nothing unnecessary given us, nothing that we will not need, and nothing therefore to be wasted.

The faith of the children of this world is not tried, but the faith of God's children is always tried; God's children march through a wilderness in which there are snares, traps and pitfalls, and in which they encounter enemies on every hand; they march in paths they have not before known; often hungry and thirsty, and are the most dependant and helpless of all people and can only go as God leads them, and only eat, drink and rest as God provides it for them. When the cloud rested upon the tabernacle they abode in their tents, and when it was lifted up they fell into line and marched onward following in the lead of heaven. They can't get up a revival as the world does, but have to wait upon the Lord to bring

them to their appointed places of rest. They are like the cony, a feeble folk, and have their house in the rock. Who would by nature, or by his own works, be one of them? Not one!

But Israel could not help but fight; they could not go back and to go forward was to encounter Amalek; it was a necessity. So the battle was joined, and to Israel all was staked upon the issue. Amalek, if defeated, could retire from the field with only the shame of defeat; but Israel had no where to retire to, no place to lay his head. So the battle raged until the going down of the sun; it was hotly contested and at times hung in doubt; first Israel prevailed, then Amalek; retreats here and alarms there; the cry of victory on this hand and the moan of despair there. Moses grew weary and had to be seated upon a stone and his hands upheld by Aaron and Hur as Joshua led the host to the charge. The noonday sun poured down upon the ensanguined field and still the battle went on. The day wears away and the sun sinks slowly behind the hills and the shadows spread like a pall over the battlefield and the hand grows weak and weary and the breath short and faint, and the cry of despair goes up, Master save, we perish! and lo! the battle is won and the enemy is gone and a shout rends the air, Praise ye the Lord!

We battle now, not with flesh and blood, nor with carnal weapons; but with false doctrine; with pride, vanity, self-interest, envy, greed, lust, unbelief, worldliness, indolence and such enemies as he, often hidden, in our depraved nature. With such enemies as these we struggle, nor does it end only with our mortal lives.

Wherever Israel journeyed or lived, whether in the wilderness, in the promised land, or in captivity, there was Amalek. The people of God will not willingly serve sin; they are freed from sin and are the servants of righteousness; and the service of God is to struggle against sin, to realize that sin is an enemy that is feared and hated of their soul. They are often as a besieged city (II Kings 6) invested by an enemy stronger than she is. The siege lasted until her own stores were exhausted and her own strength gone; and as day after day she felt her own strength dwindling away and more and more helpless and hopeless, so she was unconsciously drawing nearer and nearer deliverance; as she grew weaker the enemy grew weaker; for the enemy was self-trust and self-righteousness; and when her own supplies were exhausted, and her own strength gone the struggle was over and the victory was won. But self cannot overcome self; nor does a sense of helplessness overcome the enemy; God overcomes for the help-less; for the Lord made the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots and the noise of horses, even the noise of a great host, wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight and fled for their lives.

Mordicai's colleagues in the gate labored with him to get him right, and when day after day, he hearkened not to them and gave them no satisfaction, only telling them he was a Jew, they reported his case to Haman to adjudicate. They did not seem able to understand why he would not bow to Haman; and especially why being a Jew should forbid it. It seemed to have puzzled them as badly as it puzzled Rabshakeh (Isaiah 36) that the Jews under Hezekiah would not give up and submit themselves to Sennacherib the King of Assyria; seeing they were so weak and few and that all the world was against them; he could not understand them and said: But if you say to me we trust in the Lord our God, is it not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away and said to Judah and Jerusalem ye shall worship before this altar I The same as to say, God will not save you because you have offended him in taking away his high places and altars; you are opposing God in destroying his altars instead of

increasing them, and you are lessening his worship. And the world to-day thinks that the Primitive Baptists in refusing worship at the Sunday school altars, missionary altars, education altars, et id omne genus, that they are opposing good things and are enemies to God and man. And because they oppose these things as departures from the faith and done in distrust of God's power and love, and as unauthorized in his word and as contrary to their experience, they are charged as being anti everything good. We can join in with our fellow-citizens in building school houses, etc., in supporting civil government, and in doing all things that tend to natural and moral good; but when it is said to us you must do this thing to save souls; that our children will be lost without Sunday schools; that those for whom Christ died will be lost without a Missionary Board, then we do not do it, for to do it would deny the faith and the Lord God that bought us.. Nor are we permitted to aid in propagating such religion in any way that we can avoid; because such religion is not only false and dishonoring to God but is an injury to human society. Such religion has been in full blast in the world for now about one generation, and what is the moral condition of the world? Mr. George R. Stetson, a statistical writer of reputation, in an article headed The Rising Tide of Crime, asserts that crime is greatly on the increase and supports his assertions by facts.

The International Record, a Boston publication, says:

In the first place, I want you to remember that in no land in the world is crime so on the increase as in the United States. With all our patriotic pride, we have to confess that we are going downward in the scale of public morals faster than any great modern nation. In 1850 there were in the prisons of the United States nearly 7,000 prisoners; in 1860, there were 19,000; in 1870, about 33,000; and in 1880, more than 59,000. That is, in 1850, one in every 3,000 people was in prison; in 1860, one in every 1,600; in 1870, one in every 1,000; and in 1880, one in 873. During the last six years the tide has not fallen. The last report of our prison commissioners puts the proportion of our prisoners to the entire population as 1 to 575. This is bad enough, but Mr. Galton, a distinguished writer, expresses the opinion that the social condition of Athens (where Paul preached upon Mars Hill) taken as a whole, was as superior to ours as we are to the Australian savages.

Mr. Stetson ascribes as one of the causes of this great increase of crime, the abolition of family government; the children are given up to moral training outside the precincts of the family. And that is, no doubt, the true root of the matter. The Primitive Baptists have refused to bow to this Sunday School god, holding that the parent is the natural and divinely appointed instructor of the child in morals. Because God has implanted a love for the child in the parent that he has in no one else, and a care is therefore required of the parent that is not required of any one else, and which no one else can give; and to destroy this order of God is to injure both parent and child, and society at large.

Mordecai knew that though Haman was so highly honored in the world, that he was not in heart a lover of the king and queen; as we know that the good things, so-called and so revered by the world, and upon which the world depends for the salvation of man, are not prompted by God's spirit, because they are a denial of his word. And what Primitive Baptist, who has experienced God's grace in giving him faith, can turn from that experience and institute Sunday Schools for the salvation of his children, when he knows that they would not have saved him? Can he suppose that less grace will save his children than

it took to save him? Does he not know that nothing less than the same grace that it took to save him will save his children, and that that alone will save them? How, then, can we bow to these things? We can't do it, and God forbid that we should. And how can we aid such religion seeing it is an evil to human society, and is a fruitful source of human crime? Not long since we were put to the test in this thing. There was a Methodist district meeting in this town, and we were asked to aid in feeding and lodging the delegates: but we couldn't conscientiously do it; and the reason was because it was aiding what we believe to be a false religion; not that we would not have fed our neighbors and fellow-citizens as citizens and neighbors, but not as official representatives of a religion that we believe to be an injury to mankind, And for such reasons Mordecai would not bow to Haman; and we are expressly charged to give no aid to another gospel; though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.-Galatians 1:8. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not unto your houses, neither bid him God speed.-II John 1:10. Of course this means one coming to us in a religious sense; and does not forbid our receiving them as neighbors and fellow-citizens; but it does forbid our aiding them religiously.

Mordicai's faithfulness to the king and queen inflamed Haman's wrath against him, as was to be expected; and Primitive Baptists may expect the enmity of the religious world; but they have either got to have that or the displeasure of God. "Know ye not that the friendship (religious friendship) of the world is enmity with God?"-James 4:4. Mordecai had but little if anything of the world to lose; God was all in all to him. He had no political aspirations to gratify, no estate to save, no children to please in his religion, no country to love; he was indeed a stranger and pilgrim. He could not afford to be unfaithful to God; and to be faithful to God was to be faithful to the queen whom he loved and whom he served; and he knew that Haman, with all his affected zeal for the king and queen and the empire, was an enemy to the truth; and that his work in the long run would be for the injury of all, as Mr. Stetson has shown that such things hare resulted in this age to the great increase of crime amongst men. The Primitive Baptists cannot be charged in this age with aiding, as a church, time propagation of a religion that has greatly destroyed family government and family love, and increased infidelity and crime amongst men.

## **SIBEOLETH AND SHIBBOLETH**

Haman thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had shown him the people of Mordecai; wherefore he sought to destroy all the Jews in the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. In the first month of the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day and from month to month, to the twelfth month. And Haman said unto King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

Haman, like Mordecai, was a foreigner. In many respects he was so alike the Jews that none save a Jew could have told the difference between them. A great majority of thinking men in this day, to say nothing of the multitude; know no difference between the so-called churches, but suppose them in all essential things about the same. They suppose the Primitive Baptist about the same as the Arminian Baptist, except they think that the Primitives are poorer, more ignorant, fewer and more stingy and selfish. Indeed the Methodist Church has published it through her Book Concern that "thousands of us



are notorious drunkards, and whose ignorance and immorality are a disgrace to the Christian name," etc., (Dr. Summer's works). To all, save the Jews, Haman no doubt seemed not only as good a man as Mordecai, but far superior in goodness and in every other respect. Christ only could detect the venality and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; but to the multitude, the devoted' Pharisee seemed a much better man than even Christ himself. They paraded their goodness and sounded a trumpet before them, and gave alms with one hand, while with the other they laid burdens upon the people, and fleeced the poor, and devoured widows' houses, as they do now. There were, doubtless, some of them sincere men, as Paul was in his false religion, seeking to live perfectly after the manner of the law that the Messiah might come. Christ did not, by any means, come up to their ideas of perfection; they charged him with being a wine bibber and glutton, and a friend and associate of bad men; and a violator of the Sabbath, because he healed a cripple on the Sabbath day; showing that with all their ostentatious prayers and alms, they hated Christ for relieving one whom they could not relieve, and whose relief gave them no honor; and that with all their zeal for God and affected love for man, they cared less for a suffering fellow-creature than they did for an ox, or a sheep. Now is such religion as that a blessing to mankind, or a curse? a religion that grinds the faces of the poor; that loads suffering humanity with burdens; that panders to pride, greed., gambling, wealth, extortion and excess; that makes begging honorable, placing a premium upon idleness and extravagance, and that drains the country of millions of dollars to be wasted upon fanatical adventurers into foreign countries, called missionaries! No wonder that many thinking men look upon such Christianity as a humbug, and take refuge in infidelity.

We read, not long since, an editorial item in the Christian Index , the Armenian Baptist organ of this State, headed, It Goes on the Sabbath, illustrating the teaching of that denomination on the subject of Sabbath keeping; and it seemed to us to be very much like the belief of the Pharisees in Christ's day:

An active and earnest young minister was told of a miller who had, with unusual profaneness, repelled every effort made to influence him on the subject of' religion. Among other sinful practices he usually kept his mill-the most striking object in the hamlet-going on the Sabbath. The minister determined to make an effort to convince him of the sinfulness of his practice. The next time he wanted flour he went himself to order it.

'A fine mill, this,' said the minister, one of the most complete I have ever seen.' This was the truth; the miller had heard it a thousand times before, and never doubted the fact. Still, he was gratified by this new testimony, and his feelings were conciliated towards the minister. 'Unfortunately there is one defect in it,' continued the minister, and a very serious defect, too.' What is that?' carelessly inquired the miller. 'A defect likely to counterbalance all its advantages.' 'Eh' replied the miller; 'what is it?' 'A defect that is likely to ruin the mill, and will no doubt one day destroy the owner.' 'What is it!' exclaimed the miller, impatiently; 'can't you say it at once?' 'It goes on the Sabbath,' replied the minister in a firm and solemn tone of admonition. The man was convinced; and we trust those faithful words of that good minister were blessed to his conversion. Friends, how do you spend your Sabbaths?"

The teaching in that extract is, that running his mill on the Sabbath would be the probable cause of his damnation, and that stopping it on the Sabbath would be the means of his salvation. Now we would, no doubt, be charged with being very wicked by that "good minister" for refusing to bow to such

Phariseeism as that; would he be charged as being a Sabbath breaker because we refused to put Sabbath keeping in place of Christ's atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit. That poor miller, if he was converted, and no doubt he was from grinding on Sunday, was as far from Christ, if not further, after his conversion than before. (Matthew 21) He must have believed, if he believed the "good minister," that stopping his mill on Sunday would save him. But the Primitive Baptists keep Sunday because it is an ordinance of man; and it is a good law for man -and beast, for saint and sinner. All working animals, as well as laboring men and women, need one day's rest in seven. If a Primitive Baptist should make a habit of working on Sunday the church would exclude him if he did not quit it. But we would be far from teaching or even insinuating such doctrine as that keeping Sunday would be the means of saving the soul; as far as we would be from teaching that any other work of man would save him. To such doctrine we dare not bow, though it be the command of the king or the law to reverence it, yet, in the spirit in which it is kept by Haman and his followers, we dare not keep it. We should think that a miller who had no religion to speak of, only on Sunday, would be in danger of making up his lost toll during the other days of the week; and that he would be very much as the man out of whom the unclean spirits would go on Saturday night, and into whom they would reenter Monday morning, as into a house swept and prepared for them.-Matthew 12. Perhaps we shouldn't mention it, but we wonder if it never once occurred to that "good minister" to stop his own mill from running on the Sabbath. His Sunday work was paid for as well as his Monday work. We have no doubt that with many of them, if the pay was stopped their Sabbath mills would grind no more.

Haman's religion was of that kind that elevated him in the world and such as the world loved. And so near of kin is a letter faith to a God given faith, that the distinction is about the distinction between Sibboleth and Shibbleth-one to be detected only by a Jew or a spiritual man, and not always by him, especially when in spiritual childhood. Haman, like Mordecai; was an exile. He could tell, like the Jews, of the country and home he had given up for the land of his adoption and the service of the king; and he could tell much more; he could tell of the great estate to which he had arrived by his own exertions, until his seat was set above all the princes that were with him. And Mordecai and the Jews had also given up their country to become strangers in a strange land, but how different the spirit in which they did it from the spirit in which Haman did it! Haman, no doubt had prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner;" and Mordecai had prayed in the same words; but Haman's spirit was the spirit of the Pharisee who boasted in his prayer of his goodness, whilst Mordecai cried in penitence and shame, as the Publican did. That is the difference today; and though the same words may be used, and the same forms and ceremonies be observed, yet they are as different as heaven and earth, and light and darkness, as Jew and Amalekite, as flesh and spirit, and grace and works. Haman's religion elevated and honored him, but the religion of Mordecai and true Jews humbled them and glorified God. Haman could boast of giving up his country, but Mordecai could not; to Mordecai, his exile was a witness of his sins; to Haman, his exile was a witness of his own goodness; to the Jews it was all grace, and to Haman it was all works. Though Haman will lug in grace as he will lug in sin in praying the publican's or sinner's prayer, it is not because he feels to be a penitent sinner, but because he thinks the confession of sin is a good work for which God will reward him; whilst Mordecai confesses sin from necessity, and feels worthy of condemnation for it, yet cries for mercy. Mercy humbles Mordecai because he knows it is of grace, and nothing but grace; and hence he will not bow to Haman; he can't do it in heart, even if he would, let the

consequences he what they may. Haman knows nothing of grace; there is nothing in his experience but his own works.

But Haman was a man of great ability; a bright and shining light, and one whose fame and goodness overshadowed the highest and best in the king's empire. And that a foreigner should attain such pre-eminence in an empire so great, attested ability of the highest order; not only the highest order of religious eminence, but with it was combined the highest order of mental culture and ability. And that Mordecai, a Jew, a member of a despised and subjugated race, a people seemingly to the world under the wrath of God, who had been stripped, and peeled, and forsaken, and impoverished, and who were wanderers and desolate, should refuse reverence to Haman, whom the king honored, and whom his noblest princes and greatest men revered, was an act of such unparalleled audacity as to fill Haman with astonishment and indignation, as much as it would fill the wise and cultured theologians of the present day with indignation for a few despised and uncultivated Primitive Baptists to refuse reverence to their religious learning, wealth and numbers; and as it filled the Rabbis with indignation that Christ, the unschooled carpenter, should set their learning and theology at naught.

## THE LYING SPIRIT

In the same spirit, therefore, in which the Jews and Gentiles crucified Christ, Haman set about the work of destroying the Jews. Haman thought scorn to lay his hands on Mordecai alone, especially as he was nothing but a Jew. He was too lofty for so little a thing as the destruction of only one poor Jew; and too wise for it; for he knew that other Mordecais would arise if this one be destroyed, and that therefore the only effectual thing to be done was to exterminate the whole Jewish race. Haman was a strong man, as well as a wise one; he had convictions, even if they were false; and his religion, though false, was not of the "namby pamby" kind of the present day; he was no religious dude, but a man even if he was a bad one. He knew that it could not be of both works and grace, and that one or the other must fall. He knew that works made him what he was, as well as Mordicai knew that he was what he was by grace, and that these two could not live under and serve the king in the same spirit. He was not a Fullerite Baptist, who believe in both systems, and that the Bible teaches both works and grace, and that these diametrically opposite doctrines are both true! And yet they say that they believe the Bible is inspired and of God! We must believe that Haman had more faith in God than that. Haman went to work inspired by hatred of Mordecai and the Jews, and not by love for the king or kingdom. The same spirit has inspired the persecutions of the church through all ages. Rivulets of blood have been shed in the name of Christ by those professing to love and serve him, but who have always in heart been enemies to God and man.

Haman matured his plans; he was a far-seeing man, and did not propose attempting a thing and failing in it; he did not build without first counting up the cost. He was a whole year casting lots to obtain a favorable augury against the Jews. He was preparing the public for the destruction of the Jews, and making it popular with the people, as demagogues in these days do through the newspapers when they are seeking to spoil the commonwealth to enrich themselves. Like Ahab, Haman set out to get an answer favorable to his designs, nor would he heed any unpropitious augury or prophesy. Ahab sought the subjugation of Ramath Giliad, and Jehosaphat was persuaded into it with him, and they took counsel of the Lord as to whether they would succeed or not. That is, they took counsel of the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord, and that all the prophets professed to do, both false and true prophets,

as they do now. There were about 400 false prophets, and they were unanimous in prophesying to Ahab as he wished; they encouraged him to go against Ramath Gilead and that the Lord would deliver it into his hands. And not only did they prophesy favorably to Ahab, but Zedekiah, the chief false prophet, invented the means by which the great work should be accomplished. He made great horns of iron, saying, "With these shalt thou push Syria until thou consume them." It was a great work, and one in which the Lord would bless Ahab; it would add much revenue and honor to him and his kingdom. It was a work much like the mission work of false religion; by its means the world was soon to be converted to God, and the Millennium ushered in. There is hardly any estimating the power of false religion. When it has grown with their growth, men adhere to it as they do to the habits of a life-time. Like the crook made in the limb of the apple tree when a twig, it cannot be straightened without breaking. Nothing short of God's grace can deliver one from the lying spirit of false religion. The sacrifices its votaries will and have made are almost incredible. "If the Jesuit was wanted at Baghdad, he was toiling through the desert with the next caravan. If his ministry was needed in some country where his life was more insecure than that of a wolf-where it was a crime to harbor him-he went without remonstrance or hesitation to his doom. When, in our time, a new and terrible pestilence passed round the globe; when, in some great cities fear had dissolved all the ties that hold society together, when the clergy had forsaken their flocks, when the strongest natural affections had yielded to the love of life, even then the Jesuit was found by the pallet which the pastor, physician and nurse, father and mother had deserted, bending over infected lips to catch the faint accents of confession, holding up to the last to the expiring penitent the image of the expiring Redeemer. But there is no doubt but that the ardent church spirit that made the Jesuit regardless of his ease, liberty and life, made him also regardless of truth and mercy; that no means which promoted the interest of his religion or church, seemed to him unlawful. It is alleged that in the most atrocious plots recorded in history, his agency could be distinctly traced; that constant only to his order, he was in some countries the most dangerous enemy of freedom, and in others the most dangerous enemy of order. He labored to reduce the world under the laws of his church; but he done so be relaxing her laws to suit the temper of the world. Instead of toiling to elevate human nature to the standard fixed by Divine precept, he lowered the standard until it was beneath the average level of human nature. He gloried in multitudes of converts baptized in remote regions, but it was believed that the facts of the gospel had been concealed from them, (of which we have not a particle of doubt). It was not strange that people of all ranks crowded to the confessionals in the Jesuit temples, for none went discontented away. If he had to deal with one truly devout, he spoke in the saintly tones of the primitive fathers; but with that large part of mankind who had religion enough to make them uneasy when they do wrong, and not religion enough to keep them from doing wrong, he followed a different system. In his books of casuistry were to be found doctrines consolatory to transgressors of every class. There the bankrupt was taught how he might, without sin, secrete his goods from his creditors; the servant was taught he might, without sin, run off with his master's silver. The Italians were glad to learn that they might shoot at their enemies from behind hedges. To deceit was given a license sufficient to destroy the whole value of human contracts and human testimony. In truth, if society continued to hold together, if life and property enjoyed any security, it was because common sense and common humanity restrained men from doing what the Jesuits assured them that they might, with a safe conscience do." See Hassel's Church History, pp. 514 and 515.

Under the influence of this lying religious spirit, the heart is hardened and the conscience seared; it robs a man of even natural love and compassion, so that the Levite and priest can pass unconcernedly by a fellow-creature and brother lying stripped and half dead by the wayside.-Luke 10. It destroys fraternal love, so that the thrifty elder son becomes enraged with his father because he had compassion upon his own erring and penitent brother.-Luke 15. The self-righteous Pharisee can look with a heart of stone at the weeping Magdalene kissing the feet of Jesus (Luke 6); he can give in charity, but in his ostentatious giving "there is no fraternity;" but he condemned Jesus because he fraternized, for their good, with publicans and sinners. -Luke 15. He can weep over the heathens, and compass sea and hand to proselyte them, and see the dogs lick the sores of a starving brother at his own gate.- Matthew 23 and Luke 16. He can build the tombs of the prophets and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous whom his fathers slew, and persecute living prophets for teaching the same the dead prophets did.-Matthew 23. He tithes mint, anise and cumin, and omits the law, judgment, mercy and faith.-Matthew 23. He strains at a gnat-a little unclean thing-and swallows a camel-a big unclean thing. He condemns Christ for not keeping his traditions, and violates the law of God by his traditions.-Mark 7. He seeks honor of men, to be called Rabbi, and to have the chief seat; he prays at the street corners to be seen of men, and in secret devours widows' houses. His conscience is so seared under the influence of this lying spirit, that more than forty of them can make a conspiracy with the chief priests and elders to possess themselves, by lying, of Paul's person, and then murder him.-Acts 23. The same spirit will impress men again to do what it then -•did, when the time ripens for it; but it has its seasons, -nor will it come before its time; when the fig tree putteth forth leaves summer is nigh. Three years of Christ's teaching brought on his crucifixion; and such teachings as his, to such people as he taught, will bring as it has brought in the past, thousands of his people to the stake. Haman's work against the Jews ripened in twelve months. Hatred inspired their zeal, and they got drunker and drunker with fanaticism; and the more they drank the more they thirsted and the more they could drink, until in their delirium they saw what they wanted, and what they never could have seen in sobriety. Like Belshazzar, when his princes, wives and concubines had made themselves drunk with the wine of Babylon, drained from the golden vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, stone and wood. "They had a great outpouring." In this sort of preparation Haman went before the king; he went with a lie in his mouth against the Jews. It was none the less a lie because there was -truth mixed with it; the wine that Belshazzar drank was none the less the wine of Babylon because it was drained from the golden vessels of God's temple. It was mixed with truth to make the lie more effective. There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom: that was true, as the king knew; and their laws are diverse from all people; and that was true in a religious or spiritual sense, but not in the sense designed by Haman; neither keep them, the king's laws; that was also false in spirit; as false as the charge was against Christ in violating the spirit of the Sabbatical law in doing good on the Sabbath day; therefore, it is not for the king's profit to suffer them, which was false in every sense. The same sort of falsehoods are told on Primitive Baptists; that we oppose morality and favor ignorance and immorality; and the same was told on Christ, that he was a glutton, drunkard, the prince of devils and an enemy to civil government. Can we bow to and reverence such religion as that in bidding it God speed in any sense.

## MORDECAI IN SACKCLOTH

When Mordecai perceived all that was done, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry; and came even before the king's gate; for none might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. And in every province whither the decree came, there was great mourning and weeping and wailing among the Jews. So Esther's maids and her chamberlain came and told it to her; and the queen was exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai and to take away his sackcloth, but he received it not. Then Esther sent the king's chamberlain to him to know what it was and why it was.

Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth. To rend the garments was a sign of deep grief. It was, no doubt, often simulated or feigned, as nearly everything, both natural and spiritual, is. That it was much simulated by the Jews is no doubt the reason why the prophet Joel (Joel 2) charged them saying, rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God. The Pharisee and publican went into the temple and both prayed; but only the publican prayed in spirit; the Pharisee rent his garments, so to speak, but not his heart; but the publican was rent in heart, and cried to God in penitence, so that, figuratively, he was not only rent in garments, but was also clothed in sackcloth. Reuben, returning to the pit in which his brethren had cast Joseph, and not finding him, rent his garments; but Jacob, his father, upon seeing his bloody coat, not only rent his garments, but put on sackcloth and mourned many days.-Genesis 37. Jacob was inconsolable; his grief was irresistible, and took control of him, and found expression in rent garments and sackcloth. Because he deeply loved Joseph, and Reuben did not. Reuben grieved from a sense of neglected duty to his father, and not from love Of Joseph, and hence could console himself; but Jacob's grief was the grief of love for the lost. When Abner was murdered by Joab, David rent his garments and put on sackcloth, and wept at his grave. It was the grief of a king whose law had been officially outraged, (II Samuel 3.) and the penitence of the king cleared the throne of guilt. A church may rend her garments and put on sackcloth for the sin of a member, and thus clear herself of the member's guilt. This is official grief; and the church does not, and cannot have the grief of guilt that the sinning member has; his garments are not only rent, but his heart is also, when he becomes penitent and confesses his sin. To put on sackcloth was also a sign of penitence for sin and a confession of it. Ahab, when reproved by Elijah, rent his garments, lay in sackcloth and went softly and God forgave his sins.-I Kings 21.

And when David sinned in numbering Israel, he put on sackcloth as a penitent king and was forgiven, and his throne was upheld.-I Chronicles 21. In this day people figuratively rend their garments and put on sackcloth. A husband loses his wife, a parent his child, and they are irresistibly clothed with grief and sorrow. Some people, and even Christian people, clothe themselves in black as a sign of mourning; but there is little need in parading grief before the world; real grief will show itself sufficiently, whether it be natural or spiritual, it is not easily hidden. All men have natural grief, and have natural penitence for wrong-doing. A thief, when caught in theft, is penitent; not for his guilt, but for the penalty of it. The drunkard has penitence for the shame and family ruin it entails upon him. But only the children of God have penitence for the guilt of sin; sorrows that are of God are not of the world or flesh. And with them these sorrows are not simulated, but are irresistible, more so than even natural sorrows. If a child of God sins he will be clothed with sackcloth for it when made conscious of it, as certainly as the earth is

clothed with snow in winter and with verdure in summer. Because it is an ordinance, of God that he shall be so clothed, as it is that the earth shall be. When David was made conscious or convicted of his sin by the prophet Nathan, for slaying his captain Uriah, he was clothed with penitence, and confessed it, saying, "I have sinned against the Lord," and Nathan said, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."-II Samuel 13. It was not that his penitence put away or atoned for his sin, but it was because his sins had been atoned for, that he was made penitent for them.

But a child of God may be clothed in sackcloth for doing right, as Mordecai was. As we have said, both natural and spiritual grief are involuntary and irresistible. The natural man laments the loss of his loved ones as deeply and sincerely as the man of God does. And natural penitence has also its blessings, but they are only natural blessings. The immoral man, by turning away from his immorality, receives the blessings of morality. And in natural grief, all men in a natural sense cry to God, for it is a cry of nature. Even the young lions seek their meat of God; and God giveth the beast his food, and the young ravens which cry. - Psalms 104 and Psalms 147. God feeds the little helpless birds in their nests, and not one of them falls to the ground without his notice. But the children of God are nearer and dearer to him than the children of nature, and he therefore gives them spiritual desires, and they cry in spirit to him and he fills them. He gives them a double portion, one portion above the world; and they have, also, double afflictions and responsibilities. They suffer naturally as other men, and suffer spiritually, as other men cannot suffer. They suffer for their faults, and suffer from the world for their virtues; for their obedience and disobedience. They desire both natural good and spiritual good, and often think they have neither, and know at the same time that they are worthy of neither. Their lives are lives of struggle, struggling for they hardly know what, but we reckon they are unconsciously struggling in the womb of time, to be born into eternity. They have, like their Saviour and elder brother, a baptism to be baptized with and are and will be straitened until it be accomplished. They are not at home here, but are only sojourners; though they would fair stay here always, yet they are irresistibly impelled onward to that country the Lord has told them of.

It often makes us feel sad to know that we can have nothing here, when we at times so much desire it, and strive so hard for it, as Israel desired the land of Moab and Ammon, but the Lord would not give it to them.-Deuteronomy 2. Israel must go further to find her rest-further than even Moses went. The Lord must be her inheritance, as she was his. So it is true indeed that if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, the most miserable. It was true of our Saviour that he had nothing here, and was, whilst here, clothed in sackcloth. He seldom rejoiced, and then only in Spirit. When he was baptized he was strengthened by the Father's approval, as his children are by his; but his righteous act entailed upon him the bitter antagonism of Satan, and for forty days He was with the beasts, tempted of the devil. It was not for his own sins that he was humiliated, but for the sins of his people. He could not divest himself of concern for them; nor could Mordecai divest himself of concern for Esther and his people. Because Mordecai loved them, and of him, therefore was required in their behalf, that which no other Jew could perform. No other Jew could go out of the king's gate into the midst of the city for them. No other Jew loved them as he did and had the same relationship to the queen, and the same access to the king by the queen that he had. Those who love much are able to do more than others with less love, and it is therefore required of them. There were many other Jews else than Mordecai whose hearts were

rent with grief and mourning; but it was personal grief-sorrow for themselves and families. But among them all there was no sorrow like Mordecai's sorrow; he sorrowed for them all; in all their afflictions he was afflicted. His position in the king's gate involved him in obligations to the queen and his people that could be felt by no other Jew, and he was thereby under a law to God for them that no other Jew was under, and would suffer in failing to fulfill it as no other Jew could suffer. To Mordecai, as to Moses, it was a humiliation. Moses was the only Hebrew that could humble himself from the court of Pharaoh and condescend to the low estate of his brethren; because he was the only one whom God had, for his people, exalted to that high state. He humbled himself and became the chief of poor slaves to deliver his brethren. It was a work in which Moses could have no fleshly pride, and which if he'd had, he could not have performed it acceptably to God. To any other Hebrew it would have been an exaltation of which he would have been proud, and hence thereby been incapacitated to perform it. To him it was a sacrifice that God had given to no other Hebrew, and hence required it of no other. It faintly forecasts the relationship of Christ and his children, and his responsibility to God for them; the children that God had given him, and for whom the gift made him responsible. With the gift was the responsibility; as with the gift of natural children to the parent is the responsibility to care for them. And the parent will feel it. And therefore Christ, of all in heaven or earth, or under the earth, had the sacrifice that was required in their behalf, and he alone could offer it acceptably to the Father. To do this he humbled himself and became obedient unto death. It was an obedience of love for his children, for no other kind of obedience would have been acceptable; it was one that honored the Father and saved them; and such an obedience as only Christ could make and by reason of his relationship to the Father and them. And as he offered to the Father, so in his spirit must his children offer, to be accepted. They must do it in love and humility; else though right in form, their works will be rejected. They must offer to God that only which God has given them; whether it be little or much does not matter, so it is of the Lord. Mordecai went down from the king's gate even into the very midst of the city; not as a prince in royal robes, but in sackcloth and ashes-not proud of his humiliation and glorying in his shame, but smiting his breast and filling the street with his heart-rending cries, so that even the queen heard of it. He couldn't help it, for he loved Esther and his people, and could not bear to see their destruction. It was the hour of darkness. His faith could not comfort him, nor the faith of others. The queen sent raiment to clothe him and take away his sackcloth; but he could not receive it. He could not be at peace himself with his people smiting their breasts under the sentence of death; his sackcloth could only be put off when theirs was put off. Esther tried to comfort him in messages by the king's Chamberlain but before she could comfort him, she must be partaker of his afflictions and the afflictions of his brethren. God must comfort us before we can comfort others. There are times when something must be done as well as believed. If we are troubled about joining the church, preaching, or doing any other duty required of us, there will be no change of raiment for us until we do it; no odds how firmly we believe in the doctrines of grace, it will not give us ease from that trouble. Or if we have sinned there will be no peace until that sin be confessed and put away. Mordecai's faith was tried, and the faith of God's children is often tried; and it is an affliction and will be until the trial is over; and no affliction is joyous at the time, else it would be no affliction. Mordecai came even before the king's gate, but he could no more go in there than he could put on the raiment that Esther sent him. He could not be the minister of a law that condemned his people.



But Esther could no longer be at ease. Mordecai's trouble penetrated even the king's house to her, and his trouble became her trouble; and one that increased upon her, so that she was moved to send to him to know why it was and what it was. And he informed her fully of it, and sent her a copy of the decree and an injunction to go in unto the king and make supplication for her people. And now comes Esther's trial.

Little knew the poor, distressed Jew, in his far-off cabin, weeping with his family under sentence of death; to whom it seemed that God had forsaken and left him helpless in the power of his enemy, and to whom there seemed no possibility of escape from the doom of an irreversible law-little did he know, at such a time as that, what God was working for him in the heart of Mordecai, and through him in the heart of Esther, and what he would work through her in the heart of the king. Had he known it, he would have been disrobed of his sackcloth. As helpless and forsaken as the poor Jew felt to be, he had a friend at court more powerful than Haman or Haman's law-a friend who watched whilst he wept, and watched even whilst he slept. This friend the penitent sinner and the tried child of God has now and ever has had in Jesus; one who can no more forget him than he can forget himself. They can be cast into no sorrow so deep, and in no trial so great, that he cannot and will not deliver them from. The cries of all the Jews in all the 127 provinces of the king shall enter through Mordecai and Esther, into the ears and into the very heart of the king. Even the broken sighs of the feeblest child of captivity shall find access there as certainly as the loud and bitter cry of Mordecai; the most feeble and ignorant shall have an advocate in Esther, and who shall speak to the king's heart in their behalf. Blessed people!

### **ESTHER'S SACRIFICE**

And so I will go in unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish I perish.

When Mordecai's cry in the street reached Esther in the king's house, she was exceedingly grieved. Had it been the cry of a prince or noble, or of any subject of the king, high or low, it would have excited her interest as queen; but the cry of Mordecai went like a flash to her heart-because she loved him. Her interest in him was more than the mere official interest of the queen in the subject; it was the interest of an affectionate child in a tender and beloved parent; an interest such as Titus, Timothy and Onesimus would have in Paul as an endeared spiritual father. There was recently in this State an appalling railroad disaster, in which many persons were killed and wounded, and our interest and sympathy were naturally excited to some extent in reading it. But how different were the feelings of that mother and child looking upon the mangled remains of a child and father. To them, it was an irresistible call to unutterable grief; because there was a tie between the mother and her mangled son that was not between us and that son, and her grief for her son was such as we could not feel, and was not required to feel. There is a relationship in spirit taught in the scriptures, whether much experienced in this day or not, between the children of God, more sacred and enduring than any natural tie; for it shall never be dissolved. It is one that often requires them to forsake natural parents, wives and children, to minister to and suffer for and with those of no natural kin to them; one that makes the obligations of grace higher and more binding than the obligations of nature. It was such a relationship that existed between Christ and his beloved elect that could not be dissolved, even by her disobedience that caused him to forsake heaven and the glory of the Father, and to become a servant unto death for her. Their cry, so to speak, reached him in the Father's house, in heaven, as Mordecai's reached Esther in the king's house,

and as Mordecai was troubled, so should Esther be troubled. Esther's maids and chamberlain were unable to tell the nature or cause of Mordecai's trouble, only that he was in sackcloth and crying loudly and bitterly in the street. The first impulse of her heart was to relieve him by sending him a change of raiment, and taking away his sackcloth. But that was easier said than done; and it showed that she had not yet entered fully into his trouble, else she would have known that no outside change would relieve him of it. It was said to us once: "Believe, believe, only believe, and you'll have peace!" to which we replied, "I know it, but I can't believe." Esther could not go to Mordecai, in her own person-the honor of the king and the dignity of her own position forbade it. It would have been as if siding with him against the king. Her love for Mordecai did not warrant a violation of law and propriety in his behalf; nor does our love for brethren warrant a violation of law for them.

Christ did not violate law in behalf of his people, else the church would not have been redeemed by his sacrifice, for it would have been a sacrifice dishonoring to the Father; but he honored the law, and in honoring it he honored the Father. He was related to both the Father and his children-the church. He loved both, and his work of obedience to the Father brought the church into unity with his Father, so that she could cry with him, my Father! and thus they are One in Him. So the church is taught to honor the law, which is holy; to honor the Law that condemns her as well as the grace that saves her. Both are alike holy. The church is to honor Christ's law in her Order as well as the doctrine of grace, for Christ is in both; he is as much in our works of obedience as in our doctrine, and we honor him as much in the one as in the other. But we are to worship neither doctrine nor order, but Christ. The sun warms the earth, and clothes and feeds man and beast; without it both would die. But it is not the source of life and therefore not to be worshipped as some people in the past have done; but we are to look beyond the sun to the creator of the sun and worship him for the sun. We thus trace the sun and all blessings, both natural and spiritual, to the author of them all. Our salvation depends not upon what we believe, but upon our relationship to Christ; and therefore not upon our obedience, but upon his; and believing this, we rejoice in him and worship him. There are troubles, both natural and spiritual, from which expressions of love and sympathy will not deliver us. If a brother be in need of food and raiment, we cannot relieve him by saying "be filled," and "be clothed;" but to relieve him we must do something for him. In doing we show we have faith indeed. To fill the needy with words is but to add to his trouble. Faith, as applied to Christians, often means more than simple belief; it comprehends the works as well as the belief of the Christian. When Paul said, "I have kept the faith," he meant that he had not only believed in Christ, but had lived as a believer should. Esther's faith, as well as Mordecai's, required to be tested. To say to a brother "be filled," is no evidence of faith in God or love for Him; anybody can say that much; but to give him of our poverty is faith and trust in God and love to our brother. It is a test of it. Anybody can obey the promptings of nature; a mother by nature loves her child, and a man his friend; but no man by nature loves his enemy. It is contrary to nature to do it, and can be done only by one under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit, under a law higher and holier than natural law. God, therefore, requires his people to do more than natural men can do, and to believe what natural men will not and cannot believe; because he gives them the ability, and it being of God and, not of them, it glorifies him and not them. And do and suffer as much as they may, they dare not boast of it. God's people are enabled to believe in things not seen, in things contrary to natural experience and human reason, and often to do things that natural prudence forbids. But it may be asked, Is not God the author

of natural law and the answer is that he is; he is the creator, regulator and upholder of all things animate and inanimate. But he is also the author of the spiritual law by which his chosen people, who by sin are children of wrath, even as others, and were created as others, and as others are under the same natural law, he is the author of that spiritual law, the law greater than, and contrary to nature, by which they are begotten of him and become his sons and heirs as well as his creatures. The law by which the parent loves the child, and by which the planets revolve in their orbits, as well as the higher law by which the revolution of the planets is reversed, and the natural law held in abeyance and made subject to it, he is the author of, though the one be contrary to the other. God is the author of the natural law of conception and generation in the propagation and multiplication of the human species. But he is greater, so to speak, than the law of nature as the builder is greater than the house he builds; greater in his spiritual law than in natural law. By his spiritual law Sarah conceived Isaac when it was impossible by his natural law, and contrary to it; and thus the seed of Abraham-the promised seed-was propagated and multiplied; and this is yet the spiritual law. It is God's natural law that the shadow shall go forward on the dial; but to save Hezekiah, he made it go backward ten degrees. This is the law of grace; and this is meant when it is said that God repents. When the shadow went back ten degrees the whole universe was reversed; the sun, moon and stars turned back in their orbits, else there would have been a universal wreck of all worlds. When the sun stood still on Gideon, the whole universe stood still; there was not a planet, little or big, that moved until Joshua had vanquished the enemies of God. As impossible as these things may seem to human science and man's reason, they are not impossible with God. It is as possible with him to control the sun, moon and stars- the creatures of his hand-as it is to control man and beast. He could stop the worlds as easily as he could infuse life into the crawling worm. All the scientists in world could not make one little ant that races over the floor, or the rose at my window that sheds its fragrance on the air; nor can they tell how it is made.. One of these little creatures is as great a display of infinite power and wisdom as the sun is itself. Whatever God does or has done is right and holy, whether it be to save few or many, to give life or take it; to make the sun go backward or forward, or to make Gideon's fleece wet and then reverse it and make it dry. God is seen in both, though the one be contrary to the other. And our faith is often so tried that we know not which to believe, or whether to believe either, when in fact we are to believe both. And this human reason forbids, and therefore no man by reason or human wisdom shall know God.

When Mordecai, as Job, "looked for good then evil came; and when he waited for light then came darkness" (Job 30). But in this way-contrary to nature- God elevates his people; elevates by humbling them, and in humbling draws them nearer to him. Christ was highly elevated by his suffering and humble obedience. And we shall find that Mordicai, though now smiting his breast in sackcloth, that he shall yet be raised higher than even to the king's gate; shall be elevated next to the king. Joseph for his righteousness was cast into prison; but it was that he should be prepared for elevation to the king's house. God's people shall not trust in their own fidelity, though it be of God, it is not God; and it shall not separate them or stop them short of him, but rather be made to lead them nearer to him, but not according to their natural expectation but contrary to it, or according to grace.

Draw me and we will run after thee (Song of Solomon 4) was the cry of the church in olden time, and is yet. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee

(Jeremiah 31). But such drawing! It is a reversal of nature; it is making nature, like the sun, stand still whilst the struggle goes on that it shall be a triumph of grace over nature. So it was with Jonah in the whale; he was taught in that way to say, Salvation is of the Lord! According to natural law he would have been dead and possibly partly absorbed by the fish. But instead of being made a feast to the whale he was a torment, driving him to the bottom of the sea and steering him as a vessel to shore and making him, no doubt, so deathly sick that he vomited Jonah up on dry land. Nature was stayed so that it would have been as easy for Jonah to have digested the whale as the whale Jonah; and, no doubt, the whale was as glad to get rid of Jonah as Jonah was of him.

Esther could reach Mordecai through the king's chamberlain. In sending Hatach to him she afforded Mordecai lawful access to her in the king's house. Hatach was the king's minister and the queen's servant by the will or authority of the king; and he could do nothing even for the queen that would be a violation of the king's law. And the same is true of the gospel minister; he is the servant of the church by the will of God; and the church as Esther the queen was, is officially higher or nearer the throne; yet the minister who serves her is the king's minister; so that his service to the church is obedience to God. Hatach, in communicating with Mordecai by Esther's command, was doing his duty to her the king. Thus Esther was taught by Mordecai, and the king's minister became Mordecai's minister to Esther. It is God's order that his regenerated people shall be taught by teachers of his appointment. He calls and qualifies them and they go in his name by authority of the church as Hatach went, and they speak his words.

The adorable and mysterious Trinity is here faintly presented to us and its necessity, in the king, Esther and Mordecai. That we might have access to the Father Christ identified himself with us in our nature; not that it was the beginning of his relationship with us, but rather the manifestation of it. And as Mordecai in the street crying with loud and bitter cry identified himself with every Jew in the king's empire so that his cry was in effect their cry, so was the sacrifice of Christ in a sense the sacrifice of every member of the elect body, little and big, man and woman. And Esther was equally related to Mordecai and to the king, for she loved both and the king loved her, and by her Mordecai had access to the king for his people. It was not, therefore, that Esther heard Mordecai as a matter of law, but it was also a matter of love. So that the spirit of love, which is the Spirit of God, bound the three together in one spirit and they were one, and the Jews one in them, and therefore nothing could harm the Jews that would not harm them. And they were thus bound together before Haman got his decree against the Jews, bound by the marriage covenant according to law, a marriage based upon love of the king and Esther, that higher law that nothing could dissolve to which Paul refers when he says that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Sin did for a time separate God's people from him, but it did not separate them from his love; but it was overruled in such a way as to show to them how great his love was for them. In Mordecai, therefore, the Jews had access to the King; by means of her chamberlain Mordecai had access to Esther, and teaching her, impressed her with a sense of her high calling, and the object of it and her obligations to the King and her people. It is God's order to teach his people by his chosen and qualified ministers. He taught Cornelius by Peter and the Gentiles by Paul; and teaches his people to this day by them. It is not for us to ask why it is so, but rather to rejoice that it is so; that God has ordained means by which his people shall be instructed and comforted. Cornelius was a child of God before Peter was sent to him by command of

the Spirit; it was because he was a child that Peter was sent' to him to instruct and comfort him. So it was that Christ's people were chosen in him before he came into the world to them, and therefore he came into the world to save them.

Esther's unity with Mordecai was developed more and more until she realized the obligation of it to be so high that it was a natural impossibility to fulfill it, and that it could only be fulfilled by grace and not by law. She felt her insufficiency; and strange as it may seem, the more she felt her insufficiency and unfitness the better she was prepared to do the work required of her. The more she unconsciously displayed her sense of unfitness to Mordecai, the more she confirmed him that she was fit, and that her work would be acceptable to the King and save her people. She was not wrought up into this frame of mind of her own natural will, but was brought into obedience when she could no longer resist. Mordecai impressed her that she could not escape the doom of the Jews, for she was a Jew, even if she was in the King's house, and that if she held her peace then deliverance would come to them, and she and her father's house would be destroyed. This is the faith of God's people as expressed by Mordecai, that God's people will certainly be delivered. And he also encouraged her, telling her that he believed she had been elevated to the throne for this, very emergency of the Jews. There was no envy in Mordecai's bosom at Esther's elevation; he loved her and her people too well to envy her higher ability to serve them. He was thankful for it, that God had endowed another of his people with ability to serve them in a higher way than he could. How thankful the people of God should be to him for faithful, humble, unselfish and suffering ministers. When we think of some of them now in old age, whose lives have been lives of affliction, self-denial and poverty, we would be more thankful than we are if we could that God has given us such men, especially as we have come so far, so very far short of it our-self. But we are often saddened that they are so much unappreciated and neglected. But Esther was wrought up to it at last, and she sent Mordecai word to gather the Jews together and fast for me night and day three days, and I and my maidens will fast likewise; and I will go in unto the King, which is not according to law, and if I perish I perish. The Spirit brings us to it in due time; and when it is done nature is stayed; nature is unfed, neither eats nor drinks; it fasts and is brought down; the sun stands still and is turned back whilst the struggle against nature goes on. It is a reversal of nature's law; it is not of the natural spirit, but of the Spirit greater and holier than nature. Three days and nights lay Jonah in the belly of the fish; three days and nights was Christ in the heart of the earth; and three days and nights was nature held in abeyance whilst Esther cried to God. On the third day she arose and went in unto the King, and shout, ye Jews, far and near, even to the ends of the earth, that your redemption from death was secured by Esther's offering for you. And they would have shouted if they had known it; but it was not yet revealed to them. And the King held out the golden scepter to Esther, which was a pledge of the deliverance of every Jew.

## **ROYAL APPAREL**

Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the King's house, and the King sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, etc.

Esther put on royal apparel. Royal apparel signifies the official authority that kings, queens and rulers of men are vested with. The every day clothing of kings and queens is like that of other people; it is of finer linen and purple than is worn by common people, but not finer than is worn by rich people generally.

The members of the church, when assembled as a church, may be said to be clothed in royal apparel. They are assembled to transact business that can only be done by church authority; such business as cannot be done lawfully even by members of the church in their individual capacity. The pastor of the church is clothed in royal apparel when he is set apart by the church, according to the laws of Christ, to preach, administer the ordinances, and take the oversight of the flock of Christ. His acts as such, are not individual acts, but official acts. A believer in Christ is clothed in royal apparel when he confesses faith in Christ, and is baptized into the church by church authority; he is then under a responsibility to God and his brethren, greater than he was under before, and is entitled to the benefits and privileges of the church to which he was not before entitled. These benefits, privileges and responsibilities are not and cannot pertain to unbaptized persons. Royal apparel is such as pertains exclusively to the royal family; and others, however rich, may not clothe themselves with it, and to do it would be to assume royal rights in contempt of royal law, and would be insubordination to law and order. Each one when becoming a member of the church takes an oath, so to speak, of allegiance to Christ, and renounces all governments of men for the government of Christ. Not that he renounces family government, or civil government, but that he is bound by the government of Christ to be subject to civil government, and as such, is really under but one government, and that is Christ's government. The President of the United States is clothed with apparel that pertains exclusively to his office as the chosen head of the federal government. Before his election and inauguration as president, he could not have exercised the power of the president; to have done so, would have been a usurpation of authority and rebellion against the government. It would have been treason. After the expiration of his term of office, his name to an act of Congress would have no more authority than the name of any other citizen. His official name is not simply Grover Cleveland but is Grover Cleveland the President. He is the President of the whole people; of Democrats and Republicans, of believers and unbelievers, and of poor and rich. As President, he cannot know one section of country to the hurt of another section, or one class of citizens to the injury of another class. He is bound to serve all, of every class and party and section- North and South- and secure to them the rights and privileges of the government of which he is the head. His personal feelings as a man are, or should be, swallowed up in his official obligations and responsibilities. And so it is in the church; personal and partisan feelings and interests should never sway the minister in his official acts, nor the church in her acts. They are acting for Christ, and are bound to adhere strictly to his law, both in letter and spirit. Mere feeling is not their guide, but they are to try their feelings, or the spirit they are under, by the word or law of Christ. There is danger lest we be governed altogether by our feelings, and thus make them or the spirit we are under the sole test of our fellowship, which is an error. We are commanded to try the spirits to see whether they are of God or not; and if they lead us to violate the law or word of Christ, we may be sure they are wrong. The word is the test of our feelings, whether they are of God or not. There could hardly be a greater delusion sent upon us than for us to reject brethren who comply with the law or word of Christ, simply because our feelings do not accord with their acts; if their acts are according to the word, it is not our province to judge and reject them by our feelings, for our feelings are often an unsafe guide.

Esther, when clothed in royal apparel, was no longer Esther the Jew, and the King's wife and the cousin of Mordicai, but she was Esther the queen. She was elevated above fleshly influences, and freed from fleshly trusts. Her personality was, so to speak, swallowed up in her official character. She would not

have presumed to stand before the king in her own righteousness or personality as a Jew, or the wife of the king, as he sat clothed in majesty upon the royal throne in the inner court. That would have been to seek his favor from the fleshly relationship she bore to him. But as queen, she could neither desire nor seek favor of the king as his wife merely, nor favor for Mordecai and the Jews merely as her kinsmen; but as queen, she sought justice for Mordecai and the Jews as the king's subjects, upon the same footing as other subjects of the king; and not for them, to the detriment of any other class of the king's subjects. If Haman's charge against them, that it was not for the king's profit to suffer them, and that it was for the good of the empire to destroy them, was true, then let them be destroyed. But, if on the contrary, they are faithful subjects of the king, and Haman's charge against them was false, then let them be secured in the rights and privileges of the king's government. This was the issue. As queen, this was Esther's duty, apart even from any fleshly relationship she bore Mordecai and the Jews. It was her duty to seek the good and well-being of every class of the king's subjects, whether Jews or Persians; and however much she loved Mordecai and the Jews, she durst not, as queen, seek favors for them to the hurt of the throne. If the Jews or any class of the king's subjects were, to her knowledge, oppressed, it was her duty, however poor and despised they might be, to seek relief for them against their oppressor, however great and potential he might be. This, Haman, had to her knowledge, done against the Jews; and therefore, prompted by the spirit and word of Mordecai, a sense of duty to the king as his queen, and of obligation to the Jews as the king's subjects, and of love to them as her brethren, she approached him solemnly into the inner court, clothed in royal apparel, as he sat in awful state upon the royal throne, the judge of quick and dead, of Jew and Syrian, of saint and sinner.

It was death to approach him presumptuously, or to seek that which was forbidden, and hence Esther, with the consciousness that though clothed as queen she was still but a poor Jew under the decree of death, could only do it impelled by an irresistible necessity. It was death to do it, and death not to do it. As the high priest approached God before the mercy seat, within the most holy place, so Esther approached the king. Into that holy place none might enter, save the high priest only and alone, and he not without preparation. Blood was shed for him and for Israel, whom he represented before God. To enter within the vail, he must be clothed with the holy vestments pertaining exclusively to his office, so that he entered not merely as a man, but as the high priest of God, and could, therefore, no more accept or present an unclean offering for his wife or son than for any other Jew; for as God's priest he no more knew his own wife before God - than any other man's wife. He stood before God in Israel's stead, and before Israel in God's stead, and could accept nothing of them that God would reject, and offer nothing unclean from them to God. His vestments were holy, and the sinful man was lost or hidden in the holy priest. But as an individual, in the bosom of his family, with his every-day clothes on, so to speak, he was the same as any other Jew; he had the same fleshly love and care for his wife and children, and the same depraved nature to contend with as any other man. He could not prefer in the Spirit, one above another, and was bound to condemn sin in his own son, as he was sin in another man's son. It was for a violation of this law that the house of Eli was cut off from the priesthood, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." - I Samuel 3.

God's people, under the gospel, are all priests in Christ. They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (or purchased) people, that they should show forth the praises of

God, who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. They are a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.-I Peter 2. They are, all and each, priests clothed in holy vestments, and may each say:

"Tis Christ instead of me is seen,

When I approach to God"

As it was the queen in royal apparel, instead of the Jew, that was seen when Esther stood in mute supplication before the royal throne. Thus clothed in Christ, the sins of God's people are covered, and they, so to speak, take Christ's place and he takes theirs, and may say in faith:

"Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;

Christ pleads before the throne,

His life and death in my behalf,

And calls my sins his own. "

But, Esther, though queen, and clothed in royal apparel, had not lost her identity as Esther the Jew; she was still Esther the Jew, as well as Esther the queen, as God's people are when clothed with the spirit- they are still in the flesh. It is the same man that now has faith, who once did not have faith. It is not two men, but one man with two natures, and the one contrary to the other, as it was with Paul, when he said: "Now, if I do that I would not (two I's), it is no more I that do it, hut sin that dwelleth in me. Sin is still there, as the body of death." Christ was made sin for his people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. Esther could not prevail against Haman, as Esther the Jew; she could overcome only in Esther the queen. The king did not love and choose Esther because she was a Jew; he did not know her as a Jew; nor did God love and choose his people because they were sinners- sin was not the cause of his love for them. And Haman's sin was that in unrighteously decreeing the destruction of the Jews, he decreed the destruction of the queen, and thus attacked the king upon the royal throne; as people do to this day in condemning God's people, they attack the throne of God itself, and will be judged for it instead of being judged for disbelieving the gospel.

## **OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**

Then the king said unto her, what wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said, etc.

Thus far Esther, the queen, had progressed righteously, both in letter and spirit. She approached the king as queen, which signified that her petition was not I a personal one, but a public one, or one that pertained to the kingdom. Had she approached the king merely as his wife, she would have gone clothed as a wife into the apartments pertaining to him as a husband, and would have been received as a wife, and her request would have been restricted to her own personal household. It would have been,



so to speak, not a church matter, but a family affair. But this was a public matter—one that pertained to others as well as herself and one that pertained to the king's empire or the spiritual subjects of his government over whom he reigned as king of saints; as God who reigns over all, both the just and the unjust, reigns over the church to whom alone of all his creatures, he has committed spiritual responsibilities. A king may grant his wife's request as any other husband may; but he may no more grant the requests of his own family to the injury of others than any other husband; because to do so would be a violation of his own law, and would be a greater sin in him than in his greatest and most powerful prince; and a greater sin in a subject of great dignity and power than in one of less dignity, and so on down to the lowest and most ignorant subject of the empire.

As it is a greater sin, in a member of the church to do wrong than it would be in an unregenerate person, and a greater sin in a bishop than in a deacon, and a greater one in a deacon than in an aged member, and a greater one in an aged member than in a young member of the church. Because to whom much is given much is required, and more being given to the church than to the world, more is required of the church. If the light in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! In this case, the king extended the scepter to the queen, and it was as when God approbates our official conduct, or when we do things by faith according to his word or law. A minister or member of the church may not ask the church to receive his wife or friend into membership destitute of faith; no odds how much she may desire it, or how much he may love his wife, or how otherwise she may be worthy, or how much the church may esteem the pastor, she may not follow him into error; she could not do it, because to do so would be a violation of the law of Christ. But if the pastor's wife was regenerate, and sought the church as Esther sought the king, then the golden scepter would be extended to her in her reception as it was extended to Christ, because she would come clothed in the apparel of faith. But it would be a violation of God's law to receive her or do any other act simply from fleshly consideration or .fleshly love; as it would also be equally a violation of Christ's law to reject any from such considerations, no odds how low their worldly estate. If they were the poorest and blackest Ethiopians in the world, and sought the church in the spirit of Christ as a refuge in distress, to reject them would be to reject Christ. Coming in faith, they will be received whatever their worldly condition, where Christ reigns. But if loved in the flesh, it would be a double delight to extend to them the blessings and privileges of the church; as Paul wrote to Philemon, of Onesimus to receive him not now as a servant, but above a servant—a brother, beloved both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So was Esther now to the king, much more than a wife, and was beloved both as a wife and a queen; and as the minister's or any other member's wife or friend, after regeneration and joining the church would be loved both as a wife and a Christian.

But whilst the church is precious to the Lord as King of saints, he would no more grant unlawful requests to her than he would to the world; nor would the church in his spirit approach him with such petitions. It would be to ask and receive not, because asking amiss; it would be to approach Him in a carnal spirit, one at enmity to Him. No Christian can pray in faith for anything contrary to God's word. If we should pray that we might never die it would be in vain; but we may pray for dying grace. If we should pray that we might not have tribulations, or that we might do the works of faith without a struggle, it would all be in vain, because contrary to his word; but we may pray for patience in tribulation, and for grace to

wrestle with sin and unbelief. We can attain in the flesh to no higher life than one of faith, which is one of warfare. And discouraging as it may seem, yet it is true, that the more purely we may live the more we shall struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil.

And though the church is made up of individuals, it is no longer individuals, but a body of itself having members as eyes, ears, mouth, etc. It is an official body and can do as a church what all the members as individuals could not do; as Esther did for the Jews what all the Jews together could not do; and as Christ did for the church what all the church together could not do. The pastor is a member of the body, but he is not the body, and though he is an important member of the body as the right eye and right hand is of the natural body, yet it sometimes becomes necessary to sever him from the body, however painful the operation, in order to save the body.

The love of the king for the queen was of a more exalted character than the love of the husband for the wife. God loves the gates of Zion-the church-more than all the dwelling places of Jacob (Psalms 103); that is, the church is a more exalted and responsible body than all individual Christians; and from her flow the influences that flow from Christ to her that regulate the personal conduct of the members. To expect individual conduct, however good, to regulate the church, would be to expect the servant's conduct to regulate the master's, the subject's conduct to regulate the ruler's, and the inferior's conduct to regulate the superior's. It would be to reverse God's order and put the servant on horseback as the prince, and the prince on foot as the servant. The precious ointment ran down from the head to the beard and to the skirts of Aaron's garment.-Psalms 133. It was more important that Esther should honor the king than that the noblest princess should; because Esther's example would flow down to the princes, and so on to the lowest woman in the empire. The church is the light of the world, and needs no worldly light to ascend to her to make her shine brighter, but it is a light brighter than the brightest worldly light, for God shines in her as the sun shines in the natural world. It is important that personal Christian conduct should be good, but it is more important that the church should be pure.

God dwells in Zion in his laws and ordinances; the church is a refuge for the distressed as David was in the cave Adullam for the distressed under Saul. It is in the church that Jesus meets with his people in the sacred feasts; it is there that lepers are yet cleansed, in a sense, the lame made to walk, the blind to see, devils cast out, and the dead raised up; and it is there that the gospel is yet preached to the poor; and we have felt thankful that there is yet left in this sinful world a sanctuary for the oppressed and broken-hearted sinner. The church should be kept pure; it should be a place fit for the visitation of the Lord; but through the infirmity of nature and the powers of evil, the light of the church often grows very dim. The church, in the day of her first love, went astray, and we are glad that we have the record, else we would be in despair. Not that we want a precedent as our excuse to go astray, but to teach us that we are not to look for perfection in this world, and to have forbearance towards erring churches even. If a church gets wrong as a church we are not to cast her away, because she may repent as a church.

Esther, though queen, was also Esther the Jew; and so is the church. Though invested with official authority, it is of the individuals that the official body is made; and when one is dealt with and cut off, it is the individual that is cut off. In her nature she is the individual clothed with Christ, who dwells in her as a body; and as an individual is liable to err, so is the church; and as also an individual member may sin

and repent and be forgiven, so may a church. But the sin of a church is one of greater magnitude than the sin of an individual; but it is not of such magnitude as to be unpardonable. If a member of the church sins and hides it, the church does not partake of it; but if she knows it, she must deal with him to purge herself of it. If he repents and confesses it, she forgives him. Nor is it required of her to know that he is sincere in his confession; with that she has nothing to do. It is hers to vindicate the law, and to receive his word as true; it is not required of her to know his heart. If an individual member sins-commits adultery, for instance-and no member knows it, it is not sufficient that he confesses his sin in his closet and withholds it from the church; but he must confess it to the church, to be purged of it. Nor must his confession be of sin generally; but it must be specific. He must confess that he is guilty of adultery, and he will be forgiven. But a member may sin and still be a Christian; and so also may a church sin and still be a church. The church is not infallible. There is danger of getting into error on this point in two ways: danger of underrating the errors of a church and of overrating them. We may underrate them in partaking of them, and overrate them in refusing the erring church after she repents, confesses and turns away from her errors. We should form no union with a church persisting in error, because that would be to gather and partake of her errors; but if she turns away from her errors and comes to us, we may and should receive her. She then comes in a way in which we should extend to her the golden scepter. This is the basis of gospel union and fellowship. The gospel acts of a church are valid until she ceases to be a church, after which she no longer has a right to approach the King as queen; no more than Vashti did after she was put away by the king. The gospel does not require restitution, but penitence and confession. David sinned in having Uriah slain, but when he was convicted and repented of his sin he was forgiven. He was not required to restore Uriah to life, nor was his lawful acts as a sovereign vitiated by his sin. If it had been required of him to restore Uriah to life before he was forgiven, he could never have been forgiven; in fact, there would have been no need of forgiveness. The law requires an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; that is, if you knock my eye out you must restore it, or pluck out your own for mine. There is no forgiveness in the law; but the gospel says to the penitent, Go and sin no more. If you did wrong as a church, confess that sin and do it no more. But it is only of errors she is required to repent. She is not required to repent of her charities to the poor, of affording refuge to the distressed, of the comforts of the preached word to her, of her communions and baptisms. These she can't undo; nor does the gospel require it of her. But let it be understood that we are speaking of a church of Christ-of a Primitive or Old School Baptist Church, or whatever the name-these holding to the principles held to by them.

Haman had gotten into the church, so to speak, and was the king's minister and the chief one as pastor; and he had brought in false doctrine. He was establishing the law in the letter of it that kills. But he was recognized as the king's minister by the queen, and was dealt with according to law before he was cut off. He was not dealt with by surmise, or by the spirit, in disregard of law; for the spirit and word agree as the king and Esther agreed. Neither Esther nor Mordecai sought or wished Haman condemned in violation of law, nor before a hearing. Therefore, when the king asked the queen, What is thy request, Queen Esther f she answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet I have prepared for him. Thus the queen signified that her business concerned the State, or was official, and that Haman's presence as chief minister was necessary. She honored him, recognizing

his official position, for he had not yet been condemned; nor could he be condemned by the Jews, or by Esther even, but only by the king's law.

Whatever the banquet was, it was a queen's meeting that required the official presence of Haman with the king. It was a banquet of wine, or a spiritual meeting in which the king's wine was administered by the Jewish queen or in which the law was administered in the spirit; and in which, if Haman had been what he professed to be, he would have been in unity with the queen and Mordecai, and would have imbibed the concern of Esther in behalf of Mordecai and the Jews; and instead of going forth from it joyful and with a glad heart, he would have gone forth clothed in sackcloth as Mordecai was for his wicked decree against the Jews; and like Paul, have cried out, "For we know the law is spiritual, but I am carnal sold under sin." But Haman went forth elated as one justified by that which condemned him, and was in the same spirit of Paul when he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against him. If he had been in the spirit he professed to be, he would have fallen at the feet of Mordecai and honored him for his vigilance and fidelity to the king and queen whom he professed to love and serve. But he hated the faithful Jew who had saved the king and empire. With all his zeal and professed love for the king and queen, he hated and sought the destruction of the king's most faithful subject and the queen's most dear friend. In the same spirit the self-righteous pharisees in Christ's day, whose professed love for God was so intense that they could not bear the least infraction of his law, and to whom it was horrible that a suffering brother should be healed on the Sabbath day, yet who were not too good to enter into a murderous conspiracy on the same Sabbath day. But he was encouraged by the favor of the queen to advance further in his evil designs against Mordecai; and at the suggestion of his wife and friends, he erected a gallows upon which to hang Mordecai before he went to the queen's second banquet. Many are the devices of a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.

## **A SLEEPLESS NIGHT**

The king went forth from the queen's banquet in a very different spirit from Haman. Haman went forth joyful, but the king with a sad heart; for he loved the queen, and her trouble became his trouble. We can't help partaking of the trouble of those we love; we weep with them when they weep. If our children are distressed, their distress becomes ours; they may be distressed and we not know it, and we will not be concerned, but when it is made known to us, it irresistibly impresses us. The king drinking Esther's wine imbibed her spirit and became one with her in spirit as he was before one with her in letter. The cause of her trouble he did not as yet know, only he knew she was troubled. The eyes of love quickly detect trouble in the loved one; how easily and quickly the mother detects trouble in the child even in the presence of others, when no word is said, and when the child is trying to seem unusually cheerful. The very effort to hide it only the more betrays it, and increases the mother's startled anxiety. So it was with the king and Esther; but it was not so with Haman; he was too self-absorbed to see trouble in others; and if he had seen it, it would not have touched him, because, with all his zeal for the king, and all his professed love for him and the queen, and the empire, he had no heart-love for any person or thing, save himself and his own honor. He had no sympathy for Esther's troubles; nor could he have, for he had never been troubled as she was; he could have no more sympathy for her and the

troubled Jews, than a rich, self-righteous pharisee, in Christ's day, could have had for a poor publican crying in penitence to God, or for the loathsome beggar lying at his gate. He had but one passion, and that was a love for his own honor; and whatever would get him that, be the creed or religion whatever it might, that he pursued with fiery and persistent zeal. If it would get him honor to affect love and sympathy for the beggar at the gate, he would be foremost in his alms and professions. Judas had more show of sympathy for the poor than Christ or the disciples had who really loved them. But it was deceptive, and not because he loved the poor; and like the pharisees whose alms were given to be seen of men.

And this is the spirit of all worldly religion; it is to be seen and honored of men. Esther could not tell the king today, but would tell him at the banquet tomorrow, so the king went forth troubled-so troubled that on that night he could not sleep. And strangely, too, it was a night on which Haman could not sleep; and yet, the reason why Haman could not sleep was as different from that which caused the sleeplessness of the king, as heaven differs from earth or hell. Haman was troubled because Mordecai would not honor him in the king's gate, and nothing would give him rest from his trouble but the death of Mordecai; but the king's trouble, which was Esther's trouble, was because Mordecai and the Jews were under the doom of death, and nothing would give her rest but their deliverance from death. But Haman's only need of the king and Esther was for his own honor; he could not feel the need of Esther that Mordecai felt for his own salvation and the salvation of his kindred. And so it was with the pharisees towards Christ; they felt no need of him as the poor publican did; but rather felt he was in their way as one who would not honor them in the gate, and that they could not rest until he was put out of the way. How different the relationship between Esther and Haman to that between Esther and Mordecai. Haman was related to her only in the letter but Mordecai in love stronger than death. And yet like many now who sing O, what a friend I have in Jesus, Haman boasted of how great a friend he had in Esther, and how the king had advanced him above the princes; and that the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet but himself, and that tomorrow he was invited also with the king; but all this avails me nothing with that hateful Mordecai in the gate; whereupon his wife and all his friends, seeing his great power with the king and favor with the queen, advised him, saying: Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and tomorrow get the king's consent to hang Mordicai thereon, and then go thou merrily with the king unto the banquet.

Now Haman was pleased, and he had the gallows made. But the king, who had no doubt retired to his bed of down at his usual hour, could not sleep; Haman was awake also, and at work for one purpose, and the king for another. The struggle was going on during the silent watches of the night. How far spent the night was we do not know, but no doubt it was getting far into the night. But the king could not sleep; though his chamber was guarded by armed men with drawn swords, and he was attended with faithful servitors, gliding noiselessly to and fro at his bidding, yet, sleep that came unbidden to the peasant on his pallet of straw, fled from the wooing of this mighty king. The cry of Mordecai and the stricken Jews had entered through Esther into that guarded chamber and filled it with their woes, so that it drove sleep away. The Jew in the gate, the Jew in his hut on the lonely mountain side, in the lowly cabin in the valley; the aged sire and the broken-hearted mother sobbing over her helpless children, and

all the sorrows of all the Jews were concentrated in Esther, and in her had entered into the king's chamber, and had irresistibly entered into the king's heart.

So at last he ordered the book of records of the chronicles to be brought and read before him. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of the king's two chamberlains that kept the door, how they sought to lay hands on the king. And the king was at once arrested, and he said:

What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? and the answer was that nothing had been done. Who is in the court? demanded the king. Now Haman was in the outer court to speak to the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows he had made. Let Haman come in said the king; and the king said unto Haman, What shall he done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself? and he answered, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor. Then said the king to Haman, Make haste and take the apparel and horse as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all thou hast spoken.

So the faithful act of Mordecai had not perished after all, but had been laid up in store against the time to come, and which had now arrived. Things had seemed to go against him, to go from bad to worse, since his faithful and courageous act in the king's gate, until he had probably wondered if he had done right, or if, after all, there was any good in faithfully serving the king. Not that he served for reward, but from love to Esther and duty to the king; but he did not look for it to be worse with him; but if it was, he was not sorry, for he could and was willing to suffer for Esther, for he loved her. But it was not in vain, and hard as it was to do, he did it; and now it was to be gathered after many days, for his salvation, and at a time of direful need. He had not served for honor, but honor came unexpectedly, and from the king. How wonderful are the works of God; and how sure he is to bring them to pass in the deliverance of his people. Haman had also been awake all that night, and having finished his wicked work, was on hand at the king's door. And when it was told the king Haman was there, the king could but admire the zeal, fidelity and love of so vigilant a minister. How faithful and untiring; when other princes are asleep, my faithful Haman is watching; how he loves me, and how glad he will be to honor Mordecai for his fidelity to me! The king had reason, from all the outward conduct of Haman, to believe that he would be delighted, and enraptured with proclaiming the honor of Mordecai. Because Mordecai had shown that he loved the king, and Haman had exceeded all the most noble princes in professions of love for the king, and therefore he would love Mordecai with all his heart for it. He said so in saying, Thus let it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor; nothing too good can be done for him, or nothing too good can be, given him. The same as if Haman had said, O my glorious and gracious master, nothing can be done too great, in my estimation, to the man who serves you in love; I would bow down my neck for him to put his foot upon; I would kiss his feet; I would serve him as an humble lackey, and proclaim in loudest voice in the midst of the city, that this man deserves honor of all men; for he saved our precious master's life. Oh, what a hypocrite he was! The king, no doubt, felt that he was conferring a

great favor on Haman, who loved him so much, to manifest that great love in parading Mordecai upon the king's horse, clothed in kingly robes, in the city before all people. But in his heart the poor wretch was overwhelmed with shame and grief; and now for the first time he hastened home with his head covered. That which delighted the king and Esther, filled Haman with grief and sorrow. And so it is to this day. That doctrine that delights the poor, penitent sinner, and fills him with joy, stinks in the nostrils of the self-righteous pharisee. Nor did his wife and wise counselors give him any comfort today as they did yesterday. Like rats deserting a sinking ship, so they were ready to desert him today, with his head covered. "If," said his wife, "Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but thou shalt surely fall before him." Haman is now nearing his end, and will soon disappear from this history.

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen; and Mordecai came before the king for Esther had told what he was unto her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordicai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Haman's life had ended, and with it followed the overturning of his evil devices against the Jews, and the coming in of Mordecai to his proper place to which he had been called, and for which he had been qualified by the Lord. Haman's iniquity had an end; the day in which it was written "exalt him that is low and abase him that is high" had come. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until he comes whose right it is, and I will give it to him."-Ezekiel 21. So Haman's house was given to the queen, and Mordecai was set by the queen over it. As God gives a minister to his people and a pastor to his church; one who loves them, and whom they love. And such is the tie between them that his care for them is prompted by the spirit of love, the same spirit that prompted Christ's care for them; and his labors and sufferings in their behalf are the promptings of love to them and love to God. The love is mutual between the pastor and flock; it is not the love of one party only, but as the love of the husband and wife, both loving each other, and whose interests are made one by love. In this spirit the minister will have no disposition to tyrannize over the church, nor will the church have a disposition to neglect him. If the flock is poor, he will bear her poverty; and she will share with him in love of all she has. He would no more take from her beyond her ability to give than he would take from himself; nor would she let him suffer any more than she would suffer herself. No other sort of relationship should endure the trials of the world, the flesh and the devil. It is not the tie of a hireling to the flock; a mere dead formalism of so much work for so much money; a dickering for price as for merchandize, as the fleshly Jews got into when the heads thereof judged for reward, and the priests taught for hire and the prophets thereof divined for money; and leaned at the same time upon the Lord, and said "Is not the Lord among us!" (Micah 3) nor when the fleshly flock robbed God in tithes and offerings and were cursed with a curse (Malachi 3), and the portions were not given the Levites, and the Levites and singers had fled every one to his field.-Nehemiah 13. But it was a tie of mutual love, so that if one member suffered, all suffered with him. It was a heavenly union. It was in this holy spirit that Paul went forth in the early days of the church; when the church was poor, oppressed and despised; and for love of them and love of God he suffered for them; was whipped and beat; was in the deep; amongst false brethren; in peril of robbers, and all sorts of perils; and in cold, nakedness, hunger and thirst, and had no certain

dwelling place; and worked with his own hands rather than share their scanty, hard earnings to their own want. Such was his life and love, and love and lives of the early disciples, that even the heathens took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The heathens could see the marked difference between pure Christianity and the religions of the world; between the self-denying, uncomplaining and suffering ministers of Christ and the greedy, rapacious and oppressive priests of the idolatrous world. The missionaries of modern times are of the Homan stripe, even by their own confession. For the most part, they are men trained in colleges for that profession, as if for law, medicine, or merchandize, and are sent out by missionary societies as a merchant would send out a foreign commercial agent.

"And they are regarded by the heathens, among whom they go as being charitable Englishmen, who keep excellent cheap schools, preaching an European theme of religion; and drive out with their wives and little ones in a pony carriage. The pony carriage is absolutely fatal to the missionary's influence. If St. Paul, before starting out on one of his missionary journeys, had required St. James and a committee at Jerusalem to guarantee him \$1,500 a year, paid quarterly, and had provided himself with a shaded bungalow (a thatched cottage), a punkah (a fan run by machinery to fan him), a pony carriage, and a wife, he would not have changed the history of the world. Mr. Routledge says, if the missionaries would succeed, they must become the brothers of the people. He describes the native catechist (a native who is converted (?)) and made a sort of minister to teach the natives by questions and answers; he describes the catechist as walking humbly three or four steps behind the missionary, not daring to walk abreast of him. The modern method is to hire a class of professional missionaries-mercenary armies which, like other mercenary armies, may be admirably disciplined, and may earn its pay, but will never do the work of the real soldiers of the cross. The hireling may be an excellent hireling, but for all that he is only a hireling. If the work is to be done, we must have men influenced by the spirit of St. Paul. They must give up all European comforts and European society, and cast in their lots with the natives, and live as the natives live, counting their lives for naught. As one of the greatest of them has said, the best preachers are not our words, but our lives; and our deaths, if need be, are better preachers still. We must hold up the spectacle of devoted lives to enable the people to understand the first elements of the Christian faith. Gen. Gordon found in China the Protestant missionaries salaries of \$1,500 a year, and preferring to stay on the coast, where English comforts and English society could be had. These Christian (?) sects, who have their missionaries among the heathen, have bitter animosities; their rivalries (like rivalries of commercial houses) are well illustrated by the report of Mr. Squires, the local secretary of the Church Missionary Society in the Bombay Presidency, who states that one of the greatest hindrances to missionary effort is the existence of so many Christians who do not belong to any of the Protestant societies. Strange to say; the existence of so many Christians is a great hindrance to the spread of Christianity. Mr. Squires, last year, baptized with his 97 assistants 36 adults and 92 children, at a cost of over \$46,000; and the converts made by his society, after 66 years' labor, do not amount to 2,000. This rivalry amongst the missionary societies is illustrated by the detailed reports of many of the missionaries. Thus, Mr. Hall complains that many of his "inquirers" (a sort of mourner, or seeker after religion,) had been "decoyed" and baptized by a missionary of another society- "inquirers" take advantage of this rivalry, and put themselves up to auction. Mr. Bell writes that an "inquirer" to whom he was paying a salary of five dollars a month, struck for higher wages (i. e. he must be paid higher to be an "inquirer"), and went off to a rival missionary to "inquire." In another case, an unusually acute



missionary found that one of his "inquirers" had been pursuing the lucrative profession of going round to mission after mission, and getting repeatedly baptized. Of course; after each fresh baptism he reappears in the missionary statistics as a fresh convert. In the missions of Egypt, Persia, Palestine and Arabia, where there are no heathen, the Church Missionary Society employs 119 agents and has spent in the last two years over \$111,090, and the results are nil (nothing). In Egypt last year there were two inquirers," one a negro, and the other an Egyptian. In Arabia a sick robber, who was doctored by a missionary, promised to abstain from rob sing for ten days. In Persia we are told that a "great and wondrous door has been opened for the gospel," but no converts are mentioned, and the "door" seems to consist of a Persian who reads the Bible. "It is plain," says the writer, "that these futile missions should be given up." In reference to the quality of the converts, he says: "Vice Consul Johnston says in many important districts, where the missionaries have been at work for twenty years, they can scarcely number twenty sincere converts. In other places, where large numbers of nominal Christians exist, their religion is discredited by numbering among its adherents all the drunkards, liars, rogues and unclean livers in the colony. In one of the colonies all the unrepentant Magdalenes (lewd women) are professing Christians, and the most notorious one in the place boasts that she never missed going to church on a communion Sunday."

These extracts are made from a paper written by Canon Isaac Taylor in Fortnightly Review. He is a high dignitary or minister of the Church of England, and is favorable to modern missions, doubtless, as his church is. Should any wish to read it, it can be found in the Eclectic Magazine for December, 1888.

This work and these men are total strangers to the spirit of Paul and Barnabas in their mission work; and the church sending them out devoid of the spirit of the church at Antioch in sending Paul and Barnabas out. Their work and workers are of the spirit of Haman; this is the spirit that rules the religious world of today, whilst the Church of Christ is, so to speak, cast out and sits solitary in the King's gate. But like Mordecai she has steadily infused to bow to the modern Hamanism, or Missionism, that set the world crazy near seventy years ago. And now, Canon Taylor confesses the failure of modern Missionism after the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars and after a trial of over half a century. Yet the promise was made our fathers that in about thirty years they would have the world converted, and then the millennium! Thus the truth of God is vindicated even by the Jew's enemies, and Haman is gibbeted on his own gallows, and Mordicai comes in before the King. And the time may be in God's providence, drawing nigh when the waste places in which some of God's children may be hidden away, shall be visited by men whom God will send in the spirit of love and self-sacrifice to open their blinded eyes and turn them from darkness to light; and Haman's house be no longer inhabited with the spirit of Haman, but with the spirit of Mordecai, a spirit of love to God and love to God's people. That there is in the near future an enlargement we believe to be foreshadowed by the trials and confusion of the present. The travails and sorrows of God's people and many of Christ's ministers we cannot believe to be for naught.

And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman, the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

Haman had been hanged, and Mordecai had been honored by the king, but the mischief devised by Haman against the Jews had not been put away. His decree against the Jews had been written in the

king's name, sealed with the king's ring, and sent by the king's posts to the governors and lieutenants in all the king's provinces to slay, kill, and cause to perish, all Jews, both old and young, on a specified day, and to take the spoil, of them for a prey. The decree was according to the letter of the law, and could not be reversed, and the day appointed for the destruction of the Jews was drawing on. Neither Esther nor Mordecai could save them. Mordecai, though the king's first minister, and the queen's minister over Haman's house, had no power or authority to write in The king's name and seal it with the king's ring, only as the king commanded it. Nor did Esther have the power to authorize Mordecai to write in her name; for though she was queen, she was still a subject of the king, and could enact no laws nor issue any decrees any more than the church of Christ can. And hence she was, and Mordecai and the Jews were, as helpless in themselves as they were before Haman was hanged and Mordecai was honored. Their power was not increased by the death of Raman, only in so far as power was given to them by the king; of themselves they could do nothing, for they were servants and subject to the king, their master. Even Christ, as a servant, could do nothing of himself as a servant, only as the Father gave to him as a servant the power or authority to do it. In this way he served the Father. This was the state of Esther, and she realized it as the church does and God's people have in all ages. Power proceeds from God only, even to do evil as well as good, as in the case of Haman and Mordicai.

"Thou couldst have no power at all against me," said Jesus to Pilate, "except it were given thee from above."-John 19. God's people receive or partake of this power as the impoverished sick woman partook of the virtue in Christ when she touched the hem of his garment. And this is faith, and does not reverse nature, but overcomes it. And though Christ has been crucified, has been raised from the dead, and has ascended into heaven where he lives for his people, yet the Spirit must do His work, and a work as essential to the salvation of his people as the work of Christ was. The Spirit must regenerate those whom Christ has redeemed; must keep, teach, comfort and preserve them unto the' heavenly kingdom. By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.-Hosea 12. Their preservation is as necessary as their redemption. They must be regenerated by the Spirit; for "except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God," teaches Christ. There is no more important point of the doctrine of salvation than regeneration, or the new birth; for without this work of the Spirit none can be saved.

The difference between the saint and the sinner is the difference made by the new birth, the work of the Spirit. The difference between Mordecai and Haman was a difference of birth; Mordecai was born a Jew and Haman born an Agagite. Haman was a natural man, with the religion or faith of nature, and Mordecai a spiritual man, with the faith of the Spirit, or one against nature. Haman was but Esau, but Mordecai both Esau and Jacob. And that is the difference between regenerate and unregenerate; the unregenerate are but Esau but the regenerate are both Esau and Jacob; they have the heart or voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau. They are two in one. This difference is the work of the holy spirit, and can be made by no less power than the power of God, the Spirit. The church, nor minister, nor any body of men, nor all the men of this world, can make a new creature. And the great question of all questions to the Christian is not so much what I believe as what I am; am I born again? for if I have not been born again my faith and knowledge and charity are all nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. I may believe in election and predestination, limited and unlimited, and still not be a Christian; but I cannot be born

again and not be a child of God, and if a child, then an heir of God. But if I am born again the doctrine of predestination and election is necessary to my comfort and strength in trials. Because it may be suggested, as it has been a thousand times, that I may have been in unity with God yesterday, cast out from him today, and after all be finally lost. And if it be possible for me to be a child of God today, and be lost afterwards, then my doom is sealed, and I shall certainly be lost, and my regeneration a thing of no worth unless I die in the moment of regeneration. But the child of God can have no peace in believing such a doctrine; nor can he have peace in believing predestination and election only as he is led into it by the Spirit. The letter of this doctrine may be taught to men by the church and ministers, but God, the holy Spirit, only teaches it in the spirit. If I believe these precious points of the doctrine, and I am thankful that I do, I can say that I received the belief of them, not of man, neither was I taught them (in the spirit) of man, but by revelation of Christ; and if, therefore, they are true, and I have been regenerated, I shall be saved. Upon my regeneration, therefore, hangs my eternal destiny; because it is the manifestation of the grace given me in Christ before the world began, of the love wherewith I was loved, even before I was a sinner and the election based upon that love that chose me as a sinner to salvation. And the sign that we are Jews (spiritual) is the sign that Mordecai and the Jews had themselves; that which Haman loved they hated, and that which they loved Haman hated. There was antagonism between them and Haman, as between the flesh and the spirit. This antagonism was not a work of their own, as it is not a work of ours. It is not of my seeking that sin makes me wretched, and that I am wretched lest I do not in spirit love holiness. But sin is a grief to a Jew, and a view of Christ a joy to him; and what stronger evidence can be given of regeneration than for sin to be a plague and grief to the soul; sins unknown to any save God and your own heart. But if I rejoice today, I shall sorrow tomorrow; I change, and my consolation is that God, whose I am, does not change and never has changed, and that, therefore, if he poured his love into my heart when I was a little boy of eight years, he loves me as well today as then, and no better then than before I was born, or than he did before the world began. This is a solid rock to the changed man, but to the unchanged it is nothing, indeed it is a rock of offense. Upon it he rests when Satan assaults him, but he can only do it as it is given him to rest. When it is dark with us it is light with God, for the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him; and with faith given us it is light to us.

Haman cast lots from month to month to get his decree against the Jews, but Esther prayed. She fell down at the king's feet, and besought him with tears to put away Haman's mischief against the Jews. Haman had no sense of need and helplessness, but relied upon his own wisdom; but Esther besought the king in humility and tears. Haman's decree was inspired by hatred, but Esther's prayer was inspired by love for her kindred, and Haman's house under Mordecai was no longer one of hatred and chance, but a house of prayer and love. It was a house subject to the queen, whose works honored the king, and whose minister was the king's minister. It was in spirit a gospel house, from which proceeded the message of deliverance at the command of the king. When Esther fell down at the king's feet, it was but the outward expression of her heart; it was an unstudied, unconscious act of humility, as genuine humility always is. She fell at the king's feet, in the king's spirit, and besought him with tears, and such cries are always heard, because they are according to the king's will. And the golden sceptre was held out to her. She was strengthened, and she arose, as having liberty to speak, and she said:

If it please the king, and I have found favor in his eyes and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasant in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman which he devised to destroy the Jews; for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon any people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Esther was irresistibly impelled to make this petition to the king, and no doubt in making it her needs were greater than ever before; in this sense, that now it would be a more bitter thing to be destroyed than before the king had hanged Haman, honored Mordecai, and enriched her with Haman's house; before these manifestations of his love and justice. And as the Jews felt in the wilderness, when they said it would have been better for them to have died in Egypt, before they had known deliverance and the destruction of their enemies, than to die after having known it; for death in Egypt would have been a death in bondage, but to die now would be to die to another life, and would be more intolerable, and be a double death. As it is with us, after we have known Christ, to be separated from him; it would have been no grief before we knew him. As to lose a friend after we have loved him; as David's grief in the loss of Ahithopel, a friend upon whom he had leaned, and whose treachery was therefore doubly bitter. Esther was not certain that it would seem right to the king; and she knew that unless it did seem right, or was right, that it would not be done, even for her; that however much he might be disposed to gratify her as his wife, that he would not violate his law to do it; nor would she have him to do it. But it had been shown the king that the Jews were faithful to the law and throne; that they were faithful or righteous in Mordecai; that of all, his subjects in the gate that the Jew only of them all was righteous-righteous from principle. That Mordecai had been found faithful, when the king's own natural born subjects had conspired against the throne; that he was faithful when no earthly interest could have prompted it, and faithful to the very power and law that had impoverished him and his people, and led them into captivity; and justified the power that condemned him and confessed it was just. As the regenerated sinner justifies the law of God that condemns him, saying it is just, and that he is the sinner; as David confessed his sin when convicted of it by Nathan. These are the faithful to the law, and these are the ones who know that if they are saved it is by grace; and none others are, or can be, faithful to the law. So was Christ faithful in justifying the law that condemned him. And when Esther cried for her kindred, it was as if presenting to the king the fidelity, or righteousness, of the Jews in Mordecai; for the king knew that Mordecai's fidelity or righteousness that withheld him from infidelity to the king for himself would also withhold him from it in behalf of his kindred; in other words, that he would not intercede for the lives of enemies to the throne, or of those unworthy to live-that as he would not do it for himself, so would he not do it for his kindred. So the spirit intercedes in the name of Christ; that as he was obedient unto death to the law in behalf of his people, so would he not intercede for one in violation of law; and that, as he was faithful, so are his people-kindred of his spirit-faithful in Him as the Jews were in Mordecai, whom he represented in the king's gate. And as Christ was faithful in his work, so is the Holy Ghost faithful in his work; for there is unity in the Trinity, the will of one being the will of the three in one. The spirit intercedes according to the will of the Father, as Esther interceded according to the will of the king. And the spirit in the church intercedes in Christ's name, for Christ lives in the church, and because he lives she lives. When trouble comes, and mischief is wrought in the church by the spirit of Haman, she is moved to go in before the king, and this she does in doing what the law of Christ commands and in the spirit of Christ, and when she does the mischief is put away.

And then it is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, and sent by the king's posts unto all the king's provinces.

Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the power of the people and province, that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

This was not a reversal of Haman's decree; it was not saying that none should rise against the Jews, but it granted them the right and power to resist them, and in the king's name. Thus there was a conflict, the spirit against the flesh, Mordecai against Haman. This is the grant of faith and the power of faith. We once thought that the law would be reversed, and that the flesh would be made holy, and that there would be no struggle; that there would be no doubt to contend with, no unbelief to struggle with, no depravity to assail us; but we have found it to be that we can do nothing only as God grants us ability; only as we receive it in the king's name, sealed with the king's ring, and directed especially to us in person.

## THE DECREE

Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews; write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring, for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse. Then were the king's scribes called, and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces; and it was written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, and the letters were sent by posts on horseback, and riders on mules and young dromedaries, wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. So the posts went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. The decree was given at Shushan the palace.

This was a grant of spiritual power to the Jews, of faith to them against their enemies. This special grant could have been made to none save to Jews—or spiritual people. There was something in the Jews that made it peculiarly applicable to them, and none but them. It was not a grant making them Jews, but a favor, which of all the king's subjects none but Jews needed or could appreciate. It was like the words of Peter coming to the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. Peter did not make him lame; he was born lame; he was in a needy and helpless condition as every man born of the Spirit feels to be, and feels just as he really is. And not really more helpless than any other man, but is made by the new birth to realize his helplessness as his true state on account of sin, which the unregenerate do not realize in their unregeneracy. There was something in that lame man that was not there of his own will; and a something that set him apart as a vessel of mercy; and the words of Peter, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," were therefore peculiarly applicable to him. They were words from the king to him by Peter; written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring, and directed to the helpless man. Peter had faith to speak them; was, in fact, so to speak, commanded to speak them to the lame man. It was what the poor man had long desired, and mourned because he found it not. And Peter

took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength; and he leaping up stood. How often it is that strength is imparted to the weak by words of encouragement, exhortation and faith. Peter's strength lifted the weak brother up, so that he stood on his feet and not only stood on his feet, but walked. He made progress, and entered into the temple. Have we not often seen the lame at the gate, and perceived the spirit of faith in them; and do we risk anything in taking them by the right hand, identifying their weakness with our strength, and imparting strength to them, so that they become strengthened to confess their faith to the church? Has not the King so written and commanded? Thus we are often comforted in comforting others with the comfort wherewith we have been comforted ourselves of God.

The king commanded Mordecai, the Jew, to write to the Jews, as it liketh you; and there was no question in the king's mind as to how and what he would write; the king had no fear that Mordecai would write anything to them derogatory to the king's honor, or to the hurt of the empire, or in hatred to the Jews or of any of the king's subjects. He knew that he loved the Jews, and that he was faithful to the throne, and that his writing would be imbued with the spirit of love to his kindred, and of fidelity to the king. And when Peter and John saw the lame man there was no doubt as to their action in his behalf they could not help identifying themselves with him; they understood his case, and knew of the remedy, and had it by faith for him. Nor could the Samaritan resist identifying himself with the Jew who had been beaten and robbed, and left half dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho; the Priest and Levite, his natural brethren, entered not into his condition; had no sympathy and fellowship for him, and passed him without notice. And yet they were what the world calls good men; but they had never suffered from sin; had never been stripped, beaten and impoverished; they had never been lame, but always able to walk-to do good, and had been doing it all their life. They did not know what their prophet (they claimed him) meant when he said, The lame take the prey. So all the Jews were but as the lame man at the gate; they were helpless, and doomed; they had no power to deliver themselves; their enemies were stronger than they were. But when the letters came from Mordecai by the king's posts they knew that Haman was dead and Mordecai was in his stead; and they had no fear of Mordecai, for he was a Jew, and knew what a Jew was. They received strength in their feet and their ankle bones, and they were enabled to stand for their life, and to gather together in the king's name and Mordecai's spirit. If one could chase a thousand, a hundred could put ten thousand to flight; such was the increased strength in gathering together that their enemies would melt away from before them as the frost before the noonday sun. So if Haman, the Jews' enemy, has wrought mischief amongst God's people, and the command comes to them in the king's name to gather together and stand for their life, how certain will be the victory, and how great the spoils! Gather together, and for a purpose, for their life. It was no holiday frolic when the Jews might have been seen coming from all directions, and gathering together into one place as if preconcerted; they naturally; or we should say spiritually, went to the same point, and they were together, the same in need, the same in faith and trust; all looking to the king through Mordecai, their kinsman. And then they had the power of the king; for the lieutenants, rulers and deputies had been written to by Mordecai. There was unity; unity amongst themselves, and unity with the king, Mordecai and Esther. The king had taken them by their right hand and lifted them up, and they stood, and the arms of their hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

How important it is that God's people gather together, especially in times of trial; it is then that they that fear the Lord speak often one to another, and a book of remembrance is written before him for them that fear him, and that think upon his name. (Malachi 3) They strengthen one another; and the weak receive strength from the strong, and the strong from the weak. It may be but a little word spoken in faith that shall raise the helpless one to his feet; it may be but a little handful of wheat scattered that had been hoarded up, that yields now a hundredfold sown into the, broken heart of the helpless.

### **WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT!**

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor; and in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Behold what God hath wrought! When the king and Haman sat down to drink (Esther 3:15) the city of Shushan was perplexed; Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes, and cried in the midst of the city with a loud and bitter cry, and the Jews in every province and city mourned, fasted and wept, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. But now what a change there is; what a change had been wrought by the execution of Haman, the elevation of Mordecai, and the intercession of Esther and the commandment of the king! The commandment of the king granting the Jews in every province and city the power to gather together and to stand for their life against the power of their enemies that should assault them. Where the sword of a king is there is power; and when the commandment of the king went forth to the Jews to gather together and stand for their life, it was as when God said, Let there be light, and there was light; the ability to do it went with the decree, as it went with the words of Christ, "Come forth," to dead Lazarus, and Lazarus came forth. And the Jews rejoiced; and Mordecai rejoiced; he was clothed in the apparel of joy; and the king's city Shushan rejoiced with the same joy of the Jews in every city; her perplexity was gone, and light and peace and love had come in its stead; and the Jews whithersoever the commandment and decree came had joy for mourning and the garment of praise for heaviness. It was a wonderful change wrought by Mordecai's labor of love, and the intercession of Esther and the decree of the king. Peace with the king through Mordecai reigned in every Jewish heart; the king's commandment was now unto life that was before unto death, and the Jew could do now what before would have 'been death to do; he could now raise his hand against his enemy in the king's name, whereas before it would have been to raise it against the king. The sinner could do now what before only the righteous man could do; he can do it in the name of his righteous kinsman, Mordecai; Mordecai's strength is made his strength, and his enemies Mordecai's enemies and the king's enemies. And the feeblest Jew at such a time has the strength of his mighty kinsman arrayed in royal apparel with a great crown of gold, and in him he stands in the presence of the king, crowned with joy and honor, without a spot or blemish.

And whatever confusion there may be amongst God's people, when the commandment of the King goes forth to them to gather together and stand for their life, they will do it. Pride, envy and selfishness will be gibbeted as Haman was; and every hindering cause will fall before the assault of faith and love as the

walls of Jericho fell flat before God's host, encompassing them about. The attack of faith is irresistible; no enemy can stand before it, not even a son of Anak.

But as we design treating of the struggle of warfare in the next chapter, we will devote the remainder of this chapter to the "many of the people of the land becoming Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."

They became Jews like Rahab, the harlot, became a Jew; a Jew by faith; and in the same way the Gentiles became Jews; "for he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly."- Romans 2. It was faith that made Rahab a Jew. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace. Hebrews 11. And the reason why she received them in peace was in her own words to the spies, because- I know that the Lord hath given you (the Jews) the land and that your terror is fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you, &etc. Joshua 2.

And why, it may be asked, did not all the inhabitants of Jericho believe in and fear the God of the Jews as Rahab did? They had all heard of his wondrous works in behalf of the Jews; and how was it that only Rahab had faith and the others believed .not? There was a difference between her and them, and it was not a difference in the hearing of the word in the letter, for that was the same to all, and it produced a degree of fear in all; but only in Rahab was the fear an irresistible one. Felix trembled when he heard Paul preach of the judgment to come; it was a fear wrought in him by Paul's preaching, and a fear that he could control; but when the Holy Spirit begets a fear in the sinner's heart, it is an irresistible one, and a fear that the sinner cannot control, but one that controls him. For if it is not irresistible the sinner will always put it away like Felix did for a convenient season.-Acts 24. Under the influence of this work of the Spirit, the sinner will seek God with his whole heart; he seeks as seeking for his life; the Lord becomes a necessity to him, as with the woman who sought Jesus on the coasts of Sidon (Matthew 15), saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; but he answered her not a word; and the disciples besought him to send her away; but she would not be discouraged, she came and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me! She was a Gentile, but a Jew in the spirit. She had great faith. It was a case of necessity with her, as with Jacob wrestling with the angel till daybreak; he couldn't cease until the blessing came (Genesis 32), and as with Naaman the Syrian, he couldn't turn back until he was cleansed, because to do it was to die with the leprosy. (II Kings 5) We have not experienced the literal bondage of Egypt and literal deliverance from it, but we have in spirit; nor have we left our country and father's house as Abraham did literally, but we have in spirit, and know the struggle Abraham had in forsaking nature and its endearments at the irresistible call of God to go to a country he had not hitherto known; we know the struggles he had, and how at last he had to leave from necessity. We can read between the lines, read that which is not written in the Book, and know how they felt in their journeyings in this world of sin. We know how Rebecca felt when she was asked, Wilt thou go with this man? and she said, I will go (Genesis 24); and though it may seem to the inexperienced reader that she left her home and all she had hitherto known without a struggle, we know that there was a struggle, or had been, with her natural feelings before she overcame them and turned away from them. And we also know that there was a struggle with the apostles and early disciples when Jesus called them, though "they straightway left their nets and followed him," as if there were no struggle; but they did it by the Spirit and not the flesh,



and there must have been a struggle as it was and is with us; for it is only by faith that we are enabled to overcome the flesh, to deny self, take up the cross and follow Christ. These things are not written in the word, but they are written in our hearts. And thus it was with Rahab; she had not crossed the Red Sea literally as the Jews had, but she had in spirit, for she feared God, the God of Jacob, whilst the other inhabitants of Jericho had no fear of God before their eyes. She was not as they were, though she had been as they were; she was changed, and could receive the spies and hide them as friends, whilst her fellow-countrymen sought them as enemies to kill them. To do this she must have faith, and to have faith she must have experience, for faith is evidence of things not seen; and evidence differs from testimony in that evidence is testimony that convinces of the truth. All testimony does not convince, but testimony such as the woman at the well of Samaria had, when Jesus told her of things in her heart, was to her evidence, for she had the witness in herself. Rahab, therefore, was prepared to receive the spies, and she did it by faith; that is, there was a struggle of course, but she was made willing to give up her people and to become impoverished to save her life. So it was with the many people of the land; the fear of the Jews fell upon them, so that they also stood for their life. And with them it was no doubt a more bitter struggle than with the Jews, for they stood with the Jews against their natural kindred, and it was a necessity with them, as it was a necessity with the Jews. So it was with Rahab the harlot, and Ruth the Moabitess, and with the Gentiles in the early days. The Jews or the early disciples were made to give up all for Christ, their kindred and self-righteousness, and it was a hard struggle, so hard that it could only be done by faith. The Gentiles also gave up all for Christ, but they did not have so much to give up as the Jews had; the Jews had to give up their life, to speak, in giving up their early training in the ceremonial law and traditions of the elders, the temple and temple service, their exclusiveness and self-righteousness, and to be made willing to consort with the Gentiles, whom they had been taught to hold as unclean; and to be cut off and lose their individuality, and to be engrafted with the Gentiles and merged into them. Thus their fall became the riches of the Gentiles, as Haman's fall became the riches of these Jews in the flesh, and the "many people of the land" who became Jews in spirit; so that the Jews' enemies became their enemies, and the Jews' struggle their struggle. So the affliction that Haman brought upon the Jews really turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so to speak. And so it has been oftentimes with God's people, and so it will be again. There is a good day ahead for the church, though for the time being the "winds are contrary." Yet God will glorify himself in her, and there may be many of the "people of the land," hidden ones, in whose heart God has wrought, will fear the God of Jacob, and their shame and pride be so overcome that they will become Jews or Primitive Baptists.

It will be a good day; a day in which there will be gladness and joy, a feast day; and in which Mordecai will go out from the presence of the King in royal apparel.

## **THE JEWS IN SHUSHAN**

The Jews in Shushan arose on the 14th day of the month Adar, and slew their enemies (300 men) and hanged Haman's ten sons on the gallows. The power or faith to do this work was granted them by the King, at the petition of Esther. It was a work that pertained exclusively to the Jews in Shushan. No other Jews could do it, nor could they do it, only as power was granted them by the King. Because they, as Jews in Shushan, living near Mordecai and Esther and of the Queen's household by authority of the King, had enemies unknown to Jews in the Provinces, and such enemies as could only be overcome by faith,

or by the Spirit, according to the word or law. The work of a minister of the gospel can be done only by faith or an additional grant of power from the great King. Certain members of the church are called by the Spirit to this work. They are not called nor qualified by the church for this work, but the power, or qualification to do it, is granted them by the Lord. It is a spiritual work, but it is also a work authorized by, or according to the word, and is contrary to the flesh. It is like Jacob's work in blessing Joseph's sons (Genesis 48); it is a cross-handed one, or a work contrary to the flesh. If Jacob had guided his hands by his fleshly feelings, he would not have crossed them so as to lay his right hand upon Ephraim's head and his left upon Manasseh's, the first born, because he knew that Joseph wished his right hand laid upon Manasseh's head; and he loved Joseph and it was a cross or a great self-denial to displease him; but by faith he overcame self to the glory of God and the good of Joseph. Jacob had grace to do it-he was on his death-bed and near the great King upon the Throne and was, therefore, able to do it. It was a trial that pertained exclusively to him as the head, or patriarch, of his family; it could not possibly pertain to any other human being. Whilst his father, Isaac lived, it pertained to him, as the head of his family, and Jacob could not then have done the work he did in giving the blessing of the first born to his seed that should succeed him. But, when in the providence and purpose of God, he, himself, was called to succeed his father, then the works that none other but he could do were required of him; and, like his father, Isaac, bestowed the blessing of the first born, contrary to his fleshly inclinations. And it is so with the ministers of God to this day. They are servants of the church by the will, or authority, of God, as the Jews were servants of the Queen by authority of the King; and have labors and responsibilities that none but they can have; and their labors and responsibilities are not all to the same or equal extent. A young minister cannot possibly have the same degree of responsibility that an older one has, and when one assumes it, it is most likely of the flesh, and not a cross-handed and self-denying work. My father used to tell me when a boy how great a parent's love for a child was, but I could not understand it then. I knew how I loved my parents, but not how they loved me, for God had not yet revealed it to me, but He did in time reveal it to me. He revealed it to me when He gave me children of my own, and then I knew how my father loved me. And so with Jacob; there pertained a work to be done and that could be done by him only and in his old age and last hours.

The work of the minister is a special work that requires special grace to do it. Like the Jews in Shushan, living near Mordecai and Esther, who were next to the King and, therefore, the least of all and the servants of all, so the Jews in Shushan were more conformed to Mordicai and Esther, for the nearer the throne the greater the humility and self-denial, and the greater the humility the greater the wisdom and the greater the sense of need and insufficiency, and also the greater the temptation to exaltation through the abundance of the revelations. This Paul experienced when he says of himself, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me lest I should be exalted above measure."- II Corinthians 12. It is not at all likely that other Christians, nor even the other Apostles, had this buffeting to the extent that Paul did, for none could have it without the same measure of revelations. Paul was the greatest of all the Apostles, but made himself, or God's grace did, the least of all, and, therefore, the servant of all. "For," said he, "I am the least of the Apostles, but by the grace of God, I am what I am. I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."-I Corinthians 15. That is to say grace was given him to do it, and, therefore, it was required of him, and in doing it he

did no more than the others did who did all that was required of them. And so it was with the Jews in Shushan and the Jews in the Provinces, and so it is in the church. The minister does his work and so the least member-the one offers a kid, the other a dove, and one does as much as the other, for each does all that is required of him. The sacrifice is the same, whether the offering be big or little; if it be little, the sacrifice is great, and if it be an ox, it is great. The Jew who offered a bullock made no greater sacrifice than he did who offered a dove- the dove was a confession of poverty and the bullock a sacrifice of riches. The effect was to humble each of them. The learned minister sacrifices worldly aspirations and opportunities of worldly honor, and the unlearned one's sacrifice is to expose his ignorance; the temptation to the learned one is to become exalted from his learning, and to the unlearned one to be cast down from lack of it and to envy his learned brother. But they are made equal in position, if not in gifts; the learned is made low, the other is lifted up, nor should they despise and envy one the other, for both are God's servants and are brethren. Paul preached and labored in writing more than they all, but none of the other Apostles and ministers found fault with him for it. It was a necessity God laid upon him and woe was to him if he did it not.-I Corinthians 8:13. Paul, himself, was "glad the gospel was preached, whether in pretense or in truth, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice." -Philippians 1:18. But some, brethren, seem to be afraid it will be preached too much.

The minister is charged to take heed to the ministry he has received in the Lord to fulfill it (Colossians 4:17), and to take heed unto himself and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood (Acts 20), and to take heed to himself and unto the doctrine. Continue in them, for in so doing he shall save both himself and them that hear him.-I Timothy 4:16. He is commanded to be an example to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; and to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, and to meditate upon these things and give himself wholly to them that his profiting may appear to all; and not to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he may praise Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.-II Timothy 2. He has a double work to do, and such a work to do that no Christian can do without special grace; as a soldier, he has a warfare; as a minister, that which none but ministers have, as the Jews in Shushan had. Paul was absorbed in his work, and if he made tents, it was that his ministry should not be hindered, and not to make money by tent making. He subordinated everything to his ministry, as ministers are commanded to do, and to this end the church should assist them.

The Jews in the Provinces did not obstruct the work of the Jews in Shushan. They were resting and rejoicing in faith whilst their brethren were fighting and hanging ten sons on the gallows in Shushan. Esther prayed for this grace upon the Jews in Shushan; it was a prayer of faith and, therefore, according to the King's will. To the carnal it might seem that Esther's petition was inspired by hatred and fleshy revenge upon Haman and his sons; that it was enough that they should be slain and needless to hang them upon the gallows. But she was inspired by the same spirit that Paul was when he said, "Though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1), or hanged upon the tree. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; neither was Esther. She was not ashamed that Haman and his ten sons, with all their moral and mental excellence, should be slain, but that they should also be accursed and be made odious as

enemies of God, His truth and of mankind. It was not in her to slay them and hurry them off in secret burial as if ashamed of God's truth, as though an injustice in God.

There is, at times, a disposition to apologize for God's discriminating grace, as if there was something in it to be ashamed of, but not when we are spiritual, for then we rejoice in it. Esther proclaimed the King's justice and mercy in hanging Haman's Sons as the accursed of the King. God's hatred of sin is proclaimed in the crucifixion of Christ; that he has no league with sin any more than Ahasuerus had with Haman and his sons, but that he execrated them as enemies of his law and his throne. God's hatred of sin cannot be exaggerated. His only begotten son He did not shield from the execration of His holy law, because the sins of His people were upon him. He was delivered up to a death of agony and shame to make his grave with the wicked in death, forsaken of God in the hour of his extreme agony. In his humiliation and death, the Father's justice and mercy were glorified and his people redeemed from the curse, he being made a curse for them. Thus they passed from under the law.

And now came to the Jews, as we may say, a new dispensation. There is now no mixing and mingling of Mordecai with Haman. The old garment was not sewn on to the new cloth. The new wine was not put into old bottles.-Matthew 9. Haman and his Sons had passed away; old things had passed away and all things had become new.

### **THE EXECUTION OF THE DECREE**

And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

The regeneration of the house of Haman under Mordecai was not yet completed. (The word regeneration is used here in the sense it seems to be used in Matthew 19:28, as meaning renovation, restoration and restitution). The triumph of the Jews over their enemies on the 13th day of the month Adar did not complete it. On that day the Jews in the provinces made a clean sweep of their foes, slaying 75,000, and the Jews in Shushan the palace slew 500; but the Jews in Shushan had enemies that the Jews in the provinces were not called to contend with, and these enemies were not slain on the first day's struggle, and therefore Esther besought the king that it might be granted to the Jews in the palace to do on the 14th day according to the decree of the 13th day, and that Haman's ten sons might be hanged on the gallows; and the king commanded it so to be done. Therefore the Jews in Shushan the palace gathered themselves together on the 14th day and slew 300 men in Shushan, and on the 15th day they rested.

The enemies slain on the 13th day were enemies common to all the Jews and to the "people of the land" in sympathy with them or in the spirit of the Jews. It was a day in which they all, official and unofficial, stood for their lives against the decree of death devised against them by Haman, and which

had been sealed with the king's ring and published in the king's name, and could not therefore be reversed, and which may be illustrated by the struggle and triumph of faith over the decree of sin and death. This struggle was preeminent in Christ; death was made inconceivably horrible to him, as involving not only physical death, but eternal separation from the Father; but he was stayed in the struggle by hope, for David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand that I should not be moved; therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover, also, my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.-Acts 2.

Esther's prayer for the Jews in Shushan was inspired by necessity; it was not a desire of the flesh, but one contrary to it; her faith forbade slackness of hand against her enemies, the enemies of her people and her God. God had cursed Amalek, and commanded Israel to exterminate him; to slay him, root and branch, father and son, little and big, oxen and sheep, and to spare none and nothing of him; to spare neither him nor his wealth, which is the same as to say now that neither the doctrine nor the works of Arminianism shall be spared, little nor big, oxen nor ass, good nor bad. And Esther had by grace the spirit to do the commandment in the simple faith that it was right to do it because God had commanded it. The Jews had realized it in their captivity. Amalek had been exalted in Haman and his ten sons to the highest pitch of eminence in the empire until his doctrine dominated it and threatened the subversion or the destruction of the Jews. It had been resisted first by Mordecai in the king's gate, and drove him in sackcloth into the street of the city, crying with a loud and bitter cry, so that it reached Esther in the king's house, and spread out as a mantle of sorrow over all the Jews to the remotest province of the empire.

And it was so under Saul, the first king of Israel; he was a carnal king, and slew only such enemies as would glorify the flesh in slaying, and was therefore the nearer destruction in every one slain; as all are in works prompted by the Arminian spirit, for the more of them they do the further they go from God. He slew the Amalekites, but spared Agag, the king, and a few of the best of the cattle for the Lord, which was as if we should say that salvation was wholly of grace, and yet spare some of the best works of men as conducive of grace, or as means of grace, making salvation at last in some unseen way hinge upon them instead of grace. There is as much difference in doing things as means of grace and in doing them as obligations of grace as there is between life and death and light and darkness. Baptism done as an obligation of grace is acceptable to God; but done as a means of grace is an abomination in his sight, and so of all other duties of Christians. All, therefore, slain by Saul were slain in the wrong spirit, and it would have been better to have done nothing at all than what he did, for what he did was disobedience to God. During all his long reign Israel was confused and distressed, as she always is under a fleshly spirit or rule. David, the anointed of God, with a price upon his head, fled from him for his life, hiding in dens and caves with a little band of followers, and was pursued by Saul, who sacrificed the peace and unity of God's people to his envy and hatred of David and his fleshly ambition.

But there were many thousands of Israel under Saul in sympathy with David as there were of the "people of the land" in sympathy with Mordecai and the Jews. Some of these helped David against a band of rovers that spoiled him; and the number multiplied as the distresses and disorders increased, so that when Saul at last destroyed himself a great host, like the host of God, of armed men that could

keep rank fell to him out of all Israel, and came to Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul to David according to the word of the Lord. In all these years of distress God was preparing his people out of their sight for the righteous reign of David, so that when the time for the renovation of the kingdom came it was renovated almost before they knew it. And in this is foreshadowed the regeneration when the Son of man sat in the throne of his glory in the gospel day.

There had been no doubt much worldly conformity to Haman whilst he was in power, so that it at last became a struggle of life and death to the Jews to free themselves of it, and the 75,000 slain was a good riddance to them; and though it diminished their number, it increased their strength by consolidating it; and the loss in number was no doubt more than regained in "the people of the land" added to them by the struggle in cutting them off. In this way a door was opened for the "people of the land" to become identified with the Jews, as a way was opened by the fall of the Jews for the "people of the land," or the Gentiles, to be brought into the kingdom of Christ in the gospel day. The dead branches were taken off, and the living ones purged to bear more fruit. This was done in the breaking off of the carnal Jews and the grafting in of the Gentiles into the same root (Romans 11), so that the same root bears the gospel church that bore the church in the wilderness; and the gates of hell have never prevailed against it in the past, and never will in the future. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed; and know ye not that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:29)

The Jews that were cast away in the regeneration of the Son of man were as the 75,000 slain under Mordecai, and their loss was more than supplied by the bringing in of God's elect from amongst the Gentiles. And if in God's purpose the fullness of the Gentiles shall arrive, or when all of the elect amongst them shall have been called, then if there shall be a remnant of the elect amongst the Jews, the Gentiles themselves shall fall or be broken off through fleshly pride and unbelief, as the carnal Jews were, and the elect Jews be grafted in again into own olive tree. So that whatever changes, disorder distresses may arise, and whatever the number carnal Israel be cut off and cast away, God will not cast away his people which he foreknew, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, for there has been and will be a remnant, according to the election of grace, and it will be saved. No change of dispensation will add one to or diminish one from the elect number.

In connection with the foregoing subject, Elder Harper, of Alabama, asks the following questions, and we answer them in this place as a continuance of the subject we are treating on. We realize that the questions are hard to answer, hard for us at least to do it, and beg that wherein we may err or come short of satisfaction to ourself or others, that our brother or some other brother may give us the benefit of his light on the subject, and show us our error:

- (1) If there was regeneration under the law dispensation, was not the law of God written in their hearts? and if so, why was the second covenant called a new one, and in what sense was it better, or established upon better promises?
- (2) What was meant by the Jews' own olive tree?
- (3) Why must the Jews be broken off that the Gentiles might be grafted in; and what was it that grafted them in?

(1) I suppose from the form of his question that Brother Harper means by regeneration the new birth; and if he does, I should say that there was personal or individual regeneration under the old covenant, not by it, but during its existence. Strictly speaking, regeneration seems to me to mean more than the new birth; it means, in my mind, a continuance of the new birth to the perfect day of faith in which the new born man is freed from the old covenant. Now, a man may be born again, and yet not freed from it perfectly; may be born again, and be like the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, unable to walk and enter into it. And this is even now the condition, perhaps, of many who have been born of the Spirit, and was the condition of those born of the Spirit under the old covenant and before it was given. The apostles were born of the Spirit, and were following Christ in the regeneration, but it was not completed in them until after the day of Pentecost, and the church was freed from the old covenant service and established upon the better promises, or the promises of the covenant of grace that was older in purpose than the Sinaiatic covenant, but the latter was first in time, as it is first in the Christian experience. The apostles were very ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom, though born again; so ignorant of it that they supposed that the exclusion of the Gentiles from salvation was to be perpetuated under it; and Peter, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, was taught better by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven in preparation for his going to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, to preach to him and baptize him.-Acts 10.

The reason I say that there was regeneration in the sense of the birth of the Spirit during the old or Sinaiatic covenant, and even before it, is because there were many throughout all these ages, from Abel down, who had faith and believed in Christ; and this no man in the past or present could have done except by revelation of the Spirit of God, which comprehends the new birth. God's truths are eternal truths; as true before they were revealed or taught to man as they were afterward; and if it is true under the gospel that none can be saved without the new birth, it was true under the law. It is not to be understood that the principles of eternal salvation differ in one age or dispensation from another dispensation; eternal salvation is made no more certain or easy under the gospel than it was under the old covenant; for it required the same election of grace then that it does now, but it is brought to light under the gospel, whilst then it was hidden, in a great measure, but it was the same truth then that it is now.

Abel offered to God an acceptable offering by faith, and to do this now, the same spirit of faith is required that was given to Abel. See Hebrews 11, wherein many saints are named as having faith and doing the works of faith. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, looking for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having us, should not be made perfect. They were as the lame man at the gate, but unable to enter within the temple.

The service under the old covenant was a letter service; it is now in the so-called churches of the world that teaches and expects salvation by works. There is no difference in the spirit of the work done now, if baptism or any other gospel work be done in the letter only, than when the kid or the bullock was

offered in the letter under the old covenant. Their religion was taught them as it is now in the Sunday-school and church, and as grammar and arithmetic is taught. Every child born was a Jew by nature, and entitled to citizenship in the commonwealth by natural birth, claiming heaven and God's favor from their natural advantages, as people do now; and they were amazed when Christ taught them that even if they were born of Abraham, that they must be born again to get to heaven.

The service under the old covenant was burdensome; it was exacting, unrelenting and inflexible; there was no mercy in it. It was like our civil law, which is based in a great measure upon it; it cannot forgive sin. If one was guilty of murder, adultery or idolatry, penitence and confession would not relieve him of the penalty; he must be stoned to death, crying for mercy. Achan confessed his guilt in stealing the golden wedge and hiding it and the Babylonish garment, but he was stoned to death with the confession on his lips. It was an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; there was no mercy to unrighteousness in it; the yoke was grievous and the burden heavy.

But under the new covenant, there is mercy and forgiveness of sin. The penitent adulteress that was brought to Jesus was sent away in peace; the woman that was a sinner washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and kissed them in love; penitent publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven, whilst the self-righteous Pharisees were thrust out. The yoke of Jesus is easy and the burden is light.

Many under the old covenant, and before it was given, rejoiced in the mercy and love of the gospel; the prophets spake of it and rejoiced in it; and to have done this they must have felt the need of it. The scribe that came to Jesus (Mark xii) and said, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus said to him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven. It is righteousness, and joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost.

It is old in purpose, but new in development; it is better because it takes hold of Christ as fulfilling the law and as extending mercy and pardon to those condemned under the law. In the law there was no hope for them, but in the gospel there was mercy for the helpless under the law. For a sinner to confess his sins under the law was to invite death, but to confess them with penitence under the gospel is to find favor. It is infinitely superior and more perfect as adapted to the lost, the penitent and helpless, the lame, halt, deaf and blind; it lifts them up, binds up their wounds and pours in oil and wine; it makes the ankle bones of the lame man strong so that he leaps up and stands and enters into the temple rejoicing in Christ.

(2) What is meant by the Jews' own Olive Tree?

I think Christ is meant, because he was of the natural seed of Abraham, and it is Christ into which we are all grafted by the spirit and which bears us all, both Jews and Gentiles. The graft is not according to natural grafting because it is grafting a bad branch into a good stock, the natural method being to graft a good branch into a bad stock. And thus the Jew and Gentile are made one in Christ.

(3) Why must the Jews be broken off?



They were broken off because of unbelief; they believed in the shadow instead of the substance because they were-the great mass of them-destitute of the true spiritual design of the covenant they were under. But there was a remnant that did believe and were not east away. Simeon and Anna believed in the holy child as God's salvation. The remnant that was saved was brought to experience the necessity of grace as much as any Gentile was. They had as we might say a double experience; they had to be converted from the law and converted to Christ whilst the Gentile who had never been under the law did not have that struggle. It is illustrated in the case of Naomi and Ruth; Naomi had a double travail of soul; she went from Bethlehem to Moab and returned from Moab to Bethlehem, whilst Ruth only left Moab for Bethlehem. In Bethlehem they were made one in Ruth's son, and he became Naomi's son and the nourisher of her old age; and thus whilst she could no longer bear in herself she bore in Ruth; and thus the fall of her family became the riches of Ruth, and Ruth's son inheriting Elimelech's estate.

So did the Jews experience in captivity; their return enabled them to rebuild the temple in a spirit that the first temple was not built in. It was rebuilt in a spirit of humility, unworthiness, and a sense of God's mercy to their unrighteousness that was unknown to them before the captivity. It was now a temple of praise to God for mercy to their sins.

So it was with the Jews saved in the gospel day; they had a deeper sense of the failure of the law than the Gentiles did who had never been under the law; and this is why Paul could proclaim with zeal and sincerity that salvation was by grace without the deeds of the law, and count all his fleshly righteousness as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ-and it was no doubt the reason why the Jews in the palace required another's days struggle that the Jews "afar off," the Gentiles-did not have, and why they were enabled to hang Haman's ten sons on the gallows as accursed of God. They had keenly and bitterly felt it.

## **THE FEAST OF PURIM**

The Feast of Purim grew, as we might say, out of the very circumstances that preceded and surrounded it. As the day of peace and rejoicing in the Christian's experience springs Out of the trials and afflictions that preceded it; and as night gives, place to the light of day, making the light so much the brighter from the darkness that prevailed before. It was as the harvest-time to the Jews, when the grain had been gathered into the threshing-floor; the grain that had been sown and had been watered with the cold rains and snows of winter; that had been at first but the tender blade, that had seemed to wither in the frozen ground, but grew, though the snow covered it, and took root downward until the stalk appeared, and then the full corn in the ear-ripened into the golden grain and was gathered into the barns. It was harvest time! There was rejoicing, for there was something to live upon-it was a feasting time and a time of giving gifts to the poor. All hearts were softened and humbled and filled with love-the stingiest man was made liberal. As my father said to me years ago, The season had come when the hickory bark could be stripped from bottom to top, that before could only be gotten off in little strips, for God had said to the hickory to yield his bark, and it yielded it freely.

And God had said to the Jews, Rejoice, and they rejoiced. So they kept the Feast of Purim. It was established among them by Esther and Mordecai, as an ordinance to be observed in all their generations, and is a memorial of God's goodness in turning the wicked device of Haman against the

Jews upon his own head and his sons. This Feast, instituted nearly 2,500 years ago, is still observed by the literal Jews, though it was not one of the Feasts of the law that required them to go up to Jerusalem to keep, as the Passover and other Feasts were. The fact that it is kept to this day by the fleshly Jews is a strong confirmation of the inspiration of the Book of Esther, as well as of the whole of the Old Testament, as is also the fact of the dispersion of the Jews a fulfillment of the prophecies concerning them. Mordecai did not, therefore, lay upon them a burden in instituting this Feast, but something to do that was a delight to do when in the Spirit. It was like the yoke of Jesus to his people when they are in his Spirit-the yoke is easy and the burden is light.