

THE MINISTRY
OF THE
PROPHETS,

AND HERE PARTICULARLY OF
ISAIAH.

THE WORK AND WRITINGS OF THOSE WHO
CAME AFTER MOSES IN THE DIVINE GUIDANCE
OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL.

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BIRMINGHAM :
PUBLISHED BY C. C. WALKER, 21, HENDON ROAD, SPARKHILL.
1907.

PREFACE.

“YE shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God.” So said the Lord Jesus Christ to many who rejected him, and who should in that day be “thrust out” of the Kingdom. But of others he at the same time said, “They shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.” The prophets will then resume their “ministry” upon earth, but on a higher plane, and in the divine nature. To the apostle John, who was also a prophet, the angel said, “Thou must prophesy again, before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings,” a thing that remains to be done. The object of this book is to state, illustrate and prove the true nature of the “ministry” past and future; and to help and encourage some of the “many” whom the Lord says shall presently be exalted to a place in the Kingdom of God.

This book is really supplementary to one dealing with the ministry of the greatest of the prophets save the Lord Jesus Christ, that is Moses. “The Law of Moses” is the title of the last work of Robert Roberts. It deals with the Law as “a rule of National and Individual life, and as the enigmatical enunciation of divine principles and purposes.”

Moses' work was the building of the house of God in Israel, as it were by a faithful servant. The work of the later prophets was the carrying on of the affairs of the household. "The Law and the Prophets" is a natural sequence, and on the completion of the aforesaid book the present was suggested to the author (then in Australia) by his fellow-labourer in England. The reply was the first chapter in print, the idea having naturally occurred, and having borne fruit.

The first portion of this book was thus written by Robert Roberts in the course of journeyings in the Australian Colonies, New Zealand, and at sea on the Pacific Ocean. He laid down his pen at the end of Isaiah, Chapter V., to resume his "ministry" no more till the time comes to "prophesy again," when we trust he will be honoured with that divine commission. He died suddenly in the United States in 1898; and the rest of the book—Isaiah VI. and onwards—has been written by its other joint-author,

C. C. WALKER.

BIRMINGHAM, *September 27th, 1907.*



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ERRATA.

Page 38 line 30 ... for Jeroboam read Jehoram.
,, 39 ,, 18 ... ,, ,, ,, ,,
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The Ministry of the Prophets ;

OR,

THE WORK AND WRITINGS OF THOSE WHO CAME AFTER
MOSES IN THE DIVINE GUIDANCE OF THE
NATION OF ISRAEL.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

TO build a house and to carry it on are two different things. They are the different things represented by the works respectively of Moses and the prophets. Both are works of God, but differing vastly in character and calibre.

It is said to be one of the works of God by Christ that he will "*plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth*" (Isaiah li. 16). This, in the language of figure, is what God did by Moses for the nation of Israel at the beginning. Whereas before the time of Moses Israel was a mere race sojourning in an alien land, in subjection to the laws of Egypt, after him Israel was a nation having defined and established institutions of their own, and dwelling in a country which they had subjugated and which they were able to defend.

The prophets had nothing to do with establishing this great work. The work once done was done for ever. No one could come after Moses in the doing of it. It was a maxim of the constitution, "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish aught therefrom," and to this day it remains unaltered as it came from the hands of Moses. The system of things established by Moses

has been destroyed, and the "prophet like unto Moses" will "restore again," "restitute," and "regenerate" the thing destroyed. But so far as setting it up in the first instance was concerned, Moses alone was the "mediator of the first covenant." As such, he had direct dealings with God such as none who came after him except Christ: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD (Yahweh) knew face to face" (Deut. xxxiv. 10).

The ministry of the prophets, though equally divine, was not in the same exalted and intimate form. God Himself defined the difference during the Aaron and Miriam revolt: "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make myself known unto him in a vision and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. xii. 6-8). So also in His message by Hosea, which supplies us with the name of this series of articles: "I have spoken by the prophets: I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by *the ministry of the prophets*" (Hos. xii. 10).

The prophets succeeded the work of Moses—(which included that of Joshua). Their mission was to keep Israel faithful to the law delivered by Moses, and not to give a new law or amend the old. They were in a very different position from a succession of natural writers improving upon each others' ideas. They were simple messengers of God, as God Himself declared to Jeremiah: "Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt unto this day, *I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets*, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not unto me nor inclined their ear. . . . This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God" (Jer. vii. 25).

This is their character as defined in the summary of their work which appears at the end of the Chronicles; and is illustrated by Christ himself in several of the parables he uttered. "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending: because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the

messengers of God and despised his words and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15).

Christ's illustration will be remembered: "There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard and hedged it round about and digged a winepress in it and built a tower and let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that he might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another," &c. (Matt. xxi. 33).

But though the work of the prophets was secondary by comparison with that of Moses, and though it was primarily directed to the condition of Israel while in their land, yet we should err greatly were we to give to their writings that unimportant and neglected place which they occupy in the general practice of Christendom. Those writings are as much the product of inspiration and as reliably communicative of the divine mind as any of the words directly addressed to Moses. The evidence of this it is simply impossible to miss in any ordinarily attentive reading of the New Testament. Jesus, for example, always conjoins Moses and the prophets as co-ordinate authorities:

"They have Moses *and* the prophets, *let them hear them*" (Luke xvi. 29). "Think not that I am come to destroy the law *and* the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17). "Beginning at Moses *and all* the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses *and in the prophets* and in the psalms concerning me" (Luke xxiv. 27, 44).

It will be found upon examination that the prophets are included in all Christ's general allusions to "the Scriptures" as a thing unbreakable. They are included in Paul's general allegation that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 15). They are the specific subject of Peter's declaration, that they are "more sure than the apostolic testimony," if that were possible; that they are a light in a dark place, and that they "came *not* by the will of

man, but holy men of old spake as they were *moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet. i. 19, 21).

See also their constant casual recognition as the standard and fountain of Gospel truth :

"The Gospel of God which he had promised before *by the prophets in the holy Scripture*" (Rom. i. 2). "*By the Scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (chap. xvi. 26), "*Saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come*" (Acts xxvi. 22). "*Persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening*" (xxviii. 23).

There are numerous allusions of the same sort throughout the New Testament. Those we have quoted are conclusive. They are clinched by the statement of the angel to John in the island of Patmos : "*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev. xix. 10).

The work of the prophets took various forms during the long interval lying between their entrance into the land under Joshua, and the re-building of the temple on their return from Babylon. When the prophets are spoken of, most people think of the books of the prophets forming the last part of the Bible from Isaiah to Malachi, whereas the writers of these books form only a part—and a comparatively modern part—of the order of men by whom God spoke to Israel. That order of men goes back to the very beginning, and embraces many who did not write books and some whose books have not been preserved. Their primary work was not to write books, but to deliver oral expostulations from God to Israel, to bring the nation back to harmony with Himself. If this is kept in mind, there will be none of the quandary that some appear to experience on the subject of unwritten books and lost books—people who seem to think that a prophet's work was a failure if he did not leave something for the Bible ; and still more if he wrote something that has been lost.

They have not realised that the prophet's primary work was the work of his own living presence in Israel, and that in the case of the preserved writings, their preservation is something over and above the natural work of their lives—a present of God's providence to

succeeding generations—for which succeeding generations have not been thankful enough. These remarks will be found verified upon a careful perusal of the history of Israel as contained in the Scriptures. The books that are preserved are sufficient for the work to be afterwards accomplished by their means. If we had not had the others, we should only have had books agreeing with those we have, as those we have agree with one another.

Another point that cannot be too strongly recognised, is that the utterances of these prophets, whether oral or written, are not to be classed with human efforts in authorship or rhetoric in any category. The modern literary habit of referring to them as “the ancient Hebrew bards” is intended to put the prophets on a level with human writers, which means either that the prophets were not inspired, or that human poets are. Either view is a lie of the first rank, as a study of the case will show.

When the prophets were sent, it was to speak God’s words, and not their own. Ezekiel’s case may be taken as illustrative of the rest: “Son of man, get thee unto the house of Israel, and *speak with MY WORDS unto them*. . . . I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, hear *the word at my mouth*, and give them *warning from me*. . . . Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake to me, and said unto me: “Go, shut thyself within thy house. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb. . . . But *when I speak with thee*, I will open thy mouth; and thou shalt say unto them, *THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD*” (Ezek. iii. 4, 17, 24-26).

So Jeremiah: “Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold *I have put MY WORDS in thy mouth*” (Jer. i. 7-9).

So Isaiah’s book opens: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for *the Lord hath spoken*. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. . . . Moreover, *the Lord spake unto me*,” &c. (Isaiah i. 2: viii. 1).

So also with “the minor prophets,” of which Amos may be taken as an example: “I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son;

but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock; and the Lord said unto me: Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos vii. 14).

In harmony with these elementary facts has to be noted this singular and distinguished peculiarity of the writings of the prophets throughout, that they constantly employ this introduction to what they have to say from time to time: "Thus saith the Lord," or "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel." Take Jer. xxx. as an instance, chosen at random. The phrase occurs *many hundreds of times*. What other writing on earth is like this?

That this is no merely Hebrew way of expressing personal authorship, but the expression of *a literal operation of divine authorship* outside of and extra to Hebrew faculty, is shown many times by incidents showing the operation to be beyond human control. Let three suffice:

Jeremiah, finding the utterance of the divine messages a cause of contempt and hatred among the people towards himself, resolved to suppress them: "Then, I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." Could he stop it then? On the contrary: "But his word was in my heart as *a burning fire* shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and *could not stay*."

The case of Balaam shows the same thing in another way. He was sent to Balak, King of Moab, to deliver a prophecy concerning Israel, who, having just emerged from the wilderness, were encamped on his borders. His instructions were: "*Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. . . .* And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo I am come unto thee: *have I now any power at all to say anything?* The word that God putteth in my mouth, that I shall speak" (Num. xxii. 35, 38).

The opening of the mouth of Balaam's ass is an example another way: "The Lord opened the mouth of the ass." The critics cannot suggest any explanation here on the score of idiomatic description: so they clean deny the record, in spite of its endorsement by Peter (2 Pet. ii. 16), of whom Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me." This is mere literary rowdyism which is not made anything different by the patronage of the wise of this world who aim

by hook or by crook above all things to get rid of the authority of the Bible.

Another illustration in a different line of things is found in the history of Elisha. The Shunamite woman went to him in grief at the loss of her son. "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi (his servant) came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone for her soul is vexed within her, *and the Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me*" (2 Kings iv. 27). In other cases Elisha was able to "tell the King of Israel the words which the King of Syria spoke in his bedchamber" (vi. 12). Here was a limitation of the discernment of the prophets expressly attributable to the divine will. If it had been a natural gift, it would have always acted. See also the expression concerning the days of Samuel's childhood: "In those days, there was no open vision" (1 Sam. iii. 1). This could never have occurred if the open vision had been subject to human will.

The same reflection is forced home upon us by the notorious fact that for 1,800 years (since Israel's dispersion), there has been neither prophet, prophecy, nor vision among them. If the prophetic gift were normal to the human temperament, there would have been no interruption to the prophetic succession.

How immeasurably is this consideration strengthened by the fact that this suspension of revelation was foretold: "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a sacrifice and without . . . an ephod and without teraphim" (Hos. iii. 4). "We see not our signs . . . there is no longer any prophet" (Psa. lxxiv. 9). "I will hide my face from the house of Jacob" (Deut. xxxii. 20; Isaiah viii. 17). "Night shall be unto you that *ye shall not have a vision*: it shall be dark unto you that ye shall not divine: the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark unto them. Then the seers shall be ashamed . . . for there is no answer from God" (Micah iii. 6). "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land—not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing the word of the Lord*. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east: they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find" (Amos viii. 11).

“But there were false prophets also among the people” (2 Pet. ii. 1). Some people use this as an argument against the true. In reality it establishes the true. It is according to human nature everywhere to imitate the genuine. The very occurrence of the phrase “false prophets” is a proof that there were true prophets. But then, say the objectors, how are we to know the one from the other? The question is provided for in the Scriptures. “*When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him*” (Jer. xxviii. 9). Here is a test that cannot fail. It applies triumphantly to the true prophets. They have foretold the future in a hundred matters, and in nothing has their word failed. Now, as man has no knowledge of the future, the only explanation of their having truthfully foretold it, is the fact of God having spoken to them.

The false prophets had had no communication from God. As God says: “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied . . . they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart” (Jer. xxiii. 21, 26). “They speak a vision of their own heart, not out of the mouth of the Lord” (verse 16). Again, “They prophesy a lie in my name” (xxvii. 15). Again, “Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow *their own spirit* and have SEEN NOTHING . . . saying, The Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them.”

They were to be practically confuted thus: “Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name and I have sent them not, yet they say, *Sword and famine shall not be in this land*,—BY SWORD AND FAMINE SHALL THOSE PROPHETS BE CONSUMED, and the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword, and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives nor their sons nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them” (Jer. xiv. 15-16).

The character and the policy of the false prophets distinguished them entirely from the true. Whereas the work of the true prophets was one prolonged protest against Israel's disobedience of the divine law and threatening of dire consequences, bringing upon them the ill-will of the people—(see for example, Jer. xxvi. 1-15), the false

prophets tried to ingratiate themselves with the people by flattering them and assuring them that all was well: "They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, *Ye shall have peace*: and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, *No evil shall come upon you*" (Jer. xxiii. 17).

James puts forward the true prophets as "an example of *suffering affliction* and of patience" (Jas. v. 10). And Paul says of them, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. xi. 37-38).

There is therefore a complete answer to those who ask how we are to distinguish between the false prophets and the true. We know the true because all their words have come to pass in the dispersion and affliction of Israel, and in the evolution of Gentile power in the earth (Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and her subdivisions). We know them in another and very conclusive way. The Scriptures of the true prophets have been preserved, though the nation that preserved them was the destroyer of the true prophets themselves. There is no trace of the false prophets preserved except in the condemnations of them that occur in the true. And these Scriptures so preserved have received the direct attestation of the resurrected Jesus as the word of the living God.

But though the prophets were true prophets of the future, they were not fortune tellers or conjurers. Israel did not apply to them for knowledge of private affairs. The course of private affairs was sometimes predicted in the course of their work, as when Abijah told Jeroboam's wife that her sick son would not get better (1 Kings xiv. 12-13), or Elijah told Ahab of the bloody ending of Ahab and his wife because of their murder of Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 19), or Isaiah informed Hezekiah of his recovery and the lengthening of his days (Isaiah xxxviii. 4).

But in all such instances, it will be found that the incidents of private life when prophetically illuminated by the light of inspiration, were ingredients in a public situation of affairs in which God was speaking for the guidance of His people, and were

never the subject of treatment for private behoof, as in the case of witches, familiar-spiritists, sorcerers and soothsayers, and other kinds of impostors.

Still less, were they made the occasion of extorting fees as in the case of various heathen practitioners. The two things were as far removed as light and darkness, both in character and treatment. The prophets were "the messengers of the Lord of Hosts," whose messages were delivered "without money and without price." They were examples of righteousness to Israel and the appointed heirs of life eternal, as Jesus recognises. The empirics and pretenders of all kinds, who professed magical powers and knowledge of the occult (a class who abounded among the neighbouring nations), are denounced throughout the prophets as evil men, whom Israel were not only forbidden to follow or consult, but commanded by the law of Moses to destroy.





CHAPTER II.

ANGELS AND PROPHETS : FROM MOSES TO ELIJAH.

THE question of who the prophets were, is delivered from all the fogs created by learning when we accept the Bible's own simple testimony on the subject—against the reception of which, not a single good reason can be given. The propensity of human learning is to divest the prophets of any divine authority, and to bring them into the category of human thoughts and utterances. The testimony of the Bible is that the prophets were men whom God chose as vehicles of His own utterance and communication to the nation whom He had established for Himself. The testimony is explicit, simple, and clear. Here are samples :

“Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel . . . *I have sent unto you all my servants, the prophets* . . . saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them” (Jer. xxxv. 15); “My words and my statutes which I commanded my servants, the prophets” (Zech. i. 6); “I sent unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh do not this abominable thing which I hate” (Jer. xlv. 4); “The Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways and keep my commandments” (2 Kings xvii. 13); “God . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. i. 1).

Not only have we these general declarations of a divine authorisation of the words of the prophets, in a sense excluding literary authorship on their part, but we have express instruction as to the method by which those words became the words of God. And this instruction fences off all idea of those words being the words of the prophets in any sense of natural gift. Natural gift could not produce most of them. They are carefully discriminated from the words that a man might speak from natural impulse, and are expressly attributed to a divine impulse with which the prophet had nothing to do.

“Prophecy came NOT in old time *by the will of man*, but holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Pet. i. 21). “Thou testifiedst against them *by thy Spirit in thy prophets*” (Neh. ix. 30). When this divine impulse was on a man, he could not resist it, as we learnt from the case of Jeremiah, already referred to (Jer. xx. 9). In the case of Ezekiel, its action is described circumstantially thus: “And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet. . . . And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them When I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God” (Ezek. ii. 2: iii. 4, 27).

A prophet might therefore be compared to an electric lamp with the electrical current turned on. Detached from the current, he was as dark as any other man; but with the power of the Spirit aglow, he showed the brightness of the mind of God in words which were the words of God, and not the words of the prophet. God alleges His connection with the matter thus:

“I have spoken by the prophets, I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets” (Hos. xii. 10). “I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth” (Hos. vi. 5). “The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets” (Amos iii. 7).

The operation is illustrated in the case of the seventy elders appointed to assist Moses in the administration of the law in the congregation. “The Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy of the elders of Israel and I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them. And Moses went out and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord took of the Spirit that was upon him (Moses) and gave it unto the seventy elders. And it came to pass that when the Spirit rested upon them that they prophesied. *But there remained two of the men in the camp* and the Spirit rested upon them. And they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle, and *they prophesied in the camp*” (Num. xi. 16-26). Here was a simultaneous touching of seventy men by the Spirit, irrespective of locality, and being touched

they were affected and could not but speak, "as the Spirit gave them utterance."

So at a crisis of danger in Judah, when Jehoshaphat the king held a public assembly in the temple for prayer, "Upon Jahaziel . . . came the Spirit of the Lord *in the midst of the congregation*. And he said, Harken ye, all Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and thou King Jehoshaphat. *Thus saith the Lord unto you*, Be not afraid or dismayed by reason of this great multitude (that cometh against you). . . . Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord. . . . to-morrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you" (2 Chron. xx. 14).

The simple truth is that the prophets were men *by whom God spoke*. Their words were not their own words. What they said, they said under the power of an impulse extraneous to their own faculties—which explains a good deal.

Among other things, it explains why they did not always understand what the Spirit uttered through them: as stated by Peter: "The prophets have enquired and searched diligently . . . searching *what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify* when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. i. 10-11).

The theories of learning assume that in dealing with the writings of the prophets, they are dealing with writings of an ordinary human origin. This renders it impossible that they can account for them or render them intelligible. They ignore the first principle of the subject and necessarily create confusion. The only key to the scripture of Moses and the prophets is their own truthfulness. The fact that explains all is the fact declared by Paul and Peter, and exhibited in their entire constitution; that God wrought with Moses, spoke by the prophets, and impelled them to commit to writing some portion of His word by them.

This fact cannot be taken away without arbitrary and unjustifiable and presumptuous violence. It may be denied, but the denial is mere assertion on the part of men who personally know nothing about it, but who wish to exclude God if they can. The simple reading of the writings in any translation whatever is sufficient to justify the

implicit confidence placed in them by Jesus and the apostles as the word of God.

The prophets very early made their appearance in the midst of Israel. Why need we trouble with the etymology of their name? Etymology may furnish a useful clue where particulars are not known: but when we know the facts of a case, etymology is useless, and may even be harmful in raising a dust over what we know—as if a man should try to learn the nature of electricity from an analysis of the term, and find himself floundering among amber as the source of the mysterious energy instead of being the mere accidental substance of its discovery.

The prophet was also called a seer (both terms are sometimes used in the same sentence—Isaiah xxx. 10; 2 Chron. xxix. 25). The term “seer” (*chozeh*, from the verb to see, and *roeh* likewise) expressed the fact that a man whose eyes God opened saw things unknown to normal human faculty (Num. xxiv. 3-4). The term prophet (*nabi*) from the Hebrew verb *to flow forth*, intimated that a man so illuminated could not repress the ideas afflating him, as in the case of the men in the house of Cornelius, upon whom the Holy Spirit having been poured out, all heard them speak with tongues (Acts x. 45-46).

That is all that the deepest learning amounts to on the etymology of the subject: only that learning conceals the part of God in the matter, and tries to make out the seeing and the outpouring to be something natural.

The popular idea that the prophets began with Isaiah and ended with Malachi is due to the mere arrangement of those prophetic books that have been preserved. The names of the prophets between Isaiah and Malachi represent but the merest fraction of the prophets that arose—a very important fraction to us, certainly—the most important that could be imagined; for without the books of these prophets, our knowledge of the mind of God as expressed through the prophets would be scanty to the famine point. Without these writings the prophets would be to us but a mere list of names, with the fragmentary sayings recorded in the historic books. The intensity with which, in that case, we should have desired to possess the sayings of the prophets in some extended form, we may only judge by the ecstatic appreciation with which wise men read and

value the actual compilation we have. Still, as a matter of fact, the advent of the prophets goes back to the very beginning of Israel's history, and their activity forms a concurrent stream in that history, with little intermissions throughout, until the day threatened, broke upon Israel at last, when "the sun went down over the prophets," and there was "no answer from God."

We may say with truth that the prophets began before Moses passed off the scene. His words on the occasion of the appointing of his seventy helpers recognise their existence as a class (in the abstract, at all events), and also indicate for us that which constituted their prophetship. "Enviest thou, for my sake," said he to Joshua, who proposed the suppression of the two of the seventy who were prophesying in the camp (Eldad and Medad, who did not come to the muster at the tabernacle): "would God that all the Lord's people were *prophets*, and that the Lord would *put his spirit upon them*" (Num. xi. 29).

For a man to have the Spirit of God operatively upon him (as distinguished from a mere state of natural faculty) was for a man to be a prophet (not necessarily a foreteller of future events, though that power was present if necessary, but) a revealer, a discloser, an utterer of the divine mind to which man in a normal state of nature has no access. In this sense, Moses himself was a prophet, and the greatest among the prophets before Christ. He is so described: "By a *prophet* the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" (Hos. xii. 13); "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (Deut. xxxiv. 10). Moses also stands at the head of all the prophets in having had direct intercourse with God, and in having foretold the destiny of Israel for ages in advance, actually before their entry into the land (Deut. xxxi.-xxxii.; also Lev. xxvi., and Deut. xxviii.).

But it is in the history of Israel after the death of Moses that we are now to look more particularly for "the ministry of the prophets."

This ministry is not a prominent feature during the times of the judges, which lasted from the division of the land under Joshua until Samuel the prophet—a period of about 450 years. The judges were not prophets, though prophets were in one or two cases judges

(*e.g.*, Moses and Samuel). A judge was a leader possessed of legal authority over the people in all things, temporal and spiritual; whereas a prophet was a man qualified by the possession of the Spirit to teach the right way, and to express God's thoughts concerning the doings of the people, but without authority to enforce the law. The judges might be considered as elective kings divinely raised up in the ways of Providence for the deliverance and protection of Israel; while the prophet was a mouthpiece of divine utterance in their midst, for message, expostulation, and reproof—as the situation might call for. It was a happy thing for Israel when the two things were united in the same person, as in the case of Samuel. But as a matter of ordinary experience, the two functions were separated, so that Israel had to look to the judge for the settlement of all questions of law and judgment in temporal matters; and to the prophet for information of God's thoughts. To be a judge did not necessarily require inspiration, but no man could be a prophet except by the Spirit of God upon him. This discrimination between the two offices greatly helps the understanding of the narrative.

The first specifically-mentioned prophet after the settlement of the land under Joshua, was between the judgeship of Deborah and Gideon—nearly two hundred years after the crossing of the Jordan. His mission was a mission of reproof against Israel's declension from the ways of God. As a result of this declension, Israel had come into great trouble at the hands of the Midianites, who had come into the land “as grasshoppers for multitude” and destructiveness. Israel “cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites,” and “the Lord sent a prophet” to them to explain the situation, which probably, in the lapse of time, they had ceased to understand.

No man could have told them God's relation to the matter, or could have confidently maintained that God had anything to do with it at all. Human helplessness in this respect will be manifest to anyone who attempts the interpretation of the modern situation—that is, who attempts to answer the simple questions, What does God think of European life? or has He any knowledge or regard in the case one way or other? It requires the Spirit of God to answer such questions, and the Spirit of God coming on a man makes him a prophet, or a vehicle of the expression of the divine mind.

In the case before us, "the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel," with this message: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. And I delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians and out of the hands of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God: fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but *ye have not obeyed my voice*" (Jud. vi. 10). Israel humbled themselves, and there shortly followed deliverance by the hand of Gideon in a miraculous manner.

There had been a similar message of expostulation more than a hundred years before, namely, some time after Israel had subdued the land and had settled comfortably in their new possessions, but without that thorough expulsion of the Canaanites which had been commanded. Joshua was dead and all the elders that overlived him, and there had arisen "another generation which knew not the Lord nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Jud. ii. 8-10). The new generation had gradually relaxed their views of the stringency of the command to have nothing to do with the Canaanites but to destroy them. There is a long list in the 1st chapter of the Judges of cases in which the various tribal commanders had neglected to expel their Canaanitish neighbours, and had settled down into social dealings with them (see Jud. i. 21-35).

In this case, not a prophet, but "an angel" came to the tribes living in the northern districts of the land, and spoke with such effect that the multitude who heard his words at a place afterwards called Bochim (weeping) because of the effect produced, broke out into lamentation and tears. The angel said, "I made you to go up out of Egypt and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers. And I said . . . ye shall throw down their altars. But *ye have not obeyed my voice*. Why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you (any more), but they shall be as thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare unto you" (Jud. ii. 1-5).

A prophet is a messenger (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16) and in this sense, an angel (which means messenger). But there are higher messengers than mortal men—messengers that "excel in strength"

(Psa. ciii. 20), and whose countenances are "very terrible" (Jud. xiii. 6), whose normal aspect is that of spirit brightness (Acts x. 3-30; Matt. xxviii. 2-3) and concerning whom Jesus says the accepted of mankind will be made equal to them and will die no more (Luke xx. 36). It is evident from the language of the angel of Bochim that he belonged to this class, and was no mere messenger. An ordinary prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord": this messenger says, "I made you to go up out of Egypt. . . . I said ye shall make no league," &c. This is a peculiarity perpetually recurring in the Bible record of the works of God among men. The angels speak as if they were God, like the angel of the bush: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Ex. iii. 2-6). The explanation of this we have seen on former occasions (notably *The Ways of Providence* and *The Visible Hand of God*). It is referred to now as proving that the angel of Bochim was no mere prophetic messenger, but one of the angels of almighty power.

It is a striking circumstance that the first reprover of Israel's waywardness should be an immortal angel, and the long succession of the reprovers who came after should be mortal men. It is in harmony with the angelic origin of Israel's commonwealth. Stephen told the Sanhedrim, "they received the law *by the disposition* (or mediation) *of angels*" (Acts vii. 53). Paul also refers to the law as "The word spoken by angels" (Heb. ii. 2). God had said, "Behold I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice: provoke him not: for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him" (Ex. xxiii. 20).

This appears to have been the personage who introduced himself to Joshua, outside the walls of Jericho, as "captain of the Lord's host" (Josh. v. 13-15). What more natural than that he should openly reprove the whole nation when Joshua was dead, and the current of things was setting in the wrong way? But afterwards, when apostasy became the established and incorrigible habit of the nation, it seemed equally natural that not angels but the mortal descendants of Levi should be employed as rebukers of the nation's folly. The angels retired into the background. God hid His face in the spirit of Hos. v. 15: "I will go and return

unto my place till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." At last, even the prophets were removed. "We see not our signs: there are no more any prophets." Israel has been "many days" without the privileges with which they began their national existence, as foretold (Hos. iii. 4).

SAMUEL, under the interesting circumstances recorded in the first three chapters of 1 Sam., was "established to be a prophet of the Lord." For a long preceding season, there had been "no open vision," and "the word of the Lord was precious in those days" (iii. 1). But in Samuel's lifetime, there was a great change in this respect. Both "the prophets" and the "sons of the prophets" became a flourishing institution. We read in connection with the anointing of Saul as king that "*a company of the prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. And it came to pass that when all that knew him beforetime saw that behold he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?*" (1 Sam. x. 10-12).

A still more interesting illustration is found at the close of the days both of Samuel and Saul—a case which not only shows the prophetic institution in full and vigorous operation under the hand of Samuel, but shows the ascendant and irresistible operation of inspiration upon those who become the subjects of it—whether willing or not. Saul had become the enemy of David: "So David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him: and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. And it was told Saul . . . and Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and *they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. Then went he—Saul—also to Ramah and came to a great well that is in Sachu, and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah, and the Spirit of God was upon him also and he went*

on and *prophesied* until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he *stripped off his clothes* also and prophesied before Samuel in like manner and *lay down naked all that day and all that night*” (1 Sam. xix. 18-24).

When Samuel died, Saul was left to his own resources. The company of prophets organised under Samuel would probably scatter. At all events, “When Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, *nor by prophets*” (1 Sam. xviii. 6). Then came Saul’s death, and David’s reign. DAVID himself was a prophet, as Peter informs us (Acts ii. 29-30). His prophethood may be said to have dated from the youthful day of his anointing by Samuel in his father’s house, for we read on that occasion, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon David *from that day forward*” (1 Sam. xvi. 13). And it may be said to have gone right up to the day of his death, for in “the last words of David,” we read, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was on my tongue” (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-2).

It is this fact that gives to the Psalms of David the divine character attributed to them in all apostolic allusion (Acts i. 16 : iv. 25 : xiii. 33, and many other places). They are the writings of the Spirit of God, and not the natural literary effusions of David at all, as Jesus repeatedly recognises (Matt. xxii. 13 ; Mar. xii. 36 ; Luke xxiv. 44). But though David was himself a prophet, it did not exclude the accessory activity of other prophets during his life and reign.

Thus the prophet GAD gave him counsel while he was yet a fugitive in the lifetime of Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 5). Thus also “NATHAN the prophet” revealed to him the covenant of the throne after David had been king some years (2 Sam. vii.), and by the hand of the same prophet, the divine rebuke was administered in the matter of Bathsheba (2 Sam. xii. 1). By Gad also, who on this occasion is called “David’s seer” (implying a special vehicle of communication with God), God offered David the choice of three punishments in punishment of the political pride of the census (2 Sam. xxiv. 11). “Nathan the prophet” was also very prominent in the proceedings connected with the accession of Solomon and the pretensions and defeat of Adonijah (1 Kings i.).

At the end of Solomon's reign, when Solomon's departures from the right way were exciting God's displeasure, "the prophet АНУЈАН, the Shilonite," appears on the scene to intimate the coming rupture of the kingdom, and the transfer of ten tribes to Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 29-39). His words are a direct message from "The Lord God of Israel," in the first person. Then, when the revolution had taken place, and Jeroboam was established on the throne as king of the ten tribes, we read of a nameless prophet, "*a man of God* out of Judah," journeying to Bethel "by the word of the Lord," with a heavy message to Jeroboam, whose headquarters were there, and who was behaving worse than Solomon (1 Kings xiii. 1-10). The controlling action of inspiration is signally illustrated in the sequel to his message.

There were present on the occasion of the prophet's message and attendant incidents, the sons of another prophet—an old prophet who dwelt at Bethel. The old prophet was at home. When his sons came home and told him what had happened, his interest was strongly excited in "the man of God out of Judah," who, in obedience to the Lord's command, had started on his journey home as soon as his message was delivered, without staying at Bethel for any refreshments. Having ascertained the route he had taken, he started after him to bring him back, and found him resting on the roadside, under a tree. The old prophet asked the man of God to come back with him and accept his hospitality. The man of God informed the old prophet of the command he had received, to "neither eat bread nor drink water at Bethel." The old prophet said, "I am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But he lied unto him.*" The man of God either did not suspect falsehood or gave in to a proposal that was agreeable to his fatigued feelings, contrary to the command that he himself had received. He went back with the old prophet, and entered into his house. The old prophet would, of course, be anxious to keep up the false impression he had made on the mind of the man of God. But while they sat at table together, the old prophet, under the impulse of the Spirit of God, broke through all the rules of hospitality, and "cried" to the man of God thus: "Thus saith the Lord, Foras-

much as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water, thy carcase shall not come into the sepulchre of thy fathers." When he was gone, a lion met him by the way and slew him. The case is also important as showing how necessary it is that we should act on what we ourselves know to be the will of God, and not allow any second party to come between, even if he should say, "I am a prophet as thou art."

Then we have Jeroboam, several years after he had been king, sending his wife to "Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people," to know how it should fare with his son who was sick (1 Kings xiv. 1-2). Not that Ahijah was a fortune-teller. It was the idea of Jeroboam, who was an unenlightened man, that as Ahijah had correctly informed him of his elevation to the throne at a time when such an event was most improbable, he would likely be able to inform him about the destiny of his son. Ahijah's correct prophecy of the kingdom was a direct message from God, and not a reading of the future by Ahijah: but Jeroboam probably did not understand, and sent his wife to Ahijah as anyone would send a messenger to a soothsayer. Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of age: "And the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son: for he is sick. Thus and thus shalt thou say unto her; for it shall be when she cometh in that she shall feign herself to be another woman. And it was so when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in at the door that he said, Come in thou wife of Jeroboam: why feignest thou thyself to be another? I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go tell Jeroboam, thus saith the Lord God." Then followed a message from God, telling of the fatal result of the sickness and of coming disaster to Jeroboam's house because of Jeroboam's disregard of the law.

The next prophet appears in about a generation afterwards, in the reign of Baasha, by whom the evil prophecy against Jeroboam was fulfilled: for "it came to pass when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam: he left not to the house of Jeroboam any

that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the Lord which he spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite" (1 Kings xv. 29). "By the hand of the prophet, JEHU, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord, against Baasha and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him" (1 Kings xvi. 7).

Several reigns later, the prophets as a class come into distinct view in what is said concerning the action of Jezebel, the wife of Ahab: that she "*cut off the prophets of the Lord.*" At the same time, "OBADIAH took an hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water." Jezebel was the daughter of a Canaanitish king (Ethbaal, King of the Sidonians—1 Kings xvi. 31): and as a worshipper of Baal, she had an aversion to "the prophets of the Lord," whom she sought thus to get rid of, substituting "the prophets of Baal" in their place. The latter were brought to a public test at a time when "ELIJAH, the Tishbite," imagined he was the only survivor of the Lord's prophets (xix. 10). There had been a water famine for more than three years; and Ahab, who superstitiously attributed it to the magical power of Elijah, said to Elijah when he found him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And Elijah answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house (have done so), in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. And now (let us bring the matter to a test). Send and gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the grove, four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table . . . the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

Ahab acted on this proposal. The prophets of Baal were duly mustered in the presence of a multitude of the Israelites. Elijah came to them and said: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them give us two bullocks; let them choose one bullock for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood and put no fire under, and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Yahweh. And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

The people applauded the proposal, and the test sacrifices were offered. The prophets of Baal "took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us.' But there was no voice nor any that answered." When mid-day was past, and the Baalite sacrifice was a manifest failure, "Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me." When he had completed the arrangements for offering the second bullock, he said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water."

He then offered a brief prayer to "the Lord God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Israel," requesting that He should let it be known that day before the multitude that He was God. "Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said, Yahweh, he is God; Yahweh, he is God. And Elijah said, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there" (1 Kings xviii. 17-40).

Elijah was not the only prophet of the Lord surviving at that time, though he thought so. Not only were there seven thousand men who had stood faithfully aloof from the national apostasy (xix. 18), but there were other prophets who began to show themselves again after the slaughter of the priests of Baal. One of them came to Ahab during the siege of Samaria, and promised the destruction of the Syrian besiegers, which came to pass (1 Kings xx. 13). The prophet also came to him on two subsequent occasions, and gave him valuable precautionary information (verses 22, 28). When Ahab, in harmony with that information, had got the Syrian king, Benhadad, into his power, but had let him go instead of destroying him, another divine messenger, "*a certain man of the sons of the prophets,*" came to him with a message of reproof, at which "the King of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria" (1 Kings xx. 43).

At the end of Ahab's reign, there was quite a dramatic illustration of the relative positions occupied in the kingdom of the ten tribes by the false prophets and the true. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, having consented to help Ahab in an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth Gilead, Jehoshaphat, with an evident uneasiness, suggested enquiry at the word of the Lord as to the success of the expedition. Ahab, in response, "gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men," propounding this question for answer : "Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" The answer was prompt and unanimous enough : "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hands of the king."

But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Why he should be dissatisfied we can only guess. The four hundred prophets who were paraded in his presence by Ahab were professedly "prophets of the Lord"—no longer prophets of Baal ; evidently the slaughter of Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel by Elijah had ended that caste. Still, they were evidently of the same sort—flippant time-servers whose ruling aim was to please the king : men professing to be prophets, but who were not so, and therefore 'false prophets—prophets of the deceit of their own hearts," and not of the word of the Lord. So Jehoshaphat wished to know if there was no other prophet besides the four hundred.

Ahab answered, "There is yet one man, MICAIAH, son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil." Jehoshaphat had probably heard of this man, and he was sent for. The messenger that went for him, told him that the prophets were unanimous in their prediction of good : "Let thy word, I pray thee," said he, "be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good." Micaiah's rejoinder was that of a true man : "What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." When brought to the two kings, he foretold in a parable the disastrous ending of the enterprise for Ahab. The head of the four hundred (Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah) went straight to Micaiah and hit him on the face, saying, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" Micaiah's answer was an appeal to the logic of events : "Thou shalt see in that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself " (1 Kings xxii. 25). Then the king gives

lordly command to have Micaiah, "this fellow," strictly imprisoned, "till I return in peace." What could be more to the point than Micaiah's response: "If thou return at all in peace, then hath the Lord not spoken by me."

This is the great test of all men professing to be prophets: Do their words come to pass? It is the test that the Scriptures recommend, and it is certainly the one that plain sense would lead every man to apply: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, *if the thing follow not nor come to pass*, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken" (Deut. xviii. 22). Tried by this simple rule, not only are the false prophets of all ages found out, but the true prophets are shown and established. This simple rule proves the divinity of the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets beyond all cavil. All that they have foretold has come to pass, down to date. If this be the case for 3,000 years past, how can reason doubt concerning that which still remains to be fulfilled?





CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHETS AND THE KINGS: ELIJAH TO ISAAH.

WHEN Ahab died, ELIJAH, the prophet, was still in the land of the living. Elijah's figure, next to Moses, stands out as the brightest among the prophets. Though he did not write a book and have a place in Scripture in this sense, he more sensibly influenced the nation's affairs, and more strikingly manifested the power and glory of God than any of those whose names are on the books of the prophets. He did not sink out of view with his flight from Jezebel. He was in seclusion for a time, but he came out of that seclusion early in the reign of Ahaziah, Ahab's successor. Ahaziah had an accident that was likely to prove fatal, and being anxious to know how it would turn out, he sent messengers to Ekron, a Philistine city, to enquire at the God of that city (Baalzebub—afterwards known as Beelzebub) whether he would recover.

While this disgraceful scene was being enacted—(a King of Israel sending a public commission of enquiry of a heathen god that was no god, concerning a matter that none but God could tell), the angel of the Lord ordered Elijah to leave his seclusion and go and intercept the messengers at Samaria, and tell them that the King would die. The messengers returned to the King with this message. They did not know who Elijah was. They spoke of him as "a man that came up to meet them." The King asked what sort of a man he was. His enquiry evoked the only personal description we have of any of the prophets in the Scripture. The messengers said "He was a hairy man and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins." This was not much of a description, certainly. But it was enough to enable Ahaziah to recognise him. He said, "It is Elijah, the Tishbite."

Ahaziah's father had tried in vain to get hold of Elijah. Ahaziah thought the opportunity was now favourable for effecting his arrest. He sent a military troop, fifty strong, under a captain,

to go after him and bring him back. If we think it strange that a sick king, under a prophetic intimation of imminent death, should be guilty of this madness, we must remember that the superstitiousness capable of believing in a heathen idol would naturally regard the powers of Elijah as magical powers resident in Elijah himself which could be nullified by imprisonment and death. The captain and his troop discovered Elijah on the top of a hill, and summoned him in the King's name to give himself up.

There is a time for everything under the sun. There is a time for the servants of God to be passive and to resist not evil, as when Jesus laid down his life, and as when his brethren, in obedience to his commandments, have to follow his example. But there is a time for the avenging hand to be lifted—as when Joshua was commanded to destroy the Canaanitish nations for their wickedness. Elijah was the prophet of God, not merely to teach the right way, but to punish Israel's departure therefrom. Hence a famine of three-and-a-half years: and hence now the destruction of this captain and his fifty men by fire sent down at the prophet's command. Another captain and another fifty men perished in like manner. A third captain and a third fifty, taking a more respectful attitude, were spared, and Elijah, by direction of the angel, went down with them to the king and personally delivered the message of death, and came away again in safety.

This incident concluded the work of Elijah, and the time came "when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind" (2 Kings ii. 1). It is an extraordinary fact that Elijah alone of the prophets (Enoch, the seventh from Adam, excepted) should not die. Paul's comment in Enoch's case probably furnishes the explanation of the case of Elijah: "Before his translation, he had this testimony that *he pleased God*" (Heb. xi. 5). The one feature specially visible in Elijah's life is the one he referred to when excusing himself for having fled from the face of Jezebel: "I have been *very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts*: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword."

God is jealous of His honour, though full of compassion and kindness. We may therefore understand how pleasing to Him would

be Elijah's undiluted and untiring zeal on His behalf. For the same reason we may understand how God would feel at liberty (as we might express it) to exempt Elijah from the common lot of men, in translating him like Enoch, "that he should not see death." The offensiveness of sin, which brings death, is its violation of the divine supremacy, and therefore of the divine honour. Its antidote, in the sense of allowing God to forgive, is the recognition, the assertion, the vindication of that divine supremacy. This is what was done in the condemnation of sin in the crucifixion of Christ. It is what, in another form, "pleased God" in the case of Elijah, and admitted of his removal without death.

The translation of Elijah, as a miracle, will be found fully considered in *The Visible Hand of God*.

When Elijah was removed, ELISHA, whom God had nominated to him as his successor (1 Kings xvi. 19), took Elijah's place as the representative and vindicator of the honour of God in the midst of Israel. We read that "the sons of the prophets," when they saw him, said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha, and they came to meet him and bowed themselves before him" (2 Kings ii. 15). The sons of the prophets had known him some time previously as Elijah's companion, as the chapter relating to Elijah's removal shows. That God had named him as Elijah's successor would also probably be known to them. At all events, after Elijah's removal, we find Elisha and the sons of the prophets living together as one family in various places.

Incidents in their communal life show the powerful activity of the Spirit of God at the command of Elisha: *e.g.*, the healing of the bitter spring at Jericho; the destruction by two she-bears of forty-two young blasphemers; the succouring of an army with a supply of water in a desert place; increasing a widow's pot of oil to many gallons; the cure of a great woman's barrenness; the subsequent raising of her dead son to life; the antidoting of poisoned food; the multiplication of a small supply of food to feed a hundred men; the cure of Naaman's leprosy; the smiting of Gehazi with leprosy, &c. (2 Kings ii. 21, 24 : iii. 15-20 : iv. 14-17, 38, 42 : v. 1-14, 25-27). He likewise influenced the public affairs of the country by the power at his disposal, for we find it a matter of notoriety that he reported to the

King of Israel the words spoken by the King of Syria in his chamber (vi. 12); and that he led a Syrian army, smitten with blindness, into the heart of their enemy's country, not to be destroyed, but to be hospitably entertained and dismissed (vi. 19); and afterwards anointed a successor to the throne (ix. 1-9). In his very death, the power resident with him was manifest; a dead man being hurriedly thrown upon his bones received such an electric shock from the contact that life revived (xiii. 20).

Elisha, like Elijah, departed without writing a book. His life was more an acting than a literary life: and his actions were more characterised by the miraculous element than any of the prophets except Moses—agreeably to the saying of Elijah (2 Kings ii. 10), that if he saw him after his elevation from the earth, his petition that he should be endowed with a double portion of Elijah's spirit would be granted.

It strikes the mind at first as a strange thing that such a display of miraculous power should occur in connection with that section of the nation (the ten tribes) which apostatised from the law and rebelled against the house of David. If we may speculate as to its object, we are probably not far wrong in supposing it was intended to preserve alive the elements of faithfulness that were at work in spite of the national apostasy, which might otherwise have been extinguished by the influence of idolatrous kings and rulers. God told Elijah that He had "reserved to himself seven thousand men that had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." This is probably a representative rather than a literal number. Whether or no, it shows that here and there, throughout the ten tribes, there were families that remained true to the law of the Lord, in the midst of the general declension.

To ensure the continuance of these, and also to maintain a divine testimony against the national corruption, and perchance, influence them to return to the God of their fathers, God showed His hand in their midst by the notable work of Elijah and Elisha. The spirit of divine compassion was the moving spring of the ministry of the prophets, as we learn from the statement at the close of their history: "The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers . . . *because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place*" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15). The practical effect of

the Elijah-Elisha work is visible in the almost over-weening regard in which Elijah is held among the Jews to the present day; and in another form, may be traced in the racial faithfulness to the law of Moses among those masses of Jewish population who are the undoubted descendants of the ten tribes in Russia, Poland, Roumania, Austria, and Germany. Such a thing as an idolatrous Jew is rarely to be found in the land of their captivity, though they were so prone to idolatry when they lived in their own land.

After the death of Elisha, it would seem as if the prophetic institution had gradually faded away. We read no more of "the sons of the prophets" during the hundred years or so that elapsed from the death of Elisha to the captivity of the ten tribes (B.C. 724). We read only of one or two individual prophets who stand forth for a moment in the gathering darkness like solitary twinkling stars in the advancing night: such as the mention of JONAH, son of Amittai, as a prophet whose word was fulfilled in a temporary restoration of Israel's coasts under Jeroboam II.; and in the indication that the written prophecies of HOSEA and AMOS covered the reigns of one or two of the last of the ten-tribe kings (Hosea i. 1; Amos i. 1).

There is a greater activity of the prophetic function, and less of the miraculous element, in the reigns of the kingdom of Judah. May we suppose that this was because of the greater faithfulness of Judah. Miracles are "a sign to unbelievers," to use Paul's expression; they are intended to create faith. Where faith already exists, they are superfluous. So with regard to the activity of prophecy. Paul in the same connection observes that prophecy is for the edification and comfort of them that believe. Judah, nationally speaking, was of this class, though with periods of lapse, consequently, prophesying was more common among them than among the ten tribes, while the sons of the prophets as a wonder-working institution was more common among the latter. Most of the books of the prophets were produced in connection with the kingdom of Judah—a fact which may have its explanation in the suggestion just made—which is greatly strengthened by the fact that the Lord Jesus sprang out of that kingdom.

The prophets that appeared in Judah, after the revolt of the ten tribes, were twenty-two in number, and twenty-five if Hosea, Amos,

and Jonah be included. The reason for doubting the propriety of their inclusion is that though their prophecies related to affairs of Judah, they themselves may have appeared in Israel or the ten tribes, as they treat of the affairs of the ten tribes. Of the whole number, sixteen wrote books which have been preserved, namely, those whose names appear in the compilation of Scripture. Some whose names are not on the list of the twenty-five, wrote books which have not been preserved, viz.: NATHAN the prophet, GAD the seer (1 Chron. xxix. 29), AHLIAH the Shilonite and IDDO the seer (1 Chron. ix. 29), Shemaiah (2 Chron. xii. 15).

Some have felt concerned at the absence of these books so referred to in Scripture. There is no need for concern. The books that have been preserved, viz., the "all Scripture" of Paul's declaration to Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 15) are affirmed, on the authority of the Spirit of God, to be sufficient for the making of men "wise unto salvation." If the others had been necessary for their sufficiency in this respect, they would have been preserved. Curiosity might wish to know their contents, but as products of inspiration, the deepest study must have failed to discover in them anything inconsistent with the same inspiration in the other books. It is barely possible they may have contained the casual quotation or two that occur in the New Testament from the Old Testament Scriptures for which nothing corresponding can be found in our present compilation. At all events, the loss is inconsiderable in a spiritual sense. Godly men find the Scriptures as they are, all-sufficient for conviction, enlightenment, holiness, comfort, and salvation. As for those who are not influenced by the Scriptures as we have them, it is very certain that they would be no better off with a hundred extra books.

With regard to those prophetic books that have been preserved, it has to be observed that they are not arranged in the Bible in the order of the date of their production. It was not necessary for spiritual purposes that they should be so arranged, or that order of arrangement would have been observed. Still, it is necessary to know to what period of Israel's history a particular prophetic book belongs. This, as a rule, is indicated in the opening verse of each book; but in one or two cases, we have no such indication, and the position of the book in these cases would be misleading in point

of date—(a comparatively unimportant item in a writing recording divine thoughts).

Ezra is said to have been the servant of God who put the books of Scripture together in one volume in their present order. He was doubtless guided in the matter as much as in the conduct of the expedition from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ezra vii. 6; viii. 21-23). It is, on the whole, in good chronological sequence; but the following is the real order in point of time of the books of the prophets, which we purpose considering in the course of these articles: 1, Jonah (B.C. 862); 2, Joel (B.C. 800); 3, Amos (B.C. 787); 4, Micah (B.C. 750); 5, Hosea (B.C. 740); 6, Nahum (B.C. 713); 7, Isaiah (B.C. 698); 8, Zephaniah (B.C. 630); 9, Habakkuk (B.C. 626); 10, Jeremiah and Lamentations (B.C. 588); 11, Obadiah (B.C. 587); 12, Ezekiel (B.C. 574); 13, Daniel (B.C. 534); 14, Haggai (B.C. 520); 15, Zechariah (B.C. 520); 16, Malachi (B.C. 397). We do not propose to consider them in this order, but in the order in which they occur in the Bible—which is a very good order as regards their size and comparative importance.

The prophets who arose in Judah after the revolt of the ten tribes appear casually in the historic narrative. There was first SHEMAIAH, who was contemporary with that revolt, but comes in sight as a prophet only after its occurrence. He did so at an acute crisis in Israel's affairs. The ten tribes had rebelled and appointed Jeroboam king over them: and Rehoboam, Solomon's son, who had just come to the throne, was contemplating military measures of coercion, when "*The word of God* came unto Shemaiah, the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the King of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house, for *this thing is from me.*" To this message, the people were obedient, and thus the word of a prophet averted civil war.

There was next the case of ODED and his son AZARIAH, twenty years or so later, during the reign of Asa, son of Abijah, son of Rehoboam. Asa began his reign well. He had not been

long on the throne when a huge Ethiopian host came against the little Kingdom of Judah. Asa went out at the head of the small army of Judah, and before the battle, prayed thus: "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help whether with many or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." The battle was a great victory for Judah, and on the return of the army to Jerusalem, "The Spirit of God came upon Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season, Israel hath been without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn to the Lord God of Israel and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times, there was no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city, for God did vex them with all adversity. Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."

These words greatly encouraged Asa, and he proceeded to carry out various reforms with vigour. But later in his reign, another prophet (one HANANI) had another message for him which was not so pleasing. Under the fear of invasion from Baasha, king of the ten tribes, Asa purchased the help of Benhadad, the Syrian king, by despoiling the temple, and sent the gold and silver and treasures to that monarch. When the cloud had passed, "Hanani the seer came to Asa, King of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the King of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims an huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen. Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly:

therefore from henceforth, thou shalt have wars" (2 Chron. xvi. 7). Asa was enraged at this message, and put the seer in prison, and at the same time in his vexation dealt roughly with the people.

The next prophet that appears on the scene is JEHU, the son of Hanani, that is, probably, the son of the seer imprisoned by Asa, of whose end we have no knowledge. (Perhaps he died in prison.) It was during the next reign (Jehoshaphat) that his brief ministry occurred. Jehoshaphat, in all respects but one, a worthy successor of David, had paid a friendly visit to Ahab, the idolatrous king of the ten tribes, and had assisted him in a military expedition against Ramoth Gilead. On his return to Jerusalem, Jehu "went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God" (2 Chron. xix. 2).

Jehoshaphat evidently received this message in a very different way from his father Asa. There is no mention of angry words or spiteful deeds towards the prophet or any one else. On the contrary, Jehoshaphat proceeded to put the affairs of the land more in harmony with the law of God. He took steps to bring the Ephraimites back to the Lord God of their fathers. Moreover, he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you: take heed and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons nor taking of gifts. Also in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites and of the priests and of the chief of the fathers of Israel for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies when they returned to Jerusalem. And he charged them saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart. And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in the cities between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord, and so

wrath come upon you and upon your brethren. This do and ye shall not trespass. And behold Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord, and Zebadiah, the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good" (2 Chron. xix. 4-11).

This was a very different sequel to the prophet's reproof from the rage and the oppression vented by Jehoshaphat's father upon Jehu's father under similar circumstances. It prepares us for the behaviour of Jehoshaphat in the presence of a great national peril that presently threw its shadow over Jerusalem. "Then came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea (Dead Sea) on this side Syria."

"And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord, even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem in the house of the Lord before the new court, and said: "O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest thou not over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend, for ever? And they dwelt therein and have built thee a sanctuary. . . . And now behold the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt. . . . O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company: neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee."

It was in the presence of an immense concourse of people—"all Judah, with their wives and children"—that this prayer was prayed. It was an impressive prayer because very earnest and sincere, and coming out of the mouth of a righteous man.

"Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Aaron,

came the Spirit of the Lord, in the midst of the congregation. And he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou, King Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow, go ye down against them. Behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz: and ye shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves: stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not nor be dismayed. To-morrow, go ye out against them, for the Lord will be with you."

At the hearing of this inspiring message, Jehoshaphat and the whole assembly fell on their faces on the ground and worshipped. What a spectacle! A contrast to the shoutings and yellings of a Gentile mob on the eve of war. After a few moments, the assembly rose to their feet, and the choral priests then, "with a loud voice on high," stood up and praised the Lord God of Israel. Early next morning, the crowds streamed out of Jerusalem to go to meet the advancing foe. As they went forth, Jehoshaphat addressed them: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." Arrived on the ground where they were to take up position, a most singular preparation for battle was made.

Singers went out before the army, and sang, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." "And when they began to sing and to praise," the Lord caused confusion in the ranks of the embattled foe. "The children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another, And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth." For three days, Judah had nothing to do but to strip the dead and take away an enormous booty of "riches and precious jewels." On the fourth day they had an assembly for praise in the valley of Berachah. "And then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to

Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. xx. 1-28).

A finishing cloud in Jehoshaphat's reign brings another prophet into view. Although Jehoshaphat did not resent the reproof administered to him by Jehu, early in his reign, on account of his alliance with Ahab, and so far profited by it that he does not appear to have renewed his intimacy with Ahab, he evidently failed to see clearly the inadmissibility of friendship with that king's house, for after Ahab's death, and after the stirring episode above narrated, he got into friendly relations with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, and went so far as to enter into arrangements for the building of a navy for their joint benefit. The navy was fitted out, and there was a prospect of a good trade to Tarshish, when the Lord interfered: "ELIEZER, son of Dodavah, of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." In accordance with this prophetic intimation, in the language of accomplished fact, "The ships were broken that they were not able to go to Tarshish" (2 Chron. xx. 35-37).

Thus three times during Jehoshaphat's reign did a prophet from the Lord interpose in the affairs of the kingdom—with the object each time of asserting the Lord's authority or administering the Lord's reproof—in total contrast to the policy of intermeddling ecclesiastics in European politics, past or present.

The next instance was in the reign of Jehoshaphat's grandson, Joash. The interval was abundantly illustrative of the mischief of Jehoshaphat's temporising policy towards Ahab's house—rebuked by the prophet. As the result of Jehoshaphat's friendship with Ahab, Jehoshaphat's son, Jeroboam, married Ahab's daughter, and this as a cause is bracketed in the same verse with the dire effects that sprang from it. "He walked in the way of the kings of Israel (the ten tribes), like as did the house of Ahab, for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife, and he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Chron. xxi. 6). To begin with, he murdered all his brothers, to whom Jehoshaphat, his father, had given provincial governorships. Moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused

the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication and "compelled Judah thereto."

These enormities called forth the singular incident of a letter from Elijah some time after he had been removed from the scene. "There came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa, King of Judah, but hast walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house which were better than thyself, Behold with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people and thy children and thy wives and all thy goods. And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day" (verse 12).

This terrible message was fulfilled in a short time. He died of sore diseases (verse 19). The effect of Jehoshaphat's mistaken friendship was not yet exhausted. Jeroboam's son, Ahaziah, succeeding to his father, must of course go and see his friends in Samaria, Ahab's family, for was he not the son of their sister Athaliah? While on that visit he lost his life in the judgments that overwhelmed Ahab's house at the hand of Jehu, which, on his mother in Jerusalem hearing, "she arose and destroyed all the seed-royal of the house of Judah," and proceeded herself to reign—a daughter of idolatrous Ahab in the capital of faithful Judah.

Her reign was not long. Through the wise measures of Jehoiada, the high priest, her death was brought about, and a little boy that had been saved from the wholesale destruction of David's house was proclaimed king. This was Joash, who did well so long as Jehoiada lived to guide him. Jehoiada died when Joash was twenty-six years old, and Joash then yielded to the influence of the young princes brought up with him and turned aside to the idolatries of the land and all the execrable but flesh-pleasing practices therewith associated. "God sent prophets to them to bring them again to the Lord and they testified against them, but they would not give ear. And *the Spirit of God came upon ZECHARIAH*, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people and said unto them, Thus saith

God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord, the Lord hath also forsaken you."

The king was exasperated at this message, and Zechariah was stoned by his orders in the court of the temple. Zechariah, in the act of expiring, exclaimed, "The Lord look upon it and require it," and truly a terrible retribution came immediately on the princes who had instigated the crime. "It came to pass at the end of the year that the army of the Syrians came up against Jerusalem with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hands. And they executed judgment upon them. *They destroyed the princes* from among the people and sent all the spoil (of their houses) unto the King of Damascus." When the Syrians went away, Joash, who was in a state of disease, was murdered by his own servants.

The successor of Joash (his son Amaziah) appears to have taken warning from these terrible events, and returned to the obedience of the Lord's law from which his father had departed. He re-organised the public and private life of the nation. Among other measures, seeing Israel exposed to danger from marauding neighbours, he hired 100,000 fighting men out of the ten tribes. This was a mistake, which he did not seem to know till "There came *a man of God* to him, saying, O King, let not the army of Israel go with thee, for the Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim (the ten tribes). But if thou wilt go, do it: be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy, for God hath power to help and to cast down." The king took the hint, and sent away the hired Ephraimites. Afterwards, Amaziah went wrong, and he was assassinated.

His son, Uzziah, walked in the right way during a long reign of fifty-two years, or the best part thereof. His faithfulness was partly owing to the influence of another ZECHARIAH "who had understanding in the visions of God." He sought the Lord during the lifetime of that prophet, "and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chron. xxvi. 5). Afterwards, Uzziah made the terrible mistake of usurping the functions of the priesthood, and was withstood by Azariah, the high priest, who said to him,

“It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests of the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God.” Uzziah was angered at this repulse, and would have resisted, but leprosy smote him as he lifted his hand against the priests, and he beat a retreat covered with shame, and was a leper to the day of his death.

The next appearance of a prophet in Israel's affairs was in the reign of Ahaz, grandson of Uzziah. Ahaz did not that which was right, but imitated the corrupt ways of the ten tribes: in punishment whereof, besides allowing the Syrians to get the upper hand of him, God gave Judah into the hands of the ten tribes, who, in a sanguinary campaign, destroyed vast multitudes and took an enormous number of captives. The captives were brought to Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes, and they were about to experience the usual fate of captives in being sold into slavery, when “a prophet of the Lord (who) was there, whose name was ODED” addressed a very solemn message to the king and his officers: “Because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand and ye have slain them with a rage that reacheth up into heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for boudmen and bondwomen unto you, but are there not with you sins against the Lord your God? Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you.”

This speech greatly impressed leading men in Samaria who had not taken part in the war. They withstood the military men and said, “Ye shall not bring in the captives hither; for, whereas we have offended against the Lord already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass.” The military men were abashed at this attitude, and allowed the princes to settle the matter. These nominated a commission, who sent the captives home after seeing that they were clothed and fitly provided for out of the great “spoil” the army had brought. “They clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them and shod them, and gave them to

eat and drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho—the city of palm trees—to their brethren.” There is no more touching episode in the whole history of Israel.

In the next reign (Hezekiah), ISAIAH the prophet took a leading and influential part; but his case may advantageously be deferred until we come to consider his book in detail. The same remark may be made concerning JEREMIAH and EZEKIEL, who belonged to later reigns.

We conclude this preliminary notice of the position of the prophets in Israel's public affairs by reference to the only remaining instance of note. In this case, a *woman* comes into view as the mouthpiece of inspiration. It was during the reign of Josiah, the last distinguished era in the history of David's house. Josiah was called to the throne at a very early age (eight years), on account of the assassination of his father, Amon. Eight years afterwards, when he was sixteen, “while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father.” Four years later, he began to remove the instruments of idolatry from Jerusalem; and when he was twenty-six, he ordered the temple to be cleansed and brought into condition for divine service according to the law. He had not seen the law, but had received such instruction from his teachers as led him to discern his duty in these directions.

While the temple was being cleansed, a copy of the law was found and brought to him. He had it read to him, and was amazed to find that things around him were so far from what the law of God required. His trouble was so great that he wept, and sent a deputation to “HULDAH, *the prophetess*, wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvath, the son of Nasrah, keeper of the wardrobe,” with this direction: “Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left of Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.”

The prophetess sent back the deputation with this answer: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon

this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the King of Judah, because they have forsaken me. . . . As for the King of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the Lord, so shall ye say to him. . . . Because thine heart was tender and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place and humbledst thyself before me and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me. . . . Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers . . . in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place and the inhabitants thereof."

The king having received this message, immediately convened a meeting of the head men and an assembly of the people in the temple, and read to them the book of the law which had been found, and entered into a covenant before them "to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul." He also caused all that were present to enter into the same covenant—after which, he went to work with their co-operation, to cleanse the country of all idolatrous abominations, and to bring into force the ordinances of the law. While he lived, public life went wholly in this direction. "All his days, Israel departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers" (2 Chron. xxxiv.).

This survey of the work of the prophets, as living and practical participators in the public life of Israel, is a necessary preface to the consideration of the books of the prophets as we have them in the collected writings beginning with Isaiah and ending with Malachi. It was a work extending over about a thousand years. It must strike the least reflective that it was a work with only one meaning—the meaning condensed into the formula, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." It was a work in no feature akin to the work of magicians, or sooth-sayers, or necromancers, or fortune-tellers. There was no pleasing of men, no earning of rewards, no gratification of petty human curiosities, but a uniform solemn condemnation of human disobedience of divine law, at the risk, and often at the sacrifice of life and limb.

There is no explaining such a phenomenon of human history except on the principle furnished by itself, and endorsed by Christ in the parable of the rejected messengers (Matt. xxi. 33-41), viz., that God spoke by these men for the instruction and reproof of His people whom He had brought out of Egypt. Any attempt to give it a human explanation will fall to pieces in the hands of the expositor. Let any honest unbeliever make the attempt, and he must necessarily experience the truth of the statement if he possess sufficient experience of men, and capacity to discern between things that differ.





ISAIAH.

CHAPTER I.

“THE LORD HATH SPOKEN.”

WE now look at the writings of the prophets as they have been preserved and compiled in our common Bible. There might be some advantage in taking them in chronological order; that is, in the order in which they were produced from reign to reign. But the greater advantage on the whole will lie in taking them just in the order in which they occur—beginning with Isaiah and ending with Malachi.

“ISAIAH, son of Amos,” emerges frequently upon the scene as a personal actor in the life of the nation. We have no account of how he was called, or where or when his ministry commenced. Any glimpses we get of him are always in Jerusalem; and the beginning of his prophecy informs us that his prophetic work covered the reigns of “Uzziah, Jotham, Abaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” We are probably correct in assuming that he was an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and that he belonged to a priestly family.

We find him dealing with the king on more than one occasion—in the days of Ahaz on an occasion of great political agitation (Isaiah vii. 3-7); and in the days of Hezekiah, on the occasion of great national peril (2 Kings xviii., xix.; Isaiah xxxvi., xxxvii.). On the other hand, his duty sometimes involved great personal humiliation, as when he was commanded (Is. xx. 2) “Loose the sackcloth from off thy loins and put off thy shoe from thy feet. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot, and the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked *naked and barefoot three years* for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the King of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt.”

His personal participations in the events of his time might be interesting, but the spirit of God has not seen fit to favour us with particulars of these. It is the messages that came through him from God to which prominence is given, and it is to these we now propose to give some attention. It is characteristic of the scriptures—and one of the many marks of their divinity—that little is made of the men, except where they are notable as examples of obedience; and everything made of the divine words of which they were the vehicle. As Paul expresses it, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. iv. 7).

The written prophecies of Isaiah open grandly. There is an appeal to heaven and earth to listen. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.” Why this supreme attention?

“FOR THE LORD HATH SPOKEN.”

All-sufficient reason for such a challenge certainly. What greater occurrence could there be in human experience than a message from God? This is the event of which the whole Bible is the literary incorporation. This is the fact which gives it its value, and apart from which, it would be but a piece of literary lumber. It is the fact constantly insisted on, in the Bible itself, as instanced in the impressive formulation by Paul in the words, “God at sundry times and divers manners, *spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets.*” It is the one fact which above all others is the most systematically, and insidiously, and resolutely assailed in our day—in every way and by every class of enemy—the vulgar, shallow, brawling blasphemer, of course, but besides him, the polished professor of science, the elegant and speculative critic of ancient documents, and the well-bred occupants of high-salaried pulpits originally erected in its defence. The adverse current is strong, but successful resistance is not impossible. The Bible is its own witness against the theories of all kinds that would quench its light. No man of discernment can make himself thoroughly acquainted with it without feeling that its testimony that God speaks by it is true.

It is not uncommon to meet this contention by saying, “True, God speaks by the Bible, but He speaks in many other ways as

well. He speaks everywhere: He speaks in everything." Distressed inexperience is liable to be silenced by this manœuvre (for it is only a manœuvre where it is not honest muddle or flat falsehood). Distressed inexperience feels there is something wrong in a speech apparently so sweet, and yet it cannot put its finger on the flaw. The flaw lies in the changed sense of the word "speaks." When the Bible says that God has spoken, it means a speaking as direct as when one man speaks to another. "Thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets" "not by the will of man, but as moved by the Holy Spirit" (Neh. ix. 30; 2 Pet. i. 21)—a speaking, therefore, by inspiration; or, as men say, by miracle. Thus only can the purpose of God be declared, for how are we to know His purpose and His will if He did not tell us. The stars are silent; the sea is silent; the woods are silent; our hearts are silent, concerning these. How can we know if He speak not?

Now, when the modern enemies of the Bible say that God speaks everywhere, they do not mean this kind of speaking, concerning which they really mean that God speaks nowhere. They mean that, as God has made everything, everything is the expression of His mind, and therefore a speaking of His mind. There is a certain kind of truth in this way of putting matters, but in the way and with the purpose for which it is put, it is practically a false statement. All nature is truly an expression of divine idea, for the divine idea was the antecedent out of which by power it all sprang. But this is not the kind of idea that is in question when we say that God has spoken by the prophets. The kind of idea in question is not the abstract conception that preceded the formation of natural objects as an architect's plan precedes a house, but the current present conscious idea of the divine mind in relation to human affairs. If we look at a tree, we look at the expression of a divine idea, but it is only the idea of a tree, which is of no use to us in answer to the question, "What does God purpose *with us*? What would He have *us* to do?" So with everything else: flowers, lakes, valleys, mountains, seas, golden sunsets, our own frames and feelings: they tell us of the wisdom in which they have their origin. But they tell us nothing of what we want to know as to what that wisdom designs concerning ourselves. That wisdom alone can tell

us—not by trees and mountains and feelings, but by message—the express message of instruction which we desire. This message, the Bible tells us, God has given us at the “sundry times” and in “the divers manners” recorded therein.

When the philosophers in question say, God has done this everywhere in everything, they mock our understanding and utter a lie. What can a stone, a lichen, a mouse, fresh air, a storm, tell us of the purpose of God? If a stone is the expression of a divine idea, it is only a stone idea, and we want something higher than a stone. If a flower express a divine idea, it is only an idea that goes no further than a flower, and what we want is the divine thoughts concerning Himself and ourselves. These we cannot gather from the works of nature or our own dark minds. We have to have them communicated direct from the presence of the Great Divine Thinker. This has been done in the events and sayings recorded in the Bible. The men who send us to nature deny this. They send us where all is darkness and would prevent our access to where all is light. They act like the man who would refer us to the house built by an architect for an answer to a question which we wish to put to the architect himself.

The book of Isaiah, we perceive, opens with the grand announcement, “*The Lord hath spoken.*” The announcement is made as a prelude to a particular thing that is to be said: “I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.” Whom does he mean? We are not long left in doubt. We might have supposed he meant the race of Adam in general. It comes closer home than that. “The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but *Israel* doth not know, *my people* doth not consider.” It is the people concerning whom He said by another prophet: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” and by Moses, “The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself above all the nations of the earth.”

“The Lord hath spoken” by Isaiah, and this is the subject of His speech: the chosen people, delivered from Egypt; and the message, their condemnation: “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, the seed of evil doers: children that are corrupters:

they have forsaken the Lord : they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger : they are gone away backward."

In these two features, we touch governing elements of the Bible which have much to do both with determining its meaning and demonstrating its divinity. The Bible is pre-eminently a book of the Jews, not only in its being instrumentally written by Jews about Jews, but in its being concerned with the future of the Jews and the destiny of mankind through and in connection with them. The feature comes out in the primordial promise to their ancestor Abraham : "*In thee* and *in thy seed* shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It shines in the description of Christ as "the seed" of Abraham (Gal. iii. 16); and as the son of Abraham, the son of David (Matt. i. 1); and as the King of the Jews (Matt. xxvii. 37). It comes out strongly in the description of the hope of the Gospel as the hope of Israel (Acts xxviii. 20), and in the statement of Paul before Agrippa, that the twelve tribes served God day and night in hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers (Acts xxvi. 6-7).

From this element of divine truth, there has been a great departure. It is imagined that God has done with Israel and has taken on the Gentiles. There is the merest ingredient of truth in this view. Though the Jews have been driven into dispersion, it is only as a temporary hiding of God's face : they are not finally cast off. They have been sent into affliction among the Gentiles, only in punishment of centuries of disobedience, and they will in the end return to restoration and favour, as Paul in Rom. xi. 11-15, 25-29 declares in harmony with all the prophets (Deut. xxx. 3-5; Isaiah xi. 11-12; lx. 1-14; Jer. xxiii. 5-8; xxx. 18-22; Ezek. xxxvii. 21; Dan. xii. 1; Hosea iii. 4-5; Joel iii. 1-3; Amos ix. 11-15; Obad. i. 17; Micah vii. 15-20; Nahum i. 15; Hab. iii. 13-19; Zeph. iii. 18-20; Hag. ii. 21-23; Zech. ii. 10-13; Mal. iii. 4-6).

It is expressly declared in Ezek. xxxix., that this will be a matter of understanding among the nations of the earth when the finality is reached : "The heathen (*i.e.* the nations) shall *know* that the house of Israel *went into captivity for their iniquity*. Because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them and gave them into the hands of their enemies, so fell they all by the

sword. But now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel" (verses 23-25).

That they are not cast off in the final sense God solemnly avers, thus: "Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have spoken. . . . Considerest thou not what this people have spoken. The two families which the Lord hath chosen (Israel and Judah), he hath even cast them off. . . . Thus saith the Lord, If those ordinances (of heaven and earth) depart from before me, then shall the seed of Israel also cease from being a nation before me for ever. If heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done" (Jer. xxxii. 42; xxxiii. 24; xxxi. 36-37).

As for the position of the Gentiles, that has indeed been one of favour since Christ sent Paul 1,800 years ago: but the extent of the favour has been misunderstood. It is not that they have been placed in Israel's position, but that they have been invited to become heirs of their good things on condition of compliance with the terms which Israel rejected. This is to be discerned in Christ's words to Paul in sending him: "To the Gentiles now I send thee to *open their eyes* and turn them *from darkness to light* and from the power of Satan unto God *that they may receive* remission of sins and inheritance among all them that are sanctified through the faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 17-18); also in Paul's definition of the matter in his letter to the Ephesians: "That the Gentiles should be *fellow-heirs* of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ *by the gospel*" (Eph. iii. 6)—not all Gentiles, but those Gentiles who should come within the conditions in the belief and obedience of the Gospel. To such in Ephesus he says: "Ye *were* aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. *But now* in Christ Jesus, ye who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (ii. 12-13). As regards other Gentiles, who had not submitted to the Gospel, he says: "Walk not as *other Gentiles* walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the *understanding darkened* and being *alienated from the life of God* through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. iv. 18).

It is evident that it is only a selected class among the Gentiles that are called to Israel's privilege.

It is further evident that this selected class change their position in the process of their selection, and ceasing to be Gentiles, become adopted Israelites: "Ye are *no longer strangers and foreigners*, but fellow-citizens with the saints of the household of God" (ii. 19), so that "he is a Jew who is one inwardly," though he be not a Jew by natural descent (Rom. ii. 29). Though a wild olive by nature, such a transformed Gentile has been grafted upon the good olive tree (Rom. xi. 24), and remembers in modesty that he bears not the root but the root him, and that he stands in this favoured position by faith, and is in danger of losing it if he fall from his steadfastness (verses 18-20).

So that the position of the Gentiles under the Gospel is very different from what loose popular theology supposes. What God has done in making advances to the Gentiles by apostolic hands has not been to adopt them *en masse* in place of Israel. What He has done cannot be better defined than in the words of Peter: "God hath visited the Gentiles *to take out of them a people* for his name" (Acts xv. 14). Gentiles are still Gentiles and Jews are still Jews: but Gentiles may become adopted heirs of Israel's promises by conformity to the requirements of the Gospel, while as for the Jews, as a body, they are subject to blindness "till the fulness of the Gentiles is gathered in," after which, as a body, the Jews will be restored to favour (Rom. xi. 25-26).

While the Bible is a book of the Jews, it condemns the Jews in a manner that would be inexplicable apart from the divine origination at the root of its authorship. Those who regard the Bible as a piece of human literature, and the national movement behind it as a human movement, must find it difficult to suggest even a plausible explanation of a circumstance so foreign to human nature in all its developments, in all countries, and races, and ages. All literature speaks well of the people among whom it originates, but here, it is literally from beginning to end that this book of the Jews condemns the Jews. At the very start, it exhibits them as mutinous and discontented under Moses—actually before they left Egypt: "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians" (Ex.

xiv. 12). When they had just left, and before they crossed the Red Sea, they are represented as saying to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" When they got across the Red Sea and found themselves in the barren desert between Elim and Sinai, "the whole congregation murmured against Moses and said unto him, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. . . . Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger."

When they reached the border of the land of promise and had received the report of the spies, they wept for vexation, and proposed to stone Moses and appoint a captain in his place and return to Egypt (Num. xiv. 1-4). About forty years afterwards, when they were just about to enter the land, Moses addressed these words to them, "Understand that the Lord thy God giveth thee *not* this land to possess it *for thy righteousness*. Remember and forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord" (Deut. ix. 6-7: xxxi. 27). David testifies of them that they were "a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their hearts aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God" (Psa. lxxviii. 8). The testimony of the prophets, as contained in their writings, is one unbroken denunciation of them throughout. It may be taken as summed up in a single verse in Isaiah xxx.: "Go write it before them on a table and note it in a book, that it may be (a testimony) for the time to come for ever and ever, that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord" (verses 8-9).

So with the New Testament: Christ told them they were of their father the devil (Jno. viii. 44), and that their leaders were hypocrites and blind guides, and he apostrophised them in these terrible words: "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore behold I send unto you prophets

and wise men and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zecharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar" (Matt. xxiii. 32-35). Stephen speaks in the same strain (Acts vii. 52-53); and also Paul (Acts xiii. 45-46 : xxviii. 25, 28).

This fact, thoroughly thought out, does more than anything else to prove the divine character of the Bible. As water can rise no higher than the level of its source, so no human book can rise higher than a human authorship. Deference to man is the characteristic of all literature; but here is a book that not only defers not to man but condemns man in every relation except that of submission to God. The explanation is supplied in the phrase that occurs about two thousand times in the Bible: "Thus saith the Lord God."

The whole of the first chapter of Isaiah is in this vein of reproof: "From the sole of the foot unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores" (verse 6). The result: "Your country is desolate; your cities are burnt with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence . . . Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom: and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (verses 7-9). That is, but for the presence of a small minority of faithful men, whom God, as in the days of Elijah, had "reserved for himself" as His purpose required, the state of the land would have been as bad as Sodom. Apart from these, Israel had become as Sodom. The rest of the people were to God as the inhabitants of Gomorrah. Catching up this idea, the Spirit of God proceeds to address them as Sodom and Gomorrah: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye *rulers of Sodom*; give ear unto the law of our God, ye *people of Gomorrah*" (verse 10).

What He has to say to them is remarkable in more ways than one. God had enjoined sacrifices by the law of Moses. He is to chide them now—not for withholding these sacrifices, but for bringing them: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed

beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations : incense is an abomination to me : the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them."

What is the explanation of this apparent repudiation of the ordinances delivered at the beginning by the hand of Moses? The glosses of modern interpretation would lead the reader off the track here. "Commentators" speak of Isaiah as "the evangelical prophet," and point to this chapter as a proof that he endeavoured to draw the nation away from the Mosaic ritual, and to lead them to what they call a higher form of divine service. That this is an entire misconception is evident before we get far into Isaiah—not to speak of the entire body of the prophets whose aim was to *bring Israel back to the obedience of the law*. In Isaiah v., Israel's crime is specified in these words: "*They have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*" It is not likely that while making such an accusation, Isaiah should be trying to encourage them in such a line of action by deprecating the offering of sacrifice and the observance of the sabbath *per se*. Isaiah meant no such thing. Further on in his prophecy, he speaks of the sabbath in a very different sense, thus: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. Then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth" (lviii. 13-14).

Whence then the deprecation of things that God Himself had enjoined? The explanation is perfectly simple. It is contained in the words of Solomon: "The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." Solomon does not mean that the prayer of the righteous is therefore to be suspended. Why did God hate the new moons, the sabbaths, the burnt offerings of bullocks and

rams and lambs that were in vogue in Isaiah's day? He tells us in the same chapter: "Your hands are full of blood . . . every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them" (verses 15, 23).

It was not the sacrifices as such, nor the sabbaths and monthly feasts as such, that God hated, but the observance of these things by men of wicked mind—men full of religious performance, but of merciless heart and dishonest principle. Therefore he proceeds to say (verse 15), "When ye spread forth your hand (as in unctuous entreaty), I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make *many prayers*, I will not hear you." The lesson for us moderns is strong. God has appointed the Gospel and the holding forth thereof, even if in much controversy, and submission to its ordinances in baptism and the breaking of bread, as the ground of our acceptance; but these very things may be an intolerable nuisance to him in hands that are not pure, and hearts that are not humble and kind.

Were Isaiah's condemnations uttered because Israel's case was hopeless? On the contrary, they are associated with advice and entreaty in the opposite direction: "Wash you: make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil: learn to do well. Seek judgment: *relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (verses 16-19).

Repentance, repentance — amendment, amendment — reform, reform—is the constant aim of divine expostulation. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return unto the Lord God, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 7). This also we are justified in applying in our own day with as much force as it was intended to have in the days of Isaiah.

A man should never despair, and never abandon the effort to conform to the law of God, in Christ.

The Spirit of God foresaw that the appeal to Israel would be unavailing, except as regards the "very small remnant" before referred to. We have, therefore, a picture of Jerusalem's unworthy state, a prediction of her overthrow, and a prophecy of her final restoration when the "very small remnants" of all generations are to be gathered together in one, immortalized, and established in possession of the land and of the whole earth. "How is the faithful city become an harlot? It was full of judgment: righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross: thy wine mixed with water. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves. Every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards." This would be considered unpatriotic and uncharitable language by modern standards, but it is the language of truth. If it is stern and displeasing, the cause lies with the facts and not with the inspiration that delineates them. In such a state of things, what could we expect but the woe-message that follows:—

"Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries and avenge me of mine enemies. And I will turn my hand upon thee and purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy tin"—that is, remove by judgment the vile element of Israel's population, which was nearly the whole of it. When this should be accomplished — a process involving centuries of affliction — restoration would take place: "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward, thou shalt be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

The four verses (28-31) that follow this statement may be taken, either as a continuation of verse 25 which describes the destruction of Israel, or as a description of the punishment that awaits the responsible wicked at the resurrection era that witnesses the redemption of Zion with judgment. They probably refer to the former, though their position would indicate the latter. It is no uncommon thing for a subject to be resumed after having been left for a moment to intro-

duce something by way of contrast or antithesis. The verses would suit either application, because both applications are the same in moral essence. The verses are as follows:—

“And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired—(that is, trees for the conduct of idolatrous worship underneath)—and ye shall be confounded for the gardens which ye have chosen—(for similar purposes)—for ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.”





CHAPTERS II.-IV.

JERUSALEM IN THE LAST DAYS—EXALTED AFTER LONG HUMILIATION.

THE prophecy that is commenced in the second chapter of Isaiah extends to the end of chapter iv. It must be considered as a whole, and in the relation of all its parts, before it becomes perfectly intelligible. The usual method of treating it obscures this intelligibility. The usual way is to regard the first five verses of chapter ii. as a detached idyll in the midst of commonplaces of a bygone application—a sort of island of glorious brightness in a gloomy sea. In reality, it is the prologue of a complete discourse which hangs together in logical coherence in all its parts. We shall see this.

The general topic is fixed and settled for us by the opening sentence, which is in the nature of a chapter heading prefixed by inspiration: “The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw *concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*” Realising that Isaiah was an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, there can be no difficulty in having clearly before the mind what it is that Isaiah is going to talk about. He is going to discourse about a word or vision shown to him concerning the future of the Jerusalem in which he dwelt, and the Judah in which he lived his life.

The idea that it was any other Jerusalem or any other Judah never entered into men’s minds until the nullifying traditions of Origenism obtained currency in the fourth century. The idea that it is any other is inconsistent with every inspired application of the prophetic word: for there are inspired interpretations which give us a perfect key which we can use with all the more confidence and readiness because they harmonise with what people understand by common-sense. Let three illustrations out of a multitude suffice:—

It was foretold (Micah v. 2; Matt. ii. 6) that the Lord should be born in *the land of Judah*. Let the birth of Christ in Bethlehem determine the meaning.

It was foretold (Micah iii. 12) that Jerusalem should be destroyed and become heaps. Let the Lord's prophecy of the same (Luke xxi. 24) and the fulfilment thereof as recorded by Josephus and known to all the world, settle the question of what Jerusalem means in prophecy.

It was foretold that the children of Israel should be scattered in all lands in affliction and disgrace: let the presence of the Jewish people in every country to the present day decide what the prophecy meant.

The future that Isaiah saw "concerning Judah and Jerusalem" was a very extended one, and one drawn out from his own day forward, and embracing the prolonged era of trouble that was waiting for them, as well as the age of glory in which that era should culminate. But the last is placed first: "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."

There are two points here: 1, "The last days," and 2, The exaltation of a certain "mountain" above all mountains. As for the first, the meaning is not to be found in the phrase itself, but in its associations. Everything terminable has its last days. You have the last days of Pompeii: the last days of the Venetian Republic. So there are in Scripture the "last days" of the Mosaic order of things, styled "these last days" (Heb. i. 1); and yet other "last days" that were future to the Mosaic last days—days when, says Paul, perilous times should come (2 Tim. iii. 1). It is impossible to fix an invariable meaning to a phrase of this kind. The association determines the meaning. Last days of what? The context will usually answer. It is evident in the case in question that it is the last days of Judah and Jerusalem as a mortal institution upon the earth—days that merge into an immortal constitution of everlasting day.

The things to happen show this to be the meaning. Mount Zion is to be exalted above all hills, and nations are to rally there for worship and instruction: "Many people shall go and say, Come ye

and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we shall walk in his paths." This has never happened yet. The currents have been in the opposite direction altogether. Nations have not wanted to come to Zion. Repulsion, not attraction, has been the law. Zion has been broken up, and the nations have gone their own evil ways. The Jews have been hated of all nations, and they have "eaten their defiled bread" in dispersion "among the Gentiles." But at the time in contemplation, Zechariah informs us that "ten men out of all the nations shall lay hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew and shall say, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23), and by Zephaniah God says, "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame" (Zeph. iii. 19).

Some have put a literal meaning on the statement: "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on *the top of the mountains* and exalted *above the hills*." They have imagined that the hill on which the temple will stand will have such an elevation above the surrounding country as to be visible hundreds of miles off in all directions. There are several objections to this. That there will be physical changes in the Holy Land when the Kingdom of God is set up, is unquestionable: but that the exaltation of Zion spoken of in this prophecy is exaltation in a figurative sense, is determined both by the evident sense and fitness of things, and by the prevalent usage of Scripture.

First, as to the fitness of things: when nations say "Let us go up," they do not mean climbing a hill, but going up as men propose to go up to London, which is a very flat city topographically. That which exalts a hill in this sense is political, legal, social, and religious importance. It would not add to this importance to have it twenty times higher than the Peak of Teneriffe—rather otherwise: for visibility and familiarity rather detract from the influence of a seat of power. Concealment adds to influence and power where the real elements of power exist. The exaltation of Zion will consist of its becoming the seat and source of universal law: "The law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Next as to the usage of Scripture: it is a common figure to speak of up and down with regard to power and position. In the matter of Zion's overthrow for example, "Thou shalt be *brought down* and shalt speak *out of the ground*, and thy speech shall be low *out of the dust*" (Is. xxix. 4). "The Lord hath cast down *from heaven to earth* the beauty of Israel" (Lam. ii. 1). In the matter of the removal of obstacles to the work of Christ at his first coming: "Every valley shall be exalted and every *mountain and hill* shall be *made low*" (Is. xl. 4). The effectual publicity of the Gospel: "Get thee up into *the high mountains*" (Is. xl. 9), and so forth. The prophecy before us contemplates the time when, not the Vatican hill nor the hill of the Quirinal, nor the capitol of Washington, but Mount Zion shall be exalted above all hills, overshadowing and eclipsing all human importances, and drawing to itself the universal attention and allegiance of the emancipated nations.

There is a disposition on the part of some to recognise the fulfilment of the prophecy in the emanation of the Gospel from Jerusalem 1,800 years ago. There is a sort of first-sight fitness in this suggestion that runs away with the judgment of those who do not care to look closer. The suggestion disappears altogether when we consider what is involved in the next statement: "He (the Lord) shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Here is cause and effect which find no illustration in the circumstances connected with the preaching of the Gospel: a "judging" and a "rebuking," resulting in the world of mankind abandoning war. The nations (needless to say) have not abandoned wars, and there has been no "judging" or rebuking of nations connected with the preaching of the Gospel. The object of that preaching was not national but individual: to "take out of them a people for the name of the Lord" (Acts xv. 14), and the means was not judicial or compulsory, but constraining by the influence of an attractive invitation on the basis of voluntary compliance. To judge among and rebuke nations, is to employ political and military measures of compulsion, and that this is what is contemplated here is evident from parallel Scriptures referring to

the matter. The words of Micah are, "He shall rebuke *strong nations* afar off" (Mic. iv. 3), and of Isaiah (xvii. 13): "The nations shall rush like the rushing of mighty waters, but God shall rebuke them and they shall flee afar off."

Every image employed in Scripture to illustrate the matter has the same import, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Psa. cx. 2). "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa. ii. 9; Rev. ii. 27). "The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold" (Dan. ii. 45). "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. xix. 15).

This "word," then, that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, exhibits them in the last days of mortal history as the glorified centre of human life upon the earth, to which men gravitate submissively after divine conquests, and radiant from which, they experience the blessedness after which they have striven in vain under every form of self-government—even the blessedness divinely promised from the beginning, and now at this time realised in all the earth.

It is natural, in view of these things, for the prophet to exclaim (verse 5) "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

But until the arrival of the last days of glory, Israel was to be forsaken: and here are the reasons (verses 6-9), "Therefore hast thou forsaken thy people the house of Jacob—*because*—(and now consider the reasons: they amount in brief to this, because Israel would lean upon men and not upon God: and because they would copy the ways of men instead of conforming to the law of God)—"Because they be replenished from the east and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures: their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols: they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. And the

mean man boweth down and the great man humbleth himself: *therefore*, forgive them not."

Here is the picture of a busy, active, energetic population, finding pleasure in the things that please natural men, and greatly interested in strangers who had no interest in God, and conforming great and small to the religion that was fashionable in the surrounding countries. That the population so exhibited should have been a nation that God brought out of Egypt and organised for Himself, made it specially criminal. No wonder the retribution would be terrible (verses 10-21): "Enter into the rock and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down. And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. . . . And they shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day shall a man cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the tops of the ragged rocks for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

In view of this terrible prospect, there is overwhelming force in the command immediately following (verse 22): "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Israel were not ceasing from man but leaning on man, building up on man, "delighting themselves in the children of strangers." The reminder is that trust in man is vain: he is only a creature of very fragile constitution—holding his life by the breath of his nostrils, which can easily be stopped, and which, stopped or not stopped, will soon stop of itself. But God lives for ever—lives in Himself and by Himself—and has everything at His command. Then, as the prophet exhorts a little further on, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

CHAPTER III.—In this, there is no new subject introduced, but only the further statement of the subject spoken of in the finish of chapter

ii. The "for" with which it commences connects it thus: chapter ii. finishes with the statement that all men would fear in a coming day of trouble, and that wise men should therefore cease taking them into account. Here details are supplied: "For behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff—the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water—the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet and the ancient, the captain of fifty and the honourable man and the counsellor and the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator." This is a cutting off of all supplies and a clean sweep of all orders of society—which took place in due course through the long series of calamities—political, military, and physical—to which Israel was subjected—by which, the Jewish nation, the most effective and illustrious of peoples in all that makes a nation great, was brought down to its present barren state.

"And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." Just so: instead of the noble and capable men that have distinguished their annals in times past, Jewish history in their dispersion shows a long series of childish Rabbinical triflers. To the present day, their head men are glad to imitate Gentile leaders. "The people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour." Generally, in other particulars stated, "Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen: because *their tongue and their doings are against the Lord*, to provoke the eyes of his glory." It is a thing not hidden, a thing glaringly apparent. "The show of their countenance doth witness against them (a statement most foolishly applied by Hine-ish Anglo-Israelism to a Jewish cast of countenance instead of to a brazen-faced stubbornness that was not ashamed to show wickedness in their faces), they declare their sin as Sodom: they hide it not" (verse 9).

What could there be but woe to such a people? "Woe unto their soul?" Yet the woe was self-inflicted in so far as it was their own ways that brought it. "They have rewarded evil unto themselves." But, as always, there was a remnant: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings"—not that they would be exempted from the national calamities impending, but that they would be saved out of them all at

the resurrection, when "Many of them that sleep in the dust should awake to everlasting life" (Dan. xii. 2).

There is a touch of commiseration of the people in view of the fact that their departures from divine law were greatly due to the misleading of blind guides: "O my people, *they who lead thee cause thee to err*, and destroy the way of thy paths . . . The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people and the princes thereof." The ground of impeachment is this: "Ye have eaten up the vineyard: the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of Hosts" (verses 12-15). Here we have a glimpse of affairs in Israel corresponding in their main features with the modern state of things: a ruling class misleading the community for their own advantage, and a people perishing under such guidance and the divine displeasure hovering over all.

In our day, it is clergy, lawyers, doctors, publicists of all kinds who fatten on the public by their several artificial crafts, and whom the public follow and trust with a blindness of faith amounting to superstition. In Israel, it was priests and princes and pretended prophets who manipulated a gullible people for their own enrichment. There was a little excuse for the gullibility in Israel's case, because in the beginning of things, the priests and princes were divinely appointed to the leadership. In our day, the leaders are of purely human manufacture. The Lord entered into judgment with Israel's leaders and brought calamity on them that swept them away. He will do the same with the public Scribes and Pharisees in the modern era when He summons the fowls of heaven on the eve of Armageddon to "eat the flesh of kings and captains, and the flesh of mighty men, . . . and the flesh of all men, free and bond, small and great."

Then the word of prophetic rebuke turns on the women of Israel who took a leading part in the ways that brought God's displeasure on the nation. The part they performed was different from that condemned in the priests and rulers. It was a part in their own line of things. They were not unprincipled traders and oppressors of the poor: but they made a vain and wanton use of the wealth unrighteously acquired by their husbands. They made an ostentatious

show ; they walked in pride instead of finding pleasure in the love of God and the service of the poor and needy. There is no touch of weakness in the divine condemnation : “ Moreover the Lord saith, because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet—therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. In that day, the Lord will take away the bravery of ”—*female attire*.

This differed in ancient times from what it is now, but only as one year’s “ fashion ” differs from another in modern times. There was difference in the names and shapes and materials of the different articles of dress, but there was no difference in the main point : display. Here (verses 18-23) we have an actual list of the articles which would not be recognised by a modern milliner : “ tinkling ornaments about their feet, their cauls, their round tires like the moon, the chains and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.”

With these are associated comeliness and perfume. All are now mentioned as objects of the indignation that would kindle on Israel’s glory and extinguish it from the land : “ It shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink : instead of a girdle, a rent : instead of well-set hair, baldness : instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty.”

If these things had not been used as causes and instruments of pride, they would not have been so objectionable in the divine eyes. God had promised them (“ if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in his ways, ”) “ to make thee plenteous in goods, ” and bless them in everything they set their hand to. Doubtless, they would have been more modest in dress if they had been addicted to the commandments of the Lord. Still, their “ dressiness ” would not have been so offensive. It was only when they were in a rebellious mood that the Lord, in the wilderness, said “ Put off thy ornaments from thee ” (Ex. xxxiii. 5). Aaron’s

garments were "for glory and beauty" (Ex. xxviii. 2). The Lord recognises that a maid cannot be expected to forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire (Jer. ii. 32). And as there is force in the question: "Who gave goodly wings to the peacock?" (Job xxxix. 13) so is there force in the consideration that female susceptibility to personal adornment is not a susceptibility of woman's creating. It is of God, like everything else, and has a place. It is wholly a question of the right circumstances. When God rules in the heart, everything is in place; when He is dethroned, nothing is right. Life itself is unlawful.

In Israel, God was dethroned. They had "cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them and hath smitten them" (chapter v. verse 24-25). This is the explanation of the gruesome tirade against all things pleasant to men and women. (*Resuming at iii. 25*), "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her (Jerusalem's) gates shall lament and mourn, and she being desolate, shall sit upon the ground."

CHAPTER IV.—Thus continues the theme of chapters ii. and iii. "And in that day (that is, the day of Jerusalem's downfall), seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach"—a graphic method of intimating that war would make such havoc, that men would be scarce, and women glad to get husbands on any terms.

This completes the description of the desolation that should overwhelm the house of Jacob as the result of God's forsaking them—a description which occurs as a long parenthesis in the delineation of the glory appointed for "Judah and Jerusalem" in "the last days."

Isaiah, son of Amoz, "saw" this "word" concerning them—that salvation and power and honour and glory await them in the finish of things, but that for a long time, God would forsake them, for a "therefore" introduced and explained in chapter ii. 6.—And now (chapter iv. 2) there is a turning back upon the original picture of the last days, as shown at the commencement of the prophecy; and a

supplying of details in pleasing contrast to the tints of darkness characterising the desolation: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious." The meaning of this is made certain by the description of restored Israel as, "*the branch of my planting*, the work of my hands that I may be glorified" (Ix. 21). It means that the nation of Israel restored will be "beautiful and glorious." No nation is such just now. Britain may be thought so, and seems so at a distance, but go close, and see the squalid multitudes, and the broken hearts, and the debased men and women, and the pinched respectabilities, and the barren lives everywhere, and the reigning vanity and vexation of spirit.

Fat and fattening writers, writing in their upholstered seclusions in town or country, or, when they go out, driving in their shining broughams, or travelling in first-class railway carriages, waited on by obsequious porters, may see British civilisation in a roseate hue; but as a whole, it is an ornamented charnel house—not "beautiful and glorious;" but Israel will be "beautiful and glorious" when the "word" is fulfilled that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, "saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." "And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel"—fruit, in the largest sense, otherwise described as "the riches of the Gentiles, and their glory," in which, saith the Spirit of God, "ye shall boast yourselves" (Is. lxi. 6). The "abundance of the sea shall be converted (or turned) unto thee, and the forces (or wealth) of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (Iv. 5)—"as a flowing stream" (Ixvi. 12). This includes literal fruit of all kinds—everything splendid, everything plentiful, everything at its best—"for them that are escaped of Israel" (going back to our verse 2).

"Them that are escaped"—a remnant—natural and spiritual. First the natural: "I will gather her that is driven out and her that I have afflicted, and I will make *her that halted*, A REMNANT, and *her that was cast far off* A STRONG NATION." There have been multitudes of natural Israel (disobedient) who have perished as the leaves of autumn—the whole generation that came out of Egypt and millions since. Multitudes also perish again in the wilderness in the process of restoration (Ezek. xx. 35-38), but a circumcised surviving remnant enter the land, and Zion personified greets them

with surprise: "The children which thou shalt have *after thou hast lost the other* will say again in thine ears, the place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart: Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive removing to and fro?" (xlix. 20). Then the spiritual, who will be the rulers—the immortal rulers with Christ their king. Jesus addresses them as the escaped: "that ye may be counted worthy to *escape* all these things and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36). Many will not be among the escaped, but will be engulfed in "the judgment and fiery indignation that devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 27).

For "them that are escaped of Israel," everything will be good beyond the possibility of exaggeration: and the glory will not be shadowed by the absence of the rejected. Their absence will be part of the glory of the remnant, and it will mean no evil to the absent such as comes with the idea of a hell of torture for the wicked. "They shall not be" (Psa. xxxvii. 10). Where are the 600,000 faithless adults that crossed the Red Sea? They have no existence. They are gone as entirely as if they had never existed. In the language applied in another connection, they are "as though they had not been" (Job x. 19). So it will be with all not included in the remnant escaped of Israel. The dream of them will not disturb the summer morning of Israel's glory.—Resuming—

"And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called *holy*—even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." What time this relates to, and how brought about, is stated in the next verse: "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, *by* the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." ZECHARIAH adds, "Yea every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord" (xiv. 21). This will be a great and notable change, both for the Jews and the world. How blessed for Israel when the words spoken by Moses will come to pass: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. xxx. 6), and again by Ezekiel, "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will

I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26).

And how blessed for the world when the centre of the authority that rules them with iron hand in all the earth will be a centre of righteousness and holiness: so that a man coming from another land to worship, will not only experience the advantage of change and enjoy the pleasure of beholding a beautiful and well-ordered country, but taste the inexpressible luxury of seeing holiness and purity and kindness in all who stand related to the seat of government. How different from the venal servants and cold officials and corrupt place-holders that one sees at the capitals of European life at the present day. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty. . . . Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem (the city of our solemnities) a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down: not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. . . . And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa. xxxiii. 17, 20).

"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime for the heat, and for a place of refuge and a covert from storm and from rain."

Many are the beautiful thoughts suggested by this description. It is manifestly a description of literal things from the mention of "dwelling places," and "assemblies," and "Mount Zion," and from its analogy to what occurred in connection with the first divine encampment under Moses. When Israel journeyed in the wilderness, "The cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day and fire was on it by night in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys" (Ex. xl. 38). This appears to be an indication of the physical accessories of the holy city. By day, it will be under the protection of a visible atmospheric canopy which will temper the heat

of the sun, and at night this canopy will turn to a fiery radiance, giving light where otherwise darkness would settle on the scene. It will also act as a protection from all elemental disturbances—"a covert from storm and from rain."

This is a peep at weather in the kingdom. It will not be a perpetual calm, but will be subject in measure to the irregularities of present experience—though not to the same extremes, as shown by the difference between the blessings and the curses of Deut. xxviii. 8, 12, as compared with 23, 24, 38, and 40; and Lev. xxvi. 4-6, compared with 19-20. But even the healthful changes of the weather will not be felt in "the camp of the saints, the beloved city." No heavy rain showers will ever make things wet and uncomfortable; no storms will whirl dust into corners or shake the palaces with windy gusts. No glaring light will weary the eye by day, but the brilliant radiance of softened sunshine will soothe and charm the senses all day long. At night, there will be no inconvenient darkness, nor the blinding glitter of electric lights, but the soft brightness of diffused flame-light. By day and by night, and at all seasons, the physical conditions of life will be perfect. "Upon all the glory shall be a defence."

Visitors from the ends of the earth will discover a delightsomeness in the city that is the throne of the Lord that has never been found in the most splendid capitals of the age of sin. It is meet that it should be so. If "glorious things are spoken of thee," of the city of God, what else could we expect when God's averted face smiles upon His people in the bestowal of every good thing which the heart can conceive. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him," but God hath revealed it unto us by His Spirit—"at sundry times and in divers manners," and certainly nowhere more luminously than in this book of the prophet Isaiah.



CHAPTER V.

“THE SONG OF THE VINEYARD.”

THE purport of this fifth chapter may be taken as summed up in the opening sentence of verse 25: “*Therefore* is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people.” The chapter sets forth the grounds on which God should act the part of an enemy to Israel. But the form in which this is done is peculiar, and the lessons conveyed are deeply instructive. The form is one of those “divers manners” spoken of by Paul in Heb. i. 1, and referred to by God Himself when He speaks of having “used similitudes” by the ministry of the prophets (Hos. vi. 5: xii.).

It is a form that illustrates a method of inspiration unknown and unsuspected by many in our day who can only recognise inspiration where there is a specific assertion of divine authorship, as when the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord,” occurs. We do not refer to the employment of parable but to the apparent human personality of the speaker. The prophet appears as the personal writer and mediator. “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.” Is it Isaiah then to whom we listen in the song following? Superficial critics—“higher” or otherwise—would say so, but without true reason. To Isaiah, truly, we listen, but not to Isaiah as a mere human impressionist, for that would be to listen to a man who might be unreliable in divine matters. It is to Isaiah used as an instrument of divine utterance, as the composition shows, for no sooner has Isaiah told us the subject of his song than the divine mentality glowing within his consciousness breaks through as the sun from behind a cloud, and expresses itself in the first person: “Judge I pray you between *me* and *my* vineyard . . . the vineyard of *the Lord of Hosts* is the house of Israel.” The personal Isaiah prologue is but the form in which the Spirit of God introduces what is about to be said.

There is a remarkable illustration of this in Jeremiah, in which the prophet is commanded to go and say something that appears as his personal utterance. "SAY THIS WORD UNTO THEM. Let mine eyes run down night and day with tears. . . . If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword, and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine. . . . Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul lothed Zion? Why hast thou smitten us and there is no healing?" (Jer. xiv. 17-19). The fact is there is no fixed form for the expression of inspiration. As the ways of God in nature are endless in their diversity, so there is endless variation in the "divers manners" in which He "spake in time past through the prophets unto the fathers." It is for this reason that the Bible never repeats itself. The evidence of inspiration is not to be found by the microscopical study of sentences, but in those wide-sweeping considerations that bear on a subject as a whole, such as the attitude of Jesus to "the scriptures," his recognition of their divine and unfailing character, and the express allegations of the apostles that they originated not in the will of man, but in the movement of the Holy Spirit, and were consequently "all given by inspiration of God."

The parable of the vineyard in Isaiah v. is not exactly the same as the parable of the vineyard employed by Christ, though the subject is the same. In the case of the latter, it was the behaviour of the keepers of the vineyard that was in question. They withheld the fruit from the owner of the vineyard: the fruit itself was assumed to be good. In the Isaiah parable, it is the fruit that is at fault: "He looked that it should bring forth grapes and it *brought forth wild grapes.*" The meaning is, the bad character of the people: "He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (verse 7). The message enters into details which show us God's estimate of human behaviour on various points: "Woe to them that join house to house and lay field to field till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth." It is no new thing to amass property and establish monopolies. God's disapprobation of such a policy may be forgotten, but it is here recorded, and may in our day be seen in the desolate state of Palestine thus foretold: "Of a truth, many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair,

without the inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah" (verses 9-10). That is, a land that was famed for its fertility—"flowing with milk and honey," would become so sterile that it would only be cultivated at a loss.

Avarice is odious to men, but here is a higher consideration: it is offensive to God, and his "woe" is recorded. The fact has little weight with the general run of mankind. They do not see in the course of a certain limited number of years that evil comes of it, and therefore they harden themselves, "Because sentence against an evil work is *not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is set in them to do evil" (Ecc. viii. 11). But things work themselves out. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God" (Ecc. viii. 12).

It is unreasonable and bad that men should bend their strength to the piling up of gigantic wealth. Even natural thinkers see it, and have proposed a legal limit to income—but the notion is not likely to be taken up. When the Kingdom of God comes, the taking up of right notions will not depend upon the people. The right notions will be enforced by the law that goes forth from Zion. The saints will possess the earth, but it will not be in the spirit of those who add "house to house and field to field"; it will not be for self-aggrandisement, and the extinction of others: it will be in the spirit of men who love their neighbour as themselves, and who will use their power for the blessedness of all entrusted to their care.

Next, we have liquor and jollity condemned, along with the distaste for wisdom that usually results from such proclivities; "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink: that continue until night until wine inflame them. And *the harp and the viol and the tabret and pipe and wine are in their feasts*: but they REGARD NOT the WORK of the LORD, neither *consider the operation of His hands*. Therefore my people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge" (verses 11-13). These things were not written as history merely. They are on record as the everlasting expression of God's views of man's ways. There are people who see no objection in the use of

strong drink and in the attendant musical convivialities. "We cannot see any harm," is the motto on their side. "Woe unto them," is the utterance on God's side. Wise men will never hesitate in the choice between such divergent issues. It is the lesson of universal experience that strong drink and indulgence in frivolous music undermine all taste for the sobrieties of wisdom. Nothing more infallibly brings men into the state described by Solomon in the Proverbs, in more places than one: "They hate knowledge: they do not choose the fear of the Lord: they will none of my counsel: they despise all my reproof." No doubt, the exertions of folly are agreeable for the time (otherwise they would not be indulged in): but what is the end? Solomon well says: "The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot": ashes and desolation are the outcome. Israel have experienced this in a long dispersion, which, if men had only wisdom to rightly interpret it, is a standing protest against the sensationalisms of wine, music, and the dance, as well as the condemnation of all idolatries.

"Therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory and their multitude and their pomp shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the Lord of Hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness" (verses 14-16). Not the popular hell, of course, but the Bible hell—*sheol*—the grave—invisibility—oblivion. Destruction personified, as when "Destruction and death say, We have heard of the fame of wisdom" (Job xxviii. 22). Destruction opened a wide mouth and devoured the merry crowds to whom Isaiah was sent in expostulation: they disappeared in the profound. The visitor to Israel's desolate hills may realise to the uttermost how fully the prophet's words have come to pass. A step further forward will see the disappearance of British, French and Italian revelries as well, and the substitution of a new civilization among the populations sobered by judgment. "The Lord of hosts shall be exalted." But first must "the day of the Lord be upon every one that is proud and lofty and upon every one that is lifted up . . . and upon all the ships of Tarshish and upon all pleasant pictures . . . the Lord alone shall

be exalted in that day" (Isaiah ii. 17-21). Liquor and music and dancing will hide their heads when men "shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Israel have had their taste of this. The turn of other nations is coming. The judgment of God is "upon the Jew first and also on the Gentile" (Rom. ii. 9-10).

"Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat" (verse 17—of chap. v.). That is, the meek of the earth will live in security and peace when the wicked are cut off: and the surplus property of the wicked wealthy will pass into the hands of others. The lambs are the meek: the fat ones are rich sinners. It is the expressive figure of a change which is put in plainer terms when it is said (chapter xxix. 19), "The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, when the terrible one is brought to nought and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity shall be cut off."

"Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it" (verses 18-19). We have here figurative action and characteristic speech on the part of the scornful class in Israel, who were just as much in the majority as they are in Gentile lands to-day. The figure is that of men dragging a loaded conveyance by means of ropes or harness. This is not a common mode of transit in Western lands, but it is common in the East. When men thus convey loaded carts, it is on business. The load in the figure is "iniquity" and "sin." The harnessings are vanity (or vain or foolish ideas), yet put on with the strength of a cart rope. The general picture is that of men following sin as their avocation, with talent and vigour, and whose only response to the expostulations of righteousness is insulting satire. "We will believe when we see." "When the judgment comes, we may get out of the way: when the Kingdom comes, perhaps we may manage to tip the doorkeeper." There is no lack of such scoffers now. Their end will be like that of the scoffers at the siege of Jerusalem,

who said to Josephus that the prophets were old women: they "miserably perished" with every attendant circumstance of suffering and shame. It is for the wise to be patient: "The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever" (Psa. ix. 18).

"Woe unto them that call evil, good, and good, evil: that put darkness for light and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine and men of strength to mingle strong drink—which justify the wicked for reward and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him" (verses 20-23). This is the same class described in another way, or rather, another aspect of their wickedness exhibited—an aspect that makes them dangerous men as well as bad men. They do not honestly own up to being wicked. If they practise evil, it is on the plea that it is really "good." They would not be considered bad men for the world. They have a philosophy that enables them to be at peace with their own consciences at least. They flatter themselves that they are "broad" in their views: "liberal" in their principles: "enlightened" in their ideas. They are able to dismiss all scruples as to divine law: and all objections on the score of principle as "prejudice." By their sophistries, they not only deceive themselves, but lead many to destruction. They lure women to dishonour, and beguile the trustful to ruin in business matters. Nothing stands in the way of their self-interest. They will praise the vile and slander the honourable if they can make it "pay." And all their ways are smoothed over with honeyed words of deceit.

"Woe unto them" saith the terrible word of God. "As the fire devoureth the stubble and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness and their blossom shall go up as dust, because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." There is nothing more melancholy than the end of a sinner. Who bemoans him? Who misses him—(unless it be his companions in folly)? Who is not relieved when the land is delivered from his presence, and his shadow no longer pollutes the sun? If thus it is in the individual cases that illustrate the principle every other day, how must it be

when "the destruction of the wicked and the transgressor shall be *together* and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed?" (Is. i. 28). "The day that cometh shall burn them up that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . Evil doers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." It will not then seem the light thing it now is in the eyes of men to "cast away the law of the Lord and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel."

It is for the wise to know wisdom in advance, and not drift helplessly to its discovery with a foolish generation, engulfed in a common destruction. Wisdom lies in the discernment of God's views as revealed. By this standard, the common practical repudiation of the divine law is a crime. We may read the heinousness of it in the words next written (verse 25), "Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people and he hath stretched forth his hand against them and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The destruction of a divinely-constituted nation and its prolonged prostration to this hour is the unmistakable indication to those who can see it, of the divine estimate of the habits of thought and speech that are as much in vogue to-day as they were in the midst of Israel.

In Isaiah's day, the coming retribution was still a matter of futurity. Its advent is foreshown in many a graphic figure—none more telling than that with which this chapter concludes: "He will lift up an ensign to the nations—(that is, wave a flag to arrest their attention and summon them)—and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth, and behold they shall come with speed swiftly." The Gentile nations were to be used as weapons of destruction against Israel. We look back and see it has been done. The destruction of Israel has not been miraculous. It has been the natural result of human rapacity with an opportunity given. Yet how constantly the formula: "*I* have scattered them." Even in the chapter before us, it is "*his* anger," *his* "stretched-out hand" that is the ultimate cause of the calamity.

The nations, though filling their part, are only used as instruments. They are unconscious of the divine ingredient in the process.

They say "Our hand is high: the Lord hath not done all this." Whereas the truth lies in the shape they deny. If their hand is high, it is because it has been divinely permitted for a divine purpose. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? *Did not the Lord?*—he against whom we have sinned. Because they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient to his law. Therefore he hath poured upon them the fury of his anger and the strength of battle" (xlii. 24). The nations have been but as so many saws, axes, and hammers in a work of demolition which has been a divine work. This is the aspect of the matter laid stress on in Isaiah x. 15; and it is most important to have it continually in view, otherwise we shall err in our reading of the whole course of history. It is a combination of the human and divine that the natural man has a difficulty in receiving, and yet the discernment of which is essential to enlightened views on many matters: *e.g.*, the death of Christ, the meaning of our own lives, etc.

That Israel's troubles were not miraculously made it worse for Israel. To be given over to "the tender mercies of the wicked" is far worse than being subjected to direct divine chastisement. Israel would have found it a cause of pride as well as comfort if only angels had been their enemies; to be subjected to the power of man was to be afflicted and dishonoured in its bitterest form. David, who had experience of man, knew the difference between falling into the hands of God and the hands of man, when invited to choose his own punishment at the close of his reign (2 Sam. xxiv. 13-14). It shows the fearfulness of Israel's punishment that they have been handed over to the power of Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Latins, and Russians: "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment. O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction" (Hab. i. 12).

At the time Isaiah prophesied, they were latent in the quiet sea of nations. The land of the heathen contained in the populations thereof the elements of trouble, but those elements had to be organised and the trouble evoked. They must have remained innocuous against Israel if God had not stirred them up and opened their way in the manner that is easy for Him. This prophecy shows us the divine operator, at work as it were: shaking a signal-flag and hissing for the nations to come, as a man hisses for a dog. By the

light of history, we see them respond in successive waves of irresistible assault, as indicated in the next verse (27): "None shall be weary or stumble among them: none shall slumber nor sleep: neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken."

This is not intended to intimate that literally and individually, the soldiers of the enemy advancing to Israel's destruction would be incapable of weariness or slumber, and have no accident to their accoutrements. It is a hyperbolic declaration of the certainty of the execution of their work, akin to what Jeremiah was instructed to say concerning the Babylonish besiegers of Jerusalem: "Though ye (Israel) had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent and burn this city with fire" (Jer. xxxvii. 10). In the same way are we to understand the remaining description of their prowess (Isaiah v. 28). "Whose arrows are sharp and all their bows bent: their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring shall be like a lion: they shall roar like young lions, and lay hold of the prey and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it. And in that day, they shall roar against them (Israel) like the roaring of the sea."

Any one reading the particulars of the Roman invasion of Palestine supplied so abundantly in the narrative of Josephus (an eye-witness) will have the illustration before his eyes of what is literally meant by these high figures of inspiration. The attendant circumstances of that invasion were of a character that could only be adequately expressed by such bold word-pictures. The same things happened in the many previous calamities of Israel's experience, but not on the same scale or with the same terrible intensity. We either lack fulness of historical information of previous cases—(such as the destruction of the land by Nebuchadnezzar), or else the events of the Roman destruction exceeded all others in their horrors—which is probable from the words of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 21-22).

The closing sentence of the chapter touches off the sequel in one vigorous stroke: "If one look into the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof." When

Vespasian and Titus had done their work, a smiling land had been turned into a blackened waste, and all order and authority had been extinguished in the extermination of the bulk of the inhabitants. Had we been there to see, it would have been like looking on the site of a conflagration the morning after the fire had reduced a mass of noble buildings to ashes, only the scene would have been far more extensive and the circumstances infinitely more tragic than anything connected with the biggest fire that happens in war or peace. A whole land involved in "darkness and sorrow;" the light of public life vanished from all high places; "the light darkened in the heavens thereof."

To speak of the high places of a community as the heavens thereof, is a common and effective figure throughout the prophetic scriptures. It is based upon the natural relation of the physical heavens as the upper or ruling sphere of the world natural. This is so natural a subject of political figure that all public writers fall into its use in the easiest manner in speaking of the relations of the ruling powers. How often do we read in press editorials of the "clouded state of the political sky" when governments quarrel; or the eclipse of some luminary when some high personage falls from state, or the rising of "a bright particular star" when some new genius makes his advent in any realm of public life. That the public habit in this respect may have its partial origin in Bible allusion is probable, but this is not sufficient to explain it. The Bible is not so influential with the world as to stamp its speech by the mere force of its usage. Natural fitness is much more powerful with men in such a matter than Bible custom.

And the fitness in this case is manifest. It is a natural, a beautiful, and a scriptural style of figure that conceives of a system of things among men—whether in the smaller phase of individual and family life, or the larger phase of political systems—as a universe of heaven and earth, with their subordinate features and phenomena of sun, moon, stars, sea, rain, sunshine, storm, calm, etc. As the one affects us literally, so the other affects us figuratively. Heavens and earth are the whole system in each case. As the heavens rule the earth literal, so the figurative heavens—(or authorities)—rule those under them, who are the earth. What the sun is in the system

of nature, the fountain of prosperity and light, whatever it may be, is in the economy of human life large or small. In general, the sun is the symbol of prosperity, but may have a special application to a ruling person, as in the case of Joseph's dream of Jacob as the sun; darkness standing for calamity and oppression, or for ignorance, as the case may be; the stars as the lesser luminaries of our life; the air for the social or political atmosphere which we breathe; tempest for adverse circumstances causing stress; the sea for the people or for the lower elements of our position, according as it is applied politically or to individual experience.

That these things are true in scriptural usage is shown by the following illustrations: "I *make new heavens and new earth*" is a form of speech employed to describe generally God's purpose to "make Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy" (Isaiah lxx. 17-18). That this means the recovery of the old Jerusalem is shown by the further statement, "The voice of weeping shall be *no more heard in her* nor the voice of crying" (verse 19). Peter (2 Pet. iii. 13) expounds the promise thus: "new heavens and new earth *wherein dwelleth righteousness*," showing it is a system of things with moral relations, and therefore a system composed of people, for the physical universe has no moral relations: it is equally the platform for righteousness or wickedness as the case may be.

"I will *shake the heavens and the earth shall remove out of her place*," is the figurative description of God's overthrow of Babylon by the instrumentality of the Medes and Persians (Isaiah xliii., compare verses 1, 13 and 17).

The revolution in human affairs by which human systems are overthrown and the Kingdom of God established is thus described: "I will *shake the heavens and the earth*, and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen" (Hag. iii. 22). The sense of the Hebrew "*wav*" (translated "and") is here expletive rather than conjunctive, and has the sense of the English "even" rather than "besides." The same form of speech is employed earlier in the prophecy (ii. 6), with the addition of the words "yet once," which Paul says are to be understood as "Yet once more," and as signifying "the removal of the things shaken" (Heb. xii. 26). "Yet once it is a little while and I

will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

A more limited figure is the employment of sun, moon, and stars, day and night, in foretelling prosperity or adversity for the things and systems spoken of. The extinction of the power of Egypt is thus described in Ezekiel xxx. 18: "At Tehaphnehes also, *the day shall be darkened* when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a *cloud shall cover her*, and her daughters shall go into captivity." Again, in Ezek. xxxii. 7: "And when I shall put thee out, I will *cover the heaven* and make the *stars* thereof *dark*: I will *cover the sun* with a *cloud* and the *moon* shall not give her *light*. All the *bright lights of heaven* will I *make dark* over thee and set *darkness* upon thy land, saith the Lord God."

Under the same figure, the extinction of prophecy is foretold: "*Night* shall be unto you that ye shall not have a vision: and it shall be *dark* unto you that ye shall not divine. And the *sun shall go down* over the prophets and the *day* shall be *dark* over them" (Micah iii. 6).

So Israel's everlasting and unclouded glory is foretold in these words: "*Thy sun* shall no more go down, neither shall *thy moon* withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God thy glory" (Isaiah lx. 20).

Israel's overthrow by Babylon is thus lamented: "How hath the Lord *covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud* in his anger, and cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel" (Lam. ii. 1).

Jesus said of Capernaum that it was "exalted unto *heaven*"; but would be "*brought down* to hell (Matt. xi. 23); and of the coming dethronement of the power of the enemy: "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18).



CHAPTER VI.

THE GLORY OF THE KING, THE LORD OF HOSTS, IN THE TEMPLE.

WE need have no doubt as to the subject matter of this sixth chapter, since it is fixed for us by the Spirit of God in an apostle. John, speaking of Jesus, and quoting some of the words of the chapter, says (Jno. xii. 40) "These things said Esaias *when he saw His glory and spake of Him.*" We are therefore in the presence of a vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus enthroned as king of the whole earth; and as heirs of the kingdom, "if we suffer with him," are interested in tracing out the upbuilding matters therein presented.

The time of the vision is stated to be "the year that King Uzziah died." There is doubtless a good reason for the introduction of this information. A consideration of the salient facts in the history of that king, in comparison with the matter of the vision, seems to reveal the fitness of time and circumstance. The death of Uzziah was a matter of peculiar sadness, for the king was a leper, and not only so, but a leper because of transgression. We are told in the history of Kings and Chronicles that he came to the throne at the early age of sixteen years, and reigned fifty-two years; and that "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." It is further said of him that "He sought God in the days of Zechariah, *who had understanding in the visions of God,* and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."

No doubt the ministry of Zechariah would have to do with the young king's upright walk, as was the case with Joash before him under the faithful guidance of the High Priest Jehoiada. How long Uzziah's prosperity continued does not appear; "But," continues the unsparing record, "when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense."

In this rash enterprise he was withstood by Azariah the priest with eighty subordinate priests. "Thou hast trespassed," said he, "neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God." And the wrathful king, censer in hand, resisting God's High Priest, was smitten with leprosy; and fled from the temple in disgrace. And he was "a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord; and Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land."

Under these circumstances then, "in the year that King Uzziah died," Isaiah saw this vision, the central feature of which is *the sanctification of the Lord of Hosts*, in the glorious reign of a future Son of David, who on his temple-throne should, without "trespass," combine the dual offices of king and priest. For, as another prophet says, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. vi. 13).

"I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Isaiah was not the only prophet who had visions of this divine throne to be set up on earth. Ezekiel and Daniel both had similar revelations, which in their imagery correspond with that of Isaiah, and are made further intelligible to the "servants of God" by "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" himself. Ezekiel in his opening chapter describes "visions of God" in which figure "the likeness of a throne" and of a man enthroned, and also the other elements of Isaiah's vision of the glory of God, as for instance the Cherubim. Daniel beheld in vision the enthronement of "one like the Son of Man" and the casting down of all human power before him.

The fourth and fifth chapters of Revelation make the meaning of such visions clear beyond mistake. Who is "the Lamb," "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," "the Root of David"? Who but the Lord Jesus? And those four living creatures who, with the four-and-twenty elders, in songs of rejoicing ascribe their salvation to the Lamb, and exult in the prospect of reigning with him as kings and priests on the earth—who could miss the signification of their words, "Thou hast REDEEMED US?" So turning back to Isaiah, we recognise

in the elements of his vision those "heavenly things"—namely, Christ and his brethren—which under the Law of Moses were foreshadowed in the wonderful symbolic ritual of God's own appointment, and which were subsequently exhibited to and by the prophets upon the basis of what had previously been laid down.

The throne in the vision, and "his train" or "the skirts thereof" (margin) are related to "the temple." "The thrones" of the kingdoms of men that are to be "cast down" before the Son of Man sustain no such relation, notwithstanding their pretensions, especially that of the so-called "Eternal City," whose occupant "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." By the side of this, the transgression of Uzziah sinks into insignificance; and if the penalty of that was leprosy unto death, the judgment of this is destruction with the brightness of the Lord's coming.

"The temple," whether considered literally or "spiritually," is the place chosen of God for His dwelling and manifestation. Its material, design, location, and service are altogether of Divine appointment. Thus "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. . . . See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount" (Heb. viii. 5). David also gave to Solomon, in preparation for the building of Solomon's temple, "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit." "All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." So Ezekiel is controlled by "the hand of the Lord" in the exhibition of all the forms, ordinances, and laws of the future temple (Ezek. xl. 4; xliii. 10-11).

And the care thus bestowed upon the literal is, of course, not absent from that "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Its "lively stones" (2 Pet. 1, 5) have to be conformed to the pattern of Jesus Christ, the "chief corner stone, elect and precious," "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 21). The manifestation on earth of this "holy temple," when the Lord Jesus shall be enthroned upon Mount

Zion (Rev. xiv.) "before his ancients gloriously" (Is. xxiv. 23), is the subject of this sixth chapter.

"His train" or "skirts" connects with the drapery of the tabernacle and the garments of the High Priest. It is in connection with these garments that most of the other occurrences of the original word are found. The High Priest of Israel in his ministrations before the throne of God, clothed with garments of God's appointment, represented Christ personal and multitudinous. Whether we consider the "fine linen," the girdle of needlework, the Ephod, the Breastplate, or other details, the substance is all of Christ and "his celestial train," some of whose characteristics and excellencies are by these things prefigured. If it should seem strange that clothing should stand for a multitude of individuals of any sort, it has only to be remembered that it is God's own figure, as clearly expressed in a prophecy of Zion's marriage after long widowhood. "As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth" (Is. xlix. 18). That is, Zion's children shall be gathered to her in glory. There is also the fact that in belief of the Gospel and baptism we "put on Christ," and if faithful unto death are to be associated with him in glory, when "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven."

The Seraphim of Isaiah's vision correspond to the Cherubim of Ezekiel and the Living Creatures of the Apocalyptic visions, and are representative of the saints when made equal unto the angels and commissioned to execute the judgments written. The meaning of the verb whence the term is derived is "to burn or consume," and that is said to be the mission of Christ and the saints in the preliminary stages of subduing the world to God. "The judgment shall sit," says Daniel, "and they (the saints) shall take away his dominion (that of the Fourth Beast), to consume and to destroy it unto the end" (ch. vii. 26). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. i. 8). Like the living creatures of Rev. iv., they ascribe Holiness to the Lord, and in almost the same terms: "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

There is no support in this for the doctrine of Trinitarianism for which it is adduced. There is a plurality certainly, clearly visible both in the term "hosts" and in the "us" of verse 8, but it is not a plurality consisting of three co-equal co-eternal gods, one of whom is incomprehensibly enough termed "the Father," another "the Son," and another "the Holy Ghost." The very first principle of divine teaching both by Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles, is that there is ONE GOD (Deut. vi. 4; Isa. xlii. 8: xliii. 10-13; Mark xii. 29; 1 Cor. viii. 6). He reveals Himself as the "Most High God: the Possessor of Heaven and Earth," "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and as being pleased in the fulness of time to manifest Himself upon earth in a multitude redeemed from among men upon principles of His own appointment, and finally exalted to the glory, honour, and incorruptibility of the divine nature. In the exhibition of these principles, it pleased Him to reveal Himself in Israel in the person of "a Son" who was also "Son of David," and the nature of whose relationship to the Father is defined by angels and prophets and by himself, in a manner that altogether excludes the mystifying co-eternity and co-equality of Trinitarian speculations.

The vision of "his glory" that is here before us is in harmony with all this. The title "Lord of Hosts"—*Yahweh Tzvaoth*, literally means He who will be Hosts, and memorialises the purpose of the Eternal concerning Christ and his body the Saints. In harmony with this purpose we hear the Lord, before he suffered, pray for his people "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one*" (Jno. xvii. 21). This saying illustrates the unity and plurality in question.

The adoration of the Seraphim introduces a principle that has almost been lost sight of on earth, although written deep and strong in the history of Israel. It is that God is "great and dreadful," that He "will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him," and that there must not be any obscuring of His majesty or tampering with His will by the creatures of His hands. This is repugnant to the natural man, whose "high thoughts" insist upon liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. The word of God

is mighty in the casting down of such reasoning. Look at Cain's rejected offering; look at the fate of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. See Nadab and Abihu fall dead before the fiery indignation that avenged their offering of strange fire. See this King Uzziah driven leprous from the temple for presuming to intermeddle with the service of God's appointment.

It is a grave mistake to suppose that there is less restriction in access to the divine favour in Christ. We hear Christ:—"He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. . . . I am the door" (Jno. x.). The apostolic ministry exhibits the mode of entering—believe the Gospel and be baptised. How does Christendom stand measured by this rule? Christ's own answer is on record in Rev. xi. in the symbol of the unmeasured outer court of the temple, cast out and given to the Gentiles. The lesson so often and terribly enforced upon Israel has been forgotten by the Gentiles, and the time draws on for their chastisement and enlightenment in the terrible "day of the Lord" that will level all human pride in the dust. Then, Hallowed will be God's name, when in His Kingdom His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

The fourth verse of this sixth chapter finds illustration in the later vision of Rev. xv. 8, which exhibits the "seven last plagues" by which all nations are made to come and worship before God, because His judgments are made manifest. In this chapter of Revelation it is said, "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." As the peaceful reign of Solomon and the dedication of the temple succeeded the wars and victories of David, so will the peaceful glory of the Kingdom of the "greater than Solomon" follow his manifestation as the second David. He is first manifested as "the Name of the Lord coming from far, burning with his anger" against the nations, and afterwards, when the smoking wrath of God is finished, he stands forth as "the Prince of Peace."

Isaiah was overcome with consternation at the vision: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have

seen the King the Lord of Hosts." An overpowering sense of uncleanness and helpless incompetence in the presence of the divine Majesty has been the visible characteristic of many of God's servants. Moses, when directed by God to bring Israel out of Egypt, hung back even to the point of provoking God's anger. "Behold," said he, "I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me"? Manoah feared death because he saw the angel of the Lord. Jeremiah lamented his incapacity, saying, "Ah, Lord God! Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." The feature is a beautiful one in many ways, assuring us of the genuineness of the Scriptures, for human writings do not thus belittle their prominent men; making us also feel that the prophets were men of like passions with ourselves, with whom we shall be at home in the Kingdom of God if it please Him to grant us a place therein. Then again it is an illustration of the altogether satisfactory philosophy of the case that Paul gives us in 2 Cor. iv. 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, *that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" Or, as he elsewhere expresses it: "God hath chosen the weak things . . . that *no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Cor. i. 27).

"Then flew one of the seraphim unto me having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." Jeremiah and Daniel in similar conditions were similarly equipped for their missions. Jeremiah says, "The Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold I have put *my words* in thy mouth" (Jer. i. 9.). Daniel in his reception of a vision of the King in his glory (chap. x.), being overcome, was strengthened by an angel touching his lips (x. 16), and then received further divine communications respecting the future of Israel till the uprising for judgment in the time of the end of Michael the Great Prince.

Comparing the cases of Isaiah and Jeremiah we see that the touch of the Lord, and the putting of God's words in the prophet's mouth, is equivalent to the touch of the live coal from the altar, and the purging of iniquity in preparation for his mission. The

appointment of God in Israel for the purging of sin at the altar, and the subsequent exhibition of the substance in Christ, gives us understanding of the matter. The qualification of those who spoke for God was the cleansing from iniquity. In the case of the prophets this is illustrated in the manner before us, and constitutes the great difference between the false and the true. The false were uncleansed and spoke visions of their own evil hearts which God repudiated. The true spoke His word faithfully through all the suffering and dishonour it brought upon them.

The relation of Christ to the apostles of his choice further illustrates this feature of Isaiah's vision. Christ is himself the antitypical altar, in touching whom in the way divinely appointed we are purged from our iniquity. As "the Word made flesh" who dwelt in the midst of Israel speaking "God's words," his cleansing power is visible in his last addresses to "his own" before he suffered. "Now are ye clean," said he, "*through the word* which I have spoken unto you." There was an exception truly in the person of "the son of perdition:" "Ye are clean, but not all." But his necessary evil presence did not obscure the principle. The word did not cleanse him because it did not find a lodgment in his heart; and as the lips are but the organs of the expression of the fulness of the heart ("for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"), we have no utterances of Judas, save the betrayal of the Lord and a hypocritical grumble at an accepted offering. But the others "cleansed by the word" and endowed with power from on high, go forward as Christ's witnesses "conquering and to conquer."

Though the days of inspiration are past (or rather suspended) according to the pre-determination of God, these things are not without their application even now. The rule of acceptable utterance is still similar, as the apostolic writings testify: "If any man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The audible voice of Christ is for a little while longer unknown to earth, but "the word of Christ" in the fulness of all the Holy Scriptures, which focalise in Him, is accessible to all; and the extent of its cleansing and transforming power will not be known till the day of the manifestation of the Sons of God, when Isaiah among all the prophets will "prophesy again."

The message which the prophet was to bear to Israel was a heavy one, as had been that of Moses centuries before. He said, Go and tell this people, "Hear ye indeed but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed."

"Why," says an objector, "if God did that to them how could they be blamed for unbelief?" "Why doth he yet find fault?" "For who hath resisted his will?" "Nay, but O man," says the apostle, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" And he puts it that God "endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy." The bulk of the people whom God rebuked by Isaiah were "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Not that God gave them no chance of mercy. Very far from it. He challenges them on this point: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge I pray you between me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it" (ch. v. 3). The blinding of Israel came only after "much long-suffering" on God's part, and steadfast persistence in evil on the part of the misguided people.

Christ's own application of these words of Isaiah illustrates the matter further. "I speak unto them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith "By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they have closed*, lest at any time, they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. xiii. 13). Men who closed their eyes to Christ, in the unmistakable divinity of his words and works, were in hopeless case, as he says (Jno. xv. 24). In their rejection and crucifixion of him, they filled up the measure of their iniquity, and "wrath to the uttermost" was thenceforth their portion.

But "how long?" In common with the other prophets, Isaiah was greatly exercised by this question. "Then said I, Lord how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." From Isaiah's day, we stand now about two thousand six hundred years down the stream of time. Looking back we can only say, "The former things have come to pass." In the days of the last King with whom Isaiah was contemporary—Hezekiah—the ten-tribed kingdom of Ephraim went into captivity, and in about a century afterwards Judah shared a like fate at the hands of the Babylonians. Then under the Persian kings there came the partial restoration, but at length in their rejection of Messiah, the nation encountered the divine indignation, and the end came with the overwhelming flood of the Roman invasion, the effects of which still challenge the attention of almost the least thoughtful of mankind in the spectacle of scattered Israel and the forsaken land.

God did not give Isaiah any other answer to his enquiry than the verses quoted; but subsequently to other prophets he revealed times and seasons, in the understanding of which, we have the happiness of knowing that the desolation of Israel is nearly at an end. That it was terminable was plainly revealed to Isaiah both in this and other visions. In this case the concluding words of God run thus: "But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten, as a teil tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Though the sinners of Israel were to be "as an oak whose leaf fadeth" (ch. i. 30), the Israelitish tree itself was not to be wholly destroyed. There would be a remnant exhibiting the characteristics of the "blessed" spoken of in Psalm i.—and who, delighting in the law of the Lord, would at last be in the estate symbolised by its beautiful figure of a fruitful evergreen by rivers of water.

All the dealings of God with Israel illustrate this principle, to which Christ also alludes in speaking of the judgment coming: "For the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." "The elect" are "the holy seed," to which all ages and generations have contributed their humanly undiscerned and unvalued number. The fathers of Israel

themselves were "few men and strangers" in the land of their future everlasting inheritance. The Prophets were often outcast fugitives. The Lord Jesus himself was despised and rejected, cast out of the vineyard and slain, by the apparently honourable husbandmen of Israel. His people have shared his experience as he said they would. Though in truth "the holy seed" and "the salt of the earth," they have been esteemed "the offscouring of all things." But divine verities are not affected by human estimations, and when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have "come in" to the elect "remnant" of Israel, as Paul calls it in his teaching concerning these things in Romans xi., the "consensus of opinion" of mere human philosophy will weigh nothing with God by the side of the "jewels" of His own development against the day of earth-filling glory which Isaiah beheld in vision so long ago, and which is now so much nearer its actual manifestation.





CHAPTER VII.

IMMANUEL.

IN the seventh chapter, we commence a section of the prophecy which runs in a connected manner to the end of the twelfth chapter, and has been called "THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL." It deals in a wonderful and comprehensive manner with the fortunes of Israel from the days of Ahaz, King of Judah, to the enthronement of the Holy One in the midst of Zion (xii. 6). The Holy One there enthroned amidst shoutings of rejoicing and salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter, speaking of this time, exhorts the brethren to endure the fiery trial of their faith with the glorious end in view: the salvation of their lives (1 Pet. i. 9); and adds, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or *what manner of time*, the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Again, in his second epistle, exhorting "those of like precious faith" to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets," he says: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Bearing these exhortations in mind, and having "senses exercised by reason of use," we are enabled in great measure to understand the words of the prophet.

In enquiring "what manner of time," the Spirit of Christ signifies we must, of course, enquire concerning the time and circumstances under which the word was given. Apart from a study of the history of the case, we might conclude from this section of Isaiah that Ahaz was a good king, and be disconcerted somewhat at the judgments denounced upon him. Isaiah vii. opens thus: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of

Uzziah, King of Judah, that Rezin, the King of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, King of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told *the house of David*, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." We read in 2 Kings xv. 30 that "Hoshea, the son of Elah, made a conspiracy against Pekah, the son of Remaliah, and smote him and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the *twentieth year of Jotham*, the son of Uzziah"—that is, twenty years after he began to reign, for in verse 33 it is said (as also in 2 Chron. xxvii. 1) that "he reigned *sixteen years* in Jerusalem." This would make the death of Pekah happen in the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz.

There were more incursions than one of Syria and Ephraim in the days of Ahaz. The troublous times spoken of in Isa. vii. 1-2 had to do with his early years, and the "evil counsel" of the confederate kings of Syria and Israel was, "Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and *set a king in the midst of it*, even the son of Tabeal." These circumstances and this time were deemed fitting by God for a further exhibition to "*the house of David*," to Ephraim, Syria, and those of the Gentiles to whom the word of His grace should afterwards come, of His eternal purpose concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and *the throne of David in the hands of Immanuel*, the Holy One and KING of His appointment.

The phrase "*the house of David*" of verses 2 and 13 is peculiar, and not accidental—not a poetic flourish put in by "the will of man." It imports that the matter before us was not merely personal to Ahaz (who was not the type of man God honours with revelations), but was national and far-reaching in its bearing and developments.

Ahaz, the son of Jotham, we learn from the parallel accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chron., came to the throne at the early age of twenty years, reigned sixteen years, died leaving behind him a bad record, and was buried in Jerusalem but not in the sepulchres of the Kings. A glance at his history makes the understanding of this section of Isaiah clear.

“He walked in the way of the Kings of Israel, yea and made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. Then Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, King of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him” (2 Kings xvi. 3-5).

Later, however, Judah was smitten with great slaughter before Rezin and Pekah, and Zichri a mighty man of Ephraim (2 Chron. xxviii.), and “Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000, women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.” It was on this occasion that the prophet Oded rebuked Israel on behalf of the captives, telling them of their own sins, and so influenced the princes of Ephraim that “they rose up and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren,” and then returned to Samaria.

Untouched by this beautiful and striking interposition of God on behalf of Judah, and being further harassed by the Edomites and Philistines, Ahaz hired help of Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria, spoiling the temple to provide the means. Tiglath-Pileser accordingly took Damascus, and slew Rezin. Ahaz went to Damascus to meet his victorious ally. While there he was struck with the pattern of a certain altar, and sent the design to Jerusalem to Urijah the priest, who had a facsimile ready against the king’s return. On his return, Ahaz displaced the brazen altar, and set up the idolatrous creation in its place, reserving the brazen altar to “enquire by.” He was undeterred by the example of his ancestor Uzziah, and “trespassing yet more,” “sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel” (2 Chron. xxviii. 23). His further desecration of the holy things, destruction of the vessels,

closing the doors of the temple, and multiplying altars in every corner of Jerusalem, are described in the histories of Kings and Chronicles.

Such was the character of the king in whose days Isaiah, Oded, Micah, and Hosea ministered "the word of the Lord" in messages of indignation and judgment, blended with promise of mercy for "the latter days."

In the time of trouble pertaining to the invasion of Judah by Syria and Ephraim, Isaiah is commissioned by God to meet King Ahaz at a certain spot and calm his fears. A writer of repute has inferred from this that Isaiah must have been of the seed royal. But the conclusion is not justifiable: Amos penetrated into the King's Court at Bethel, though originally but a herdman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, and he excused his presence and message by direct reference to the command of God (Amos vii. 13-15). The fact is, that of Isaiah's extraction and personal history we know little or nothing beyond the word or two of chapter i. 1, which describes him as "the son of Amoz." It is evidently not designed that we should know in these days. If it please God to let us take place with "all the prophets" in His glorious kingdom we may hereafter know much. Meanwhile, personal curiosity is baffled, and attention directed to the message rather than the messenger.

The divine command was: "Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub (*Remnant-shall-return*), thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fullers field"—(that is, to the point where the besiegers were against the city, and where afterwards Sennacherib's blasphemous captain challenged the God of Israel to deliver Jerusalem—chap. xxxvi. 2). "Go forth . . . and say unto him, Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah"—and the message recounts their policy of overthrowing the Kingdom of David and founding a new dynasty, and resumes, verse 7—"Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of

Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

There are heads and heads: the apostle Paul, speaking of a certain matter, says: "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ . . . and the head of Christ is God." Here were certain powers in the Lord's land—*Immanuel's land*—besieging "the city of the Great King." Their relation to the HEAD of all, was that of His briefly tolerated instruments of chastisement. Of Ephraim's follies the Spirit of God in the prophet Hosea speaks expressly: "They have set up kings but not by me: they have made princes and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols that they may be cut off" (Hos. viii. 4). The divine estimation of and sentence against these self-appointed "heads" in threatening array against the Kingdom of David is thus presented to Ahaz by Isaiah. They were simply "two tails"—"the two tails of these smoking firebrands." They would not, like Immanuel, be "plucked from the burning" (Zech. iii. 2), but would pass away in the consumption decreed of God for all the seed of the serpent. Less than sixty-five years saw the fall of both Syria and Ephraim, Rezin having been slain by Tiglath-Pileser, and Pekah by Hoshea. Syria became a province of Assyria; and Samaria, in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth of Hoshea, fell before Shalmaneser, and thus the ten-tribed kingdom of Ephraim passed away for ever.

"Moreover the Lord spake again to Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, *O house of David*: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign:—

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

And shall call his name IMMANUEL.

Butter and honey shall he eat,

That he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

This was to be a *sign to the house of David*, not to Ahaz personally. He had expressly refused the invitation of God to ask

a sign. He would be dead and gone seven hundred years and more before Immanuel's days. Hostile criticism, rejecting Jesus, fixes on Ahaz and his time, and asks with an air of triumph, How much of a sign was the birth of Jesus to him? But such criticism has to wrest the Scripture even to appear to snatch a victory. The words of the prophet altogether exclude such rigid personal construction. Jewish rejecters of Jesus (in their very rejection and "abhorring" fulfilling the later words of the prophet), have exhausted their ingenuity in unsuccessful endeavour to expound the sign apart from him. Emphasising the fact that the definite article appears in the Hebrew ("the virgin," not "a virgin," see R.V.), and altering "virgin" to "young woman," they have even striven to prove that "Hezekiah King of Judah" was the man of sign in question! But it is "hard to kick against the pricks." Hezekiah, though a worthy king, and a pleasant contrast with idolatrous Ahaz, was no such sign to the house of David. He was not a virgin's son. He was not "God with" Israel, neither did Syria and Ephraim fall before he knew "to refuse the evil and choose the good."

But in the face of the New Testament Scriptures it were vain to follow too closely such desperately ingenious struggles to get rid of the authority of God's Anointed. Matt. i. 22, 23, concerning "the birth of Jesus Christ," is all sufficient: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted is, God with us."

As to the definite article, the reason and propriety of its appearance may be gathered from Mary's answer to the salutation of the angel Gabriel (Luke i. 38): "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word." This was a recognition of her honoured position as "*the* virgin" of Isaiah's prophecy—"the handmaid of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxvi. 16: cxvi. 16) as much present to the mind of God from the beginning of His purpose, as was her illustrious Son.

As to the proposition to alter the rendering of the word *almah*, it is entirely unwarrantable. The matter was to be "a sign," a

“wonder,” and the usage of the term in indisputable and expressly defined cases of virginity as in Gen. xxiv. 43 (Rebecca), and Ex. ii. 8 (the sister of Moses), justifies the received translation. Further, the necessities of the case from the very earliest promise of God (Gen. iii. 15), that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, effectually exclude any other idea, as also does the wonderful name the Son was to bear.

“Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.” What kind of a diet was this to be? Not literal butter and honey, of course, for thousands of Israelites ate that, who were distinguished more by the opposite characteristics of refusing the good and choosing the evil. On the occasion of his conversation with the Samaritan woman, when Jesus, “being wearied with his journey,” sat at Jacob’s well, he had something to say about his “meat.” In answer to the importunities of his disciples, he said: “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” And after their wondering enquiry of each other as to the source and nature of the supply, he added: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John iv. 32, 34). The doing of that will involved the indwelling of the word of God in which, by the Spirit of God, he was of “quick understanding.”

The Scriptures frequently speak of the word as food to be eaten. “The Lord thy God humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” So said Moses to Israel (Deut. viii. 3). “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food,” said Job (ch. xxiii. 12). “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. xv. 16). Words that in their “reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting” thus establish and delight the new man, are “butter and honey.” The words of the covenant-breaking enemy, said the Psalmist, “were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps. lv. 21). The sham illustrates the true. Another Psalm, the 119th (a

long panegyric of the word of God), says: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste—yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts *I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way*" (verse 103). Solomon uses the same metaphor as Isaiah vii. His exhortation runs thus: "My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb which is sweet to thy taste. *So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul*, when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward and thine expectation shall not be cut off" (Prov. xxiv. 13-14).

All this finds pre-eminent illustration in Immanuel, who refused the evil and chose the good, who "loved righteousness and hated iniquity," and is therefore "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Heb. i. 9). He is himself the bread of life, antitypical of the manna with which God fed Israel in the wilderness. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," said He to the people that followed Him because He had miraculously multiplied bread, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27). "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (verse 53). And pacifying his disciples, who complained of the "hard saying," he added in explanation: "It is the Spirit that maketh alive, the flesh profiteth nothing; *the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life*" (verse 63). All Immanuel's "seed" eat of the same "spiritual meat," and esteem it exceedingly; and by it alone in its daily assimilation, "know" and are encouraged to "refuse the evil and choose the good" in hope of the day of recompense that lies ahead.

Long before Immanuel's childhood, the land abhorred by Ahaz was "forsaken of both her kings." In the days of Jesus, the Romans had incorporated it in their "iron" dominion, and still long ages of desolation awaited "the glorious land." But these are now nearly expired, and the signs of deliverance are many and bright.

But judgment was to come upon Ahaz, verse 17: "The Lord shall bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the days that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the King of Assyria." The history of the Kings tells us that "the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, King of

Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord. And Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria, came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not" (2 Chron. xxviii. 20). The Assyrian whom Abaz hired with the spoil of the temple, to deliver him from Syria and Israel his enemies, became the Lord's hired razor (verse 20) to make Judah bare. Jeremiah and Ezekiel illustrate the same figure of judgment.

To Jeremiah God said: "Cut off thine hair and cast it away . . . for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath" (ch. vii. 29). Ezekiel, symbolically representing the destruction upon destruction that was before Jerusalem in his days, was commanded by God, saying, "Son of Man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard; then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part and smite it about with a knife; and a third part shalt thou scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number and bind them in thy skirts. *Then* take of them *again*, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire, for *thereof* shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel (Ezek. v. 1-3).

Thus the shaved, burnt, and scattered hair of the prophet represented Israel in the successive visitations of fire and sword that came upon their evil generations. One of the features of the representation of Christ in glory is "the hair of his head like the pure wool" (Dan. vii. 9). "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" (Rev. i. 14). In those days the shaving, smiting, burning, and scattering of Israel for their iniquity will be a thing of the past, and Immanuel surrounded by the multitude of the immortal redeemed, will have gathered purified and repentant Israel unto himself; yea, even the "razor" itself shall have been transformed, for "in that day shall Israel be the third *with Egypt and with Assyria*, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. xix. 24). Egypt and Assyria, upon whom Israel leant when they

forsook God, and whom God therefore used as instruments of chastisement, will then have borne their measure of chastening and humiliation and figure among the "many nations joined unto the Lord" in the day when he shall "inherit Judah, his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. ii. 12).

Notwithstanding the iniquity and desolation there was to be good food for the elect remnant: "It shall come to pass in that day that a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep; and it shall come to pass for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter, for *butter and honey shall everyone eat that is left in the land*" (verses 21-22). That is the same food that was to nourish Immanuel (verse 15), and he himself is enigmatically before us in verse 21.

"A young cow:" that is literally "a heifer of the herd." When God was about to confirm to Abram the "covenant concerning Christ" (Gen. xv.), He told him to take among other animals for sacrifice, "an heifer of *three years old.*" About five hundred years afterwards, when Israel had gone through much of the experience of which God spoke to Abram, He appointed in their midst, as an ordinance for purification, the water of separation made with the ashes of "a red heifer without spot, wherein was no blemish, and upon which never came yoke" (Num. xix.). The substance of this, Paul identifies with Christ (Heb. ix. 13-14).

As to the "two sheep:" Christ is at once "the Lamb of God," and the "Great Shepherd of the sheep." The two ideas are blended as it were in Isa. liii.: "All we like sheep have gone astray . . . the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth." He taught the Jews that he was at once the door of the sheepfold and the shepherd that entered by the door, an involution of ideas that is unintelligible apart from the understanding of the truth concerning "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). He said that not only of Israel were his sheep: "Other sheep I have which are *not of this fold*; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (Jno. x. 16).

Christ: the "Word made flesh," in the days of his flesh, by his ministering of the word in Israel, "nourished" a remnant,

which, being thus begotten by the Father with the word of His truth (Jas. i. 18), became in turn the ministers of the same word, and shepherds of the sheep. "Feed my sheep," said the Lord to Peter; and in doing it, Peter thus addressed the "scattered strangers, elect according to the foreknowledge of God," "Laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes desire *the sincere milk of the word*, that ye may grow thereby." Growth apart from the milk and honey of the word is impossible. It is *the* characteristic of the latter-day revival of the hope of Israel, that its possessors are "begotten" by the Word, "desire" it, and "grow thereby."

If many do not exhibit such characteristics, it is because they do not really belong to it. "Everyone left in the land," whether the phrase be taken to refer to the remnants which have in the past escaped from the judgments that have come, or to the elect remnant that shall at last enter into the "eternal inheritance," conformed and must conform to the pattern of Immanuel in the assimilation of the food and nourishment of the Father's own appointment and providing.

Because of the neglect of this has been all the evil of the past. The desolate land is but the monument of Divine indignation upon the most favoured people of His choice, "because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (ch. v. 24). "With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; *because* all the land shall become briars and thorns" (ch. vii. 24). Apostolic exhortation to "go on unto perfection," uses this warning: "The earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, whose end is to be burned" (Heb. vi. 7). The briar-and-thorn-choked land of Israel was consumed by the invader, but some "good ground" escaped. "And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of sheep" (verse 25).

The meaning of the concluding words of this seventh chapter is illustrated in the work of Christ and the apostles. He was "the sower" in the land, who, in the "sending forth" of the twelve upon the mountains of Israel, figuratively "sent forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass" (ch. xxxii. 20). Paul does not hesitate to appropriate the figure of the patiently labouring ox. "It is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it *altogether for our sakes?* For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thrasheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor. ix. 9). Nevertheless, the apostle was extremely careful in the exercise of his undoubted privileges lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ.

His day of labour in "treading out the corn" has long ceased. The monument of it is preserved in the many records of his works and sufferings. Many generations since have contributed their number of "oxen and sheep." Far less directly "sent forth," and in the times of darkness succeeding the Apostolic era so few as to be scarcely discernible, they have nevertheless patiently fulfilled their appointed day. Briars and thorns have multiplied and do multiply exceedingly, not only in the Lord's land, but in all lands where His name is nominally in the ascendant. The desolate mountains of Israel still wait His return, one of whose functions it is to burn up the sons of Belial "as thorns thrust away," a work the true magnitude and terror of which, can never be adequately estimated this side of its accomplishment.





CHAPTER VIII.

MAHER - SHALAL - HASH - BAZ.

MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ, Isaiah's second representative son, is the subject of prophecy in the opening verses of the eighth chapter.

Like Cyrus afterwards, he was named by God before he was born, and the things that he should memorialise were specified. Much ingenuity has been expended in vain attempts to identify Maher-shalal-hash-baz with Immanuel. That there is a relation, and a close one, between the two men of sign is undeniable; but that the two names cover one and the same person is impossible. It is an advantage to trace the points of comparison and contrast in the case. Known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world; and known unto Him are all human oppositions and perversions of His word, as the whole of the prophetic Scriptures testify. In this case the matter appears to be specially guarded. It is impossible to avoid being struck with the particular definition of *sonship to Isaiah personally* given in the opening verses of this eighth chapter.

“Moreover, the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll and write in it *with a man's pen* concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. The first point of contrast then between Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is that the former was to be a virgin's son, while the latter was Isaiah's son by the prophetess. Enlightened Israelites would never confound the two; they would know positively from the covenant God made with David, that Messiah would be at once a son of David and a Son of God, for the terms were: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son.”

“Write in a great roll with a man’s pen” (the same word stands for a *graving tool*), reminds us of the contrast between Immanuel and all others of Israel’s sons that is introduced both in the Mosaic law and the prophetic symbolism concerning him. Understanding from divinely enlightened Jewish teaching (Heb. xiii.) that Jesus is the antitypical altar, we remember the restriction of Ex. xx. 25: “If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone, for *if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*”

In harmony with this is the vision of Zech. iii. Joshua and his fellows, like Isaiah and his children, were men of sign. The angel’s words are: “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men of sign (margin), for behold I will bring forth my servant the Branch (*i.e.*, Jesus, see Rev. xxii. 16), For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone seven eyes; *behold I will engrave the graving thereof*, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”

The same feature was exhibited to Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation were revealed to him in answer to his prayer. “Thou sawest till that *a stone was cut out without hands*, which smote the image.” “Forasmuch as thou sawest (this) . . . *the great God hath made known* to the king what shall come to pass hereafter” (Dan. ii. 34, 35).

So that, whether presented as the remover of iniquity, or the destroyer of the kingdoms of men, Immanuel, as his name imports, is of higher than human origin, even as Jesus said: “I came down from heaven.” Those who would refer his paternity to Joseph—and it is these chiefly who confound the names of Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz—are guilty of polluting the altar, and giving the lie to God.

Then the signification of the two names is very different. “*God with us*” is the equivalent of Immanuel, and “*Speed the spoil; haste the prey*,” that of the other. The prophet’s son was not “God with” Israel or Judah. In his days God was not “with” the nation. He testified against them of impending judgment upon both the houses of Israel, and the triumph of

Immanuel's day belonged to a then remote future. Isaiah's son was a sign of evil to the idolatrous northern kingdom, and Syria its equally offensive ally. "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria" (viii. 4).

By some who oppose the truth, these words are put against chapter vii. 16, and the attempt is made to treat both passages as dealing with precisely the same thing, that such treatment may pave the way for at least the *suggestion* that Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz are the same. But the words of chapter viii. 4, just quoted, are not the same as those of chapter vii. 16, which run, "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." This is a larger matter than the fall of Damascus and Samaria before Tiglath-Pileser. These victories of the Assyrian king over Syria and Ephraim in the infancy of Isaiah's son, were but the earnest of the departure of the two sovereignties that subsequently followed, and was a matter of ancient history before Immanuel's time.

With reference to Ephraim, whose duration as a people was limited by the prophet (ch. vii. 8) to less than sixty-five years; we are told in 2 Kings xvii. 24 that "the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria *instead of the children of Israel*," who had been carried away captive. This would be the work of a later king of Assyria, long after Shalmaneser's overthrow of Israel, and appears to mark the termination of the period specified.

The import of the name of Isaiah's son having been defined, God spoke again to the prophet concerning the inroad of the king of Assyria. "Forasmuch as this people (Israel) refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son. Now therefore, behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the

stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." Shiloah was "a fountain in the south of the valley of the Tyropæon, between the upper and the lower parts of Jerusalem, from which flowed a little brook past Sion and Moriah, and was lost in the gardens south of Ophel." It is mentioned in Nehemiah's account of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem some 250 years later than Isaiah's time. "Shallum repaired the gate of the fountain . . . and the wall of the pool of Siloah, by the king's garden" (Neh. iii. 15).

Some years ago (in 1880), it was brought to mind by the discovery of an inscription in an underground conduit which fed the pool. The inscription was deciphered, and found to record the successful piercing of the conduit by bodies of miners beginning from each end and meeting in the middle. The date of the writing is supposed to coincide with Isaiah's time. The Scriptures speak of some such engineering work on the part of Hezekiah (2 Kings xx. 20). It is one of the many illustrations of the perfect agreement of "The land and the Book."

In the days of Jesus, the pool of Siloam was the scene of an interesting work of power in the case of the man born blind, whom he observed when leaving the temple after a sharp controversy with the Jews. He said that the man was an occasion for manifesting a work of God; and having "spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him: Go wash in the pool of Siloam (*which is by interpretation, Sent*). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John ix. 7).

Then again, the name Shiloah of Is. viii. corresponds with that of Judah's Lawgiver, in Jacob's prophecy of "the last days": "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, for that Shiloh shall come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. xlix. 10, *Dr. Thomas' translation*). Jesus, "the *Apostle* and High Priest of our profession," spoke of himself as having been "Sent": "The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted" (Isa. lxi. 1). This he quoted of himself in the synagogue at Nazareth. On another occasion, "he stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that

believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive" (Jno. vii. 37).

Looking back to Isaiah's time, it is not difficult to see that Israel's refusal of the waters of Shiloah was their rejection of the word of the Lord sent forth from Jerusalem by the faithful ministry of His servants the prophets. From the beginning, the Kingdom of Ephraim was based upon apostacy from God. Jeroboam, fearing the ten tribes would return to the allegiance of the House of David, established an idolatrous system of his own devising, with centres of worship at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings xii. 29). And subsequent kings walked in the way of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Jeremiah, remonstrating later with the whole nation on the unheard of enormity of a nation changing its gods, said: "Be astonished, O ye heavens, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. . . . Now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? (the 'black and turbid' Nile); or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (Jer. ii. 12, 18).

In sharp contrast with this national apostacy, and leaning on man instead of trusting in God, is David's attitude expressed in Psa. xlii. 1-2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Nothing like this ardent desire for God was to be found in Israel in Isaiah's days. They had long turned their backs upon Him, and made confederacy with a Gentile neighbour to destroy the house of David in which His covenant was established. But in vain:

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son. Now, *therefore*, behold the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory." Accordingly Tiglath-Pileser, as history tells us, slew Rezin, took Damascus, and, having conquered Syria, incorporated the country with his own dominion, and subdued also a great part of the kingdom of Israel,

which Shalmaneser and Sargon, his successors, finally overthrew. But Judah, though delivered from extinction at the hands of Syria and Ephraim, was not to escape. The word of the Lord continued :

“And he shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching forth of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel” (verse 8). Bible history illustrates the fulfilment of the prediction. Although at first favourable to Ahaz, and later on severely checked at a certain crisis in the cutting off of Sennacherib’s army by an angel in a single night, the Assyrian prevailed against Judah till at last the kingdom of David was overturned by the Babylonian power with which the Assyrian had been incorporated by conquest.

That Immanuel should have a land does not harmonise with the fabulous notions that, in the name of Christianity, have so long prevailed against the truth. Palestine might pass away for ever in the imagined “wreck of matter and crash of worlds,” without in the slightest degree disturbing the system of religion that has for centuries passed current as Christianity. How differently the matter really stands in the word of God, all know well who are enlightened by the truth.

Of the world at large, the word of God says: “Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord; and there is none else” (Isa. xlv. 18). Inhabited, that is, eternally, by the redeemed, when “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation” (verse 17), and when, unto Jesus, “every knee shall bow” (verse 23, interpreted by Paul in Rom. xiv. 11). This “everlasting salvation” of Israel is rooted in the promise to the fathers of the nation of everlasting life and land inheritance. Foremost in this divine purpose is Immanuel as the “heir of all things.” Speaking of God’s promise to Abraham, Paul says, “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. iii. 16). Let anyone study attentively the last four verses of Genesis xiii., from which Paul’s quotation is made, and see if they can reconcile them with received ideas. If they do not at first discern the bearings of the matter, but suppose the temporary occupation of the land by Israel

under the law to fulfil the promise of "eternal inheritance," let them study the apostolic comments on the case (Acts vii. 5; Rom. iv. 13; Heb. xi. 8-16, 39; Gal. iii. 16-29). Let them further trace the purpose of God in Israel, especially with reference to the "everlasting covenant" He made with David concerning Christ (2 Sam. vii. and xxiii.; Acts ii.: xiii.). Let them realise that David is "dead and buried," and "not ascended into heaven"; and that the land and city wherein he reigned are here with us, desecrated by the effete tyranny of the Turkish Empire, and ask themselves how, in accordance with received notions, is the everlasting covenant to be fulfilled?

In nothing is Christendom more astray than in relegating Immanuel's realm to "kingdoms beyond the skies." God chose Palestine in the beginning, for the central land in which His kingdom should at length be established, and now, after nigh four thousand years, the wisdom of the choice is manifest to all who study the matter, and it is dimly perceived on all hands that the Holy Land is the pivot on which the destinies of nations turn. Moses reminded Israel that it was a land that the Lord their God cared for continually (Deut. xi. 12), and God said by Moses that even when it should have long lain desolate and forsaken because of their iniquities, if they would turn to Him He would in the end "remember the land" and reinstate them (Lev. xxvi. 42). The prophets are full of the same divine purpose, as Isaiah will further illustrate. The scattering and desolation, rightly considered, is but the earnest of the gathering and the glory. This is expressly declared (Jer. xxxi. 10: xxxii. 42).

The future vindication of the land by divine intervention is introduced by Isaiah simultaneously with the decree of its overflowing by the Assyrian flood. His words continue: "Associate yourselves O ye people and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together and it shall come to nought, speak the word and it shall not stand, for (*Imma-nu-el*) God is with us" (verses 9-10).

However outrageous it may seem, and however repugnant it may be to popular Christianity, nothing is clearer in the Scriptures

than the fact that Immanuel has a controversy with the nations concerning his land. Cast out of his inheritance and slain eighteen hundred years ago by the power of the adversary, "when Jew and Gentile joined their power," he was raised from the dead and taken up to heaven by the Father, "henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." The nations are "his inheritance" and the uttermost parts of the earth "his possession" (Ps. ii. 8). Just as the first two verses of this second Psalm found a preliminary and literal fulfilment in the days of his weakness (Acts iv. 25), so will they and the remainder of it find full, literal and glorious fulfilment in the day of his power. There is a time for everything: a time for his enemies to prevail against him, and a time for him to prevail against his enemies: a time for the rod of transgressors to smite the judge of Israel (Mic. v. 1) and a time for his "iron rod" to break them to pieces (Ps. ii. 9). Who but his enemies can object to this?

This language of Isaiah viii. 9-10 is almost a reproduction of that of the second Psalm. The picture is that of a wide-spread and powerful confederacy of "peoples" on the one hand, and God and a certain "us" on the other hand, in controversy in the Lord's land, concerning the Sovereignty of the world centred in the city of Jerusalem. The issue has long been revealed: the breaking to pieces of the enemy, the triumphant enthronement in Zion of God's glorious King, and the subjugation in blessedness to Him of all the earth. The "us" on the Lord's side is not indeterminate nor confined to Israel. The Gospel of the Kingdom calls to "whosoever will" to take part in the wonderful work. There is no mistake about it. Christ's own words of promise preclude the possibility of error: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I have received of my Father" (Rev. ii. 26).

But note well the conditions: "*Overcometh*, and *KEEPETH MY WORKS UNTO THE END.*" As might be supposed, such God-like powers are fenced with close restrictions; and all unfitness is for ever excluded. But while there is absolutely no room for self-complacency; we must not swing to the other extreme, and declare, or at least

esteem it to be unattainable. Christ has overcome (Rev. iii. 21) and he invites us to "consider him." Is he high above us, although once a wearer of our nature? There are others—men of like passions with ourselves—who have overcome, and are approved beforehand. Of them are Elijah (Jas. v. 17) and the prophets (v. 10), the twelve apostles (Matt. xix. 28), and "a great cloud of witnesses" of whom the world was not worthy.

For the most part of the humblest extraction, unspoiled by the pride engendered by "philosophy and vain deceit," being enlightened by the Word and "made perfect through sufferings," men have been developed in all ages of the past, in whom God takes pleasure, and whom at last He will "beautify with salvation." Of their estate when thus beautified it is written: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises (or rather commands—compare Deut. xviii. 18-19) of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them *the judgment written*. THIS HONOUR HAVE ALL HIS SAINTS" (Ps. cxlix. 5-9). A "Christianity" that has no room among its doctrines for "this honour" is manifestly self-condemned.

It is now about 2,500 years since God brought upon Israel and Judah "the waters of the river strong and many." Our far-distant generation, that was then in the womb of futurity, now looks back upon the history of "the land the rivers have spoiled." The "remnant" that belongs to Immanuel, with eyes enlightened by him, regards it with wonder and thanksgiving; and with faith and hope of His coming glorious intervention. He, too, has spoken of the "waters of the river." But how differently from Isaiah, in the days of Ahaz. After the final scattering of Israel, when the measure of their iniquity had been filled up in his crucifixion, he revealed a "drying up" of those once "strong and many" waters, as a sign of the imminence of his return to his land and the manifestation to the astonished earth of a new order of kings of his appointment "by right divine."

His people do not require to be told where this is set forth: "The sixth angel poured out his vial (full of "the wrath of God")

upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" (Rev. xvi. 12). And concurrently with this and other developments—"Behold I come as a thief!" (verse 15). The territory of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian power has for many centuries past been occupied by the Turkish power, whose origin, as Jesus foretold (Rev. ix. 14), was in the Euphratean countries; and which has "spoiled," and is spoiling the land of Israel to this day.

For about a century past the decline of this power has been a notable "sign of the times," and is now a fact so obvious that the matter has become a proverb, and "the sick man" is only preserved in being, by the mutual jealousies of the Powers who hope to inherit his most desirable though "spoiled" estate. They gather round with all manner of conflicting "counsel." Is there a place in it all for Immanuel and the "kings of the east"? Imagine the derisive smiles that would greet the introduction of any such claims in any conference of the Powers that be! No, they are the other parties to the controversy of Zion; and though the Turkish power waning is a sign of Immanuel's coming, there is yet another inroad of the "Assyrian" before the matter is finally settled.

"This man (the Bethlehem-born Ruler of Israel) shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men" (Mic. v. 5). These are some of "the kings of the east." The latter-day Assyrian is the King of the North (the Russian Power). His following, and his conquering career, and final overthrow by Christ on the mountains of Israel, are the subjects of divine revelation by the prophets. Thus Ezekiel tells of the nations that shall be in his "company" when God brings him "in the latter days" against the mountains of Israel, "*that he may be made known in the eyes of many nations*" (Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix.).

Daniel tells of his "overflowing and passing over" into the glorious land, and of his planting the tabernacles of his palace between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain, and of his coming to his end with none to help him, in the epoch of the standing up of "Michael the great prince," and the resurrection of the dead (Dan. xi. 40 and Ch. xii.).

Isaiah, speaking of the fall of Babylon, has a word in Ch. xiv. concerning the fate of the Assyrian of the latter days. "The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot; *then* shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders" (verses 24-25).

This has never come to pass. The yoke of the Assyrian is still heavy upon the neck of Israel, and his burden well nigh intolerable upon their shoulders. It is this indeed that is the proximate cause of the latter day Israelitish movement that has "Zionism" for its title and the mountains of Israel for its objective as a "legally assured home" for its persecuted and hopeless multitudes. But vain is the help of man. "There shall come out of Zion the DELIVERER, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

It is Immanuel's work altogether. "Refused" like "the waters of Shiloah" for long ages, he has withdrawn himself while the guilty nation has been overwhelmed by the enemy, and while, consequent on their rejection, the Gentiles have provided an elect remnant that have accepted his divine invitation: "Come unto me and drink." But the time of his absence is almost at an end, and presently Isaiah, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, and the many that shall come from the North, South, East, and West, will rejoice in the frustration of the counsel of all the enemy, which "shall not stand for GOD IS WITH US."

Then Isaiah tells how God required him to stand aside from the apostate people, as a sign of what Immanuel's attitude would afterwards be among the apostates of his day:—

"The Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not a confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy, neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Here is complete separation from the national apostacy emphatically commanded by God. No brotherhood with those who departed from the law of God was to be thought of by the prophet. His eye was to be on God, and the family of the redeemed that

should at last be manifested gloriously in Israel. We know by our own experience the difficulties of such a calling, and the amount of faith and patience it necessitates, and hence can sympathise with the prophets in their trials, and, if we hold fast, shall be able to rejoice with them in salvation.

The past history of Israel contains many illustrations of a faithfully-maintained separation between the service of God and the corruptions of apostacy. Thus Elisha, when, at the request of Jehoshaphat, he was summoned before Jehoram concerning the Moabite war, said to him: "What have I to do with thee, get thee to the prophets of thy father . . . As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the King of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" (2 Kings iii. 13). And even then he was so vexed that the soothing strains of a minstrel were necessary before he could prophesy of the victory that was coming.

Micaiah, the son of Imlah, hated by Ahab because of his prophesying evil concerning him, indignantly refused the admonition of the false prophets to trim his message, and speak smooth things; and faithfully repudiated them and their lies, pronouncing Ahab's doom in the impending battle. In this he encountered smiting and imprisonment, but would have the satisfaction of seeing the word of God proved true in the event foretold.

"The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" were rejected in their advances by Zerubbabel and the chiefs of the Restoration, when they said, "Let us build with you." There was no place in their fraternity for the co-operation of these Samaritan apostates. "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God," said they to them; and, as a consequence, had to encounter the misrepresentation and opposition of their wounded ambition. These people were the successors of those with whom now Isaiah was forbidden by God "with a strong hand" to fraternize.

The New Testament Scriptures exhibit the same command of separateness to God, and the approval of such an attitude faithfully maintained. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion

hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 14-18).

The faithful following out of the course of action here commanded, will soon bring a man into sympathy with the prophets and the temple-builders of the Restoration period that followed the Babylonian captivity. He will be beset with much specious argument; for the sons of Belial never own up to their true character. It will perhaps be admitted that many evils and corruptions exist among present day ecclesiastical communities, but it will be the advice that these ought not to be protested against by so energetic a measure as "coming out" and being "separate."

The late Mr. Laurence Oliphant, who went the round of many "isms," finding no rest for the sole of his foot, at length took refuge in a device of his own heart which he styled "*Scientific Religion*," which was in reality a kind of conglomerate of Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Jewish superstition. In one part of his book with the above title he says, when speaking of "The Evils of Compromise": "Those who, perceiving the glaring evils attached to the ecclesiastical system with which they are connected, are impelled by their conscience to believe that they can best remedy those evils by remaining within its pale, and working for its reform from within, are bound to follow that guidance: and may rest satisfied that in doing so they are carrying out the will of God, as certainly as others to whom a different message is conveyed by the same still small voice; both may be the voice of God, though the message to each may be different—for abuses may be attacked from within as effectually as from without."

This is the sort of thing that the present day "brethren of the prophets" have to encounter in their endeavours to conform to the will of God. They know how to meet it. The voice of conscience is

not the voice of God. The voice of conscience said to Saul of Tarsus: "Bind and imprison the Nazarenes." The voice of God in Christ Jesus said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The voice of conscience in Peter said to Christ concerning the crucifixion: "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee." The voice of God in Christ replied: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." The voice of God has commanded separation from corruptions and corrupters of His way from the earliest times, and if the voice of conscience does not coincide, it is because it is unilluminated by the word of God, the entrance of which "giveth light."

Isaiah, enlightened and strengthened with the word which the Lord "spake to him with a strong hand," stood out from all fellowship with apostate Israel, a fitting type of Christ in the attitude he maintained toward the "evil generation" in the midst of which he testified the truth in his day. Isaiah was encouraged to lean on God only, who in Christ Jesus would afterwards be for "a sanctuary," although "for a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel."

IMMANUEL, A SANCTUARY.

A sanctuary is a place of God's appointment where He is manifested for approach in worship and praise. Moses was commanded by God to receive of the children of Israel an offering of many things divinely specified in Ex. xxv., and God said: "Let them make me a sanctuary *that I may dwell among them.*" And we have abundant details of specification for the construction of the tabernacle, the materials for which being liberally provided by the children of Israel, were put together by the skilful workmen of God's raising up, under the guidance and superintendence of Moses.

Stringent laws regulated all the service of the sanctuary; the breach of them being punishable with death, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, and the cutting off denounced against any one who should fail to offer the blood at the door of the tabernacle. Paul instructed the Hebrews of his day that these Mosaic ordinances were but "patterns of things in the heavens," and that the Lord Jesus was "a

minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man."

The understanding of these sayings is the key to the meaning of the word of the Lord to Isaiah: "He shall be for a sanctuary." The Eternal Father, when the time came for the manifestation of Immanuel, raised up a Son of David by His spirit according to His promise, in whom He dwelt among the children of Israel, and in whom alone, after the way into the holiest was made known by the blood of Christ, He accepted the worship and offerings of such as "came unto God by him."

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." So says Paul to the Corinthians. "By him let us therefore offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. xiii. 15). Israel of old made the mistake of supposing that they could reject Jesus and still retain God's favour. "Give God the praise," said they to the blind man whom Jesus had healed, "we know this man is a sinner." "We know God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow we know not from whence he is." But the man pointed to his opened eyes; and Jesus said: Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

The attitude of Christendom is no more defensible than that of Israel of old. Professing Christ's service, as Israel professed admiration for Moses, they reject his commandments. Tried by the standard of these, Christendom appears in the attitude of worshippers outside the sanctuary. Indeed, this is Christ's own figure in Rev. xi. 1-2—a rod of affliction for "the temple of God and the altar and them that worship therein," and the outer court, unmeasured and given over to the Gentiles. The terms of the Gospel are, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved:" and the attempt to evade any part of them is simply a "climbing up some other way," which Jesus says is the act of a thief and a robber. Just as Aaron and his sons were in their consecration brought to the door of the tabernacle and washed with water (Ex. xxix.); so those who come unto God in "the true tabernacle" must approach by "the washing of water by

the word" (Eph. v. 26), "the washing of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5). Believing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and being "baptized unto Christ," they are in the position spoken of by the apostle (Heb. x. 19): "Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Those who maintain that it is senseless bigotry to contend for "forms and creeds," and who make light of God's ordinances, are in the position of the despisers in Israel of old, and will be "cut off" without remedy. The insistence upon this truth, and the faithful maintenance of the divinely drawn distinction between "in Christ," and "without," develops all the enmity that inevitably exists between the "carnal mind" and the mind of God. It matters not to the people of Christ. They are in good company; they take the prophets for an example, and even their Lord Himself. The purpose of God will stand when "every plant that the Father hath not planted" shall have been rooted up.

It was said that "the Lord of hosts" besides being "for a sanctuary" should be "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to *both* the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared and be taken." However undiscernible this may be to scattered Israel, who still have the words of the prophets in all their synagogues, it is plain enough to the outsiders who in the mercy of God have come unto their "sanctuary." Simeon, at the birth of Jesus, prophesied concerning him in harmony with Isaiah's words. He said to Mary: "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Lu. ii. 34).

Jesus himself afterwards amplified this, when he emphasised the parable of the vineyard and the slain heir, by the quotation from Psalm cxviii., concerning "the stone which the builders rejected." He said: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder" (Matt. xxi. 44).

Some fell on him who were broken (as Peter and Paul were, and as, indeed, he himself was), but who will "rise again." Others stumbled fatally over him, being "offended." "Whence hath he this wisdom and these mighty works?" said they, listening to his parables and seeing his miracles, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "And they were offended in him" (Matt. xiii. 54). John the Baptist, in the misery of imprisonment, having heard of the works of Christ, sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Jesus sent back the messengers as eye-witnesses of his mighty works, to reassure John, adding, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." John would doubtless be revived by this, and the time of his further sojourn was mercifully shortened by the executioner's sword.

Paul, in Rom. ix. 32, makes application of the prophecy of Is. viii. 14 to Christ. He says Israel "sought not righteousness by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written. Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." And in 1 Cor. i. 23, he alludes to his preaching a crucified Messiah as being "unto the Jews a stumbling-block." Peter goes further: he diagnoses the reason of the stumbling. His words are: "Unto them *which be disobedient*, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which *stumble at the word being disobedient*" (1 Pet. ii. 8). All stumbling at the appointments of God is traceable to disobedience. "Great peace have they which love thy law, and they shall have no stumbling-block." So says the Psalmist (Psa. cxix. 165). All Wisdom's words "are in righteousness; there is nothing froward nor perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge" (Prov. viii. 8-9).

It would be a woeful mistake to suppose that Christ is a stone of stumbling to Israel only. He is such to the disobedient of all generations whither his name has come. Christendom has stumbled over him as badly as Israel of old, as they will discover when his day of "grinding to powder" is manifested. Disobedient Israel, with false anticipations of kingly glory not based on the sacrificial declara-

tion of God's righteousness in a crucified Messiah, rejected him in that phase of his work. Christendom under the influence of pagan doctrines has subverted the truth concerning his sacrifice, and left no place at all upon earth for the kingdom and glory that is to follow. In the first century some stumbled at the fundamental truth that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," and from that day to this, men have repeated the history of their folly. Others stumble over his commandments, declaring them to be impossible and impracticable. Others again stumble over his hard sayings as to his divine origin and relation to the Father. But in all generations since his manifestation there has been a remnant who, having found in him the SANCTUARY of the Lord of Hosts, have not been offended in him; but having through faith and obedience entered into him as into the holy place, have there abode till the end of their mortal career, and will, in the day of his manifestation, be made pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out (Rev. iii. 12).

It was said that he should be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to *both* the houses of Israel. When he appeared, the ten-tribed kingdom of Ephraim had long passed away, as the prophet had foretold, and the descendants of the restoration of Judah's captivity from Babylon were those who took offence at him. There appears thus to be a future application of the prophecy to the "lost ten tribes." They have never seen those works of power that left Judah inexcusable for his rejection. It will be a feature of the restoration of Israel that they are similarly put to the proof.

There was nothing in the external appearance and bearing of Jesus to indicate to a casual observer in Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago, that the guileless man who went about among them doing good, was "for a gin and a snare to them." Things are not always what they seem. The enemy who triumphed over him, and at last cut off his life from the earth, did not dream that in thus carrying out their evil work to their own entire satisfaction, they were really walking into a death-trap of agony unspeakable. And yet the awful experiences of that generation exemplified the prophecy. Rows of crucified wretches round the doomed city were exhibited by the Romans (till the wood for making crosses gave out), that they might

intimidate the defenders to cease their useless and exasperating opposition. All in vain ; with almost superhuman madness and obstinacy they persevered. They mocked at the prophets, and in the midst of famine, pestilence, sedition, and assassination within the city, and the iron grip of the implacable foe without, they perished like wild beasts in hundreds of thousands.

“Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm,” saith the word of God. “He that toucheth you, O Zion, toucheth the apple of his eye.” The Anointed of God, His city and His saints, are not “disallowed,” “touched,” rejected and slain without consequences. There is a heavy debt accumulated by the world in its treatment of Christ’s people and Israel. Jerusalem had her turn when in the horrors of the overthrow which Christ foretold, God avenged the insult of His rejection by “destroying those murderers, and burning up their city.” Next time it is to be Rome, the “great city” of the Gentiles : “Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her” (Rev. xviii. 20). “As a snare” it is coming, and the only place of safety is on the side of those who, like Isaiah of old, have come out and are separate from the apostate system, and “sanctify the Lord of hosts himself” in the “SANCTUARY” of his appointment.

ISAIAH AND HIS SONS ; SIGNS AND WONDERS IN ISRAEL.

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion” (verses 16-18).

From Paul’s quotation in Heb. ii. 13, in which he applies the above quoted words to Jesus and his brethren, we perceive in this word of God to Isaiah an illustration of the phenomenon referred to by Peter when he spoke of “the *Spirit of Christ* which was in the prophets.” They were “men of sign,” and often represented in their lives and actions some characteristics of Christ, to whom they belong, as his children, in “the restitution of all things.”

The crisis of judgment, in the overthrow of the Jewish State in the lifetime of the generation that rejected Immanuel, having been revealed; what was to become of the "oracles of God," of which, to their great advantage (Rom. iii. 2), the Jews had, by the divine favour, become the custodians? Was the faith of God to perish from the earth with the hiding of God's face from the house of Jacob?

The answer to these questions is contained in the words that immediately follow—verse 16—"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." That is God's disciples, and, in Immanuel's days, the disciples of JESUS. There would be a "remnant" faithful in Israel, as Isaiah had already testified. And there would be a great provoking of Israel by the extension of God's kindness in the Gospel invitation to "those which were not a people"—to the "foolish nation" outside Israel, as Moses had testified ages before (Deut. xxxii. 21). The leading characteristic of these "disciples" of the "remnant" of Israel and from among the Gentiles, would be the exact opposite, with regard to "the law and the testimony," from that of the ensnared, fallen, and broken stumblers. Of these the prophet had said (ch. v. 24), "As the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: *because* they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." Of His "disciples," God says: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. lxvi. 2).

Foremost among these, as head of the one body, is Immanuel himself, who was the Word made flesh, and upon whom the spirit of the Lord rested, making him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. In him, personally and centrally, the law and testimony are bound up and sealed. "Of his fulness," says John, "have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." So wrote Paul to the Corinthians. God "openeth the ears of men, and *sealeth their instruction*" said Elihu to Job; and Jesus declared himself to be the subject of this divine sealing. Rebuking the multitudes that followed him for

the sake of the loaves and fishes, he said: "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (Jno. vi. 27). But when he interpreted the bread to be his flesh, they stumbled, and even the "disciples," in that early stage of discipleship, declared it to be "a hard saying."

But these being men of humble and contrite spirit, he rallied them, saying, "Doth this offend *you*? What and if *ye shall see* the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life*" (verses 61-63). And afterwards they did see the Son of Man ascend, and being by the promise of the Father sealed by the Spirit in like manner, but in less degree to their royal Master, the law and the testimony was bound up and sealed *in them*. Paul blesses God for this in writing to the Ephesians. He alludes to the apostolic standing in Christ, "that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed *ye were sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. i. 12).

Thus, the disobedient in Israel having stumbled and fallen, the new wine of the gospel was put into new bottles, and both were preserved. The relation of the "disciples" to the substance shadowed by the law is alluded to by Paul more than once. Thus he says to the Romans that God sent His Son . . . and "condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4). And to the Philippians (ch. iii. 3): "We are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). And "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Equipped with the law and the testimony, the "disciples" of Jesus went forth "conquering and to conquer," and by it, as "the sword of the Spirit," planted his name victoriously in the earth. Their description by the spirit of God in all the dark ages of the conflict that rages during his absence, is in harmony with

Isaiah's prophecy. It is recorded in Rev. xiii. 17, which describes them as "the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

In this attitude they have always, like the prophet, waited upon the Lord: "*I will wait upon the Lord*, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." The Lord Jesus in this, as in all things, is the foremost example. It had been testified of him in the Psalms that this should be his attitude: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psa. xvi. 8). And in the crisis of his death at the hands of Israel, when the Lord's face was averted from the nation in the time of their filling up the measure of their iniquity, he cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the forsaking was only for a moment. On the third day the Father raised him from the dead according to the Scriptures, and a little while afterwards removed him from the earth to His own right hand, until the time should come for his reappearance in the house of Israel in the latter days.

In all the centuries since the Lord's departure from the earth, the *waiting remnant* has preserved the same attitude. They have known and believed God's promise, that He will return in mercy to Israel; and, therefore, the "long time" of His silence and of "hiding his face from the house of Jacob" has not stumbled them. They are visible in this waiting attitude in the apostolic epistles as well as in the prophets. Thus we see Paul writing to the Thessalonians: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to *wait for his Son* from heaven." Isaiah's words, "I will wait upon the Lord . . . I will look for him," in the New Testament illustration of them in the attitude of the disciples of Christ, resolve themselves into this: "I will obey the commandments of God in Christ Jesus, and await his return from heaven." Throughout all the New Testament scriptures, nothing is plainer than this; and in nothing is Christendom more evidently astray, than in the universal ignorance and indifference that prevails concerning the matter of Christ's relation to "the house of Jacob," and the one "hope of Israel" with which it is so inseparably bound up.

Isaiah, in a later chapter that deals with the future song of salvation to be heard in the land of Judah, speaks of this waiting

attitude: "In the way of thy judgments O Lord have we *waited for thee*; the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi. 8). "In the way of thy judgments"—that is the qualification of the waiting. Not in idleness and indifference; but in enlightened and enterprising and faithful service, knowing that the evil "night" is short, and that the day of glory that is coming is everlasting. Of the day in which death is swallowed up in victory the prophet further says (ch. xxv. 9), "It shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have *waited for him* and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." But of course this "shall be said" only by those who can truthfully affirm that they have thus waited, for none others will be permitted to taste the sweetness of victory when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

When this day of glory dawns upon the world, the signs and wonders of which the spirit spoke by Isaiah (viii. 18), will be *manifested* in Israel. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion." This is one of the many beautiful instances in the Scriptures of divine double intention, that is of the word having both a proximate and more remote object and fulfilment. The more remote and concealed application of the words is revealed to us by Paul's quotation in Heb. ii. 13, in which he refers them to Jesus, in the world to come, having once tasted of death, but then surrounded by the "many sons" whom he shall have "brought unto glory" by his perfect obedience. The proximate application was to Isaiah's own times. He and his two sons were men of sign, both to that generation and all generations to come; and all three were related most intimately to Immanuel who was to come.

ISAIAH means *Salvation of Yah*, and thus agrees with the name of Jesus (Saviour): "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel Gabriel to Mary, before his conception, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). Isaiah represented proximately to Ahaz and the House of David, the salvation of Judah from Syria and

Ephraim, and, remotely, that greater and "eternal salvation" that should be manifested in Judah by Immanuel, "unto all them that obey him." SHEAR-JASHUB, the name of Isaiah's *eldest* son, means, *The Remnant shall return*. He was the representation proximately of the return of the captivity of Judah by the princes of Ephraim at the expostulation of the prophet Oded (2 Chron. xxviii.), a beautiful and touching incident. And, remotely, he was a sign of that more glorious return of a ransomed "remnant" in the latter days, for thus saith the Lord: "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: *afterward*, thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and *they that return of her* with righteousness" (Isa. i. 26). MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ, the name of the prophet's *second* son, means, "*Speed the spoil: haste the prey.*" He was a sign, proximately, of the seizure of the "spoil" and "prey" of Damascus and Samaria (the capitals of the confederated Kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim at enmity with the house of David), by the King of Assyria. But, being, as Paul shows, one of the representatives of "the children" whom the Father hath given Immanuel, he is likewise, more remotely, a figure of the speeding to the spoil and hastening to the prey that pertains to Immanuel and his children.

What! say the pious professors of the name of "another Jesus," do you mean to say that the Lord Jesus will take "spoil" and "prey"? Why, yes, Have you never read in the Scriptures, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall *divide the spoil with the strong*; BECAUSE he hath poured out his soul unto death"? Would you deprive him of the fruits of victory? If so, are you not on the side of his enemies? And where will you be when he appears? Listen to the law and the testimony. "The nations thine inheritance . . . the uttermost parts of the earth thy possession" (Psa. ii. 8). "This is the heir: come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." So said the wicked husbandmen of Israel (Luke xx. 14). "Wait ye upon me (all ye meek of the earth), saith the Lord, until the day that I *rise up to the prey*: for my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all

the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy" (Zeph. iii. 8). "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Jesus). "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! How long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not *rise up* suddenly that shall bite thee, and *awake* that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be *for booties unto them*. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, *all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee*; because of men's blood and for the violence of the *land*, of the *city*, and of all that dwell therein" (Hab. ii. 7-8). "The merchandise of Tyre and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently and for durable clothing" (Isa. xxiii. 18). "Arise, shine, O Zion, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. . . . Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. lx.).

So then God will "rise up to the prey," when the Lord Jesus, "the heir of all things," who once was slain and cast out of the inheritance, returns. By the indwelling of "the Power of the Highest," he will gather round him "the children whom God hath given him." Most of them are "asleep in the dust of the earth;" but, being "the Resurrection and the Life," he will cause them to "awake," and "rise up suddenly," and after investiture with immortality they will, under him, take possession by conquest of "the prey," "the spoil," the "booties," "the wealth of the Gentiles" which they will consecrate to the service of Jehovah in Mount Zion. All this, though absolutely and irreconcilably at variance with the "Christianity" of the churches and chapels, is nevertheless in harmony with "all that the prophets have spoken," and which Jesus says men are "fools" not to believe.

What depth of folly is equal to that which transforms the glory of the kingdom of God into the imaginary realms of bliss of popular theology? What "strong delusion" is like unto that which,

disregarding the great salvation of which the Lord Jesus Christ, in the glory and incorruptibility of spirit nature, is now the visible and tangible example and earnest, rejoices in the supposed translation at death of "immortal souls" to kingdoms beyond the skies? The glory of the Lord and His signs and wonders are to be "in Israel" when "the Lord of Hosts dwelleth in Zion." "The word of the truth of the gospel" defines the matter to be very real and tangible, much more so indeed than the present occupation of the earth by "vapour-lifed" flesh and blood which "passeth away." "The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." God, who created the earth, has given it to Christ, who is the "heir of all things." The world for Christ, is the divine rule, co-rulership with him for the saints, Palestine for the Jews, Jerusalem for the Great King, blessedness for the nations in their being joined to the Lord in that day, after his judgments have taught them righteousness.

Look at Zion in those days and we see by the eye of faith "*signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts.*" The heathen have ceased out of the land. The Lord has caused the false prophets, and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land (Zech. xiii. 2). No longer do the mummeries and superstitions of Greek and Roman Catholicism, Mohammedanism and kindred abominations desecrate the Holy City. The Lord hath inherited Judah his portion in the Holy Land, and hath chosen Jerusalem again. All flesh is silent before Him and He is raised up out of His holy habitation (Zech. ii.). He dwells in the midst of Zion with songs of rejoicing. He is manifested there, upon the throne of the Lord over Israel, in an immortal King—the central "SIGN AND WONDER" of Israel and all the earth. His name is "Wonderful" far beyond what it was in the days of his flesh. He was Immanuel even then, though born of a woman, and crucified through weakness. Much more is he Immanuel now—"declared to be the Son of God *with power* according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All power in heaven and earth is his.

He is surrounded with a glorious company of immortals in which Isaiah and "all the prophets," and "the ancients of Israel

gloriously," find place. "Behold I, and the children whom God hath given me!" It is the doing of the Lord of Hosts; the design and handiwork of the Creator of all things. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." It is the Father's "House of many mansions" at length manifested upon earth, architecturally and politically. The Lord Jesus spoke truly, "If it were not so, I would have told you." He would not have mocked us with vain hopes. He did not, and now it has come to pass. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." This is that which was spoken of the Spirit by David, who now sees his throne and kingdom established for ever before his face, as the Lord hath sworn: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." "How doth David by the Spirit call him Lord?" Ah, it is all very manifest now, in the presence of these "signs and wonders." For a long time most of them silent sleepers in the dust of the earth, they have "come forth unto life" at the voice of Him who is the resurrection and the life. God has "shown wonders to the dead." They have arisen and praise Him, and become "wonders in Israel"; over all the earth.

"But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see JESUS, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing MANY SONS unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of ONE: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children whom God hath given me" (Heb. ii. 8-13).

WITCHCRAFT AND NECROMANCY CONDEMNED BY "THIS WORD."

A prominent feature of Israel's apostacy, with which Isaiah was not to be confederate, was witchcraft and necromancy, which the Spirit of God foresaw would prevail in some form or other until the day of the manifestation of the Sons of God in Zion. It was specially forbidden in the law, and the history of the nation contained some striking examples of the breach of the law having been punished with death. The word of God by Isaiah concerning this matter, in ch. viii. 19, was: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep (whisper), and that mutter: Should not a people seek unto their God? For the living (should they seek) unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The law was plain: it said (Ex. xxii. 18), "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people. A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. xx. 6, 26). "Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations (that defile the land of promise). There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. *For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord:* and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. xviii. 9-12).

The examples of the judgment that came upon transgressors were striking. Israel in the wilderness "joined themselves to Baal-Peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead;" and suffered a devastating plague in consequence of their thus provoking God to anger.

Saul in his latter end is the most conspicuous example. When "the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets," he had recourse to the witch of Endor that he might

enquire of the dead Samuel. And this after he had previously put away all witchcraft. The woman was reluctant to gratify the wish of the strange night visitor (Saul was in disguise), and only consented, on his assurance that, *notwithstanding the law of God*, he would not cause punishment to come upon her. This promise being given, the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" And Saul answered, "Samuel." And immediately, to her great astonishment, she had a vision of Samuel, and discerned that her visitor was Saul. This limitation of knowledge and discernment is interesting. All that God permitted Saul to get from his unrighteous errand was a message of rebuke for asking of a dead man, and the dreadful intimation that, on the morrow, he and his sons together should descend into the grave with Samuel. The discrepancy between the true, and popular views of the incident does not now concern us. The comment on Saul's end in 1 Chron. x. 13 runs thus:—"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, *even against the Word of the Lord*, which he kept not, and also *for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit*, to enquire of it; And he enquired not of the Lord; *therefore* he slew him, and turned the kingdom to David, the son of Jesse."

In later times Ahaziah's messengers were intercepted by the prophet Elijah when on their way to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron. The angel of God told Elijah to turn the messengers back with a message from God to Ahaziah saying, "Is it because there is no God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed upon which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die" (2 Kings i.). And so it came to pass, notwithstanding Ahaziah's fury and the companies of soldiers sent to take Elijah.

These things were known, or should have been known, to the people to whom Isaiah testified; but they heeded them not. Not only Israel, but Judah also, under the evil influence of Ahaz, was turning his back upon the law and the testimony, and going after the abominations that had been the ruin of the nations whom Israel dispossessed in the land. The more we reflect on witchcraft and necromancy, the easier it is to see why "all that do these things

are an abomination to the Lord." God is the great Fountain of underived life, knowledge, and power: and He is jealous of His honour and glory. Witchcraft and necromancy, known to the moderns as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and so forth, obscures God's glory altogether, and gives the lie to His word. It affirms in effect that there is life apart from His gift and control, that His word is palpably untrue when it affirms that "the dead know not anything." It declares that the dead not only live in the enjoyment of a knowledge far superior to that of the days of the flesh; but that they are potent to control the destinies of the living, and inform them of the way in which they should go. It matters not to such a system that the word of God declares that in the day of death man's "thoughts perish," that "their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished," and that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in *sheol*." It thinks it knows better, and pities the dulness and incredulity of those who believe God rather than man. Such are "an abomination" to the dupes of such a superstition, just as their notions and practices are "an abomination to the Lord." It is a case of mutual abhorrence.

It might not seem at first sight that ancient witchcraft and necromancy had anything to do with modern Christianity; but the study of the matter in the light of the law and the testimony yields a different conclusion. The central doctrine of popular "Christianity" is that the dead are alive, being "immortal souls." And if alive, possibly accessible to communications from earth. Hence the origin of that particular "merchandise" of Rome in which the substance of the deluded people is exchanged for imaginary benefits said to accrue to the souls of the departed as the results of the prayers of her corrupt and ignorant priesthood. The only escape from such imposition is through the light that comes from the law and the testimony. This gives us to understand man's true estate, and reveals to us the enormity of neglecting the knowledge of God, and turning to the profitless fables that are preferred by all the world.

The modern revival of the truth does well to take Isa. viii. 20 for its watchword. "*To the law and to the testimony*" has ever been the attitude of the faithful remnant among men. Finding current superstitions thereby condemned they have "come out"

from among them, preferring the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ and the prophets, to the ease and advantages of confraternity with those under the "strong delusion." They are warned by the Word itself, and the examples of punishment upon the disobedient in Israel, and comforted by the reflection that the reign of vanity and death is short, and their own days of subjection to it shorter still; and that at last "the wicked shall be turned into sheol, and all the nations that forget God."

The eighth chapter of Isaiah closes with the picture of the land in great affliction and the people "driven to darkness" amid attending horrors of famine and sword.

In the Hebrew Bible the eighth chapter embraces the verse which in the A.V. is counted as the first of chapter nine. Notwithstanding the trouble and darkness and dimness of anguish there was still hope of better things in the future. The word continues: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations."

Whether this be the correct translation, or that of the Revised Version, which differs somewhat from it, the meaning is clear. Zebulon and Naphtali, and the districts of Galilee, had been the locality of severe visitations of divine judgment. In Deborah's days deliverance came after Jabin, King of Canaan, had afflicted Israel for 20 years. His 900 chariots of iron were overthrown, and Sisera, his chief captain, slain in these parts. Later on, Benhadad, King of Syria, at the instigation of Asa, who bribed him with the silver and gold of the temple, overran the country. Later still it was desolated by Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 29), and Shalmaneser (2 Kings xvii. 5), and Israel was carried away captive. All this came upon them because they despised the law and the testimony, having "no light" in them.



CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT LIGHT IN GALILEE.

SOME seven centuries after Isaiah foretold the "driving into darkness," there arose in the despised parts of Galilee "a great light," as Matthew tells us, in fulfilment of Isa. ix. 2.

"When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Naphtalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matt. iv. 12-16). Thus, as Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, testified, through the tender mercy of Israel's God, "the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lu. i. 79). This was indeed a new experience for these benighted districts and the mixed multitudes of "Gentiles" who were the descendants of the transplanted Assyrians and Babylonians that were sent over to occupy the land "instead of the children of Israel," and whose darkness was even greater than that of the wicked generation they dispossessed (2 Kings xvii.).

"Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." The word and works of Jesus in Galilee made manifest the divine purpose with grace and power. It was the reassertion of the rejected law and testimony in new and glorious form. It was "a sign and wonder in Israel" in earnest of the greater that are coming. After more than seven hundred years, Immanuel was at length among them,

“the Word made flesh,” “anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power,” “of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.”

His words and works in Galilee had direct relation to that multiplication of the nation and increase of joy of which Isaiah goes on to speak. As Jesus walked round the shores of the sea, preaching the kingdom of heaven, he chose Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who were fishermen, saying, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Later on he instructed them and the other disciples that it was the Father’s good pleasure to give them the kingdom. They were made to understand at length that it was to be “in the regeneration,” when Jesus should, after long absence from the earth, return in glory to re-establish the kingdom of Israel under a new and immortal constitution. And in this hope they testified the same gospel during their day of toil, and then fell asleep in the dust of the earth till the day of realisation should come. Many generations have come and gone since then, but the purpose of God is unchanged. Immanuel has been “a long time” absent, but the signs of his coming are plain in the political ærial, and the accomplishment of the full measure of his glorious mission in the near future is assured by the fulfilments of the past.

Speaking in the language of accomplished fact according to the Scripture usage, because of the certainty of fulfilment, the Word of God by Isaiah continues (ch. ix. 3): “Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. FOR unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment

and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Some of the beautiful words above quoted re-echo round the world from year to year wherever the name of Christ has come. Set to majestic music they stir sentiments of veneration and rejoicing which unhappily are unaccompanied by any adequate idea of what the performance of the promise by the zeal of the Lord of Hosts really involves. Thus, as an apostle says, the word preached (or sung) does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear. The gospel of the kingdom of God must first be well understood and affectionately received and obeyed, before any just appreciation of the connections of the prophetic word in its testifying of the shining of the "great light" in Galilee, and its relation to the multiplication of the nation in the joy of harvest is possible. The truth shining into a man's heart opens his eyes and causes him to behold wondrous things. Instead of the barren ritualism of a religious system that he cannot satisfactorily apply to the needs and hopes of his vain and brief life, there arises the glorious "hope of Israel" in which he beholds with astonishment and gratitude all human affairs in the hands of Israel's God, controlled and subservient to the working out of His gracious purpose of manifesting "everlasting salvation" in the House of Israel. He beholds for the first time the Lord Jesus, as King of the Jews, and "heir of all things," and the coming multiplying of the nation as a glorious feature of his future works of power.

Never has nation been the subject of such a development as is at present just before the nation of Israel. Never indeed has any nation had such experiences in the past as have fallen to the lot of Israel. Moses rallied them on this point:—"Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" (Deut. iv. 33). No, there had been nothing like it before, and there has been nothing like it since. It remains true to this day that "He hath not dealt

so with any nation : and as for His judgments, they have not known them " (Psa. cxlvii. 20).

But great and glorious as have been the works of God in Israel in the past, "greater works" are in store. The multiplication of the nation by the Son of David and Son of God "given" by the Father to Israel is not a matter of increase on any natural principle, but a revelation of divine power in what an apostle calls "the manifestation of the sons of God." Christendom has lost sight of the fact that "salvation is of the Jews," and only to be revealed in connection with the latter day destiny of the nation. It requires to be reminded that God constituted Abraham the father of the faithful, saying, "I have made thee a father of many nations"; and that as many as have been baptised into Christ upon belief of the gospel of the kingdom, in so putting on Christ become "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise." In Christ, the obedient, both of the circumcision and the uncircumcision, becoming "Jews inwardly," belong to Israel and to the glory that is to be revealed.

The cream of the nation, with the exception of the Lord Jesus its head, and the one or two who were favoured with the extraordinary honour of exemption from death, is "asleep in the dust of the earth," and hence the first thing necessary in the divine multiplication that is coming is the resurrection of the dead. This is the especial function of the Lord Jesus, who declared "I am the resurrection and the life," emphasising the truth of his claims by visibly exercising resurrection power in Israel, by reason of which many believed on him. His connection with the *multiplying of the nation by resurrection and life power* was frequently spoken of beforehand by the prophets. Thus Isaiah (ch. lxvi. 6) says: "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children."

Zion's man child is the Lord Jesus, brought forth before the time of travail spoken of, in that God raised him from the dead

“having loosed the *pains* of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” “As the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the son to have life in himself;” and through the exercise of this power, Zion’s other “children of the resurrection” will be brought forth and “a nation born at once.” An earnest of this was given at his own resurrection, for “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matt. xxvii. 52).

But the multiplying of the nation and increase of joy has also the natural as well as the spiritual element in it; that is to say, the resurrection to eternal life of the faithful of all past ages is to be accompanied by a great national resurrection to political life of Israel according to the flesh. This element is included in Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrection of the dry bones of “the whole house of Israel,” which in despair said, as they do in effect to this day: “Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are clean cut off.” The prophet was commanded to tell them that there was still hope in Israel’s end, and now in our day, after nearly twenty-five centuries, the “noise” and “shaking” among the dry bones of Israel, and murmurings of “A JEWISH STATE,” testifies to the gladsome truth that the advent of the Deliverer is near. He will re-unite Judah and Ephraim. The ancient enmity that Isaiah witnessed to his distress will pass away for ever for, “Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all” (Ezek. xxxvii. 21-22).

“JOY IN HARVEST.”

What could be more beautiful than the figure of “Joy in harvest”? It appeals to all who have any experience of the pleasant reward of toil in the ingathering of the fruitful sheaves that

the bounty of God gives even to the unthankful and the evil. The artificial conditions of crowded life in town and city no doubt have obscured the matter for multitudes, who scarcely ever see anything of the works of God in nature. But this would not be so in Israel. It was not merely that in Isaiah's distant times the people were more "on the land"; but that there was a divinely appointed exercise in connection with harvest which connected the joy with the Giver of all good—"God my chiefest joy," as David calls Him. "Thou shalt keep the feast of harvest, the first fruits of thy labours which thou hast sown in the field" (Ex. xxiii. 16). "When ye be come into the land which I give you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you" (Lev. xxiii. 10). Fifty days afterwards the two wave loaves of the first fruits were offered. This was called "the Feast of Weeks" because of the numbering of the seven weeks from the beginning of the harvest.

The offerer of the first fruits of the harvest had a certain form of words divinely appointed in which to memorialise God as the source of all joy. He was to go with his basket to the priest and say:—

"I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us."

Then the priest was to take the basket and set it down before the altar, while the man continued:—

"A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders. And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now behold I

have brought the first fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me."

And Moses continues: "Thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God, *and thou shalt rejoice* in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou and the Levite and the stranger that is among you" (Deut. xxvi.).

Thus the "joy in harvest" in Israel was a rejoicing in God for the abundance of a fruitful inheritance, out of which the enemy had been cast by divine judgment, and which had only been come at after generations of affliction, labour, and oppression.

We hear of "harvest thanksgivings"; but where is the like of this? Suppose we take our seat in one of the churches in the golden season of the year, amidst the odours of twining garlands and festoons of ears of wheat, will our thoughts be taken back to that "Syrian ready to perish," and the mighty works by which God planted the nation of Israel in the land of Promise? Shall we be led to look forward to the coming rejoicings in the same land in the "time of the restitution of all things"? No, we must come to "the place of the Lord thy God" to see these things. The churches belong to the "outer court" (Rev. xi.): they are ignorant of God's truth and consequently faithless concerning His promises. "The "place of the Lord," or "the temple of God," of apocalyptic symbolism is the "one body" "in Christ" by faith and obedience. Here the joy of harvest is rightly comprehended, and, in its full antitypical manifestation, patiently awaited.

The beautiful institution of harvest rejoicing under the law of Moses had not only the object of keeping God always before the mind of the nation as the "Source and Giver of all good" in whom they lived and moved and had their being; but it was "a shadow of the good things to come," when God shall ultimately fulfil His promises to the fathers, that in Abraham and in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. "Thy seed, which is Christ." Christ speaks of the harvest and its joy. He is himself the antitypical "sheaf of the first-fruits, waved before the Lord the morrow after the Sabbath." Speaking of his resurrection and the consequent making alive through him of all his people, Paul says: "Every

man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's, at his coming" (1 Cor. xv.). Christ's people at his coming then will constitute the anti-typical wave loaves, which, as God's Melchizedek High-Priest, he will present in Jerusalem as an offering before the Lord.

Looking with compassion on the faint and shepherdless multitudes, he said to his disciples: "*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*" He did this himself in sending forth the twelve (Luke vi. 12-13). They came upon the harvest field that had been ploughed and sown by others (Jno. iv. 35, 38). But they in turn became "labourers" in God's field, and the Lord said to them: "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may *rejoice together.*"

The *time* of this "rejoicing together" is introduced to us in Christ's interpretation to the disciples of his parable of the tares among the wheat. He said: "The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. xiii. 39). This will bring Isaiah and all the prophets upon the scene again, and clear the field of the children of the devil of every type. Then "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." For "he that goeth forth weeping bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with *rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*" (Psa. cxxvi. 5-6). The Lord Jesus is the kernel of it all, and he was the "great light" which, in fulfilment of the prophecy, made manifest this glorious consummation in Galilee nearly nineteen hundred years ago.

But the prophet said also of the nation in his vision of coming glory: "They joy as men rejoice *when they divide the spoil.*" The rejoicing of the feast of harvest memorialised deliverance from Egyptian tyranny, and inheritance of the country of the enemies of

God: for "He gave them the lands of the heathen and they inherited the labour of the people." This was a great reversal of fortune for the oppressed and down-trodden people. The inheritance came only after long and severe discipline in the wilderness, in which the carcasses of a vast multitude of unbelievers fell. After the weeding out, during forty years, of the unfaithful, the remnant went into the land, prominent in which were Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who "wholly followed the Lord" in peril of their lives. Joshua was elevated to leadership of the nation, and had the satisfaction of rejoicing with Caleb when they came into the land. Caleb was then an old man of eighty-five, but as strong as he was at forty, and very confident in God of his ability to clear the Anakim out of his inheritance, which he afterwards did, and inherited their cities. Hebron, one of the best remembered sites in Palestine, is the testimony of it to this day.

These things are the shadow of what is coming on a larger scale. Jesus is the antitypical Joshua who is to give the nation rest. He will come upon the kings of the earth as Joshua came upon the Canaanites, and particularly in the same country, and appropriate the spoil. Caleb and Joshua will then be made strong for ever with all who like them have "wholly followed the Lord" in the wilderness state, and will doubtless view with everlasting satisfaction the scenes of their old encounters in the long past days of their mortal life.

"THE DAY OF MIDIAN."

The reason of the rejoicing is further stated in verse 4. "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in *the day of Midian*. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." The visitation that is coming upon the latter-day enemies of Israel is to eclipse all previous experiences. So terrible will it be that men's hearts are failing them for fear in the contemplation of the possibilities involved. They know not the purpose of God, but they know there are terrible times ahead. The "scourge" of the latter-day Assyrian is likened unto the "slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb" (Isa. x. 26).

The "day of Midian," in which Oreb, Zeeb, Zeba, and Zalmunna fell before Gideon, is described in the book of Judges, chapters vi. to viii. It is worth while looking back upon it carefully because of the similitude divinely said to exist between the breaking of the yoke of Midian in Gideon's days, and that greater deliverance of the nation that is coming by Immanuel. We are told that Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and that he sold them into the hand of Midian seven years. When they cried unto God by reason of the affliction, He replied by a prophet that He had delivered Israel from Egypt with a mighty hand, and that they were now only suffering the results of their apostacy.

But, having pity upon Israel, He sent an angel to Gideon with the message, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Gideon, not at first recognising the angel, replied: Why, then, this trouble? Where are the Lord's miracles? He has given Israel into Midian's hand. Being commissioned to deliver Israel, he pleaded his poverty and incompetence; but was assured of divine help, and as a sign, the bread and flesh of his offering were consumed by fire from a touch of the angel's staff. On the angel's departure he feared exceedingly, because he had "seen an angel of the Lord face to face." "And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Upon this Gideon built there an altar, and called it "*Yahweh Shalom*" (Yahweh [saith] Peace): a memorial of God's purpose angelically declared, and a type of that *Sar-Shalom*—Prince of Peace, of whom Isaiah speaks, and through whom the final deliverance is to come.

Then God commanded him to destroy the altar of Baal and the grove, which he did by night. In the morning, when Baal's worshippers threatened his life, Joash, his father, saved him by the pertinent plea that they might let Baal avenge himself. When Moses cried to God against Korah and his company, God avenged Himself speedily. But so could not Baal. Then the Spirit came upon Gideon, and he gathered a host out of Zebulon and Naphtali and the adjacent countries where afterwards Christ ministered. On his craving yet another sign of the divine blessing, God granted him his request in the matter of the fleece, wet through one night while the ground was dry, and quite dry next night while the

ground was wet. But the host which Gideon had gathered was far too great for God's purpose, the explanation divinely given being, "Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying mine own hand hath saved me."

They were thinned down by peculiar processes: 22,000 "fearful and afraid" being first weeded out. Afterwards they were tried at the water. "Three hundred men" out of 10,000, in drinking put their hands to their mouths; and "by these," said God, "will I save you." As a final encouragement to face a huge host with his three hundred, God caused him to hear the rehearsal of a dream by a Midianite, and the interpretation of it by another who listened to it, as God's delivery of Midian into the hand of "Gideon, the son of Joash." Thus strengthened, he worshipped, and arranged his three hundred in three companies round the host of Midian, with pitchers and lamps in them, and trumpets in their hands. In the night, at a given signal, there was a crashing of pitchers, and flashing of lights, and pealing of trumpets, and the terrible shout: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" A great panic from God took possession of Midian, and they slew each other in their madness; and the remnant fled. Israel guarded the fords of Jordan, and Oreb and Zeeb were slain by them, and afterwards Zeba and Zalmunna by Gideon and his "faint yet pursuing" three hundred. A great spoil was taken and Israel delivered.

Such was "the day of Midian," that was a picture on a small scale of what is coming under Christ. Attentive readers of the prophets will recognise in their foretellings the same salient features as pertain to the past deliverance. There is the spectacle of Israel in affliction because of apostacy—the angelic ministration to a mighty man of Israel of poor and humble extraction, whose offering was openly accepted by sign from heaven—the revival of the worship of Yahweh and the uprooting of idolatry—the delivery of Israel by a small and very select company, and apart from all human prowess, that the glory of God be not obscured—the panic from the Lord—and the slaughter of the kings, and the taking of the spoil. The prayer of Asaph (Psa. lxxxiii.) introduces this day of Midian (verse 11), and entreats that God will not keep silence,

but confound the confederated enemies of the Lord, "that men may know that thou, whose name is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth."

This prayer will be answered when Christ is manifested upon earth in the character of a "Man of war"; for "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Apart from divine judgments, men will never practically "know" that God is the "most high over all the earth." Christendom has most completely lost sight of the fact that it is as much a work of Christ to make war upon and prevail against the enemies of God, as to lay down his life in sacrifice—that he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah just as really as he is the Lamb of God. Throughout the Scriptures this phase of the work of Christ is before us. The earliest intimation is that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. iii.), a process that involves more disaster than befel the seed of the woman when bruised in the heel.

When Moses, on the further shore of the Red Sea, sang in his song of triumph: "Yahweh is a Man of War," he not only celebrated the triumph over Pharaoh, but prophesied of the ultimate triumph of Christ over all his enemies (compare Rev. xv.). David, in his last words, spoke of Christ's being pierced with a spear in Jerusalem, and afterwards destroying his enemies there (2 Sam. xxiii.). And in Psa. xlv., apostrophising the King, he says: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Mighty One, with thy glory and thy majesty"; which accords with the vision of the "King of Kings," in his war against the powers, given in Rev. xix. From end to end the Scriptures find place for this indispensable phase of the work of Christ; and it is only pious unbelief that excludes it, and prays (inconsistently enough, considering the "determination" of God):

"God the all-merciful! Earth hath forsaken
Thy ways of blessedness, slighted thy word:
Bid not thy wrath in its terrors awaken:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord."

God will give peace, truly, for which we may be thankful, but not before "the terrors of His wrath" have not only awakened, but

wrought "desolations" in the earth because of its wickedness, which is so explicitly admitted and defined in the verse above quoted.

The breaking of the yoke of Israel will be thorough; and the "battle of the warrior" ("the war of the great day of God Almighty") will be sore;

"FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN."

How few connect the ideas as they stand written in Isaiah by the spirit of God! And yet nothing is more plainly revealed than that it is Christ's especial work to deliver Israel, and that the participation by the Gentiles in their holy things is in the nature of an extension of the divine invitation to outsiders who "were not a people." There is much need in the days of Gentile complacency in Christendom, and the continuation of the scattering of Israel, to emphasise the "UNTO US." The matter belongs to Judah. "Salvation is of the Jews," as Christ said to the Samaritan woman, and Gentiles who participate must become Jews, "Abraham's seed," "in Christ," receiving the "spirit of adoption" in the belief and obedience of the truth in baptism, in which they partake of the "circumcision made without hands," and become "heirs according to the promise," and able by "patient continuance in well doing" to "wait for the consolation of Israel" which it is the province of Christ to bring.

Both the Jews and Christendom are away from the truth concerning the *child of promise* spoken of in this prophecy; and the titles given him are misconstrued by Christendom in the endeavour to accommodate them to Trinitarian theology. When the Jews, in answer to the question of Jesus, responded that Messiah was the Son of David, he propounded to them the further question: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord (Jehovah) saith unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then called him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. xxii. 43). They could not answer this, because they did not perceive that the son of David was to be also the Son of God; and indignantly rejected the claims of Jesus, though attested by his miracles, by John the Baptist and the voice from

heaven itself. They knew his proximate origin as they supposed, and could not look beyond or above the flesh.

Christendom has gone to the opposite extreme and transformed Jesus into the second person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father who begat him; regardless of the impossibility of co-eternity in a "son," and Jesus' own express disavowal of co-equality. So regarding him, Christendom is forced into the most extravagant "incomprehensibilities," as when a hymn speaks of him as

"Strong Creator, Saviour Mild,
Humbled to a mortal child,
Captive, beaten, bound, reviled."

It regards him not as Immanuel (the manifestation of God in Israel) but as the manifestation of an eternally pre-existent Son, and points to some of his sayings, and to some of the prophecies concerning him, in support of the idea. But the fundamental teaching of Jesus concerning God, which is in harmony with Moses and the prophets, must be disregarded to sustain such an idea; and the titles given in this prophecy lend no countenance to it:

"The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVER-LASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE." Take these seriatim:

"WONDERFUL."

Had we lived in the days of Isaiah, we could have had but a faint conception of how wonderful the Son of God and of David would prove to be. Standing as we do some two thousand six hundred years further on, when his name has been engraven on the earth for nearly nineteen hundred years, we are better enabled to comprehend the marvel of it; though for the full appreciation of all that it portends, this mortal will have to be swallowed up of life.

Jesus was wonderful in origin, in relation to God and man, and in words and works that are yet only the earnest of greater wonders to come. In the following Scriptures the original word for "wonderful" is the same as that in Isaiah ix. 6, and they direct our attention to wonders that find illustration in Jesus. In Gen. xviii., the birth of Isaac was announced by the angel to Sarah, when

she was ninety years old, a matter so much out of the ordinary course of nature (v. 11, with Heb. xi. 11-12), that she could not help laughing. But God said by the angel, "Is anything too hard (*wonderful*) for the Lord?" And in course of time Isaac was born according to promise.

Accepting this record of the altogether miraculous origin of the nation, Israel ought not to find it impossible to receive the testimony concerning Jesus, for it was no harder for God to raise up a Son of God and Son of David by the operation of His spirit on a virgin of the house of David than it was to raise up Isaac to Abraham when he was "as good as dead" and his wife "past age." The personal "Son of God" has an origin as wonderful as that of the national, of whom God spoke to Pharaoh saying: "Israel is my son—my firstborn: Let my son go."

When Manoah was visited by an angel who told him of the approaching birth of Samson, being in ignorance of the nature of the "man of God" who instructed him, he said: "What is thy name?" But the angel answered: "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *wonderful*?" But the name of Jesus is above every name. Originally made "a little lower than the angels" for the suffering of death, he has "become so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a *more excellent name* than they" (Heb. i.). He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. iii. 22). The excellence of his majesty is the theme of the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the basis upon which rests the claim to "earnest heed" on the part of all those to whom the word of God comes by him.

His works were wonderful. A Psalm of Asaph (Psa. lxxv.) says: "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." This received superabundant illustration in Jesus, and he appeals to his works as proof that he was indeed Immanuel: God manifested in the midst of Israel. He says: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (Jno. xv. 24). One of his wonderful works was the blinding of disobedient Israel (Isa.

xxix. 14, with John ix. 39), a work inconsistent with the artificial views that are current concerning him. The coming enlightenment of the nation will be wonderful, and will be preceded by the "marvel" of the resurrection of the dead and the bestowal upon his friends of eternal life by the power and authority given him by the Father (Jno. v. 20-30). His name is well called "WONDERFUL."

"COUNSELLOR."

This is the next on the list of titles, bestowed beforehand by the Spirit of God in the prophet upon the Son promised to the house of David. The root idea of the verb whence the term is derived is counsel, advice, instruction, direction. How necessary a thing is this in all human affairs. What is action without counsel, but a mere drift to chaos and death. "Every purpose is established by counsel, and with good advice make war" (Prov. xx. 18). And whence but from God can counsel come? "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." So Jeremiah confessed (ch. x. 23), and so will everyone who attains to anything like a due appreciation of man's estate. The generations of the race come upon the scene in helplessness and ignorance. From the cradle to the grave they stand in need of counsel. They get a little of a low type, by means of which they get through the days of their vanity with more or less discomfort. But with regard to the "*counsel of God*" they are for the most part hopelessly ignorant, and therefore depart in sorrow to the oblivion of the grave. This is not a more pessimistic presentation of affairs than that of the Apostle John (1 Jno. ii. 16-17).

Trace back the history of those fleeting generations. Whence came counsel at the first? "It is not in man." It never was "in man" innately. Yet it has come. The Bible says from God; and there is no other explanation that will stand for a moment. It is not the place to discuss objections. With the prophets in their ministry this was an axiom never to be disturbed, and our concern is only to exhibit the fact, and the developments in the divine purpose in Christ to our own day, and with regard to the perfect day beyond. It is not without reason that the Psalmist, praying for the promised

intervention of God in judgment, says: "Understand, ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that chasteneth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity" (Psa. xciv). "With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding" (Job xii. 13). He affirms it of Himself in protest against Israel's apostacy from Him:—

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. xl. 12-14). His vast and glorious designs in creation are before us and He has given Israel many proofs that He is indeed "the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth." If we reject His testimony we cut ourselves off from "counsel" and life, and are left without any adequate explanation of things as they exist. But let not that be our attitude, but rather that of Paul, who, lost in admiration of the work of God in Israel, and making quotation of this passage in Rom. xi., concludes, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen."

God at the first then "taught man knowledge," instructing him concerning the creation of which he was the crowning feature on earth, and concerning the way in which he was to walk before his Maker. Our first parents were to dress and keep the garden of Eden, and to observe the commandment (suited to their circumstances), that forbade the eating of a certain tree. This was the "*whole counsel of God*" with respect to man at that stage. The entrance of sin altered all things. It came through *the rejection of the counsel of God*, and the imputation to Him of ignorance and falsity, which originating with the serpent, was practically adopted by Eve, and by Adam after her, with such disastrous effects. In

the eyes of the wise of this world, this of course seems a mere childish legend of a benighted antiquity. But to make it appear so, they really have to argue *that Christ was an ignorant enthusiast*, which no sane man would do. His title "COUNSELLOR" is directly related to God's purpose to put away the death that entered the world by the sin of Adam and Eve; and all his references to the subject of the beginnings of sin and death are in absolute harmony with the Mosaic record which he so unreservedly acknowledged as divine, and a part of the Scriptures which he says "*cannot be broken.*"

Having sinned, Adam and Eve took counsel between themselves and covered their nakedness with a device of fig-leaves. But God rejected this, and substituted "coats of skins," which, necessitating the slaying of animals for their provision, brought a representation of death before them as the wages of sin, and the necessary portion of the "Counsellor," who, as the "seed of the woman," should afterwards bruise the serpent's head, and take away sin and death from the earth. Thenceforward the counsel of God in its direction of human affairs towards the goal of His purpose, as the first of its first principles kept this fact to the front: that "the wages of sin is death," and that according to divine appointment "without shedding of blood there is no remission," no effectual covering for sin apart from the recognition of God's insulted majesty, and the humblest submission to His merciful provisions for reinstatement.

In harmony with these reflections is the history of the accepted offering of Abel ("the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof"); and the rejected offering of Cain ("the fruit of the ground"). The comment of Paul in Heb. xi. is that Abel's was "by faith . . . a more excellent sacrifice" than that of Cain, whose faith did not take hold of God's promise and instruction. Later on, all flesh corrupted God's way on earth, and He destroyed the world by the flood, reserving only a remnant in which to preserve His purpose for the future. In the lives of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the purpose concerning Christ becomes more clearly defined, and they all looked for "the seed" who should be "seed of the woman," "seed of Abraham," son of God, offered in sacrifice as Isaac was in figure, raised from the dead likewise as he was symbolically, and who should "possess the gate of his enemies," and

with Abraham inherit the land for ever. "Your father Abraham," said God's "Counsellor" to Israel, "rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." He perceived that the eternal inheritance pertained to the then far distant future, and accepted his position as a stranger and a pilgrim, looking for "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Under the Mosaic economy, the divinely-appointed ritual contained a central and crowning place for the representation of God's purpose in the "Counsellor" of His promise and providing. God at the first proclaimed His covenant with Israel in the terrible trumpet voice that sounded the "ten commandments" from Mount Sinai trembling and cloud-enveloped, amid the thunder and lightning that accompanied the divine presence. But "he added no more," and Moses alone was bidden to draw near, that God might commune with him "face to face." In this, Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant, was a type of Jesus, the mediator of the New; God's "counsellor," who, having "engaged his heart to approach," has been caused to "draw near" unto God as the "Governor" of Israel, presently to return (Jer. xxx. 21). But there was to be a special place and method about the approaches to God even of Moses; for God directed him to make the tabernacle in the wilderness and made provision for the mercy-seat with the over-shadowing "Cherubim of Glory" on the lid of the ark of covenant, as a *place of counsel* from the Most High to Israel. The specification in Ex. xxv. concludes with these words: "There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from *above* the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim, which are upon the ark of the testimony of *all things which I will give thee in commandment* unto the children of Israel."

The "communing" was not to be of the kind that passes between man and man, as the discussion of possibly opposing judgments on a matter, one or both of which may be wrong, or more or less open to question. It was the speaking of the word of "*command*" to Israel. All the "counsel" of God is of this character and cannot be rejected without death as a consequence. Because sentence against evil works is deferred (the purpose of God requiring the free play of human will for the manifestation

of that pleasing and precious thing, an unconstrained obedience arising out of faith that worketh by love)—because of this, human discernments are dull in this direction, and as has been well said, if men do not often go to the length of saying "there is no God"; they for the most part act as if there were none. If they knew the Scriptures and the power of God, they would be saved from so fatal a mistake.

Apostolic exposition by the Spirit of God connects Christ with the Mercy-seat-throne of God in Israel as the substance of the shadow there outlined. Paul speaks of Jesus "whom God hath sent forth to be a propitiation ("mercy-seat," literally) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God . . . that he (God) might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). In Christ then, as from "above the mercy-seat," and as through the antitypical High Priest of Israel, God communicates His counsel or commandments concerning "the children of Israel" who are not only taken from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles by "faith in his blood."

"Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Prov. xi. 14). The last half of this proverb is commonly quoted alone, and the idea is thus obscured, if it be not lost altogether. It is often put as though the safety lay in the "multitude" and not so much in the fact that they are "counsellors." One "counsellor" is worth a multitude who cannot be thus defined, and God's standard in Christ being taken, the "multitude" of such has in any age of the world's history been small indeed. The glory of the age to come will be Christ as "counsellor" for God over all the earth and a multitude like him subordinate to him, freed from the weaknesses and inefficiencies of the flesh, and made gloriously competent with him to advise, instruct and direct the world's affairs to the glory of God the Father. In the guidance of such there will indeed be "safety," as it is written: "The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, strength of

salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure" (Isa. xxxiii. 6). In the hope of this the Psalmist exulted, notwithstanding the prosperity of the ungodly meanwhile. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa. lxxiii. 24).

From the preservation to our day of the divinely given and preserved records of the life and work of Christ, we are enabled to see for ourselves what was meant when it was said by Isaiah that his name should be the "Counsellor." Begotten by the spirit of God of a virgin of the house of David, he was filled therewith in harmony with the prophecy which said: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

He was introduced to Israel at his baptism with the direct approval from heaven of the Father Himself. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." On the Mount of Transfiguration he was similarly divinely accredited to Peter, James and John by the voice from the overshadowing cloud: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. HEAR YE HIM." And the Father bore witness to him in "works that none other man did;" while the word of his "counsel" overawed even the officials whom an offended and jealous priesthood sent to apprehend him. "Never man spake like this man," said they, and having his words preserved, we cannot but perceive the truth of their remark. The greatness of the difference between his style of counsel and that of his contemporaries in Israel appears well in the record that tells us that at the end of the "Sermon on the Mount" the people were astonished, "*for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*" This was in harmony with the Mosaic type in the divine voice from the mercy-seat which communicated through the High Priest "*the commandment of the Lord*" for Israel.

The Sermon on the Mount contains many illustrations of this "authority." "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old

time" (thus and so), "but *I* say unto you," is a form of speech more than once repeated, and making more searching application of the commandments (verses 21, 28, 33) than had hitherto been made in Israel; in harmony with his declaration: "I am not come to destroy (the law or the prophets), but to fulfil." "The Word was made flesh," says John, "and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This grace and truth finds expression in all the records of his life and work, whether it be in the assertion of his divine authority, the turning of the situation upon his enemies in controversy with a word, the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, the healing of the sick, the forgiveness of sins, or the comforting of his disciples as he went forward steadfastly to death upon the cross.

Take for examples of his counsel some of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. He proclaimed blessedness upon the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. He exhorted men to be perfect, as the Father in heaven is perfect; to seek first the kingdom of God; to enter in at the strait gate that leadeth to life; to beware of false prophets; not only to hear but to do his sayings, that they might stand in the day of judgment. He counselled them to forgive to the uttermost; to submit to any form of self-denial rather than lose life eternal. His counsel was rejected by the bulk of the nation, but a few chosen ones gave heed; and he thanked the Father that His purpose was hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. He said; "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. xi. 27).

The practical application of this merciful counsel of God is found in the ministrations of the men of Christ's appointment according to

his express commandment. He chose his apostles and *equipped them as counsellors under him*, saying: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." And again: "When they deliver you up (to governors and kings), take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak; but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." And so they went forth preaching Christ crucified, and that men might come unto him for salvation in belief of the gospel of the Kingdom, and baptism thereupon into his name, and the taking of his yoke upon them in the obedience of his commandments, which, though it would bring them present persecution, was "easy" by comparison with the bondage of sin which ended in death.

The Apostolic allusions to Christ illustrate Isaiah's prophecy of the "Counsellor." Paul says that "of God he is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30); and that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). If it is not yet obvious to all the world, it is because the purpose of God requires the toleration of a time of evil for the development of His people.

In the book of Revelation, Christ presents himself as the "Counsellor," according to whose penetrating discernment the whole course of human affairs is being directed from behind the veil. The introduction represents him as "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead." With regard to the affairs of his own people in the world, the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia are eloquent. "I know thy works," saith he to each of them, and he rebukes shortcomings and sins, commends steadfast faithfulness, and exhorts to repentance where necessary. Even to the Laodiceans he says: "*I counsel thee* to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed; and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see." The faith of Christ, the righteousness of obedience to him, clearness of mental vision through the application of the word of Christ, are the precious things signified. To this community he continues: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent.

Behold I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" The last clause (appended likewise to all the other epistles), brings the counsel down to our own time, though the Lord is absent.

But not only, or chiefly, in the days of his flesh, and during the time of his absence from the earth is he the "Counsellor." The crowning manifestation is to come, as the prophets testify. "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and *thy counsellors* as at the beginning: afterwards thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa. i. 26); "Behold the man whose name is the Branch; he shall grow up out of his place and he shall build the temple of the Lord. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and *the counsel of peace* shall be between them both" (Zech. vi. 12). God has given the earth into the hands of Jesus as His "COUNSELLOR." Just as surely as he suffered in Jerusalem, so will he reign there, surrounded by the "*counsellors*" of his own choice and development. The wisdom and glory of Solomon's peaceful reign was but a shadow of what is coming under Christ when, as God's Melchizedek High Priest, he rules the world with righteousness. Meanwhile a faithless world groans and travails in vain endeavours for peace, while rejecting the instruction of the "Counsellor" and pronouncing his rules of action impossible and impracticable. But, as Paul said of the Jews: "Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect." By no means. "What though all the world resist Him, God will realise His plan."

"THE MIGHTY GOD."

"The Mighty God" was to be one of the titles borne by the virgin's son who, centuries after Isaiah's day, was to be the manifestation of God in Israel—Immanuel, God with us.

In the ocean of controversy and strife that rolls round his Name, according to his express prophecy, we are safe only in holding fast by his own exposition of the things of God. The root of it all is his doctrine of the Unity and Supremacy of the Father: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Mar. xii. 29). Mosaic, prophetic and Messianic teaching all agree in this first principle of all things; and the Scriptures can never be successfully accommodated to a Trinitarian exegesis that utterly rejects it.

The words of Jesus, above quoted, are from Moses: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). Speaking prophetically of Jesus, the "mighty God" of Isa. ix. 6, Moses said: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee like unto me." And, quoting the word of the Eternal concerning that prophet: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto *my words* which he shall speak *in my name*, I will require it of him" (Deut. xviii. 15). Here then "the Lord thy God" raises up, inspires and commands "the mighty God" of subsequent prophetic allusion. This is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus as we shall see; but is quite irreconcilable with Trinitarian "incomprehensibilities" of co-equality and co-eternity.

The prophets, by whom God spoke by His spirit as He did by Moses, agree with Moses in the proclamation of the unity and unapproachable majesty of God. "I am Yahweh; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another" (Isa. xlii. 8). "I, even I, am Yahweh, and beside me there is no Saviour" (xliii. 11). "Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no rock (power), I know not any" (xliv. 8). "I am Yahweh, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (xliv. 5). These are some examples of the way in which the unity and supremacy of the Eternal Father were enforced on Israel by the prophets, in protest against their apostacy and idolatry. Many others could be given. The apostles, after Jesus, taught the same things concerning the Father and the Son. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ

Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). "The Blessed and only Potentate" (1 Tim. vi. 16). "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him: and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. viii. 6). Our interpretation of the names and titles of Christ must harmonise with these clear and unmistakable exhibitions of the truth concerning God.

When the "prophet like unto Moses" was raised up by God in Israel, he spoke the words and did the works of the Father, as had been foretold. This often involved him in controversy with his countrymen as to his divine origin and mission, which he defined in terms that were above the comprehension of fleshly animosity; and proved, not only by works of power, but by unanswerable scriptural argument, which they could only seek to silence in procuring his death. A notable instance was that in which he took occasion of the presence of a blind man to proclaim himself the light of the world, to open the man's eyes, and convict the Pharisees of wilful blindness and sin. He declared himself to be the door of the sheep-fold, and the good shepherd who would lay down his life for the sheep, according to the "*commandment received of the Father.*" His extraordinary words, backed up by the miracle, produced a great effect upon those who were independent of the Pharisees; and a sharp controversy ensued. It culminated, in Solomon's porch of the temple, in an attempt on the part of the Jews to stone him because of his doctrine concerning his relations to the Father. But as they stood there, with stones for arguments, he said: "Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" They answered, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." But he answered: "Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called *them* gods, unto whom the word of God came, *and the Scripture cannot be broken*; say ye of *him* whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him" (Jno. x.).

So then "being a man" he could nevertheless be called "god"; especially as the Father was "in him" and had "sanctified and sent him into the world." The eighty-second Psalm, from which Jesus made this quotation, is very enlightening when considered with reference to the "mighty God" of Isa. ix., his controversy with the unjust judges of Israel, and the ultimate establishment of his kingdom with "judgment and justice for ever." It runs as follows:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly (Jno. viii. 15), and accept the persons of the wicked? (Jno. vii. 48: v. 43). Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked (Matt. xxiii. 14). They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course (1 Jno. ii. 11; Ps. xi. 3). I have said ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High (Jno. x. 34). But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth, for Thou shalt inherit all nations (Isa. ix. 5; Heb. i. 8; Jno. viii. 26; Rev. xi. 15).

The interpolated references indicate the application of the psalm to the time when Immanuel rebuked the apostacy of the "gods," and declared that they should die in their sins for rejecting him (Jno. viii. 21), and also to the terrible time when they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out (Luke xiii. 28).

But the English reader of the Bible, to whom the term "God" almost of necessity conveys the idea of the Uncreate Father, is at a disadvantage in comprehending the import of the prophecy of Isa. ix. 6. The title under consideration is *El Gibbor*, Mighty God, and the understanding of it will be greatly helped by the following extract from Dr. Thomas' invaluable exposition entitled *Phanerosis*, in which the subject of God-manifestation is dealt with in a masterly and exhaustive manner.

"The names of God which occur in the Bible are not arbitrary sounds; and one of the chief imperfections of the English Authorised translation, or rather version, is the slovenly manner in which all the names by which God has been pleased to make Himself known to His people, have been rendered after the fashion of the Septuagint, by the two words *Lord* and *God*.

"These words do not convey the ideas of the Spirit in its use of terms. *Lord* is of Saxon origin, and signifies monarch, ruler, governor, something supreme or distinguished. The word to which it answers in the Septuagint and New Testament is *Κυριος, Kyrios*." The Doctor then quotes Parkhurst's comments on this word, which he considered to convey the idea of self-existence, and continues: "But if this be the radical idea of *Κυριος* it fails to represent the meaning of *Ail, Eloah, Elohim, Shaddai, Yahweh*, for all of which it is often, or rather most frequently and almost generally used. The word *Adon* is properly enough rendered *Lord*, or *Κυριος* in the singular; but not the other words, for which it should never be used. *Elohim, Shaddai, and Adonai*, are plural names of Deity, and require terms of the same number to express them.

"The common use of *God* in the English language, is as little justifiable as that of the word *Lord*. "God" in Saxon, signifies *good*; a meaning which cannot possibly be extracted from any of the names recited above. God is indeed good, exclusively so, as we are taught by Jesus himself while in the mortal state. In this sense he refused to appropriate the word *good*, saying to one who styled him so, "Why callest thou me good? No one is good, except one, that is God" (Matt. xix. 17). Jesus was free from personal transgression, and therefore *in character* good; as he did not refer to character, he could only have had reference *to nature*, or to God as substance. He is good in the sense of being deathless, or incorruptibility itself; which, when Jesus refused the term, did not define the *nature* the Spirit was tabernacling in, and was encumbered with. "In me, that is in my flesh," says Paul, "dwells no good thing." *God*, then, whether in the sense of moral or material goodness, while it is a term expressive of the truth, is not a translation of any of the words before us; and where used in their stead, leaves the mind in the dark concerning the things they were intended to convey."

"To Melchizedek and Abram the alone Good One was known as *Ail Elyon, Most High Ail*, which teaches by implication that there were *Ailim* of inferior rank, station, and power. Melchizedek, King of Jerusalem, was the priest of the Highest *Ail*, whom he understood and proclaimed to be *POSSESSOR OF THE HEAVENS AND*

EARTH. In Gen. xiv. 22, Abram is made by transcribers to call the MOST HIGH AIL by the name *Yahweh*; though we are expressly told, in Ex. vi. 3, that Abraham did not know him by that name. He knew AIL, and he knew *Shaddai*; but with any superior or divine being of the name YAHWEH, he had no acquaintance. . . . The use of the word *Yahweh* is evidence that Genesis was compiled at least 430 years after the events of chap. xv.”

“As often as the word *Ail** passed before Abram’s mind, the idea of POWER, *might, strength*, would stand out in bold relief. ‘It always,’ says Gesenius, ‘presented to the Hebrews the idea of strength and power.’ Nebuchadnezzar is styled in Ezek. xxxi. 11, *Ail Goyim*, the Mighty One of the Nations; and in Isa. ix. 6, Messiah is termed *Ail Gibbor*.”

Other illustrations of the use of the term *Ail* or *El* are given by Dr. Thomas, but these will be sufficient to show that the Trinitarian doctrine is absolutely unsupported by the phrase “Mighty God” of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Christ. It is part of the misery of “the times of the Gentiles” and the prevalence of an apostate Christianity, to have even to appear to belittle the greatness of Christ in preserving the truth concerning him from the distortions of a system that confuses us while thinking to honour him. The marvel is that God should raise up in the House of David a man who could bear such titles, in seeing whom Israel should see the Father, so far as that was possible in flesh and blood. But it is not honouring Christ to attribute to him an underived power and excellence which he himself emphatically repudiates. He is “the King of Glory;” but it is of the Father’s appointment. He is the “mighty one” (*gibbor*), Ps. xlv. who rides prosperously with glory and majesty because of truth and meekness and righteousness; but it is the Father who anoints him and decrees the everlasting stability of his throne: “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God,

* Now generally transliterated *El*.—ED.

even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. i. 8-9). He is the "mighty one" upon whom God "laid help," and whom He has made His "firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Psa. lxxxix. 19, 27), to whom, though Israel now rejects him, as for ages past they have done, the remnant shall at last return, as Isaiah foretells: "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob unto the Mighty God" (*El Gibbor*) (Isa. x. 21).

"THE EVERLASTING FATHER."

This rendering in the Authorised Version involves a contradiction in terms. If the term "everlasting" be understood to convey the idea of time without beginning, it is obvious that it cannot be applied either to "Father" or "Son." "Father" of necessity implies priority and fountain of origin, and therefore a time when fatherhood was not affirmable. "Son" likewise always expresses the idea of emanation, of secondary and derived existence. Even Trinitarianism is compelled to describe Christ as the "Second Person;" and if "*second*," how "the Everlasting Father?"

But these words do not convey the true meaning of the title *Avi Ad*, which is more correctly rendered in the margin of the Revised Version: "Father of Eternity." This dropping of the definite article, and substitution of a noun for an adjective, favours the clearing away of Trinitarian fog, and leaves us free to enquire of the Scripture in what sense the Son of David and Son of God is described as "Father of Eternity." Scriptural usage alone can satisfy us as to the mind of God in the matter. His ways are higher than ours, and His thoughts than our thoughts, and consequently His modes of speech are proportionately difficult of comprehension by flesh and blood, which is only too prone to lean on its own understanding and thus to become foolish.

Looking through the Scriptures for light on the subject, we discover that JOSEPH, who was a type of Jesus, in that he was sold by his brethren, and nevertheless in his afflictions went before them to preserve their lives, was made a father to Pharaoh and to Egypt through the divine overruling of those very sufferings. In the dramatic climax in which he made himself known to his brethren he said: "It was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath

made me a *father to Pharaoh*, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt" (Gen. xlv. 8). By the revelation of God concerning the years of plenty and the subsequent years of famine, and his wise action in storage of grain, he bought all Egypt for Pharaoh, and became a father and saviour to the nation. This is an illustration of possibilities in connection with the future work of Christ, who even in the days of his flesh could multiply bread miraculously. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." If heaven's supplies were stopped for a little while, save through Christ, all the earth would fall into his hands at once. Of course it is revealed that he will subdue the earth by conquest, but the foregoing reflection is not out of harmony with the foretold withholding of rain from any who neglect to come up to Jerusalem to the feast of tabernacles in the age to come (Zech. xiv. 17).

ELIJAH the prophet was a father in Israel. When he ascended to heaven, Elisha, who saw it, cried out: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Afterwards ELISHA himself was similarly apostrophised on his death bed by Joash, King of Israel. He wept over the dying prophet, saying, "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." And Elisha gave him a parting sign of coming deliverance from Syria, and was angry at the dulness of Joash's perception when he smote on the ground only thrice after shooting "the arrow of the Lord's deliverance" (2 King's xiii.). Of Elijah and Elisha, Israel and the world will hear again by-and-bye; but, though their works were wonderful, greater than either will be JESUS (*Avi Ad*, Father of Eternity), to whose decease Elijah looked forward on the Mount of Transfiguration as the one great sacrifice, foretold by Moses and the prophets, which, involving the resurrection to eternal life of the righteous victim, should open the way for the immortal and glorious "regeneration" in which "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets" shall be seen shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Isaiah, in a later prophecy, represents Messiah as the Father of the Age to come. In the twenty-second chapter, by the decree for the degradation of Shebna, and exaltation of Eliakim, his successor, he foreshows the same everlasting kingdom of Christ

upon the throne of David as is the matter of assurance in chapter nine. After denouncing Shebna, the word of God continues (Isa. xxii. 20): "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah: and I will clothe him with thy robe and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him *all the glory of his father's house*, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off, for the Lord hath spoken it."

For a detailed exposition of this prophecy, the reader is referred to *Eureka*, vol 1, page 375 and onwards. For present purposes it will suffice to note that its terms are appropriated by Jesus in Rev. iii., where he presents himself as "he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth." And we remember his gracious promise to his disciples concerning the "*Father's house of many mansions*" (Jno. xiv.), and his words in prayer concerning the glory bestowed on him by the Father, which he would in turn bestow upon the men the Father had given him (John xvii. 22, 9). A study of this prophecy in the light of the gospel of the Kingdom, in connection with Christ's past and future relation to Jerusalem, will make very clear the meaning of the phrase *Avi Ad* of Isaiah ix. 6.

Even under the old constitution the King of Israel was considered as the father of the nation. Even Saul was so addressed by David (2 Sam. xxiv. 11). How much more Immanuel in his day. Even in the days of his flesh he would have been "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," but they would not receive him. But in the day of his power they will be willing, as is foretold

(Psa. cx.). It was necessary that he should first be "cut off" as the prophets testify; but the condemnation of sin in the flesh having been accomplished in his cutting off, he was raised from the dead for his righteousness sake, and henceforth awaits the satisfaction of seeing his seed, "the offspring and the issue" (Isa. liii. 10 : xxii. 24), and the "small and great" vessels of the "great house" of the Father gathered into their destined places (Rev. xi. 18; Isa. xxii. 24; Jno. xiv.; 2 Tim. ii. 20).

Contrast as well as comparison helps to the understanding of the coming glory of the Fatherhood of Christ. Christendom is full of "fathers" and "patriarchs" owning allegiance for the most part to two chief "fathers" of this present evil world: the "Holy Father" of Rome, as the Pope is blasphemously styled, and the Czar as head and "father" of the Russian Greek church. "Peter the Great," we are told, "in 1721 suppressed the Patriarchate of Moscow and invested himself with the supreme headship of the Russian Greek church." The present-day treatment of Jews and dissenters by the Russian Holy Synod, and the Papal enormities of many centuries past are the fruits of the fatherhood of Czars and Popes. The Czar, as a first principle of his creed, rejects the notion of the Papal supremacy, which the Pope of course as strenuously, but now quite impotently, maintains. But at the end, the prophets show us that a kind of Herod and Pilate agreement is arrived at between them in the endeavour to get rid of the yoke of *the true World-Father of God's appointment*. Imagine them both cut off, and their ignorant and blood-thirsty hierarchies destroyed in all the countries of their occupation, and substituted by the immortal "kings and priests" of Christ's appointment, owning rejoicing allegiance to him enthroned in Jerusalem, and we see something of the picture that is before us in the title "Father of Eternity."

With regard to the "Eternity" spoken of in the phrase *Avi Ad*, the Gospel of the Kingdom tells us that Messiah's times have a division marked by the cessation of sin and death from the earth. The Kingdom of God in its primary stage: the administration of immortal rulers over mortal populations, is revealed to endure for a thousand years (Rev. xx.). "Then cometh the

end," says Paul, when Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and in all. This division of the time to come into two ages with these differing characteristics, is expressed in the Old Testament scriptures by the phrase *olam-va-ed*, the *olam* and beyond.

Dr. Thomas, in *Eureka* i., pp. 122-134, has some excellent remarks in exposition of this subject, under the sectional heading of "FOR EVER AND EVER." The perusal of them in connection with this prophecy will be found very enlightening. Christ is "Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," and to the world at large in the Millennium; but his position of supremacy as the "Author of eternal salvation," does not then pass out of view, though the kingdom be delivered up to the Father; but continues manifest in the perfect age beyond. "The *noun ad*," says a concordance, "only occurs eight times; it is twice rendered *everlasting* (Isa. ix. 6; Hab. iii. 6); once *eternity* (Isa. lvii. 15); once it is used with *olam*, and *ad olemái ad* is translated 'world without end' (Isa. xlv. 17)." A consultation of these passages will show that the marginal rendering of the Revised Version is the correct one, and more in harmony with the things revealed concerning the reign of Christ on earth. Moses said in Ex. xv. 18: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (*leolam va ed*); and in Psa. xlv. 6, the Spirit says of Christ: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (*olam va ed*). He is, therefore, *Avi Ad*, Father of Eternity: Earth's Possessor and Governor when it shall have passed into the perfect state designed beforehand by the Eternal Creator, "Possessor of the Heavens and Earth."

"PRINCE OF PEACE."

"PRINCE OF PEACE" is the concluding title of Messiah in Isaiah's ninth chapter. The nature and scope of the description is, of course, to be sought in the context and in the revealed purpose of God in general, and is not ascertainable in the interpretations of a Christianity that has lost sight of so much concerning Christ. It is obvious from even a superficial reading of the context that the peace contemplated by the prophet is connected with the breaking of the yoke of Israel's bondage, and

the overshadowing of all human dominion by the throne and kingdom of David in the divine hands of the bearer of the title. But in view of the prevailing dearth of knowledge concerning this great development, and the imminence of the crisis, as manifest from the movements of the times, it may be well to take a comprehensive survey of the situation with a view of preserving clear ideas concerning the "work before" the Lord Jesus at his coming.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." So says Solomon, and among other things he instances "a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; . . . a *time of war and a time of peace.*" Failure to recognise this will land us in distress and confusion. There are not wanting those who point to the present warlike and evil condition of the world; and sneer at Christ's claims to be "Prince of Peace." Folly and shallowness could scarcely go further. They need to be reminded that children and fools should not attempt to judge unfinished work. If this were the end of the chapter, the objectors would have to be reckoned with, but it is not so; but only that initial stage, in which Christ's own words of so opposite an import find striking fulfilment. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

The enemies of Christ take note of this, and ignorantly contrast it with the title "Prince of Peace." The friends of Christ simply respond: "A time for everything": "Judge nothing before the time." Had there been no "sword" and "variance" because of Christ, there would have been a lack of harmony between history and his prophecy, though even then a wise man would have said, in view of all the past: "It will be sure to come, we can wait and see." But "sword" and "variance" have never been lacking concerning him since he uttered the words, and he is, therefore, true. But to make this a difficulty concerning a declared time of peace in an age then far future, is a blunder indeed.

Nothing can be clearer than the fact that the Peace of Messiah's bringing about and maintaining was defined by all the prophets as a matter far remote from their days, and always associated with his latter-day deliverance and resuscitation of the nation of Israel. "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. lxxii. 7). "Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob . . . His salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psa. lxxxv. 1, 9-11). "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness *in the latter days*" (Hosea iii. 4-5). If there were not before our eyes the nation of Israel having abode "many days" desolate as foretold, there might be some excuse for doubting the prophets; but as it is there is none; and it has simply to be replied to objectors and perverters of the word: "These are merely the last days of 'sword' and 'variance' and headless and exiled Israel. 'His days of peace are coming.'"

What would be thought of an arithmetician who should attempt the solution of an involved and abstruse calculation by first ignoring the existence and function of the number one? He would be accounted mad. The world is in some such case in attempting the solution of so deep rooted, involved, and delicate a matter as its peace-problem without regard to its Creator and Possessor. The will of God is the very first "factor" in the case. The written expression of it is with us in the Bible, which exhibits satisfactorily the root and origin of all earth's woes, and the divinely appointed means of reconciliation and healing. The real reason of the lack of peace on earth is found in Eden. There are those who profess admiration for Christ and smile scornfully at the childish legends

of Genesis. But they cannot consistently do this. You cannot have Christ and reject Genesis, for he endorsed Genesis; naming nearly all the details over which scepticism stumbles, as the flood, Lot's wife, &c. We look back on Genesis in confidence under Christ's guidance. Why should we not? What is the world but so many hundred millions of mortals, scarcely one of whom was in existence a hundred years ago? "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord, thy maker?" Let us not be deterred from full confidence in the word of God.

We look back. We see Adam and Eve, our first parents, at perfect peace with God in a fruitful garden, in unclouded innocence, delighting before God in the dominion He had given them over the creation of His hand. We see sin enter, and all is changed. Fear, shame, suffering and death are introduced, and to this day continue to be the natural portion of the race. But it is peace we are particularly contemplating. God "*put enmity*" in the beginning between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman; a sentence that finds illustration in the enmity existing between Jesus and the "generation of vipers" that withstood him and at last compassed his death. The earliest illustration recorded in Genesis is the murder of Abel by Cain. The acceptance of Abel's offering by God, coupled with the rejection of his own, stirred Cain's resentment, and he slew him. "And wherefore slew he him?" asks John, "Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." Enmity, then, between the righteous and the wicked is the express and unalterable appointment of God: ("There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"), and will never cease from the earth until wickedness and the wicked come to an end. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is *first pure, then peaceable*. . . . Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" So James speaks.

But the world, based, as John says, all of it, upon "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," thinks notwithstanding to secure peace apart from the "wisdom that

cometh from above." But in vain ; the purpose of God will stand, and the world will not know peace apart from the primary enforcement of purity at the hands of him whom God has appointed "PRINCE OF PEACE." Nearly six thousand years of wars and fightings have elapsed since the days of Adam in Eden, and more terrible times than ever are manifestly before us. "Perilous times" have come over the world, as was testified of the last days. The picture Paul gives of the condition of Jew and Gentile is still true : "There is none righteous, no not one : There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. . . . Their feet are swift to shed blood : destruction and misery are in their ways : and *the way of peace have they not known* : There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. v. 10, 15, 18). Nevertheless, there *is* a "way of peace" in Christ, in whose hands "the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 17).

This great work, contemplated and designed of God from the beginning, has bearings individual and national, as appears from the unfolding of the matter by the prophets, and Christ and the apostles. Many Scriptures of the prophets look forward to Christ as Prince of Peace though he be not so named in them. Nahum, contrasting Judah's end with that of Nineveh, said : "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings that publisheth peace ! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows, for the wicked shall no more pass through thee ; he is utterly cut off" (ch. i. 15). And Isaiah (ch. lii. 7), speaking of the same time uses similar language. But long before the still future proclamation of peace in Judah, in day of the cutting off of the wicked and the announcement to Zion : "Thy God reigneth" ; there was a bringing of good tidings and a publishing of peace in Judah by him whose "beautiful feet," "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," traversed its mountains in going about doing good in the midst of the evil generation that finally nailed him to the cross. His ministry was : "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, *preaching peace* by Jesus Christ." So Peter described it to Cornelius (Acts x. 36), reminding him of what he already knew, but concerning the

scope and bearing of which he was about to have his understanding so greatly enlarged.

When the time for the birth of Christ was come, the angels of heaven rejoiced in prospect of the peace he should bring. The song of the heavenly host over the plains of Bethlehem, in its co-ordination of God and man, is beautiful, and never to be forgotten: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men" (Luke ii. 14). This was the relation of things always maintained by Jesus in his ministry afterwards. He proclaimed peace to those who did the will of the Father, and glorified Him in believing on him whom He had sent. These, though few and obscure in the days of his weakness, will be exalted to honour and glory in his coming kingdom. He comforted them with this assurance, and in view of his withdrawal from the scene of their testimony and labours concerning him, he further promised them the comfort of the Holy Spirit, which should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said to them. He said: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (Jno. xiv.). When he said this, he was going forward to death, in obedience to the Father's will; but he had before him the assurance of resurrection to everlasting life, and the overlordship of the Father's house, abiding places in which he had been promising to his disciples. The peace which he promised them involved reconciliation to God, and brief tribulation in the world preparatory to enthronement in the coming kingdom. Paul, who afterwards attained to that peace, and the accompanying tribulation in the world, assessed the latter as unworthy of mention by comparison with the glory at last to be attained. If the end of a matter is certain to be all that can be desired, much can be endured. The end of a life of faithfulness to Christ is so certain and so good that life itself can be given up for it. Indeed, Christ gave his life for that which was to come, upon the basis of a revelation of God's righteousness coupled with the extension of His mercy to sinners. It is of this that Isaiah said: "The chastisement of *our peace* was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

. . . It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

The purpose of God required the declaration of His righteousness in the sacrifice of a sinless representative of the human race, of His own providing; that through him, raised from the dead and glorified, believers, recognising their true estate, and God's gracious purpose in him, might have access to the divine favour in the forgiveness of sins through his name. *In this way* "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," not that God chastised the innocent instead of the guilty, or bruised him to pass over them. This would not be according to the revelation of the divine character, and would leave no room for the forgiveness of sins. It would induce boasting, and render unnecessary our participation in the sufferings of Christ.

Nothing is clearer than that we are forgiven for his sake, and must die with Christ, be buried with him by baptism into death, be crucified with Christ, suffer with him that we may hereafter reign with him. He comes upon the scene as the second Adam. It is Paul who so strongly draws the comparison in the fifth chapter of Romans: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Peace departed from the earth in connection with Adam's offence. It returns in connection with Christ's obedience. The opening of this chapter (Rom. v.) presents this bearing upon those individually who believe in Jesus: "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here then is *the true basis of peace*: the humble and affectionate recognition of the will of God in Jesus Christ, in the obedience thereto according to divine appointment. Apart from this, professors may talk of Christ with ever so much admiration, and applaud his title, 'Prince of Peace,' but his name will profit them nothing, and the way of peace they will not know.

There are several allusions to this phase of the "peace of God" in the apostolic writings. Paul says to the Ephesians, speaking of

their past alienation as Gentiles, and their hopeless state in being without God, which now was remedied in Christ: "He is our peace who hath made both (circumcision and uncircumcision) one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make of the twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. ii. 14-15; compare Col. i. 20). The apostles, in their ministration of the gospel of the Kingdom to Jew and Gentile, were heaven's ambassadors, with conditions of peace (2 Cor. v. 19-20). They ministered the word "of reconciliation," showing men and women how the Divine Majesty had made provision for the return of the rebellious to His favour in the raising up of an Holy One who poured out his soul unto death, and rising victoriously from the grave, "made intercession for the transgressors."

This same message of peace is sent abroad wherever the apostolic presentation of the Gospel obtains. They applied to themselves as in Rom. x. 15, the prophecy of Isa. lii.: "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Being "in Christ," who said of them, "He that heareth you, heareth me," there was no presumption in so doing. The Spirit of God directed the usage of the prophetic word in harmony with the facts of the case. Although not "sent" like them, those who, being of the same faith, preach the same word, become, though less directly, *messengers of peace*, directing the attention of fellow-mortals to the true way of reconciliation and life eternal. The acceptors of this message individually make peace with God, which involves them in enmity with the world, of which, like their Master, they have to testify that the deeds thereof are evil. They pass through the appointed and inevitable tribulation, and fall asleep in Jesus until the resurrection morning, when he will arouse them to the life and peace of the Kingdom of God.

But when he comes there will not *at first* be peace by any means. When Joshua appeared with the hosts of Israel in the land of Canaan, there was no peace till the wicked nations who withstood him were destroyed. Or, to go back, when Moses returned from Midian to Egypt, there was no peace till Egypt was destroyed by plagues, and Pharaoh's power finally broken in the Red Sea. Jesus

is the antitype both of Moses and Joshua, and his dealings with the nations through the instrumentality of Israel are to be "according to the days of their coming out of the land of Egypt" (Mic. vii. 15). He is the "heir of all things" and "king over all the earth," a position that "the Powers" will be exceedingly loth to recognise.

It does not rest on inference, but is explicitly testified beforehand; and is no more extraordinary than the history of the past, in which Pharaoh was hardened to resist the Almighty, and the power of the enemy permitted to prevail to the crucifixion of Christ. The second Psalm gives us the picture of a coalition in the last days to resist the divine enthronement of Messiah on Mount Zion; and it is worthy of note that this psalm is apostolically applied in Acts iv. 25-28 as having had an incipient fulfilment in the crucifixion. Revelation (ch. xix.) represents Christ making war in righteousness upon "the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies," a description which, when rightly understood, explains the true nature and intent of the appalling armaments of modern times. It was never designed by God that the world should for ever be misgoverned by a race of mortal sinners without regard to His will. Human self-government is a usurpation at the start; but it is allowed of God to run its course subject to His control in the development from out of the passing generations of a people for Himself, in whose hands, under the Prince of Peace, when the time is ripe, He will bless the world with an immortal administration of righteousness and peace. The world cannot know peace apart from this. God "makes peace and creates evil" (Isa. xlv.); and evil is the rule while He is dishonoured. "Enmity" between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is the divine appointment, and there is enmity between the various sections of the seed of the serpent itself. The lust of dominion is the motive power among the nations, and is by no means concealed from the view of people enlightened by the law and the testimony by the smooth language of diplomacy in which the great men of the earth endeavour to "conceal their thoughts."

A notable phenomenon of modern times in this connection was the Peace Conference convened in Holland at the initiative of the

Czar of Russia. Projected first in August 1898, by the Czar's Rescript, the matter came to fruition in May 1899, when, as all the world knows, the representatives of the Great Powers, and many others, met at the Hague, for the purpose of discussing disarmament, the modification of the rules of war to render it less disastrous in its effects, and the establishment of a Permanent Court of Arbitration to which nations could appeal upon the principle so strongly insisted on by a public writer: "Always arbitrate before you fight." The one thing accomplished by the Conference was the agreement upon the Court of Arbitration, leaving open the very vital question of the enforcement of its awards.. Disarmament was out of the question, and the modification of the rules of war were not of a radical character.

The Prime Mover in the matter did not appear in his true character when he posed as "The Harbinger of Peace!" Without concerning ourselves with the character and intentions of the present Czar, we may discern from the Scripture the aims and intentions of the Power of which he is the reigning representative. The policy of the "King of the North," as defined beforehand by the prophets, and in these latter days in the tradition embodied in the will of Peter the Great, is that of founding a world-empire which shall overshadow all other dominions, and have for its religious capital, the city Jerusalem, which is now the site of so many rival religious interests.

In the language of the prophet, the King of the North is "a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death and cannot be satisfied, but *gathereth unto him all nations*, and heapeth unto him all people" (Hab. ii. 5). It is a well recognised fact that the trend of Russian diplomacy has been continually towards the increase of her territory and influence, and that the Peace Conference is but the latest illustration of it. What is not recognised is that the gathering of nations under the King of the North is not for Peace, but for "the war of the great day of God Almighty," that the assembled hosts may be broken upon the mountains of Israel at the presence of Israel's God (Ezek. xxxviii.)

It is not incongruous that the title "Prince of Peace" should be associated with these terrible developments. The connection is explicitly made in the Scriptures; for Micah, in a portion of his prophecy (ch. v.) which in part has already received literal fulfilment in the experiences of Jesus in the days of his weakness, goes on to say: "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they (Israel) shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And THIS MAN SHALL BE THE PEACE *when* the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men."

From this Scripture, as from Isaiah, it is very evident that Christ is Prince of Peace by reason of his procurement of peace through triumph over the latter-day Assyrian in conjunction with certain mighty ones of his "raising up." He is the "Chief Shepherd," and his companion "princes" are some of those who inherit the kingdom at his return. It is impossible to identify them before the time; but the divinely honoured names of Israel's worthies of the past will doubtless be represented among them. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses and Samuel, David, Noah, Daniel, and Job, are names singled out for special honourable mention in the Scriptures: the Twelve Apostles also in the New Testament. The day will reveal them, whoever they may prove to be; the point under contemplation now is that lost sight of in Christendom, though so plainly revealed in the prophets, that peace comes by Christ as the result of his overthrow of the oppressor of Israel, and the execution of "vengeance, in anger and fury upon the heathen such as they have not heard" (Mic. v. 15).

In the land of Israel and the city Jerusalem, and not in heaven beyond the skies, is Messiah's peace to be manifested, and those only will enjoy it as inheritors of the kingdom who have faith in what God has promised. The references to the locality of the blessing are many and quite unmistakable. By Haggai, in the restoration period after the Babylonian captivity, God said: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,

saith the Lord of Hosts, and *in this place* will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Hag. ii. 9). The time referred to, we learn from the apostolic quotation of the passage in Heb. xii., is at the establishment of the "kingdom that cannot be moved," when human dominions are swept away, and "the desire of all nations shall come."

An exhortation of Ps. cxxii. says, "Pray for *the peace of Jerusalem*: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." The world's speculators concerning peace do not concern themselves with the affairs of the brethren and companions of the King of Israel. But the Psalm reveals them to be a ruling factor in the situation, as appears also from many other portions of the word.

Psa. cx., in its application by Paul in Hebrews, shows the Lord Jesus enthroned in Zion as Melchizedek High Priest: first, King of Righteousness; and *then, King of Salem, which is King of Peace*. In view of this, mourners for Zion are exhorted to rejoice: "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream; then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isa. lxvi. 10-13).

A more literal description of the blessedness that underlies this description is obtained from the prophet Ezekiel in the temple vision (chaps. xl.-xlviii.) which introduces "the Prince," of whom the other prophets have spoken, and reveals him as the manifestation of the glory of the God of Israel (Christ personal and multitudinous), then enthroned in glory in the city which once rejected and slew him. There are ordinances for his eating bread before the Lord in the East Gate, to which, before his cruci-

fixion, he referred in promise to his disciples: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 28-30). These are some of his "children whom he makes princes in all the earth" (Psa. xlv.). They are then enthroned with him as "kings and priests for God" (Rev. v.) after the order of Melchizedek. He then has fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah which says: "He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*" (Zech. vi. 13).

Here then is *the true hope of peace for the world*: the advent, in a time of trouble such as never was, of the "Prince of Peace" from heaven. He will raise from the dust of death those of all ages who, through faith in his name, either in prospect or retrospect, have attained unto reconciliation and peace with God. Dismissing the wicked to shame and death, he will beautify these with salvation, and they will enter upon a reign of life and peace everlasting. With them he will break the yoke of Israel "as in the day of Midian," and establish the throne of David "with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." From Zion he will demand the surrender of all the Powers of the world to the throne and sceptre of David. Upon refusal he will subjugate them all by conquest in the "war of the great day of God Almighty," in which the slain of the Lord shall be many from one end of the earth to the other. The remnant, with loftiness bowed down and all haughtiness laid low, will be only too glad to submit to the will of God as expressed in the commands of Jesus, and the "terribly shaken" earth will pass into the peace of the Millennium so little believed in, so ardently desired, and so hopeless of attainment apart from the strong arm of him who once was crucified through weakness, but whom God has constituted "WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, MIGHTY GOD, FATHER OF ETERNITY, PRINCE OF PEACE."

WOE TO EPHRAIM.

Assurance of the everlasting continuance of the throne and kingdom of David having been given, and emphasised by the declaration: "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this"; the word of God returns to further denunciation of Ephraim and his Syrian confederate. Ephraim had been founded in idolatry, and sustained in wickedness by his kings, notwithstanding the expostulations of God by the prophets, and in miracles, signs and wonders, as in the terrible vindication of His name over the prophets of Baal by Elijah on Mount Carmel. The time for the subversion of the kingdom drew near; but first was to come the fall of Syria.

Verse eleven of this ninth chapter says: "The Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together." Bible history shows us the fate of the Gentile prince, who with an Ephraimite conspirator and usurper (2 Kings xv. 25), sought to subvert the Kingdom of David, and by the erection of a new dynasty (Isa. vii. 6) annul the covenant that God had made with David. But there is no counsel against the Lord. He said by His servant Isaiah: "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass," and denounced the overthrow of both the hostile powers. With regard to Rezin, "the word" appointed the King of Assyria to despoil his capital (Isa. viii. 4); and so it came to pass, for: "The King of Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser) went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people thereof captive to Kir, and slew Rezin" (2 Kings xvi. 9).

This, to Ephraim, was an earnest of the judgment that should as certainly come upon them; but, true to the traditions of their evil history, the warning was utterly disregarded. When their turn came, however, at the hand of Shalmaneser in the ninth year of Hoshea, the word had its ample fulfilment. "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, *and it hath lighted upon Israel*. And *all the people shall know*, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria" (v. 9). God's comment on these and similar fulfilled threats of judgment is given by a later prophet (Zech. i. 6), "My

words and my statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Throughout the entire Scripture there runs this emphasising of the knowledge of God produced by judgment. The plagues of Egypt made Him "an everlasting name," manifesting for all time that there is none like unto the Lord God of Israel. The dispersion and sufferings of Israel testify to the same great truth. The calm declaration of Christ (pronouncing judgment upon Jerusalem): "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," finds fulfilment round the world in scores of millions of Bibles. All the facts of history and of the current situation are such as endorse Christ's saying that men are foolish not to believe "all that the prophets have spoken."

The unappeasable wrath of God is the subject of four-fold emphasis in the section of the prophecy under consideration. The form of words four times repeated runs thus (verses 12, 17, 21, chap. x. 4): "For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched forth still." The history of Israel being preserved for our instruction (1 Cor. x.), it becomes an important matter to note the conditions under which national destruction was inevitable. One of these is exhibited in verse 11, thus: "The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts." As the proverb has it: "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Very elaborate counsel and warning had been given to Israel by Moses concerning the effects respectively of obedience and disobedience. The twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus is an eloquent exhortation to the point, and withal a prophecy of the punishment and preservation of Israel, and of the hope in the latter end. "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me. And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the

land of their enemies. If then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land" (v. 40). And the words go on to declare that God will not utterly destroy Israel; of the truth of which we are witnesses.

Nineveh, repenting at the preaching of Jonah, is an illustration of God's mercy where respect is shown to His Word; and it is Christ who uses the case of Nineveh as an argument against those who refused to hearken to the words of the "greater than Jonah." Even Ahab, when he humbled himself before God, was spared the witnessing of the evil that God would bring upon his house.

The principle upon which God acts He has clearly revealed through Jeremiah (xviii. 8), "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."

Israel did evil persistently in God's sight, and the last warnings of the prophets before the final overthrow were now sounding against them. For us the lesson is that divine chastisement must not be despised or resisted. An apostle says: "Chastening . . . yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to *them which are exercised thereby.*" "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world." But for them that are not "exercised thereby," and that "turn not to Him that smiteth them," the case is hopeless.

For the fulfilment and inspired comment on the judgment pronounced in this chapter of Isaiah, 2 Kings xvii. may be read. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was the first "leader of the

people” that caused them to err, and was a type of all who came after him; of nearly all of whom it is said they “departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” Even Jehu, who was anointed to cut off the house of Ahab, and who did it and declared that it was God’s work; and who, moreover, destroyed the worshippers of Baal, nevertheless in the end took the same evil course. So true was the word by the prophet: “The leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed.” “Every one is an hypocrite and an evil doer, and every mouth speaketh folly.” They decreed unrighteousness, perverted judgment, and robbed the fatherless and the widow.

It was the same state of things that was afterwards so terribly denounced by Christ in Jerusalem in his encounters with the Scribes and Pharisees. The difference between his and the prophetic threatenings is the more direct authority with which he speaks. The prophets say, “Thus saith the Lord”; but Christ speaks in the first person: “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” It is the word of God in both cases—God spoke in times past by the prophets, and in the last days of the Mosaic economy by a Son (Heb. i.), but the voice of the “heir of all things” is the higher form of divine approach in invitation, instruction, and judgment. The sentence on Ephraim extends to the fourth verse of chapter x., concluding with the picture of a forsaken nation in the extremity of slaughter and captivity: “*Without me* they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain.”





CHAPTER X.

“ASSHUR, THE ROD OF MINE ANGER.”

IT was not only against Israel that the Assyrian was to have a mission, for Judah also had forsaken God; though there were some good kings on the throne of David. And as for the Assyrian, it was not because he was any better than Israel that he was to prevail against them. The call of God to that power, and the description of its function under the hand of God is very interesting and enlightening; affording a precedent that is very useful in enabling us to appreciate the current international workings with regard to Israel, so far as they have been revealed. The word of God calls to the Assyrian :

“Ho Assyrian, *the rod of mine anger*, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. *Howbeit he meaneth not so: but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.*” And then follows (verses 8-11) a *prophetic summary* of the Assyrian argument which found utterance in the blasphemous message of Sennacherib against Jerusalem; when “they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man.”

“Rod of mine anger,” though “he meaneth not so,” is a principle that finds illustration in more than one place in Bible history, and is recognised by the servants of God in many places. Habakkuk says of the Chaldeans: “O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.” The Roman subversion of the Jewish State in A.D. 70 was parabolically foretold by Christ as the operation of the King’s armies, which “destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city”

(Matt. xxii.). Nehemiah shows us the confession of the Levites (ch. ix.) that the servitude of Israel to the Kings of Persia was God's chastisement by them. "The land yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle at their pleasure, and we are in great distress" (v. 37).

The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman invasions of Israel, were, from a merely human point of view, but the perfectly natural evolutions of the will of man. It required a higher discernment, which, though rare, was not absolutely non-existent, to perceive that, all unwittingly, these powers were but working out the will of the Lord God of Israel. This higher discernment could only come from the revelation beforehand of the will of God in the matter, and this was unreservedly given through the prophets, upon the principle expressed by one of them (Amos iii. 7): "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Thus the precedents of thousands of years are before us as a guide to the discernment of the workings of the current situation in its bearings upon Israel's coming deliverance.

The Assyrian "rod of God's anger" was to be broken and cast away when it had served His purpose, while the prostrate nation, the object of chastisement, was to survive. The boasting of the Gentile power would not be tolerated by God without remonstrance. The prophecy continues (v. 12): "Wherefore it shall come to pass when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." The reason is given in the following verses, namely, the arrogant assumption of the strength and wisdom to himself. The expostulation of God by Isaiah continues: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself as if it were no wood."

This is the divine view of nations—His weapons, or instruments in fashioning for himself upon earth a house of glory for an abiding place in the ages beyond. Israel in turn is to become the "battle axe and weapons" (Jer. li. 20); but these are the "times of the

Gentiles" in which they are *rods, staves and saws in the hands of the Eternal*. A Kitchener in Egypt wins a great victory over the savage tribes of the desert, and recovers and opens up a vast province for the trade of the latter-day Tyre. Over this the British nation rejoices in the spirit of the Assyrian of old, though without the grossness of blasphemy that he exhibited. It does not consider that it is but the latter-day instrument in the development of a crisis in which it will be removed from the scene of its employment by a rougher instrument from the "North quarters" (Dan. xi. 43). This is because the Bible, though circulated in millions, is universally neglected; which again is partly because the key of knowledge has been taken away, and "strong delusion" has for centuries prevailed above the truth.

The fate of the Assyrian is an example to the Gentile nations in their relations to Israel: and the record of it, interwoven with prophecies concerning his latter-day representative, has not been thus divinely preserved and multiplied without good reason. It is there for the enlightenment and comfort of those who belong to "the remnant of Israel," and will be looked back upon by enlightened nations in the day of Christ as among the many monuments to the truth of God, whose faithfulness will then be openly manifested in His Kingdom.

Because of the Assyrian boasting, it was said (v. 17):—"The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour *his* thorns and *his* briers in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them." If Israel's "briers and thorns" were appointed for destruction (ch. vii. 24, with Heb. vi. 8), those of the Gentile power that God used to chastise them were likewise to be consumed. The principle applies to the present day, when Israel is about to arise from the ashes, and God declares that the nations shall not be utterly unpunished (Jer. xxv. 29-31).

But the burning consumption that came upon Sennacherib's hosts by the hand of the angel of the Lord in Hezekiah's days,

manifestly does not exhaust the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isa. x. The Light of Israel is *still* for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; for "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power WHEN HE SHALL COME to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired among all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 7-10). David, in his last words, referred to this:—"The sons of Belial shall be, all of them, as thorns thrust away, for *they cannot be taken with hands*. But the man that shall touch them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place" (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7).

The prophecy of Isaiah continues (v. 20):—"And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return (*Shear-jashub*) even the remnant of Jacob, unto (*El Gibbor*) the mighty God (that is, unto the 'son given' to the house of David—ch. ix. 6). For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined in the midst of the land."

When we enquire "what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ" in Isaiah here signifies, the answer comes to us from the Scriptures above quoted. It is "the regeneration" of Israel when Jesus comes, a matter of which he spoke in terms of definite promise to his apostles (Matt. xix. 28). Then, indeed, the house of Jacob will no more think of Gentile alliances, as with Syria or Assyria, which proved their destruction instead of their succour; but under the leadership of kings and pastors after God's own heart will walk in His way instead of being caused to err, and subjugate the Gentiles instead of being crushed under their yoke and burden.

The apostle Paul, in "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" for his brethren and kinsmen after the flesh, knowing that "wrath to the uttermost" was about to overtake them, referred to Isaiah's prophecy of the remnant who should return. It was when he was writing to the Romans, who had, as wild olive branches, been grafted by the divine husbandry upon the good olive tree of Israel. His argument, in the face of almost universal unbelief and opposition, is that the failure was only apparent. It was "not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel" (Rom. ix. 6). After referring to the work of God under the figure of the potter and his clay, and quoting from Hosea concerning the pre-determined call of the Gentiles, he turns to Isa. x., saying: "Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (v. 27). This salvation he attributes to the Lord Jesus at his coming. "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

In the remnant, then, of which the Spirit of God spoke by Isaiah in the days of Ahaz, believing Roman Gentiles of eight hundred years afterwards found a prospective place. The fulness of the Gentiles has not even yet come in, and in these latter days the hope of Israel has, in the providence of God, been revived, and we have been permitted to take a place in the waiting remnant in the solemn and deeply interesting epoch of their *return unto the mighty God*.

ISRAEL'S YOKE TO BE DESTROYED "BECAUSE OF THE ANOINTING."

The prophecy (Isa. x. 24), goes on to encourage God's people in Zion concerning the threatening of the Assyrian invader. The frequent occurrence of the divine titles "Lord of Hosts," "Lord God of Hosts" in this passage is an answer to the challenge of the King of Assyria concerning the "God of Jerusalem." The record of the controversy about to be settled between God and the Assyrian was to be preserved for all time, and the issue revealed beforehand by God is emphasised by this frequent formula: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." It is no mere

flourish of words; but the majestic statement of a glorious fact at present hidden from mortal eyes. These are times of darkness when God does not interfere. His "legions of angels" are undetected by the common gaze of sinners, and the time is not quite ripe for the arresting of universal attention by open manifestations of judgment. In Sennacherib's time it was different; God deeming it a suitable occasion to vindicate and assert His supremacy by a stroke of judgment, the report of which should engage the attention of succeeding generations of His people for thousands of years to come. The impending destruction of Sennacherib's army in Hezekiah's days, in "a very little while" as God reckons, was at once a great deliverance to His people in Zion at that time, and an earnest of the final deliverance when the yoke shall be taken from off Israel's shoulder "because of the anointing." The words run thus :

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, though he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction. And the Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (verses 24-28).

The day of Midian, when Gideon, with his three-hundred, decimated a host "like the sand by the seaside for multitude," was the subject of remark in a previous chapter. The effect of the stretching forth of "the rod of God" in the hand of Moses over the Egyptian Sea, whereby Pharaoh and all his host "sank like lead in the mighty waters," is too well remembered to need comment. A stroke of judgment, comparable only to these things was in store for the Assyrian who blasphemed God as grievously as did Pharaoh, and like him was to encounter an overthrow by means of which Yahweh's name should be declared in all the earth.

A like fate with a like object awaits the latter-day Assyrian at the hands of God's Anointed, the prophet like unto Moses. "The anointing" (v. 27), is literally "oil" in the Hebrew, as the Revised Version says in the margin, and hence gives the alternative "fatness." Young puts it "because of prosperity." The ideas are congruous, and focus as it were in Christ, who is the heir to the throne of David then occupied by Hezekiah as God's anointed, for whose sake, because he trusted in Him, God was about to reprove the hostile king (Psa. cv. 14-15). Of "the King" of Israel, in the day of victory it is said (Psalm xlv.) "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Mighty One, prosper thou, ride thou because of truth and meekness and righteousness. . . . Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: therefore God, thy God hath *anointed thee* with the *oil of gladness* above thy fellows."

This implies that his "fellows" are likewise to be anointed with "the oil of gladness" in the change of nature into likeness with Him as He is. The doctrine of the New Testament plainly sets this forth, and it is also discernible in the prophecy of Micah (ch. v. 5) which says of Him and His saints: "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces; then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men" (literally "eight anointed of man"). These are those who, like him, are anointed with "the oil of gladness," "the oil of joy for mourning," and are by him "made princes" as the forty-fifth Psalm testifies they shall be.

THE VISION OF THE ASSYRIAN ADVANCE UPON JERUSALEM.

In the concluding verses of Isaiah x. the prophet sees by the Spirit the advance of the Assyrian upon Jerusalem. The rendering of the Revised Version presents the picture in a very graphic manner. The country through which he passed, with the places on his line of march, was a scene of stirring associations. It was here that Abraham sojourned among the Canaanites, received the promise and built an altar unto the Lord (Gen. xii. 8). Here Jacob, departing to Padan Aram, dreamed of the ladder that connected the place with heaven, and upon which the angels ascended and

descended (Gen. xxviii.). Here Israel "fled before the men of Ai" because of God's displeasure concerning Achan, "the troubler of Israel," and the city was afterwards subdued and destroyed by Joshua (Josh. viii.). Migron and Michmash figure in the history of Saul's transgression, when he "forced himself and offered a burnt offering," and also in the account of the extraordinary smiting of the Philistines by Jonathan and his armour bearer (1 Sam. xiii., xiv.).

In these Scriptures there are various minute descriptions of the locality, the modern identification of which, in the Palestine Exploration Survey, has been very complete. Upon the sheets of the Great Map one can trace the course of Sennacherib's army as detailed in Isaiah's vision with ease and accuracy. The reason why the Assyrian King "laid up his baggage at Michmash" is seen when one looks at the "passage" which, the prophet says in v. 29, "they are gone over." The circumstantial agreement of the Land and the Book is so striking here that an extract from Captain Conder's *Tent Work in Palestine* may not be judged out of place.

Speaking of Michmash, which lies a little way south of Ai or Aiath, and still bears the name of Mukhmas, he says:—

"The site of the Philistine camp at Michmash, which Jonathan and his armour bearer attacked, is very minutely described by Josephus. It was, he says, a precipice with three tops, ending in a long sharp tongue, and protected by surrounding cliffs. Exactly such a natural fortress exists immediately east of the village of Michmash, and it is still called "the fort" by the peasantry. It is a ridge rising in three rounded knolls above a perpendicular crag, ending in a narrow tongue to the east with cliffs below, and having an open valley behind it, and a saddle towards the west on which Michmash itself is situate.

"Opposite this fortress, on the south, there is a crag of equal height and seemingly impassable; thus the description of the Old Testament is fully borne out—'a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other' (1 Sam. xiv. 4).

“The southern cliff, as we have noticed above, was called *Seneh*, or ‘the acacia,’ and the same name still applies to the modern valley, due to the acacia trees which dot its course. The northern cliff was named *Bozez* or ‘shining,’ and the true explanation of this name only presents itself on the spot.

“The Great Valley runs nearly due east, and thus the southern cliff is almost entirely in shade during the day. The contrast is surprising and picturesque between the dark cool colour of the south side and the ruddy or tawny tints of the northern cliff, crowned with the gleaming white of the upper chalk strata. The picture is unchanged since the days when Jonathan looked over to the white camping ground of the Philistines, and Bozez must then have shone as brightly as it does now in the full light of an Eastern sun.

“To anyone looking over the valley it seems a most difficult feat to cross it, and in the words of Josephus, ‘it was considered impossible not only to ascend to the camp on that quarter, but even to come near it.’ Yet in the winter of 1874 we were able to march with horses and mules over this great chasm, perhaps treading almost in the steps of Jonathan.”

Here Captain Conder describes the crossing of the valley—a decidedly perilous undertaking, and resumes :

“Such a descent we never made again; and looking up, it seemed incredible that iron-shod beasts could have come down those vertical walls; for the Survey party had marched across almost the worst part of the passage which checked the advance of the King of Assyria on Jerusalem.

“Though we got down *Seneh*, we did not attempt to climb up *Bozez*. That rock was not on our line of march, which was directed east of the Philistine camp. Horses could scarcely find a footing anywhere on the sides of the northern precipice, but judging from the descent, it seemed possible that Jonathan, with immense labour, could have ‘climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him’ (1 Sam. xiv. 13).

"LOPPING THE BOUGH WITH TERROR."

Thus, by modern exploration, we are enabled to get quite a vivid picture of the advance of the Assyrian through the Prince's portion of the land (Ezek. xlvi.) upon the city of the Great King.

At Nob, however, the divine command was: HALT! "This very day shall he halt at Nob" (v. 32 R.V.). Nob is not certainly identified; but it seems to have been situated about two miles north of Jerusalem. It was a Levitical city, the place where David ate the shew bread, and the scene of the slaying of the Lord's priests by Saul. If Shafat be the site, it is on the main road to Jerusalem from the north, and about two miles distant from the city, which is visible from it. Here the Assyrian was to camp and "shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."

The history of the fulfilment of the prophecy shortly afterwards, in Hezekiah's days, is recorded in 2 Kings xix., and incorporated in Isaiah xxxvi. and xxxvii. At that time, God consoled Hezekiah by an assurance of deliverance from the invader, and a sentence of judgment upon the boastful king: "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it." And so it came to pass; for, without striking a blow, he left the dead bodies of his host of 185,000 men, slain by the angel of the Lord "that night," and returned in disguise to Nineveh, where he was slain by his own sons in the presence of his god Nisroch, in whose strength he trusted to prevail against "the God of Jerusalem."

This stroke of judgment is figuratively foretold in the last two verses of Isaiah x., "Behold, the Lord, the LORD of Hosts (that is, 'the angel of the Lord' as the history shows), shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one." From this symbolic language, and the literal description of its import that is available, we may estimate the

judgments that are yet in store for the world. The book of Revelation (ch. xiv.) gives us a picture of the Son of Man sitting crowned upon a white cloud and armed with a sharp sickle. Angels of the temple, likewise sickle-armed, assist him in the terrible process of reaping the ripe harvest of the earth, "gathering the clusters of the vine of the earth." The work being accomplished, the clusters are "cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden *without the city*, and blood came out of the wine-press: even unto the horse bridles by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs." The terrible judgments thus portrayed have to do with anti-typical Babylon (Rev. xiv. 8), the Roman corruption of God's "way," that is as obnoxious to Him as was the aggressive Assyrian of two thousand five hundred years ago.





CHAPTER XI.

“THE ROD OUT OF THE STEM OF JESSE.”

BETWEEN the lopping of a bough, the cutting down of thickets of a forest, and the shooting forth of a branch, there is a great and effective contrast, and it is this that challenges attention in the opening verses of chapter xi.

The modern division of chapter and verse somewhat obscures the fact, but “the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven” will override this and grasp the idea conveyed. The purpose of the Assyrian invader was thus alluded to by God in His message to Hezekiah (ch. xxxvii. 24), “Thou hast reproached the Lord and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon: and *I will cut down the tall cedars thereof*, and the choice fir trees.” But instead of his cutting down the Israelitish cedar, and taking Hezekiah captive as he designed, he was himself cut down; and the occasion taken of foretelling the prosperity in righteousness and peace of the kingdom of the “ROOT AND OFFSPRING OF DAVID.”

The opening words of the eleventh chapter—words that have sustained God’s people for so many generations—run thus: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

The apostle Paul, quoting this eleventh chapter of Isaiah when writing to the Roman Christians, alludes to the mission of Jesus in these words (Rom. xv. 8): "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, *and* that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written. . . . There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

This in few words is the inspired summary of the substance of Isaiah xi. Believing Gentiles should note well the order of their salvation: "the Jew first," and then the Gentile. The covenant God made with the Son of Jesse, is that which required the coming forth of the "rod out of the stem of Jesse," and which in the initial fulfilment of it at the birth of the Lord's forerunner caused Zechariah to exult in that God "hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." Although Jesus was not born till six months afterwards, the angel Gabriel's words to Mary were accepted implicitly by her, and by Elizabeth and Zechariah; and hence the language of accomplished fact.

The exhortation Paul bases upon his allusion to the divine purpose expressed in Isa. xi. and the other scriptures he quotes, is briefly this: "Rejoice in belief and hope, and minister to Israel's need as occasion offers, realising your deep indebtedness to them in partaking of their spiritual things" (Rom. xv. 13, 27). This argument appeals as powerfully to believing Gentiles of the twentieth century as it did to those of the first. They are contemporary with stirring signs of the approaching restoration of the Kingdom of David, and their faith and hope is strengthened by daily contemplation of these things in the "lively oracles."

The term Branch (*Nehtzer*) of Isa. xi. 1 has sometimes been supposed to be referred to by Matthew in ch. ii. 23, "He shall be called a Nazarene." This was Jerome's idea. The precise term "Nazarene" is not found in any prophecy extant. But against

Jerome's interpretation it has to be urged that Matthew's reference is general and not precise—"that which was spoken by the prophets," not by one of them in a certain place. And, moreover, his allusion is geographical in its essence:—"He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." The view of Matthew's saying that sees in it reference to the "reproach of Christ" is evidently the correct one.

Nazareth was an obscure place (not even mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures), in a despised district, and having so evil a reputation, that the first impulse of Nathaniel on hearing of "Jesus of Nazareth" was to exclaim, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He had much reason after he came and saw, to answer enthusiastically in the affirmative. As to Galilee, of which district Nazareth was a city, it was "Galilee of the nations," the *goyim*, the heathen, who were transplanted from Assyria and the neighbouring countries, "instead of the children of Israel" (Is. ix. 1; 2 Kings xvii.). In Solomon's time he gave Hiram "twenty cities in the land of Galilee" (1 Kings ix. 11), in return for his preparation of timber for the temple. Hiram was much dissatisfied, "And he called them the land of Cabul (Disgusting, Dirty) unto this day" (verse 13). Thus the land of Galilee seems always to have been alienated and despised.

The name Nazareth seems likely to be more correctly referable to the root whence comes the term Nazarite, than to the term *Nehizer*, branch. This verb is *nahzar*, to separate; and the derived noun is used in Gen. xlix. 26, of Joseph, who "was separate from his brethren." It is remarkable that the city which was the home in youth of Jesus, who is a Joseph to his brethren, should bear a name the associations of which in the days of his flesh should be alienation and dishonour, and which, descending upon his disciples in the epithet "Nazarenes," should in the public eye brand them as pestilent fellows and movers of sedition among the Jews (Acts xxiv. 5).

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts x. 38).

This is Peter's testimony to the household of Cornelius of the fulfilment of the promise of Isa. xi. 2. The Spirit of the Lord is the base of everything created, and Jesus always referred his wisdom and power to this Source. At Nazareth, in the synagogue, "there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias," and turning to the opening words of the sixty-first chapter he read before them: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings." And, in comment upon the prophecy, he appropriated it to himself, and by incisive reference to the history of Elijah and Elisha, warned those whose "eyes were fastened on him" that, as in the days of those prophets the divine succour and healing passed over apostate Israel to reach unto a Sidonian widow and a Syrian captain, so it would be again with them in their rejection of him as the "Physician" sent of God. For this the congregation in their wrath sustained the evil reputation of their city by seeking to throw him over the precipice (Luke iv.).

But it was not only that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. The Holy Spirit had come upon others, enabling them to speak and do wonders. But He was above them, being begotten by the spirit: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee (Mary), and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). He was "the Word made flesh" that dwelt among the Jews and manifested forth the Father's glory and goodness. John the Baptist, sent from God to bear witness to him, testifies of the Father's visible approval of him, saying: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God" (Jno. i. 30). Again (Jno. iii. 34), "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." And, by voice from heaven, the Father proclaimed Jesus to be His beloved Son. In controversy with the Jews Jesus always came back upon this effectual testimony that the righteousness of his claims

was attested by the words and works of power which none other man ever did or could manifest (Jno. v. 19, 36 : viii. 47 : ix. 4 : x. 25, 38 : xv. 24).

The quickness of his understanding in the fear of the Lord, even at twelve years of age, was the cause of astonishment in all that heard him, as was manifested on the occasion of his remaining in Jerusalem after the passover, and being found by his parents in the temple in the midst of the doctors (Lu. ii. 47).

The piercing discernment that depended not upon the sight of the eye or the hearing of the ear finds many exemplifications in the history of his life and work. Look at his reception of Nathaniel : "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." And listen to his answer to the surprised enquiry, "Whence knowest thou me?" "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (John i. 47). Against this place his seven times repeated declaration to the seven representative churches of Asia : "I know thy works," and we begin to realise that all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. In a word he revealed to the Samaritan woman "all things that ever she did" (John iv.). He reproved the Jews for murderous intent (John vii. 19), and by a simple act revealed the traitor at the table (John xiii. 26). With the brief words, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her," he convicted and scattered the callous and designing company of Scribes and Pharisees who used the woman taken in adultery as a means whereby "they might have to accuse him" (John viii.). "He knew what was in man," and anticipated an argument (Matt. xvii. 25) or turned a situation, leaving his enemies on the horns of a dilemma (Matt. xxi. 23-27) with a superhuman righteousness and skill that at last reduced them to the position of not daring to risk further controversy (Matt. xxii. 46).

But these manifestations in the days of his flesh were only the earnest of better things to come. It remains for him to judge the poor with righteousness, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth ; to smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips to slay the wicked. In the days of his

flesh he "judged no man," in the sense of condemning them to death; but at his second coming it will be different. The picture of Rev. xix. 11-21, exhibits Christ in an aspect that is almost lost sight of in the prevalence of so-called evangelistic teaching concerning him, as also is the picture of his judgment seat. It belongs to the truth to recognise in their places all features of the divine purpose in Christ. With the records of his past mighty works in our hands, and the striking developments of modern scientific inventions before our eyes, we cannot but recognise the unspeakable changes that will be wrought in human affairs when once he takes the tangled skein in hand.

That the world should be given into the hands of One of whom it was foretold that "righteousness should be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," is a glorious dispensation of the Creator's goodness. It will be appreciated to the utmost by reason of the long continued sufferings of the world at the hands of the wicked, whose characteristics are the very opposite of those which grace the Lord Jesus. The spirit of folly, ignorance and rebellion, has for thousands of years controlled the affairs of the earth, subject only to the invisible control of God. Paul sums up "the course of this world" as one directed by "the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2); but he defines the end of the matter as the gathering together of all things in Christ in the dispensation (or economy) of the fulness of times. Righteousness and faithfulness, unequalled in human affairs, qualify the Lord's Anointed for immortal Kingship over all the earth; and like qualification, in varying degrees, obtains in all the units of the glorious "hosts," who, with him, are to "take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

HOW IMMANUEL TAMES THE WILD BEASTS.

A picture of the peace of Jerusalem is thus given in verses 6-9. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down

together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy *in all my holy mountain*: FOR *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*"

The popular view of this prophecy finds expression in a well-known and beautiful picture of a little child leading some of the beasts spoken of; and in that vision the matter is for most people exhausted. But let the questions be asked: How does *the knowledge of the Lord* bear upon the taming of the wild beasts? And what special reference has the matter to *God's holy mountain*? A greater and more interesting development then comes into view, and one which is the subject of description in other Scriptures.

There are human wolves and lions, the subduing of whom is a greater work than taming the wild beasts of the forest. What profit would it be if wolves and lions were tamed and men left wild? It will not be so. Beginning with the Lord's land, the knowledge of the Lord will, after judgment, transform mankind; and Satan being bound, and the "old serpent" cast into the abyss, earth will rejoice in the peace and blessedness of Christ's kingdom for a thousand years.

In the forty-third chapter of Isaiah, God declares that He will do "a new thing," saying, "The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. *This people* have I formed for myself; *they* shall show forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." Peter's vision, described in Acts x., represented to the apostle, as the symbol of the Gentiles, a great sheet let down from heaven; "wherein were *all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things, and fowls of the air.*" In the end of the same chapter we learn that Cornelius the centurion, and his household were part of the substance represented by the vision. They were some of the beasts of the field that "honoured God" in the reception of His WORD, and the doing of His will in obeying the truth in bap-

tism. Thus God "cleansed" the "common and unclean" as He had thrice revealed His purpose to Peter in vision; and He bore additional testimony to the fact in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, enabling these Gentile converts to speak with tongues even as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost.

This illustrates the process of the transformation of Gentile wolves, lions, swine, and other unclean beasts into "the sheep of God's pasture," led of Him all the days of their life, in hope at last of a place in His House for ever.

The case of Paul may be said to furnish a striking example of the same change. When he was a persecutor of the Lord Jesus and his people, although he did it in all good conscience, he was on the side of the Devil—a lion among the lions, a wolf among the wolves, who "breathed out threatenings and slaughter" against the sheep, and, on his own testimony, was "exceedingly mad against them." Because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief he obtained mercy of the Lord, and being baptised, for the washing away of his sins, became one of Christ's sheep, to the amazement of those of the flock who had known him in his old character. Slightly changing the figure, it is Paul who applies the injunction of the law against muzzling the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn, to the apostolic labour, and liberty to partake of the carnal things of those to whom the spiritual things of the gospel were ministered (1 Cor. ix. 10).

The woman of Canaan who appealed to Jesus on behalf of her daughter, was promptly classed by him among the "dogs," and had sufficient faith and humility to accept his estimate, and plead that even the dogs got a crumb or two under the table of their masters, a saying that at once secured for her the "crumb" desired. Thus dogs, wolves, lions, serpents, sheep and oxen appear as the representation of their analogues among human animals; and Bible students will recall many more illustrations that might be given.

But what wolves, lions and serpents are those that have in particular "hurt and destroyed" *in Yahweh's holy mountain because of the lack of the knowledge of the Lord?* Bible history supplies the answer, which in brief is that they are the evil

doers of Israel, and the Gentile powers God brought upon the nation in consequence of their sins. Literal visitations of lions (2 Kings xvii. 25) are not overlooked; but the larger matter is now before us. "Israel is a scattered sheep; *the lions* have driven him away: first *the king of Assyria* hath devoured him; and last, this *Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon*, hath broken his bones." So says Jeremiah (ch. l. 17). And again (chap. v.) "A lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities." The four-headed and four-winged leopard of Daniel's vision (ch. vii.) "watched over their cities" for between two and three hundred years; and when at length Immanuel appeared as the "heir of all things," the assembly of the wicked, of Jews and Gentiles, combined against him as a gathering of wild beasts (lions, dogs, and bulls of Bashan), on the mountains of Israel.

But their fury did but accomplish the predetermined purpose of God in the death of Christ. As Ezekiel and Zephaniah had testified of their times, the princes, prophets and judges of Israel had become lions and wolves ravening for the prey (Ezek. xxii.; Zeph. iii.); and secured a temporary triumph as the Spirit of God had testified in Psa. xxii., when telling how God's Anointed should be brought into the dust of death. He had not failed to describe them in their true character as "wolves," "serpents," a "generation of vipers;" and he had specially warned his disciples in sending them forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves," to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." After his death and resurrection, we find them acting out his advice in their difficult undertakings; and from behind the veil, as it were, the Lord himself granted them occasional deliverance as suited His purpose.

Thus Paul (2 Tim. iv. 17), speaking of his defence before Nero, says, "The Lord stood with me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the Lion." Peter exhorts to watchfulness, "because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom," says he, "resist, stedfast in the faith" (1 Pet. v. 8). And Paul warned the Ephesian elders against the "grievous wolves" who would surely arise and "not spare the flock" (Acts xx. 29).

History has only too well verified Paul's prophecy, and that of the later revelation of the Lord Jesus himself. In Rev. xiii., the Roman system in union with the secular power is represented by a beast "like unto a leopard" with feet like a bear's, and a mouth like the mouth of a lion. The beast made war with the saints—for a time appointed—a time that we have the happiness of knowing is now in the past. The end of the beast, however, has not come yet; but is to be brought about by war with the Lamb (Rev. xvii. 14: xix. 19). Armageddon, on the mountains of Israel, will decide the matter for a thousand years, during which "they shall not hurt nor destroy" in all God's holy mountain, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; but the redeemed shall walk there" (Isa. xxxv. 9). Of Jerusalem and her people: the new heavens and new earth, God says (Isa. lxxv. 24-25), "Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and *dust shall be the serpent's meat*. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord."

As concerning literal changes in the relations of man with the inferior creatures over which in the beginning the Creator gave Adam dominion, it has been well said that Daniel in the lions' den is an illustration of possibilities when Daniels are multiplied in all the earth. In the beginning, "every beast of the field and every fowl of the air" were presented by the Lord God to Adam "to see what he would call them": a very interesting incident in which Adam, strong in innocence and God-given dominion over the animals, exercised his observation, judgment, and powers of definition on their differing characteristics, and named them accordingly. Adam's sons have been at it ever since; for the matter is a great one, and it will be one of the delights of the kingdom of Adam the second to hear his classification of the Father's creatures with a wisdom far exceeding Solomon's. In the days of his flesh, in the temptation in the wilderness, it is said, he "was with the wild beasts." From these it seemed he had nothing to fear, like his prototype in the

garden of Eden : but other and more terrible wild beasts sought and took his life. Elijah fed by ravens is another glimpse of possibilities. Nothing is too hard for the Lord ; and doubtless a feature of millennial blessedness will be the great reduction, or possibly abolition altogether, of the mortality due to wild beasts and serpents, which in countries like India assumes terrible proportions. But the language of the prophets, and *the reason of the cessation of the "hurting and destroying,"* suggests that the matter of taming the more terrible "beasts" is the subject introduced in Isa. xi. 6-9.

"THE ROOT OF JESSE."

The prophecy continues : "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the peoples ; to it shall the Gentiles seek ; and his rest shall be glorious." How one and the same person can appropriately be symbolised in verse 1 by the expression "Rod out of the stem of Jesse," and in verse 10 "Root of Jesse" can only appear when the truth concerning Jesus is rightly apprehended. In Rev. v. 5 John in vision hears him called "the Root of David" by one of the elders ; and in ch. xxii. 16 he says himself : I am the Root and the offspring of David." The doctrine of "Immanuel" explains the apparent anomaly. God was the Root of David, as of all things created, and Jesus was God with Israel, and spoke God's words, saying, for example, "Before Abraham was I am." The Spirit was the antecedent to Abraham, but the Jews, who looked no higher than the flesh, supposed that Jesus spoke of himself, and sought to kill him. It was otherwise with John the Baptist, who, recognising his heavenly origin, said of him, "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me." Inasmuch as Jesus was the Word made flesh, he is the "Root of Jesse" ; and because he "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," he is obviously "the Branch." Were he merely a man, as some would have it, such expressions as the "Root of Jesse," "the Root and offspring of David," could have no rational place in the testimony concerning him. Those who seek to evade the force

of the prophecy of Isaiah vii. concerning his supernatural origin, should consider this. "The word of the truth of the gospel" is so interlaced in all the scriptures, that any attempt to mutilate it must inevitably recoil on those who are unwise enough to make it.

"AN ENSIGN OF THE PEOPLES."

An ensign is a standard or banner, indicating the presence of royalty or authority; and denoting a rallying point for the people in peace or war. The Bible usage of the term with reference to Christ, introduces things that have no counterpart among the powers that be. Suppose we contemplate the late Queen Victoria in the year of the Diamond Jubilee (1897) as an ensign to the British Empire. We have an imposing spectacle truly; but there is no divine life and power behind the British throne. And although the boast be true: "We hold a vaster Empire than has been;" that Empire is by no means universal, but is only part of what is to be possessed by Christ in the day when the British "kingdom" is "left to other people," even "the saints of the Most High."

The term translated "ensign" is that which appears in the name "*Yahweh-Nissi*" (Yahweh, my ensign or banner), which Moses gave to the altar he built after the victory over Amalek (Ex. xvii. 15). Amalek fought with Israel in Rephidim; and Moses, having commissioned Joshua to direct the battle, stood with Aaron and Hur on a neighbouring hill, with the rod of God in his hand. When Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. And when he was weary, Aaron and Hur "held up the failing hands" till the going down of the sun, by which time Amalek was discomfited before Joshua. God directed Moses, saying, "Write this *for a memorial*, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." The altar, *Yahweh-nissi* (literally, He who shall be my ensign), represents Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, more honourable than Moses; and before whose un-failing uplifted hands Israel will do valiantly. Balaam, in his

prophecy of "the latter days," saw him in vision in this victorious attitude (Num. xxiv. 17).

But before this there was another kind of "*lifting up*" to which the "Root of Jesse" was to be subjected. When Israel loathed the manna and murmured against God in the wilderness, God sent fiery serpents among the people, by which many died. The people confessed their sin to Moses, who prayed for them; and God commanded him, saying, "Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole (*nes*, a standard or ensign); and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. xxi.).

About 700 years afterwards, when the brazen serpent had been made an idol, it was broken up by Hezekiah. Another 700 years, and the substance of the sign appeared in Israel in the person of an Israelite, who was serpent-bitten, though no murmurer, and who was at the same time the antitype of the loathed manna of the days of the exodus. He said: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be *lifted up*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii.). And to the Jews, in the controversy that arose upon his declaring himself to be "the light of the world," he said, "When ye have *lifted up* the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he" (John viii.). And just before that lifting up took place he said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, WILL DRAW ALL UNTO ME.* This said he, signifying what death he should die" (John xii.). A few days more and the Son of Man was *lifted up upon the cross*. God so loved the world that He gave him for that end. He thus "condemned sin in the flesh." Thus "the prince of this world" was cast out. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." *Yahweh-nissi* received the initial stage of its fulfilment in Israel, and serpent-bitten sinners had but to look upon him and live. The apostolic preaching

of the gospel, "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile," is the literal unfolding of the meaning of the figures.

But the "ensign" did not then "stand" in the land of Israel as a beacon for all peoples. The nation that had rejected him, and the city before which he was crucified, were given over to judgment and desolation for a long "time of the Gentiles" as he had foretold; while he himself ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on High, "from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." When the time comes for that great crisis, he returns and is "*lifted up*" on the mountains of Israel far otherwise than as in crucifixion, and all the world is called upon to behold:—

"All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign upon the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet hear ye" (Isa. xviii. 3). This is a warning that precedes the stroke of judgment that gives the hosts of the robbers of Israel for a sacrifice to the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air, and paves the way for the final replanting of Israel in their land. It is the great day in which the Assyrian falls, but not by the sword of man (Isa. xxxi. 8). "And his rock shall pass away for fear, and his princes shall be *afraid of* THE ENSIGN, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." The Angel of the Lord who destroyed Sennacherib's army was terrible to the Assyrian of old. Christ will be more so hereafter to the Great Northern Confederacy of the latter days.

And the glory of Christ as the "ensign of the peoples" is not confined to himself as the Head of his multitudinous body; but extends to all the children of the resurrection as well. This appears from the prophecy of Zechariah (ch. ix.) where God speaks of the release from the pit, of Christ's prisoners of hope by the blood of his covenant. Of their royal position over Judah and Ephraim it is said: "The Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, *lifted up as an ensign upon his land.*" The Lord Jesus at their head is King of Kings, who "was dead and is alive for evermore;" who once was lifted

up on the cross to suffer a malefactor's death but is then enthroned in glory with the saints as his "crown of rejoicing." And they who have looked upon him for salvation, as Israel looked upon the serpent in the wilderness, and who have "suffered with him" in various manners and degrees, are then with him "an ensign of the peoples;" and having been by him made "unto God, kings and priests," "all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

Even in the days of their flesh, Christ's people are in some sort "an ensign of the peoples" as he was. They are not now, and have not at any time been "acknowledged;" but like him have been, and are, "disallowed," disowned, and accounted "the offscouring of all things." "The truth" is their ensign or banner: "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" (Psa lx. 4). Their testimony concerning Him who shall be the ensign of Israel constitutes them "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," "a city that is set on a hill (which) cannot be hid." So Christ testified of the disciples, in the sermon on the mount, cautioning them at the same time about becoming unsavoury and extinguishing the light.

If we are to have part in the exaltation of the future, we must realise the exaltation of the present, and reckon with Paul that the sufferings in consequence are altogether negligible. In the resurrection morning the memory of the sufferings will be to the apostle a pleasure instead of a pain; as the crucifixion must have been to the Lord when he awoke from the brief sleep of death. The victory that overcometh the world, says the apostle, is our faith; and the Word of God, ministered by prophet and apostle, is strong to produce that faith wherever it is earnestly sought and diligently and prayerfully followed. Be it ours to cleave fast to it, that we may be as he was in the world, and may be counted worthy of a place in his glorious rest.

"NATIONS RALLYING TO THE ENSIGN."

"An ensign of the peoples, to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious" (Isa. xi. 10). Jesus is the "ensign of the peoples." But what does the word of God tell us of nations seeking to Him, and of His rest that is to be glorious?

First of the nations. God's division of mankind with the reference to His eternal purpose marks them off into the two classes—Jews and Gentiles. It might have been otherwise. What His purpose may be in other planets, with the inhabitants thereof, we know not; save the presumption (from the words of the Elohim at the time of Adam's transgression), that they are to attain to perfection by faith and obedience manifested under trial—a choosing of the good, and refusing the evil, because of the love of God.

But concerning Earth His revelation is clear and unmistakable, though so universally neglected, that "*Salvation is of the Jews.*" It is vain to kick against the pricks. High-flown theories of presumptuous speculators may reject what they are pleased to term the narrowness and bigotry of a mere "tribal theology," and claim with swelling oration the "Universal Fatherhood of God" and the common brotherhood of man. They cannot alter facts. The facts are the "pricks" (goads). All Jewish history of the past, and the world-rousing Jewish developments of the present, simply goad and torment the theorists who reject God's plan. They can neither face nor account for them.

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities"—this, in a sentence, is an entirely satisfactory divine philosophy of the unparalleled sufferings of Israel in the past. "He that scattered Israel will gather him"—this is a perfect explanation of the movements of the present. A terrible lesson awaits the Gentiles among whom God has scattered Israel. A small remnant among them will save themselves in time before the judgment storm bursts upon the world. They will enquire of

God, by means of the Word He has given Israel and suffered it to come through them into their hands. They will discover their true relation to the matter in His gracious purpose from the beginning.

Man has no rights before God. It is true that Adam was "Son of God," but he sinned; and "the wages of sin is death." Our natural birthright from Adam is only evil and death. Even to the *elite* of the chosen nation when they were in rebellion against the Father, Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the Devil." We must realise our true estate before we can appreciate the goodness and condescension of God in providing a Saviour to whom nations shall seek, and whose rest shall be glorious.

After more than sixteen hundred years of human progress, all flesh had corrupted God's way upon earth to such an extent that He determined to destroy "the world of the ungodly." He did so in Noah's flood, saving only eight souls. So that it might have been said in that day, "Salvation is of Noah," according to the prophecy of Lamech, his father, who at his birth "called his name Noah (Rest or Comfort), saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." In Noah's family, in Shem's line, comes "the heir of the world," and "father of many nations"—Abraham. Just as in the case of Noah, so in Abraham's case, it is entirely "of the Lord" that he is individually chosen as the vehicle of divine blessing, the fountain head of human hope in his holding of the divine covenant. That the "wise men after the flesh" have got the length in our day of saying that "it has not yet been made probable" that such a man as Abraham existed, is only an exhibition to all whom it may concern of their own utter folly before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ and a world full of Jews.

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." So God said to Abraham, and Paul, about two thousand years afterwards, speaking to some of those concerned, emphasised the fact, saying, "The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify

the heathen through faith, preached before *the gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Thus the matter of Isaiah's prophecy of Immanuel is rooted in the covenant of God with his father Abraham. For nearly two thousand years the full scope and bearing of the divine purpose with regard to the Gentiles was concealed. It was there all the time, concurrently with all the law and the prophets, but, although the subject of abundant revelation, was not thoroughly comprehended till the "rod out of the stem of Jesse" appeared, of whom it had been said, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." Even in his infancy the hope of nations comes before us in the songs of angels and prophecies of saints:—

"Peace on earth, goodwill from heaven
Reaching far as man is found,"

was the theme of the heavenly host in connection with the glory of God to be revealed through the Babe of Bethlehem. And the aged Simeon, rejoicing in having survived "to see the Lord's Christ," spoke of him as "a light to lighten the Gentiles."

Time passed and Jesus went forth on his mission preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Some incidents in his ministry foreshadowed the opening of the door of faith unto the Gentiles. On one occasion a centurion asked the favour of his healing a sick servant. "I will come and heal him," was the answer. But the centurion, deeply impressed with the majesty of Jesus and his own unworthiness, said, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;" and argued that that would be as easy for Jesus, as the giving of a command to a soldier would be to him. And "when Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you that *many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.* But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." And he dismissed the centurion with the words: "Go thy way;

and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee." And the servant was healed as he spoke.

Soon afterwards the leaders of that generation of "the children of the kingdom" combined with the Romans and crucified the King, who died without resistance, and with a prayer to the Father for their forgiveness upon his lips. But he had forewarned them of the consequences of this filling up of the measure of their iniquity, telling of the great wrath of God that should come upon the land and city and nation, and the desolation of Jerusalem during a long "time of the Gentiles." Before the subversion of the Jewish State of those times, he caused the gospel of the kingdom to be preached "in all the world," or Roman habitable earth, to Jew and Gentile, and in the doing of this his apostles expounded to all men God's purpose in Christ concerning Israel and the nations. Beginning at Jerusalem with devout Jews out of every nation, it extended, in the hands of Peter the holder of the keys of the kingdom (the key of divine knowledge), to the household of Cornelius and onwards; and afterwards, in the hands of Paul, to the Jews and Gentiles of Europe and Asia.

Paul was especially "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God that *the offering up of the Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." In the exercise of this function he had much to say of the word of God concerning the Gentiles. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's writings reveal it. At Antioch, in Pisidia, when the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul turned to the Gentiles, quoting Isa. xlii. as the Lord's command in justification of so doing. At Lystra he rebuked the prevailing idolatry and restrained the priest of Jupiter from sacrificing to him! At Jerusalem, when the apostles came together over the matter of the Judaisers, he witnessed of God's working with him in miraculous attestation of his ministry, and, with others, took back to the churches of Asia the inspired decision of the apostles. At Phillipi, at Athens, and Corinth, and at Ephesus (to trace the progress of the Acts), he testified to the Gentiles concerning Christ, and one night when imprisoned in the Roman castle in Jerusalem, "the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem so must thou

bear witness also at ROME." And so, having appealed to Cæsar, he was taken to Rome, where he convened the chief of the Jews for the sake of "the hope of Israel."

But these rejecting the Gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, as was his wont, and a community was founded at Rome, to whom he afterwards wrote the epistle which contains so much concerning the Gentiles in their relation to the Jews and to the Law of Moses, to Abraham as the father of many nations, to Adam who was inversely a figure of Christ, and to the promised "receiving" of Israel which is to be a revelation of "life from the dead." In the tenth chapter of Romans, Paul quotes the Word of God to Moses that He would requite Israel's provoking Him to jealousy with their idols, by provoking them to jealousy by the "foolish" Gentiles. And he adds the "very bold" contrast in Isa. lxx., between disobedient Israel as the rejecters of God's long-proffered mercy, and the Gentiles who suddenly accepted His gracious invitation. In the fifteenth chapter, Paul, emphasising the matter before us in Isaiah xi., says, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, *and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy*; as it is written"—and he quotes where it is written—from the Psalms, from Moses in Deuteronomy, and from Isa. xi. "Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

The words of this quotation differ somewhat from the words of the text in the Old Testament. What is the explanation of the fact, and how does it bear upon the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures? Paul's quotation is from the Septuagint version, and as in the providence of God that version was the means of appeal to the Gentiles in the prevailing language of that day, a word or two on the subject may not be out of place.

Before the time came for the last dispersion of Israel, and the concurrent sending forth of the Gospel invitation to the Gentiles, it was necessary that there should exist a version of the Old Testament Scriptures that could be appealed to in the apostolic labours in a way that left their hearers an opportunity

of "searching the Scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts xvii.). The Jews, of course, could appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures; but the Greeks would have been at a loss apart from a version in their own tongue, unless, indeed, supernatural gifts had in every case followed the apostolic preaching. That the last supposition was not the case, the New Testament writings clearly show. How the Septuagint Version came into existence is briefly shown by the following extracts from an "Introduction" to the book that appears in Bagster's edition of the Septuagint.

"After the conquests of Alexander had brought Egypt under Macedonian rule, the newly founded city of Alexandria became especially a place where the Greek language, although by no means in its purest form, was the medium of written and spoken communication among the varied population there brought together. This Alexandrian dialect is the idiom in which the Septuagint Version was made.

"Amongst other inhabitants of Alexandria the number of Jews was considerable: many appear to have settled there even from the first founding of the city, and it became the residence of many more during the reign of the first Ptolemy. Hence the existence of the sacred books of the Jews would easily become known to the Greek population."

The account then goes on to give reasons for concluding that the translation was commenced prior to B.C. 285 and probably completed in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. The fabulous stories of the miraculous agreement of the *seventy-two* translators said to have been employed by the Egyptian King ("the King of the the South" of one of the verses of Dan. xi.) is dismissed; but the substratum of truth accepted is that "the Egyptian King procured a translation of the Jewish Scriptures," "and that it was from the Royal Library at Alexandria that the Hellenistic Jews received the copies which they used."

"The variety of the translators is proved by the unequal character of the version. Some books show that the translators were by no means competent to the task, while others, on the

contrary, exhibit on the whole a careful translation. The Pentateuch is considered to be the part the best executed, while the book of Isaiah appears to be the very worst."

"At Alexandria the Hellenistic Jews used the version, and gradually attached to it the greatest possible authority: from Alexandria it spread amongst the Jews of the dispersion, so that at the time of our Lord's birth it was the common form in which the Old Testament Scriptures had become diffused."

"The Septuagint version having been current for about three centuries before the time when the books of the New Testament were written, it is not surprising that the apostles should have used it more often than not in making citations from the Old Testament. They used it as an honestly-made version in pretty general use at the time they wrote. They did not on every occasion give an authoritative translation of each passage *de novo*, but they used what was already familiar to the ears of converted Hellenists, when it was sufficiently accurate to suit the matter in hand. In fact, they used it as did their contemporary Jewish writers, Philo and Josephus, but not, however, with the blind implicitness of the former."

"In consequence of the fact that the New Testament writers used on many occasions the Septuagint version, some have deduced a new argument for its *authority*,—a theory which we might have thought to be sufficiently disproved by the defects of the version, which evince that it is merely a human work. But the fact that the New Testament writers used this version on many occasions supplies a new proof in opposition to the idea of its *authority*, for in not a few places they do *not* follow it, but they supply a version of their own which rightly represents the Hebrew text, although contradicting the Septuagint."

"The use, however, which the writers of the New Testament have made of the Septuagint version must always invest it with a peculiar interest; we thus see what honour God may be pleased to put on an honestly-made version, since we find that inspired writers often used such a version, when it was sufficiently near the original to suit the purpose for which it was cited, instead of rendering the Hebrew text *de novo* on every occasion."

These remarks are quoted for the sake of the interesting light they throw upon the apostolic ministry to the Gentiles, and because of the reverent manner in which is exhibited the true principle of judging of the apostolic handling of the scriptures. Superficial animosity, finding variation between the Hebrew text and the apostolic quotation or allusion, cries "Discrepancy"! and, after the manner of Dean Alford on Acts vii., does not hesitate to virtually charge God with blundering and mistake! The friends of Christ approach the matter in another spirit. Their first axiom is "Let God be true;" "Thy word is perfect;" "The spirit of truth guideth into all truth." Grant that God, by the Lord Jesus, inspired and guided the apostles in their mission (and how can it be denied?), and all is plain. Their voice is the Spirit's voice. God, who spoke by the prophets and by Jesus, spoke finally by them as Jesus had promised (Matt. x. 20; Acts iv. 8). Their utterances are therefore *authoritative*.

In the passage before us (Rom. xv. 12 in connection with Isa. xi. 10), we simply conclude that for the purpose in hand Paul considered the Septuagint version sufficiently accurate: and indeed its rendering: "He that shall arise to rule over the Gentiles," is quite equivalent to the Hebrew: "Which shall stand as an ensign of the peoples." So also "In him shall the Gentiles trust," is the same idea as "To it shall the Gentiles seek." We ought surely to allow the Author's liberty of choice to the Holy Spirit, and whatever difficulties may appear, let us not charge God with error. Most difficulties can be solved; but if not, let them remain, and suspend judgment, avoiding the pitfalls into which the "wise men after the flesh" stumble to their own discomfiture.

Quoting this prophecy to the Roman believers, in illustration of the divine intention with regard to their privileged position in Christ, Paul adds: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit." After this he speaks of the ministration of the Grecian brethren to "the poor saints

at Jerusalem." and comments on the indebtedness of the Gentiles to the Jews. He desires their prayers, and, greeting many by name, with many words of approval and encouragement interspersed, concludes thus: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; but now is made manifest, *and by the scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*: To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ for ever, Amen" (Rom. xv. 25, 27).

Our time has come in the passing generations of the Gentiles, and the revealed mystery, by the Scriptures of the prophets, has become known to us, and we have so far rendered the obedience of faith as to put on Christ in baptism, and enter upon his service in hope of the rest that remaineth. "In him shall the Gentiles trust" receives an exceedingly fragmentary illustration in our day and generation; but it is a real one nevertheless, for nothing but trust in his name would induce men and women to come out from kith and kin and all that is agreeable to the flesh, and accept the inevitable scorn and humiliation that pertains to a true following of Christ, and is part of the perfecting process that prepares for the Kingdom of God. The signs are many and clear that tell us the end is near, and that the larger fulfilment of the prophecy is near, when the nations shall seek the Lord at Jerusalem in the day that he shall be exalted there.

"HIS REST SHALL BE GLORIOUS."

"His rest" is an extraordinary phrase to find applied to a son of David in prophecy. Familiarity has largely obscured the true wonder of it; and an effort has to be made to get rid of the blunting effect upon spiritual perception of the mere repetition of the familiar words. In the beginning, at the end of the creative week, "God rested on the seventh day." Parkhurst says the Hebrew word *shabath* "is opposed not to weariness, but to work or action," which, though well enough as applied

to God, does not exclude the idea that the saints will be wearied enough before they enter upon "the rest that remaineth."

Though not definitely stated in the Scriptures, it is manifest that Paul endorses the tradition that just as God employed six days in the creation of the World Adamic, and rested on the seventh; so He is employing six millenniums in the creation of the World Messianic, and will rest on the seventh, which is the day of Christ of a thousand years' duration. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul argues on this wise, and refers to "the rest (literally sabbath-rest) that remaineth to the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). He also refers to the history of the Exodus, and the rest in the land of promise under Joshua, which was a type of Christ's rest in the same land; and to the failure of the unbelievers to enter—"whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." These were an example of the many who shall be refused entrance into "his glorious rest" in the day of Christ.

Paul makes a pointed application of these things to the believers of his day: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." He justifies his future placing of the rest by reference to the ninety-fifth Psalm, in which God, "after so long a time" (that is, in David's days, about 430 years after the occupation of the land under Joshua), says to Israel, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." On this Paul argues that if Joshua had given Israel rest, God would not afterwards have spoken of another day, and concludes that there remaineth a sabbath rest for the people of God.

In view of this he exhorts, saying, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast, firm until the end." And Paul also draws attention to Jesus, saying, "He

that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his," and adds, "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." And he encourages the brethren by reminding them of the faithfulness and sympathy of the High Priest of God's providing, and warns them of the penetrating discernment of the Word and Spirit of God.

Christ's own words contain the assertion of his fulfilling the position assigned to him by the Spirit of God in the prophets as the *Giver of Rest* to Israel and the nations. On one occasion, after upbraiding Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum for the disregard of his mighty works, he thanked God that the things of the kingdom were hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes; and apostrophised his hearers in words that have echoed round the world ever since: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest*. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, *and ye shall find rest unto your souls*. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This rest is mental and moral, and belongs even to this present time of waiting for the glorious rest of the kingdom of God. The man who comes to Christ finds rest and peace in many ways even now. He is delivered from the perplexities, doubts and distresses of those "without Christ." Has he been burdened with sin and sorrow? Christ forgives him, and gives him hope and guidance unto life eternal. Has he dreaded "the great unknown" after death? Christ enlightens him: he is the Resurrection and the Life, and death but "a sleep in the dust" for a night, with his strong hand ready to wake him in the morning. Does he look abroad on the Father's works in nature—the great silent Universe, and yearn for an explanation of the state of things on earth—the reign of sin and death—the triumph of evil—wars, strifes and hatreds ever increasing? Christ is the all-sufficient answer—"the heir of all things," "the Way, the Truth and the Life," once a wearer of this poor human nature, now glorious for ever with life and blessing in his hand ready to bestow it on his people.

The most conspicuous wearers of his yoke have the most earnestly attested the truth of his apparently hard saying that it is "easy." Paul was positive of it. Truly judged—by comparison with the yoke and burden of sin, we can see it is really so. Give a sinner long life, unclouded success, vast inheritance—everything but Christ; and the final verdict must be "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" And it is not only the final verdict. Where is the "rest" all the time of the vain march to the grave? There is none and can be none: we were made by God, for God, and apart from God there is no rest or peace for the sons of men. Universal human experience altogether belies the practically universal human denial of this truth.

But come to the end of the matter with Christ, and rest of mind in mortal pilgrimage culminates in the perfection of physical, mental and moral rest, satisfaction and glory in the kingdom of God. A great gathering of the labourers of all past generations is the sublime crisis toward which the world is hastening. This will be truly "glorious" as the prophet foretold, a consummation worthy of the Great Creator, and providing, as it were, a living record of His dealings with mankind in all their generations. If this end were always in view, and "the great cloud of witnesses," we should never falter nor fail. And the word of God is able to keep it in view.

The Revised Version would render the line in Isa. xi. "His resting place shall be glorious." This is truly so: "the glory of the celestial body" has fit topographical setting in the glory of Jerusalem in the age to come. The sixteenth chapter of Isaiah is the vision of it—Zion glorified by the presence of the Lord and the saints, the wealth of the Gentiles, the beauty of mountain, forest and stream, and the expurgation of every form of defilement. God, who appointed the city to desolation that it should become, as it has, a proverb and an astonishment, has appointed it for a praise in the earth in the latter days, and the desolation is but the earnest of the glory; and the more so as the tide is on the turn, and "Zionism" sounds the first note heralding the dawn of "Zion's glad morning." We labour, as it were, late on the sixth day. The Sabbath of rest is at hand, and it will be glorious for those who hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.

The typical rest of Israel in the Promised Land under Joshua was not reached without a final time of trouble and war. The glory of Solomon's peaceful reign only succeeded the sufferings, wars and victories of David, which were celebrated by him in songs of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance. So Christ's "glorious rest" is only reached after war and conquest on a scale far exceeding these actions of ancient times. Isaiah, in common with the other prophets, presents this picture, as also does the later revelation of the Lord Jesus himself.

"The earth abideth for ever." The everlasting hills are with us, and the countries that saw the mighty works of old, and are studded with the monuments of them, are to witness the revival of God's work in the latter days. And though times and generations change; Israel is with us, ready to participate in these world-changing developments, but faithless of the wonder that is about to happen to the nation, when, by the hands of Jesus, Joshua, David, Isaiah, and the "ancients of Israel" in general, will come forth as the heads of the revived nation to subdue all enemies, and plant Israel victoriously in the Land of Promise to the glory of Yahweh's name.

THE SECOND EXODUS.

History repeats itself, it is said, and certain it is that by the will of God Jewish history is to repeat itself, with variations that will redound to His ever increasing glory upon earth. The Exodus from Egypt in the days of Moses, and the return from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, are both divinely before us in this prophecy as illustrations of what God intends to do with Israel in the latter days. The Exodus was, of course, a matter of national history in Isaiah's day; but the Babylonian captivity was yet in the future; as also, but less remotely, was the Assyrian captivity of the ten tribes, which Isaiah now foretold (viii. 1, &c.) But the spirit of God, speaking of the recovery of Israel "*a second time*," included "Assyria" and "Shinar" among the countries of their dispersion, in harmony with the history that was to come.

Looking back upon the Exodus and the return from Babylon, we discern many beautiful analogies, which the gospel

of the Kingdom of God enables us to apply as light upon our future.

In the case of THE EXODUS, the time specified by God to Abraham was expiring, and a deliverer was provided by a birth of water as it were, and after training, was rejected by Israel, and kept in hiding in a far country till an appointed crisis for his revelation. The people multiplied and waxed more and mightier than the Egyptians. This was met by oppression and the cruel decree of Pharaoh against the male children. In Moses' case the decree was not only circumvented by God; but was made actively operative against Pharaoh in his own court, through his daughter's pity for the child who was afterwards to be the ruin of Egypt. After the long time in "a far country," Moses is divinely sent back to Egypt to deliver Israel. Aaron in Egypt is sent to meet him: "The Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him." Then came the gathering of the elders of the people, and the doing of the signs. Afterwards came the demand on Pharaoh, and his indignant refusal to recognise Yahweh or let Israel go. The plagues followed, and the exposure and judgment of the gods of Egypt. The slaying of the firstborn was the last stroke threatened. Before it came the Passover was instituted and the beginning of the year changed. Then came the judgment of that awful night, when by one final blow there was brought right home into the heart of every individual in Egypt the conviction that Yahweh alone was God in all Egypt, and that He was with Israel and against Egypt, with all-seeing scrutiny and almighty power.

The consecration of Israel's firstborn followed, and then came the flight, the pas-age of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts, and the fervent song of Moses and Israel on the further shore. Afterwards came the 40 years' sojourn in the Wilderness, embracing the giving of the law by the disposition of angels, the making of the tabernacle, the manna, the murmurings, the rebellions, the gradual purging out of all the rebels, and at

length the settlement in the land under Joshua of a tried and purified remnant which swept the land of the ripened iniquity of the Amorites and others, and took their place.

Somewhat analogous, though less dramatically striking, is THE RETURN FROM BABYLON. Again there is an appointed time; and as with Moses, so with Daniel, it is more or less accurately discerned from the revealed counsel of God, and prayers and confessions and yearnings ascend to Him in consequence, in the face of life-threatening difficulties. An Ezra and a Nehemiah stand ready, as Moses stood. Decrees of kings are overruled by God as in the days of Pharaoh. Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes lend themselves to His purpose according to His will. There is the restoration of sacred vessels, the return of priests, the divinely-defended march from Ahava river to Jerusalem, the setting up of the altar, the laying of the foundations of the temple, amidst a strange mixture of joy and mourning that will find no place in the antitype. There is the hindering of the jealous neighbours and enemies, whose rejected appeal, "Let us build with you," stirs up all their animosity. There is the expostulation and encouragement of the faithful prophets (Haggai and Zechariah), who speak of times then present, and future glory then far remote. There is the subverting of the machination of the enemies by the divinely controlled favourable decree of Darius. And finally the cleansing of Israel by a drastic process of separation from strange wives—a lesson for all time, for the most part little heeded.

When God says He will set His hand "*a second time*" to recover Israel from these and other countries, He expects us to be informed concerning what He did at the first; lacking which, our ears will be dull of hearing, and our eyes closed, as it was with Israel of old to His displeasure.

Those then, who would understand and prepare for a part in the great and terrible and glorious work of Christ that is to come, must study the divine records of the work of God in the past, in the spirit of Psalm cv., "O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name, let the heart.

of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders and the judgments of his mouth, O ye seed of Abraham, his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen." "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed," says an apostle. Therefore the foregoing applies to Gentile converts of the latter days.

"It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, *from Assyria and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.* And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. xi. 11). In the countries named there will be accomplished "in that day," by the hands of "the root of Jesse," the "prophet" of whom Moses spoke, the antitypical "Joshua" of whom Zechariah testified, a work like that which, in the same countries, was performed by God through these "men of sign" of old. The analogy is expressed not only in this chapter xi. of Isaiah, but in other places as well, as Micah vii., Psa. lxviii., &c., and is striking and obvious to those enlightened in the truth.

The times of the Gentiles are running out, and there is expectation of deliverance for Israel "in the air," both spiritual and national. Christ is the Moses of the situation, who came "not by water only, but by water and blood." He is away in the "far country," and Israel groans in the modern house of bondage of "the north country," where oppressive decrees and periodical massacres make life intolerable. The saints, like Aaron, are expecting the command, "Go into the wilderness to meet (the prophet like unto) Moses"—"at the mount of God." And those who are faithful, like Aaron, will be "glad in their hearts." The antitypical Moses will show his brethren God's power, to the extent of swallowing up their mortality in life in the twinkling of an eye, and will make known to them his counsels of war, and formulate his demands upon the courts of the powers that be.

Refusal and plagues will follow, and the war of the great day of God Almighty, and at last, out of the chaos of destruction, will arise, as out of primeval darkness, the new and beautiful order of the day of Christ. A new era will dawn upon the troubled world, and the Passover be celebrated afresh in the Kingdom of God.

Meanwhile, taking a view of the countries named, we perceive Israel still preserved, but in dispersion in all these districts: a monument to the truth of God ("my witnesses," He calls them), and an earnest of the blessedness that is to come.

"FROM ASSYRIA."—Concurrently with the increasingly virulent attacks of scepticism on the Bible, an increasingly strong defence of "the impregnable rock" has accumulated during the last half-century, which owes a good deal to Assyrian and Babylonian exploration. Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser, Shalmanezer, Sargon, Sennacherib, and others have come to light and are now in the British Museum. They of course agree with the Scriptures, and even mention some of the kings, as Jehu, King of Israel, and Manasseh, King of Judah. One of the most recent ethnological notes, speaking of the Assyrians as pure Semites, as manifest from Genesis (x. 22), and the native inscriptions, adds: "Their descendants, the 'Chaldeans' of the mountains near Mosul, still speak a corrupt Aramean dialect, and have features closely resembling those of the Hebrews." Current estimates place the number of Jewish in Turkey in Asia at 150,000, of whom many are doubtless located in the regions of ancient Assyria.

"FROM EGYPT."—Although it is evident that nothing like the ancient sojourning in Egypt now obtains in that country, yet there are some 8,000 Jews there, and their number steadily increases with the rising prosperity of the country under British administration. But before the second exodus they will be brought there in full force as in the days of old.

"PATHROS."—This was the name of Upper Egypt, as distinguished from *Mazor*, Lower Egypt, and *Mitzraim*, including both. It was here that the disobedient remnant of Judah settled in Jeremiah's days; after disobeying the word of God which He

spoke to them. Here they persisted in serving "the Queen of Heaven," ascribing their misfortunes to their previous neglect of that worship; an inversion of facts that involved them in ruin with the country of their choice, for God gave Pharaoh Hophra into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, as He had previously given Zedekiah, King of Judah. In the resurrection Jeremiah will be familiar with Pathros, and his dealings with Israel in the days of the second exodus will be of a very different character from the galling encounters of the days of his flesh.

"CUSH."—The first mention of this name in the Bible is in Gen. ii. 13, where it defines the whole land compassed by the river Gihon, the second branch of the river of Eden. Cush was the son of Ham, and though his son Nimrod made a great name in eastern "Babel," the descendants of Cush mostly occupied Ethiopia, or Abyssinia. "Ethiopia" is the term used to represent Cush in the English Bible; but this leads to confusion in Gen. ii. 13, where the retaining of the original name leaves all clear. Cush in Isaiah xi. 11 is in association with Egypt and Pathros, and is doubtless rightly referable to Ethiopia. Menelik of Abyssinia delights to style himself "King of the Kings of Ethiopia" (or Cush, which means *black*), and it is interesting to learn that there are in his dominions some 50,000 Jews, known as Fellashas, of whom, of course, the world is destined to hear more. In passing, it may be remarked that Isaiah's description of our own "land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (Cush)" (ch. xviii.), fits the geography of the case both East and West, for British power is found in its Indian Empire beyond the Euphratean districts, and recent developments have consolidated it also upon and beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.

"ELAM" is Persia, speaking roughly, and took its name from Shem's son Elam. It is associated with Media in Isaiah's prophecy against Babylon (xxi. 2), and was the country of Chedarlaomer, whose confederacy was defeated by Abraham and himself slain. It was after this exploit that Melchizedek, king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God, brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham on his return. Abraham will know all about Elam in the regeneration, when the antitypical Mel-

chizedek reigns in Salem, and ministers bread and wine in blessing to his conquering heroes. There are 30,000 Jews, according to current estimate, in Persia, where, in the lands of Semitic origin and ancient settlement, they are better treated than among the Japhetic barbarians of the North quarters.

“SHINAR” is Babylonia proper, the territory of the kingdom of Nimrod, the mighty hunter of men and beasts before the Lord. It is the land of Babel, where “the children of men” built the tower, and the Lord confounded human language and scattered them; the land in which the Lord’s nation was captivated for its sins, and the vessels of His temple desecrated in the house of the god of Babylon. It is the land whose chief city, as a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, made nations drunk and mad (Jer. li. 7). Spiritually, its extent stretches far beyond the Euphratean country of Nimrod’s kingdom. As, by the decree of a Roman Emperor, the city Rome was considered and declared to be co-extensive with the Empire, so Babylon, giving its name to that same city, by reason of its spiritual parentage and family likeness, comes before as the designation of an enormous system ramifying into all the earth; and “*the land of Shinar*,” therefore, stands for all the territory of the enemy, where Israel is hunted and captivated for their sins, and the saints, who are Jews inwardly, have in past times shared the experiences of Daniel and his companions as far as concerns wild beasts and fire. The vision of Zech. v. gives us this idea of “Shinar” as Dr. Thomas has scripturally demonstrated (Eureka i. p. 72). The house of the wicked woman there described, was to be built in *the land of Shinar*, and established and “set there upon her own base.” “Her own base” is a ricketty foundation. God’s rock foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. iii.), and individuals and communities are built upon him who hear his sayings and do them (Matt. vii. 24). No other “house” will stand. Babylon is condemned beforehand in the Revelation, and the prophets and apostles are to rejoice over her downfall. In Isaiah xi. “from Shinar” suggests this secondary and antitypical view of a feature in the second exodus. Of the number of Jews in the territory

of ancient Shinar we know little, but the spiritual extension of the territory necessitates the taking in of nearly all the world; and the present estimation of the world's Jewish population is from ten to eleven millions, whose rising watchword is ZION *versus* BABEL, IMMANUEL'S LAND *versus* SHINAR.

"HAMATH" was a city and district of Upper Syria, the northern boundary of the land as appointed by God, both past and future (Num. xxxiv. and Ezek. xlvi.). It is at present, of course, included in the Asiatic part of the Turkish Empire, in which as a whole the Jews are numbered at 150,000.

"THE ISLANDS OF THE SEA" comprehended at first mainly those of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean, one of the chiefest of which (Cyprus) is now being spoken of as a "side door" to Palestine in the colonisation movements of Zionism. But wherever there are islands there are Jews, so complete is the dispersion which God foretold. In "the remote islands of the Northern Seas," as Dr. Thomas described Great Britain and Ireland from a Jerusalem standpoint, the Jews have found more toleration and comfort in the latter days than in any other land of the Gentiles. The Jewish Scriptures have taken hold on these people more than on others, and this, humanly speaking, is perhaps an element in the explanation of the phenomenon. The hold is slight enough truly, but even a traditional veneration for God and His holy word in the days and hands of Cromwell, led to a befriending of the Jews in this country which has progressed from that day to this, and has not been marred by anti-semitic outbreaks such as disgrace the continent of Europe.

In all the countries of this divine enumeration Israel remains in dispersion, and in more or less antitypical Egyptian and Babylonian conditions, such as were specified to obtain in the latter days. It is noteworthy that here and in other prophecies the uniting of the severed kingdoms of Israel and Judah is specially emphasised. A fantastic theory (Anglo-Israelism), that obtained considerable currency some years ago, and is not yet entirely extinct, has, while in a rude manner drawing attention to the prophets, quite obscured this fact.

Anxious to identify Britain with "the lost ten tribes," it has glorified "Ephraim" to the point of almost totally eclipsing Judah, though it is undeniably plain that to Judah the royalty belongs. It would be vain to follow its benighted ramblings; but occasion may be taken of noting afresh the uniform declaration of God by the prophets that the division of Israel is to be healed not by British ascendancy indeed, though that has its place in the work, but by divine power in the hands of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Isaiah, who here speaks of the reuniting of Israel and Judah, was a witness of the "envy" between the two kingdoms, and the "vexing" wars that threatened the stability of the Davidic covenant. Jeremiah spoke in similar strain (iii. 18), "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the North to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers." Ezekiel, with his symbolic sticks labelled Judah and Ephraim, which he joined together and made one in his hand (xxxvii.) graphically represented to the captivity the unification of the nation in the hands of the Son of David. And other illustrations might be given.

How deeply interesting and impressive is the spectacle of the first breath of national and political life stirring the dry bones of Israel. This "unification of the nation," though, of course, without the faintest reference to the "Son of David," much less to "Jesus of Nazareth," is the spirit of the Jewish movement in these latter days. In the book that started Zionism: "*A Jewish State*," by Dr. Herzl, he speaks with an insight, earnestness, and emphasis that are almost prophetic. He was doubtless an instrument in God's hands, though he did not discern the true nature of the mighty work to which he stood related. He says, when rehearsing the phases of Anti-Semitism:—

"We are a people—ONE PEOPLE."

"We have honestly endeavoured everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities, and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. *It has not been permitted to us.* In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and

property as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers."

Again, discussing the effects of Anti-Semitism, Dr. Herzl says:—

"We are one people—our enemies have made us one in our despite, as repeatedly happens in history. Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a State, and a model State. We possess all human and material resources necessary for the purpose."

These things are so: the scattered elements of the nation are there, and ready, and it needs only the divine Architect to "restore again the Kingdom of Israel." But the nation will not become "one nation" until the Lord brings it about; but here is the first blush of the thing visibly before us. These things were written in 1896. In the following year the first Zionist Congress was held at Basle, and for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem the *national* voice of Israel fell upon the ears of an astonished world. It portends the return of Christ and the setting up of "the ensign," round whom, after centuries of alienation and suffering, the rescued tribes of Israel will at last rally.

Details of the restoration of Israel are scattered up and down the prophetic scriptures like parts of a dissected picture, for the exercise of the senses of those to whom the "hope of Israel" should come, whether of Jewish or Gentile extraction. Micah, who was contemporary with Isaiah, speaks as he does of the world-astonishing marvels of the second exodus (vii. 15). So also does Zechariah (x. 9-12). Various details are seen in vision by various prophets, and putting them all together in their proper places, we arrive at a more or less complete vision of the whole, in proportion to our skill in the placing of the disjointed parts. In this synthetical work, so far as we are aware, nothing has excelled, if indeed anything has equalled, the labours of Dr. Thomas in his books *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka*.

It will be found upon study that the work of restoration is as deliberate and well marked a matter as the process of disintegration and scattering. Just as there was a time in which the nation of Israel was split into the rival kingdoms of Ephraim and Judah; there will be a time, in the days of the greater than Solomon, in which they will be joyously re-united. Isaiah's prophecy of this came at a time when the enmity between the two kingdoms was at its height, and when the faithful remnant in Israel needed some encouragement concerning "the sure mercies of David," because of the threatening overwhelming of his throne and kingdom at the hands of Ephraim and Syria. It was glad tidings for the prophet to say: "The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them."

The Philistines, Edom, Moab, and Ammon figure in Bible history only as Israel's more or less successful enemies; and it is certain that nothing like the state of affairs depicted by Isaiah (xi. 14) has ever been seen from that day to this. Those who deny the restoration of Israel and declare that these ancient territories will never be subject to his dominion, deny the truth, and in effect, as the apostle says, "make God a liar." This is the position of Christendom as a whole, though many, by reason of the striking Jewish developments current, are more or less disposed to admit portions of the truth. But where, in the preaching of churches and chapels, is it put forth as the express function of the Lord Jesus "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the desolations of Israel?" Yet in Isaiah xlix. it is said of him that Yahweh formed him from the womb to be His servant, "to bring Jacob again to him." It belongs to the latter-day revival of the truth to exalt the matter to its true place, whence by Gentile complacency and perversity it has been dethroned; and to emphasise the fact that the Gentile contingent of Christ's people are but the slip of the wild olive, grafted

contrary to nature upon the good olive tree of Israel, where they stand only by faith (Rom. xi.).

In the fall of Israel the initiative was taken by Ephraim, whose kingdom was founded from the first upon apostacy from God in the hands of "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Ephraim came to an end in the days of Hezekiah. Their evil example was followed by Judah, and the prophets protested against it, especially Ezekiel, but without avail; and Judah's captivity followed in the days of Zedekiah. Judah, returning from the Babylonian captivity, in a future generation filled up the cup of their iniquity in the rejection of Jesus, who became to them "a gin and a snare," and they were afterwards overthrown and scattered as they remain at this day. But Jesus was not known to the "*diaspora*." When he spoke of going unto the Father the Jews said: "Whither will he go that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the *dispersed* among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" But as he is to be "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to *both* the houses of Israel" (Is. viii. 14), Ephraim must yet get to know him.

Whatever scraps of information may have distilled through missionaries among scattered Jewish peoples in Gentile lands, they relate to quite "another Jesus," than he of apostolic testimony; and the knowledge that the ten tribes are to come to is of a very different character from these hazy dreams. The revelation of Joseph to his brethren is the type of the future manifestation, and the order is, "the tents of Judah first;" just as David was first made king over Judah in Hebron. The same kind of order is suggested by the events of the Exodus. First the manifestation of the rejected Moses to Aaron and the elders of Israel, and afterwards to all the people, followed by the divine demands on Pharaoh.

In the antitype the Lord Jesus, the rejected ruler and deliverer of Israel, returns as a nobleman from a far country whither he had been "to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Luke xix.). He comes after long absence—"After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them" (Matt. xxv.). The time of his coming is that of the

sixth vial of Apocalyptic revelation when the symbolic Euphrates is drying up, and the frog-demons are provoking the kings of the earth to war. His first work is "reckoning with those servants" — the judgment of his household, which implies the resurrection of the dead. This is introduced in the parable of the ten virgins in the same chapter, Matt. xxv., and is the subject of plainer speech el-ewhere both by Jesus and the apostles and prophets. Apart from this rising up of the spirit's "dead body" (Is. xxvi.), there could be no "perfect man" in manifestation as the multitudinous Christ—no "ensign of the people" on the mountains of Israel, and no restoration of Israel such as the gospel of the kingdom of God promises. Christendom does not believe this; but would gladly omit resurrection and judgment altogether.

The first work of Christ, however, will take Christendom by surprise as completely as it will Israel, and will result at last in the discernment "between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. iii.). The details of the judgment are revealed in various phases. Although Omnipotence and omniscience are with the Judge and his angelic retinue, it is evident that it will be a work of time—though as to how long we cannot speculate with profit. It is revealed that acceptance by the Lord is followed by change of this body of our humiliation into the divine nature in a moment at the appointed time; and that rejection by him is followed by weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and excommunication from the camp of the saints into that of "the devil and his angels," there to await the "everlasting fire" prepared for their consumption.

The locality of the judgment-seat of Christ is revealed to be in the lands that witnessed the mighty revelations of God to Israel of old. Christendom has no idea of this; but consigns the whole inheritance of Christ and the saints to a fiery destruction at some perpetually receding "last day" of its benighted speculations. The truth delivers people from this, giving them to understand that God proposes to put things right upon earth where they have gone wrong, to regather the nation of His

choice to the land whence He scattered them for their sins, and to reveal Himself in glory through the prophet like unto Moses to the resurrected "ancients of Israel," in the place where He at the first revealed Himself to Moses, who was "faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." When Elijah fled from the wrath of Jezebel he instinctively came to this locality—"unto Horeb the mount of God" (1 Kings xix. 8). Elijah with Moses upon the mount of transfiguration spoke of Christ's "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." And Elijah with Moses will have to do again with "Horeb the Mount of God" in the days of the second exodus. The sixty-eighth Psalm, which speaks of that exodus (verse 22), and which speaks also of the resurrection and victorious ascension of Christ (verse 18 with Eph. iv. 8), locates the future manifestation of God in Sinai (verse 17). The italics in the Authorized Version are unauthorized and misleading. The margin of the R.V. lets a little light in, though not much. It is beautiful and fitting that in the place where Moses received of Israel offerings of the willing-hearted for the "worldly sanctuary," there the Lord Jesus should receive his own willing-hearted "that the Lord God might dwell in them" (Psa. lxxviii. 18; Eph. ii. 22).

Accompanied by this glorious multitude, he goes forth from the land of the South on the work of conquest and national reconstruction of Israel that this psalm and the prophets in various places describe. He comes into his land and discovers a defenceless remnant of his nation that have been made a prey by the King of the North, who has taken Jerusalem, and doubtless supposes that his old dream of Universal Empire is at length about to be realised. He is terribly undeceived by the outburst of divine judgments depicted in Ezekiel xxxviii., xxxix., and elsewhere, in which, as in Joshua's time, the confederacy of the North is overwhelmed in destruction. The result of this marvellous and unexpected deliverance of the land and city is to reveal to the astonished remnant in the land that "Jesus of Nazareth is He:" and, as the result of beholding his

wounded hands, they perceive that he whom their fathers sold and put to death, is indeed the Messiah. As with Joseph's brethren of old, so with these—fear, shame, and penitence take hold of them—"the spirit of grace and of supplication" takes the place of the spirit of rebellion which for so many centuries took the form of the "message sent after him"—"We will not have this man to reign over us."

Judah and Jerusalem being thus delivered, the proclamation is sent forth to the nations to submit to God's king enthroned in Zion (Psa. ii.; Rev, xiv.). The bulk of Israel is still scattered among the nations—north, south, east and west. They are commanded to "give up" to "keep not back," as was Pharaoh of old (Isa. xliii. 6). They refuse, and the war is carried into their countries, and nations and kingdoms are broken to pieces by God, with Israel as His "battle-axe and weapons of war" (Jer. li.). It is little dreamt of by the nations among whom the ten or eleven millions of Jews are scattered, that this is the relation of the ancient people to God and towards them! It is in the course of these developments that they are brought again into Egypt, and disciplined in the wilderness as were their fathers, with the like result of purging out the rebels from among them and providing a purified and humbled generation that shall worthily occupy the Land of Israel as "a righteous nation," under Messiah and the saints, who are themselves in a higher sense, "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" (Isa. xxvi. 2). This leading of Israel through the wilderness as in the days of old is plainly prophesied by Ezekiel (ch. xx.), since whose days no such movement has taken place. His contemporaries did not believe it, any more than ours do. He complained: "Ah, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" In a sense our contemporaries are less excusable than they, for so much more of Ezekiel's prophecy is now history. We witness the latter-day colonization movement of which he spoke (ch. xxxviii.), and the second exodus "by the same word" is sure to be witnessed presently.

The prophecy of Isaiah concerning the rise and triumph of Immanuel which concludes in his twelfth chapter, necessarily

touches but briefly the outlines of these great developments. He says in the conclusion of the eleventh chapter, "The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." From this prophecy it has been supposed by some that it is God's intention to close the waterway between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea; and from other scriptures it has been supposed that Jerusalem itself would be approachable by water from the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

But these suppositions are unwarranted. The purpose of smiting the sea and the river is to "make men go over dry shod" as in the Exodus. Zechariah (ch. x. 11) repeats the prophecy, saying, "He shall pass through the sea with affliction and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away." Here there appears to be a blending of the literal and figurative, as also in Isaiah xi. The sea of Egypt and the Nile and the Euphrates have all been literally manipulated in the divine purpose in the past, and will be so again. But they also stand as symbols of the Egyptian and Assyrian powers. In this particular prophecy (Isa. viii. 1), "The waters of the river strong and many" are the symbol of "the king of Assyria and all his glory." And in Rev. xvi. the drying up of the Euphratean waters is the symbol of the decline of the Turkish Power for the preparation of "the way of the kings of the east."

So there are physical and political miracles in store for these ancient countries, and new literal and figurative highways will be opened in consequence. There has been a dead block for a long time, territorially, politically, and religiously; but the coming of Immanuel will change it all. Great international routes of pilgrimage to Jerusalem will be opened up as the result of his victories (Isa. xix. 22-25; Zech. xiv. 16). And the voice of thanksgiving and melody will resound in Zion, because God's salvation is known in her in all the earth.



CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLY ONE IN ZION.

IT was probably to this prophecy of Isa xii. that Jesus referred when he spoke to the woman of Samaria of the "living water," which, said he, shall be to him that drinks it, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). To this also he appears to have referred on the last day of the feast of tabernacles in Jerusalem (John vii. 37-39). The Jews had a custom of drawing water from the pool of Siloam, and pouring it mixed with wine upon the sacrifice on the altar. The rejoicings on these occasions were so enthusiastic that they became proverbial, so that it was said: "He that never saw the rejoicing of drawing of water, never saw rejoicing in all his life." The Jews grounded the custom on Isaiah xii., and while, like their ancestors (Isa. viii. 6), "refusing the waters of Shiloah," made ritual use of the literal waters with great external show. So "in the last day of the feast Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this," says John, "he spake of the spirit which they that believe on him should receive."

This twelfth chapter in effect shows them in this exalted position. Zion praises God because His anger is turned away and He comforts her. The prophet declares "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for Yah, Yahweh is my strength and my song, he also *is become my salvation*. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." When Yahweh is become Isaiah's salvation, it will mean that all who have "thirsted" for that salvation are satisfied by Immanuel with that "living water" of which he spoke. Those

who received the spirit in the days of their flesh, and testified of him, having tasted of the powers of the age to come, will then receive it above measure; for he says, "that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

"In that day," the prophecy continues, "shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord for He hath done excellent things, this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout thou inhabitant of Zion; for GREAT IS THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL IN THE MIDST OF THEE."

Thus ends the section (chs. vii.-xii.) that has been called "the book of Immanuel." It begins with the spectacle of an idolatrous king (Ahaz) on David's throne in Zion, and ends with the Holy One of Israel enthroned there in glory. It opens with an Ephraimite and Syrian confederacy to upset the "everlasting covenant," and subvert the chosen dynasty; and ends, after the lapse of many centuries, with "the sure mercies of David" triumphantly revealed.

The promise of Immanuel to the house of David at such a crisis was opportune, and the initial fulfilment of it has been before the world for nineteen centuries. Judgment has come upon Judah and upon Assyria as the prophet foresaw, and yet a remnant has been preserved in Israel—separated as the prophet himself was. Immanuel has been revealed as a Sanctuary; but as a gin and a snare to Judah and Jerusalem. God still hides His face for a little while longer from the house of Jacob; but a remnant still waits expectantly for the turning away of His anger. In this attitude they hold on to the law and the testimony as the prophet did, and are not slow to expose the darkness of those who do otherwise.

The land is still desolate; but many centuries ago that "great light" arose in Galilee of the nations, and the dawn of "his day" is now almost breaking; when "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." The crash of arms still resounds through the world; but beyond the further turmoil of the "war of the great day of God Almighty,"

his people confidently look to him as "Prince of Peace." The "briers and thorns" of Israel have been consumed by successive judgments of devouring fire; but Israel has not ceased from being a nation before God; and the days of restoration and of the second exodus manifestly draw near.

Zion still sits in widowhood, and still further desolation by the word of God awaits her; but "Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning" may almost be said to have become a national refrain in these last days; and certainly among those of her children in the isles of the Gentiles the hope grows brighter and brighter, as with fear and trembling they seek to work out their salvation that they may be accounted worthy of a place under the Holy One of Israel in the midst of her.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON.

“**T**HE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the Son of Amoz did see.” So run the first words of this thirteenth chapter.

The introduction of Babylon immediately after the vision of the glorious and final triumph of Zion, is a great and effective contrast. Zion and Babylon are thus before us throughout the Scriptures; even the closing visions of the Book of Revelation giving us the picture of the Lamb upon Mount Zion, surrounded by the hundred and forty-four thousand, and immediately afterwards that of the downfall and utter obliteration of “Babylon the Great.” Rightly to understand and appreciate this divinely expressed relation of things, we must have clear perceptions of the beginning and characteristics of Babylon, as representing the head and front of human antagonism to the divine purpose—which human antagonism, however, God has used for the furtherance of that purpose, making even the wrath of man to praise Him, as the prophets declare.

The prophets have much to say concerning Babylon, and it will be convenient to consider their sayings collectively; but first we look back to the beginning, and notice what the book of Genesis has to tell us of the origin and characteristics of Babylon and the Land of Shinar. All human history, from the Garden of Eden to this day, is but an exhibition of the great strife going on between the two seeds, by reason of the enmity which God put between them at the beginning (Gen. iii. 15). The seed of the woman *versus* the seed of the serpent has been the order of the day from that time to the present.

As if to preserve the memory of this, the serpent figures in the monumental inscriptions of the most ancient times. The seed of the serpent deified the serpent. Among the people of God the emblem had a place, but it was the place of crucifixion, first represented in Israel by the serpent of brass hung on a pole.

The first phase of the struggle between the two seeds was closed by the deluge, and a new departure was divinely made with the family of Noah. A generation or two from Noah brings us to the founding of Babylon. Noah, Ham, Cush, Nimrod—that is the line of descent; and in Gen. x. 8, we read: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh in the Land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh,” &c. The eleventh chapter of Genesis opens with the account of the Tower of Babel, and closes with the exodus of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees.

“A plain in the land of Shinar” was the site selected by the remnant of human kind, on which to erect the metropolis of the world, and the colossal tower that should be seen from afar as the landmark of their capital. The ruined monuments of this enterprise are still visible, and a not less wonderful monument is the confusion of tongues that exists to this day as the consequence of what God did at Babel some two thousand years before Christ. The design of the Babel builders was centralization, and the establishment of a great dominion for their own and their posterity’s gratification, in apostacy from “the way” of God. The design of God, in opposition to this, was that the seed of the serpent should be employed in subduing the earth, and getting it ready to its utmost bounds for transfer to the seed of the woman (Christ and his people), in whose hands God proposed to establish His everlasting kingdom, for their salvation, and the blessing of all nations.

The ministry of the prophets is throughout subordinate to the details of this mighty work, that has its roots in the exodus of Abram from the land of the Chaldees, and its final fruit in the blessing of all nations in Abraham's seed. The necessary scattering of the concentrating human forces in the land of Shinar was accomplished by the marvel of confounding human speech, and "Babel," or its Greek version, Babylon, (that is Confusion), is the memorial of it to this day. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound (*balal*) the language of all the earth, and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. xi. 9). On this verb, *balal*, Davidson says it means (1) to suffuse, (2) to mingle, mix, confound, as Hos. vii. 8. Of Babel, he says: "*Babel* (for *Balbel*, confusion), *Babylon*; also used for the *Kingdom of Babylon*." We notice this because of learned attempts to substitute another derivation and meaning in opposition to the explicit statement of Genesis xi. Babylon then, from its very foundation, comes before us as the symbol of antagonism, apostacy, confusion and scattering.

A few traces in the Book of Genesis are enlightening concerning the relation of Babylon and its peoples to the people of God. After the account of the migration of Abram, the next glimpse we get is in Gen. xiv., where Amraphel, King of Shinar, is among the kings who, under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, made successful war upon the cities of the plain, and carried off Lot among the captives. Abraham, with a handful of armed servants, pursued the returning army and defeated them, recapturing Lot and his family, and returning in peace to be blessed at Salem by Melchizedek, and to give him tithes of all.

After these things, there arose for a moment the question of the suitability or otherwise of a Chaldean matrimonial alliance for Abraham's son Isaac (Gen. xxiv. 4). The faithful Eliezer contemplated the possibility of failure in his mission to Haran to procure a wife for his master's son. "Perad-

venture the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land; must I needs bring thy son again unto (Ur of the Chaldees) the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, *Beware that thou bring not my son thither again.*" And he absolved his servant from all responsibility if the woman of his search should refuse to come; but under no circumstances was Isaac to be brought back to Chaldea. As to Abraham, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. . . . If they had been mindful of that country whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he is preparing for them a city" (Heb. xi.). This is Paul's comment on the matter. We must not be tempted aside to the application of these things, beyond the passing remark that Chaldean or Babylonian matrimonial alliances are still fenced with a "BEWARE" to the faithful sons and daughters of Abraham.

In the Scriptures we lose sight of Babylon from the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, until much later times—some eight or nine hundred years afterwards. Some outlines of its history it will be profitable to pass under review. The following is extracted from the article "BABYLON," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Babylon (the modern *Hillah*) is the Greek form of Babel or Bab-ili, "the gate of God" (or, as it is sometimes written, "of the gods"). . . . It is doubtful whether the god meant was Merodach or Anu, Merodach being the patron divinity of Babylon in the Semitic period, and Su-Anna, "the valley of Anu" (Anammelech), being one of its oldest names . . . Babylon figures in the antediluvian history of Berosus, the first of his mythical monarchs, Alorus, being a native of it. The national epic of the Babylonians, which grouped various old myths around the adventures of a solar hero, knows of four cities only—Babylon, Erech, Nipur (Niffer), or Calneh, and Surripac or Larankha; and according to Gen. x., Babylon was

a member of the tetrapolis of Shinar or Sumir, where the Semite invaders of the Accadians first obtained permanent settlement and power. It seems, however, to have ranked below its three sister cities, among which Erech took the lead until conquered by the Accadian sovereigns of Ur.

It was not until the conquest of Khammuragas that Babylon became a capital, a position, however, which it never afterwards lost, except during the Assyrian supremacy. But it suffered severely at the hands of its northern neighbours. Tiglath Adar drove the Cassi from it, and established an Assyrian dynasty in their place, and after being captured by Tiglath Pileser I. (1130 B.C.) and Shalmaneser (851 B.C.), it became a dependency of the Assyrian Empire in the reign of the son of the latter. The decline of the first Assyrian Empire restored Babylon to independence; but it had soon afterwards to submit to the Caldai, and from the reign of Tiglath Pileser II. to the death of Assur-bani-pal, it was a mere provincial town of Assyria, breaking now and then into fierce revolt under the leadership of the Caldai and repeatedly taken and plundered by Sargon, Sennacherib, and Assur-bani-pal. Sennacherib indeed rased the city to its foundations. After the defeat of Suzub (690 B.C.) he tells us that he "pulled down, dug up, and burned with fire the town and the palaces, root and branch, destroyed the fortress and the double wall, the temples of the gods and the towers of brick, and threw the rubbish into the Araxes," the river of Babylon.

It was under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors that Babylon became the huge metropolis whose ruins still astonish the traveller, and which was described by Greek writers. Of the older city we can know but little. The Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar and his father, Nabopolassar, must have suffered when taken by Cyrus, but two sieges in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, and one in the reign of Xerxes, brought about the destruction of the defences, while the monotheistic rule of Persia allowed the temples to fall into decay. Alexander found the great temple of Bel a shapeless ruin, and the rise of Selucia in its neighbourhood drew away its population and completed its

material decay. The buildings became a quarry, first for Selucia, and then for Ctesiphon, Al Modain, Baghdad, Kafa, Kerbelah, Hillah, and other towns, and our only cause for wonder is that the remains of the great capital of Babylonia are still so extensive.

Our two chief authorities for the ancient topography of the city are Herodotus and Ctesias, and though both were eye-witnesses, their statements differ considerably. The city was built, we are told, on both sides of the river in the form of a square, and enclosed within a double row of high walls. Ctesias adds a third wall, but the inscriptions refer only to two, the inner *enceinte*; called *Imgur-Bell*, and its *salkhu*, or outwork; called *Nimitti-Bel*. Ctesias makes the outmost wall 360 stades (42 miles) in circumference, while according to Herodotus, it measured 480 stades (56 miles), which would include an area of about 200 square miles! Pliny follows Herodotus in his figures, but Strabo with his 385 stades, Qu. Curtius with his 368 stades, and Clitarchus with 365 stades, agree sufficiently closely with Ctesias. Even the estimate of Ctesias, however, would make Babylon cover a space of about 100 square miles, nearly five times the size of London.

Such an area could not have been occupied by houses, especially as these were three or four stories high. Indeed Q. Curtius asserts that even in the most flourishing times nine-tenths of it consisted of gardens, parks, fields and orchards. According to Herodotus the height of the walls was about 335 feet, and their width 85 feet; while Ctesias makes the height about 300 feet. Later writers give smaller dimensions, but it is clear they have merely tried to soften down the estimates of Herodotus (and Ctesias); and we seem bound, therefore, to accept the statement of the two oldest eye-witnesses, astonishing as it is.

But we may remember that the ruined wall of Nineveh was 150 feet high even in Xenophon's time, while the spaces between the 250 towers irregularly disposed along the wall of Babylon were broad enough to allow a four-horse chariot to turn. The clay dug from the moat had served for the bricks

of the wall, which was pierced with 100 gates, all of brass, with brazen lintels and posts. The two inner enclosures were faced with coloured brick, and represented hunting scenes. Two other walls ran along the banks of the Euphrates and the quays with which it was lined, each containing twenty-five gates, which answered to the number of the streets they led into. Ferry-boats plied between the landing places of the gates; and a movable drawbridge (30 feet broad), supported on stone piers, joined the two parts of the city together.

At each end of the bridge was a palace; the great palace of Nebuchadnezzar on the eastern side (the modern *Kasr*), which Herodotus incorrectly transfers to the western bank, being the most magnificent of the two. It was surrounded, according to Diodorus, by three walls, the outermost being 60 stades (7 miles) in circuit. The inner walls were decorated with hunting scenes painted on brick, fragments of which have been discovered by modern explorers. Two of its gates were of brass, and had to be opened and shut by a machine; and Mr. Smith has found traces of two libraries among its ruins. The palace, called "The Admiration of Mankind" by Nebuchadnezzar, and commenced by Nabopolassar, overlooked the Ai-ipur-sabu, the great reservoir of Babylon, and stretched from this to the Euphrates on the one side, and from the *Imgur-Bel* (or inner wall) to the *Libil* (or eastern canal) on the other. Within its precincts rose the Hanging Gardens, consisting of a garden of trees and flowers on the topmost of a series of arches at least 75 feet high, and built in the form of a square, each side measuring 400 Greek feet. Water was raised from the Euphrates by means, it is said, of a screw. . . . The lesser palace in the western division of the city belonged to *Neriglissar*, and contained a number of bronze statues.

The most remarkable edifice in Babylon was the temple of *Bel*, now marked by the *Babil*, on the north-east, as Professor Rawlinson has shown. It was a pyramid of eight square stages, the basement stage being over 200 yards each way. A winding ascent led to the summit, and the shrine in which stood a golden image of *Bel*, 40 feet high, two other statues of gold,

a golden table 40 feet long and 15 feet broad, and many other colossal objects of the same precious material. At the base of the tower was a second shrine, with a table and two images of solid gold. Two altars were placed outside the chapel, the smaller one being of the same metal.

A similar temple represented by the modern *Birs Nimrud* stood at Borsippa, the suburb of Babylon. It consisted of seven stages, each ornamented with one of the seven planetary colours, the azure tint of the sixth, the sphere of Mercury, being produced by the vitrification of the bricks after the stage had been completed. The lowest stage was a square 272 feet each way, its four corners exactly corresponding to the four cardinal points as in all other Chaldean temples, and each of the square stages raised upon it being placed nearer the south-western than the north-western edge of the underlying one. It had been partly built by an ancient monarch, but, after lying unfinished for many years, like the Biblical tower of Babel, was finally completed by Nebuchadnezzar.

From this description, we may conjure up some kind of vision of the surprising magnificence and beauty of Babylon in the zenith of its glory about a century after the date of Isaiah's prophecy, and can the better appreciate many of the details in the prophetic allusions to the judgments by which at length it should fall.

THE WORD OF GOD AGAINST BABYLON.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk and Daniel have much to say concerning "the burden of Babylon." All foretell her utter extinction and the ultimate and everlasting triumph of Israel.

Isaiah is the earliest, and prophesied before Babylon arose to the fulness of its beauty and power. Like the other prophets, he pronounces destruction against the things most boasted of and delighted in, in Babylon. Her enormous walls, her brazen gates, her beautiful river, her glorious but idolatrous worship, her astrology, her magnificence and pride of every sort were doomed to utter

obliteration, incredible as it must have appeared in the day when the prophet spoke.

The chapter (xiii.) opens with a call to the enemies of Babylon. "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand that they may go into the gates of the nobles." The language throughout is highly figurative; but with sufficient literal allusions interspersed to properly guide the discerning enquirer. Literally Babylon was built on a plain. Politically the Babylonian power was "a high mountain." The figure is common, and is unmistakable in Jer. li. 25: "Behold I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyed all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain." But the rival dominion—the kingdom of God in Israel—is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth (Dan. ii. 35).

The executors of God's judgment on Babylon are alluded to in verse 3, and openly specified in verse 17. "I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness." We might from this have expected quite another instrumentality than that which is specified further on—"I will stir up the Medes against them." God has various instruments and weapons for different stages and phases of His work—idolatrous warriors "sanctified" for judgment on others of like kind, and sons of God "sanctified" for inheritance of the Kingdom of God and the subjugation of the nations to Him. It is remarkable that even Nebuchadnezzar and Christ himself bear the same designation, "my servant," but the extreme difference of the service in each case needs no emphasising.

The fate of Babylon at the hands of the Medes and Persians is a typical illustration of the coming fate of the kingdoms of men as a whole at the hands of the Sons of God, and this fact must not be lost sight of in reading the prophecies, or much instruction will be missed and many allusions become quite obscure. It is difficult for us with our brief and limited lives to rise up to anything like a comprehension of the divine style which regards a thousand years as one day, and sees the end from the beginning; but if we receive the prophets as a divinely-

given "light that shineth in a dark place," we shall use our best endeavours in that direction, and shall be rewarded with some measure of success.

The Assyrian had been described as "the rod of God's anger," His "axe" and "saw" to chastise and hew down Israel. The Medes and Persians are now before us as His "weapons" to do the like for the Babylonian successor to the Assyrian Power. "They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord and the weapons of his indignation to destroy the whole land." If we can thus regard so apparently natural a matter as the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, we shall have no difficulty in extending the principle, and in like manner, agreeably with Christ's words, accounting the Roman overthrow of Jerusalem and the Jewish State as the act of God, who "sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burnt up their city." Further, we can extend the view from the time of Christ's departure to our own time, by reason of the movements depicted in the book of Revelation, until we come to the impressive evolutions now before us of "the kings of the earth, and of the whole habitable," preparing for "the war of the great day of God Almighty," in which "Great Babylon" comes into remembrance before God for wrath and destruction. "From a far country, from the end of heaven," of course literally imports no more than from the extremities of the Babylonian World, which was a very much smaller habitation than its latter-day antitype. The gradual extension of "the ends of the earth" from the original eastern central dominion must be borne in mind that the true scope of the prophecies may be rightly perceived.

How often in the prophets we read of "the day of the Lord" upon this nation or that. In this place it is the day of the Lord as a destruction from the Almighty upon Babylon. Previously the prophet had spoken of "the day of the Lord of Hosts," in which, in "the latter-days," all human pride should be abased and God alone exalted. He had spoken of "the day of Midian" as the likeness of the coming time when Israel's yoke should be broken by Christ. In the detailed characteristics of this

day of the Lord on Babylon, and in the history of the judgment it brought, we may form an accurate estimate of what is still before the world. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate : and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it."

THE GROUND OF BABYLON'S CONDEMNATION.

"The sinners thereof" ? Were the Babylonians accounted sinners before God ? What was their sin ? It is defined in v. 11, as in many other places. "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity ; and I will cause the *arrogancy of the proud* to cease, and will lay low the *haughtiness of the terrible*." Babylon arrogantly opposed God, and desolated His land and city. Though used as His weapon, this did not excuse her blasphemous attitude towards Him. Belshazzar's feast was a deliberate insult that was very promptly avenged. Bel and Nebo, to whose imagined strength Babylon imputed her victories, were ridiculous rivals of Jehovah, upon whom He pronounced judgment. Her intoxicating doctrine obscured the truth of God, and made nations mad. Therefore she was destroyed.

There are sinners and sinners. In proportion to the closeness of relationship to the purpose of God is the divine estimation of sin and its punishment. Israel is the ever-living example of the principle. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth : therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). Israel's history is a long and terrible exhibition of the scope of this brief enunciation. Some have made the mistake of supposing that men cannot be rightly accounted sinners unless they be directly related to the Gospel. Such must needs ignore the testimony which speaks otherwise. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." The nations of Canaan defiled the land by their "iniquity" and were therefore by the land "spued out." The nations that afterwards surrounded Israel were by God held accountable for their attitude to His nation and land. "Sinners of the Gentiles" is a phrase the apostle uses in Gal. ii. 15,

and he says elsewhere (Rom. v. 8), "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And as Christ himself said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

National sin brings national punishment, and when directly wrought against God is purged by judgment as direct. So individual sin may be of the order of blindness and ignorance that only consigns the sinner to the common tomb; or of the nature of witting sin against the light that merits and will meet "sorer punishment" than death, ending in the "second death." This is both scriptural and reasonable, and is in harmony with the prophetic pictures, which always exhibit the nations as obnoxious to the divine judgments according to their lights.

The language of the tenth verse that amplifies the statement that the Lord will destroy the sinners of Babylon out of her is highly figurative, and runs thus: "*For* the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." The Babylonian heavens are of course in question; the royalty and the priesthood corresponding to the sun and to the moon according to the analogy of Bible figures elsewhere, beginning we might say with the beautiful symbolism of Joseph's dream of the sun, moon and eleven stars making obeisance to him.

Then again sun and moon worship was the order of the day in Babylon from the earliest times. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the river in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods." So said Joshua to Israel (Josh. xxiv. 2). Those other gods are revealed to us in some measure by seals and monuments that have come to light of recent years. Their engraved legends have at length been deciphered, and discovered to relate to the worship of the Moon-God, and the Sun-God, and the goddess Ishtar (Ashtoreth), who is described as the "Daughter of the Moon-God," and is the "Great Oriental Venus," whose worship as "The Queen of Heaven" is rebuked by Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Accurate pictorial reproductions of these monuments, &c.,

now deposited in various museums, are available in published form, and they show that the rulers of Babylon, the Sun, Moon, and Stars of her "heaven," conceived themselves to be the special favourites of these gods, upon whom, as upon the gods of Egypt, the God of Israel was about to execute judgment.

CYRUS : THE TYPE OF CHRIST.

The chief instrument in this judgment is thus alluded to (v. 12): "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." This was Cyrus, who, while in a certain way precious in himself, though a Pagan, was but a type of the much more precious "man Christ Jesus" the Heir of all things. Cyrus was so named by God in the prophecy of Isaiah. "The Lord . . . saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd" (xliv. 28), "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden . . . I have even called thee by name: I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me" (xlv. 1-4.)

Some have used these sayings to prove the later origin of this part of Isaiah's prophecy—even in the days of Cyrus himself. Isaiah, of course, was dead long before that. This has made them invent "Isaiah the second," and there is no need to stop at the "second" when once the reins are given to the imaginative speculations of the so-called "higher criticism." The principle upon which they work is expressed by God in Psa. l. 21: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Upon this mistaken principle, denying to God the ability to see the end from the beginning, they would have likewise to mutilate the words of the prophet who spoke beforehand of Josiah, (1 Kings xiii.) and reject the word of God concerning Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). Indeed, with Christ in view as the Coming One in all the Old Testament Scriptures, it would be more

consistent to discard them altogether, than nominally to reverence them while actually discrediting them.

The name of the "man more precious than gold" who was to destroy Babylon is, like all the other divinely bestowed names, supremely expressive. "Cyrus, whose Hebrew name *Choresch*, which is a contraction of *Chayoraish*, and signifies *Like the Heir*, was, as his name was intended to express, the type of Christ, in the execution of his mission against "the Great City Babylon" of the latter-days. So says Dr. Thomas in his exposition of Rev. xvii. History reveals many striking points of comparison; and even the sculptured portrait that has been discovered is in agreement.

Mr. C. J. Ball, in his recently published *Light from the East, or the Witness of the Monuments*, says of this stele, or monumental column, an illustration of which is given:

"This famous bas-relief of the Liberator of the captive Jews is the oldest known relic of Persian sculpture. It stands at *Mesheh-Murghab*, among the ruins of the ancient Pasargadae, which Cyrus made his royal residence after the conquest of Asia Minor and Babylonia. The age of the remains at this site is determined by the inscriptions of Cyrus engraved upon them in Persian, Median, and Babylonian cuneiform; the last indicating that Cyrus had already added Babylonia to his dominions (B.C. 538). It will be noticed that the features are distinctively European, and quite unlike the Assyrian and Egyptian types. Yet the ornamentation of the figure is entirely borrowed from Egypt and Assyria."

The face is in profile, and reveals what a phrenologist would at once pronounce to be a good head, the sweep of the curve from the eye to the back of the head being such as is invariably indicative of intellectual and moral nobility and decision of character.

This interesting monument is in harmony with the history of Cyrus, in which the likeness to the Heir appears in many things. He was of quick understanding from his earliest youth, occasioning surprise at the soundness of his judgment and wisdom of his operations in military matters when only in his

teens. He was conspicuously sober, and temperate in all things, and enterprising in his father's business. He was mighty in battle, but not covetous, delighting not in gold and silver for its own sake, or for the purpose of personal aggrandisement. He was among his people, though in different manner and degree, what the Heir of all things afterwards was in Israel—God's shepherd (Is. xlv. 28)—a man endeared to them by his wisdom, power and benevolence, and the humility of his deportment in recognition of the transient character of human affairs.

Such men are "more precious than fine gold," even in the mortal state, and in subordinate relation to the divine purpose. How much more "precious" (1 Peter ii. 7) the immortal Son of God, the "Chief Shepherd" whom He has given to the world, and who will by-and-bye, after the destruction of Babylon the Great, restore again the Kingdom to Israel, and bless all nations in his righteous reign.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON (*Continued*).

IT is not surprising that there is so much concerning Babylon in the Old Testament Scriptures, when we consider her antiquity and importance, and the extent of her influence upon the nations and Israel.

It is only in harmony with the fact that we have very much concerning Rome in the New Testament Scriptures, especially Revelation, for the same obvious reason, that her position and importance, and intimate and antagonistic relation to the divine purpose, required it.

It is easy to realise this in connection with Rome, the modern Babylon, for the city remains, with the monuments on which Paul and the first century Christians set eyes. And the influence of Rome is indelibly engraven on all the civilized world. But it requires greater effort to realise the grandeur and influence of ancient Babylon, which was, in the mind of God, related to that of Rome as gold is to iron; for by these two metals the two dominions are represented by God to Nebuchadnezzar of old. Scriptural and historical study, however, will soon reveal the fact that if apostate Christendom be related to Rome as its "mother" (Rev xvii. 5), Babylon, whose name is symbolically named upon it, is unquestionably the grandmother and first parent in the genealogy.

It will surprise those who may for the first time undertake the quest, to discover how directly related are all the "fables" of Roman Catholic superstition to the ancient myths of Babylon. It is indeed an unenlightened handling of these facts that has given opportunity to blaspheme to a scepticism which mistakes the "fables" of the apostacy for "the truth" of the Scriptures which so roundly condemns them.

Babylon, then, as the seat of the golden-head dominion of the kingdoms of men comes in for particular notice and reprobation at the hands of God by the prophets. By God's power and munificence she had her magnificence and wealth. By Him she was used as His weapon in the chastisement of nations—even of Israel; but she did not honour Him; but wrought in pride for her own glory, exulting against the chosen nation, and insulting God to honour Bel, Nebo and Merodach. Isaiah, by the Spirit, assured all who had ears to hear that God was not unmindful of these things; but that down to the minutest details they were taken account of and provided for in the overruling counsels of the Most High. By him was revealed in Israel not only the downfall of Babylon, but the many striking details therewith connected, which, like the judgments of the Exodus from Egypt, should through all subsequent ages stand as a witness for God and the truth of His word. The weapons of God's warfare against Babylon were declared beforehand by the prophet to be His "sanctified ones," the Medes and Persians. Their victorious commander was named Cyrus by God nearly two hundred years before his birth. The prophet saw beforehand (ch. xiv.) Lucifer's fall from heaven. He saw (ch. xxi.) the night of pleasure that was turned into fear and destruction. The river of Babylon in which she boasted, Jeremiah (ch. li.) saw dried up, and made the channel of attack. The brazen gates Isaiah (ch. xlv.) declared God would open before Cyrus. In Isaiah (ch. xlvi.) and Jeremiah (ch. l. 2), Bel, Nebo and Merodach, like the gods of Egypt before them, were exhibited as the subjects of divine judgment and contempt. The astrologers (Isa. xlvii.) are challenged and disgraced. Looking at these features in detail as they come before us, we are first presented by Isaiah (ch. xiv.) with the taunting parable with which Israel should celebrate

LUCIFER'S FALL FROM HEAVEN.

The relation of the divinely decreed destruction of Babylon to the Hope of Israel is thus expressed in the opening of ch. xiv.:

“For the Lord will yet have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.”

It was when this relief from the Babylonian captivity was experienced that Israel was to take up the “proverb” or parable expressed in the fourth and following verses. There can be no mistake about the object of the “taunting speech” in question. It is “*the King of Babylon*” (v. 4), who “smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke” (v. 6). He was the broken staff and sceptre (v. 5), the fallen tree (Dan. iv.), over whose hewing down the firs and cedars of Lebanon were comforted (v. 8). All this is so obvious that it seems almost an insult to intelligence to rehearse it. But when we have the surprising fact before us that the context (v. 12), is referred by many to the Devil of popular belief—an imaginary king of an equally imaginary hell, the insistence on these obvious facts is seen to be neither unnecessary nor unreasonable.

“Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee at thy coming,” says the parable. That is “the grave” as the margin of the Authorised Version rightly expresses it—the hell of “the dead” (v. 9), “the grave” (v. 11), where “the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.” Or, as it is expressed in v. 15: “Thou shalt be brought down to hell (*sheol*, the same word translated grave in v. 11 and many other places), to the sides of the pit.” This “hell” is *gravedom*, or the dominion of the grave, located in the ground, a land of darkness, a place of forgetfulness and silence, a place of dead bodies and worms. The other “hell,” the imaginary place of torment, located nobody can imagine where, is a pagan fiction of Babylonian origin. The figure of the dead speaking is as intelligible as that of the trees rejoicing, and is not confined to this parable. Its most striking illustration is found in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.),

the imagery of which has something in common with that of Isaiah xiv. and is similarly misinterpreted.

But the words that give pause to those uninstructed in the first principles of the truth are those of verse twelve. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations?" Such language can have but one meaning to them, portraying the fall from heaven of their Satan, the archangel who was cast out of heaven for rebellion, and with his hosts established those traditional infernal regions which an apostate Christianity has borrowed from pagan mythology. If this were true, we should be compelled to question whether heaven were a finality of blessedness—since rebellion would be possible even there.

But seeing that the language indisputably refers to "the King of Babylon," the only question arising is: How do such descriptions fit the case? "Lucifer," in the Authorised Version, is of Latin origin, and signifies simply lightbearer. The margin gives "day star" as an alternative, and the Revised Version has transferred this to the text. This was the idea of the Septuagint translators who so rendered the Hebrew word, which itself simply means "shining," coming from a verb the primary meaning of which is to shine.

"Day-star, son of the morning" or dawn, as an appellation of the King of Babylon, recalls the sun, moon and star worship of Merodach, god of light, and challenges comparison with the titles "The Bright and Morning Star"—"The Star of Jacob." applied to *Zion's King*, of whose dominion Isaiah and all the prophets speak, in assurance of its ultimate triumph over all the gods, and the whole Kingdom of Babylon.

The ambitions of "Lucifer" aimed at the perpetual exaltation of the Babylonian heavens above the Israelitish; but God had decreed otherwise. The Babylonian heavens comprised the royalty and ruling classes of her political ærial, and the corresponding things obtained in Israel. Moses, addressing the congregation of Israel, began:—"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak, and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth"

(Deut. xxxii. 1). Babylon, prevailing over Israel, brought these heavens under eclipse. Lucifer's ambition is thus paraphrased in verses 13-14—"Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will *exalt my throne above the stars of God*. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Here, to "exalt the throne above the stars of God," is to "sit upon the mount of the congregation," that is, Mount Zion, where the "bright and shining lights" of Israel shone, and where Israel's "Morning Star" is yet to be enthroned. Somewhat similar language is addressed by Ezekiel to the King of Tyre (ch. xxviii. 13-17), whose dominion, in the days of David and Solomon, had been in alliance with Israel; but who, for his pride, was, like Lucifer, condemned to an ignominious downfall. And Daniel, speaking of the Roman power that should prevail over Israel, said (ch. viii. 10), "It waxed great even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even against the Prince of the host (that is Christ, Israel's "Morning Star"), and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary cast down."

Thus the language of Isaiah xiv. concerning Lucifer is quite in harmony with other prophecies concerning Gentile movements and presumptions against the Kingdom of God in Israel. But it is grotesquely inapplicable to the supposed revolt in heaven, God's dwelling-place, and the casting out thence of the Satan of popular belief. Lucifer was "the King of Babylon," a "*man* that made the earth tremble;" who, for his offences, was divinely decreed to go down to a dishonoured grave, being denied the rights of kingly burial. The Babylonian monarch whose fate answers to the details of Isaiah's prophecies here and elsewhere, as well as to those of Jeremiah and Daniel, was BELSHAZZAR; and of his "fall from heaven" the latter prophet was witness, and in it he was deeply concerned. And this introduces

THE NIGHT OF PLEASURE TURNED INTO FEAR AND DESTRUCTION.

In the twenty-first chapter Isaiah had "a grievous vision" of the siege of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. In verses 3-5 he speaks as it were from the very point of view of the King of Babylon in the siege: "Therefore are my loins filled with pain; pangs have taken hold upon me as the pangs of a woman that travaileth; I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me; *the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.* Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower. Eat, drink.—Arise ye princes, and anoint the shield."

Human ingenuity can with suitable apparatus reproduce the sights and sounds of the past. Only God can give beforehand the impressions of the future; and here is a striking one of many illustrations, in Isaiah's beholding nearly two hundred years before-hand Belshazzar's night of carousals, his loin-rack-ing dismay at the writing on the wall, the interruption of the feast by the sudden call to arms, the fall of Babylon and her gods, and her speedy conversion into Jehovah's threshing floor at the hands of Cyrus.

Both Scripture and profane history tell us of Belshazzar's feast. Daniel, in chapter v., gives us the divine account with which every Bible reader is familiar. It brings the true issues clearly before us—Israel's God as against the gods of Babylon—"the temple which was in Jerusalem" as opposed to "the house of his god in the Land of Shinar"—the worship of the God of Israel in antagonism to the Babylonian system. When the gold and silver vessels of the temple, at Belshazzar's command, were brought in, and "they drunk wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver and of brass, of iron and of wood, and of stone," the angelic handwriting on the wall reduced him at once to the state of abject terror depicted by Isaiah so long beforehand. The writer was invisible, save the hand that wrote, and traced upon the plaster "over against the candlestick" the brief indecipherable sentence of the doom of Babylon. The unintelligible characters heightened the king's

fear. What was to be done? The most natural and obvious thing was done. The king called the astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers, and all the wise men of Babylon.

THE ASTROLOGERS DISCREDITED.

What could they do? They were as helpless in the presence of this mysterious divine inscription, as they had been before Nebuchadnezzar when he demanded of them first, the rehearsal of his forgotten dream, and then the interpretation of it. Their ignorance and impotence had been the subject of Isaiah's prophecy (ch. xlvii.), when he denounced upon Babylon loss of children and widowhood in one day—"for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments." By the Spirit of God he thus challenged these pretenders:

"Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit; if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them: they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants from thy youth; they shall wander everyone to his quarter; none shall save thee."

And now Babylon's hour had come. As Isaiah had foretold, evil was upon her and she knew not whence it arose. "The vengeance of the temple" was about to be poured upon the desecrator of the vessels thereof; and before the handwriting on the palace wall stood the astrologers in helpless ignorance, ready to be destroyed, powerless to deliver themselves as Isaiah had said. But the exposure of the astrologers was the occasion of the manifestation of God's prophet. Daniel, in brief and stern rehearsal of Nebuchadnezzar's experiences, rebuked Belshazzar, who sinned against the light (Dan. v. 22) in humbling not his heart *though he knew all this*. He then read and interpreted the

handwriting on the wall, which, in four words (Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided!), decreed the end of the Kingdom of Babylon; and "in that night was Belshazzar the King of the Chaldeans slain." Probably many of the astrologers fell before the sword of Cyrus; but Daniel escaped, and came to honour under Darius.

THE DRYING OF THE EUPHRATES.

One of the boasts of Babylon was its beautiful river, which ran through the midst of the city, walled on either side along its entire course. The walls were each pierced with twenty-five gates corresponding to the lines of the streets of the city. Between these gates and massive quays adjoining, ferry boats continually plied, and the river was bridged in the centre of the city by a drawbridge which connected the two great palaces. Besides the river, there was the immense reservoir already alluded to. Water was superabundant, and the great extent of open land within the walls permitted the growth of a large supply of grain. It was estimated that the city could successfully withstand a siege of twenty years at least; and the citizens seemed safe in their amusement of insulting Cyrus and his army from the walls.

But the river was marked out beforehand by God as the line of attack; and it suited Cyrus very well to let it be supposed that his purpose was to reduce the city by famine. "O thou that dwellest on many waters," said Jeremiah (li. 13), "thine end is come." "A drought is upon her waters and they shall be dried up, for it is the land of graven images" (Jer. l. 38). "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another to show the King of Babylon that his city is taken at the end; and the passages are surprised, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted" (Jer. li. 31). "I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry" (v. 36).

How all this was accomplished every reader of ancient history knows. Cyrus, under cover of constructing simple entrenchments and imprisoning enbankments of vast extent, really

excavated an immense channel for the diversion of the river. The stratagem, and the scale upon which it was carried out, were worthy of the man. But of course we remember that both the plan and the man were "of the Lord." When the work was completed, and on the night of Belshazzar's feast, the waters were turned, and the way through the heart of the city laid bare. But even so it was not plain sailing, for the interior walls and gates remained, and had these all been efficiently watched and manned, the forces of that memorable night-march might only have walked into a trap after all. But,

"THE GATES SHALL NOT BE SHUT."

So God had declared by Isaiah (xlv.). "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; *and the gates shall not be shut*. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." And so, when the time came, the gates were not shut; and the forces under Gobryas and Gadatas, advancing to the heart of the city from the north and south in the river bed, were soon in the palace; and, having slain the king, took the city with little further resistance.

BEL, NEBO, AND MERODACH JUDGED.

From time to time in human history, there have arisen crises at which it has pleased God to make Himself known by the judgments which He executes. Generations following soon forget these judgments, for in the flesh dwelleth no good thing; but the facts remain. In every generation the remnant that may have come under the power of the Word, has taken heed to the record of these facts, and remembered them in hope of the day of final vindication.

It is so still. We read of the destruction, in Noah's flood, of the world of the ungodly, and remember Christ's impressive application of it to the day of his coming. We read of the events of the Egyptian exodus and the judgment upon the gods of Egypt, and remember that it is written in the prophet Micah that

“marvellous things” are to come on the nations after that same pattern. We read of the destruction of Sennacherib’s army, and his own assassination in the presence of his god at Nineveh, in whose name he had defied “the God of Jerusalem.” And now we read of the judgment of God upon the idols of Babylon, and remember that there is still a Babylon adoring “phantoms vain as wood and stone,” against which adoration we earnestly protest, exhorting men to “turn to God from idols, and serve the living and the true God and wait for His son from heaven.”

Daniel in Babylon revealed to them the true God, whose works the court ought to have remembered. But they were “mad upon their idols.” God had foretold the overthrow of these. Isaiah had said (ch. xlvi.): “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.” And the chapter goes on to appeal to Israel to hearken to God and not idols, the work of men’s hands—to God who in His majesty and foresight had called Cyrus as “a ravenous bird” to execute His judgment on Babylon. This chapter closes with the assurance of a final manifestation of righteousness and salvation in Zion.

Jeremiah’s emphatic denunciation of judgment against Babylon (chs. li., lii.) commences thus:—“Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces, her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.” And in explanation of the divine judgment he further says: “The Lord of Hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men as with caterpillars, and they shall lift up a shout against thee. He hath made the earth by his power, He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.” This was a repudiation of Bel and Merodach, to whom Babylonian superstition attributed these mighty works, and in whose sun-moon-and-star worship they thought to prevail against the God of Israel, and the land and nation He had for a period of 70 years delivered over to them for punishment.

That there should be no perpetuation of Babylonian error concerning this, God said (v. 44), "I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up; and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea the wall of Babylon shall fall." The names of Bel, Nebo and Merodach have been recovered in many of the inscriptions from Babylon. Nebo was the Babylonian God of learning and represented the scribes and priests; while Bel had apparently more to do with the civil power. Merodach was the god of light, "the sun of dawn and of spring."

One of the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar the Great which have been preserved to our day shews his worship of Merodach. It is known as the India House inscription, being now in the India Office, and "gives an account of the rebuilding of more than twenty temples in Babylon and Borsippa, of the strengthening of the fortifications of the city, and of the making of the great quays beside the river." It confirms the truth of Dan. iv. 30, which tells us how the king, in admiration of his work, "spake and said, Is not this great Babylon *that I have built?*" Daniel had told him that it was by the power of the Most High who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and who would humble him in an unprecedented manner. But Nebuchadnezzar attributed his power to Merodach and the gods of Babylon. Hence this inscription concludes with the following prayer :

"To MERODACH, my Lord, I prayed, I lifted up my hands. 'Merodach, Lord, wisest of gods, glorious prince! Thou it wast who madest me, and with the sovereignty of all mankind didst invest me! (Compare Dan. ii. 37: v. 18-21). Like dear life I love thy lofty image; above *thine own city Babylon*, I have adorned no town in any place. Like as I love the fear of thy Godhead, [and] regard thy Lordship, favour thou the lifting up of my hands; hear my prayer! I am the patron king that rejoiceth thine heart; the prudent minister, the patron of all thy cities. By Thy command, O merciful Merodach! may the house I have built endure for ever! May I be satisfied with the fulness of it; (contrast Psa. lxxv. 4) and therein may I come to grey hairs, [and] be satisfied with children! May I receive therein the rich tributes of the Kings of the regions of all mankind! (contrast Psa. lxxii. 10-11; Isa. lx. 11-12) from horizon to zenith—the places of the rising sun—may I own no enemy, have none 'to make me afraid! Let my offspring therein rule the black-headed folk for evermore.'"

But Merodach could not preserve Nebuchadnezzar from humiliation, nor save his "own city Babylon." Two thousand five hundred years have passed away, and the fragmentary evidences of his hypothetical existence are found in the museums of the Gentiles of the far west, whose careless multitudes, strolling by them, wonder at the childishness of the mighty ones of long ago. Here and there, a more enlightened spectator passing by, with the prophetic word in hand and heart, wonders in another way; and his heart rises in thankful worship to the Lord God of Israel who brought these vanities to nothing; and has preserved His own nation of Israel against the setting up of the kingdom of which Daniel spoke to the Babylonian Kings.

The taking of Babylon by Cyrus was only the beginning of the end. The prophecy required that it should be "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha." First of all it ceased to be a royal city, the Persian kings preferring Susa, Ecbatana, or Persepolis. The Macedonian kings built Selucia, which drew away the population of Babylon and caused it to be deserted. At last the city was entirely forsaken, so that Pausanias, who wrote about the time that John received the Revelation (A.D. 96), took occasion to remark that of the once greatest city of the world nothing more then remained than the walls. The prophecies that it should become a habitation of wild beasts were literally fulfilled by the action of the Persian kings in converting the desolate city into a hunting park! At last even the walls began to crumble and fall, and the debris, blocking the river, caused it to divert, possibly to the course of Cyrus' artificial channel, while the diminished flow that came through the city, spread out at last into marshes. Thus it degenerated into "pools of water," a most unlikely thing from a merely human point of view; for if there is a stable landmark in the world it is a city on a river—witness Rome on the Tiber, or even London on the Thames.

The combined effect of all these things was the manifested fulfilment of the prophetic declaration: "I will make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. xiv. 23). So

effectual was the sweeping that Rollin, who flourished 1661-1741, declares that "the most able geographers at this day cannot determine the place where it stood." The explorations of the nineteenth century, however, have revealed the site of Babylon, and very many interesting confirmations of the truth of the Scriptures. The twentieth century will see many of the eye-witnesses of her vanished glory again in the land of the living—the children of Zion rejoicing in their king.

THE APPROACHING FALL OF ROMAN "BABYLON."

The last verses of Isaiah's fourteenth chapter look far beyond the fall and desolation of ancient Babylon, and contemplate judgments which are still in the future. In the nature of things it is only in the time of the end that the full scope of the prophecy becomes visible, and, by the deep conviction produced of its divine authorship, compensates somewhat for the absence of the open vision that the prophets enjoyed in Israel. Passing on from God's declaration concerning Babylon (Isa. xiv. 23): "I will sweep it with the besom of destruction," the next verses run thus:

"The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out and who shall turn it back?"

Isaiah had already testified (ch. ix. 4: x. 27) that the final breaking of the yoke from off the neck of Israel should be "because of the anointing," and should come by the hand of the promised Son of God and of David. The association of the idea with the downfall of Babylon cannot be supposed to be accidental; and when we come to know all that is testified of and by the Son of David, we see clearly the design of it. Assyria and Babylonia

have their modern counterparts in senses geographical and spiritual. The prophets of Israel and their ministry did not cease with Malachi. To stop with him would be to leave out the greatest of the prophets, even the prophet like unto Moses, who was "worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." In building the house he said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Behold I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city" (Matt. xxiii. 34).

Among these was John, the beloved disciple, who, when banished to the Isle of Patmos, beheld in vision among the things that should come to pass thereafter, the final judgment of the GREAT ROMAN SYSTEM which, under the figure of "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters," corrupted, enslaved, and destroyed the nations. "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," is the legend upon the forehead of the symbolic woman who, in the last verse of Rev. xvii., is explained to be "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." There is thus no escape from the conclusion that Rome, subsequently to A.D. 96 and down to the time of her revealed destruction at the hands of the Lord, is before the world defined by Jesus as the modern representative of ancient Babylon.

It seems fitting to pause here to notice briefly what is said in the last prophecy of the word of God concerning a system that is so closely related to the Babylon, whose downfall the prophets of old foretold, and that is so powerful an influence for evil at the present day, and, moreover, that is in such direct and murderous antagonism to the "servants of God," to whom "the words of this prophecy" are especially addressed. It would require a volume to trace satisfactorily and completely all the analogies of Rome and Babylon. They are many and most striking. They constitute not merely an intellectual problem of the highest type, but a great, earnest,

and practical matter revealed from God concerning the state of affairs in which we live and move and have our being, and the true inwardness of which is exceedingly difficult of discernment by reason of the all-prevailing "sorceries" that are divinely said to be characteristic of the prevailing system. They deeply concern "the patience and faith of the saints" who are called upon to "Come out and be separate," to protest, contend earnestly, and endure to the end, watching and hoping for the Avenger of the elect in the day of Judgment that has been proclaimed.

Ancient Babylon was dealt with by God not merely as a city, but as the head of a great dominion, "the golden city,"—"The Lady of Kingdoms," that dwelt "upon many waters" or peoples. So Rome is before us in the Revelation as the great city that reigned over kings, "that sitteth upon many waters"—"peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues," whose boast, like Babylon's of old, was, "I shall be a lady for ever" (Isa. xlvii. 7). "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow" (Rev. xviii. 7).

By the decree of Caracalla the boundaries of the city, Rome, were declared to be coincident with those of the Empire; and the slain witnesses in Rev. xi. are said to lie "in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom, and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Thus the territory ruled by Rome, and divinely characterised by the attributes of the land of Egypt, and the cities of Sodom and Babylon, is before us as the further and final object of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies concerning Babylon. Judea was a Roman province when Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem, and some forty years afterwards Rome destroyed the city, as Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, had done before. Just as Israel was to rejoice over Babylon's overthrow; so, in the future, "the Israel of God" is to rejoice over the fall of Modern Babylon, as it is written: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20).

THE MODERN LUCIFER.

Following the features of Isaiah's prophecy of the fall of Babylon, as briefly noted in the last chapter, the question naturally arises, Who, in the latter-day Gentile world, answers at all to "Lucifer, son of the morning," with his ambitious designs of exalting his throne above the stars of God? If Rome be Babylon, who is the most conspicuous figure in Rome? Unquestionably the Pope, whose sovereignty is, or rather was, of the kind that answers exactly to that of the proud king of Babylon, the Sovereign Pontiff of the old order that passed away before the divine judgments at the hands of Cyrus. The Papal sovereignty, however, extended, (and does yet spiritually extend) far beyond "the ends of the earth" as known to the Babylonians. And what was the boast of Lucifer: "I will sit upon the mount of the congregation," by comparison with the Papal legend engraven upon a medal representing the dominion of Roman state: *Sedet super Universam!* She sits upon the Universe? And what Babylonian pride or superstition could exceed, or even equal, that of the assumption by the popes of the titles "Holy Father," "Our Lord God, the Pope?" But there is a like ambition in modern Babylon (meaning thereby what a popular writer has aptly designated "Anti-Christendom") to what existed in ancient Babylon of Daniel's day; that is the dream of Jerusalem as the world metropolis of "Babylon the Great."

It must be remembered that Roman Christendom is divided into the two great divisions of Greek and Roman Catholicism, of the former of which the Czar is the spiritual head, and of the latter the Pope. This division does not, however, destroy the unity of Babylon, which at the crisis of divine judgment (Rev. xvi. 19) is said to be divided into *three* parts. It is "the great city" all the same, and when its dominion is threatened by Christ returned, its military head, the Czar, and chief "false prophet," the Pope, may be expected to join hands against him, for the whole of the forces of Christendom are prophetically shown united to make war against the Lamb (Rev. xvii. 14). Thus the characteristics of "Lucifer" are found in both these world-"fathers."

Russian designs on Constantinople and Jerusalem are well known. The recent pose of the Czar (in 1899) as the "Harbinger of Peace" does not in the least interfere with the steady preparation for war and the steady advance of Russian aggression in Asia Minor and Syria. It will be remembered by many how the dispute over the Holy Places at Jerusalem provoked the Crimean War. This is also a hint to the wise of future possibilities. But plain information concerning the last strife for the place of Jehovah's throne in Jerusalem is given by the prophets, and it shows that before its final overthrow Modern Babylon prevails for a last time over Jerusalem (Zech. xiv.) before the Lord goes forth to judgment upon the scene of his crucifixion nineteen hundred years ago.

THE NIGHT OF PLEASURE.

The prevalence of "the darkness that covers the earth" (Isa. lx.), and is only to be dispelled by the arising of the Lord as the Sun of Righteousness upon Zion, is well represented by the "night." It is the night in which "the beasts of the forest do creep forth," even those which Daniel saw in the night visions. It is, as it were, a continuation of that of which God spoke by Micah (iii. 6), "Therefore night shall be unto you *that ye shall not have a vision*, and it shall be dark unto you *that ye shall not divine*; and the sun shall go down over the prophets and the day shall be dark over them." It is the night in which Zion's watchmen wait, as Isaiah in vision (xxi. 6-9) saw one watch and wait on the wall of Babylon, and in which they, like him, see the approach of chariots, and turmoil and war that will bring about the fall of Babylon. It is the night of the drunken feast of Babylon; for the Spirit of God says that "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. xvii. 2), that is, with the stupefying doctrines of apostate Christendom.

Christendom is mentally and morally "drunk" with Romish perversions of the truth and blendings with paganism. Just as the nations of antiquity were said to be "mad" through

the wine of ancient Babylon (Jer. li. 7), so the nations of "Christendom" are equally "mad" through Rome's "wine." Paul, writing to the Thessalonians concerning the times and seasons of the coming of Christ (1 Thess. v.), said he did not need to enlarge on it to them—"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of day; we are *not of the night* nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are *drunken in the night*. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

This sobriety and wakefulness and watchfulness is induced by putting away the Babylonian wine and drinking freely "without money and without price" of the "wine and milk" of the divine invitation (Isa. lv.). In plain English, it is a throwing away of Church and Chapel theology, and a whole-hearted cleaving to the Bible instead. The Lord God will "abundantly pardon" the wicked who forsakes his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. By a belief of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the obedience of baptism into Christ, such a one may be transformed from an inebriated Babylonian, into a sane and sober citizen of Zion, watching and praying for the dawn of Zion's glad morning, and the breakdown of the dreadful system that so long befuddled and enslaved him.

During the night of Belshazzar's feast, he prostituted the cups and vessels of the temple to Paganism. So in a sense does Rome. The Corinthians, transforming "the Lord's supper" into a riotous love feast, ate and drank damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. xi.). Exhorting them to flee

from idolatry, and appealing to them as "wise men," Paul said: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils (demons); ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils (demons)" —1 Cor. xi. 16, 21.

If that be so, what shall we say of the system which has deliberately converted "the Lord's supper" into an idolatrous ceremonial of the grossest type? Rome has truly turned the Lord's table into a table of demons. She has made a god of the bread, and avoided the literal Corinthian drunkenness by withholding the wine altogether. And, as if to establish the family relationship of the Church of England to the Romish "Mother of Harlots," a semi-secret society within her pale, called the "Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament," thus speaks in a published paper:

"We say that the presence of Christ is whole. Whole Christ comes to us, and is incorporated with us in His Sacrament. His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His Divinity, are present. And not only that, but He is wholly present in every particle, just as much as in all that is consecrated. When we separate from the notion of substance everything gross and material, we may regard the term *transubstantiation* as a convenient definition of the results of consecration which the articles do not exclude."

Those who, in the time of their Babylonian citizenship, have belonged to the Anglican department of the "Great City," may remember that Article XXVIII. says, among other things: "Transubstantiation (or, the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." The squaring of the "Confraternity's" statement with this is a specimen of the "sorceries" spoken of in Revelation.

Christendom is, in fact, very much in the condition allegorically represented by the Palace of Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's

feast. The wine of intoxication is the false doctrine of which the chief ingredient is the "immortality of the soul," a doctrine based upon the first lie told in the world. The whole truth of God concerning all things from man to God is marred by this; for the reasoning is always from man to God in opposition to the revelation of the Bible from God to man.

THE ASTROLOGERS OF MODERN BABYLON.

In the eyes of the millions of worshippers of Christendom, bigotry and fanaticism could not go further than to suggest the least resemblance between the clergy of the various State Churches of Christendom and the soothsayers, astrologers and necromancers of ancient Babylon. Yet the resemblance is close and striking, and is portrayed by the Word of God. It is, moreover, easily and clearly perceived by those who, in His mercy, are awakened from their drunken sleep and brought out from the "Great City" to view it in the light of divine truth. It is indisputable that the Romish system of world-wide sorcerisings (Rev. xviii. 23) is "Babylon the Great;" and therefore there is no escape from the conclusion that the Romish hierarchy—the popes, cardinals, priests, and clerics of the mother and daughter churches—are the sorcerers or astrologers of the great city.

Their doctrines are as purely pagan as any that circulated in ancient Babylon. They are indeed the direct lineal descendants of these. The idea of immortal souls that survive the death of the body, and ascend to heaven at death, or descend to the infernal regions they call hell, or hover in an intermediate state which the Babylonian "mother" calls "purgatory," and whence, she says, they can be liberated by certain sorceries, for a consideration in cash—this idea is simply paganism, allied to a profession of Bible truth; and can be traced back, feature by feature, through the Roman and Greek mythologies, to the Babylonian and Egyptian originals; thus absolutely justifying the prophecy of the Lord Jesus in the book of Revelation.

This tracing back is elaborately done by the late Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons*: not that the identity is exhibited with the thoroughness that pertains to the truth alone,

for Mr. Hislop was not *quite* without the pale himself; but many of the tenets and rites of Roman Catholicism are very clearly identified with the Pagan superstitions of the past.

The astrologers of Babylon were not a whit more helpless before the angelic inscription on the wall of Belshazzar's palace than their modern representatives are before the "writing" that decrees the fall of modern Babylon. They cannot interpret it, and declare that those who can do so are mad. The Lord Jesus, by his angel, has given a "Revelation" to his servants concerning this, which is intelligible only to "the wise," who "shall understand." There is a good deal of singing in Babylon about

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose firm,
And dare to make it known."

But those who come to understand Daniel's faith and hope, and proclaim the kingdom that he proclaimed to the Babylonian kings, soon find themselves in close encounter with the clerical astrologers, who will have none of it, but sing

"With thee we'll reign,
With thee we'll rise,
And kingdoms gain
Beyond the skies!"

Now, all who know the Bible know that it tells of no kingdom beyond the skies in which the people of Christ shall reign with him; but that it does tell of a kingdom upon earth, "*under the whole heaven,*" in the prospect of reigning in which they are seen in this "Revelation" rejoicing, saying: "We shall reign on the earth as kings and priests" (Rev. v. 10). The clergy, in their pretended sky-pilotage of fabled immortal souls, are mere "sorcerers," like their prototypes in Babylon. The proof of it is in what Daniel taught as against what they teach.

Daniel taught that the God of heaven would set up on earth a kingdom that should not be left to other people, but should break in pieces and consume all the rival kingdoms of

men, and itself should stand for ever. That God would do this by ONE whose figure is a stone cut out of a mountain without hands—that is Christ, who was of higher than merely human origin (ch. ii.). He declared that this kingdom should be taken and possessed by the saints of the Most High, and that it should in its territory embrace the whole earth (ch. vii.). He revealed by the Spirit that before this great consummation the saints would be prevailed against for a long season by a power which the same Spirit of God afterwards styled “Babylon the Great” (vii. and Rev. xvii.); and that they would have the honour of taking away this dominion, “to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Dan. vii. 26). This honour, the angel declared to Daniel, would be bestowed upon them by resurrection from the dead in the day of the return of Christ (Michael, the Great Prince), in a time of trouble such as never was from the Flood onwards (ch. xii.). Previous to that the angel described the saints as of “them that sleep in the dust of the earth,” who, he said, shall “awake to everlasting life” and to “shine as the brightness of the firmament . . . as the stars for ever and ever,”—or as Jesus expresses it: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;” that is, in the “harvest” at “the end of the age” (Matt. xiii.). “Go thy way till the end be,” said the angel to Daniel, “for thou *shalt rest* and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” So Daniel rests, sleeping in dust till the end be.

Nay, say the modern astrologers,

“Where is now the prophet Daniel?
Safe within the promised land,”

“land” meaning “beyond the skies” in the language of their incantations. But the children of Daniel’s people will not heed these, but, like him, *study the books*, and believe and hope in what they there find written, shaping their aspirations and prayers on the recorded model of Daniel’s angelically answered prayer as read in his ninth chapter.

THE SYMBOLIC EUPHRATES, AND THE INCOMING KINGS OF THE EAST.

No one intelligent in the Scriptures could miss the striking analogy between the stratagem of Cyrus by which Babylon was taken, and the great latter-day historical development (related to the same territory) by the symbol of which in Revelation xvi. Jesus prefaces the announcement of his thief-like entry into Babylon the Great. The Euphrates was diverted by Cyrus, and its dried channel made "the way" of his conquering forces into the heart of Babylon. So in Rev. xvi. 12 it is said, "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared."

Here the river stands as the symbol of the Empire whose territory is watered by it; and its "water" for the population of that empire. This is according to the divinely-explained symbolism of Isaiah viii., concerning the overflow of the same river, in relation to the ancient Assyrian. The modern Euphratean Power is of course the Turk, and the Turkish Power has for nearly a century been "drying up." This is not the time and place to trace the process of the decay of the Turk, who was once the terror of Europe. His political sobriquet, "the Sick Man of the East," is known all over the world. But what has Turkish decay, wasting or "drying up," to do with the way of the Kings of the East? Who are the Kings of the East?

The answer to the first question is that the Turkish Empire occupies the Land of Promise, the Land covenanted to Abraham and his seed the Christ for an everlasting possession, and therefore blocks the way of the manifestation of Christ and his people's power against Babylon the Great as really as the Euphratean river did the divinely-appointed "way" of Cyrus of old. So long as the Turk possesses Palestine and Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God cannot be set up. No matter what the wise men of Babylon say, this is the fact, and therefore his removal is the subject of revelation beforehand to such as have eyes to see and ears to hear. The Kings of the East, or literally, "Kings from a Sun's rising," are those who in

the same Revelation (v. 10) are styled "Kings and priests unto God," the "Kings" and "Lords" over whom Jesus, the Faithful and True Witness, is said to be "King and Lord" (ch. i. 5: xix. 16), and to whom one of their number said in the days of his flesh, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 12).

Jesus himself returns to reign in Jerusalem, "where also our Lord was crucified," when it was the capital of a province of the great Roman Babylon. Therefore it should seem no strange thing that his people should return to reign in the countries where, like Israel, "they have been put to shame." However it seems to the citizens of Babylon in their spiritual drunkenness; it will come to pass; and the drying Euphrates is a great and notable sign of the imminence of it. But just as Babylon discerned not the stratagem of Cyrus, so modern Babylon cannot see the purpose of Christ though it be so plainly advertised to the people. It will know nothing until in panic it discovers that "as a thief" he is in the great city, and has all its royalties, priesthoods, and aristocracies entirely at his mercy.

Isaiah beholding the judgment of the fatal night of Babylon's pleasure, cries: "O my threshing and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you." Jeremiah also proclaimed that Babylon should become the Lord's "threshing floor" (li. 33). The Medes and Persians were the threshing instrument. But in the latter-day antitypical Babylon becomes the Lord's threshing floor, and "*the daughter of Zion*" his threshing instrument (Micah iv. 13; Is. xli. 15; Dan. ii. 35). The student who takes the trouble to study these scriptures in the light of what has been already indicated from the word, will perceive that they introduce a great international confederacy against Zion in which the issue of the case *Zion versus Babylon* is finally *threshed out*, to the vindication of the former and the entire abolition of the latter. They introduce, in fact, the subject of Armageddon, which is associated with the drying up of the Euphrates in the sixth vial (Rev. xvi. 16).

“Armageddon” is a jest to most of the Babylonians, but it is no subject for jest, and succinctly introduces at this crisis that gathering of the nations to the land of Israel for judgment, of which the prophets so often speak. *Arma-gai-don* is a composite word of “the Hebrew tongue,” and means literally “*a heap of sheaves in the valley of judgment* ;” which is just what the nations of Babylon are to become according to the testimonies already referred to. The British military authorities have some kind of a notion that something like this may happen in Palestine. Thus Col. Conder, in his “*Tent Work in Palestine*,” speaking of Megiddo and the valley of Jezreel, says :

“The route followed by Thothmes III. (he is referring to the inscriptions of the temple of Karnak in Egypt), is the same afterwards taken by Necho; and his great battle at Megiddo preceded that in which Josiah was slain. May we go yet further, and say that *if any important battle be fought in Palestine in future times, it is at Megiddo, or in its neighbourhood, that it is likely to occur, in fact, ‘Ar Mageddon,’ is a military probability* in case of a contest in the Holy Land. The physical causes which led to the former battles in this district would again come into operation. An army would find its way across the watershed of the country most easily in the neighbourhood of the plain of Dothan, where the greatest elevation is only 800 feet above the level of the sea, or a little farther north by the chalk downs of the ‘Breezy Land,’ where the slopes are gentle, and the greatest elevation is only 1,200 feet.

“An army advancing from Damascus on Egypt would cross the Jordan valley near the Sea of Galilee, and would advance with the greatest ease up the broad highway of the valley of Jezreel, where Megiddo (if at *Mujedd’a*) now stands in ruins. Thus it is in the neighbourhood of this place that the two contending forces might still meet, and the old highway of kings from Egypt to Assyria would be the line of advance for armies of the nineteenth century.”

It is impossible to enlarge fully upon the analogies discoverable upon comparison of Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning Babylon, with the later Revelation of the Lord Jesus

concerning the Roman Babylon, which is in truth but an extension or continuation of the same Kingdom of men, with all the old hateful characteristics in a new dressing and many new abominations added. The mind of God towards it is expressed in the visions given to John in the Isle of Patmos and is a very graphic illustration of the recorded fact that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart." Those who know His revealed mind as expressed in His word will not hesitate to "come out and be separate," to renounce the pagan superstitions of the "great city," and look for the day of judgment that shall suppress them all for ever, and vindicate Zion and her children in all the earth.

"REJOICE NOT, PALESTINE!"

The last five verses of Isaiah xiv. contain a brief message of God by the prophet to all Palestina, or Philistia, "in the year that king Ahaz died."

It will be remembered that Ahaz was a wicked and idolatrous king, and was therefore distressed by Ephraim and Syria, and when the Philistines invaded his dominions he hired the king of Assyria against them, plundering the temple for his hire. "And Tilgath Pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not." Soon after this he died. Philistia naturally rejoiced over the discomfiture of her hereditary foe; but is warned by the prophet that from the same north quarter a desolating judgment would come upon her. Jeremiah afterwards enlarged upon this in assigning to the country "the wine cup of the Lord's fury" by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, to whose yoke it was symbolically commanded to submit (Jer. xxv., xxvii.). This came to pass in due course.

But concerning Judah, and Jerusalem—the city which Ahaz betrayed and disgraced—there were better things in store for them at last. "The first-born of the poor shall feed; and the needy shall lie down in safety." The promised Son of David would re-establish the city in righteousness. In the days of

his flesh he said "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And one of his servants, speaking of "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," describes them as "the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 22). They are "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb"—"the first resurrection" who "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. xx. 5). It was with this end in view that the prophet by the spirit said, "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall betake themselves unto it." Or, as the Revised Version puts it: "In her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge." Hence it is that the afflicted saints and the afflicted Jews have always taken pleasure in varying ways and degrees in Zion; and the latter-day remnant of them in "ZIONISM," the one hopeful *national* movement of our times.





CHAPTER XV.

THE BURDEN OF MOAB.

ISAIAH'S fifteenth and sixteenth chapters introduce "the burden of Moab," or "oracle concerning Moab," a message which not only speaks of the proximate judgment to come upon the nation, but of its latter-day policy in relation to the house of Israel.

All things are for Israel's sake; and the surrounding nations acquire importance in human annals only as they find place in the divine purpose to "restore again the kingdom to Israel." Of Moab, Ammon and the other neighbouring kingdoms to Israel the prophets often speak, and the history of Israel shews them sometimes subdued by Israel, and sometimes, on account of Israel's iniquities, prevailing over them and bringing them into subjection—sometimes corrupting them in their faith and practice and at others repudiated by the faithful leaders of the nation, who, like Nehemiah, would tolerate no half measures in the separateness that God enjoined.

Moab and Ammon were related to Israel. Lot was the nephew of Abraham, and these his two sons by his daughters under the circumstances recorded in Gen. xix. The very names, Moab (from a father) and Ammon (Ben-ammi, son of my people), memorialize this for ever. In judging of it, it has to be remembered that though wrong was manifestly done, as the narrative recognises, the law of those times, expressing the will of God in the matter, which is the only final standard of right and wrong, is not on record, and that, therefore, we must not be too hasty in judging of it on the basis of subsequent revelations of God's will. Further, Lot was betrayed into the action through wine, while on the part of his daughters the motive appears to have been patriotic rather than otherwise.

Wellhausen risks the extraordinary suggestion that these last few verses of Gen. xix. are a malicious concoction of Israelitish origin. He says of "the Israelites": "With what bitterness the latter . . . were wont to speak of their hostile kinsfolk can be gathered from Gen. xix. 30, *sqq.*—the one *trace of open malice* in the story of the patriarchs, and all the more striking as it occurs in a narrative of which Lot is the hero and saint, which, therefore, in its present form is of Moabite origin, although, perhaps, it has a still older Canaanite nucleus."

This is another example of learned flounderings consequent on rejecting the fact that Genesis is "Moses' writing," Christ being witness. In one breath the professor gives us Gen. xix. 30, *sqq.*, as an example of the (late) bitter and malicious speeches of "the Israelites," and at the same time as "in its present form of *Moabitish* origin"! Which is it? And if "Moabitish," why, then, the "malice"? Would Moabites write thus disrespectfully of the origin of their nation? and in a writing which sought to glorify Lot their ancestor as "a hero and a saint"? As the professor says, it is certainly "striking"! But the very name Moab testifies at once to the truth and antiquity of Gen. xix., for his descendants were a nation in the days of Moses. Professor Sayce has justified the reaction that is setting in in favour of "the traditional view" as against the views of the higher criticism. Loyalty to Christ, on the basis of truth and common sense, necessitates the same conclusion.

Since "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," (*i.e.*, for the learning, of course, of all generations of the past who may have come after the writing), there must be some good reason why the record of the origin of Moab and Ammon has been divinely given and preserved. Repudiating the theological professor's reckless suggestion of its being a mere malicious story (Israelitish or Moabitish, as you like it), what may be the lesson to be learned?

The children of Israel, who in Moses' time came to grief over the daughters of Moab, and who in subsequent generations were frequently corrupted with Moabitish idolatry, would always have before them in this memorial the origin of their

seducers, and the warning that under the influence of wine so ministered, even a righteous man might be moved to do things which, in his sober senses, he would not dream of.

As to those who make a stumbling-block of the narrative, and condemn the Bible for containing it, their attitude is of no great consequence (except to themselves). They had better condemn the world in which they live, and come on to the side of the Bible. Their understanding would then be enlarged, and a kingdom open up to them, into which there shall enter nothing that defileth.

The country of Moab was situated east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea; and its chief cities were Ar and Kir, Dibon and other places mentioned in Isaiah xv. and elsewhere. It was the territory allotted to Reuben, who, being "unstable as water" (Gen. xlix. 3-4), did "not excel," as Jacob, on his death-bed, had prophesied. Reuben does not appear to have held his portion with any great tenacity, and was among the first of the ten tribes to be carried away captive to Assyria, by Tilgath Pilneser. Situated as it was, it was inevitable that Moab should exercise great influence on Israel, and evil influence as it turned out. Of the personal history of Lot's two sons, Moab and Ammon, we hear nothing, nor of the early history of their descendants. Between four and five hundred years elapsed between the overthrow of Sodom and the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and their first contact with Moab. Out of this silence of centuries the descendants of Lot emerge as an idolatrous state, subject to the Amorite of the immediate north. They were now "*the people of Chemosh.*"

In the history of Israel's defeat of Sihon (Num. xxi.), and occupation of Heshbon his capital, the following explanatory note is dropped in: "For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand even unto Arnon. Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared: for there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and

the lords of the high places of Arnon. Woe to thee, Moab ! thou art undone, *O people of Chemosh* : he hath given his sons that escaped and his daughters into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites. We have shot at them. Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah which reacheth unto Medeba."

Besides being a valuable illustration of the parabolic speech of the scriptures, found also in Isaiah xv., Jer. xlvi., and elsewhere, this also explains to us the intimate connection between the Amorites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Midianites. We must remember that in the early scriptures we deal with fragments of history of peoples related to Israel, and that their various conquests, annexations, alliances, etc., are not designed to appear in complete sequence, the historical fragments being only introduced into Israel's history as side lights according to the divine purpose. Forgetfulness of this may lead to misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Following the account of the conquest of Sihon is that of the disastrous connection of Israel with Moab by the evil counsel of Balaam, after God had made him bless Israel instead of cursing them as Balak desired (Num. xxxi. 16 ; Rev. ii. 14). Balak was king of Moab at that time and sent to Mesopotamia for Balaam to curse Israel. The history of his journey to Moab and his experience and prophecies there is detailed at length in Numbers xxii.-xxiv. Upon his arrival Balak took him "up into the *high places of Baal*, that thence he might see the uttermost part of the people" (Israel).

Though a bad man, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness," the spirit of God compelled him to bless Israel, and that with increasing emphasis on every occasion. I cannot curse, said he, those whom God has not cursed. The people (Israel) shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Balak, dismayed, suggested another trial from a different spot, but it only provoked the assurance that "God is not a man that he should lie ; neither the son of man that he should repent." And further, Balaam was made to declare that Jacob as a great

lion should rise up to the prey and not lie down unsatisfied. A third trial on Balak's part only brought greater blessing still on Israel, whose king should be "higher than Agag," and his kingdom greatly exalted. Then Balak was wroth and dismissed Balaam in anger; whereupon Balaam, before departing, "advertised" him as to "what this people shall do to thy people *in the latter days*" (Num. xxiv. 14).

Then follows Balaam's striking prophecy of the latter-day smiting of Moab by the Star of Jacob (Rev. xxii. 16), whom he declared he should see "but not nigh." Then Israel was to "do valiantly," for to Jacob pertained the "dominion" in the hands of the King of the whole earth, before whom the rival "city" should fall. It is probable that the *full* import of Balaam's prophecy will not be seen until he himself is before the Star of Jacob, to encounter the dreadful experience of rejection at his hands, in exemplification of his own prophetic lamentation (verse 23): "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

The next chapter in Numbers (ch. xxv.) tells of Israel's committing whoredom and idolatry with the daughters of Moab, which a later chapter explains was by "the counsel of Balaam." The resulting plague from God was only stayed by the "extreme" action of Phinehas, who slew a Prince of Israel and a Princess of Moab with his own hand, after 24,000 had died of the plague. Afterwards, we learn (Num. xxxi.) how God commanded Moses to avenge Israel of the Midianites, and how Moses deputed Phinehas to conduct the expedition with 12,000 Israelites, and how they slew the Kings of Midian, and also "*Balaam, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword*" (v. 8). Balaam in Moabitish intrigue against the way of God in Israel, is a type (Rev. ii. 14); and his end in the war against Midian of the 12,000, who came through without the loss of a man (Num. xxxi. 49), is also typical of what may be expected in the days of vengeance coming, when the Star of Jacob and his 144,000 (Rev. xiv.) carry judgment into the land of the enemy "as in the day of Midian."

It was in "the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho," that the second census of Israel was taken at God's command by Moses, disclosing the dreadful fact that in thirty-eight years the number of the effective men of war in Israel had *decreased* by 1,820 men, and that not a man had survived from the first census save Caleb and Joshua.

It was upon the mountains of Moab that Moses, by God's commandment, went up to die after viewing the Land of Promise, into which he was not permitted to lead Israel because of his trespass at the waters of Meribah Kadesh. "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth Peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 5). Brief, solemn, majestic record. How superhuman! Coupled with the vision upon the Mount of Transfiguration, what memories it wakes! What glorious hopes, coupled with fears and tremblings, it arouses!

Joshua brought Israel into the Land; and after Joshua came the Judges, in whose days Moab arises *in dominion over Israel* because of transgression. "The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened Eglon, the King of Moab, against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon, the King of Moab, eighteen years" (Judges iii. 12-14). From this servitude they were delivered by Ehud, the Benjamite, whom God raised up to deliver them when they cried unto Him. After this the land enjoyed eighty years' rest.

But Israel afterwards, in the days of Jephthah the Gileadite, had relapsed into the old Moabitish and Ammonitish idolatry (Judges x. xi.). At this time the message from God was: "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (Judges x. 14). But "the gods of Moab" were of no avail in such a case, and Israel

confessed their sins, and, putting them away, "served the Lord," who was "grieved for the misery of Israel." He then raised up Jephthah, whose diplomatic communications with the king of Ammon (who desired the peaceable restoration of the Moabite and Ammonite territories) introduced a factor little considered in modern diplomacy, namely, the will of the God of Israel concerning His nation's possession of the Land of Promise.

The main line of Jephthah's argument was this: "*Israel* took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon." They simply desired a peaceable passage through; but when they were refused and Sihon declared war against them, God delivered them into their hand. "So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? Wilt thou not possess *that which Chemosh thy God giveth thee* to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess" (Judges xi.). And Jephthah committed the issue to God, with the result, as the chapter shows, of discrediting Chemosh and subduing his people. This is an illustration of one of many such issues created in the history of Israel, and throws light on the prophecies concerning Moab that found fulfilment in later times, as well as on those that remain to be fulfilled by the nations being made to know God by the judgment that He will execute.

Like a gem among rubbish, there next appears to us, in our glance over the history of Moab, the figure of *Ruth the Moabitess*. Israel in apostacy had served the gods of Moab, and Moab's daughters had corrupted them; but here was a bright exception "Thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods; return thou," said Naomi to her. "But Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And so this Moabitish woman came into Israel and obtained the blessing of Boaz: "The Lord recompence thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Some of the recompence and

reward appears already in the history, for Ruth was united to Boaz in marriage, and her son Obed was the grandfather of David; and thus Ruth the Moabitess finds mention in the genealogy of Messiah (Matt. i. 5). When the Lord "brings again the captivity of Moab" in the latter days, the fulness of Ruth's "recompence of the reward" will doubtless appear. Her history is a great encouragement for all Gentile women who in after times have come to "trust in the Lord God of Israel."

After this Saul conquered Moab and Ammon (1 Sam. xiv. 47). A little later David, in distress before Saul, secured protection from the king of Moab for his father and mother, who dwelt in Moab all the time he was in the cave of Adullam. Afterwards David subdued Moab among the other nations (2 Sam. viii.) and left the kingdom of Israel at last to Solomon. In Solomon history repeats itself, for when he was old his many wives, Moabitish and others, turned away his heart. Undeterred by the command of God not to intermarry with these nations, and uninstructed by the history of Israel before him, "*even Solomon*" built an high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon (1 Kings xi.). The terrible impartiality of the Scriptures, which do not hesitate to overcloud the greatest king of Israel (but one) in the zenith of the kingdom's glory, must appeal to every reflecting mind. Also the greatness of the folly of contracting alien marriages. When God says: "Surely they will turn away your heart," we ought to believe Him.

After Solomon, because of his apostacy, comes the division of the kingdom into Judah and Israel, under Rehoboam and Jeroboam. When Israel was faithful, the surrounding antagonistic nations were subdued, and subject to them. When they apostatized, these arose and prevailed against them. So, after Solomon, Moab arises again. But, as we have unexpectedly learned in the latter days from a Moabitish source, it was again subjugated by Omri, the father of Ahab, though, as the Bible tells us (2 Kings i. 1), "Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab."

What is called "The Moabite Stone," is one of the many monumental evidences that have borne witness to the truth of the Bible in recent years. It was found at Dibon (Dibhân), in the land of Moab, in 1868, and contains an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, the "sheepmaster" mentioned in the second book of Kings. It is now in the Louvre, Paris; but a facsimile may be seen in the British Museum. The inscription is so interesting, that, for the sake of many who may not have read it, it is here transcribed.

THE MOABITE STONE.

"I am Mesha, the son of Chemosh-melek, the King of Moab, the man of Dibhon; my father reigned over Moab for thirty years, and I sat on the throne after my father. I built a high place for Chemosh in Korha, a place of salvation for Mesha, for he hath delivered me from all monarchs, and he hath let me look with scorn upon all mine enemies. Now Omri was king over Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for that Chemosh was wroth with the land. His son reigned in his stead, and he said, 'Now will I oppress Moab.' Thus spake he even in my days; but I have gained the victory over him and over his house, and *Israel is laid waste for ever*. Omri took possession of the land of Medeba, and he dwelt therein in his own days and sometime in the days of his son, even forty years. But in my time, Chemosh gave back the land unto me. Then did I build Baal-Meon, and I have made . . . and I built Kiryathayim. The people of Gad had dwelt in the land of Ataroth from days of old; and the King of Israel built the city of Ataroth. I assaulted the city, and I took it, and I slew all the people thereof in the sight of Chemosh and Moab; and I carried away the *Ariel** of David, and I dragged it on the ground before the face of Chemosh at Kerioth. And I carried away the people of Saron and the people of . . . And Chemosh said unto me, 'Go carry Nebo over Israel.' And I went up by night, and I fought against the city from dawn *even* until noon, and I took it, and I slew every man, even seven thousand men, and children, and women, and maidens, and slaves, and I dedicated them unto Ishtar-Chemosh. And I carried away from thence the *Ariels* of Jehovah, and I dragged them on the ground before the face of Chemosh. And the King of Israel built

*The *Ariel* appears to have been an altar of burnt-offering. *Ari* is a lion, and *El* is God; and in Ezek. xliii. 15-16, the term is applied to the altar. This is in harmony with the fact that *the Lion of God*, even "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," is the altar (Heb. xiii. 10) prefigured in the Mosaic ritual, and memorialized in the restitution of all things that Ezekiel foresaw. In Isaiah xxix., there is a play on the word: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow; and it shall be unto me as (an) Ariel"—*i.e.*, a hearth of God, or altar of burnt-offering. And so it came to pass, when in the judgment of God "the flame of devouring fire" (verse 6) was kindled by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

Yahas and dwelt therein after he had fought against me; but Chemosh drove him forth before me. I led forth two hundred of the men of Moab, I led them up to Yahas, and I took it, that I might join it unto Dibhon. I built Korha, and the forest wall, and the . . . wall, I built the doors and the towers thereof. I built the royal palace, and I digged the sluices for the water cisterns in the city. There was no well in the city of Korha, therefore I said unto all the people, 'Let every man dig him a well in his own house;' and I digged the water-courses even unto Korha by the hands of the captives (?) of Israel. I built Aroer, I made the road unto Arnon. I built again Beth-Bamoth, which was ruined. I built Bosor. . . . I added one hundred cities unto the land of Moab. I built Medeba and Beth-Baal-Meon. . . . And Chemosh said unto me: 'Go down and fight against Horonayim,' and I went down and fought against it. . . ."

Such is Mesha's account of the doings of Moab in the days of Omri and Ahab, some two thousand eight hundred years ago. This was something like two hundred years before Isaiah's prophecy, and upon comparison it will be seen how many of the places mentioned by Mesha are referred to by the prophet in ch. xv. xvi. Mesha's attributing Moab's misfortunes to the "wrath of Chemosh" is a good example of Moabitish turning of things upside down: while his complacent estimate that by his victories "*Israel is laid waste for ever*" is being falsified before our eyes as the prophets of Israel declared: "I will for this afflict the seed of David, but *not for ever.*"

In the days of Jehoram, King of Israel, he formed a coalition with Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and the King of Edom; and God for Judah's sake, wrought the miracle of sending water without wind or rain, and filling the valley that the thirsty host perished not for lack of water (2 Kings iii.). How this is regarded by some of the learned is manifest from the following comment by Wellhausen: "Elisha's miracle in Wadi-'l-Ashá is explained by the locality; Ashá means a sandy ground, with moist subsoil, where, by digging trenches, water is always obtainable." But from personal experience of such digging, many can testify with the writer that it does not at all fit the description of the narrative of the book of Kings, which says (v. 20), "Behold there came water by the way of Edom, and *the country was filled with water.*" Against this the professor can only pit his opinion that that is merely a drawing of the long bow. Some, however, will prefer

the un mutilated record of Scripture, and maintain that it will never yield up its secrets to such an "evil heart of unbelief." God delivered Moab into the hands of the allies at that time; and the King of Moab's offering of his son as a burnt offering in his extremity availed him nothing.*

The foregoing remarks indicate most of the leading features of Moab's origin and history in its bearing on the history of Israel, as delineated in the historical books of the Old Testament. The prophets have a good deal to say about Moab. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah, all mention Moab at greater or less length, and with reference to past and future developments in his land. They speak in the name of the Lord of the ground of the national responsibility, of the judgments that should come upon the people, of the interesting relation of the people occupying that territory in the latter days to the ancient people of Israel, and of the bringing again of the captivity of Moab, and its final subjugation to the throne of David in the hands of the Lord Jesus. It seemed advisable thus to glance over the historical outlines as given in the scriptures before looking at what the prophets have to say of Moab's history that lay before them in the future.

*The reference of the Authorised Version would connect this with the denunciation of Amos ii. 1, which speaks of "the burning of the bones of the King of Edom," but that is evidently another matter. The history in Kings evidently speaks of the King of Moab's son, and the account is so paraphrased by Josephus (*Antiquities*, Book ix., chap. iii.).



CHAPTER XVI.

MOAB'S FINAL SUBJECTION TO THE KINGDOM OF DAVID.

“**I**S he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.” So writes Paul to the Romans. But now in the time of the Gentiles, the things of Israel are so much under eclipse that the questions must needs be reversed. “Is he the God of the Gentiles only?” By no means. “Salvation is of the Jews.” But when Gentiles lay hold of the hope of Israel, Israelitish matters loom so large, and Gentile matters are so belittled, that there is even a possibility of running to the extreme that Paul confronted, and supposing that God has no particular interest in the nations outside Israel.

The truth lies between these extremes. All nations are to be blessed in Abraham and his seed, though the order of blessing is certainly the Jew first, and afterwards the Gentile. And all nations are more or less remotely related to this great and glorious development—some exceedingly remotely, as the Chinese, or the tribes of Central Africa; some more closely, as the nations of European Christendom, and the Mohammedan Occupier and present Desolator of the Lord's land. It was so in ancient times; and the nations surrounding Israel are in the prophets made the subjects of God's communications, which show that He uses them in the out-working of His purpose, and holds them nationally responsible for their attitude to Him and His people Israel.

This is illustrated in the case before us—the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Moab. What are the commands addressed to Moab? What are the judgments proclaimed against him?

What is the reason of them, and the ground of his national responsibility? The opening adjuration of Isa xvi. divinely commands tribute to Israel: "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the Mount of the daughter of Zion."

In this there appears to be a proximate and far future application and intention. As we read in 2 Kings iii. 4, "Mesha, King of Moab, was a sheep master, and rendered unto the King of Israel, an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams with the wool." The magnitude of this tribute and the greatness of the pastoral prosperity that it argues will be best appreciated by those who know something of sheep-farming (as in the Australian Colonies). But Mesha rebelled, as the history in Kings goes on to state, and as he himself says in his inscription on the "Moabite Stone." Long afterwards came this prophecy of Isaiah. That the command produced any proximate obedience on the part of Moab does not appear; but that it will so operate hereafter, we cannot doubt. Moab's tribute will come in with others in the day of Zion's glory, of which God says: "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory" (Isa. lx.). Then will the house of David say: "Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia triumph thou over me (if thou canst)" (Psa. lx. and cviii.). And Judah and Ephraim united under Christ, and with the old enmity healed and forgotten, will "lay their hand on Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them" (Isa. xi. 14).

But before all this, God's judgments were to come upon Moab because of their pride, and their exultation over the calamities He had brought upon His people. "Behold," said He to Moab, among other powers, "I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished" (Jer. xxv. 29). And so Moab had to take of the wine-cup of His fury (v. 15) and come under the same Babylonian yoke (Jer. xxvii. 1-7). Thus,

Moab the uncircumcised was punished with Israel, circumcised in flesh but "uncircumcised in the heart" (ch. ix. 26).

The reasons of the judgments are plainly given in the prophets. The following are examples: "We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so (or, his boasting is nought, R.V.). *Therefore* shall Moab howl for Moab" (Isa. xvi. 6). "*Because* thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together, and the spoiler shall come. . . . 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 into captivity: *therefore* his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. *Therefore* behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence. . . . Moab is spoiled, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of Hosts." The "strong staff and beautiful rod" would be broken and cast away to make room for the "rod out of the stem of Jesse," whose people at last should "lay their hands upon Moab." "Make ye him drunken, for he magnified himself against the Lord. . . . For was not Israel a derision unto thee? . . . Since thou spakest of him thou skippedst for joy." Because of this, God would cause to cease the worship of Moab, and the Babylonian eagle would spread his wings over Moab as over Israel. "And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, *because he hath magnified himself against the Lord*" (Jer. xlvi.).

So Ezekiel (chap. xxv. 8): "*Because* that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen, therefore I will open the side of Moab . . . unto the men of the east, . . . and I will execute judgment upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the Lord." So also Amos ii.: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he burned the bones

of the King of Edom into lime." A king of Moab offered his own son as a burnt offering to his idols in the days of Elisha, and this would appear to have been a similar abomination. It is probably to an action like this that Micah (ch. vi.) alludes when, referring to the intrigues of Balak against Israel and rebuking their idolatry, he says: "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Then again Zephaniah says of Moab: "I have heard the reproach of Moab and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. *Therefore* as I live, saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles and salt pits and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have *for their pride, because* they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of Hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them, for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen" (Zeph. ii. 8-11).

One of the statutes of the law said "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever; *because* they met you not with bread and water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt: *and because* they hired against thee Balaam the Son of Beor of Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse thee" (Deut. xxiii. 44).

All these divine proclamations concerning an outside nation are valuable guidance to the Gentiles if they would but hear them. They are on record against the time to come. They are a standing denunciation of things most esteemed among the nations to this day. Pride, trust in uncertain riches, settlement on the lees, idolatry of various forms, reckoning Israel no different from all the heathen, magnifying themselves against them, even against the Lord and His people—all these things are characteristic, more or

less, of the most prominent Gentile powers to-day, and will be more and more so until the crisis comes which has been so long ago revealed in the prophets. The Anti-Semitic movement, bred and fostered among the European powers, has its condemnation and judgment exemplified in these prophecies; but the supporters of it will certainly not learn righteousness until the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, and their origin, and connection, and aim explained to the humbled remnant of the nations that fight against Zion by her king enthroned in victory.

The proud and wealthy nations of Europe have no idea that they are God's instruments in preparing the world for the establishing of His everlasting kingdom in Israel. They will stand aghast at the revelation when it comes. The lower strata of their societies account those mad who introduce such matters to their notice, while their heavenlies or upper-ten-dom are far above, impervious and inaccessible to any such disturbing visions. And yet the quiet record is there among them all the while—"Nebuchadnezzar my servant," humbled to the estate of a beast of the field till he knew that the heavens do rule--the Assyrian, God's "hired razor" wherewith he "shaved" Israel bare, his "rod" of chastisement which was discarded and thrown into the fire when done with. Prophecy and history are there in abundance, but comparatively few individuals in any age or country do themselves the honour of studying it and believing in God, to the extent of obeying His commandments and waiting for His salvation.

A sharp distinction of time is expressed in the conclusion of Isaiah's prophecy of chapters xv.-xvi. "This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab *since that time (literally, "from then")*. *But now* the Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble." "What manner of time" they spoke of by the spirit, was a subject of diligent search and enquiry by the prophets themselves, who often had to speak and write things they understood not for the benefit of succeeding ages and generations (1 Pet. i. 10-12). At the end their visions were to speak, and their dark sayings to become

intelligible to "the wise." This is coming to pass in the experience of those who by the Word of God in the submission to it are made "wiser than their teachers." An eminent teacher among the higher critics, who will not yield this submission, stands in doubt of this prophecy concerning Moab. He says: "A vivid picture of the confusion and anguish then prevalent in Moab has been preserved to us in the ancient prophecy of Isaiah xv.-xvi., which indeed would have greater historical value if we were able to tell precisely what in it depicts the present, and what is prediction of the future." But no one, however great may be his learning and celebrity, can possibly hope to come anywhere near such discrimination who is ignorant of the gospel of the kingdom, and consequently faithless concerning the divinely-promised restoration of the throne and kingdom of David, which is the subject of allusion in part of this prophecy. To one enlightened by the gospel the case is not so hopeless.

First, then, with regard to the "now," "within three years, as the years of an hireling." The expression, "years of an hireling," is suggestive. In the scriptures the position of a "hireling," or hired servant, is used in contradistinction to that of a *son* and heir. This may be seen in Christ's parable of the vineyard labourers, and that of the prodigal son, also in his contrast of the Pharisaic "hirelings" of Israel with himself as the "good shepherd" (Jno. x.). Nationally Israel is Yahweh's Son, His firstborn (Ex. iv. 22), and the Gentiles—Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Roman, Russian, German, British, or others—His "hirelings," who do His subordinate work, but have not in His house of glory the eternal inheritance of the Son. The Assyrian was His "hired razor;" the Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar) did "great service against Tyre," for which his "wages" was the land of Egypt (Ezek. xxix.), a thing at once historical and prophetic. And so Moab before God was a mere "hireling," though very proud and prosperous, and boasting against Him in Chemosh his god. The same expression is used in chapter xxi. 16 concerning Kedar: "a year according to the years of an hireling." The preservation of Israel to this day under our

eyes, and these expressions in the prophets concerning long vanished peoples, reveal human affairs to our admiring gaze in perspective that can only be divine.

The precise time of the expiry of the "three years" spoken of by Isaiah (xvi. 14), it is no doubt difficult, if not impossible, now to fix with certainty. It is conjectured to refer to Salmanser, who, about this time, destroyed Samaria, and probably previously overran the country east of Jordan. It was most certainly fulfilled, we may be sure, and further light is not so absolutely inaccessible and hopeless as some, even reverent writers, imagine. One of these says: "Half the allusions of Isaiah and Jeremiah must *for ever* remain obscure. *We shall never know* who 'the lords of the heathen' were, who, in that terrible night, laid waste and brought to silence the prosperous Ar-Moab and Kir-Moab. Or the occasion of that flight over the Arnon, when the Moabite women were huddled together at the ford, like a flock of young birds, pressing to cross to the safe side of the stream—when the dwellers in Aroer stood by the side of the high road which passed their town, and eagerly questioned the fugitives as they hurried up, 'What is done?'—received but one answer from all alike—'All is lost! Moab is confounded and broken down!'"

If Isaiah and Jeremiah themselves were destined *for ever* to remain obscure in the oblivion of *hades*, we might share the regret of the writer of these graphic lines. But, with the assurance that they shall prophesy again gloriously in the Kingdom of God, we can look forward to that time of intense interest when, from all the generations of the past will come the chosen witnesses of the work of God in each, comprising in one glorious multitude a living epitome of the Father's work on earth. If Paul could describe the Corinthians as the epistle of Christ written with the Spirit of God, how much more may the "perfect man" be so described in the day of his perfection? How far above all human thoughts and speculations are these divine purposes! How subversive of all high thoughts and reasonings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God!

But to turn from the "now," "within three years" of Isaiah's day to the "from then" of his simultaneous proclamation, what do we see? To what time does the "then" of this word of the Lord point us? To what crisis? To what institution? Who can hesitate to answer in the terms of the prophecy itself: To the time when "in mercy shall the throne (of David) be established; and He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness" (verse 5). But when might that time be? Let the King himself answer. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, *then* shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. xxv. 31). If popular religion does not agree with this, let it be discarded. "*In that day* will I raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old" (Amos ix. 11; Acts xv. 16). Here, then, is a definite time, a definite crisis and institution—the return of Christ and the re-establishment of David's throne. With arithmetical measurements of the time we do not now concern ourselves, as Isaiah does not introduce them. But we look at divine delineation of Moabitish developments to be connected with the crisis that still lies ahead. The command runs: "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land" (verse 3-5).

When David came up to Adullam from the land of the Philistines, he "went thence to Mizpeh of Moab; and said unto the King of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, *till I know what God will do for me*. And he brought them before the King of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold" (1 Sam. xxii. 3-4). What God did for David was this. He caused Saul to fall in battle upon the mountains of Gilboa, and established David on the throne in Jerusalem, which thereafter was known as "the throne of David." After his corona-

tion, David doubtless brought back his relations, before that war with Moab of which we read in 2 Sam. viii. 2. It would appear that in this, as in David's other experiences, and in the history of Joseph and many other places, we have one of those beautiful allegories with which the Bible abounds. David the Second (that is, the Lord Jesus) comes up into his inheritance from the South, and a Spoiler is then in possession of Jerusalem. The Jews, his brethren after the flesh, are in great affliction; and, under these circumstances, the hospitality of Moab for David's parents, at his request, is antitypically repeated in the national hospitality of Moab in the latter days for the fugitive Jews.

But who is the latter-day Spoiler and Extortioner? and who is the latter-day Moab? The answer to these questions must be derived from the other prophecies which speak of the same time, and from what of their fulfilment may be before us in the history of the latter days. Ezekiel, who prophesied about a hundred and thirty years later than Isaiah, and who spoke of the setting-up at last by Yahweh of "one shepherd" over Israel, even his "servant David, a prince among them," revealed the fact that at the crisis of the national resurrection of Israel (ch. xxxvii.) there should arise a Spoiler from the north (ch. xxxviii.) who, with many peoples, should be like a cloud to cover the land; and in his spoiling of the land of Israel, and conflicts with a Southern confederation of Powers, should be the occasion of manifesting the God of Israel in the judgments he would provoke. The two chapters xxxviii., xxxix. tell of this great crisis, and then follows the temple vision and the setting-up of God's throne in Israel in the hands of the Prince of the House of David. Daniel also received from the angel a revelation of the actions of these rival powers in "the time of the end" (Dan. xi. 40). The King of the North overflows and spoils the glorious land; "but these shall escape out of his hand even Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." Here then is the "covert" for the "outcasts" in the terrible "time of trouble" that immediately precedes the "establishment in mercy of the throne of David" (Isa. xvi.). Daniel agrees with Ezekiel in the revelation that the appearing of the glory

of God marks that time to favour Zion, for in ch. xii. we have the standing up of Michael the *great Prince* (the Lord Jesus), and the resurrection of the dead associated with the same time.

We have only to study the signs and the times to satisfy ourselves perfectly that we are in this "time of the end." In Dan. xi. the Northern King, though Moab escapes him, is to "have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt." A hundred years ago and less Egypt was incomparably less of a prize than at present. The cutting of the Suez Canal, and the British occupation have vastly improved the country, and excited the jealousies and cupidities that the prophetic word implies. British Imperial Sea-Power in Egypt and the South; and Russian Imperial Land-Power in all the countries of the North fits the prophecies exactly in all details of time, place, and circumstance. The demonstration of the fact was most discerningly and faithfully made by Dr. Thomas in *Elpis Israel* fifty years ago, when there was very much less evidence available than at present. His unhesitating conviction expressed so long ago, that God "will bring Britain's rulers to see the desirableness of Egypt . . . which they will be induced, by force of circumstances probably, to take possession of" (p. 398), is a standing monument to the correctness of his interpretations; for over thirty years afterwards the thing came to pass. And this was but one item of many that prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that in these latter days the words of the prophets have (to a certain class) become intelligible as God said they should.

Driven out of Egypt by Russia and her allies, Britain, whose solitary friendship for the Jews is now so conspicuous amidst a world of persecutors, takes refuge in Edom and Moab, and there becomes a "covert" for the "outcasts," who are now, in their "Zionist" movements, establishing themselves in the land of Palestine in a feeble manner, as Ezekiel xxxviii. requires. These things are the signs of the time of the end and the nearness of the kingdom of God. Although a Jewish kingdom, its aims and objects are not the mere lust of dominion and

self-aggrandizement at the expense of other nations. Far otherwise. Its king shall reign "in mercy," "judging and seeking judgment, and *hasting righteousness*." This will indeed be a new kingdom in the earth, in which at last "many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." And among them Moab, as it is written: "Yet I will bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord." That is to say, the country will be re-populated, and Ruth the Moabitess, and any others of Moab who may have "entered into the congregation of the Lord" in the highest sense, and now be imprisoned in the confines of *hades*, will be liberated by the almighty power of him who, having "ascended up on high, has led captivity captive and given gifts unto men" (Eph. iv.). The ancient animosity of Moab, like the "envy" between Ephraim and Judah, will then be a thing of the past, and the glad and bounteous tribute of his fertile pastures be accepted upon God's altar in "the mount of the daughter of Zion."





CHAPTER XVII.

DAMASCUS AND "THE DAY OF VENGEANCE."

FROM Moab Isaiah turns again to Syria, and by the word of the Lord speaks in chapter xvii. of "the burden of Damascus." Syria, like Moab, was related to the divine purpose, and Damascus, like Ar and Kir, having corrupted Israel with her idolatry, and presumptuously desolated the inheritance of the Lord, was equally amenable to divine judgment. At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, Israel is associated with Syria in the denunciations, for they were confederates, as the Bible tells us, in the days of Ahaz against the kingdom of Judah, thinking to subvert the dynasty and annul the covenant of God with David by setting the son of Tabeal upon the throne (Isa. vii. 6).

Even the least reflective of men must admit that it is not a little remarkable that the records of the activities of these peoples two thousand six hundred years ago should at this remote time circulate in ever increasing volume in hundreds of millions of copies among all peoples and nations and tongues. But even the most intelligent and devout will find it difficult, if not impossible, to rouse up to any interest therein, unless enlightened by the Gospel of the Kingdom. But once thus enlightened, then indeed all things become new. Ancient places and ancient men, ancient struggles, threshing out simple but vast and far-reaching divine principles, become associated with a future which eclipses in sublime interest all that has ever gone before; and in which the ancients of Israel shall once again tread on the ancient high places of their long past sojourning in the days of their mortal weakness, and the supremacy of Israel's God over all nations shall be vindicated beyond question for a thousand years.

In the light of the gospel "whatsoever things were written aforetime" appear full of instruction and interest; and to those who walk in that light, the fact of their being "written aforetime" is sufficient to engage their respectful and earnest "search." What then can we glean from this "burden of Damascus" that has come to us in our own mother tongue in these latter days? Like the "burden of Moab" that precedes it, it is associated with a time of "eventide trouble" for Israel; of angry rushing nations like the billows of a storm-tossed sea; and with the sweeping away of the Spoiler by a divine REBUKER as thistle-down before the whirlwind!

From Isaiah's time to this great crisis, still in our future, stretches what is to mortals a vast span of time. To God it is not so. On the thousand-years-to-a-day scale (2 Pet. iii. 8) it is less than three days. Hence we must be prepared when we read: "In that day shall it come to pass" thus and so, to take this large view of time, to remember that God sees the end from the beginning, and to enquire accordingly with reference to time and circumstance, with the end—the Kingdom of God, always in view.

Taking this view, it cannot but be instructive to look back through the scriptures upon the lands and cities that were the subjects of divine operations in times past, the records of which, in greater or less detail, He has seen fit to preserve for our use. Damascus past, present, and future, is by no means the barren theme that once it would have seemed to most of us.

Damascus has been a notable place from time immemorial. Josephus says it was founded by Uz, the grandson of Shem. Shem's son Aram, gave his name to the land, which was afterwards called Syria (from Tyre, *Tzur*), and Mesopotamia is called in the Hebrew, Aram-Naharaim, Aram of the two rivers (Euphrates and Tigris). The name Padan-Aram (Plain of Aram), in the A.V., Gen. xxv., xxviii., &c., connects with this. In Aram's country on a natural and beautiful site, Uz, his son, founded the beautiful city Damascus. The following description by a traveller is interesting.

"Damascus . . . occupies a site of singular beauty. On the eastern side of the range of Anti-Libanus, is a plain of vast extent, reaching far out into Arabia, and having an elevation of 2,200 feet above the sea. The river Barada, the Abana of the Bible, rises in the centre of the mountain range, descends through a sublime ravine, enters the plain, flows across it eastward for 20 miles, and empties itself into a lake, which, in the heat of the summer, becomes a morass. On the banks of the Abana, about a mile from the mouth of the ravine, stands Damascus. The river intersects the city in a deep rapid current, averaging 50 feet wide. On its northern bank is a large and comparatively modern suburb, but the whole of the ancient walled city, and the principal buildings, are spread over the plain on the south. The Abana is the life of Damascus, and has made it perennial. By an admirable system of channels and pipes, many of them apparently of high antiquity, its waters are not only conveyed through every quarter, but into almost every house, supplying that first requisite of Eastern life and luxury. The river is also extensively used for irrigation. Canals are led off from it at different elevations above the city, and carried far and wide over the surrounding plain, converting what would otherwise be a parched desert into a paradise. The orchards, gardens, vineyards, and fields of Damascus cover a circuit of at least sixty miles, and they owe their almost unrivalled beauty and luxuriance to the Abana. The area irrigated and rendered fertile by it is upwards of 300 square miles in extent, and the river Awaj, the ancient Pharpar, irrigates nearly 100 more. There was truth, therefore, in the boastful words of Naaman (2 Kings v. 12), "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

"The view of Damascus from the crest of Antilibanus is scarcely surpassed in the world. The elevation is about 500 feet above the city, which is nearly two miles distant. The distance lends enchantment to the view; for while the peculiar forms of Eastern architecture do not bear close inspection, they look like an Arabian poet's dream when seen from afar. Tapering minarets and swelling domes, tipped with golden crescents, rise

above the white terraced roofs; while in some places their glittering tops appear among the green foliage of the gardens. In the centre of the city stands the Great Mosque, and near it are the grey battlements of the old castle. Away on the south the eye follows a long suburb, while below the ridge on which we stand is the *Merj*, the *Ager Damascenus* of early travellers—a green meadow extending along the river from the mouth of the ravine to the city. The gardens and orchards, which have been so long and so justly celebrated, encompass the whole city, sweeping the base of the bleak hills like a sea of verdure, and covering an area more than thirty miles in circuit—not uniformly dense, but with open spots here and there. Beyond this circuit are large clumps of trees, dotting the plain almost to the horizon. The varied tints of the foliage greatly enhance the beauty of the picture.”

Such is the appearance of the modern survival of the city of Shem's grandson, the scene of many interesting developments from his day onwards. The first mention that is made of it in Scripture is in Gen. xv., where Abram says before God: “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus.” Although not the “heir,” this faithful man of Damascus had to do with the heir, for he had later to return to the country of his origin to take a wife for Isaac. And God opened his way in the beautiful manner described in Gen. xxiv. After this we hear nothing of Damascus till David's time, when, in the subduing of all the neighbouring kingdoms, he slew of the Syrians of Damascus 22,000 men and put garrisons in Syria of Damascus (2 Sam. viii.). In Solomon's reign, however, because of his apostacy, God brought about a reversal. “God stirred him up an adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliadah, who fled from his lord Hadadezer, king of Zobah. And he gathered men unto him and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah; and they went to Damascus and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did; and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Syria” (1 Kings xi. 24). Thus, as in the case of Moab, so with Syria and

Damascus; when Israel was faithful to God they were subdued under them; when they transgressed the enemy prevailed by the express determination and foreknowledge of God.

Afterwards, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we read of the leagues and conflicts of the Syrians with Israel and Judah, as when Benhadad first leagued with Baasha of Israel against Asa of Judah; and then with Asa against Baasha (1 Kings xv.; 2 Chron. xvi.); or when Benhadad II. took certain cities of Israel, and laid siege to Samaria, but was defeated and taken prisoner by Ahab, who spared his life, and was rebuked by a prophet for so doing (1 Kings xx.). After this, Ahab, transgressing in the matter of Naboth's vineyard, is slain in battle when he goes against the Syrians to Ramoth Gilead, and, according to the word of the Lord, the dogs lick his blood in Samaria in the place where they licked the blood of Naboth, his victim (1 Kings xxii.).

Later on, in the days of Jehoram, king of Israel, and of Elisha the prophet, Benhadad, king of Syria, has an exhibition of the power of the God of Israel in the healing of Naaman, his captain, of his leprosy. He sends a deputation to Jehoram with a royal present of money and goods, the gold alone representing more than ten thousand pounds, with the request that he would heal Naaman of his leprosy. How Jehoram was dismayed at the request, and how Elisha intervened, is well known to all who know the truth. The healing of Naaman. is one of the most beautiful object lessons in all the Scriptures. The Great Mosque of Damascus, referred to in the description above, is supposed to cover the site of the "house of Rimmon," where Naaman afterwards so reluctantly escorted his royal master in his vain worship.

That Benhadad was not convinced by Naaman's cleansing, appears from his subsequent war against Israel, which was the occasion of the manifestation of a further work of divine power in the opening of the eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan to the perception of the angelic host that encamped about the besieged city; and the subsequent smiting of the Syrian host with blindness, and leading them captive to Samaria, where

Jehoram fed them, and sent them back to their master (2 Kings vi.).

One would think that such treatment would melt a heart of stone; but a siege of Samaria by Benhadad immediately follows (2 Kings vii.), which is raised miraculously, as the chapter goes on to say. Some years afterwards, Elisha comes to Damascus, and Benhadad, being sick, sends to enquire of him whether he shall recover. Now, the position here is peculiar, and affords a wonderful illustration of the divine manifestation of time, place and circumstance. Some fifteen years or so previously God had commissioned Elijah to anoint Hazael king over Syria. Elijah had been removed; and Elisha, with a double portion of his spirit, acted, as it were, as his deputy in the land of Israel. Benhadad, almost like Pharaoh, had rejected every evidence that the Lord God of Israel is the true God, and now he sent the very man who was to murder him, to the very prophet who was to appoint that man to be king in his place. So Hazael put Benhadad's question: "Shall I recover?" And Elisha answered: "Go, *say* unto him, thou *mayest* certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die." And Elisha, foreseeing what Hazael would do to Israel, looked steadfastly at him and wept. What various things make men weep!

So Hazael murdered Benhadad by suffocating him with a wet cloth, and reigned in his stead. All this was long before Isaiah's time—some hundred and fifty years or so; but it is illustrative of the connection of Damascus and Syria with Israel, and of the fact that the hand of God was upon the people, dealing with them according to their relation to Him and His people Israel. Then we have a brief allusion to the ministry of a prophet that is not elsewhere recorded, when we read in 2 Kings xiv. in the days of Jeroboam II., of "the word of the Lord God of Israel which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah the son of Amittai." Jonah's mission, which is the matter of record in the book bearing his name, had to do with Nineveh, and provided the "sign of the prophet Jonas" with reference to the burial and resurrection of Messiah. This had to do with

the recovery of territory to Israel, and we read of Jeroboam that "he recovered Damascus." So Damascus alternately prevailed and was prevailed against during the history of the Kings of Israel, until in Isaiah's day, we find it confederated with Samaria—Syria with Israel, to overturn the kingdom of David.

In chapter vii. Isaiah had already foretold the fall of Syria and Damascus. We glanced at the history of the time when looking at the prophecy of Immanuel. Ahaz, oppressed by Syria and Israel, called in the help of Tiglath Pileser, King of Assyria, a name that has been recovered in the Assyrian inscriptions. Ahaz robbed the temple of the silver and gold to provide the necessary "present." Tiglath Pileser accordingly "went against Damascus and took it and *carried all the people of it captive to Kir* and slew Rezin" (2 Kings xvi. 9). Upon this Ahaz went to Damascus to congratulate the Assyrian King, and while there copied the idolatry of Damascus which became "the ruin of him and of all Israel" (2 Chron. xxviii. 23). These were the circumstances related to Isaiah's prophecy (ch. xvii. 1): "Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city and it shall be a ruinous heap."

Amos likewise had foretold the destruction and captivity that should overtake Damascus, and had given the reason of it. He said, "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: *because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron.* But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeel, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. I will also break the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria *shall go into captivity into Kir,* saith the Lord" (Amos i. 3-5). The book of Kings records the fulfilment of the words of Amos and Isaiah as we see, and furnishes another assurance that God is not indifferent to the oppression of His nation and the appropriation of His land at the hands of the nations outside, especially when He deigns to give them sufficient evidence to prove that He is the Creator and Possessor of the heavens and earth.

Damascus recovered from these calamities, and was afterwards the subject of further prophecy, of overthrow by the Babylonians. Jeremiah spoke of this about B.C. 600 (ch. xlix.), and later Ezekiel speaks of the city as trafficking with Tyre in wine and wool (Ezek. xxvii. 18). The very name Damascus, has become embedded in our language in connection with fruits and fabrics for which the ancient city was celebrated. "Damson," which used to be written "damascene," is really from "Damascus;" and the term "damask" (which is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew), whether applying to figured fabric, or a rich red colour, has the same origin. Even in the scriptures an example of this latter usage is found, for the most confusing allusion of the A.V. in Amos iii. 12—"the children of Israel . . . *in Damascus in a couch,*" is made intelligible by the R.V., which renders the last words "on the silken cushions (damask) of a bed."

"The fortress also," said Isaiah (ch. xvii. 3), "shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of Hosts. And in that day it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim." "The glory of Jacob" is a wider thing than "Ephraim," and in harmony with previous utterances it would seem that Judah is here included in the desolation foretold. The figure of the harvesting in the valley of Rephaim would be forcible and intelligible enough to Judah; for it was not only that it was a fertile valley near Bethlehem, where harvesting operations found ample illustrations; but in that valley the Philistines had been wont to come up and gather Israel's harvest (2 Sam. xxiii. 13; Jud. vi. 3). It was here that David twice smote the Philistines, enquiring of the Lord beforehand and being assured of victory (2 Sam. v. 18-25). Isaiah's contemporaries, therefore, would know only too well what the spoiling of the glory of Jacob like the harvesting in Rephaim meant. Looking back, we see how the word accomplished its purpose. First

Ephraim was "harvested" by the Assyrian, and then Judah, by the Babylonian, and the "glory of Jacob" as manifested in the goodly kingdom of David and Solomon went under eclipse.

But, as in former prophecies, the foretold desolation was associated with the salvation of a remnant: "Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the Asherim (R.V.) or the sun images."

The figures of the remnant, and the attitude of the "man," in contrast with the idolatry of Ahaz, direct us to the "day" in question. It is "the day of Christ," in which, as Isaiah had said (ch. x. 20), "the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel in truth. The remnant shall return (*Shear Jashub*), unto (*El Gibbor*) the Mighty God," that is the Lord Jesus (Isa. ix. 6-7; Lu. i. 32). From the dust of death the fathers and the prophets, and all the saints small and great, will return to him; and from all the lands of the enemy the remnant of his scattered nation will return to Immanuel's land. The rustling noise of the dry bones of Israel (Ezek. xxxvii.), as heard in Zionism, is at once the earnest of the political resurrection of the whole house of Israel, and (with the angry state of the nations), of the literal resurrection of the dead in Christ.

From the throne downwards *the eyes of man will be towards his Maker*. How great the contrast between Ahaz and Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem! How different the attitude towards the Assyrian. "This man (the Bethlehem-born Ruler of Judah), shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men" (or princes of the Man—Ps. xlv. 16; Isa. xxxii. 1). And they shall waste the

land of Assyria with the sword. . . . And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as a dew from the Lord" (Mic. v. 5-7).

And as to Damascus, in those days it will be the peaceful capital of its country, in the hands of some of the shepherd-princes who are parts of the "perfect Man" in the kingdom of God. A brief allusion in Zechariah's prophecy seems to refer to this. He says: "The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof, *when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord*" (ch. ix. 1). This is associated in the context, both preceding and following, with prophecies of the vindication of Jerusalem and the entry of her king, the cutting off of the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and his speaking peace to the nations, in the midst of the children of the resurrection.

What sweet revenges await the faithful in the day of Christ! Elisha, who wept before Hazael in the city of Benhadad, will see Damascus transformed into a paradise, perhaps specially subject to his immortal administration, in the kingdom of God. Isaiah, who witnessed its antagonism with Ephraim against the kingdom of Judah, and who was an alien in the midst of his people for his testimony (ch. viii. 12), will rejoice with Shem, Abraham, David, Paul, and others in the glory of Immanuel's "rest," on the scene of their mortal "sojournings." The desolation that prevails over all these Bible lands, because Israel forgot the God of his salvation, and was not mindful of the Rock of his strength (Isa. xvii. 10), is only the earnest of the good things which are, by the same word, and at the same time, promised for the comfort and encouragement of the remnant who shall not "forget," or be unmindful, but who, like the prophets of old, shall walk in faith of the law and the testimony with their eye upon the kingdom of God to come.

Damascus still stands among its beautiful orchards and fields, watered by its perennial rivers, one among many witnesses to those who consider, of the truth of God revealed in the scriptures. The word that decreed the perpetual extinction

of Babylon, decrees the perpetuation of Damascus; but before it becomes "the rest," of its country in the kingdom of God, a fearful inundation of many peoples sweeping southward to Jerusalem will pass over the city and country. At first reading, the latter end of Isaiah's seventeenth chapter seems to have but little relation to what goes before, but the more we consider it the more we admire God's arrangement of the Word, and discover that the fault lay with our own perception in the failure to attain to the divine point of view.

RUSHING NATIONS AND EVENTIDE TROUBLE.

"Ah, the uproar of many peoples, which roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of many waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but HE shall rebuke him, and he shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. At eventide behold terror; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" (Isa. xvii. 12-14, R.V.).

This is the vision that Isaiah sees in connection with his denunciation of woe upon the northern spoilers of his day—Syria confederate with apostate Ephraim—whose judgment, with "the burden of Damascus," he had just proclaimed. The propriety of the connection does not at first appear, and does not appear at all where the gospel of the kingdom is unknown. Of the truth of this last remark, the following clerical comment may be taken as evidence. It is quoted so that those who have been honoured with a knowledge of the truth may be incited to a fuller estimation of their privilege:

"The passage that follows (xvii. 12-14) is one of considerable beauty. It does seem to be connected with the prophecy which precedes, and does not belong to that which follows. It is one of Isaiah's striking miniatures of the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. There is no necessity to regard it as a fragment of some larger prophecy. The prophet

probably inserted the piece in this place of his gallery to mark the contrast between the fates of Israel and of Judah when they severally came into collision with the might of Assyria. The moral of the lesson is too evident to need comment."

So writes the "Rev." C. H. H. Wright, D.D., Ph.D., vicar of St. John's, Liverpool. But, on reading his remarks, one is constrained to ask: Is this "a light that shineth in a dark place?" Is there not more light in the "sure word" than is condensed into this brief paragraph? No doubt the allusion: "eventide trouble, and before the morning he is not," is very suggestive of the destruction of Sennacherib's army; but Isaiah had already spoken of that in chapter ten, and that deliverance, though great, was small by comparison with the salvation that awaits Israel in the time of the great international conflict that belongs to the "eventide" of which Isaiah here speaks.

Then, again, so far from the passage not seeming to be connected with the prophecy that precedes it, nor with that which follows, the very reverse is the case. It is naturally connected with both. It is connected with the previous portion of chap. xvii. in that it portrays the eventide struggle that ushers in the day of the Lord, when "the eyes of a man shall look towards his Maker" (verse 7), and in which the rushing nations shall overrun the territory of Damascus and Samaria, with which the prophet is dealing. It is connected with chap. xviii., which introduces one of these rushing nations and its peculiar characteristics, and speaks of the result of the struggle in the judgment of the assembled hosts, the giving of their carcasses to the fowls of heaven, and the subsequent restoration of Israel to the land of promise that has been so long desolated for their sins. The last verses of chapter xvii. may be regarded as a summary of matters, some of the details of which are revealed in chapter xviii., and others are found in other places of Isaiah's prophecies (and in the words of the other prophets), where they speak of the same great crisis of the time of the end.

No originality is to be attributed to the present writer concerning the ideas contained in the remarks that follow. They are derived almost in their entirety from the expositions of Dr. Thomas that have been current in a small circle of believers of the truth for about fifty years past. At the same time they are not received without that proving of all things which the apostle enjoins, and which Dr. Thomas was ever wont to insist on concerning his own or any other writings. Peter, speaking of the word of prophecy, made more sure by the things that had recently happened to Jesus Christ, of which he was an eye witness; and exhorting the believers to take heed to it as unto a lamp shining in a dark or squalid place (2 Pet. i.), tells them in so doing to know first that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of private or special interpretation. "For," says he, "no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." So that any true interpretation by whomsoever, is not of the individual's own heart, but derived from the Spirit-word, and, being in harmony with all the Spirit's utterances, will appeal at once as true to all men of good and honest heart, sufficiently conversant with the Bible and human history.

Dr. Thomas wrote particularly concerning this portion of Isaiah as far back as 1853. His remarks concerning it were reproduced in the *Christadelphian* for 1892, and may profitably be referred to by those who possess the volume. He gave a translation of Isa. xvii. 12 to xviii. 7 inclusive, which, whatever may be said against it, corresponds remarkably well with that of the Revised Version of 1885. The article was entitled: "*The Breaking of the Russo-Assyrian Clay, the Redemption of Zion and her Sons,*" which, to his mind, defined the scope and intention of the prophecy. Increasing familiarity with the subject will only deepen the impression that this definition is correct.

To follow the words of Isaiah xvii. 12-14, we may remark first of all that the figure of a troubled sea is common in the prophets, and beautifully expressive of human affairs in the kingdoms of men; and that the eventide rushing of nations like mighty waters is also a frequently proclaimed feature of the prophetic word. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it

cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. lvii. 20-21). And the wickedness of the rushing nations spoken of in ch. xvii. is phenomenal, as the prophets elsewhere testify.

"I saw, as it were, a sea of glass, having been mingled with fire," said John, in Patmos (Rev. xv. 2), when he described the effect of the wrathful judgment of "the Lamb," who, in the days of his flesh, had calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The international storm that he will yet reduce to a glassy calm is the subject of allusion in the Psalm which says, "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Psa. xlvi. 1-8). The context of this psalm, like Isaiah xvii. and xviii., has to do with "the redemption of Zion and her sons." And another Psalm says: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psa. xciii.). The theme of this psalm is the stability of the world in the kingdom of God, and the identity of the language quoted with that of Isaiah xviii. is sufficiently obvious.

"The nations shall rush like the rushing of mighty waters; but He shall rebuke him." This language of Isaiah also corresponds well with that of the last-named psalm, and with the revelations of the prophets in general concerning the latter days. The rushing waters encounter the divine rebuke when they sweep against Jerusalem. It is as when storm-tossed breakers spend themselves upon the rocks. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job xxxviii. 11), has this application to the sea of nations, as much as to the literal waves of the ocean. Nothing in the scriptures is clearer than this, that the kingdom of God is to be established on earth upon the ruins of the antagonistic kingdoms of men, and that the great crisis to come has to do with the promised land and the city Jerusalem, where the hosts of the enemy are to be judged

and Christ enthroned in victory, notwithstanding all their opposition. The second psalm tells us this plainly. God will have the raging nations in derision, and will say: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Psalms xlv.-xlviii. speak of the same thing in various phases, and so do various others.

Isaiah says also that God will punish the host of the high ones, and the kings of the earth upon the earth, as a preliminary to the reign of the Lord of Hosts in Mount Zion (ch. xxiv. 21-23); and that Jesus will scatter or startle many nations, causing the waste places of Jerusalem to break forth into joy (lii.). That the nation and kingdom that will not serve Zion shall perish (lx.). That Jesus will tread the winepress in the day of vengeance when the year of his redeemed is come (lxiii.). The other prophets also speak of the same last crisis. Ezekiel (ch. xxxviii.-xxxix.), foretells the overspreading of the Holy Land by the Northern hosts as a storm-cloud. Daniel (ch. xi. 40) says the Northern invader shall overflow, and pass over and plant the tabernacles of his palace . . . in the glorious holy mountain in the time of the end. Joel says (chap. iii.) that all the heathen shall be gathered against Jerusalem for judgment. Micah (ch. iv.) speaks of the threshing in the last days of the many nations that gather against Zion. And instances might be multiplied.

"But He shall rebuke him." Who is the Rebuker and who is the rebuked? God is the Rebuker, as the A.V. rightly indicates in italics. But God has deputed the rebuking of the sinners of the earth to Jesus Christ, which is a matter that they are very slow to recognise. The "strong delusion" that has settled down upon Christendom has altogether obscured this side of Christ's work. He is in effect still alienated from his inheritance in the house of his professed friends. Like the Jews, all Christendom is in effect sending a message after him: "We will not have this man to reign over us." It seems a mere raving of fanaticism to say so; but wherever the gospel of his kingdom is preached, it is rejected by the vast majority. And it cannot be gainsaid by anyone that it is revealed that the nations of Christendom are to make war upon him when he

returns from heaven, and are to be overcome by him before his enthronement in Zion. This phase of his work is plainly revealed in all the prophetic and apostolic writings. It was so much plainer in the prophets than his sacrificial work, that the Jews accepted the former to the overlooking of the latter. Christendom has reversed their error, and worse confounded the ancient confusion.

Isaiah speaks of Jesus as the Rebuker. He is the Child born and Son given to the house of David, who shall break the yoke of Israel in a time of war unparalleled (ch. ix.). "He shall judge among the nations and rebuke many peoples" (ii. 4). "For behold the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke like flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (lxvi. 15-16). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 7-8). Thus he will be peace to Israel and destruction to the enemy (Mic. v. 5) and will "divide the spoil with the strong" (Isaiah liii. 12). Without doubt he is the Rebuker.

But who is the rebuked? Why should the word speak of an individual as it were, in antagonism to the individual Rebuker in the time of the end? Because at that time the nations gather together under one Head to oppose the King of the whole earth by right divine. And because in all the prophets this fact is revealed, and their language is in accord with it. First, with regard to the fact; and then with regard to the identity of the headship. Balaam, speaking of the "last end of Jacob" said, "his King shall be higher than Agag." (The LXX. renders this "Gog.") Isaiah, speaking of the coming of the Name of the Lord from far, says: "Tophet is ordained of old yea for *the king* it is prepared" (xxx. 33). That is, "Hinnom's vale of slaughter" shall receive and consume "the Assyrian" (verse 31). Daniel says that the constituents of the great image representing the Kingdom of men were broken to

pieces *together* by the stone (ch. ii. 35), and therefore the Babylonian "head of gold" must have a latter-day representative to be broken.

Individuals come and go but Powers remain, however they may be transformed, just as a river remains though its constituent waters change continually. Some remarks concerning the latter-day Babylon and the headship thereof have been made in previous chapters (chs. ix., xiv.). The king is "*the king*" who "shall do according to his will," and who, in the time of the end, shall come to his end on the mountains of Israel (Dan. xi.). This is the "*proud man*" (Hab. ii. 5) who gathers unto him all nations, and lades himself with "thick clay" (compare Dan. ii. 34); but only to become "booties" for the children of the resurrection, with whom Christ "divides the spoil." All these allusions, by the spirit of God scattered through various speakers and times, point to the headship of the kingdom of men in the great crisis coming.

The matter is focalised, as it were, in Ezekiel xxxviii.-xxxix., where the description of Gog and his confederated hosts is given. In ch. xxxviii. 17, God says, "Art thou he" (or, rather, "Art *not* thou he?" for God does not ask the question for information, but the reverse)*—"Art (not) THOU HE *of whom I have spoken in old time* by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring thee against them?" And further on in the same prophecy (xxxix. 8), it says: "Behold, it is come, it is done saith the Lord God; THIS IS THE DAY WHEREOF I HAVE SPOKEN." So then here is the head of the heathen who is to be rebuked by the Lord Jesus in the time of eventide trouble. The identity of Gog and of the nations alluded to in Ezekiel's prophecy is well known to those for whom these pages are written, and need not here be re-established. From the foregoing and other considerations, they will not hesitate to endorse Dr. Thomas's description of the divine work of Isaiah's allusion in chs. xvii.-xviii. as "The Breaking of the Russo-Assyrian Clay." Those who are

* It is like Ahab's question in 1 Kings xvii.: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" better rendered by the R.V., "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?"

not familiar with the identification in question may make themselves acquainted with it in *Elpis Israel*, pp. 377-392.

The allusion to the fate of the rushing nations in Isa. xvii. 13, is quite in accordance with the other sayings of God's "servants, the prophets of Israel." Thus the expression, "chaff of the mountains before the wind, and the whirling dust before the storm," is parallel with Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the end of the kingdoms of men. The constituents of the representative image, under the descent of the "stone," "became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them" (Dan. ii. 35). This, Daniel told the king, represented the breaking in pieces and consumption of all those kingdoms, by the kingdom of the God of heaven (verse 44). The preliminary stroke of judgment in that great work is the subject of Isaiah's prophecy in chapters xvii. - xviii.

"And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not." "The evening and the morning were the first day." Chaos and darkness preceded it, and were banished by God's decree — "Let there be light." But, as Moses says (Psa. xc.), "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night;" a fact concerning which Peter says to the brethren: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises" (2 Pet. iii. 8). We are in the "eveningtide" preceding the world's "Sabbath," of which Paul speaks to the Hebrews in ch. iv. 9. "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. xiii. 11-12). The present-day movements of the nations in the swelling waves of military hosts rolling southward and eastward, with ever increasing amplitude, is an eloquent sign of the eveningtide trouble, when the mighty waters will converge against the Lord's land, and, according to His decree, find their prescribed boundary and subjection.

Dr. Thomas has the following remarks upon the "eveningtide trouble" :—

"*At eveningtime . . . and before the dawn.*" This interval between the evening and the dawn is styled in Daniel, 'the time of the end.' We are now in the eveningtime of the day of salvation—the 'to-day' of the times of the Gentiles. . . . The eveningtime before the dawn is the 'time of trouble' foretold by Daniel, when Jehovah shall come with his holy ones. 'But,' saith Zechariah (xiv. 6), 'light shall not be, the splendid ones draw themselves in. [Compare the margin of the R.V., "the bright ones shall contract themselves."—C. C. W.] But it shall be one day, this is known to Jehovah—not day, nor night, but it shall be at eveningtime there shall be light.' This is a remarkable passage. *Yiquahroth yiquiphahron*, the splendid ones draw themselves in. Though they that be wise are to shine as the sun, as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars *in the Kingdom*, we learn from the text in Zechariah, that when they appear with Jesus 'before the dawn,' before the Kingdom is set up, they restrain their splendour, as it may be supposed Christ did during his forty days sojourning with his disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension. This leads to the conclusion that while Christ and the saints are carrying on the war of Armageddon against 'the Beast, False Prophet, and kings of the earth and their armies,' during the eveningtime, they will appear like other men. They will draw themselves in, restraining the manifestation of their brightness until they have fully executed the judgment given them to do."

"At eveningtime brightness shall shine forth; that is, at the close of it. When the light shines, the dawn has passed, and the darkness been chased away. The day of glory shines upon the world, and the earth becomes full of the knowledge of it. The interval between the rebuke of the Assyrian by Jesus Christ, and the shining forth of his day, will be, I take it, about 40 years. This will be the most extraordinary period of the world's history. The re-appearance of Christ, the resurrection of the saints, the dashing in pieces of the governments as a potter's vessel, the restoration of Israel, the manifestation of Paradise in the Holy

Land, and the regeneration of the nations, are the events characteristic of the period. Who would not pray, 'Thy kingdom come?'

“‘Before the dawn he is not.’ In answer to the question, Who is not? we have, He whom the Ruler of Israel rebukes, and chases like chaff before the wind. The fate of this Assyrian awaits all the Powers that oppress Israel.”





CHAPTER XVIII.

“THE LAND SHADOWING WITH WINGS.”

HAVING by the Spirit exhibited the rebuking of the Head of the heathen in the time of eventide trouble, and the dispersion of his hosts, “as the whirling dust before the storm,” the prophet turns to a Power that stands in a less obnoxious relation to Israel’s King and Rebuker of his enemies. Indeed, it is at once evident that this Power is somewhat of the nature of a Gentile ally. The prophet says:—

“Ah! land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Cush: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, (*saying*) Go ye swift messengers to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.”

The quotation as given is selected by choice between the Authorised and Revised Versions and the marginal notes of each. It is perfectly obvious that both King James’ translators and those of the Revision of 1885, are in the dark concerning the import of the prophecy; the latter less excusably, because of the 274 years extra development of the “land” and “wings” in question that was before their eyes. As between the Authorised and Revised Versions in this place, it may, indeed, be said that “the old is better.” “Shadowing” (v. 1) is better than “rustling,” which the R.V. places in the text, relegating “shadowing” to the margin. “A nation tall and smooth” (R.V., v. 2) is nonsense. “A nation scattered and peeled” (A.V.) is intelligible, scriptural, and historically discoverable. It is not without reason that Dr. Thomas indulges in some delicate irony on some translator’s uncertainty between

vertical and lateral extension ; as implied in the renderings "tall" and "outspread," and "scattered" or "dragged away"! Or, again, on their extraordinary dilemma between "peeled" and "polished"! Then again, "a nation . . . trodden" (A.V.) is correct, and "a nation . . . that treadeth" (R.V.) is manifestly incorrect, as we shall see. But, with the quotation as given above, and the knowledge of "the hope of Israel" derived from the writings of Dr. Thomas, we can easily trace the bearing of the prophecy, and discern that all modern developments in Israel and among the Gentiles attest the truth of his interpretation.

First, then, as to the "LAND SHADOWING WITH WINGS." The idea of overshadowing wings is not confined to this place, nor even to lands, but extends to God Himself. Hence David says in Psalm xvii. 8, "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings." And the figure is frequent in the Psalms, standing for *the Protectorate of the Almighty*. The original root of the word found in Isa. xviii. 1 appears in the name of Bezaleel, the spirit-endowed artificer of the tribe of Judah whom God "called by name" and appointed to help Moses in the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness. His name literally means, "*In the shadow of El*," or God. But with reference to Isaiah's use of the expression, "shadowing with wings," we cannot improve on the following from Dr. Thomas:—

"'A land of wings' is a figurative expression, like that of 'wings of the God of Israel.' Isaiah, predicting the invasion of the Holy Land by the King of Assyria, says, 'The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!' That is, his dominion shall overshadow it from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. This is a beautiful allusion to the eagle-winged lions of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian power. A winged lion is used in Daniel as the symbol of Assyria under the Ninevite dynasty. When the sovereignty was transferred from Nineveh to Babylon, the prophet represents the wings as being 'plucked.' Nineveh lost its wings, and could therefore overshadow no more. It was once a City of Wings, and Assyria a *land of Wings*, so that if the prophet had any message to

proclaim to it from afar, he might have exclaimed, 'Ho, land of the overshadowing of wings!' A city or land of wings, then, is a city or land having dominion; and if the wings are wide-spreading, which is indicated by a widely-extended shadow, the dominion is extensive, perhaps very extensive, if an intensive word be used to express the idea of shadowing. But all lands have not wings, because all lands have not dominion. Canada and the West Indies, Hungary and Lombardy, have no wings. The wings of the mighty overshadow them all. They have no dominion over their own lands, even; hence none dwell under their shadow. Austria, on the other hand, is a land of overshadowing of wings. So are Russia, Turkey, France, and Britain.*

"WHICH IS BEYOND THE RIVERS OF CUSH."

"Ethiopia" in the A.V. or "Cush" in the Hebrew, as the R.V. notes it in the margin. Some remarks upon the term "Cush" have already been made in chapter xi., when speaking of that country in relation to the second exodus described by Isaiah in ch. xi. 11. There the term is rightly applied to Ethiopia, or the country more or less accurately coinciding with the modern Nubia, the Eastern Soudan, and Abyssinia. And Cush plainly denotes this North African country in many places in the Old Testament Scriptures. But the term is not exhausted then. There was an Eastern Cush, whence came the African settlement. But let Dr. Thomas speak again.

"Cush is the name of a grandson of Noah, in the line of Ham, and the brother of Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan. These all began their migrations from Ararat. Cush and his brethren journeyed southward, towards the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, and *Countries of the Nile*. Japheth's descendants spread themselves over the north-west; while Shem's branched off towards the east. Cush's brother Mizraim settled Egypt; and Canaan, another, a cursed

*This was written by Dr. Thomas in 1853. Since then the wings of Austria and Turkey have been clipped considerably; while those of Russia and Britain have been very much extended. The whole development is the subject of prophecy in various parts of the scriptures.—C. C. W.

race, the land afterwards possessed by the Israelites, descended from Shem. The sons of Cush descended the Tigris and the Euphrates, and from thence spread around the waters of the Persian Gulf, to Muscat; and thence to Aden, the region of his sons Sheba and Dedan. They diffused themselves along the south-eastern coast of the Red Sea; while some of them crossed it, and *extended their settlement to the regions of the Upper Nile.*"

"Cush begat Nimrod.' Nimrod founded the first kingdom that existed after the Flood. It commenced with four cities in the land of Shinar, the principal of which was Babel, afterwards styled Babylon. 'Out of the land went forth Asshur and builded Nineveh,' on the Tigris or Hiddekel: 'the same,' says Moses, 'is a great city.' The land of Shinar thus became the land of Cush; whose original stock ruled the countries afterwards styled Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Cushan-Rishathaim was the Cushite Sovereign who first subjected Israel after the death of Joshua. 'The tents of Cushan' thus extended from beyond Nineveh to Midian on the Red Sea; but Cush proper, as pertaining to the Kingdom of Nimrod, is the country between Persia, Arabia, and the Holy Land."

The "rivers of Cush," then, as Dr. Thomas points out from Genesis ii., comprise Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel or Tigris, and Euphrates; but he did not go further, and dwell upon "the Nile," or "the regions of the Upper Nile" (though he could not help mentioning them), because upon and beyond these "rivers of Cush" the "widely shadowing wings" did not spread in 1853. He took note of the Indian wing beyond the rivers of the Eastern Cush; but beyond that he could not go. But over fifty years have passed away, and now, beyond the rivers of the Ethiopian Cush, the overshadowing wings are spread.

By the revolt of Arabi in 1882, the British military occupation of Egypt was brought about. By the uprising of Mahdism in the Soudan, the destruction of General Hicks and his army of about 11,000 men in 1883, the siege and fall of Khartoum and the death of General Gordon in 1885, and subsequent troubles, it became evident that the conquest of the

Soudan was a necessity if England was to uphold her prestige in Egypt. How it has been accomplished within recent years, and how the victories of the river Atbara, and Khartoum at the junction of the White Nile and Blue Nile (all "rivers of Cush"), have brought the "overshadowing wings" over these regions, notwithstanding the Fashoda incident and French jealousy, all attentive watchers of "the signs of the times" know well. And now, far beyond these Ethiopian "rivers of Cush" (as far beyond as India is from the Euphrates and Tigris), the shadowing wings are spreading over Cape Colony, Natal, and the newly-annexed South African Colonies of the Orange River and the Transvaal. The eyes of all the earth are upon the phenomenon; but to how few is it given to see in it the fulfilment of what the Lord hath spoken.

"Beyond the rivers of Cush," then: beyond the Euphrates and Tigris, and beyond the Atbara and White and Blue Nile, there is in these latter days a notable "land shadowing with wings," whose "rustling" in the countries last indicated is attracting the attention of the whole of the civilized world at the present time. Is that land one

"THAT SENDETH AMBASSADORS BY THE SEA?"

Dull, indeed, would be the individual who would not, after the events of the year 1900, unhesitatingly answer, YES. What one feature of the outstretching of British wings (that is, the over-spreading of British military hosts—compare Isa. viii.) was the nation's boast and the admiration of the world during that year? Just this very feature: the "sending of ambassadors by sea." Within a few months, not only "ambassadors," but an army of over 200,000 men were sent by sea "beyond the rivers of Cush"; while from the ends of the earth came sea-borne contingents from the other wings to the help of the "land" in question. And there is unquestionably much more to follow.

But again it will be very instructive to listen to the voice of Dr. Thomas of over fifty years ago.

"The wings of the land, or its dominion, being so wide-spreading from tip to tip, it is obliged to communicate with its

possessions under their shadow, 'by sea.' This character in the text shows that the over-shadowing land is *a maritime power*. It is neither Austria, Russia, nor Turkey, because they do not correspond with their possessions by sea; neither is it France nor the United States, because their wings do not stretch . . . beyond the Tigris and Euphrates. *It can be no other than the British Power*, whose wings stretch from Burmah to the land of Sheba, and West of the Indus; and will advance to Cushistan from the Persian Gulf, as soon as it perceives it necessary for the protection and promotion of its commercial interests. The movements of the Russo-Assyrian Autocrat in regard to Turkey, will cause Britain to extend the shadow of her wings to the rivers of Cush. These waters are the borders beyond which her wings will spread no further westward. Britain on the Euphrates and the *Assyrian* as a cloud to cover Israel's land, will bring face to face in the heart of Asia, the friend and foe of God's oppressed, dispersed and captive nation. Policy and interest will identify Britain with the Jews, while many of its people will sympathise with them on religious principles."

Now, after the expiration of half-a-century, how does this interpretation stand? Time, which tries all things, has proved and is proving it to be remarkably correct in every detail. Russian and British rivalry in Persia, and British friendship for the Jews are notorious. And they are, among the other things, at once the assurance that the right understanding of the prophecy has been arrived at, and the earnest of the fulfilment of the whole counsel of God.

"VESSELS OF BULRUSHES," A.V., or, "vessels of papyrus," R.V. The words of the Authorised Version are "even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters"; while the Revised gives an alternative to the particle rendered "even" by saying, "or *and*," in the margin. Thus it might read "*and* in vessels," &c., so making this characteristic of the land something additional to "sending ambassadors by sea." This would appear to harmonise better with the other ascertained facts of the case. Obviously "vessels of papyrus" are neither *sea-going* nor "*swift messengers*;" so that the clause cannot be supposed to qualify the sending of ambassadors

by sea. Dr. Thomas, emphasising this, proposes to render it, "vessels of fleetness." But the common Hebrew word for "fleet" or "swift" is *qal*, as in the next line (*malakim qallim*, "swift messengers"), and not *gomeh*, as in this place.

The word *gomeh* is rightly enough rendered "bulrushes," or better, "papyrus," as is evident from its few occurrences in the scriptures. Thus in Ex. ii. 3, Moses' mother took for him "an ark of *gomeh*," or papyrus reed. Bildad asks (Job viii. 11), "Can the rush (*gomeh*) grow up without mire?" And Isaiah (xxxv. 7) speaks figuratively of the rush (*gomeh*) flourishing by reason of the springs of water. The radical idea of the verb from whence the term comes is "to drink in, to swallow," and it is that used in Gen. xxiv. 17, where Abraham's servant says to Rebecca, "Let me *drink* a little water of thy pitcher." It is applied to reeds and rushes on account of the bibulous nature of these plants. The idea of "fleetness" is very remotely, if at all, connected with it. It is quite true that Britain's steamers are "vessels of fleetness," and are "drinkers" of large quantities of water for condensing purposes; as it is also true that they are propelled by "whirling things" (whether paddles or screws), which is Doctor Thomas' translation of the word represented by "ambassadors." But these characteristics, upon mature consideration, do not seem to be the things alluded to in the text.

Why then the inspired choice of *gomeh*, *i.e.*, "bulrushes," or "papyrus" reeds? Is it not to identify the operations of the land in question with the river of which that method of navigation was a notable peculiarity? The sea-going ambassadors and swift messengers are separately alluded to. Is not this an intimation that the land shadowing with wings would have something to do with the river as well? It would certainly seem so. At any rate one of the "eventide" features of the situation on the Nile, upon which Moses floated in a "vessel of bulrushes" over 3,000 years ago, has been the boat expeditions of the "land shadowing with wings." Light and shallow

vessels have accomplished wonders of transport of troops and supplies. So the shadowing wings do not only spread "beyond the rivers of Cush," but over the rivers themselves, as the last twenty years upon the Upper Nile and the Atbara have shewn.

"Go, YE SWIFT MESSENGERS." Both the Authorised and Revised Versions interpolate the word "*saying*" before these words, with the effect of making the command come from the land shadowing with wings, instead of from God by the prophet. There is no such word in the original, as the italics indicate; and its omission reveals the divine authorship of the command. In another place, where the same matter of the restoration of Israel is in question, the work of the "swift messengers" is thus alluded to: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons (O Zion) from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee" (Isa. lx. 9). These ships of Tarshish, whose development is so notable a feature of the nineteenth century, are the "swift messengers" at God's command to bring Zion's sons again to their land. As Dr. Thomas beautifully puts it: "What Hiram was to Solomon, Britain will be to Him who is greater than he. The steam marine of the latter-day Tyrians trading to Tarshish, is the navy prepared of Jehovah for his King. The twelve tribes are his land forces; the ships of Tarshish His marine."

"TO A NATION SCATTERED AND PEELED, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled." Whatever doubts and difficulties translators may feel about this—and they are many, as the Revised Version in text and margin bears witness—there is one nation that fits the entire description easily and obviously, and *only* one nation. Ask the question: "What nation does the Lord of Hosts propose to bring at 'eventide' to the place of His Name, 'the Mount Zion?'" (verse 7). The answer is contained in a thousand prophecies, and even voiced in audible cry among the

Gentiles of these latter days—"ISRAEL, A NATION!" This nation is "scattered and peeled." The scattering is notorious. As to "peeled," the sense of the term is illustrated in the inspired account of Nebuchadnezzar's military operations against Tyre. "Every head was made bald," said the prophet, "and every shoulder was peeled" (Ezek. xxix. 18). The same king peeled the shoulder of Israel, as did the Assyrian before him, and the Greek and Roman after him. Israel is truly "scattered and peeled."

"Terrible from their beginning onward," is true of Israel for centuries; but their past terribleness is nothing by comparison with what is to come. Dr. Thomas' translation, "terrible from this and onward," emphasises this fact. Lions among sheep, a hearth of fire among wood, a torch of fire among sheaves, Yahweh's battle axe and weapons of war, His new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: these are some of the figures by which the relation of Israel to the Gentiles hereafter is divinely specified. "Meted out and trodden down," is applicable to Israel as to no other nation. The "line, line," of the Hebrew in marginal reference is God's measuring line of judgment and overthrow (2 Kings xxi. 13; Isa. xxviii. 17). "Whose land the rivers have spoiled," is true of Israel's as of no other land. Isaiah himself supplies the exposition of this clause in chapter viii., where he foretells the overflowing of Immanuel's land by "the waters of the river strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory." And this overflowing of the river of Babylon was only one of many. Nebuchadnezzar's invasion may be considered another. And the Roman invasion is alluded to by Daniel in these terms: "The end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (Dan. ix. 26). After the Roman, the Saracen, the Turk, and the Crusaders "spoiled" the land. And there yet remains the "overflowing and passing over" of the King of the North, when, in "the time of the end," he enters into "the glorious land" (Dan. xi. 40). Surely Israel is the nation whose "land the rivers have spoiled."

A PROCLAMATION TO ALL THE EARTH CONCERNING THE ENSIGN.

After speaking of the swift vessels of "the land shadowing with wings," and publishing the divine command concerning the restoration of the "scattered and peeled" nation of Jehovah, the Prophet by the Spirit makes a proclamation to all the inhabitants of the world. "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye when He lifteth up an ensign on the mountains, and when He bloweth the trumpet, hear ye."

What ensign is to be lifted up on the mountains? and what trumpet is to be blown in connection with the restoration of Israel and His avengement on all His enemies? There is but one answer in harmony with Isaiah's other words and all the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus is the ensign, and the trumpet is the great trumpet of jubilee, when Israel, long dispersed and oppressed, shall return to his possessions. In chapter xi., where Isaiah speaks of the coming forth of the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and of the second exodus from Egypt and the other lands now under the dominion of "the land shadowing with wings," he says, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse which *shall stand for an ensign of the people*: to it shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious." The initial circumstances under which the Gentiles shall thus "seek" are recounted in this 18th chapter, and comprise the bringing back of Israel in British ships, and the destruction of the "rushing nations" upon the mountains of Israel.

The blowing of the trumpet is the subject of Isaiah's further allusion in this connection in chap. xxvii., which speaks of "the time of the dead," and of the song of triumph that shall be sung in the land of Judah by "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth." It says, "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel; and it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish, in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in

the holy mount at Jerusalem. Jesus himself alludes to this time. He speaks of the appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and says, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 30-31). In the Revelation the figure is reproduced, for we read (chap. xi. 15), "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

In all these allusions to this great crisis, the avengement and salvation of the saints is intertwined with that of the nation of Israel. The Gospel is the "Hope of Israel," and a true and correct reception of it makes place for an intelligent apprehension of the striking international developments which are associated with the time of the end, and of which the prophets spoke so wondrously beforehand.

Isaiah continues (verse 4) accounting, as it were, for the command just given, saying, "For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, I will consider in my dwelling-place, like a clear heat upon herbs and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." This explains the arrestment of the attention of all the earth. The Lord's "rest" and His "dwelling-place" are alluded to in the 7th verse as "the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion."

Popular theology has obscured all this. It has left the Lord no "rest" upon the earth, no "dwelling places upon Mount Zion"; but its high ones, having appropriated as much of the inheritance as possible to themselves, have relegated His dominion to "heaven beyond the skies," a shadowy realm remote from human rivalries. But this is all pagan fable; Messiah is to "rule in the midst of His enemies" in Immanuel's Land. God covenanted with Abraham to give him the land for an everlasting possession, and Christ is the heir under the covenant, with whom Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, will gloriously inherit the land for ever. The prophecy before us represents Messiah in possession of the city

where He was crucified, and which He declared should be "trodden down of the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled." Isaiah, who was a man of sign, and, with his children, represented Christ and His people (ch. viii. 17), in this place also stands as a type, and will, when these things transpire, enter into that glorious rest of which he thus spoke in the days of his flesh.

Commenting on verse 4, Dr. Thomas remarks:—"This is the quiescence of Jehovah's Name-bearer after beating down the Assyrian at eventide, by which he obtains forcible possession of Jerusalem. It is absolute quietude or cessation from all hostilities, an armistice as it were, obtaining from the descent to the Mount of Olives, and the commencement of the war between the King of Israel and the Papal powers of the Roman West. The words, 'yet in my dwelling-place I will be without fear,' are parenthetic, and descriptive of the Great King's perfect security and fearlessness in the midst of fierce and warlike nations, among whom he has introduced himself 'as a thief' with the intention of spoiling their governments of all their glory, honour, dominion, and wealth. As if he had said, 'Though I forbear immediately to follow up the victory I have gained in delivering Jerusalem from the Russo-Assyrian Gog, the enemy will be too confounded to rally his forces and lay siege to the city for its recovery of my hand. I shall be in it, and hold it without any ground of fear from a threatened renewal of the siege.'"

And further, after emphasising the fact that Zion is the place of God's "rest," a fact even less widely discerned in 1853 than at the present day, Dr. Thomas adds:—

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, at Zion, 'still as dry heat impending lightning, as a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest,' is represented in the Apocalypse as 'one like the Son of Man sitting upon a white cloud, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle,' or pruning hook (Rev. xiv. 14). In this cloud-scene he has but one crown. It pertains, therefore, to a time anterior to that in which, in chapter xix., he is seen with 'many crowns' upon his head. The one crown is David's, which he wears by inheritance; the 'many' are those he wins from the beast and kings of the earth whom he over-

comes in battle, when he 'gathers the clusters of the vine of the earth,' and casts its grapes, fully ripe, 'into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.' Jesus, the Redeemer, comes to Zion at that crisis, 'reaps the earth,' in the overthrow of Gog: there, as a dew-cloud, he rests in Zion, awaiting the full ripening of the vine-clusters in the Roman West. This perfecting of the fruit is accomplished when the acceptance or rejection of the trumpet-proclamation to the Land of o'ershadowing wings, and to other lands, has divided them into adverse and friendly nations. As hostile they are 'the Goats,' as friendly they are 'the Sheep,' of the Imperial Fold. This division effected, then the Royal Reaper, no longer still as dry heat and as a cloud of dew, thrusts in his pruning hook again, and having reaped the grape-clusters, treads them in the wine-press without the city, that is, beyond the limits of the land."

Isaiah continues (verses 5-6): "For before the harvest, when the bud is perfect and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." The harvest is the "harvest of the earth" of Apocalyptic phrase (Rev. xiv. 15), and the similarity of language and the identity of the crises revealed in both Isaiah and the Revelation must strike any attentive reader. The things represented by the "sour grape," the "sprigs," and "branches," are sufficiently obvious from the context (v. 6), "*They* shall be left, &c." The confederate hosts of the Northern invader (Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix.) are those whose lot it is to be given to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth, in the day when God is made known by judgment in the eyes of many nations (Ezek. xxxix. 17-22). Dr. Thomas, speaking of this "flower," or "blossom," as he prefers to call it, says:—

"This blossom is Gog, who aims at establishing a permanent dominion over the East and West. He obtains preadventual possession of Jerusalem, but is unable to retain it in subjection. His ambition blossoms forth with great promise, but he proves

eventually unable to bring his schemes of conquest and dominion to perfection. Though 'laden with thick clay,' his blossom will not even become a sour grape, for scarcely doth he appear as a flower in Jehovah's vineyard, but he is cut off and blown away like chaff before the wind. The ten-horn kingdoms are not so. They continue to flourish on the earth's vine, first as blossoms, then as sour grapes, and lastly as grapes fully ripe, and fit for the wine-press without the city. They are trodden at vintage time; but the pre-eminent blossom is cut off 'before harvest,' as vine shoots by pruning hooks, and luxuriant twigs are lopped away."

Isaiah xviii. concludes thus: "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people (or 'even of a people,' &c.: *Young*), terrible from their beginning and hitherto, a nation meted out and trodden underfoot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." The following is Dr. Thomas' comment of over fifty years ago:—

"At that time"—at evening time, and subsequently to the King of Israel's victory over Gog and over the "beast, false prophet, kings of the earth and their armies." The nations in arms, being subdued under Israel (Psa. xlvii. 3), their hosts will no longer need to be detained in foreign parts. The time will have therefore come to give them rest from war, and to transport their victorious armies into their native land, that they may be disbanded there, and "settled after their old estates" (Ezek. xxxvi. 2). The steamships of the "land of overshadowing wings" will be in great request for this service, which will be willingly and joyfully rendered. Hence Israel's eventide return to their fatherland by this agency is termed a diligent conveyance of "a present to Jehovah of armies." Those of the scattered nation that are inaccessible to ships will be brought home by the usual means of transportation by land. This present, brought by sea and land to Mount Zion, is termed by the prophet "an offering unto Jehovah out of all nations." His words are: "They shall bring all your brethren

an offering unto Jehovah out of all nations, on horses and chariots and litter vehicles, and upon mules and dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, as the children of Israel bring the offering in a clean vessel to the house of Jehovah."

This "present" is not brought before the return of Jesus, the bearer of Jehovah's Name, from the right hand of Power. It cannot be brought until He becomes "Jehovah of Armies," and is enthroned in Zion, for it is brought by strong nations as an offering to Him dwelling in Zion. Were all Israel now sent back to Palestine by existing powers, their restoration would be no offered present to the Jehovah Name, because Zion is not yet the actual abode of Jehovah Jesus. The "present" will be freely offered, because the offerers will have come to the recognition of the true nature of things. Jesus, whose prophetic name is JEHOVAH, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. xxxiii. 6), will have convinced them of his power and right to the world's allegiance by his skill and prowess in arms. The South will no longer "keep back," nor the North refuse to "give up," for the Dragon and the Beast and the Kings, with all the armies that now give effect to their wickedness, will have been destroyed, and all obstacles to the full return of Israel 'from the four winds of heaven,' completely removed. 'They shall bring my sons from far,' saith God, 'and my daughters from the ends of the earth, every one that is called by my name, for I have created Israel for my glory'" (Is. xliii. 1, 6, 7).

"But before the freewill offering of this present of Israel unto their King by the nations, no longer hostile; and before Zion is delivered of a man child, Palestine will be occupied by a Jewish population, respectable for numbers, industry and wealth. This is evident from the following testimony: 'In the latter years, O Gog, thou shalt come into the land brought back from the sword, and gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which were for desolation continually; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they dwell safely, all of them. Thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud to cover the land. It shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know me, when I shall

be glorified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.' This proves a partial return before Gog's invasion. The following text shows their prosperity in their land before he disturbs their peace. Jehovah, addressing Himself to Gog, says, 'Thou shalt think an evil thought, and shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages. I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them, dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey, to turn thine hand upon the desolate places, now inhabited, and upon the people gathered out of the nations who have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.'

He accordingly invades Palestine with a mighty army, and that this invasion precedes the appearing of Jesus in Zion is clear from the consideration that the invasion of God's unoffending people is made the occasion of that appearing, as it is written, 'And it shall be at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face . . . and there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel . . . and all the men that are upon the face of the land shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be hurled over, and the towers shall fall. . . . And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood, and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many peoples that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I, Jehovah, am Jesus, bearing the Name. And I will turn thee back . . . and thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, and upon the open field; and I will give thee to the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured'—'the great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that they may eat flesh, and drink blood' (Ez. xxxviii. - xxxix.).

"Thus falls the blossom from the vine. Sudden destruction at eventide descends, in storm and tempest, and sweeps him as mountain chaff or stubble before the blast. Thus Zion is redeemed with judgment. Prostrate under the

heel of the Autocrat, and none of all her children to draw sword for her deliverance, her voice is stifled by the throat-grip of the destroyer. She hath no strength to give birth to a deliverer, and nought seems to impend but the final extinction of all her hopes. But what doth the prophet hear at this crisis of her fate? 'A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the Temple, a voice of Jehovah, that rendereth recompense to his enemies.' 'Jehovah roaring out of Zion and uttering His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake, but He will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I, Jehovah, your God, am dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. Then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more' (Joel iii. 16-17). Thus, 'before Zion travailed, she brought forth, before her pain came she produced a male,' even a Man of Renown."

Thus far Dr. Thomas, over fifty years ago. How does the subsequent half-century confirm or stultify his interpretation? The answer is known to all who have studied the history of the time with knowledge of the first principles of the truth, and in comparison with the Scriptures of the prophets. Most emphatically did the Doctor testify that the coming years would not be years of peace, and now after the lapse of over fifty years, we stand amidst a world of angry armed nations in the eventide of the Gentile times; in which all their schemes and rivalries unconsciously focalize towards that "rushing" against Jerusalem which the prophet foresaw more than seven hundred years before Christ.

We do not need to argue concerning the preparedness of the world for this great crisis. It is notorious to all qualified observers. Hopes ran high for peace when in 1899 the Conference of the Powers convened at the Hague by Russia, sat to consider means of securing it. They had scarce risen when war ensued, which plunged the "land shadowing with wings" into the greatest war it had ever been engaged in, that is so far as numbers were concerned, on its side, and which involved the forces of the "wings" to their utmost extremities in all directions.

The next year saw the other Power spoken of by the prophet, involved with all the powers of the West in a struggle with the Chinese Empire of the Far East. Then followed the tremendous struggle between Russia and Japan, which has crippled, but not fatally wounded the great "King of the North." From the time in which Dr. Thomas wrote up to the present, the Russian empire has steadily been advancing to the place assigned to it by the prophets. In the Holy Land, as in other countries, this is so. Beside us is the ordnance-map of Jerusalem. On the north, commanding the city, is a kind of Russian colony, with buildings of great strength, by many competent observers suspected to have been designed with reference to military projects of the future. On the East, on the Mount of Olives, also easily commanding the city by the power of modern artillery, is the Russian Convent. At Jericho, also, the Russians are said to have a settlement, and the constant stream of Russian pilgrims familiarises the people with the country which the Northern hosts are destined to overrun.

As to the "land shadowing with wings," the wings have stretched far and wide during the last half-century. The ships of Tarshish fifty years ago represented but a small fraction of the immense naval and mercantile marine of the present day, while conspicuous among a world of enemies to the Jews, the land is recognized by the oppressed as the one spot of security and friendship that is left for the Jew in all the earth.

As to "the nation scattered and peeled," the noise of its political resurrection is in the air, and the colonies that represent the "unwalled villages" of Ezekiel's prophecy are already taking root upon the mountains of Israel. Fifty years ago these things were non-existent, and were discerned entirely by faith in the written word. Now they are, in some degree at any rate, matters of fact. The Zionist movement in Israel, brought about by the Anti-Semitic outbreaks of the past half-century, is the earnest of the fulfilment of all that the prophets have spoken. We live in a sublimely interesting time, for we are approaching the day of vengeance of our God, and the year of His redeemed.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT.

“THE Burden of Egypt” is one of the series of “burdens” or “oracles concerning” various places and countries that occupy this part of Isaiah’s prophecies. Thus, in ch. xiii.-xiv., we have “the burden of Babylon”; that is, utter extinction for ever. And in ch. xv.-xvi., “the burden of Moab”; that is, overthrow and captivity, but not utter extinction. A latter-day mission belongs to Moab in connection with Yahweh’s outcasts, and final subjugation to Israel when the throne of David is established in mercy by Christ. So in ch. xvii. “the burden of Damascus” is introduced, and, at the end of the chapter, the burden of many peoples rushing like mighty waters; while in ch. xviii., the “land shadowing with wings” is described in its latter-day character and mission. And now, in ch. xix., the prophet by the spirit reveals various matters concerning Egypt’s smitings and healings at the hand of God from that day to the day of Christ, so often and so darkly alluded to in the Scriptures. By the help of the other Scriptures and of history, we make an endeavour to grasp the most salient points of the prophecy.

“Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.”

The manifestation of God in Egypt had been literally connected with cloud and darkness, ages before Isaiah’s time. The pillar of cloud that indicated His presence in Israel and directed the movements of His camps, was a matter of notoriety in Israel’s history, as also was the terrible manifestation

on Mount Sinai. But the language here has to do with a future vindication of God and of Israel in the land of the old-time bondage. With the nature of that vindication we are acquainted from the Scriptures, which tell us that it is to be wrought by the manifested presence of Israel's God in Jesus and the saints, with the tribes of Israel under them, as Israel of old was under the direction of Moses and the elders of Israel.

This divine manifestation is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures under the beautiful figure of the clouds as God's chariot of war and victory. Thus it is said in the Psalms (xviii. 10-11): "He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." And again (Psalm civ. 3): "Who maketh the clouds his chariots, who walketh upon the wings of the wind (or spirit, *ruach*). Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire." Daniel, in vision, saw "one like the Son of Man" come with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days to receive the everlasting kingdom (Dan. vii. 13). Afterwards, when the Son of Man was revealed, he said that after the subversion of the Jewish state by the Romans, there should "appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." "And then," said he, "shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

Thus clouds symbolically stand in some connections for the angels who are higher than men, and in others for men raised to angelic nature. For the saints are to be made "equal to the angels"; and the apostles speak of them also under the figure of clouds. Thus Paul speaks to the Thessalonians saying: "We which are alive and remain (unto the coming of the Lord) shall be caught away together with them (the risen dead) in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). And in Heb. xii. he speaks of the faithful dead as "so great a cloud of witnesses." In the Revelation (ch. i. 7) John says: "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." And in chapter xiv. one like the Son of Man is seen sitting on a white cloud, crowned with gold, and

armed with a sharp sickle with which he reaps the harvest of the earth in the outpouring of the wrath of God.’

These figures prepare us for the conclusion that the language of Isa. xix. proclaims, a future manifestation in the land of Egypt exceeding the wonders of the Exodus under Moses. In the days of Moses the idols of Egypt were moved at God’s presence, for the angel of His presence wrought with Moses, and “against the gods of Egypt he executed judgment,” and their priests and magicians could not stand before Moses. But since Isaiah’s day, some 700 years before Christ, we do not find in history a trace of any such divine phenomenon. Nevertheless it is decreed for Egypt, as it is also for the land of Israel, that it shall shake at His presence when He is magnified and sanctified and made known in the eyes of many nations (Ezek. xxxviii.).

As concerning judgments on Egypt more proximate to Isaiah’s day, they were, of course, executed under the supervision of the angels of God’s power, but it is certain that nothing in the past, in its fulfilment, exhausts the language of this opening verse. Strife and civil war were denounced upon Egypt in verses 2 and 3. “And,” it continues, “the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel Lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.” The first subjection of Egypt, dating from Isaiah’s time, was to Assyria. Sennacherib warred with Tirhakah (the Ethiopian king who conquered Egypt) at Libnah (2 Kings xviii.-xix.), and probably would have overcome Egypt had not God destroyed his army of 185,000 men in a single night, as the Scripture tells us He did. After his death his son, Esarhaddon, invaded and subdued Egypt, and, although Tirhakah successfully rebelled, he was afterwards re-conquered by Esarhaddon’s son, Assur-bani-pal. This was about B.C. 666.

In this was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (ch. xx.) in the days of Sargon, Sennacherib’s predecessor. Isaiah was made to walk naked and barefoot for three years, for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia. For “so,” said God, “shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners and the Ethiopians captives, young and old naked and barefoot, even with

their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia, their expectation, and of Egypt, their glory. And the inhabitants of this country shall say in that day, Behold such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria, and how shall we escape?"

But after a while the Assyrian power declined, and the Babylonian arose; and the "cruel lord" and "fierce king," of whose dominion over Egypt the Scriptures next and chiefly speak, is Nebuchadnezzar, God's "servant," into whose hand He gave so many nations, including Israel. Jeremiah tells us how, after Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem, the remnant of the Jews would flee into Egypt, notwithstanding the fact that God had forbidden it when they enquired His will through Jeremiah. Jeremiah himself was carried down into Egypt by Johanan; and, at Tahpanhes, by the word of God, he took great stones and laid them with mortar in the pavement that was before Pharaoh's house, and proclaimed that Nebuchadnezzar should come and set his throne upon them, and smite and spoil Egypt, in which the remnant of the Jews had put their confidence to the disobeying of Jehovah's word. Ezekiel, likewise, foretells the same things, mentioning the same place, Tahpanhes (xxx. 18), and divinely appointing the land of Egypt as wages for Nebuchadnezzar for his service against Tyre on God's behalf (ch. xxix.).

Nebuchadnezzar had first to do with Egypt in connection with Pharaoh Necho's invasion of the East. Jeremiah (xlvi.) denounces the word of the Lord "against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates, in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, smote in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, King of Judah." The language of Jeremiah concerning the invading hosts of Egypt, conversely illustrates that of Isaiah concerning Egypt's ruin. Jeremiah says: "Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up and will cover the earth: I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof" (verse 8). Egypt, like Assyria, was symbolised

by its river, and with peculiar fitness, for the Nile is the making of Egypt, without which it would be like the surrounding desert. And, therefore, the drying of the Nile is as fit a symbol of the wasting of Egypt's power, as the drying of the Euphrates (Rev. xvi.) is of the modern wasting of the power of the Turk.

But the figurative does not necessarily exclude a certain amount of the literal. In the siege of Babylon the Euphrates was actually dried, by Cyrus diverting the channel and entering the city by the river bed. And the wasting of the power of Egypt at this time comprehended an incident which may be covered by Isaiah's language in ch. xix. Pharaoh Necho attempted to anticipate the Suez Canal, or rather he essayed to cut a canal from the Red Sea to the Nile, and so to connect the Red Sea with the Mediterranean. The distance was nearly double the Suez route, and, "after 120,000 workmen had lost their lives in the attempt, Necho was obliged to desist; the oracle which had been consulted by him having answered, that this new canal would open a passage to the Barbarians to invade Egypt." He did better with his Phœnician navy, which circumnavigated Africa, leaving the Red Sea and returning through the straits of Gibraltar.

Necho, as the Scriptures tell us, reluctantly fought with Josiah, king of Judah, who was slain in battle and mourned greatly by Judah. Necho also carried away Jehoahaz, his son, captive to Egypt, and placed Eliakim on the throne in Jerusalem and under tribute, changing his name to Jehoiakim. It was in his days that Nebuchadnezzar subdued Egypt, according to Jeremiah's prophecy. The brief account of Jehoiakim's reign in 2 Kings xxiv. 7, tells us that "the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt, unto the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt."

Necho was succeeded by Psametik, who reigned but a short time, and was followed by Pharaoh Hophra, whose name, with those of Tirhakah and Necho, and others before and after, has been discovered in the Egyptian inscriptions. He was confederate with Palestine and Phœnicia against Babylon, and aided Tyre for

a number of years against the Babylonian besiegers; but at length it fell, and Nebuchadnezzar was avenged by conquest of Egypt, which, in the divine operations, he thus received for "wages" (Ezek. xxix. 17-21). The desolation consequent upon his conquest of Pharaoh Hophra is that which Ezekiel foretells for Egypt as to be of forty years' duration, and to be succeeded only by a permanent subjugation of Egypt to other Powers (Ezek. xxix.). And so it came to pass, for the Persians not only conquered Babylon, but subdued Egypt as well, which has never since risen to the rank of an overshadowing Power with a great Empire as in the ancient days.

After the Persians, Egypt came under the sway of the Greeks, of which the city Alexandria, named after Alexander the Great, is a standing witness to this day. Then came the rule of the Ptolemies, spoken of in the prophecy of Daniel xi., and afterwards, on the death of Cleopatra in B.C. 30, Egypt became a Roman province. After about 600 years it came under the Moslem rule, and has continued under it almost to the present time. The last hundred years have seen a change in the country, which is but the precursor of the greater changes foretold by Isaiah. The revolt of Mehemet Ali against the Sultan, and his victories in 1832, and the constitution of Egypt, at the intervention of the Powers, as a hereditary pachalic in his line, paved the way for the resuscitation of Egypt in the latter days. The subsequent revolt of Arabi Pacha and British intervention are as matters of yesterday; and now Egypt prospers greatly under those who are now "the stay of the tribes thereof."

But we know that there is a yet further giving over into the hand of a "cruel lord," and "fierce king," before the country, for the King of the North is, "in the time of the end," to "stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt" (Dan. xi. 42). The context of Daniel's prophecy in this place introduces upon the scene the same power as that spoken of by Isaiah in chap. xix. The King of the North comes to his end before "Michael the great Prince." And Isaiah says that the Egyptian

oppressor of the latter-days shall fall before the "Saviour," the "great one" whom God will at that time raise up to Israel (v. 20).

"In that day," says Isaiah (v. 16), "shall Egypt be like unto women, and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And *the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt*, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it."

Never from Isaiah's day to this has there been anything like this in Egypt. In all the past, Egypt has been more or less a terror to the land of Judah; and will yet be so again before the end. The Jews are more or less in terror perpetually in the Russian territory of the future Lord of Egypt, and when he obtains possession of the country by conquest, they will be in terror under his rule there. There are only a few thousand Jews in Egypt now, but there will be very many thousands before the second exodus takes place; and "the south" will be disposed to "keep back" Jehovah's outcast people, as was Pharaoh in the days of Moses. And so God says by Isaiah (xliii. 6) "I will say to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth." When the time comes for this, Egypt will be made to fear Israel's God as it was under Moses. "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, will I show unto him marvellous things" (Mic. vii. 15). The history of the Exodus will be repeated on a grander scale under the prophet like unto Moses, as Isaiah (xi.) and the other prophets testify.

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction" (v. 18). In Isaiah's time, and before and afterwards, Egypt spoke her own language and swore to the gods of the country, as to Ra, Osiris, Isis, Apis, and the others. Even the shaking that God gave the country by Moses did not eradicate this. But in the future it will be different; for of the coming day of judgment God says by Zephaniah (iii. 9):

“For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (Cush), my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed shall bring mine offering.” And again, Zechariah says (ch. viii. 22): “Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; in those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Thus it will be in Egypt and other countries as it was in the Persian Empire in the days of Ahasuerus and Mordecai, when, after the vindication of the Jews and the fall and death of Haman, their arch enemy, “many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Esther viii. 17). And Egypt will be kept up to standard in the “worship of the king, the Lord of hosts”; for, “if the family of Egypt go not up and come not . . . there shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech. xiv. 18).

There seems to be some little uncertainty about the name of the city mentioned—“the city of destruction.” The Hebrew has it “Heres”; but the Septuagint has it Asedec, as corresponding to the Heb. Zedek, righteousness; while the margin gives an alternative—“or, *of the sun.*” The sun was worshipped in Egypt in the service of the hawk-headed god Ra, and the darkness over all the land in one of the plagues showed its futility and the power of Israel’s God, by whose wonderful provision the children of Israel simultaneously had light in their dwellings. Perhaps the name of the city is a memorial of some such stroke of judgment as this. In any case, the appropriateness will be seen when the event transpires.

“In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the

Lord, and it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour and a Great One, and he shall deliver them." Of late years the most fantastic interpretations have arisen concerning this passage in connection with the Anglo-Israelitish theories concerning the Great Pyramid, which they profess to regard as the altar and pillar in question. Very little consideration is necessary to dispose of this; for neither in points of time nor circumstance does the Great Pyramid correspond with the prophecy.

The thing Isaiah speaks of is an erection of the future, whereas the Great Pyramid was of hoary antiquity even in Isaiah's day, dating back to perhaps B.C. 3000. (The "authorities" differ by a millennium or more just here, Marriette making the fourth dynasty, to which Cheops the builder belonged, date B.C. 4235, while Lepsius puts it B.C. 3124.—*Ency. Brit.*). And the Great Pyramid was most certainly not an altar to Yahweh, whose very name was not revealed in Egypt till about B.C. 1500 (Ex. iii. 15). The purpose of the "sign" and the occasion of its erection, as revealed in v. 20, is so obvious as to render the "Great Pyramid theory," as it is called, unworthy of serious following.

There is an episode in Israel's history which sheds great light upon the prophecy in this place, and with which the language naturally invites comparison. It is the account in Josh. xxii., of how the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, returning to their possessions on the east side of Jordan after their service in war together with the other tribes, "built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to." The other tribes, hearing that the two-and-a-half tribes had "built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel," were angry, and prepared war against them, supposing that they had done it idolatrously. The explanation of the two-and-a-half tribes, however, appeased them perfectly. It was to the effect that the altar was simply a monument of witness to the fact that they belonged to Israel, though dwelling on the other side of Jordan.

And so they "called the altar Ed, for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God."

And so this "altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and pillar at the border thereof," will be monuments memorialising the fact that the Lord has conquered and possessed Egypt, just as He did Canaan by Joshua and his people in the days of old. And Egypt will be united with Israel in the worship and service of Jehovah, just as really as the trans-Jordanic tribes of Joshua's day were with their brethren west of the river.

The Saviour and Great One promised came out of Egypt in his infancy, and the sites related traditionally to his sojourn there are still in a manner venerated, though sadly so in the eyes of those who are enlightened concerning him. He is himself, in a sense, the Lord's "altar" (Heb. xiii. 10), and pillar of witness, to whom the everlasting pillars in the house of God (Rev. iii. 12), will be immortally related in the day of his coming. Current traditional theology has divorced from his name all idea of a future salvation to be wrought by Him in the land of Egypt; but God's ideas are not affected by human opinions, and the day will come of which Isaiah speaks, when, like Moses of old, the Saviour "shall deliver them." Egypt will be again the scene of divine manifestation, all unexpected by "the modern Pharaoh." There will be another Moses, another controversy, more magicians exposed in various unexpected ways, and finally the country will be subjugated in blessedness with Israel to God.

"In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." Thus all nations at last, according to God's promise, shall be blessed in Abraham and in his seed.



CHAPTER XX.

“NAKED AND BAREFOOT.”

“**T**AKE, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience” (Jas. v. 10). Isaiah is here before us as such an example, a man of sign to apostate Israel, walking naked and barefoot among them for three years, to indicate first the approaching fate of “Ethiopia their expectation, and Egypt their glory,” upon whom they leaned for help against Assyria; and next, the fate of the nation that looked to them rather than to God, who had brought them out of Egypt at the beginning.

Some ingenuity has been expended in the attempt to escape the roughness of the word just here. It has been said that “naked” means only partially unclothed. But the original word is that applied to Adam and Eve before the fall, and to the condition of a babe at birth, and the working out of the sign was to result in a procession of captives with “buttocks uncovered” to their shame. Then again, it has been sought to evade the length of time, “three years,” and the margin of the Revised Version bears traces of the effort. But it is beside the point. We might as well object to the account of Ezekiel’s four hundred and thirty days prostration in his typical siege of Jerusalem (ch. iv.), or to Nebuchadnezzar’s seven years’ madness, or to Israel’s forty years’ wandering in the wilderness. It would be more straightforward for hostile critics simply to avow disbelief, than to attempt the wresting of the text of the Word for the purpose of avoiding sentimental troubles.

What is flesh and blood to God? The testimony is that “all nations before him are as nothing” (Isa. xl. 17); and

this is reasonable. And when promoted to the immortal glory, honour, and rest of the coming Kingdom of God, how much will Isaiah trouble about past shame and suffering? Oh, but what an awful trial and disgrace! says the merely natural thinker. Yes, but that is only the human point of view. Consider God's. The nation was morally "naked" before Him—shamefully and disgracefully naked—and His purpose, yea, His kindness, required this holding up the mirror as it were, with warning of literal shame and disgrace that would come if the people went on in their wicked and idolatrous ways, and trusted to an alliance with Egypt—one of the lands whose corrupt ways were spoiling them—for deliverance from the equally corrupt enemy, Assyria, on the other side.

And so Isaiah "loosed the sackcloth from off his loins," put off his sandals, and "walked naked and barefoot." What a challenging testimony! Many would remember it when Egypt fell before Assyria, as it shortly did. When they heard of, and perhaps saw, Egyptian and Ethiopian "captives young and old naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt," they would certainly think, as the prophet said they should, that their turn was likewise coming—which it was.

This twentieth chapter supplies an interesting illustration of the authenticity of the Scriptures in comparison with the monumental records of the past. "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon the King of Assyria sent him), and fought against Ashdod and took it. At that time spake the Lord by Isaiah," thus and so (verse 1). This is the only occurrence of the name Sargon in the Scriptures, and not being in a historical book, and no trace of such a name having come down in history from that early day, it was for a long time supposed that there was no such person, or rather that the name was only another name for one of the kings whose names were well known. Some of the learned said that Sargon was Shalmaneser; others that he was Sennacherib; and others again that he was Esarhaddon. But in the nineteenth century Sargon, though dead, was providentially permitted to speak for himself, and those who had correctly placed his name between Shalmaneser

and Sennacherib, were justified in their abiding by the words of the book of Isaiah.

How Sargon comes to speak for himself is in this way. In the record chamber of Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh, there has been disinterred, among many other records, a broken cylinder of Sargon which speaks of the very expedition against Ashdod that is the subject of mention in Isaiah's prophecy. Not only does Sargon's name thus appear, but even his portrait, with that of his Tartan, or Commander-in-Chief, has been discovered on the walls of his palace at Khorsabad. From the cylinder it appears that

"Azuri, king of Ashdod, had conspired with his neighbours to throw off the yoke of Assyria; and Sargon had deposed him, and made his brother Ahimiti king in his place. But the disaffected princes and peoples of Palestine would not recognise Sargon's vassal-king, and set Yamani on the throne of Ashdod. (Judah, Edom and Moab were in treasonable correspondence with 'Pharaoh, King of Egypt, a prince who could not deliver them,' as Sargon himself says in language vividly reminding us of Isaiah xxx. 5-7.) Without waiting to muster his entire forces, Sargon at once marched against Ashdod. Apprised of his coming, Yamani fled to the South borders of Egypt, and 'appeared no more.' Ashdod, Gath, and Ashdodim were besieged and taken, and Yamani's gods, wife, sons, daughters, treasures, and people became the victor's booty. Sargon re-peopled the towns with foreigners from other conquered places, and appointed a governor. Afterwards the King of Ethiopia, overawed by the might of the Great King, sent Yamani in chains to Assyria" (*Light from the East*).

This cylinder of Sargon is to be seen in the British Museum, and pictures of it are to be found in some of the most recent editions of the Oxford Bible. It is one of many such things by which the Bible has been confirmed in these last days of a sceptical age.

Isaiah's brethren of the latter-days have not such an ordeal to face as he had; but of their whole class, the sackcloth that he

wore is the symbolic garb (Rev. xi. 3), until the day of his, and their, justification shall come. Of Isaiah's times and disciples, a Jewish writer (Professor Graetz) speaks thus beautifully, though somewhat cloudily :

“The members of the circle which he had collected around him were called the ‘gentle ones,’ or ‘the sufferers of the land’ (*Anve Aretz, Anavim*). They were mostly of poor family, or they had become impoverished through the depredations of the nobles. They either called themselves, or were called by others, the “poor” (*Dallim, Ebionim*). From Isaiah they learnt to refrain from complaints against their sorrow and pain, and to trust in God, and submit to His will. These ‘gentle ones’ formed a special community; they were considered the kernel and support of the nation by the prophet Isaiah and his successors, and to them all hearts were turned. They were expected to improve and purify the entire people, and to serve as a pattern to the whole nation. The light shed by these great prophets cast beneficent rays around; germs of thought which lay hidden in the teachings of Sinai, came to light, and the mental rule of the nation became established through them. Isaiah, therefore, became an important feature in the national history of the people of Israel, as Samuel, and in a lesser degree Elijah, had been before him. Isaiah's prophetic labours were not confined to his nation and country; they extended beyond the boundaries to the two great states of Egypt and Assyria, which, like great cloud masses, were casting lightning-flashes over Israel and Judah” (*History of the Jews*).

Isaiah's prophecies extend, of course, much further still; even to our own country and empire, and the era of regeneration for Israel that is now setting in. This allusion to the prophet and his circle, however, furnishes an interesting illustration of the scope and meaning of the language of Jesus in the “Sermon on the Mount.” The “poor,” the “meek,” the “persecuted for righteousness sake,” of his allusions, were Isaiah's brethren of that generation; and were encouraged by Jesus with reference to the integrity of the prophets who had gone before. “Rejoice and

be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. v. 12). The Sermon on the Mount is not obsolete by efflux of time, and wherever there may be in the land of the living, people of like faith and works with Isaiah, with the disciples of Jesus' day, there the words of God by the prophets and by the Lord Jesus, His Son, will be heard and acted on, as Jesus says, they shall be by "wise men."





CHAPTER XXI.

“WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”

“**T**HE BURDEN OF THE DESERT OF THE SEA.” — In chapter xxi. 1-10 the prophet turns, as it were, from Egypt to the other end of the world political of his day; and looking beyond Assyrian times, foretells the fall of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Remembering the position of the kingdom of Judah between these great powers of Egypt and Assyria, the latter of which in time gave place to the Babylonian Empire; and remembering also the purpose of God concerning them, as now unfolded in history, the structure of the book of Isaiah is better comprehended; and order and connection appear where otherwise it would not be seen. It was natural, we might almost say, for the prophet, having recorded the downfall of Egypt before Assyria, to go on to the downfall of Babylon, which in turn gained supremacy over Nineveh.

We have already looked at what Isaiah has to say here about the taking of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, a typical “threshing on God’s threshing-floor” (verse 10), which has yet to find its antitype in the prowess of the “daughter of Zion” in “threshing” the hosts of “many nations” in “the last days,” gathered together against Zion (Micah iv.). When this great “threshing” is performed upon the site of “the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite,” where so many bloody “threshings” have already taken place, Isaiah himself will be on the scene again, having been “called out of his grave” (to use the language of the New Testament in the case of Lazarus—Jno. xii. 17) by the Lord Jesus, who comes into the Land of Israel from the South to settle “the controversy of Zion.” Is this connection of thought intended by the sequence of “the burden of Dumah” (verses 11-12),

after the "grievous vision" of the threshing of Babylon? It would seem so.

"THE BURDEN OF DUMAH."

"He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come."

This is one of the briefest and most enigmatical of the "things written aforetime for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). The Gospel of the Kingdom directs our search concerning it. We have to enquire how, in history and prophecy, Dumah and Seir are related to God's mighty works of the past and the Kingdom that is coming? Who is HE that so "calleth to me out of Seir"? Why is the prophet thus twice challenged as a "watchman"? What is "the night"? What may be the meaning of his very brief, and at the first sight tantalising, answer? What is "the morning," and "also the night"? Who are they who have the "will" to "enquire"? Of whom, or where, shall they "enquire"? And concerning what? Why this invitation: "Return, Come"? Return whence? and Come whither?

DUMAH=Silence is the name of a district, and not of a city, as some suppose. The terms of the prophecy are quite inapplicable to a small city in the south of Judah. They relate to Mount Seir, through which the nation of Israel passed when, as Yahweh's son, his first-born, they came out of Egypt at the beginning. Dumah was a son of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 14), and the locality of his settlement, with Ishmael's other sons, is defined in verse 18 of the same chapter. "They dwelt from Havilah to Shur that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria." (That is, one going from Egypt to Assyria, would have to pass through the wilderness of Shur, and, therefore, through the country of Dumah and the others.) Havilah was a boundary of Amalek. Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah unto Shur; that is, south of Judah. Amalek was the first of the nations to war against Israel in the time of

the Exodus. All this is plain enough indication of the locality of Dumah.

SEIR is the dwelling-place of Esau or Edom. It is that hilly stretch of country that extends southward from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea. "Meddle not with the children of Esau," said the Lord to Israel, "I will not give you of their land . . . I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession" (Deut. ii. 5). Seir is celebrated in the Scriptures because of the manifestation of God that has already taken place in the country, and of the greater that is promised. In Moses' blessing of the tribes before his death, he says: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of his saints" (Deut. xxxiii. 2). Moses' blessing relates to Israel's future, although it contains historical allusions to the great manifestation on Sinai at the giving of the law.

Deborah and Barak spoke of that great time in the day of victory over Jabin and Sisera. "Lord, when thou wentest *out of Seir*, when thou marchedst *out of the field of Edom*, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, *even that Sinai* from before the Lord God of Israel" (Judges v. 4-5). These allusions show that narrow geographical limitations are not to be considered; but rather that, in the prophetic allusions to the coming manifestation of God in the locality of the ancient wonders, the great events of the Exodus are to be taken broadly as the illustration of the greater things to come.

The prophet Habakkuk, having had a vision concerning "the end," speaks in chapter iii. of the revival of God's work "in the midst of the years," and says: "God cometh from Teman (the South), and the HOLY ONE from Mount Paran." The Holy One is the Lord Jesus ("Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption"—Psa. xvi.). The prophet sees him with his hosts (v. 8), "threshing the nations in anger" (v. 12), preparatory to his taking possession of the land and city of his special inheritance.

Isaiah, in another vision, sees him likewise in these parts, trampling the peoples in fury in the day of vengeance. He says: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" And the divine answer is: "I, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Wherefore," asks the prophet, "is thy clothing red? And thy garments as treading in a wine-fat?" The answer is:

"A wine press I have trodden by myself,
 And of the peoples there is no one with me,
 And I tread them in mine anger,
 And I trample them in my fury.
 Sprinkled is their life blood on my garments,
 And all my clothing I have polluted.
 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart,
 And the year of my redeemed hath come.
 And I looked attentively, and there is none helping,
 And I am astonished that there is none supporting.
 And give salvation to me doth mine own arm,
 And my wrath—it hath supported me.
 And I tread down peoples in mine anger,
 And I make them drunk in my fury,
 And I bring down to earth their strength."

(Isa. lxiii.)

This is what the apostle Paul refers to when comforting the Thessalonians concerning the coming of the kingdom of God, for the hope of which they suffered. "It is a righteous thing with God," he said, "to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thes. ii. 5-10).

The other prophets, as Obadiah, have likewise spoken of these times and places (Obad. 21). And the Psalm (lxxviii.) which prophesies of the ascension of Christ (verse 18), speaks of a future manifestation of God in Sinai when "the issues of death" shall belong to God, as the risen Christ does now (v. 20); and he "shall wound the head of his enemies" (v. 21), bring AGAIN his people from Bashan and the depths of the sea (v. 22), establish his temple at Jerusalem (v. 29), to which the subjugated nations, including Egypt and Ethiopia, shall repair.

Before Isaiah sees the Saviour coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, he hears this call out of Seir. This is very suggestive. When "the day of vengeance" really arrives, Isaiah will be among the Lord's "hosts" advancing "from Edom" and Seir upon the Holy Land. But in the days of his flesh he was a watchman, and with his children, divinely named, was a man of sign representing Christ and the children whom God hath given him (ch. viii. 18, with Heb. ii. 13). When therefore, "in spirit" he heard the Lord's voice "out of Seir" and put the matter on record for Israel, and for translation into Gentile tongues in future times; it was not unto himself (1 Pet. i. 12), but unto future generations of Christ's "children" and brethren that he ministered the Word. Thus it is not any stretch of ingenuity, so to apply words which, superficially considered, had only a present bearing in times some seven hundred years before Christ. A thousand years with the Lord being but as one day, the end is seen from the beginning, and the Spirit of God speaks of things which be not as though they were. Of this, Isaiah's words have already supplied many examples, as for instance: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

Isaiah was a watchman to the house of Israel, as were other prophets who saw the like things. Thus Habakkuk, witnessing, like Isaiah, the iniquity of Israel and the consequent prevailing of the enemy, stood, as it were, on the watch-tower (ch. ii. 1), to look to the end. He was shown the judgment of the oppressor, and the incoming of the Holy One from the South; and yearned to rest in the day of trouble (iii. 16). So Ezekiel was made a watchman to the house of Israel, to give them warning from God

(ch. iii. 17). He did his part faithfully, but was only listened to out of intellectual curiosity (ch. xxxiii. 30-33).

Others there were, contemporary with the prophets—namely, the priests and rulers of the nation, who were of a different character altogether. "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark" (Isa. lvi. 10). The contrast between these and the faithful watchmen was extreme. The faithful hoped against hope to see Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isa. lxii. 6, 7), and prayed to God accordingly. They were His true watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem. Though they went into captivity afar off, that did not alter the matter. Daniel in Babylon is an illustration of this (Dan. ix.). The others, the faithless, were blind, ignorant, and dumb, and greedy of gain, each from his quarter. In the time of Christ, the one class was exemplified in him and the circle of his disciples, and the other in the Pharisees and Sadducees, who could not discern the signs of their times, nor the Lord's "Prophet like unto Moses" in their midst. The faithful, however, discerned him, and *enquired* of him concerning the sign of his coming and of the end of the age. And he instructed them and warned them to *watch* (Mar. xiii. 35; Matt. xxiv. 42); taking heed, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Lu. xxi. 34).

After he was taken from them, they remembered his words and became, like the prophets, *watchmen of Zion*, waiting for the consolation of Israel in the restitution of all things, and exhorting people to repent that their sins might be blotted out when the Lord Jesus should return. This is the position and function of their uninspired brethren of the latter days, and one of the last messages from heaven is in terms related to the divine challenge "out of Seir." It is where the Lord speaks of the decline of the Power that now holds the country, "that the way may be made ready for the kings that come from the Sunrising" (Rev. xvi. 12, R.V.). "Behold I come as a thief," says the Lord. "Blessed is he that *watcheth*, and keepeth his garments, lest he *walk naked*, and they see his shame."

Before "the Sunrising" it is "night," as Zion's true watchmen know only too well. But night to "blind" watchmen is all the same as day; they "cannot see it" because of their "ignorance," and know not its times, nor what is coming "in the morning." Night is used symbolically in the Scriptures for a visionless time in Israel, when "seers are ashamed, and diviners confounded, and all cover their lips, for *there is no answer from God*" (Mic. iii. 7). This state of things obtained from Malachi to Christ, and then he shone in Galilee and elsewhere as "a great light" in the darkness and "region and shadow of death." In process of time he was withdrawn from the earth; the "great light" departed, and notwithstanding the promised illumination of his disciples by the spirit of God, "night" at last again settled down on the world of Jews and Gentiles; and continues to this time.

The only "light" in the situation is in the Word, and its secondary reflections from such human mirrors as are sufficiently polished to reflect it. "There is no answer from God." But the constellations of the political heavens, especially Jacob's rising star, tell us that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." "Let us therefore," says the apostle, "cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. xiii. 12-14). "For," as he says again, speaking of the resurrection, and the day of the Lord that is coming, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1. Thes. v. 5-9). These are authoritative utterances, and illus-

trations of how the watchmen of Zion should watch and walk in the last hours of the night which precedes "the day of the Lord," and his thief-like entry into an unsuspecting world.

The prophetic watchman, twice challenged by ONE calling out of Seir, turning to certain third parties, cries: "The morning cometh, also the night; if ye will enquire, enquire ye. Return! Come!"

It was a strange answer. At least so it seems at first sight. But it is reasonable when we reflect on it. Its brevity almost implies reproof, as much as to say, "You know, or you *ought to know*." It reminds us of another prophet's vision (Zech. iv.) where the angelic revelator gently reproves the dulness of the prophet by the twice repeated question, "Knowest thou not what these be?" (verses 5, 13). The golden candlestick was so prominent an object in the temple worship that the angel seems to think the prophet ought at once to have understood the vision. Jesus had a difficulty in speaking to Nicodemus (Jno. iii. 12); and Paul likewise with the Hebrews (Heb. v. 10-14). Isaiah's brief words in ch. xxi. 12 appear to be spoken in a similar spirit.

"The morning cometh." All the scriptures contemplate the day of Christ as a morning after a dark night. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It is the time of the dominion of the upright over the wicked (Psa. xlix.). Christ himself is said to be "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii.). And he speaks of himself in Revelation as "the bright and Morning Star." His glorious appearing is the coming morning.

But, "also the night." What might this be? Night in the sense of "no answer from God," failure of open vision, will have departed for ever at the return of Christ. "Thy sun (O Zion) shall no more go down" (Isa. lx. 20). In what other sense, then, could the prophet say "Night cometh." In the same sense as Jesus said: "The night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4). Every man's life is his day, though it be a little span of time in the world's great night.

Death is to him the coming night. "Truly the light is sweet," says Solomon, "and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun: but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all: yea, let him remember the days of darkness, for *they* shall be many" (Ecc. xi. 7). A true watchman of Zion will do this. Christ did it, though in his case the days of darkness were few indeed, for he was "an Holy One."

But this is not all; just as natural death is not all. When "the morning cometh," it is related to "the night" of the "second death," which will be the portion of a multitude of "the children of the night and of darkness." When Judas betrayed Christ, being identified by the sop, he went immediately out "and it was night." Afterwards, when he realised what he had done, he hanged himself and went out into the night of death. Hereafter he will once more appear in the presence of Him whom he betrayed and sold, to encounter "sorer punishment than death" in the shame and contempt of the age to come, and will at last vanish from the scene in the eternal "night" of the "second death." "The morning cometh, also the night." There are more ways than one of betraying Christ and selling him for pieces of silver. Zion's true watchmen are "moved with fear" as well as love, and consider "the night," as well as hope for the morning.

"If ye *will* enquire, enquire ye," said the prophet. There is a great deal in a will. "Where there's a will, there's a way," says the proverb; and unlike many proverbs, this has the support of Scripture. "*Whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely," says the Lord Jesus. How often in his discourses did he interject: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;" and he even formally appends that saying to each of his epistles to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. ii., iii.). But where are those who *will not enquire*? They are unconvertible and incurable on Christ's own testimony (Matt. xiii. 14-15). The leaders of Israel in his day had no ears for the truth. They "closed their eyes," and would not enquire. Therefore, their case was hopeless. Modern popular theology obscures the truth concerning this state of mind by preaching that "the

soul" is incapable of believing the Gospel unless God act upon it by His Holy Spirit. This is shifting the responsibility with a vengeance. Christ's doctrine and application of Isaiah's prophecy puts it in its proper place, and honours the Father and condemns the wicked.

But of whom were Israel to "enquire," and of whom must we? and concerning what? In Isaiah's day, Israel could enquire of the Lord by the prophet, and could "seek out of the book of the Lord and read." We are shut up to the latter, which, thank God, is "able to save our lives." Not until "the morning cometh" will the Scriptures be appraised on earth at their true value. Zion's true watchmen value them aright, and read and meditate upon them continually. There is no other access to the word of God at present open upon earth. This cannot be too often and too powerfully insisted on. Nor can any attempt to cast doubt upon or weaken the authority of the Word be too strenuously resisted. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The enquiry of those who *will* enquire is to be directed towards the Kingdom of God and the conditions of inheriting it. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (food and raiment) shall be added unto you." So said Jesus to his disciples. And the prayer that he taught them has the same objective: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." All Zion's true watchmen are "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," who "bring out of their treasuries things new and old" concerning it. When the kingdom is established they hope to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets therein enthroned, and to be counted worthy of a place under them.

"Return! Come!" said Isaiah in the concluding words of "the burden of Dumah." With reference to "enquirers" of his day, we may understand the words as an exhortation to "turn to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God;" and the like will hold good for subsequent generations, as Paul's words to the Thessalonians show. Paul's gospel had the effect of turning many idolaters to God, "to serve the living and the true

God and to wait for his son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 9-10). Isaiah had spoken so in the word of the Lord to Israel: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him *return unto the Lord* and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 7). Even the sons of the stranger (lvi. 3) were encouraged to join themselves to the Lord, keep his sabbaths, choose the things that please him, and take hold of his covenant. They were promised a place and a name better than that of (natural) sons and daughters, and that they should be made joyful in Yahweh's house of prayer.

"Come," said Isaiah. But whither? "Come ye to the waters" ("every one *that thirsteth*"). "Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." And the context explains these beautiful figures in an exhortation to forsake the unsatisfactory things of current apostacy, and incline the ear to the terms of the everlasting covenant—"the *sure mercies of David*." When the Heir to David's throne appeared, he took up the gracious divine invitation: "*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*; for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. xi. 28). What the coming unto Christ literally involved, we learn clearly upon determined enquiry of the Word of Christ and the apostles. The taking of Christ's yoke involved the putting off of another yoke. The coming unto Christ involved the "coming out from among" the unbelievers, as Paul told the Corinthians (2 Cor. vi. 14-18). He was a faithful watchman, who cried aloud regardless of consequences, and was consequently "pure from the blood of all" (Acts xx. 26). He went his way into the sleep of death along with Isaiah and all the prophets, and generation after generation of faithful watchmen have followed in his footsteps. And still the Spirit's invitation sounds abroad, wherever the word penetrates in the darkness of the passing night. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"THE BURDEN UPON ARABIA."

"The burden upon Arabia" is the title of the last five verses of Isaiah xxi. It is difficult to say to what the prophecy may have referred in the past, and almost equally so to suggest any application to the future.

Arabia, in scriptural usage, mostly denotes the North-west part of the Arabian peninsular, known as Arabia Petraea. The allusions to it are associated with Edom, Tema, Kedar, and other names connected with this locality: and Paul's reference to "Mount Sinai in Arabia" (Gal. iv.) brings us to the same country.

The allusions in the Scripture to Arabia in connection with Israel's history, are not very many; and they do not throw much light on this prophecy. We are told that the weight of gold received annually by Solomon was so much, "beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the Kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country" (1 Kings x. 15). This is the first mention of Arabia, though, of course, the names of families that had settled in the country figure frequently before this. Afterwards, in the days of Jehoshaphat, God "established the kingdom in his hand," and "the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Also, some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams, and seven thousand seven hundred he-goats" (2 Chron. xvii. 11). This was because Jehoshaphat followed the Lord and not Baalim. But afterwards, Jehoshaphat "helped the ungodly" Ahab; and Ahaziah after him. And after Jehoshaphat's death, his son Jehoram slew his brethren; and, taking Ahab's daughter to wife, "forsook the Lord God of his fathers." Then "the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians that were near the Ethiopians" (2 Chron. xxi. 16: xxii. 1). Thus, from a tributary country, Arabia became an invading scourge because of the apostacy of the Kings of Judah. Once more the tide turned. In the days of Uzziah, who did well in the earlier part of his long reign of fifty-two years, "God helped him

against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gurbal and the Mehunims (2 Chron. xxvi. 7).

Isaiah was contemporary with Uzziah (ch. i. 1), but evidently only during the latter part of that king's reign. The vision of chapter vi. is dated "in the year that King Uzziah died." This and other considerations necessitate the conclusion stated. The words of ch. xxi. 13-17, cannot therefore well apply to anything in Uzziah's experience. And yet the phrase "within a year" (v. 16), presents a judgment to come in Isaiah's lifetime; a judgment concerning which either history is silent, or, if it belong to Uzziah's reign, we must suppose these words to have been spoken earlier than those of chapter vi. and to have been incorporated in this place for some special reason.

After Uzziah, the next overthrow that the Scriptures bring before us in relation to Arabian countries is that mentioned by Jeremiah, who foretells the subjugation of the Arabian districts by Nebuchadnezzar. "Dedan, Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners," were to drink of the cup of the Lord's fury and submit to Nebuchadnezzar "his servant" (Jer. xxv. 23). "Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor" were likewise to be smitten by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xlix. 29). Dedan also was to be visited with "the calamity of Esau" (verse 8). But for the time limit "within a year," we might think that the fall of the glory of Kedar that Isaiah thus contemplated was this that came under Nebuchadnezzar some hundred years or so afterwards.

The phrase "according to the years of an hireling" has already been before us in connection with the description of Moab's fall (Isa. xvi. 14). We then saw, in chapter xvi., that the nations are reckoned by God as His "hirelings," or "servants," in contrast with Israel "his son," His "first born." Sometimes God used His "hirelings" to chastise His disobedient "son;" and sometimes to chastise each other, as when He gave all these countries into Nebuchadnezzar's hand; or as when He gave Nebuchadnezzar the land of Egypt for "wages" for his "great service against Tyre" (Ezek. xxix.). Ultimately the "son" will return from his prodigal wanderings, and under the kindness of "the Father," will dispossess the "hired servants"

who have occupied and desolated his inheritance. This national deliverance will come by the Lord Jesus, the Father's personal Son and Firstborn. And we know from the Scriptures that his operations have much to do with those Arabian countries that have already seen so much of the Divine work on earth.

There are reasons for thinking that a latter-day application of this "burden upon Arabia" is intended, whatever fulfilment it may have found in the past; and that its coupling with "the burden of Dumah" is not undesigned. The Revised Version tells us in the margin that "according to the ancient versions" we may read:—"In the forest *at evening* shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanites." Also the margin suggests that the succeeding words may be construed as an admonition instead of an historical record, thus: "Unto him that is thirsty bring ye water; ye inhabitants of the land of Tema meet the fugitives with their bread."

The difference between "Arabia" and "evening," wide enough in English, is not so in Hebrew, *ereb* standing for both. We have only to ask: Have the prophets anything else to say about Dedanites and Temanites "at evening" succouring fugitives who flee into their country from the grievousness of war? The answer is, Yes. Isaiah had previously spoken of "evening-tide trouble," and of the scattering of Israel's spoilers like thistle-down "before the morning" (xvii. 14). "At evening" also, that is, just before the dawn of "Zion's glad morning," Ezekiel, speaking of this crisis, says that "Sheba and Dedan, and the Merchants of Tarshish," *an Arabian coalition*, interpose in Israelitish affairs against Gog and his northern confederacy who overrun the land (Ezek. xxxviii.). A British confederacy of the South opposes a Russian confederacy of the North at this great crisis, and the latter prevails to the taking of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Zionist colonies then well rooted in the land.

We have already drawn attention to what others have previously established, namely, that Edom and Moab of the latter days represent British power at the crisis of Christ's revelation to Israel. In Isaiah xvi. God exhorts Moab, in the

time when the throne of David is to be re-established in righteousness, to let His outcasts dwell with him. Britain, the natural friend and protector of the Jews for every political reason, and the natural enemy of Russia in the same way, will do this—not for any love of Israel's God, or of Israel in the highest sense. Necessities which know no law, and which are controlled only by God Himself, will compel it. A strong enemy will drive Britain out of Egypt into the Arabian countries south of Jerusalem (Dan. xi. 40-43), and Jewish fugitives will naturally take refuge among the hosts of their protector.

But Sheba and Dedan and the Merchants of Tarshish do not save Israel, or themselves. Were it not for the supernatural intervention of divine power, which is most emphatically announced in Ezekiel xxxviii., a fifth Universal Empire would arise to dominate the earth, namely the Russian—"Colossus." But Christ and the saints come into the inheritance at this crisis, and the kingdoms of men are soon "broken to pieces together," as Daniel saw in vision (ch. ii.). "The glory of Kedar" falls for the last time, and he is transformed and adopted with all other "hirelings" into an obedient member of the family of nations that shall be joined to the Lord in that day.

The tribute of Arabia, as of all countries—the gold, spices, and flocks are rendered joyfully to the greater than Solomon in his capital Jerusalem, then "the joy of the whole earth." "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea and all that is therein, the isles and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands" (Isa. xlii. 10-12). "The multitude of camels shall cover thee (O, Zion), the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come, they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee:

they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory" (Isa. lx. 6, 7).

Great Babylon will then have fallen before the Lord, who comes into the land of Israel from the South by the route of the hosts of Israel of old. Isaiah and many others who spoke of these places in their various generations, and of this great final crisis, will be there to witness the truth of the word of God, which they ministered in times of mortal humiliation. Moses, Caleb and Joshua, and many others who sojourned wearily in these parts in the days of their flesh, having "respect to the recompense of the reward," will then see the scene of their old wanderings in happier times. And the call of the gospel is to us to rejoice with them in that day on condition of walking as they walked in their day and generation.





CHAPTER XXII.

“THE BURDEN OF THE VALLEY OF VISION.”

THIS “oracle” is related to Hezekiah’s reign. Shebna and Eliakim were two of his officers who figure in the account of Sennacherib’s invasion, of which the prophet speaks in chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii. This, we are told, took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, from which we see that Isaiah was then getting an old man. His vision of chapter vi. is dated “in the year that King Uzziah died.” After that, Jotham reigned 16 years, and Ahaz followed with another 16 years’ reign. Add to this the 14 years of Hezekiah, and we have 46 years from the death of Uzziah. If the prophet were then only 20 years old, he would be 66 years old in the fourteenth of Hezekiah. The probability is he was past the three score and ten limit, and that when he was “sawn asunder,” according to the tradition, which seems to be supported in Heb. xi. 37; it was in old age, after a long life of distressful and unheeded testimony and warning.

“The burden of (or, oracle concerning) *the valley of vision,*” is the title of this prophecy. The objective is Jerusalem, beyond dispute. The valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat surround Jerusalem on the south and east, and in Isaiah’s time the Tyropœon valley divided the city, and running south joined the valley of Hinnom. This last was *the valley*, defiled by the idolatries of Judah’s kings, which was to be the scene of divine retribution in the day of “treading down by the Lord God of hosts.”

Isaiah had been a grieved spectator of the abominations practised there. Ahaz, to whom he had announced God’s purpose in Immanuel, had distinguished himself in wickedness in this place. “He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, yea,

and made his son [to pass through the fire, according to the abomination of the heathen whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel" (2 Kings xvi. 3). This was "*in the valley of the son of Hinnom*" (2 Chron. xxvii. 3). Afterwards, in the days of Jeremiah, God expostulated with Israel, saying: "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim. See thy way *in the valley*, know what thou hast done" (Jer. ii. 23). And Josiah, in whose days Jeremiah spoke, "defiled Topheth, which is *in the valley of the children of Hinnom*, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech" (2 Kings xxiii. 10).

From this we can well understand why Isaiah should have to communicate "an oracle concerning the valley of vision." In the sight of God and of the prophet, the nation was here by its continued provocation accumulating a judgment which would at last come without remedy. God defended the city against Sennacherib, but He gave it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar a little over a century afterwards, and at last, after many more judgments, into the hands of the Romans, that it might be for many centuries "trodden down of the Gentiles," as it is this day.

Isaiah's grief and tears (v. 4) are a characteristic not confined to him. Such was the portion of all the prophets, and even of Christ himself, of whom Isaiah was a man of sign (chap. viii. 18, with Heb. ii. 13). The circumstances under which Isaiah spoke are vividly brought to mind by the vision of another prophet concerning Jerusalem in later times. Ezekiel (ch. viii. ix.), a "son of man," who likewise represented Christ, was shown Jerusalem from a divine point of view. They said that God could not see: "The Lord seeth not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth." How far otherwise it was, Ezekiel was made to see. God showed him "them that had charge over the city," and he beheld the recording angel go through the city and "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst thereof." After him followed his companions with swords, and slew utterly "old and young, both maids and little children and women"; but, says Ezekiel, "I was left." The prophet was a marked man. But "the ancients of Israel,"

“princes of the people,” were prominent in the iniquity and in the slaughter that followed. We need not elaborately trace the parallel in the case of the greater Son of Man. It is complete and striking. Jesus wept over Jerusalem; his testimony was rejected, and himself despised and slain; but when the time came for retribution on that generation, the ancients of Israel, and princes of the people, with unnumbered thousands of despisers and rejecters, were slain utterly; while he, by resurrection, was left.

The truth alone gives us fellowship with the prophets and with Christ in these things. It shows us the goodness of God in the gospel of the kingdom, and at the same time the hopeless corruption and inattention of the world, even of Christendom. “The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth,” is its true working principle, though unexpressed in words; and the re-echoing of the voice of the prophets is as unpopular as was their direct testimony in their own days. But the day will come when the corrupters and despisers will be slain, and only the “men upon whom is the mark” left. Those of that class who are “alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” will have good cause to rejoice in their adherence to the ways of the prophets and of the Lord.

Isaiah rallied the inhabitants of Jerusalem concerning their attention to measures of defence, in utter neglect of God, in whose hands they were, and who had chosen the city for the glory of His name. “Ye have seen the breaches of the city of David that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth. And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord

of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die saith the Lord of Hosts."

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," is, as Paul argues (1 Cor. xv. 32), a motto fit only for those who have no hope of the resurrection of the dead. In Judah, in the city of David, such a state of mind ought not to have existed. God's covenant with David, concerning which He had commissioned Isaiah to speak, with reference to the coming of Immanuel, ought to have been the ground of confidence and obedience in the nation. But it had been totally lost sight of—as much so among David's descendants as it is among the Gentiles at this day. Abominable fables, coupled with atrocious rites, had superseded "the Gospel" (Gal. iii. 8), and God's expostulations, warnings, and threatenings fell on heedless ears. And at last "it was revealed" to Isaiah that the people's sin was past forgiveness, and that the city was doomed to destruction. A dreadful communication was this for the prophet to receive; it made his life bitter: "I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people."

The revelation brought the prophet into direct personal conflict with one of the highest officials of the court. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say: What hast thou here?"—And the prophetic word went on to say that God would pull him down from his station, toss him like a ball into captivity, and that his bones should not come into his rock-cut sepulchre at Jerusalem, for he should die in a strange land (verses 15-19). "The Lord seeth not as man seeth: man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart." Here was a treasurer of wealth and influence in Hezekiah's court, who had, nevertheless, *no place in Jerusalem*; but was really "a vessel of wrath," "endured" by God for so long a time and then cast away.

Contrast this with God's own message concerning the sons of the stranger and the eunuchs that choose the things in which He delights, and take hold of His covenant (Isa. lvi. 4). To these He says: "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within

my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them *an everlasting name* which shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." When one of the sons of the stranger manifested such a disposition in the days of Jesus, "he marvelled," saying, "Verily I say unto you I have not found so great faith no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 10-12). Shebna was an example of the rejected "children of the kingdom." Who among us shall be included among the "many" who sit down with Abraham? Those who walk in his footsteps.

Of these, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, Shebna's contemporary officer, is an example; being at the same time a type of Christ. Just as Isaiah, without form or ceremony, apology or circumlocution, had, by the word of the Lord, pronounced the deposition of Shebna; so he as briefly and directly announced the preference and advancement of Eliakim. But the terms in which this was done bring before us something far exceeding any exaltation of which Eliakim may have been the subject in the days of his flesh—even the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. And the language compels the conclusion that Eliakim, like Isaiah himself, was a man of sign, and stood as a figure of Christ in the regeneration. Of Eliakim personally, we read nothing more than is to be found in this chapter, and the contemporary records of Hezekiah's reign in Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah. But the things affirmed of him, and of which he will participate hereafter, are all likewise affirmed of

Christ in other parts of the Word of God. Indeed, in the Revelation, Jesus appropriates the phraseology of this prophecy. He directed John to write to the ecclesia at Philadelphia: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, *he that hath the Key of David*, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth" (Rev. iii. 7).

In *Eureka*, his exposition of the Apocalypse (Vol. I., p. 375), Dr. Thomas devotes a section to the consideration of what is involved in the Lord's allusion to his possession of The Key of the House of David. In this he deals at some length with the prophecy of Eliakim in Isa. xxii. Independent searching of the Scriptures confirms the truth of his exposition, to which readers of these lines are referred. It will be sufficient here to pass briefly under review the main features of the prophecy (Isa. xxii. 20-25).

First as to the name Eliakim. Like other Bible names, it is expressive of something more than the mere defining of an individual. It is derived, as Dr. Thomas points out, from *El*, God, and *yahkim*, shall set up, and hence "is a typical name for *the restoration power* (Acts. i. 6), which is Deity in David's Son, or the Christ." It is the Lord's function to "build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down" (Amos. ix. 11; Acts xv. 16). And he will do it by the power of the Father, who "shall send him again" in "the times of restitution" (Acts. iii. 21). Hence Eliakim, clothed, strengthened, and established in the government, was a very fitting type of him.

"He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." We have already, in chapter ix., seen what is involved in this description of the coming paternal government of Christ. The excellencies of Joseph in Egypt, and of Elijah and Elisha in Israel, will be combined and far surpassed in Christ. And the infamies of the sham "Holy Father" of Rome will vanish in judgment before him. God in Christ and in the fathers of Israel and the prophets and apostles, and all of whom the world was not worthy, will in, and from Jerusalem, bless Israel and the nations as they have never been blessed before, according to the covenant of promise with Abraham of old.

The key of the house of David on Eliakim's shoulder is representative of the government upon the shoulder of "Great David's greater Son" (Isa. ix. 6). He is the holder of the keys of *hades* and of death. It is his work to bring David again from the dust of death, and to open a door in heaven (Rev. iv.) for the setting up of David's fallen throne. He is "the Root and offspring of David," and controls all things on earth with reference to this great consummation. Christendom is faithless concerning it; but his people rejoice in the prospect of reigning with him. This is revealed in Rev. v., where, in the day of the realisation of their hopes, they ascribe glory and honour to him in the prospect of their thousand years "reign on the earth." Present-day movements among David's people assure them that the end is near.

Eliakim, fastened by God "as a nail in a sure place," is a beautiful figure of Christ. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd" (Ecc. xii. 11). As Dr. Thomas remarks: "The word of the only wise Deity when incarnated, is therefore fitly represented by 'a nail fastened in a sure place.' Of this nail, the Spirit in Zechariah said, that it should come out of Judah (ch. x. 4). The 'sure place' in which it is to be fastened, Ezra designates as 'Yahweh Elohim's holy place,' in which he and the remnant of the captivity returned from Babylon, were then sojourning—that is, in Jerusalem. This accords with the true import of *maquom neahman*, which signifies an established habitation. This is the 'sure place' in which THE NAIL is to be fastened—in Jerusalem, then a peaceable, quiet, and established habitation" (Isa. xxxii. 18: xxxiii. 20).

"And he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father's house." Here, again, we are constrained to look to Christ, the "true heir to David's throne." Isaiah had already spoken of God's purpose to enthrone him in Zion, and the angel Gabriel reiterated it just before his birth. Zechariah said, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne" (Zech. vi. 13). Jesus himself afterwards spoke of this: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. xxv. 31). And just before his

death he comforted his disciples with the memory of the "Father's house," and the many abiding places which he would prepare for those who loved and obeyed him.

The apostles and the whole company of the redeemed will in that day constitute "the glory of his Father's house" which "they shall hang upon him." There will be a Father's house in the shape of the temple of the age to come, but architectural glory, even of so exalted a kind, falls far short of the mental, moral, and deathless glory of Christ personal and multitudinous. "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one." So he spoke in prayer to the Father. In lesser degree the same thing is illustrated in the generations of Christ's friends. "Ye are our glory and our joy," said Paul to the Thessalonians when speaking of the coming of Christ. But Paul himself is the glory of Christ. All finally hangs upon him. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth" (Psa. xlv. 16). With only one or two exceptions, as Enoch and Elijah, these "children" of "the King" are "asleep in the dust of the earth." It is therefore appropriate that "the offspring and the issue" (Isa. xxii. 24) should be designated by terms denoting, as Dr. Thomas truly remarks, "earth-products and shoots." To use the language of Jesus himself, "they are the children of God, *being the children of the resurrection*" (Luke xx. 36). As "vessels of mercy," "small and great," they will be gathered round Christ in the "great house" of the Father that He will set up and embellish.

But before this, not only was the typical glory of Eliakim, Isaiah's contemporary, to go under eclipse, and his people to be overthrown and taken captive; but the Lord Jesus himself was to be "cut off," and the children of the kingdom in a natural sense more terribly slain and dispersed. The last verse of Isa. xxii. brings this before us. "In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down and fall, and *the burden* upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it." First the

bearing of the burden, and then the bearing of the glory : first the cutting off of the burden in the cutting down of the nail, and then the fastening of the nail in the sure place for ever, and the hanging on of the glory. This was God's order of things. It is otherwise presented in the apostolic phrase : " the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow," of which, says Peter, the prophets spoke ; though neither they, nor even the angels, saw to the end of the matter.

" He bare the sin of many." " The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all " (Isa. liii.). " He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin " (2 Cor. v. 21). " Who his own self *bare our sins in his own body to the tree* " (1 Pet. ii. 24). " For mine iniquities are gone over my head : as a *heavy burden* they are too heavy for me " (Psa. xxxviii. 4). " In this we groan . . . *being burdened* " (2 Cor. v. 4). These scriptures illustrate the nature of the burden that was " cut off " when Messiah was " cut off " (Dan ix. 26), though no iniquity was found in him (Jno. xiv. 30). The things that Isaiah spoke concerning him, to, and through, his fellow-servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, 700 years before Christ, have been so far fulfilled. The Restorer of Israel has prevailed personally over sin and death, and " we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." It only remains for him to return from heaven and re-establish the throne and kingdom of David and bear the glory. To a share in this the gospel calls us. Ought we not to respond with heart and soul ?





CHAPTER XXIII.

“THE BURDEN OF TYRE.”

“THE burden of Tyre” (or the oracle concerning Tyre), though part of the “light that shineth in a dark place,” reveals nothing to clerics and critics whose eyes are closed against the gospel of the kingdom of God. One of the “authorities,” discussing the authorship of this prophecy, rightly maintains that “no convincing arguments have been adduced against the traditional view;” but dismisses the oracle in the following words :

“The date of the prophecy cannot be absolutely determined, nor can the fulfilment of the prediction in all its terms be pointed out. No light has yet been cast upon the predictions of the closing verses.”

This simply amounts to an admission that the writer “can’t see it.” It by no means follows that the light is not there and brilliantly visible to other eyes. The truth is the enlightener. “The light of the glorious gospel of Christ” shining into the minds of even men of low degree causes them to behold “marvellous things” out of God’s law and testimony. It is the lack of this that is the undoing of the wise of this world.

As to the date of the prophecy; there seems to be no good reason for doubting that it belongs to about the middle of the reign of Hezekiah, to which the preceding chapter, and some subsequent ones, evidently belong. As to the scope of the predictions, and the fulfilment especially of the concluding verses; it will be seen that the truth easily and beautifully indicates it; and that it bears upon the setting up of that kingdom, for the coming of which all Christendom orally prays in the Lord’s prayer, but concerning the advent of which it is so signally faithless.

THE ORIGIN OF TYRE.

Tyre (Heb. *Tzor*, a rock), is the name of a city about 35 miles north of Mount Carmel on the Mediterranean, and about five miles south of the river Leontes. It was in the midst of Phœnicia, and 25 miles south of Sidon, with which, in the Old and New Testaments, it is associated. Tyre and Sidon were to Phœnicia of old, somewhat as London, or Liverpool, and Glasgow are to the British Isles to-day.

The allusions of this prophecy at once take us back to the earliest accounts of the book of Genesis, that we may get a clear Scriptural idea of the origin and character of Tyre. The first words of "the oracle concerning Tyre" are, "Howl, ye ships of Tarshish;" whence at once arise the questions, "Who was Tarshish?" "Where was Tarshish?" Then, again, the prophet speaks of "the land of Chittim," and of Tyre as being at once the enfeebled "daughter of *Tarshish*" (v. 10), and "the oppressed virgin daughter of *Sidon*" (v. 12).

These allusions are intelligible only when we consult the divine account of the origin of these peoples and places. "They call their lands after their own names, and their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever" (Ps. xlix.). This has been the custom and sentiment from the beginning. After the flood, one line of Noah's descendants, in its first three generations, ran thus: Japheth, Javan, Tarshish and Kittim, the last two being sons of Javan. In another branch, the corresponding three generations were Ham, Canaan, Sidon. Thus, in few words, the paternity of Tarshish, Kittim, and Sidon is disclosed from Genesis. Sidon gave his name to the city in the northern land of the Canaanites, and the geography of Tarshish and Kittim is first indicated in Gen. x. 4-5, as follows: "By these (Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim) were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families in their nations."

These isles of the Gentiles were Cyprus, Crete, and the islands and coast-lands of the northern shores of the Great Sea,

or Mediterranean generally. Thus, without at once descending into questions of geographical details, it is obvious from the first that Tarshish and Kittim stand for a maritime power often alluded to in the Scriptures, with designed indefiniteness, under the phrase "Ships of Tarshish." The times and bounds of the naval supremacy of the world have changed frequently; but this conveniently elastic phrase covers them all. What is meant in any particular case is determinable by the context, the history of the past, the first principles of the gospel of the kingdom, and the developments of the latter-days, in which we are assured the prophetic visions shall "speak and not lie," and that at the time of the end "the wise shall understand."

The "isle of the Gentiles" with which the name Chittim or Kittim is most prominently identified, is Cyprus. Josephus says: "Cethimas (Chittim) possessed the island Cethima: it is now called Cyprus; and from that it is, that all islands, and the greatest part of the sea coasts, are named Cethim by the Hebrews; and one city there is in Cyprus that has been able to preserve its denomination; it is called Citius by those who use the language of the Greeks, and has not, by the use of that dialect, escaped the name of Cethim" (*Ant.*, Bk. i., cp. 6, sec. 1). Phœnician inscriptions have been found at Larnaka, the site of this ancient Citium, which speak of the inhabitants as Chitti, thus endorsing the testimony of Josephus, of nearly 1,900 years ago.

Tyre was "the daughter of Tarshish" in the sense of being an offshoot of that earliest maritime power; and "the virgin daughter of Zidon" in the sense of being in its palmyest days the unsubdued colony of the parent city to the north in the land of "the Sidonians" (*Deut.* iii. 9). This country, when Joshua divided the land by lot to Israel, fell to the lot of Asher (*Josh.* xix. 29). But Asher, like the other tribes, "did not drive out the inhabitants," "but dwelt among the Canaanites." Because of this, they became thorns in Israel's side, and their gods a snare (*Jud.* ii. 3), even to the extent of subverting Solomon, and afterwards desolating the kingdom of Israel.

THE TYRIAN IDOLATRY.

“The Canaanites worshipped the male and female divinities, Baal and Astarte, who, in some cities, were designated by the names of Adonis and Baaltis. Baal was intended to be a personification of the sun, and Astarte of the moon; they did not, however, figure as luminous beings within the celestial space, but as the procreative powers of nature. The Canaanites also worshipped the then known seven planets termed *Cabiri*, i.e., the Mighty; as an eighth god they adored Ashmun, the restorer of health, who was depicted as a serpent. The rites by which men and women dedicated themselves to the male and female deities were of a loathsome description. The degraded priestesses of the temple were termed ‘consecrated women’ (*Kedeshoth*). In honour of Astarte half frantic youths and men mutilated themselves and wore female attire. They then wandered about as beggars, collecting aid for their sanctuary, or rather for their priests, and were called ‘holy men’ (*Kedeshim*). Such proceedings formed a main part of the religious discipline among the Phœnicians, and their profanities were constantly displayed before the Israelites” (*Graetz, History of the Jews*).

The foregoing extract shows what a fatal mistake was made by the tribes in sparing a system that God had commanded them to extirpate. It also suggests reasons for some commandments of the law of Moses; and holds up to view the original source of the spiritual harlotry, of which the prophet Isaiah speaks in this “oracle concerning Tyre” (verses 15-17).

THE ALLIANCE WITH DAVID AND SOLOMON.

The Tyrian alliance with David and Solomon is an allegory related to things to come in the land of Israel. The Lord Jesus makes comparison of himself with Solomon, saying to the Jews: “a greater than Solomon is here.” He is to “build the temple of the Lord” (*Zech. vi. 13*). A Tyrian power of the latter days is related to this time and work, for “the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift” in the day when the “greater than Solomon” sits on “the throne of the Lord over

Israel" (Psa. xlv. 12, 6-7). A comparison and a contrast come before us here, for the "greater than Solomon" will by no means repeat the folly and transgression of his typical predecessor, nor the wicked toleration of the tribes before him; but will effectually uproot the Tyrian idolatry from the Holy Land and all the lands of its erstwhile dominion.

The greatness and glory of Tyre are the subject of extensive delineation by the prophet Ezekiel (xxvi.-xxviii.), where God pronounces judgment upon the city, to be executed by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. It is clear from Ezek. xxix. 18 that Nebuchadnezzar subdued Tyre; but it is not quite clear in what sense he is said by God to have "received no wages." The record runs thus: "Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it." And God decreed that Egypt should be his wages. It has been suggested that the city itself was not actually taken by Nebuchadnezzar, or that all the spoil was removed before its fall. The latter seems the more probable. At any rate, Tyre, with all the other powers enumerated in Jer. xxv., was reduced to servitude of the King of Babylon for seventy years, as the prophet here said it should be (Jer. xxv. 11, 22).

A superficial reading of Isa. xxiii. 13, apart from comparison with other parts of the Word and with history, would lead one to the conclusion that Babylon fell before Tyre. This verse has started the critics off on the assumption that it must have been written long after Isaiah's time by another, whom, having invented, they have christened "the Babylonian Isaiah." But there is no sound reason for such perversely ingenious romancing. This prophecy of Isaiah's is not "the burden of Babylon," which had been previously declared with great vividness in chapters xiii.-xiv.; but "the burden of Tyre." And the prophet does not direct the attention of Tyre to the founding of Babylon, but to that of "the land of the Chaldeans" under Asshur. There were towers and palaces in this land

long before the Babylon of Isaiah's time; the tower of Babel was about contemporary with the birth of Tyre. The ruin of this tower and city in "the land of Shinar" (Gen. xi.) and the scattering of the builders by God may be the example that Tyre was called upon to "behold." As a matter of prophecy and history, we know that the humbling of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar preceded the fall of Babylon before the Medes and Persians, and Isaiah's prophecy must be understood in harmony with this fact.

After the "seventy years'" servitude, according to the word of the Lord by Isaiah and Jeremiah, Tyre revived and continued the customs of her former estate. The time to "punish the King of Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans" (Jer. xxv. 12) came, and Tyre and the other powers were freed from his yoke. The next visitation on the merchant city was by Alexander the Great, who, in B.C. 332, took insular Tyre, after a siege of seven months' duration, by building a mole connecting it with the mainland.

THE MIGRATION WESTWARD.

After this, the sovereignty of the seas—naval and mercantile—migrated westward from the shores of Phœnicia. Tyre was no longer "the mart of nations," as she had been some centuries before, when the prophets depicted her splendour and proclaimed her fall. Isaiah, by the Spirit, decreed this migration in v. 6: "*Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.*" "*Pass over to Chittim; there, also, shalt thou have no rest*" (v. 12). This, of itself, is an indication that the terms Tyre and Tarshish are not to be geographically confined to the land of the Phœnicians in the prophecies concerning the latter-days. And this consideration is most amply justified by many scriptures. The language of verse 9 is in harmony with this: "The Lord of Hosts hath purposed it to stain the pride of *all glory*, and to bring into contempt *all the honourable of the earth.*" This is a work to be accomplished when the Lord Jesus is enthroned in Jerusalem, and

his ancients "dwell before the Lord" (v. 18), there in the glory foreshadowed by Solomon's kingdom.

Dr. Thomas wrote most lucidly of this over fifty years ago. Quoting the passages just referred to, he said:—

"From this it would appear that Tyre was to emigrate from the Phœnician isle to Italy; but was not to abide there permanently. Tyre in Italy was the *Tyrio-Tarshish traffic* there. But it was to find no rest there. This implies that Tyre was to remove from Italy and become Tyre in some other place: that is, that *wherever the traffic originally peculiar to Tyre should settle itself as in a stronghold, there would Tyre and the stronghold of Tarshish be*. Tyre was to carry herself away upon her own feet. Commerce and trade cannot be taken captive and be compelled by a conqueror to locate itself wherever he pleases. They must flow in their own natural channels. A numerous, ingenious, and industrious population will export and import largely; and if it get the start of surrounding nations, it will become a great centre of attraction; and when, in its growth and prosperity, it develops into the old Phœnician similitude, there has Tyre carried herself upon her own feet, and not those of another. Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander might plunder her merchandise, but could not transfer her trafficking to Babylon or Macedonia. Tyre has been in Alexandria, in Venice, in Genoa, in Lisbon, in Holland, and lastly, in Britain, '*far away*' from her ancient home, and there 'to sojourn' until she shall return over the Sea of Tarshish to her fatherland, there to pursue a course more calculated to bless the world than she has hitherto done in her harlotry with all the kingdoms of the earth."

With reference to Alexandria, founded by the conqueror of Tyre, we get just a brief glimpse of its maritime trade in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul, on his voyage as a prisoner to Rome, about A.D. 60, was put on board "a ship of Alexandria" at Myra, in Lycia (Acts xxvii. 6). And when that ship was wrecked on the island of Melita (Malta), after a three months' sojourn, he was shipped in the *Castor and Pollux*, another "ship of Alexandria," and landed at Puteoli, in Italy (Acts xxviii. 11-13).

TYRE AND VENICE.

The maritime ascendancy of Venice came a few centuries later. It is interesting to hear the late John Ruskin trace the genealogy of the Tyrian Power — not indeed with any idea of elucidating the prophecy of Isaiah, but as noting a great world-phenomenon. He says:—

“Since first the dominion of man was asserted over the ocean, three thrones of mark beyond all others have been set up upon its sands—the thrones of Tyre, Venice, and England. Of the first of these great powers, only the memory remains. Of the second, only the ruins; the third, *which inherits their greatness*, if it forgets their example, may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction.”

A perusal of the historical section of the article VENICE, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, will convince anyone that it was a “sojourning place” of the Tyrian power of old. So marked is the resemblance, that a footnote is devoted to the subject, which runs as follows:—

“There are many curious analogies between Venice in the early part of its career and the Phœnician city of Tyre in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., in the position of the two cities, their mercantile habits, their custom of acting as carriers for other races, and their both being, in their habits of life and in their artistic productions, links between the East and the West.”

Venetia was one of the twenty-nine provinces into which Constantine divided Italy. After his time the original government was invested in magistrates called *tribuni maratimi*, maritime tribunal; but they gave place to the rule of the Doges or dukes. In the 9th century A.D., after the wars with Pepin and Charlemagne, the people in 810 “abandoned the mainland in order to make the Rivo Alto, with its surrounding islets, the permanent seat of their government.” Compare this with insular Tyre. The suppression of the Adriatic pirates developed the naval strength of Venice, and the period of the Crusades developed a great transport trade. “The whole littoral, from Trieste to Albania, became in this way a sort of prolonga-

tion of the Venetian Coast." From the 12th to the 15th centuries A.D. was the palmiest time of the "sojourn" of Tyre in Venice. Constantinople was conquered by the Doge Enrico Dandolo in 1204. The salt trade of Central Europe was in the hands of the Venetians, and such was the greatness of the arsenal that it at one time employed 16,000 workmen: and, in the struggle with the Turks towards the end of the 16th century, sent forth a fully-armed galley every morning for 100 days in succession. But the Turks became the rising power in the East, till in 1453 they took Constantinople, and the Venetian possessions gradually fell under their power. Chittim, or Cyprus, was ceded to them in 1573, after many other places. At last, Napoleon the Great suppressed the Republic in 1797. Then Venice was assigned by treaty to Austria. But, in 1866, Austria was defeated by Prussia, and Venice liberated. At last, in 1870, it was united with Italy. But long before this, the Tyrian power had migrated still further westward, even to "the remote islands of the Northern Seas."

"The Lord of Hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of *all glory*, and to bring into contempt *all the honourable of the earth*" (verse 8). This alone ought to assure everyone that the scope and intention of the "burden of Tyre" here revealed, is not yet exhausted. The pride of the glory of Phœnician Tyre of old has departed truly, and "only its memory remains." Likewise the glory of its Venetian successor has been stained and laid in ruins; but Britain, which, as Ruskin truly says, "inherits their greatness," and boasts "*a prouder eminence*," remains; and, with "all the proud," must be humbled and "brought into contempt," before the prophecy, even in this one particular, can be said to have been fulfilled. This latter day "daughter of Tarshish" must become as weak as water (v. 10), in the day that the Lord stretches out his hand over the sea and shakes kingdoms (v. 11).

"If it forget their (Tyre's and Venice's) example," says Ruskin, "it may be led through prouder eminence to less pitied destruction." The examples of Tyre and Venice must be studied in the light of prophecy, and of the gospel of the kingdom, which covenants their dominion to Christ and the saints. There is but

little of such study in Britain, whose correspondence with other Tyrian features delineated in the prophecy is only too well marked. Her forgetfulness of God's judgments on Tyre is absolute, and the destruction of her power is assured.

“BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES.”

We have dwelt a little on the passing of the Tyrian Power to Alexandria and Venice. It is unnecessary further to trace its progress. Students of English history will not need reminding of the Spanish Armada, and its destruction in 1588: nor of the Dutch victory of Van Tromp in 1652, when he carried a broom at his mast head in the English Channel as an emblematic announcement that he had swept Britain from the seas. The tables were soon turned, however, and the British flag was saluted in the way that has come down even to our own times. It was about the opening of the seventeenth century that (after the destruction of the Spanish Armada) the vital importance of the navy began to dawn on the British nation. Since that time naval supremacy has become an axiom, for the upholding of which hundreds of millions of pounds have been squeezed out of the people to the tune of “Rule Britannia!”

Seeing that the prophecy undoubtedly has a latter-day application, it becomes a question whether we can support this by other scriptures, and identify in Britain, as the modern representative of Tyre and Tarshish, the features that are here before us. As concerning other scriptures, we find them in harmony with this idea, inasmuch as they represent a latter-day Tyre in subjection to, and in alliance with, “THE KING” of Israel. Thus, in Psalm xlv., which we have Paul's authority for interpreting as prophetic of the reign of Christ on earth, it is said: “The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.” This is to come to pass when “the Queen in gold of Ophir” stands at the right hand of the King, in the day that he exalts his “children” to be “princes in all the earth.” This, according to his own teaching, is when he “comes in glory,” and, placing “the blessed of the Father” on his “right hand,”

invites them to "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv.). Then "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him" (Psa. lxxii.). And the particular service of "the ships of Tarshish" is declared to be "to bring Zion's sons from far, their silver and their gold with them," unto the name of the Lord God of Israel (Isa. lx. 9).

Tyre of Isaiah's day was "the daughter of Tarshish," otherwise defined as "the virgin daughter of Sidon." But the latter-day British Tarshish is defined as "the daughter of Tyre," because in turn it "inherits her greatness." Its Mediterranean acquisitions at Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus within the last century or two are further local proofs of it, in addition to the naval and commercial supremacy which Britain has developed. But, as of old, there is "no rest" in Chittim (v. 12) or elsewhere for the Tyrian Power of the time of the end. The modern representatives of the Babylonians and Grecians are jealous of her supremacy, and design its overthrow. They reckon, however, without considering the purpose of "THE KING." This involves the gathering of the forces of the adversary against his Land and City (Psa. xlvi. 4), and their overthrow there. The Tarshish Power is opposed to these others by reason of the divergence of its own interests, but it does not escape a humbling, for of that time it is written: "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an East wind" (verse 7); so that, as of Tyre of old, it will be said: "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters, the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas" (Ezek. xxvii. 26).

THE WORLD-WIDE "HARLOTRY."

But *before* this final overthrow, and *after* the humiliation encountered at the hands of the Babylonian; Tyre was to recover from her seventy years' obscurity and "sing as an harlot:" and "commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth." This is one of the features concerning which the latter-day Tyrians are in darkness. "The fulfilment of the prediction in all its terms cannot be pointed

out," says one. "No light has yet been cast on the predictions of the closing verses." This is a mistake; the fulfilment can be pointed out with ease and certainty, and the illumination of the Word is amply sufficient to the "making manifest" of the meaning.

Cities are said to be "harlots" or "adulteresses" when they go astray from God, corrupt themselves for gain, and mingle with the nations and learn and condone their ways. Of this, Sodom, Samaria, Jerusalem, and ROME are the chief examples in the Scriptures. Ezekiel xvi. and xxiii. and Revelations xvii.-xviii. will be all sufficient, in the study of the passages, to establish this point. All apostacy on the earth, from the time of Cain downwards, is covered by this figurative description. Of the Tyrian corruption of God's way, and its harlotry, literal and spiritual, we have already spoken briefly; and of Jerusalem's and Samaria's adoption of it to their shame and destruction. The question now is: Has this feature proved hereditary and passed westward during the centuries along with the other marks of Tyrian identity?

The answer will naturally spring to the lips of those who know the Scriptures and the history of the world in relation thereto. It is summed up in the name of the "great city" of Rev. xvii., that "reigned over the kings of the earth" in John's days—that is, ROME. She is the "Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" that still reigns in her spiritual jurisdiction, and will till the Lord consume her with the spirit of His mouth and destroy her with the brightness of His coming (2 Tim. ii. 8). The casting of a great millstone into the sea by a mighty angel was the figure of her final overthrow; and John heard in spirit the previous lament of the *Merchants of the Sea*, thus: "Every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city? And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! alas! that great city, wherein were made rich ALL THAT HAD SHIPS IN THE SEA by reason of her costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate" (Rev. xviii. 17-19).

The latter-day "daughter of Tyre" is unquestionably covered by the phrase, "all that had ships in the sea," so that it simply becomes a question *how* she is related to the "Mother of Harlots." The answer is simple. Just as Jerusalem and Samaria inherited and appropriated the harlotry and "abominations" of Tyre of old, so Rome inherited and appropriated the Judaised corruption of the Gospel of Christ. And Britain, in her ecclesiastical relations, *which are always subordinated to the mercantile and Imperial*, is merely the feebly "Protestant" daughter of the Roman mother.

It is not to be expected that Protestant "divines" will own up to this spiritual parentage; nor that they should be willing to be incriminated in the Tyrian "harlotry" and world-wide "fornication" of Isaiah's and John's revelations (Isa. xxiii. 15-17; Rev. xvii. 2: xviii. 3). They declare that there is "no light" upon the subject. They "can't see it." And yet the line of historical development can be traced clearly enough. The apostle Paul's anxiety over the body of Christ, he expresses in the following beautiful words: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2-3).

The apostle's fears were only too well grounded. The serpent-doctrines that then took the form of preaching "another Jesus" (verse 4), soon corrupted the mind of the Christian Eve, until, like her prototype, she fell. The Lord Jesus, in A.D. 96, shows how she *took the way of Jezebel of old* (Rev. ii. 20), and so, in his estimation, the old Sidonian and Tyrian abominations were anti-typically reproduced in the end of the first century among his own people. Two centuries later the fulfilment of another revelation of the Lord was manifested. "The woman" had by that time got "up in the world." John, in Rev. xii., saw her "in heaven," "clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." He saw also that she was pregnant, and afterwards brought forth a man-child who

proved to be another Cain. The history of Christianity in the first half of the fourth century gives the literal unfolding of the matter. The Christian community, now become very corrupt, rose to place and power in the Roman Empire. A military champion was found in Constantine the Great, the so-called "First Christian Emperor." Church and World, or State, were united in adulterous compact (Jas. iv. 4), and the "remnant of the woman's seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," became a hunted fugitive. Hereafter, in Christ's last prophecy, a sharp distinction is drawn between these and "the woman." The latter appears at last as "the Mother of Harlots" (Rev. xvii.), and the former as "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife" (Rev. xix.).

Nearly three centuries onward from Constantine's time, "the Man of Sin" and "Son of Perdition" was born of "the woman." The Papacy was manifested in Rome in the early years of the seventh century, and there it sits still, awaiting the judgment of the Lord to be accomplished amidst the rejoicings of the "holy apostles and prophets," whose blood Rome has poured out like water.

The Tyrian Power, in all its migrations since New Testament times, has been allied with Romish "fornication" (Rev. xvii. 2). This is true whether we consider its Venetian, Genoese, Spanish, Dutch, or British phases. It is, perhaps, most manifest when we look at the Spanish Armada. What was this but a great Papal expedition to bring back recalcitrant England to the Papal fold? And, but for the hand of God, it must, humanly speaking, have succeeded. The English fought valiantly enough; but God fought for them. The storms off Lisbon at the start of the expedition, and those off the North of Scotland and Ireland at the finish, destroyed more than British naval prowess did. This is recognised by monumental inscription at Plymouth. The monument is to Admiral Drake, but the inscription was chosen by Queen Elizabeth, and is from Ex. xv.: "Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." This is distinctly apposite and true, though spoken of another matter. After Drake had done his best, 120 ships escaped up the Channel

northwards, in the attempt to work round Scotland and Ireland to Spain. Of these only 54 reached Spain at last, after months of suffering and privation.

This was a great deliverance for British Protestantism, which waxes more and more feeble every year, and never was at any time thorough-going enough to remove itself from the category of a daughter of the "Mother of Harlots." The singular retention of the title "Defender of the Faith," which was bestowed by the Pope on Henry VIII., is in harmony with the fact that in all essential details, "the faith" in question is that of the Roman "mother," and not the "one faith" of apostolic proclamation. But the latter-day Queen of the Sea is not particular as to faith so long as her commercial interests are supreme. Hence when the Catholics object that if the King in his Coronation Oath be required to brand some of their notions as false and superstitious, he should do the like with those of his Mohammedan subjects, the matter is quietly ignored. "My religion," says a latter-day Tyrian, "is EMPIRE!" That is the prevailing sentiment. The "gospel of the kingdom" is not endured, far less suffered to interfere in the slightest degree with imperial and commercial schemes.

But, according to Isaiah and the other prophets, all this is to be changed. "Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord. It shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently and for durable clothing" (verse 18). Those that "dwell before the Lord" are the Lord Jesus and the saints; and, in a secondary sense, the whole house of Israel, and the "dwelling-place" is not the heaven of Romish and Protestant pulpit theology, but the land of Israel transformed into the Paradise of the Kingdom of God.

The prophet Ezekiel associates the *final* fall of Tyre with Yahweh's *setting of glory in the land of the living* (Ezek. xxvi. 20). The word of the Lord by Ezekiel against Tyre and Sidon concludes thus: "And there shall be no more a pricking brier (compare Judges ii. 3) unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them, and they shall

know that I am the Lord God. Thus saith the Lord God: When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from among the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence when I have executed judgments on all those that despise them round about, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God" (Ezek. xxviii. 24-26).

Here the locality, time and nature of the final crisis are clearly indicated, in harmony with Isa. xxiii. 18, and other Scriptures. The British-Tyrian power is humbled by the destruction of its navy, purged of its Babylonian idolatry and superstition, and of the "iniquity of its traffic," and "cast as profane out of the mountain of God." But it is not destroyed without remedy, as are the hosts of the Northern confederacy. It is permitted to survive as the Gentile ally of the Greater than Solomon, and its vast wealth and commerce is sanctified to the service of God in the hands of the saints and the house of Israel. Such is the ultimate "burden of Tyre," which Isaiah, by the spirit of God, revealed over 700 years before Christ. At the end of 2,600 years the vision speaks and does not lie; for we can see how all things tend to the crisis divinely foretold.

"A REMARKABLE PARALLEL."

It will be a fitting conclusion to this chapter to reproduce Dr. Thomas' "remarkable parallel"* between Britain and Tyre of old. He says:

1. Tyre was the mart of the nations.—So is Britain.
2. Tyre was the mighty fortress of the sea.—So is Britain.
3. Tyre's merchants were princes, and her traders nobles of the land.—So are Britain's; being, as the French say, "A nation of shopkeepers."
4. Tyre was a Dispenser of Crowns.—This is true also of Britain, as shown in her continental and Indian history.

* Written in the 50's.

5. Tyre was the Daughter of Tarshish, as well as of Sidon.—So is Britain the Daughter of Tarshish, as well as of Tyre, and grand-daughter of Sidon.

6. Tyre emigrated to, and afterwards beyond Chittim, and beyond the sea of Tarshish or Mediterranean; in and beyond which is now located the British Power—the Ionian Islands (Cyprus.—C.C.W.), Malta, Gibraltar, and the British Isles.

7. Tyre was the stronghold of the ships of Tarshish, or ships trading to India and the coasts of the Mediterranean.—So is Britain pre-eminently.

8. Tyre played the harlot with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.—This is true of Britain in a greater degree than of Tyre in the most brilliant period of her career.

9. Tyre was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, who spread their terror through all the inhabitants of the earth.—Britain's naval history shows that this is also true of her.

10. Tyre's wise men were the pilots of her state.—So of Britain's; what is called “the Collective Wisdom” are the pilots and calkers who navigate the vessel and stop the leaks.

11. The Tyrian and British trade are identical.

12. Tyre was the great workshop of her time.—So is Britain.

13. Tyre was QUEEN OF THE SEA and military.—So is Britain.

14. Tyre traded in slaves.—So Britain, formerly to a great extent, and now in coolies.

15. Tyre's chief trafficker was Tarshish.—So is Britain's.

16. Tyre boasted in the greatness of her wisdom, and her heart was lifted up because of her wealth, and she set her heart as a goddess in the midst of the seas.—This also is signally true of Britannia.

17. Tyre was a monarchy, whose king was bedizened in all the flashiness in which vain mortals delight.—So is Britain—a commercial power tricked out in all the trappings of royalty.

18. Tyre ruled in Eden, the garden of God, and existed there at the time of her overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar.—Britain's influence is also in the ascendancy there; and will yet rule there as potentially as Tyre, when the Russo-Assyrian—the Nebuchadnezzar of

the latter days—shall confederate his forces to expel her from the land.

19. Tyre was a wide-spreading covering protector (“anointed Cherub”)—a protecting power—the position of Britain, whose covering protectorate spreads throughout the earth.

20. Great wealth and prosperity filled Tyre with violence; and through the multitude of her iniquities by the unrighteousness of her traffic, she prostituted her asylums.—The same cause produces the same results in Britain; her factory system, Unions, institutions, ecclesiastical merchandisings, supporting Mohammedanism, Hindooism, Popery, and so forth, for the sake of advantage—make the resemblance striking.

21. Tyre was a harlot.—So is Britain; the Anglo-Hibernian daughter of “Babylon the Mother of harlots, and of all the abominations of the earth.”

The royal merchant power of Great Britain, then, for the twenty-one reasons adduced, is the Daughter of Tyre; the Mystical Tyre in her development beyond Chittim, far away to the westward of its ancient predecessor and parent in the world-wide commerce of the earth. The spirit of Jehovah in the prophets cited, spoke *primarily* of Old Tyre and her traffic; but enigmatically, mystically, spiritually, figuratively, or typically, of the Merchant Power of Britain.





CHAPTER XXIV.

A WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

A NEW section of Isaiah's ministry opens with this chapter, and a well-marked division appears. The prophet turns from the outside nations to Israel again—yet not to Israel in a narrow sense, but as it were, to the Israelitish *world* in conflict with the Gentile *world* until the latter shall have been swallowed up of the former; or, in the language of Daniel, until the "little stone" of Israel shall have become "a great mountain" and "filled the whole earth" (Dan. ii. 35).

Chapters xxiv.-xxvii., inclusive, are strongly connected in their sequence, as we are made to feel unmistakably in the reading of them. And then another break occurs, and the prophet turns to rebuke "the drunkards of Ephraim" (ch. xxviii. 1).

A BRIEF ANALYSIS.

It may be well to attempt a brief analysis of these chapters before proceeding to more detailed consideration of them.

CHAPTER xxiv. opens with the vision of the land emptied and destroyed, and the city broken down because of transgression. It contemplates acceptable worship from a scattered remnant, judgment at last upon Israel's enemies, and the final triumph of Zion when the Lord shall be enthroned there.

CHAPTER xxv. records the prophet's praise of God for His judgments on *the Great Rival City* that is brought down, that Yahweh's mountain may be exalted. In this mountain, the veil of the covering is removed from the faces of the nations, and death itself is abolished. The rebuke of Yahweh's people is removed, and Moab suffers a contemporary downtreading.

In CHAPTER xxvi., there rise the strains of "a new song" in the land of Judah, sung by the "righteous nation which keepeth the truth," and which, at that time, therefore "enters in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14). The lofty city that oppressed them when they were "poor and needy" is then laid low, and *they* who have "waited for God" in the "night" of the absence of the Sun of Righteousness, notwithstanding the blindness and antagonism of these "citizens," rejoice over it exceedingly. In the last travail of Zion, the earth itself brings forth Yahweh's first-born nation, which is sheltered for "a little moment," till his indignation exhausts itself upon the adversary.

CHAPTER xxvii. is the description of the effect of this indignation as "the sword of the Lord" upon the Old Serpent. The Lord's vineyard being redeemed from the Serpent seed, the Israelitish vine flourishes exceedingly, and "fills the face of the world with fruit." Though long smitten, the iniquity of Jacob is at length purged. Yet a long time of desolation lies before the prophet. But, at last, it is terminated in the *great trumpet of Jubilee* that brings Israel back to his possessions.

Even in this quick glance, we recognise many features of the picture that we have seen elsewhere. Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, the New Testament writings, especially the Apocalypse—all ministered by the same spirit, convince us that in these visions of Isaiah we have glimpses of the progress of the world, Israelitish and Gentile, towards the great crisis of the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the nations, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

THE EARTH EMPTY.

To return to CHAPTER xxiv. "Behold the Lord maketh *the earth* empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." "The earth" is the Israelitish earth, and not the globe, which is not to be emptied, but to be filled with God's glory (Num. xiv. 21). Before Moses died he spoke "in the ears of all the congregation of Israel" the

song written in Deut. xxxii. Its opening words run thus: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak, and hear O *earth* the words of my mouth." "All the elders of the tribes" were the "heavens," and the congregation they ruled were "the earth." It was this that was the subject of Isaiah's proclamation in chapter xxiv. But of course it had its bearing upon "the land," and perceiving this the translators have rendered *eretz* indifferently "earth" and "land" in the opening verses. The Revised Version draws attention to this in a marginal note, and no inconvenience arises so long as we know the truth, and our minds are disabused of the absurd world-burning notions of the apostacy.

In verses 4-6 the meaning becomes apparent in the words: "The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the *world* (*tebel*, the habitable) languisheth and fadeth away, the *haughty people of the earth* do languish. The earth (or land) also is defiled under the *inhabitants thereof*, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate, therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left."

This at once fixes the objects of God's wrath, and the reason for it. We know from the history of Isaiah's times, and those before him, how Israel had transgressed. Even Solomon had imported the worship of Moloch and other abominations. Uzziah had likewise "changed the ordinance" in presuming to "burn incense upon the altar of incense," for which he had been smitten of God with leprosy. Ahaz "made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord." He robbed the temple to hire help from Assyria against Syria and Israel. He copied the pattern of an altar at Damascus, and made one like it in Jerusalem. To make room for this, he removed the brazen altar of sacrifice out of its place, and "changed the ordinances." He also "cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them, and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones" (2 Kings xvi.). This was a complete destruction of the typical significance of these "patterns of things in the heavens." It was a

typical repudiation of the Christ-Altar (Heb. xiii.), a typical substitution of human for divine "foundations" (Eph. ii. 19-22), for the house of Israel represented by this strangely supported "sea." No one having respect to the "everlasting covenant" or "sure mercies of David" (Isa. lv. 3) would have done such things, far less aggravate them by "causing his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom," as Manasseh did afterwards (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6).

These things justify the judgments of God that came upon Judah as here threatened,—things that are written for our admonition that we may be warned not to "change the ordinances," but to hold aloof from the apostate systems of our day, which differ from those of the past only in the manner and degree of their offensiveness in God's sight. Covering all time from its utterance to the resurrection of the dead and beyond, the prophecy manifestly appeals to us in this way. And this becomes more evident when we contemplate the prophet's use of the phrase "the world" in conjunction with "the earth" or "the land." The Jewish world was overrun by the Gentiles in A.D. 70; but by that time "the habitable" of the Roman Empire had been indoctrinated with the gospel of the kingdom, and, at last, "Christendom," as it is called, came to sustain before God a position somewhat analogous to that of the apostate houses of Judah and Israel of past times. Jerusalem having become a "city of confusion" (*tohu*, chaos, compare Gen. i. 2)—the faithful city having become an harlot (Isa. i. 21)—it was destroyed; but another apostate "city of confusion" at length arose in Europe, namely ROME, divinely labelled the "Mother of Harlots, and abominations of the earth" (Rev. xvii. 5). Within the confines of "the earth" of this allusion, or of "the great city," as it is otherwise defined (Rev. xi. 8), are the scattered remnants of Israel nationally and spiritually considered. And this must not be lost sight of in pondering these chapters of Isaiah's revelations, or we shall fall far short of the Spirit's intentions concerning us.

This conclusion is strengthened by the language of verses 13-15. "For thus it shall be in the midst of the earth

among the *peoples* (plural), as the shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings when the vintage is done. These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of the Lord they cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the east (marg. *lights*, or *fires*), even the name of the Lord the God of Israel in the isles of the sea" (R.V.).

That is to say, that though Judah should be made desolate, a remnant should be saved and glorify God in their dispersal. Paul likens the Gentile contingent of this remnant to a branch of a wild olive grafted contrary to nature on the good olive stock of Israel (Rom. xi.). This elect remnant of Jew and Gentile has glorified God and cried aloud from the lands of its dispersion since the destruction of Jerusalem, as the Lord Jesus reveals in the Apocalypse, and history testifies.

The translators have been hard put to it to make anything out of the "east," "fires," "valleys," or "lights," of verse 15. If they had known the gospel, and the history of the truth, as well as the Hebrew and Greek, they would have known that the locality of the manifestation defined was to be *west* of Jerusalem, and not "east," though it should at length return there. The word in question is in the Hebrew *urim*, and the meaning is undoubtedly "lights." It is the term applied to the sparklings of the cut and polished gems which garnished the breast-plate of the High Priest of Israel. It is not unconnected with "fire," but its primary meaning is "light." The far more common word for fire is *esh*, which accords more with the idea of burning destruction.

The remnant which is spoken of are intimately related to the High Priest of Israel and the *urim*, or "lights," of his "breast-plate of judgment." Paul, writing to some of them in Philippi, exhorted them to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom," says he, "ye shine as *lights* in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. ii. 15). The Ephesians, likewise, he addressed as having been "sometimes darkness, but now *light in the Lord*" (v. 8). These brethren glorified God in the *lights* being "in the Lord,"

and, therefore, constituents of "the name of the Lord God of Israel" in the isles or coasts of the great sea (Isa. xxiv. 15). Their glorification of the Father upon earth, after the example of their Lord and Master, who is "the Light of the World," consisted in "holding forth the word of life" and "walking as children of light." We read the words of Isaiah aright when we take verse 15 as an exhortation to go and do likewise.

When the Lord Jesus had finished the work appointed of the Father, he said in prayer just before he was betrayed: "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify thee . . . I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And further, praying for *all who should believe on him through the apostolic testimony*, he said: "I pray that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jno. xvii. 4, 5, 21, 22).

This is the end to which Isaiah's words in verse 16 point, though he did not see it with the clearness that afterwards belonged to it. "From the uttermost part of the earth we have heard songs, even glory to the righteous." Though Israel rejected the law, and broke the everlasting covenant, yet God would be glorified even in "the isles of the sea" and "the uttermost parts of the earth." The words of the Lord show how the glorifying of the Father results in the glorification of the righteous. And the New Testament history of the apostolic preaching of the Word shows how the arena of its operations was extended westward from Jerusalem throughout the length and breadth of the Roman habitable.

During all the past eighteen centuries and more, the earth and world of Israel have been a state of chaos and wasteness and voidness, so that if "one looks unto the land, behold darkness

and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens *thereof*” (Isa. v. 30). This is the time of Israel’s “leanness” which the prophet so pathetically deplored (xxiv. 16). But the earth and world of the Gentiles are by the same word reserved for judgment, “For the day of vengeance is in mine heart (saith the Lord), and the year of my redeemed is come” (lxiii. 4).

It is quite evident that Gentile Power is the subject of the breaking down and dissolution threatened in the end of this chapter, and not Israel; for, as the upshot of it, the Lord of Hosts reigns in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem before His ancients gloriously (v. 23). “It shall come to pass in that day,” says the prophet, “that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit (or dungeon), and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”

The locality of this punishment of the hosts and kings of the earth upon the earth is elsewhere defined to be the valley of Jehoshaphat, where the hosts of all nations are to be gathered (Joel iii. 2, 11), under the leadership of the Russian “King of the North” (Dan. xi. 40, 45; Ezek. xxxviii. - xxxix.), in the day that Yahweh will make Himself known in his destruction in the sight of all nations.

The “many days” of which the prophet spoke are nearly expired. It is about 2,610 years since the words were put on record. Israel’s world has been long destroyed, and the Gentiles have had it all their own way for very nearly the full length of their allotted “times.” Zion’s “sun” has long “gone down”—her King is absent. Her “moon” has long “withdrawn itself”—her priesthood has been abolished (contrast Isa. lx. 20). Apply this to the luminaries of the Gentile firmament. Conceive the blank confounding of the hierarchies of Christendom when the Lord Jesus is in the earth again, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel!”

Imagine the shame and contempt that will be the portion of the Pope-King of Christendom when confronted with the "witnesses," whose blood he has poured out like water. Contemplate the utter breaking of the whole military strength of Europe on the mountains of Israel, and the "high ones" captives, like Joshua's defeated kings, in the cave of Makkedah, and we have some faint idea of what is involved in the punishment so long on record.

But, beyond the storm that reduces the Gentile world to chaos, contemplate the creation of the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Look at the glory of "his ancients," promised before by the prophets, assured in the Lord Jesus by actual personal possession for nearly 1,900 years, promised by him after his ascension to heaven in the last message to his people in the world of his enemies. Who are those four-and-twenty "elders" clothed with white raiment, and wreathed with golden crowns, that surround his throne in the day of victory (Rev. iv.)? The gospel of the kingdom invites us to identify ourselves with these "ancients," who are to "inherit glory." We have accepted the invitation. Let us endeavour to recognise our place in these our "days of the prophecy," that we may be encouraged to "strive lawfully," and at last receive "the crown of life that fadeth not away."





CHAPTER XXV.

FALL OF THE GREAT CITY, RISE OF ZION IN DEATHLESS GLORY.

IN view of the reign of the Lord of Hosts in Mount Zion, before His ancients gloriously, Isaiah is moved to break forth in praise: "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." There must be a reason for praise, and the praise of God is as much founded on reason as the praise of man, and a thousand times more so. Men universally and unhesitatingly praise in men the qualities and accomplishments they admire, as knowledge, wisdom, power, skill, foresight, courage, and what not. What is there lacking in God of that which is thus admired in man? Truly nothing. But human attainments are humanly discernible with ease. Not so the divine thoughts and ways and works. These are high as heaven above man (Isa. lv. 9); and thus, being discerned only by those who are taught of God, are praised only by the prophets and their uninspired "brethren," who, by their spirit-moved word, are enabled to see clearly and to rejoice in the things that moved them to praise and thanksgiving. Unfinished work, human or divine, is not that upon which to pronounce admiration or the reverse: "In all things consider the end." The established Kingdom of God will bring praise to God at last from all mankind. Meanwhile, the vision of it moves "the wise" to praise and rejoicing beforehand.

The particular reason of Isaiah's exultation in this place, he defines to be *the vindication of Zion against a rival city*; concerning which, as concerning Zion in this aspect of things, we shall find ourselves compelled to take enlarged views. In this particular vision of chapters xxiv.-xxvii., Jerusalem and the

unnamed rival city appear as the capitals of *two antagonistic worlds* which are alternately in the ascendant or in chaos, until at last the Jerusalem-world triumphs and the serpent-world is destroyed.

The right apprehension of the word of God by the prophet in this place, demands a broad view of the whole purpose of God with the earth during the appointed course of the age of sin and death. The very earliest divine transaction was the dividing of humanity into two seeds (Gen. iii.)—the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Later, a distinction is visible between the Cainites and the Sethites (Gen. iv., v., vi.); and later still, between the drowned world and the Noah-remnant (Gen. vii.-viii.). Then came the division between Shem the blessed and Ham and Japheth. Out of Ham came the first GREAT ANTAGONISTIC CITY of the kingdom of men, whose name runs through the entire Scriptures as the symbol of the metropolis of the serpent-seed, BABEL, Confusion; so called because there Yahweh confounded human speech, as we find to our inconvenience to this day. Babel in the land of Shinar, Babylon of Isaiah's time and onwards, and "Great Babylon" of our days, even seven-hilled Rome on the Tiber (Rev. xvii.), are all comprehended in Isaiah's ministrations in the passage under consideration. The tower of Babel has been a heap for ages; Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's glory has been a ruin for many centuries, as God declared it should be, and explorers are now digging up his palaces. But mystical Babylon remains in all its meretricious glory, and is "*the city of the terrible nations,*" which, saith the prophet, "shall fear thee."

Looking back to Babel, we trace the rise of God's city. SHEM, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg: such was the line from the Deluge to Babel. Peleg, whose name means Division, marks the scattering at Babel B.C. 2300, or thereabouts. What was to become of the scattered Babel-builders? God alone could say. His answer is before us in the history of Abraham. He called him out of Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan, and promised it to him and to his seed, the Christ (Gal. iii.), for an everlasting possession. He looked over the city of SALEM, where reigned "Melchizedek, King of Salem, priest of the most High God" (Gen.

xiv.), and was assured that he should possess it *for ever* with the Promised Seed (Gen. xiii. 15). "He looked for a CITY which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi.). Here, then, was a rival city to Babel, predetermined of God as an everlasting city for His King. Salem means Peace (Heb. vii.). There is no peace in Babel: Confusion and Peace are mutually exclusive terms. So the metropolitan ascendancy of Babylon and Jerusalem cannot co-exist. One or the other must perish, and the purpose of God is that Babylon is the doomed.

It is unnecessary for present purposes to trace the history of Jerusalem to see how at last David conquered the city, and God appointed the site of the temple which was afterwards built by Solomon, and consecrated with great solemnity and rejoicing in the midst of the manifest tokens of the presence of God. But the whole history of the city must be borne in mind, down to the very latest phase which marks it as the Jewish objective in the current ZIONIST MOVEMENT, if we would thoroughly apprehend the things that Isaiah has written for us. And not only so, but by the light of the truth the true relationship between "the children of the desolate" Jerusalem (Isa. liv.; Gal. iv. 27-28), and the children of prosperous Babylon which is to be destroyed (Psa. cxxxvii.; Rev. xviii.), must be discerned and maintained.

There is nothing good in store for "the great city which, spiritually, is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Rev. xi. 8). There is nothing but destruction and death in the citizenship and worship of "Babylon the Great" (Rev. xiv. 8, 12). In plain language, it is confusion, destruction, and death to be found in the fellowship of the State Churches of Christendom. It does not look like it to the "worshippers of the beast," but it is true, nevertheless. It is not without the deepest reason that it is written in the passage last quoted: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." A testimony that unchurches "the strong people" of the earth, and that, consequently, brings down upon the witnesses their potent hatred, is a thing demanding patience,

faith, and obedience to maintain it. Isaiah, in his day, knew this experimentally, and spoke by the Spirit of the coming vindication of Yahweh's "poor and needy."

"Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place, even the heat with the shadow of a cloud; the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low."

From this, as from the words of Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Lord Jesus, we understand that in the time of the end there will be a gathering of "terrible nations" against Jerusalem as a storm (compare Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix.; Dan. xi.; Zech. xiv.; Rev. xix., &c.). The reason of their coming thus "like a storm, like a cloud to cover the land," is because the rise of Jerusalem threatens the extinction of Babylon. Out of the current Zionist movement comes a Zionistic development long on record by the Spirit, but now scarcely finding credence in the earth. Yahweh sets His King upon the holy hill of Zion (Psa. ii.) and "the terrible nations" rage against him, and the peoples imagine a vain thing, even the breaking of his dominion. They are given a chance, and even permitted in the first stage of the movement to take the city and divide the spoil. But "then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zech. xiv. 3). So says Zechariah.

"The day of battle" referred to is the day in which the Lord fought for Joshua against the Kings in the same places ages before. "And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel" (Josh. x. 14). A comparison of the history of this typical overthrow of "terrible ones" with the language of Ezekiel and Daniel will give a true idea of what the Lord will do for Jesus in the crisis that is coming. When the Assyrian host was destroyed by the angel in Hezekiah's days, it had been prophetically alluded to beforehand by Isaiah saying, "The Lord, the Lord of hosts shall lop the bough with terror" (Isa. x. 33). Again, in the vision of "evening-tide trouble" the

prophet had seen the reaping of the vine of the earth: "He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks and take away and cut down the branches" (Isa. xviii. 5). These figures, which we have already studied, are equivalent to the branch of the terrible ones being brought low, of which we read in ch. xxv. 5. The vine of the earth is cut down that God's "true vine" may be planted in the earth. It is rooted in Jesus spiritually and nationally; that is, Jesus and his brethren will constitute an immortal hierarchy over Israel restored, and will bless all nations with their righteous reign.

"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined."

The supremacy of Zion having been divinely established in the fall of Babylon and the destruction of her "terrible ones," the mountain of *the Lord's house* is established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and all nations flow unto it (ch. ii.). What is this feast of fat things to which they are graciously invited by Yahweh? Something more than mere "creature-comforts." Of *those* "the peoples" partook, often unwisely, in "the great city." This is a feast that *the Lord makes*, and cannot be eaten elsewhere than in His house, upon His holy mountain.

That it will embrace the partaking of bread, flesh, and wine is certain, for the Lord said that he would partake again of bread and wine with his disciples in the kingdom (Luke xxii. 16-18, 30). And Ezekiel, in vision, sees the flesh of the offerings ready on the tables (ch. xl. 43), and that THE PRINCE eats bread before the Lord (xliv. 3), and keeps the passover (xlv. 22). But man doth not live by bread alone, but by all that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, as the heavenly manna, the word of Christ. It is this that is the subject, in a thousand beautiful ways, of the prophet's allusion to the feast of fat things.

"The great city" is famine-stricken for lack of knowledge, and even in Israel, in Isaiah's times, it was not much better. The divine contrast brought out in the invitation of chapter iv. helps our understanding here. "Ho, every one that thirsteth,

come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is NOT BREAD? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in *fatness*. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Here "waters," "wine," "milk," "good things," and "fatness" stand for "the sure mercies of David" defined in "the everlasting covenant" and amplified in "THE WORD" generally. Israel's leaders in Isaiah's day, and unnumbered thousands since, went off after mere husks in the worship of Baal, Moloch, and what not. They spent liberally for that which was *not bread*. They dreamed of souls living *apart from hearing the word at all*, thus giving God the lie. They refused to hearken to the prophets, and laboured and were not satisfied.

At last, in incipient fulfilment of the everlasting covenant, God sent forth "the son of David" promised, who declared himself to be *the true meat and drink*, of which, if a man partake, he shall be satisfied and live for ever (John vi.). He said he was the "living bread which came down from heaven," antitypical of the manna, of which, said he, "your fathers ate, and are dead." He further declared that the bread that he would give for the life of the world was his flesh, and the drink his blood. And when the Jews murmured, he added, solemnly and emphatically: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, *ye have no life in you*." Even the disciples found this "a hard saying;" but he gently rebuked them, and pointed them to his approaching ascension to heaven as a coming proof of his heavenly origin, and added: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth (or maketh alive); the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." So then *the Christ-doctrine concerning himself* is the true meat and drink to be assimilated if men would live for ever.

But this is exceedingly distasteful to the men of "the great city." In vain does Wisdom divine spread her table for these (Prov. ix.); her invitation is unheeded, and husks preferred. What would become of the philosophers and "great souls" if Christ's dictum should be accepted? It would debar them from life, and that Babylon will not have at any price. But when Isaiah xxv. is fulfilled, all this will be changed; the nations will go up to Jerusalem with the contrite confession, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. xvi.). Pastors according to God's own heart shall feed the people with knowledge and understanding (Jer. iii. 15). A feast of fat things will succeed the husks of this famine-stricken time, in which "the faith" is scarcely to be found on earth.

The highest aspect of the feast of fat things is the presence of the Lord, and those with him who have eaten and live for ever. "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. ii. 7). "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna" (v. 17). These, his promises, are fulfilled then, when, as the reward of their living on his spirit and life words in the days of their flesh, he transforms them by his almighty power into the divine nature, so that they can "hunger no more neither thirst any more." These are the chief of the "pastors" according to God's own heart, who feed the people with knowledge and understanding. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures; for with thee is fountain of life." Thus spoke one of them in the days of his unsatisfied longings (Psa. xxxvi. 8, 9; xlii. 1).

Under the regal and priestly ministrations of such "pastors," "all peoples" are properly nourished. The law goes forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and the purified remnant that remains after the judgments of God, goes up annually to Jerusalem to keep the appointed feasts and learn of God's ways in heart-building meditation on the glories there revealed. This is concealed under the very term translated "wines on the lees." It is *sh'mahreem*, literally "preserved things" or

“residues.” “Wines on the lees” is well enough if we have our eyes upon the substance meant by the figure; but because vast multitudes of “the great city” are wont to slay themselves with wine or other alcoholic liquor, the text has been tortured by others who very properly object to the madness of their ways in this particular. They have insisted on “preserves,” but what sort of “preserves” they have not told us. We must help ourselves. The word in question comes from the verb *shamar*, to keep, watch, guard; or as a secondary meaning, to keep, observe, mark. Hence, of the *feast of the Passover* and night of the Exodus it is said: “It is a night of *observances* (*shimoooreem*) unto Yahweh” (Ex. xii. 42). Here, the “preserved things” were the families of Israel by the blood of the Passover, and the “observances” the ritual of the feast of the Passover. The verb occurs likewise in the same chapter, verses 17, 24, 25, with reference to the same things, and is translated “observe” and “keep.”

All “the fatness of Yahweh’s house” is centred in Christ, the substance of all the shadows of the law, the Passover included (1 Cor. v. 7). He is not less “the bread of life,” but more so, when he returns. He is “the hidden manna” that has been “laid up before the Lord” for centuries. He has been “preserved” from corruption, and will be so for ever; and his sacrifice will be the kernel of all the “observances” throughout the Millennium. He will “bring forth bread and wine” just as literally as did Melchizedek before him, and “all peoples” will be refreshed in the natural man by the feasts provided; but the substance in the highest is Christ and his brethren, who, “being many, are one bread”; and to eat of whom, in the obedience to their inspired guidance, will be to live for ever.

The connection between this “feast of fat things” and the next mentioned divine work, is obvious and beautiful: “And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations.” So then, according to the word of God, THERE IS SUCH A UNIVERSAL VAIL TO BE TAKEN AWAY. Nothing is more unendurable to “the

great city" than this testimony, which is entirely unheard among her citizens. For "in so saying thou condemnest us." This is the sentiment, and it is true. "By thy sorceries (O, Babylon the Great) were all nations deceived" (Rev. xviii. 23). It is indisputable that the Babylon of this passage is Rome; and the contention of Catholic writers that it is Pagan Rome, will not stand. Pagan Rome had not "seven heads and *ten horns*." Pagan Rome was not related to "the last plagues" of the vials. Pagan Rome has never made war with the Lamb, and *been overcome by him* since A.D. 96. Pagan Rome's "sorceries" were small, both in nature, extent, duration, and culpability, by comparison with those of Papal Babylon.

To appreciate the matter as it truly stands, we must "see the glory of the Lord." "Moses put a vail over his face, (allegorically signifying) that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But *their minds were blinded*, for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in reading of the old covenant, which is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon *their heart*. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away." So says Paul in 2 Cor. iii. 13-16, and the vail of the covering that was upon the hearts of his brethren according to the flesh is still upon Christendom, though in different form.

The Jews of Paul's day boasted in Moses, and looked for the restoration of Israel in the hands of a son of David; but did not recognise that Messiah should at the same time be Son of God, and first be manifested as a sufferer; and that Jesus was the Messiah. Besides, "their minds were blinded" by pagan notions borrowed from the surrounding nations, as the immortality of the soul, the fabulous heaven and hell, and intermediate state invented by the wisdom of the Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, Persians, and so forth. With all this nonsense on the brain, and with the hatred of Jesus begotten of his scathing rebukes of their hypocrisy, it is not to be wondered at that the writings of Moses were unintelligible to them.

So it is to this day. The truth was first corrupted by the Judaising apostacy, whose footsteps we trace in the Acts of the Apostles, and the polemics of the epistles of Paul. Evil men and seducers waxed worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; till at last the Lord's own prophetic picture has come to be realised—"all nations deceived." Individually, when a man's heart turns to the Lord, "the vail is taken away." A more beautiful and apposite description of the mental and moral effect of the entry of the Word could not be conceived. A good and honest heart is pointed to Christ's saying: "If ye believe not Moses' writings, how shall ye believe my words?" He is convicted of gross ignorance of Moses' writings. He studies them, and discovers man's true estate, and God's promises to the fathers *concerning Christ*. The vail is gradually "taken away." He ceases dreaming of phantoms, and shades, and realms of bliss beyond the skies, and regions of woe beneath the earth, presided over by an almighty fiend he once called the Devil.

"With open face" he beholds in Jesus the reflection of the glory of the Lord. The existence of evil—the reign of sin and death, is satisfactorily explained to him, both as to nature, cause and duration. God is justified, and His mercy magnified; and "the barque of human progress" is seen to have God for its pilot, and His Kingdom for its port of destiny. He takes his stand thankfully among the ranks of the witnesses; but what can he do? Only his duty, like his Lord, and be prevailed against, as he was. To God alone, by His almighty power, belongs the taking away of the vail from the face of the nations. Argument is powerless. Judgment must and will do it.

And at Jerusalem it is to be done. There will be seen the terrible opening manifestation of divine wrath that will first convince the world that God hath not forsaken the earth. Thence will emanate the first divine proclamation to the nations to "fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." And thence afterwards will "go forth the law," as thence already has come forth the word of life. And thither, as the needle to the pole, turn the faces of the brethren of the prophets, cheered by

the word of their ancient ministry, and by the unmistakable signs of its speedy fulfilment.

“He will swallow up death in victory.” It is no longer merely a promise; but a promise partly fulfilled, for he *hath* swallowed up death in victory in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it is only for the completion of the work that his people wait. The Revised Version would make this read: “He hath swallowed up death for ever.” But this, though, in a sense, philologically admissible, is doctrinally excluded. The Revisers should have rested content, as did their predecessors of King James’ day, with Paul’s *inspired paraphrase and exposition* in 1 Cor. xv.: “*Then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.” That is, at Christ’s coming. But death is not swallowed up “for ever” then, but continues for a thousand years longer, and then, at length, in the same place, is indeed “swallowed up for ever,” as the Lord reveals in Rev. xx.-xxi.

Meanwhile, death reigns and tears flow; and the rebuke of Yahweh’s people is still current in the earth. There is no more certain disgrace than in professing and maintaining the truth of God revealed in the Bible. And because the enduring of it perpetually is irksome and intolerable to the flesh, the temptation is great to compromise, and forbear with current “lies and vanity.” Against this universal tendency, we are steeled by “the ministry of the prophets,” who were “the rebuked” of leaders and people in their day and generation.

WAITING FOR CHRIST.

Taking our standpoint on Paul’s application in 1 Cor. xv. of the words of the prophet in this place, we have no difficulty in rightly understanding the language of the context. It is at Christ’s coming that death is to be swallowed up in victory; at that time, therefore, is the day contemplated in Isa. xxv. 9: “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” This brings before us the Lord Jesus in the manifesta-

tion at last of the Memorial Name of the Father, at the resurrection of the firstfruits.

“This is our Elohim,” and “this is Yahweh,” indicates the presence of One who shall be the head of the mighty ones of Israel, and surrounded in glory by those who have waited for him. The truth honours us in our acceptance of the gospel call, by prospective inclusion in these ranks of the redeemed. It was not alone from the generations of Israel after the flesh that God proposed to take out a people who should wait for the manifestation of the Name, and rejoice at last in its accomplishment. The prophet Isaiah himself testified more than once of the call of the Gentiles; and Paul, writing to some of these at Thessalonica, spoke of them as being in the attitude here defined by the prophet. “Our Gospel,” says he, “came not unto you by word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. i. 5).

These Gentile brethren became examples in turn in their faithful proclamation of the Word of the Lord. “These things,” said Paul, “show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God, *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*” He comforted these waiting brethren concerning their bereavements by death, with reference to the death and resurrection of the Lord, and to the day of his coming, of which Isaiah in this place speaks. We of this late time, standing in the same position, are not the less able to “comfort one another with these words.”

One of the reasons of the rejoicing of God’s people in that day is the down-treading of Moab by the Lord, “as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.” This, of course, necessitates the contemporary existence of a power called Moab to be trodden down at that time. We have seen in chapter xvi., when considering “the burden of Moab,” of which the prophet speaks in chapter xvi. of his prophecy, that our own nation corresponds to the Moab of the latter days. Britain is providentially brought into occupation of Edom and Moab in the great crisis of the latter

days, in which she is expelled from Egypt by the Russian King of the North, preparatory to the breaking of his power by divine judgment on the mountains of Israel.

In Isaiah, chapter xvi., the fate of Moab is unmistakably associated with the re-establishment of the throne and kingdom of David in the hands of the Lord Jesus, who is "the Heir" thereof, and who will at that time deliver Israel from the hand of the "spoiler." Bearing this in mind, the connection in Isaiah xxv. between Christ's coming and the fate of Moab does not appear difficult to perceive, although the subject is so apparently abruptly introduced. Movements so deeply affecting Jerusalem and Palestine must, of course, affect the adjoining countries, just as did the kingdoms of David and Solomon of old.

David conquered Moab of old, and the Greater Son of David is to do the same in the future. He will subdue British power, at that time located in that country, and in angry opposition to the Russian "spoiler" of the North (Ezek. xxviii.; Dan. xi.). A preliminary down-treading and humbling is very necessary before the Lord can make any use of the latter-day Moab as the scriptures have foretold he will. By the destruction of the Mediterranean fleet, and overthrow of the land forces, British power will be brought to recognise the fact that there is a power in the earth mightier than itself or any earthly rival, and whose rule of the waves is mightier than that of proud Britannia.

Under another aspect (that of the latter-day Tyre), we saw in ch. xxiii. that it was the purpose of God to stain the pride of British, as of "all glory" (v. 9), reducing the Tyrian power to the position of a subordinate ally, after the pattern of Hiram of old. Thus, "he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim, and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoil of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust."



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW SONG AND THE RIGHTEOUS NATION.

THE fall of the "terrible ones" who come from the north "as a storm against the wall" of Jerusalem (compare Ezek. xxxviii. 9, and Zech. xiv. 1-2), and of their Moabitish antagonists who have their own schemes of appropriation concerning the city and the land of Israel, is the occasion of the great song of rejoicing on the part of Israel and the children of the resurrection. This is the subject of Isaiah xxvi.

It finds a counterpart in the Apocalyptic rejoicings over the fall of Babylon the Great. There it is written, "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20). This "great city" of the Apocalypse, which has for ages triumphed over the apostles and prophets, and their followers in faith and practice, is Rome, as indicated to John by the angel in ch. xvii. 18. Isaiah's prophecy *includes* John's in the Revelation, which supplemented the former by a profusion of details that would only have been unintelligible and burdensome to Isaiah and his contemporaries.

Isaiah and John both have visions of the New Jerusalem, which triumphs at last in "the time of the dead," or the resurrection, over the "great city" of the adversary. In Isaiah's times, literal Babylon was the rising foe. In John's days it was Rome, the mystical Babylon, which continues down to our own time. But, as we learn from Revelations xi. and from ancient history, "the great city" was not to be limited to Rome architecturally and municipally, but to be understood as embracing all the Roman Empire. This was in harmony with the decree of Caracalla, by which, for purposes of increasing taxation, he made the

boundaries of "the great city" coextensive with those of the empire.

Hence mystical Babylon likewise is not to be confined to Rome or the Roman Catholic pale, but is to be considered as coextensive with the Kingdom of the Apostacy, which is humanly styled Christendom. This great system of "confusion" is more and more disposed to avow, or at any rate manifest, its real relation to Roman-Babylon the Great; and it is certain, because foretold in the Bible, that when the Lord appears as a claimant for the throne over the East and all the world, that Greek and Roman Catholicism, with all the Protestant daughters of the family, will unite in unholy alliance to make war against him and depose him" (Psa. ii. : cx. ; Rev. xvii. 14, &c.)

Both Isaiah and John, as well as the other prophets, show that the result will be the destruction of the adversary and the victory and joyful exaltation of the Lord and his people. Isaiah in this place introduces it in these beautiful words: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city! Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth the truth may enter in."

The "we" of this declaration—"the righteous nation which *keepeth the truth*"—is sufficiently defined by the Lord and by Peter in the New Testament. In the parable of the vineyard (Matt. xxi. 33), Jesus condemned the wicked husbandmen of Israel who were about to slay him, and said that the Owner of the vineyard would "let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, which should render him the fruits in due season." And he added more plainly: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a *nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" What was taken from these was life and place and power in an Israelitish constitution of things in the Holy Land, and this is what is to be given to the "nation" in question, only under an immortal constitution of things under "the Heir" there enthroned.

Peter, addressing the "elect strangers" of his day, said: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an *holy nation*, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of the darkness into his marvellous

light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). "The fruits thereof," of which the Lord spoke in parable, Peter here defines to be showing forth God's praises, abstaining from fleshly lusts, patiently enduring contradiction for Christ's sake, and maintaining good works that men might be led to "glorify God in the day of visitation."

Such men are "walls and bulwarks" even now, being "built upon the foundations of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Had there been a few more Lots in Sodom, all the city would have been spared for the sake of the ten righteous. What shall we say, then, of the whole company of the fathers, prophets, and apostles under Christ in a state of "Salvation"? Jeremiah, in the days of his flesh, was made "a fenced brazen wall" to his countrymen. In the day of salvation, he will be incorporated in the symbolic "wall of the city great and high" (Rev. xxi. 12), when the glory of God is revealed in Jerusalem. "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 5).

"Open ye the gates" is a phrase which, like the others, finds its counterpart in the apocalyptic visions, and affords matter for instruction, edification, and comfort. None but those belonging to "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" can enter these gates. There is a great consensus of opinion to the contrary in Christendom; that is to say, it is the universal fashion of the religious world to disregard God's conditions, and seek salvation each in his own way. We remember what Christ said about "the door of the sheepfold," and the leaders of the people, who sat in Moses' seat endeavouring to "climb up in some other way" (John x.).

History repeats itself. Christendom calls Christ "Lord, Lord," but does not the things that he says. He says, "He that believeth (the gospel of the kingdom) and is baptised shall be saved." Christendom, in effect, says: "It does not matter so much what you believe so long as you are in earnest; and you need not be baptised." All such other-way-climbings are rebuked by the Scriptures in many places, and in this place most strikingly. "Keeping the truth" is the only open

sesame here. In the Apocalypse it is written: "Blessed are they that *do his commandments*, that they may *have right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14). "Doing his commandments" is the Lord's comment on the earlier expression, "keeping the truth."

"The truth" is an Israelitish matter, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are inscribed on the gates of the symbolic city (Rev. xxi. 12). Everyone who "keeps the truth" holds "the hope of Israel" for which Paul was bound, and concerning which he preached. He testified that it was Jesus who was ordained of God to rule the world in righteousness, and that he would return from the heaven to bring again the righteous from the dust of death and cause them to inherit the earth for ever, that he would set up again the fallen kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem, and regather the tribes from their dispersion, and settle them after their old estate.

He preached that God offered to all men a share in this great inheritance on condition of their repenting, and believing His promises as expressed in the gospel of the kingdom, being baptised, and thereupon waiting for His Son from heaven in the doing of His commandments. All who affectionately and intelligently heard and obeyed his preaching and were baptised into Christ became prospective constituents of "the righteous nation," who shall "enter in through the gates into the city." The revived truth in the latter days has called us to a portion in this. Let us spare no endeavour to "keep the truth."

Isaiah says: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in Yahweh for ever, for in Yah, Yahweh, is a Rock of Ages." We may have been familiar from childhood with this last phrase by reason of the common use of Toplady's well-known hymn; but alas, how foreign is the sentiment of the hymn in places to that of the prophet whose inspired phrase it borrows. And how far off has been the substance of it all until the truth revealed it to us.

Christ is that substance truly, as it is written in another connection, "that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). He exemplifies

the perfect trust and the perfect peace, and of this he spoke to his disciples before he suffered. In John xiv. he comforted them with the prospect of an abiding place in the Father's house, and bade them fear not though trouble should overtake them:—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid."

He promised that he would come again and receive them to himself. Afterwards they understood him perfectly, and in the power of the spirit testified to others who took his name upon them in the way appointed, and found his peace, though tribulation in the world accompanied it. They would not exchange the shelter of the "Rock of Ages" for anything the world could offer for a brief lifetime. They looked, as Abraham did, for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Their confidence is given as the reason of their trust in Isaiah's following words (v. 5): "For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low; he layeth it low even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust." Christ's friends are content to wait for this vindication, which is now very near, and when it comes will be manifest to all men to their consternation. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but *they shall see*, and shall be ashamed for their envy at the people." Meanwhile the attitude of the true followers of the prophets and apostles is before us in verses 8, 9. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee, the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

What else is there to wait for or desire? Solomon's verdict is true: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity." No doubt at first, to the ears of inexperienced youth and perverseness, this sounds mawkish; but give youth enlightenment such as Solomon had from God, and time to consider, and it will presently endorse his judgment. It is not with any hope of

materially altering the existing state of things on earth that the servants of God maintain their testimony in the face of overwhelming odds. They know that argument is powerless, except to take out a people for the name of God, which is itself a great and noble work. They can but testify and endure in hope of the promised day, when God will plead His own cause, knowing that in such a course they are pleasing Him and saving themselves.

The prophet's confidence was in this direction. He comforted himself (v. 8) with the assurance that God was working with the righteous; a truth that is emphatically upheld in apostolic teaching. He lamented the dominion of other Lords over his people. Apostate Kings introduced the worship of other gods, and had compelled conformation thereto. And throughout the ages there are illustrations of this. Nebuchadnezzar and his golden image, and the Pope and his dragooning of heretics into the Catholic faith, are widely separated instances in point of time, but connected in essence.

But all such lords are as dead as the images and phantoms they delight in and serve. Only in the God of Israel and His appointed "Kings and Lords" is there life. Of the others Isaiah says, "They are dead, they shall not live, they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them and made all their memory to perish." When this new song is sung in the land of Judah the time for Gentile lording it over Israel and the saints will have passed away. A new order of kings will have arisen in the earth, and the one pure worship of the Father in Israel will have supplanted the confusions of Babylon the Great.

The increase of the nation of which the prophet speaks in v. 15 is due to the re-appearance in the land of the living of a glorious generation of "Israelites indeed," and the gathering again of the scattered tribes of Israel who have been "removed far unto all the ends of the earth."

Isaiah lamented the impotence of the faithful in these figurative words; "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her

pangs, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain; we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen" (ch. xxvi. 17-18).

The figure of the woman in travail which the prophet uses here to express the troubled condition of God's people before the reappearance of Christ, is appropriated by the Lord himself in his parting conversation with the disciples (John xvi. 21-22). He associates the end of the "travail" with his coming again: "Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." In that great day the labours of the servants of God will no longer be apparently abortive—they *will* "work deliverance in the earth," and "the inhabitants of the world" will fall before them.

The announcement of the resurrection of the dead in v. 19 is striking and beautiful. Their whole number is put forth under the figure of one dead body. The prophet, speaking by the Spirit of Christ, says, "Thy dead shall live, my dead body they shall arise: Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Omitting the italicised words, the meaning of the passage becomes plainer. The whole number of the accepted who have died are considered as the Spirit's "dead body." In the constitution of the kingdom of Israel in the days of the Exodus, the chosen people were considered as "the body of Moses," for, says Paul, "all our fathers were baptised unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea." So it is with the "prophet like unto Moses," since manifested in Israel for the remission of sins. For Paul says again, "By one spirit are ye all baptised into one body . . . now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." When these are dead, they are the Spirit's "dead body," which, like that of Christ personally, "rests in hope" of tasting his resurrection power in the day to come.

The figure of the dew applied in this place, and in the 110th Psalm to the children of the resurrection, is a very

beautiful one. Dr. Thomas has the following remarks upon it: "The sleepers in the dust are styled 'dew' because of the resemblance existing between the process of nature in the formation of dew and the operation of the eternal Spirit on the generation of living beings from the dust. In comprehending the formation of dew, we are enabled to form some idea of the evolution of a living body from dust. A dewdrop is a sparkling drop of water secretly and silently deposited upon the leaves of plants. The elements of which it is composed exist previously to its formation, free and uncombined in the air of night. These are the invisible gases termed oxygen and hydrogen. But, besides these, there is the indispensable formative agent styled electricity. Without this there could be no dewdrop, visible or invisible. The gases might be mechanically mixed, but without the invisible and silent operation of the electricity, they could not be chemically combined in the manifested product called a dewdrop. This is a visible and tangible thing generated from invisible and intangible latent elements. According to the electrical law of its formation, it is globular and light-refracting, or sparkling in the open brightness of the dawn. These refractions are the brilliancies, splendours, or glorious vestments of the dew. Before the dawn, the dewdrops are all in the womb of night, of which both they and the dawn receive their birth, begotten by the orb of day. No figure can be more beautiful, no resemblance more complete.

This new-born body multitudinous, like the "body of Moses" in the days of the Exodus, arises in troublous times. Not one nation, but many, are to be confounded at all Israel's might (Mic. vii. 16). The punishments of God are not to be upon Egypt only, but upon all the earth besides. In this crisis, a position of safety is provided, as it was in the days of the Exodus, when Israel kept indoors, sheltered by the blood of the Paschal lamb on the doorpost and lintel, in the night on which the destroying angel passed through Egypt, and cut off the firstborn.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment,

until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Is. xxvi. 20-21).

Thus the prophet, by the Spirit, spoke of the only refuge that God would provide for His people in the day of vengeance. No other shelter will avail. We hear much of the "balance of power," and the schemes and alliances by which the nations seek to secure and perpetuate peace on the basis of a complete ignoring of God and His purpose. A more fatal fallacy could not be imagined. All history illustrates the fact. Where was the whole world of sinners when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came? That is a type that Christ applies to this very time. Noah's ark rode the waters of the Deluge for the brief space of about a year until "the indignation was overpast," and then he came forth to the establishment of a new order of things in the earth. Christ is the Ark of safety, in him alone there is assurance of deliverance from the deluge which will sweep away the existing order of things.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE SERPENT—ISRAEL BLOSSOMS AND BUDS.

THE prophet goes on to speak of the judgment storm on the nations, and of the consequent deliverance and re-gathering of the children of Israel. "In that day the Lord, with his sword—a great and strong sword—shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent—even leviathan, that crooked serpent—and shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

Leviathan, serpent, and dragon are figurative terms representative of the sin-power of the world in its latter-day manifestation in opposition to Christ. Leviathan is derived from the verb *lavah* (to join), and is of the same origin as Levi, the name of Leah's third son. "She conceived again and bare a son, and said, Now this time will my husband be *joined* unto me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi"—that is, Joined (Gen. xxix. 34). From Psa. civ. and from Job xli., it is evident that the term is applied to any great sea monster; while in Psa. lxxiv. 14 it is figuratively applied to a many-headed monster that is broken to pieces, and given as "meat" to God's people after the type of Egypt of old. One of the noticeable peculiarities of leviathan in the book of Job is the compact joining of his parts—his bones and his scales (xli. 15-16, 23-24). The skeleton of a serpent and the armour-plating of a crocodile are wonderful pieces of divine joinery in the natural world. When, in the light of the Scripture, we come to look into the metaphorical, the doctrine of the name still holds good; for the many-headed dragon of the Apocalypse and Daniel's prophecies reveals a system compactly knit together by many and strong joints. Of the body of Christ, it is said by Paul, that "from the head,

all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 19). The body of the dragon or leviathan is nourished by its own "joints and bands," and is subject, not to Christ, but to its own head or heads—the Popes and Emperors who lord it over the world. It is in harmony with the derivation and doctrine pertaining to leviathan that the ecclesiastical hierarchies of Christendom should arrogate to themselves the position and privileges of Levi in Israel of old. It is this that has largely contributed to the strength of "his body" (Dan. vii. 11), which is to be "destroyed and given to the burning flame" in the judgment committed to the saints.

The serpent has been the symbol of the sin-power of the world from the beginning because sin originated with the lie of the serpent in Eden. The seed of the serpent are always in conflict with the seed of the woman until the victory of the latter results in the entire abolition of sin from the earth. In Jesus' days he contended, as the personal Seed of the woman, with the "serpents and generation of vipers" who withstood him and finally compassed his death. Since then the "body of Christ" has continued the struggle, filling up the measure of his sufferings; and the last revelation of heaven exhibits the binding of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan" as a work associated with the conquest of Christ and his millennial reign on earth (Rev. xx. 2). We may take this apocalyptic unfolding as supplemental of Isaiah's prophecy under consideration.

The dragon in the Old Testament scriptures is the symbol for the Egyptian, Babylonian, and other oppressors of Israel that were concurrent with the times in which the prophets wrote. Hence it is said, Ps. xlv. 19: "Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons." And again, Ezek. xxix. 3: "I am against thee Pharaoh King of Egypt, *the great dragon* that lieth in the midst of his rivers." Here the Nile crocodile is the literal element in the case, emblematic of the Egyptian royalty in flesh-devouring manifestation against Israel. So likewise with the oppressor on the northern side of Israel: "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath

crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up *like a dragon*, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitants of Zion say, and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say" (Jer. li. 34-5).

In after years ROME became *the dragon* that devoured, crushed, emptied, swallowed up and cast out Israel. To Rome, through Pergamos migrated the old Babylonian idolatry, and, becoming there enthroned under lying labels and Christian phrases, persecuted the saints and the Jews after the manner of Egypt and Babylon of old. Hence it is symbolically exhibited by the spirit of God as "Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. xi. 8) and "Babylon the Great" (Rev. xvii. 5). And particularly is this symbol of a dragon applied to Rome, which actually used it on her military standards. In Rev. xii. xiii. much is revealed concerning the origin and uprise of the dragon in its pagan and anti-christian forms, and its relation to the saints, who are represented under the strikingly appropriate figure of a fugitive woman fleeing into the wilderness "from the face of the serpent" (Rev. xii. 14, 17).

Taking our stand, then, with the prophet 700 years before Christ, we look down the ages, and we see the sword of the Lord destined to come upon the Egyptian, Babylonian and Roman oppressors of the saints and the Jews, until, at the climax in the time of the dead, he "shall slay the dragon that is in the midst of the sea." What this involves concerning the gathering of the modern nations against the mountains of Israel we have already frequently seen and need not now rehearse. But the context invites us to dwell on the great change that comes at that time over the fortunes of the saints and of Israel.

"In that day sing ye unto *her*, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." The "true vine" is Christ; his accepted are the fruitful branches purged of the Father; the rejected are the outcast and withered fruitless branches to be gathered and burned in the fire (John xv.). This is the highest aspect of the vineyard of the Lord, introducing the

members of Christ, and immortal Israelitish royalty and priesthood. But there is a national aspect likewise: "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isa. v. 7). Because of this, God laid waste the vineyard, and gave it over to "briers and thorns." "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (v. 6). Between this and "watering it every moment" there is a great contrast. Literal rain was withheld from the land, as in the days of Elijah; but even more dreadful was the taking away of the fructifying Word of God—"doctrine that drops as the rain, and (inspired) speech that distils as dew, as small rain upon the tender herb and showers that water the grass" (Deut. xxxii. 2). Because of the iniquity of Israel, the spirit of God in the prophets was taken away, and there set in, a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. And at last, because of continued apostacy, the vineyard was given over to desolation.

And now burnt up it is with fire;
It also is cut down;
And from the land hath perished,
Because Thy face did frown.

But all this is to be changed "in that day." "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit" (v. 6). With the return of Christ, "the true vine," and the "fruit of the earth" that belongs to him—the "children of the resurrection," the great change is fully inaugurated. Already there are the signs abroad that it is coming. A Jewish newspaper has borrowed the words of the last quotation as a motto for its title-page, and it preaches ZIONISM with fervour, though, of course, at the same time, it is adverse to the proposition that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. The Jews know that a crisis has come in their history, in which the issue is between a resurrected Jewish State, and assimilation with the Gentiles as "gentlemen of the Jewish persuasion," as it is absurdly enough put; but they know absolutely nothing of the true nature of the crisis; neither does

Gentile Christendom. The Jew would have a Jewish State under the shadow of the Gentile dominions still in possession of the Holy places. And he knows nothing of an Israelitish kingdom which, in the immortal hands of Messiah and his subordinate princes, "shall not be left to other people." "Shall we end by having a theocracy?" asked Dr. Herzl. "No, indeed," he answered. "Yea, verily," saith the Scripture. Christendom, likewise, has relegated the Kingdom of God to the skies, or "beyond the realms of time and space," or some equally imaginary region.

Therefore neither Jew nor Christian perceive that the Zionist movement is but the prelude to the establishment of the coming Kingdom of God, that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Isaiah, in another place, speaks pointedly of this universal lack of perception of the true nature of these times, and of the utter consternation of the kingdoms of the world when the matter becomes plain to them by the judgments of the Lord. Then their "thorns and briers" will be burned together; for it is a divine maxim that the nations shall not be unpunished any more than Israel. The holy oracles have come to them, and are multiplied in millions of copies, and as industriously made void by the preachers, who only minister to the people what "they delight to have." So that it is right and just that all such should be deceived, and punished, after due warning, in the day of judgment to come.

It is a very pertinent enquiry that is put forth by the prophet in verse 7: "Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him? or is *he* slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?" To appreciate the full weight of the implied negative answer, we must know and meditate upon Israel's divine history, and compare the fate of rival powers with that of Israel. Where is Egypt? Where is Assyria? Where is great Babylon? Where are Persia, Greece, and Rome—the world-empires of the past? Gone, so that they are merely a memory. But where is Israel? Preserved though punished, and waxing mighty again to the consternation of "the Modern Pharaoh" and his Kingdom.

God has "debated with" Israel for his sins in the past, and there is still a time of trouble for Jacob; but the purging of his iniquity is coming, when, recognising Jesus as his deliverer, he shall mourn and repent, as Joseph's brethren did of old in Egypt.

But, before this, Isaiah saw a long period of desolation, and that the boughs of the vine of Israel should be broken off. "When the boughs thereof are *withered*, they shall be *broken off*, the women come and set them on fire; for it is a people of no understanding; *therefore*, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." Jesus, before he suffered, referred to this withering and breaking off. As they led him away to be crucified, and the women were weeping over him, he said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children . . . for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31). Forty years afterwards came the breaking off. The women came and set them on fire. To paraphrase the language of the High Priest: "The Romans came and took away their place and nation;" and they burnt the city and the temple. What a grievous thing it is to lack understanding of God. Paul makes the matter the subject of exhortation to Gentile believers: "Thou wilt say, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Rom. xi.). And Paul goes on to speak of the promised restoration, of which Isaiah had spoken, by the same Spirit, eight hundred years before.

But at last, said Isaiah, "the Lord shall beat off (the invader) from the river (Euphrates) unto the river (or brook) of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt; and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

This is the solution of the Jewish Question and of the Eastern Question, both of which are so exercising the most thoughtful of men. Of proximate solutions depending upon the caprice of the flesh, whether Russian, French, German, or British, yea, and Jewish, there may be enough and to spare, but the condemnation of all these lies in the fact that they leave God out of account, and seek to seize on the inheritance of "the Heir" He has appointed. They are all foredoomed to failure and destruction in the tempest of his wrath; while, on the other hand, the gospel of the kingdom, wherever its still small voice can penetrate, actually invites men to "come out" from the camp of the adversary, and inherit for ever a place under Zion's King. Let those who are on His side sound out the truth as the Thessalonians did (1 Thess. i. 8), that they may find place with the apostles and prophets in the day of exaltation that is coming.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

WOE TO THE DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM AND JUDAH.

“**W**OE to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim.” So Isaiah xxviii. commences; and the next few chapters have been styled by a commentator, “The book of woes,” because of the frequency with which they are opened by similar denunciations.

Ephraim was like Judah in apostacy, only in a manner more openly and thoroughly opposed to divine ways. The set policy of the kingdom of the ten tribes was so to corrupt God’s laws and institutions, that the house of Judah should no longer have the undivided dominion. And this was “of the Lord,” who permits “the crown of pride” and “drunkenness” for a time for His own purposes.

Nevertheless, the proud and the drunkards are an abomination to Him and obnoxious to His judgments. And this Isaiah here proclaimed. He had before (ch. viii.) testified of the fall of Ephraim before Assyria; and his contemporary prophet, Hosea, specially pleaded with Ephraim by the Spirit of God which was in him. By implication, a vivid picture of the condition of the Ten Tribes is to be seen in Hosea’s prophecy. Baal-worship, and the worship of the calves set up by Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan, was associated with every evil imaginable. The condition of Israel is referred to in the second book of Kings, which tells (ch. xvii.-xviii.) of Shalmanezar’s taking of Samaria in the ninth year of the reign of Hezekiah. Shalmanezar appears to be the Lord’s “mighty and strong one” of Isaiah’s allusion in this place. He cast down the crown of pride, and trod the Ephraimite drunkards under foot. Nebuchadnezzar is called the “mighty one of the heathen” (Ezek. xxxi. 11), into whose hand God gave Pharaoh and Egypt. But he was also God’s mighty one, for he is described (Jer. xxvii. 6)

as "Nebuchadnezzar . . . my servant." So Shalmanezzer was God's servant and mighty one to chastise Israel; just as in after-times the Romans were the King's armies, to destroy the murderers of His Son and burn up their city (Matt. xxii. 7).

"What manner of time" did the spirit of Christ signify when in verse 5 it said, "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory"? The day of the Lord doubtless. But what had that to do with Ephraim, now threatened and shortly to be "trodden under foot"? The answer is, that though cast off for many centuries, Ephraim at last should be regathered and united with Judah in the land. And that there was even then a "*residue*," who, in that day of the Lord, should inherit the "fat valleys" of Ephraim for ever. Joshua was an Ephraimite who slept there in dust, while later generations of his tribesmen, forgetting his example, went astray after other gods. Elijah's "seven thousand" remnant were other portions of the "*residue*," who slept likewise, while Elijah was (and is) honoured with exemption from death. These will be elements in Yahweh's "crown of glory" and "diadem of beauty" in the land in the day of Christ, when he who wandered tired, hungry, and thirsty by Jacob's well will be in the land again in "the restitution of all things." Crowns of pride and drunkenness are but for a moment, but Yahweh's crown of glory is for ever (Zech. ix. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 19-20).

The drunkenness rebuked by the prophet would be spiritual as well as literal. The two have always gone together in the history of religious declensions, and both are evidently rebuked by the prophets. "Woe to them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night until wine inflame them. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands" (Isa. v. 11). Here literal drunkenness is a factor which contributed potently to precipitate the people into "hell's mouth," as it does this day. Many other denunciations could be quoted. On the other hand, the

prophet says of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (ch. xxix. 9), "They are drunken, *but not with wine*; they stagger, *but not with strong drink*;" pointing here to an inebriation with false doctrine that is quite compatible with total abstinence from alcoholic liquors. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. li. 7). This "wine" was the Babylonian idolatry, the source of what was long afterwards described as "the wine of her fornication," with reference to another "Babylon" that has "made the inhabitants of the earth drunk," and, like her prototype, "deceived all nations." In Isaiah's day Ephraim was corrupted by the importation of the Euphratean Babylonian religion (2 Kings xvii.), and now Jew and Gentile are alike corrupted by a modern variation of the same thing emanating from Rome. This is susceptible of very extensive and complete demonstration. Hislop's *Two Babylons* does much in that direction.

In verse 7, the prophet appears to turn from Ephraim to Judah, saying, "But *they* also have erred through wine." At any rate, in verse 14, we find him speaking to the rulers of Jerusalem. They also "erred in vision and stumbled in judgment." They had the law, but despised the word, corrupting it with traditions like a later generation that resisted the Lord Jesus. In such a state of affairs the Spirit said: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" And the answer given is: "Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts." This is made the subject of an enlightening allusion by Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews (ch. v.), where he rebukes some who, by reason of their long connection with the truth, ought to have been teachers; adding that they themselves had need to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. "Ye are become," says he, "such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both

good and evil." And he goes on to exhort them to leave first principles behind and go on unto perfection.

So, then, the "weaned" are men of exercised senses in the word of righteousness, of whom Isaiah and Paul are examples, whose "exercises" were supplemented by gift of the Holy Spirit. If this be so, how can unexercised persons expect to understand doctrine and be taught of God? If they elect to exercise their senses only on some inferior gifts of God to the exclusion of the word of righteousness, what reasonable complaint can be made against Him that He allows them to pass away for ever with the things they so transiently enjoy? And, again, if people will not exercise their senses on the word, how can the servants of God do anything towards teaching them, seeing God Himself restricts knowledge and understanding to the "exercised" seekers after Him. It was to this class that the ministry of the prophets potently appealed—and appeals, to this day.

But the unweaned of Isaiah's day were not without professional zeal for the law, like their modern representatives. Only they played with it and nullified it—not, perhaps, after the type of modern sermonizings, that is a later development—but with "traditions" such as Christ rebuked, and "Jewish fables and endless genealogies," such as Paul referred to.

To these and their successors of after generations, a constant iteration of first principles was to no profit. "For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little. Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people: to whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they *would not hear*. Therefore shall the word of the Lord be *unto them* precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; *that they may go and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*" (R.V.).

It is usual to apply this passage to a justification of the gradual instruction of the young in God's ways. But, although that instruction is altogether excellent and indispensable, it is not

the subject of the prophetic word in this place. What we have here is the rebuke of people who were "babes" when they ought no longer to have been such, or, worse still, of people who *would not hear*, despite miraculous intervention, and *to whom, therefore*, the word of the Lord was "precept upon precept" only to their destruction. Paul quotes the eleventh verse of the chapter when rebuking the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv.) for their abuse of the gift of tongues. The solemn lesson of the passage is that men may be in close and familiar contact with the word of the Lord, and yet find it only to their destruction if they will not hear (or obey) it. "We are," said Paul, "unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are being saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." There were men in his day "ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth"—men "desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They were an affliction to him till the day of his death. To a man like Paul, nothing could be more distressing than an unfaithful handling of the Word of God.

The "scornful men" who ruled Jerusalem were represented by Isaiah as declaring that they had made a covenant with death and an agreement with the grave, and that they would escape the "overflowing scourge" threatened by God, by means of their "refuge of lies." "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place."

The stone is Christ (Psa. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; &c.). In a sense the stone has been laid in Zion, and in a sense it has not. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). The name of Jesus Christ was revealed in Zion in the first century as the only name of salvation; and judgment and an overflowing scourge followed Zion's rejection of it. But though he rose from

the dead, he did not further prosecute his claim to Jewish and universal sovereignty, but ascended into heaven, whence, as from "a far country," he is to return to be enthroned in Zion and to make his foes his footstool. The tried and precious stone has, therefore, yet to be laid in Zion, with judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet; and the refuge of lies which still obtains in Jerusalem and all the earth is to be swept away, and the "spiritual house" of which Peter and Paul speak (1 Pet. ii. 5; Eph. ii. 20) is to be manifested in Zion to the glory of God.

It was a great annulling of Israel's "covenant with death," when the escape from death was shown to be in the way they deliberately rejected. When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, what became of their saying, "Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner"? And when he sent the Romans upon them as an "overflowing scourge," where was their means of escape? There was none, and they perished under it.

"Perasim" was the place where God broke forth upon David's enemies "as the breach of waters," using David as His instrument (2 Sam. v.); and was, therefore, a fitting reference to the time when He broke forth in the waters of the Roman "flood" upon the enemies of the Son of David. And "Gibeon" was where the Lord fought for Joshua, and by Joshua against His enemies; and was likewise, therefore, a fitting symbol of God's fighting by Jesus against His enemies. It is not suggested that the scope of this prophecy is *restricted* to the Roman overthrow, but rather that, since that was consequent on Jerusalem's filling up the cup of her iniquity, it is the most prominent catastrophe in the prophet's line of vision.

This fighting *against* Jerusalem is referred to by God as "His strange work"—"His strange act." God is good; He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Nothing could exceed the kindness and emphasis with which this is declared by the prophet Ezekiel (ch. xviii.). And when the Father was manifested in Jerusalem in human form divine in the person of His beloved Son, he even wept over the city (Luke xix. 41) as he pronounced judgment against her because she "knew not the time of her visitation." It was a "strange work," the siege of Jerusalem,

and the giving over to death of hundreds of thousands of "the children of the kingdom." It is not the last "strange work" to come upon earth. What will be thought when Christendom's turn comes, which it will. It would seem strange, indeed, to many, that God should destroy a system upon which the name of Christ is called, and a city in which a High Priest poses as the chief representative of Christ on earth—Rome and "His Holiness" the Pope (Rev. xvii. 18, 14). But it will not seem strange to the friends of Christ who remember Jerusalem's fate. Apart from the judgments written, the name of God would be erased from the earth, which, however, He has declared shall not be.

A somewhat obscure parable (verses 23-29) concludes this chapter of rebuke against the mockers and scornful men who would not hear, though in the presence of constantly-recurring precepts and rules of the Word of God. They appear to be likened to a plowman who ploughed all day and broke clods, but did not give a thought to sowing. The exhortation of Hos. x. 12 is "Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy." Compare also Christ's parable of the sower and Paul's allusion to ploughing in hope and sowing spiritual things (1 Cor. ix. 10). A wise husbandman gave thought to the sowing, and when harvest time came, did not blunder in his treatment of the various plants. Cummin is a small plant whose seeds are used as we use carraway seeds. Fitches are vetches. "So small and tender a seed (as cummin) would be destroyed or crushed if threshed like corn, or even if beaten with a staff like the stouter husks and the fitches. The same mode of beating out the cummin is still practised, while the corn is TRODDEN out by the oxen" (*Smith's Dict.*).

"The good seed are the children of the kingdom," but the "wicked husbandmen," though punctilious about the tithing of "mint and anise and cummin," passed over the weightier matters of the law, and were quite unscrupulous in their treatment of the "good seed." Jesus is the "true bread," who was "bruised for our iniquities"; and the apostles shared his experience in less degree. "Thrice was I beaten with rods," says Paul; and

the Acts of the Apostles shows us the others in like suffering. But the "bruising," "threshing," and "breaking" in which the "wicked husbandmen" were but God's instruments, was not to be for ever. The fruit would endure in eternal life when they would be dead and forgotten.

This appears to be the meaning of the enigmatical words to which Isaiah so emphatically called attention (v. 23), and of which he said in conclusion: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working."





CHAPTER XXIX.

“ WOE TO ARIEL ! ”

“ **W**OE to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.” So Isaiah’s lamentation continues. And he further foretells the coming judgments upon Jerusalem, and the final redemption of the city in the day of Christ.

The name Ariel is poetical, or symbolic of Jerusalem, and conveys a deep and beautiful doctrinal significance. It means literally Lion of God, *Ari El*; and is the term applied in Ezekiel xliii. 15 to the “altar” upon the Holy Hill of Zion in the Age to Come. In a sense, the whole nation of Israel is a Lion of God (Num. xxiii. 24: xxiv. 9), and the Lord Jesus Christ, its King, is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. v.). He is also “the Altar,” whether of burnt offering or of incense, antitypical of that whereon Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Moriah of old, and on the site of which the Temple of Solomon afterwards stood. The Temple furniture of Solomon’s manufacture, the pattern of which he received from David by the Spirit *in writing* (1 Chron. xxviii. 19), incorporated this idea of the Lion of God. On the borders of the ten bases were “lions, oxen, and cherubim” (1 Kings vii. 29-36). Also on the steps of Solomon’s “great throne of ivory” there stood twelve lions, and the seat of it was flanked by two lions (1 Kings x. 18-20). Again, the faces of the cherubim comprised “the face of a man and of a lion on the right side” (Ezek. i. 10), as well as the face of an ox and of an eagle. The man and lion faces, which are to be reproduced in Ariel in the future temple, memorialise God’s Lion-Man of Judah who takes away the sin of Ariel, and of the world, and causes David and the fathers to inherit the Land for ever, as God has sworn.

The language of David's day further illustrates the meaning of the term Ariel. Benaiah, one of his mighty men, slew "two Ariels of Moab," or "lions of God of Moab," *i.e.*, "lion-like men," as the text says (2 Sam. xxiii. 20). That the term was likewise applied to the altar is evident from Meshah's record on the so-called "Moabite Stone," to which reference has been already made in chapter xv., when speaking of Isaiah xv. and xvi. He says, "I carried away the Ariel of David." . . . "I carried away the Ariels of Jehovah and dragged them on the ground before the face of Chemosh." These were evidently altars, given into Meshah's hand by God because of the iniquities of His people.

In like manner now, Jerusalem, the Ariel or Lion of God, was to be made an Ariel, or altar of God—a veritable *hearth of burnt offering*, with the people for the sacrifice, because of the "vain oblations" which in heartless worship they offered to the Lord God of Israel. "Add ye year to year," said the Spirit of God by the prophet, "let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow, and it shall be unto me as Ariel," *i.e.*, *an altar or hearth of God*. The idea of a people being thus offered as a bloody sacrifice is not confined to this prophecy, nor to Jerusalem. Indeed, in this very chapter Jerusalem's enemies are at last to be the sacrifice in the same place. The last words of David contemplated this: The sons of Belial, as thorns, shall be utterly burned with fire in the place where they filled God's Lion-Man of Judah with iron and the staff of a spear (2 Sam. xxiii. 7). Many of them were thus sacrificed at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70; but there is still a future consumption. Isa. xxxiv. speaks of the Lord's sacrifice in Bozrah, and Ezekiel (ch. xxxix. 17-20) and Revelation (ch. xix. 17-21) likewise tell of the Lord's "great sacrifice" of antagonistic nations in the future. Israel's turn is past, the Gentile nations at length become the sacrifice.

All this came upon Israel because their service was an abomination to God. The annual feasts came round, and the sacrifices were offered; but, like the churches of our day, the whole thing was as lifeless as a fossil. The often-recurring message of the

prophet Isaiah illustrates the state of the case. Even in his first words God had said: "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot endure, it is grief, even the solemn meeting." What, then, was lacking? What was required? "Wash you, make you clean; *put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes*; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." But despite this warning, and the touching appeal with which it was accompanied (Isa. i. 18), it was unheeded; the "faithful city" became a "harlot," and therefore it was "Woe to Ariel." God, who fought against the Jebusites when David encamped against them, now declared that because the spirit and service of David were departed, He would fight against Jerusalem and the Kingdom of David, and give it into the hand of the enemy. And the Egyptian alliance would profit them nothing: "the multitude of thy strangers shall be like the small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away." As we have already seen, Nebuchadnezzar accomplished the fall both of Judah and of Egypt as God had threatened.

But even in this threatening of divine vengeance upon Ariel, the vengeance at last upon Israel's enemies is not overlooked. "And the multitude of all the nations that fight *against* Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munitions, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." In a sense, this is already seen to be true of all Israel's past enemies. They are fallen, no more to rise. But the elect of Israel, the cream and kernel of the nation, are only sleeping in dust, hereafter to arise and inherit the land for ever. But the last "fighting against Ariel" has not yet come by a long way. There is to be a great premillennial fighting, in which Ariel is wrested from the paws of the Russian Bear by the true Lion of God—the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah speaks elsewhere of this crisis. And even after the Millennial reign, Ariel is once more, and for the *last time*, the subject of international fighting on the part of the innumerable hosts of the last "Gog and Magog" (Rev. xx. 8-9). For the last time the city and its environs become the Ariel, or hearth of God, to consume

the enemies of the Lord as the fat of lambs. "Into smoke shall they consume away" (Ps. xxxvii.). Thenceforward Ariel and her children will alone and immortally survive. All others will be a forgotten nightmare (Isa. xxix. 8).

Then (verse 8) the spirit of God apostrophises the drunkards of Israel: "Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out and cry. They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered." So the purpose of God became a sealed book to them, whose knowledge was equally inaccessible to learned and unlearned. It is a plainly enunciated, though for the most part a discarded and offensive doctrine of the Scriptures, that God blinds as well as opens the eyes of the blind, and that He sends to sleep those who do not care to keep "awake to righteousness." The whole world may, in a sense, be said to be an example of this, for it "lieth in wickedness," as John says. And of individual illustrations, every generation furnishes its number. Paul alludes to the matter in the first chapter of Romans in these words: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." He is speaking here more particularly of the Gentiles, although in his argument he levels down reprobate Jews and Gentiles to the same plane. But the principle is the same as that set forth through Isaiah. Scorners and disobedient men who turn from the obedience of the commandments of God will be blinded, made fools of, and sent to sleep to their own destruction—a solemn thing for the brethren of the prophets to remember.

In verse 13 there is a change in the divine name, which leads us at once to the most striking application of the prophecy, and furnishes the basis for its proper exposition. It is no longer *Yahweh*, but *Adonai*. "Wherefore *Adonai* (my Lord), saith" thus and so. It calls to mind David's prophecy of Christ (Psa. cx.), "Yahweh saith unto my Lord" (*Adon*). We remember how Jesus appropriated this saying and confounded the scornful men who denied his Lordship; and it is he who applies this prophecy of Isaiah to the same scorners. He was challenged by the scribes

and Pharisees of Jerusalem concerning the transgression by his disciples of the traditions of the elders, in that they ate with unwashed hands. On this, he at once challenged the blind guides concerning their transgression of God's commandments by their traditions, giving an illustration of their so doing. And then he went on: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And then he called the multitude, and, in opposition to Pharisaical puerilities, taught them what really defiled a man (the evil thoughts of the heart). His disciples timorously told him that he had offended the Pharisees, to which he replied: "Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. xv.)

Thus the Lord referred to Isaiah's prophecy, and completed the "marvellous work" of blinding disobedient Israel, while at the same time enlightening an elect remnant. God had blinded Israel before, but this was an added judgment. So verse 14 says, "Behold I will *add to do* a marvellous work"; which He did by Christ. When he healed the blind man (John ix.), Jesus said, "For judgment am I come into this world that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." And when the Pharisees said, "Are we blind also?" he answered, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth." What hope was there for men who could proclaim Jesus a sinner in the presence of such manifestly divine words and works?

The lesson of the "marvellous work" was unheeded by later generations of Christ's own disciples. Hence we hear him threaten to remove the light from Ephesus (Rev. ii. 5) if they did not remember whence they had fallen, and repent and do the first works. And the Laodiceans he declared to be "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17); and he counselled them to buy of him gold

tried in the fire, white raiment, and eyesalve that they might see. These expostulations and exhortations were unheeded, and the "marvellous work" was again wrought in Christendom as in Jewry of old. The same figures, intensified if anything, are used of Christendom. It is represented by Christ as "drunken," "sorcerised," "deceived"; and Paul's prophecy is fulfilled which says, "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved . . . God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 10).

In all this what is the lesson to the latter-day possessors of the truth? Manifestly this—that lip and mouth worship covering works of darkness is an abomination to God, and will be followed by the taking away of the truth. There is no "hiding of counsel" from God. "The Lord looketh upon the heart." Christ's epistles to the seven churches are eloquent in their assurances of this, and in their exhortations to repentance and faithfulness, and the "exceeding great and precious promises" they make "to him that overcometh."

The vain endeavour of the rulers of Israel to hide their counsel from God is rebuked by the declaration that the Potter cannot be likened to the clay. Men may be deceived, but not God; and "the deceived and the deceiver are His." Paul alludes to this when, in the epistle to the Romans, he quotes this passage from Isaiah in illustration of God's dealings with "the children of the flesh" and "the children of the promise." He speaks of Pharaoh as the Potter's "vessel of wrath," fulfilling a necessary place for the declaration of the Creator's name in all the earth. Some are "vessels unto honour," and others "unto dishonour"; but all have their place, some transitory, others eternal. In the days when the "scorners" antagonised Jesus in Jerusalem, they were the vessels unto dishonour, and he preeminently the Father's chosen vessel unto honour in the everlasting house of God to come. But how much otherwise it looked to merely human observers. The principle holds good to this day, when the leaders of Christendom, equally perverse, unite in declaring the truth of God

“heresy” as of old. They have their place, and out of the antagonisms begotten by the truth between them and “the children of the promises” is developed a people prepared for the Lord.

The coming day will reveal them, and enlighten and sober all the world: “In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (v. 18-19). No doubt there was a great enlightening and sobering of a remnant when God’s “Holy One” shone as “a great light” in the regions of Galilee and all Israel—when one of the wonders of the times was that “to the poor the Gospel was preached.” But the “terrible ones” and “scorners” were not then cut off (v. 20); but, on the contrary, prevailed against the Holy One, as they thought, to the extinction of his light for ever. But the Father raised him from the dead; and, according to His promise, gave him, subsequently to Israel’s rejection, as a light to the Gentiles.

But, although many were enlightened by the preaching of the apostles, darkness at length set in again among the Gentiles because of apostacy, as in Israel of old, and “the vision of all” was “sealed” again to learned and unlearned alike. But within the last century a great unsealing has been accomplished in the providence of God. The eyes of a remnant have been opened to “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ”; and not a few are now able to show with certainty that they hold the hope of the fathers and of the prophets and apostles, and that Christendom is, as Christ declared it would be at the time of his coming, in a state of universal deception.

It is noteworthy that sealing is affirmed of the two most difficult books of the Bible—namely, Daniel and the Revelation. To Daniel the angel said: “Shut up the words, seal the book even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. xii. 4). The figure of Rev. v. represents the scroll of the divine programme in human affairs as “sealed with seven seals,” and hopelessly inaccessible as

regards its locked-up knowledge until the Lamb-Lion of the tribe of Judah (the possessor of Ariel) prevailed to open it. And even then the contents of the scroll were only symbolically expressed by him. Now it is a fact that within the last century there has been a great unfolding in the light of the truth of what Daniel and the Lord Jesus revealed by the Spirit in these two books; and this of itself is a proof that "the time of the end" is upon us. This argument will seem childish to "the blind," but it is true all the same, and cannot successfully be gainsaid.

But all the opening of the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind that has hitherto been accomplished, is as nothing to what shall be revealed "in that day." By comparison with "the day of Christ," it is Egyptian darkness now. "Terrible ones and scorners" are rife, and the generation of those who "watched for iniquity" in his days, and sought to make him "an offender for a word," is reproduced on earth still wherever his people fill up what is left of the measure of his sufferings. And this will go on till he is actually in the earth again. Then will come the true day of sobriety, enlightenment, and joy everlasting. It is of this that the prophet goes on to speak.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not *now* be ashamed, neither shall his face *now* wax pale. But when he seeth his children the work of my hands in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Israel, and shall fear the God of Jacob. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

Truly Jacob's face will turn pale before Jesus and the children of the resurrection. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be there in person, and the scorners and terrible ones of Jesus' day likewise, to witness their inheritance of the kingdom of God, and to be themselves cast out for ever (Luke xiii. 28). And many from the north, south, east, and west will join in the exaltation of the fathers, as Jesus declared. Then "the city where David dwelt" will be graced with the presence of David

himself in the day that he so longed to see, and his throne and kingdom will be established for ever before his face in the hands of his greater Son and Lord, as the Lord God of Israel covenanted with him. From having been a "hearth of God" for the consumption in sacrifice of the flesh of "the children of the Kingdom," and later of the flesh of the adversary, Ariel will become a real Lion of God, the invincible Metropolis of the world, and the place of the Altar where the sacrifices of Israel and of the nations will ascend gratefully to Yahweh, as He has declared. In the day of Zion's marriage after her long widowhood she will say of these "children": "Who hath begotten me *these*? seeing I have lost my children and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath *brought up* these? Behold I was alone: *these*, where had they been?" (Isa. xlix. 21). The answer is, they had been "prisoners in the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. ix. 11), and had been liberated by "the blood of the covenant" of the rejected King, who in the days of his flesh rode into the city in lowly form as the prophets foretold.

He exhibits his wounded hands and side. The spirit of grace succeeds the spirit of pride and error (Zech. xii. 10). The house of David is manifested "as God" (Zech. xii. 8), "equal unto the angels" (Luke xx. 36), and the people mourn with a great mourning the crime of their fathers, in which they have participated in hating Jesus, and "sending after him," as it were, the message: "We will not have this man to reign over us." And if Jacob be thus humbled and purified, it is not otherwise with the Gentiles. All the earth will be humbled and enlightened in that day by the judgments of the Lord that will teach its inhabitants righteousness (Isa. xxvi. 9).





CHAPTER XXX.

WOE TO REBELS THAT TRUST ON EGYPT.

“**W**OE to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin. So Isaiah continues the divine denunciation against the disobedient people.

From the very beginning mankind have made the mistake of attempting to cover their sins with their own devices. Adam and Eve “sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons,” but were not thereby properly covered, as evinced by their shame and fear in hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord God. This covering was not of divine appointment. Later in the chapter (Gen. iii.), we find the Spirit’s covering defined: “The Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them.” But even this was only a typical covering, for they were exiled from Eden and died. The substance represented by this bloodshed and covering was Christ, thereafter to be revealed in fulfilment of the promise of the Lord God, just made, concerning the Seed of the Woman (v. 15).

Afterwards, under the Mosaic ritual, the clothing of the High Priest, and of the priests, and the *kapporeth*, place of covering, or mercy seat, in the ordinances connected with it, were shadows of the same substance. Israel was required to believe God’s promises to the fathers, and obey His commandments as expressed in the Law of Moses. To turn aside from this, and seek expiation in some other way, and to rely on Egypt for protection, was to “cover with a covering, but not of the spirit,” and to “add sin to sin.”

It is said of Christ by the Spirit in the prophet: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for

he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 10). This was the scripture from which Jesus quoted at Nazareth (Lu. iv.), and which was then partly "fulfilled in their ears," and shortly afterwards fulfilled in Jesus' own experience, so far as the words here quoted are concerned. For his righteousness' sake the Father clothed him with salvation, according to another prophetic vision (Zech. iii.), in which Joshua, "clothed with filthy garments," is a man of sign representing Jesus taking part of sinful flesh. To him the prophecy says, "Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." In the angelic liberation of Jesus from the tomb, and his "ascent to the Father," we see the full substance of this promised covering or clothing.

Thereafter, *his name* was set forth as the covering divinely appointed, the ordinances of the law being antitypically referred to him in apostolic preaching. He is the High Priest of Israel (as Joshua was) (Heb viii. 1). He is the *kapporeth*, or mercy seat, of one substance with which were the cherubim of glory, of which Paul could not then "speak particularly" (Rom. iii. 25). He is the second Adam, covered by the Lord God, by whose spirit also the second Eve, the Bride, must be also covered. Paul, writing to the Roman believers, and pointing out that Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness while as yet he was "in uncircumcision," refers to the blessedness of those "whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered," quoting from David in Psa. xxxii. The great prerequisites for the participation in this blessedness are the faith of Abraham in the promises of God concerning the Christ, and that Jesus is the Christ, in whom we must believe, and so believing, righteousness shall be imputed to us as it was to Abraham.

"The circumcision" of Isaiah's day rebelled against God in many ways, and in the religious observances of their apostacy only "added sin to sin." Afterwards, in Jesus' day, we see it more clearly still—how they boasted in Moses, and rejected and slew Jesus, of whom Moses wrote—and how he denounced them in unmeasured terms (Matt. xxiii.). Afterwards, the uncircumci-

sion took the same way by reason of the Judaising apostacy (Acts xv.); and now all Christendom is in a state of rebellion against God, seeking not counsel in the written word, "covering with a covering, but not of His Spirit," and thus adding sin to sin. The promises to the fathers are unknown, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ are unpreached in the churches and chapels; baptism into Christ is considered a non-essential, or explained away altogether. The very name of "Egypt" is apocalyptically applied to the darkness of Christendom (Rev. xi. 8), as also is "Babylon" as the symbol of its mad inebriation.

The covered with the covering Name of Christ are exhorted to look to themselves in many places in the Scriptures. The Lord himself has a parable—the marriage of the King's Son—(Matt. xxii.)—which forcibly brings the matter before us. "When the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then saith the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called; but few chosen." The chosen, then, must be suitably clothed. The wedding garment is evidently not baptism, for that is the initial clothing of the called, many of whom are not chosen. The wedding garment is defined by the Lord himself in a later vision of the marriage of the King's Son (Rev. xix.)—"the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." They are invested with an incorruptible nature on account of righteousness, just as the Lord himself was—with this difference, however, that he did *no sin*, whereas they all have come short, but are forgiven by him in the exercise of his power as the Judge appointed of the Father. Those who do not defile their garments, but walk worthily of His Name, shall walk with him in white (Rev. iii. 4-5). Therefore, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. xvi. 15). These Scriptures,

and others in the New Testament, illustrate the bearing of God's expostulation with Israel concerning their vain attempts to cover their sins in apostacy.

The next ground of the denunciation of "Woe to the rebellious children" is that they "walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt" (v. 2). Hezekiah was a good King. He purged the land of the imported idolatry of Ahaz, and restored the service of Yahweh. He even broke up the brazen serpent, which had been transformed into an idol, and called it Nehushtan, a piece of brass (2 Kings xviii. 4). "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (2 Chron. xxxi. 21). In this spirit of confident reliance upon God, "he rebelled against the King of Assyria, and served him not." Then, in the fourth year of his reign, Shalmaneser came against Samaria, and took it in the sixth year of Hezekiah, and terminated the existence of the kingdom of Israel. Afterwards, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib came against Judah, and Hezekiah gave him tribute of the gold and silver of the temple. Then, it appears, the people, if not the King, began to think of an alliance with Egypt; for it was part of Rabshakeh's taunt before the walls of Jerusalem: "Thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which, if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all that trust on him." It was under such circumstances that God denounced the "trust in the shadow of Egypt" in Isa. xxx. 2. Hoshea, King of Israel, had likewise made alliance with So, King of Egypt, against Shalmaneser (2 Kings xvii. 4).

Hezekiah, as we learn from the same record, referred Rabshakeh's blasphemies to God, and was comforted with the assurance of the discomfiture of the Assyrian who had held up his smashing reforms as an evidence of his destruction of the national religion! The chapters of Isaiah in this part of his book deal with "the Assyrian" of Isaiah's day, and of the latter day; and the events of Hezekiah's reign are to be regarded not merely

as history, but also as a type of what is to happen when a greater Hezekiah=(Strength of Yah) works reform in Judah and cuts off the latter-day invader.

The history of God's dealings with Egypt in relation to Israel, from the days of Moses and onwards, ought to have been sufficient to preclude the people's seeking alliance in that direction, but, like the generation that thought to disown Moses and turn back to Egypt, they were forgetful of God's deliverance, and saw no further than flesh and blood as a means of deliverance from the Assyrian, who, on his side, was but "the rod of God's anger" when rightly considered. Sennacherib's operations against Egypt at this time, of which Josephus tells in his "Antiquities," quoting Herodotus and Berosus, fulfilled the prophecy in rendering helpless the "strength of Pharaoh" in which Israel trusted. "Their strength," said God by the prophet, "is to sit still." "In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

The people had had such an experience in the apparently hopeless crisis in which they were between the Egyptians and the Red Sea in the days of the Exodus (Ex. xiv. 13). "And Moses said, Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," which they did in the drowning of the Egyptians. But all that was a long time in the past, and in Isaiah's day well nigh forgotten. From this we may gauge the importance of being instructed in the history of God's dealings with Israel, and trusting on Him accordingly.

Isaiah was then commanded to write a special charge against the people, that it might be preserved "to the latter day, for ever and ever." We have it with us now, after more than 2,600 years, and the people are here scattered among all nations. What Isaiah was to write was this: "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord, which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us."

We can only account for a nation carefully preserving in its archives such condemnatory writings, on the supposition that it considered them divine. And we can only account for the preservation and truthfulness of the picture on the supposition that it is divine. It is like the saying of the Lord himself: "My words shall not pass away." We have only to conceive of Shalmaneser or So, Isaiah's contemporaries, risking a similar statement, to feel the difference between the word of man and the word of God.

Israel is not alone in the rebellion thus memorialized for ever. Christendom is as apostate. Nothing is more unpopular in its midst than "the law of the Lord." "Smooth things" and "deceits" are as urgently in demand as ever they were in Israel. The truth is an unendurable and outcast thing; and therefore it is not surprising to read, as we do in the New Testament scriptures, that Christendom will reject and make war on Christ, just as Israel did, and will in consequence be broken to pieces as a potter's vessel, just as Israel was (Isa. xxx. 14; Rev. xvii. 14; Psa. ii. 9: cx. 5-6). The only place of safety is on the side of the prophets, in obedience to the Word and hope of the deliverance which it promises.

It is revealed that Yahweh is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth." And surely there is an exhibition of this in this prophecy, which, having rebuked such utter and determined apostacy, yet goes on to say: "Therefore will the Lord wait, *that he may be gracious unto you*, and therefore will he be exalted *that he may have mercy upon you*: for Yahweh is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." We must remember that these things are written "for the elect's sake"—for the sake of such as really "wait for him." Israel is "beloved for the fathers' sakes." We read that God spared Jerusalem much for David's sake; that He would even have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous men; that He forgives our sins for Christ's sake. And so through ages and ages of apostacy and heedless iniquity, He has "waited" even to this day, in which the words of the apostle Peter still apply: "The Lord is not slack concerning

his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

But at last the waiting will be over, and, as it goes on to say: "The people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left."

The people who shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem are the "new heavens and new earth" of the "world to come," as it is written: "Behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and *her people* a joy." Christ and the Heads of Israel enthroned in Zion, and the tribes of Israel re-settled in the Land under the new constitution of the Kingdom, is the picture before us. Already there are the signs of its coming in the Zionist Movement, and the softening of the hearts of some of the more devout among the people towards the words of the prophet, which they cannot but see are beginning to be fulfilled in this matter.

Israel has long eaten the bread of adversity and drunk the water of affliction. His teachers have been removed into corners from Isaiah's day to this. Where was the prophet in Judah? A despised outcast. Where was the Lord Jesus? The same: his teaching was "hid from their eyes." So with the apostles and onwards. And now the Lord is absent, and the voice of inspiration is silent, and the scriptures are a sealed book to the people. The eyes of the leaders of Israel literally rested upon Jesus, but they "saw not." Their ears actually heard his gracious words, but they "heard not." And though it has all been reduced to writing and printing, and is abroad in the world and universally accessible in that form, the truth is unrecognised and unreceived by Israel and the nations to this day.

But the end is near. With the return of the Lord from heaven, the silence is broken. With the birth of a nation in a day

by the resurrection of the dead, Israel's teachers come forth to place and power, never more to remove or be hidden or unheeded. A glorious recompense is before the prophets and all who fear God's name—small and great. They have taught and endured in shame and contempt in the days of their flesh. They will teach with authority and power divine in the Spirit nature. In proportion as they have been despised, so will they be honoured; and "all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

The sheep and cattle are to "eat clean provender (salted, R.V.), which has been winnowed with the shovel and the fan. . . ." The poor sheep and cattle of Israel and Christendom have long fed on "husks," "chaff," "that which satisfieth not"—the unwinnowed rubbish of Rabbinical and Clerical threshings. The Lord is not their Shepherd, and they want all things, having forsaken His "green pastures" and "still waters" (Psa. xxiii.). Fabulous visions of "immortal souls" in bliss in Elysian fields "beyond the skies" have supplanted the promise of God of immortal angelic bodies in Paradise in the Holy Land—in the Kingdom of God that is coming. There is no hope till "the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall."

Then, says the prophet, there shall be "rivers and streams of water." What a terrible expression and association of ideas. Pasturage and water are in some way withheld, and only "a great slaughter" and falling of strongholds can relieve the situation! What can it mean? The Gospel of the Kingdom supplies the answer. The truth of God is suppressed by a powerful combination which is to oppose the Lord himself at last and be swept away in judgment. This frees the truth, which, argumentatively, was "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," even in the days of the flesh (2 Cor. x. 4). And thenceforward the world is presented with the bread of life and the water of life in truth, and no "chaff" or cheat of any kind will be tolerated at all.

The light of that day of healing after smiting is phenomenal (verse 26). As an example of the light of *this* day, it may be remarked that an American preacher recently arrived at the

conclusion from this verse that the temperature of heaven must be something like 840 degrees; for, said he, the sun on a hot day is about 120 degrees, and "sevenfold" of that would be 840 degrees. Absurd enough, but not more so than many less suspected clerical interpretations. "The light of the world" is Christ; "the light of the moon" is the light of the bride (Song vi. 10), the light of the priesthood, then made "like Christ." These are Zion's Sun and Moon, never more to be withdrawn; Yahweh, her everlasting light, her Elohim, her glory (Isa. lx. 19-20).

The day of judgment and light and healing is introduced by the advent of "the Name of the Lord," of which the prophet goes on to speak in words of terrible sublimity. Jesus is "the Name of the Lord," and he parabolically speaks of his "coming from far" in the latter day (Luke xix. 12, 27). He teaches that he will return from heaven to take account of his servants, reward the industrious, punish the unprofitable, slay his enemies who would not that he should reign over them, and establish his Kingdom which he has "received for himself."

Popular conceptions of the work of Christ leave no room for the picture of judgment and fiery indignation here drawn by the prophet; but it is an indispensable part of his work "to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity, a bridle causing to err being upon the jaws of the peoples." The house of Israel is being sifted among all nations, yet not a grain will be lost (Amos ix. 9). The twelve apostles were sifted by Satan, but only Judas, "the son of perdition," passed through the meshes unto death, and ultimate burning up of the chaff with unquenchable fire in the day of judgment. This illustrates the sifting process that is coming.

And the condition of the peoples, as a bridled beast ridden in wrong paths, is further illustrated in the terrible figure of the Apocalypse, wherein the European body politic of Christendom is represented by a scarlet-coloured beast in a wilderness, ridden by a woman of evil repute and full of names of blasphemy. How greatly the peoples are caused to err by this Romish rider is graphically illustrated in this same

place (Rev. xvii.), where they are described as actually dragged into war against the Lord of Lords and King of Kings! What a terrible error! and all due to the neglect of Moses and the prophets, as was the case with those who similarly made war upon the Christ at his first appearing (Acts iv. 26-27).

The divine judgment spoken of by Isaiah in the chapter under consideration is referred to the Assyrian. Proximately a judgment was impending upon the Assyrian in the destruction of Sennacherib's army. But, as we see, the prophecy also refers to "the latter day," as it says (v. 8 margin). The Assyrian of the latter day, as before demonstrated, is the Russian Gog, the great northern enemy of Israel, and occupier at last of the ancient Assyrian territory. *His* jaws are likewise said to be bridled, causing him to err: "I will turn thee about and put hooks in thy jaws and I will bring thee forth" (Ezek. xxxviii. 4). "Thou shalt not know" (v. 14). "I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel" (xxxix. 11). Tophet is prepared for him, as Isaiah prophesies (xxx. 33). All the prophets tell of this. The hosts of the adversary are gathered against Jerusalem, and the valleys of Jehoshaphat and of Hinnom become the place of burning and burial as of old. The valleys are full of graves to this day—literally paved with stones. The history of the past is the type of the future. All the nations are burdening themselves with Jerusalem at present, forgetful of the past, and "erring" concerning the future. The truth cannot penetrate beyond affecting the merest remnant; but it will not fail to reach all who are required, and the sole anxiety of its stewards in their day and generation is that they uphold it faithfully, that they may be accounted worthy of a place with the faithful who have gone before.





CHAPTER XXXI.

WOE TO EGYPT AND ASSYRIA.

CONTINUING his denunciation by the Spirit, Isaiah resumes his revelation to apostate Israel concerning the fates respectively of their Egyptian allies and their Assyrian enemies; and exhorts those who have ears to hear, to turn to God and trust in His salvation. Chapter xxxi. belongs to the argument of chapter xxx., as may be at once seen upon a careful reading. The divisions of the Authorised Version, though in many ways convenient, must always be held to be subordinate to the theme in question. In many places in the Bible, the division into chapters breaks the sense and hampers the reader. This is an example. The Revised Version has done a good deal towards remedying this defect, though not in this instance. The truth alone enables us to "rightly divide the word."

There was great point in Isaiah's rebuke of Israel's trust in the horses and chariots of Egypt. The history of previous generations in Israel was before the people. What were chariots and horses when opposed to the purpose of God? What happened to Jabin's 900 chariots of iron when God raised up Barak against Sisera, and sold Israel's foe into the hand of a woman, who slew him with a tent-peg? Was it without reason or without recollection of this that David afterwards sang, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God"? And now, what was the house of David doing? Forgetting the name of God, and trusting in the power of Egypt against Assyria.

There is much combined irony and pathos in God's expostulation by the prophet concerning this: "They look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. Yet He also

is wise, and will bring evil." It was as though God had to remind them that He was not less wise and powerful than Egypt! In the argument that follows, the contrasts between man and God, flesh and spirit, are most marked, and have a strong bearing not only on Isaiah's and Hezekiah's times, but upon our own and the future, as we shall be able to discern.

Man, whether Assyrian, Israelitish, Egyptian, ancient or modern, is God's creature, originally the creation of His Spirit from the dust, whence also come all the other land animals of this creation. Assyria and Egypt were in the dark concerning this truth, which, however, was plainly revealed in Israel. "He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." The law of Moses was ordained by angels in his hands as a Mediator. God had manifested Himself many times in Israel in a way that was sufficient basis for their everlasting trust in Him. Horses and chariot of fire had taken Elijah from the earth in the presence of Elisha, who saw it. Elisha, besieged in Dothan, had comforted his young man with the assurance that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He had prayed "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see." "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." What were the Egyptian forces in comparison with these? Ah, but the men's eyes were not open to heaven's armies. Egypt was a visible and powerful ally. God was invisible, and angels' visits of increasing rarity with the increasing apostacy of Israel. Yet a great deliverance was pending, when the angel of the Lord would destroy Sennacherib's army, and convince the house of David that safety was from the Lord and not Egypt. But even then there was more calamity before them, for God said: "When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and *he that is holpen* shall fall down, and they all shall fall together." As a matter of history, so it came to pass. Both Egypt and Judah fell before Nebuchadnezzar.

At various times God has fought both for and against Zion. He fought for Zion when He destroyed Sennacherib's army, and against her when He overthrew the city by Nebuchadnezzar. He fought with fury against Jerusalem by the hands of the Romans,

who were the King's avenging armies against the murderers of His Son (Matt. xxii. 7). And He will yet fight with equal fury for Jerusalem when the time comes, of which this chapter in Isaiah speaks, to wrest Christ's city from the grasp of the Gentiles and establish therein the Kingdom of God. All this is very plainly revealed in the prophets, whose words, when admitted into men's minds and affections, shine as a light in a dark and squalid place (2 Pet. i. 19). But where the Gospel of the Kingdom does not penetrate, and it is supposed that it has to do not with Jerusalem, but with a city of bliss "beyond the skies," the words of the prophets are unintelligible. Some would make out that God says here that He will fight *against* Jerusalem (R.V. marg.). But this would be reversing the whole sentiment of the prophecy, which is the divine purpose to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrian over the head of the Egyptian ally of the house of Judah, both in the days of Hezekiah and in the days of Messiah for which we wait.

God's purpose to defend Jerusalem, both in Hezekiah's days and in the far distant future, was further expressed in the following beautiful simile: "As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it." "As birds flying"—or, as Rotherham quaintly but literally expresses it, "As little mother-birds hovering, so will Yahweh of Hosts throw a covering over Jerusalem." The poor of the people who trusted in Yahweh would be able to appreciate this figure, for they would be familiar with it in the law. "Yahweh found Jacob in a waste and howling wilderness. . . . As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. So Yahweh alone did lead him" (Deut. xxxii. 11). Ages later, a company of "the poor in spirit," brethren of the prophets who slept in dust, heard a greater than Isaiah reproving the leaders of Israel, his contemporaries, and lamenting over the city in these words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens

under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

In this saying of Christ's, the figure of Isaiah is illustrated, and beyond the desolation comes into view the final deliverance of which all the prophets have spoken. He will yet gather to Himself all Zion's children and defend Jerusalem. This is a prominent element of the gospel in the prophets and the New Testament Scriptures, and the ultimate solution of the Zionist question as affecting Jew and Gentile alike.

It is in view of this glorious consummation that the Spirit of God says to those of Hezekiah's day, who had ears to hear (and to all afterwards to whom Isaiah's words might appeal), "Turn ye to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which your own hands have made unto you for a sin." Whatever response was made to this appeal, and whatever escapes from impending national calamities may have been made in the days of Hezekiah and afterwards, it is certain that the full realisation of the matter lies in the future. It relates to that time of "the last days," of which the prophet speaks in chap. ii., when "Yahweh shall arise in the glory of his majesty to shake terribly the earth." Now is the time for believing Jew and Gentile to turn unto Yahweh in hope of redemption in Jerusalem. At present the response to the divine invitation is confined almost exclusively, so far as we can tell, to Gentiles. These are "the times of the Gentiles" in more ways than one--times of their dominion, and times of their participation in Israel's good things, almost to Israel's entire exclusion. But a change is near.

"Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword *not of man*; and the sword *not of men* shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem" (verses 8-9, R.V.).

This is an improvement upon the rendering of the A.V., which inserts the terms "mighty" and "mean" before "man" in v. 8, with the effect of obscuring the fact that it is a *divine and not human visitation* that is threatened upon the Assyrian. In a certain sense, this was so in Hezekiah's days, when the word of an angel was more powerful than the swords of 185,000 Assyrians. But this cannot be the full extent of the divine purpose, for, great as was that overthrow, the Assyrian did not fall then, but afterwards, and that by the sword of man, even the Babylonians. What, then, remains? Manifestly that the latter-day Assyrian shall fall by the sword of the Lord upon the mountains of Israel, as Ezekiel testifies (xxxviii., xxxix.). This great judgment of "the latter days" is explicitly declared to be of a superhuman character due to the "presence" of God, that is of the Lord Jesus and the saints. "I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And *I will plead against him* with pestilence and with blood; and *I will rain upon him*, and upon his bands and upon the many peoples that are with him an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." This is the divine specification of the character of the last great pre-millennial crisis in which "the Assyrian" finally falls before Israel. "Behold, it is come and it is done, saith the Lord God; THIS IS THE DAY WHEREOF I HAVE SPOKEN" (Ezek. xxxix. 8).

We have in the history of Joshua the typical example of the unequalled day when the Lord fought for Israel (Josh x. 14). The tempest of hailstones slew more than Israel did with the sword, and Israel himself was the Lord's sword upon the Amorite kings whose iniquity was now "full" (Gen. xv., with Josh x.). This is the example of the judgment of the day of Christ, who, as the second Joshua, shall bring in "glorious rest" and "eternal inheritance." In Joshua's days, the Amorite king of Jerusalem was one of those destroyed by him, and it is shown by the prophet (Zech. xiv.) that, in the crisis to come, a foreign king shall have taken Jerusalem and be destroyed by Christ. Senna-

cherib, in Hezekiah's days, was not suffered of God to come into the city; but the latter-day Assyrian will walk into the fire there (Isa. xxxi. 9), and be consumed in the furnace of God's wrath.

Translators seem loth to believe that "the sword not of man" was to subdue the Assyrian. The A.V. we have seen adds the qualifying words "mighty" and "mean," as though *some* human power, neither mighty nor mean, might destroy him. The Revised Version is faithful to the original. Young's literal translation is in this case not literal at all, but a mere paraphrase, thus:—

And fallen hath Asshur by the sword, not of the high,
Yea a sword—not of the low, doth consume him.

But there are no words for "high" or "low" in the text. It is *ish* and *adam* rightly enough translated "man" in harmony with the contrast between God and man, Spirit and flesh, that runs through the whole chapter. Rotherham follows the A.V., only substituting "great" for "mighty" in the first part of verse 8. The truth tells us at once that the Revised Version is right in sticking close to the very words of the Spirit; for it gives us many examples of "the sword, not of man" in which God overcame the power of the enemy, sometimes by an angel's whisper without the shaking of a blade; and at others by heaven's artillery of irresistible hail supplementing the feeble efforts of His people. And this latter the truth defines to be the form of "the sword, not of man" that is to come upon the Assyrian in the future.

The Revised Version also is to be preferred in the concluding verse (9) as above quoted. The Hebrew says "His rock shall pass away for fear," or "by reason of terror," as the R.V. puts it. The A.V., referring it to Sennacherib's ignominious retreat (ch. xxxvii. 37-8), says, "He shall pass over to his stronghold for fear." But while that is historically a true statement, it is not the form of the divine expression, and distracts attention from the future climax by suggesting that the prophecy is completely fulfilled already.

"His rock" is an ironical expression for the Assyrian god in whose name the king boasted against "the God of

Jerusalem." A contrast is involved between "his rock" and the Rock of Israel—*Tzoor Olammim*—the Rock of Ages—rendered "everlasting strength" in Isa. xxvi. 4. "He is the Rock. His work is perfect. . . . How should one (of you O Israel) chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except *their rock* had sold them, and Yahweh had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges" (Deut. xxxii. 4, 30-31).

Sennacherib's rock sold him, and Yahweh shut him up. Isaiah's faithful brethren would remember how Moses had spoken of the triumph of Israel in the "Rock of their salvation" over the false gods of the heathen.

But in Sennacherib's day, where was "the ENSIGN" spoken of by the prophet? The Assyrian was to be afraid of the ENSIGN. It has already been shown in Chapter xi., when dealing with Isa. xi. 10-12, that Christ is the Ensign, prefigured in the Yahweh Nissi memorial altar of Ex. xvii. 15, and in the serpent in the wilderness, which is divinely styled an ensign "lifted up" in prefiguration of the sacrifice that Jesus should make. It has been shown that when he returns and is "lifted up" in glory (Is. vi. 1) his people with him are "lifted up as an ensign upon his land" (Zech. ix. 16). He is the Rock of Israel, the manifestation of the Father in Israel in the Spirit as once he was in the flesh—the antitype of that smitten rock whose living waters kept Israel alive in the wilderness. "That Rock was Christ," says Paul. Before his face "his rock" (the latter-day Assyrian's phantom-god) shall pass away for fear. The armed hosts of Anti-Christendom contending in the name of "the Holy and Blessed Trinity," will be dumbfounded by the appearance in the Land of Jesus and the children of the resurrection. And after the judgment-storm by which they shall be devoured, he, with his associate princes, will be manifested as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" for the shelter and protection of the survivors of that oppressed and toilworn generation.



CHAPTER XXXII.

GOD'S KING, HIS PRINCES, AND HIS PEACE BASED UPON RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE Assyrian King having fallen by the sword of the Lord, and having been consumed in the fire of Tophet, the way is opened for the reign of ISRAEL'S KING in righteousness, along with the princes of his choice. This is the setting-up of Yahweh's ENSIGN, the blessed results of which are unfolded beforehand in Isaiah's vision of chapter xxxii.

The Gospel of the Kingdom leaves no trace of doubt as to the identity of the King and Princes in question, nor of the time, locality, and characteristics of their righteous reign. The Lord Jesus and his brethren are unquestionably the subjects of the prophetic vision, as proved by the testimony of angels, of the Father by audible voice from heaven, of Jesus himself in words and works of power, and of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven after his ascension, in attestation of the apostolic preaching of "this Gospel of the Kingdom."

He was "born King of the Jews," and the angel Gabriel declared that the Lord God would give him the throne of David for ever. He was crucified for maintaining the claim of his divine royalty, though he emphatically declared his Kingdom was not of this world (*kosmos*), but of a heavenly order hereafter to be revealed in Jerusalem.

He himself chose some of the "Princes" over whom he in turn is "Prince" (Rev. i. 5). He told these, his humble "fellows" in the days of his flesh, that in the regeneration they should reign over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix.). They are some of his "children" (so styled by him—Mar. x. 24; Matt. v. 9, 45) whom he will thus "make princes in all the earth" (Psa. xlv. 16). They in turn went forth, and called others to the Kingdom and glory of God; and the calling is not even yet

discontinued. Wherever the Gospel penetrates, it offers a princely inheritance with Christ in "his day," which is imminent.

"Righteousness" and "judgment" are revealed as the characteristics of Messiah's reign, in sharp distinction from the unrighteousness of the Kingdom of the World that it will suppress. The beauties of Isaiah's vision shine out the more conspicuously against the dreadful background constituted by the history of "the times of the Gentiles." It is an honourable, profitable, and delightful thing to trace out the substance in Christ.

First of all we note that it is Christ multitudinous who is the subject of the prophecy. When it says "A MAN" shall be thus and so, it means "a perfect man . . . the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," of which Paul speaks to the Ephesians when describing "the economy of the fulness of times" (Eph. iv. 13: ii. 10). This is the "one body," the Head and "many members" visible in Isaiah's prophecy as "King" and "Princes." And the term of the original is not *Adam* but *ish*, for this dominion is not of the earth but of One from heaven, who indeed once bore human nature. And the form of speech of the original draws attention to the participation in the one body of the many members in the glorious work described. So Young and Rotherham render it: "Each one hath been a hiding place," &c. This is true, for all the Princes partake in the work and glory of Christ, as he himself specially affirms with reference to one feature of this vision—"as rivers of water in a dry place." On the occasion of the feast of tabernacles (at the rejoicing over the drawing of water from the pool of Siloam), he said: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Perhaps it was to the Scripture we are considering that he referred, as well as to Isaiah xii. John explains that Jesus spoke "of the Spirit which they that believed on him should receive," which at once gives us in Isa. xxxii. the idea of an inspired and glorified King and princes.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." So said Jesus on the occasion under consideration. The living

water that was in his gift (John iv. 14) was the word of life (John vi. 63), which, believed and affectionately obeyed in him, will result in everlasting life by his approving bestowal of it upon the obedient in the day of the resurrection. And he will be revealed before all as "the Prince of Life" at his coming; and will be memorialised perpetually by the rivers of water that will flow down from the altar in the vicinity of his temple throne (Ezek. xlvii.). Isaiah's figure is in beautiful harmony with the other parts of the scriptures.

And "an hiding-place from the wind" is likewise a most expressive figure for Christ and his brethren. Winds of false doctrine drive about clouds of unstable people (Eph. iv. 14; Jude 12), and destroying winds of war and commotion desolate the earth, and are specially to desolate His land at last (Dan. vii. 2; Jer. iv. 12; Rev. vii. 1; Ezek. xxxviii. 9). And, if we come down from the greater to the less, literal wind and wave are subject to his omnipotent control in that day, much more than in the days of his flesh. In every way Christ, personal and multitudinous, is a hiding-place from the wind. No papal bulls, decrees of anti-Christian councils, or edicts of fanatical Kings, Sheiks, Mullahs, or potentates of any kind will be permitted to afflict mankind any more for 1,000 years; and after "the war of the great day of God Almighty," the storms of battle will be silenced for the age. Truly "the perfect man" will be in the earth, and especially in the Holy Land and City, "as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest."

"And as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Only those who have traversed "a weary land," and known the effect of a scorching sun in its shadeless wastes, can fully appreciate the figure. Christ is often spoken of as the Rock, antitypical of the smitten rock in the wilderness, whence flowed the water that kept Israel alive. The "sun scorching" he parabolically couples with "tribulation or persecution because of the word" (Matt. xiii.); a phenomenon with which his "friends" in all ages have been only too familiar. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." The world is "a weary land" to

Christ's "pilgrims." But think of the shelter when once he is in the earth again, and if it be a case of sweating endurance now, hold on!

Who are "the blind" and "the deaf" of this prophecy? And what are they to see and hear in Messiah's day? Isaiah himself supplies the answer. The leaders of Israel were in his day culpably "blind." They "closed their eyes" to the truth; and afterwards, in Jesus's day, presumed to declare their superior discernment in pronouncing him a sinner! (John ix. 24). This was when he had healed a blind man by anointing his eyes with clay, and sending him to wash in the pool of Siloam. In the controversy which arose upon this, Jesus declared he came into the world both to give sight and to *make blind*. And the Pharisees promptly asked, "Are we blind also"? The answer is striking: "If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." "There are none so blind as those who won't see." And none are louder in their profession of spiritual discernment. The world is full of such "blind," whose presumption is not bounded by the desire to "lead the blind," but extends even to the endeavour to direct those who can see. But there are many not so culpably blind, but from whom native ignorance and the pressure of evil circumstances shut out "the word," the entrance of which giveth light.

It is "*the word*" to which people are "blind" and "deaf." Hence, says Isaiah, "In that day shall the deaf hear THE WORDS OF THE BOOK, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity" (xxix. 18). It is the knowledge of God that is so lacking in the earth, and upon which such "rash" or "hasty" things are spoken, and in such "stammerings" in the Babel of Jewry and Christendom. Men are keen enough on matters of science, the arts, literature, and commerce; but on the true knowledge of God not one in ten thousand can speak intelligibly. No doubt such a statement seems madness; but if it be not true, why does Isaiah thus speak of the past and present, and of Messiah's day? Is it not true that "the vail is spread over all nations"? (Isa. xxv. 7). Was Christ misinformed by the Father when he proclaimed

“all nations deceived” by Romish “sorceries”? (Rev. xviii. 23). If we cannot discern that the world is “blind,” “deaf,” and “deceived” or “sorcerised,” it only proves that our point of view is not God’s, and that we ourselves are “of the world.” But many can discern the evil only too well, and for them the prospect of a truly intelligent, eloquent, discerning, humble, and obedient population is a ravishing picture for which they are content to labour and wait and die if need be.

The Nabals of the present evil world are to be deposed, that the antitypical David and Abigail may be delivered and enthroned. “Vile person” in this chapter is *nabal*, literally a fool—a vain and fading mortal, from the verb to wither or fade—contrast the evergreens of righteousness (Psa. i., &c.). And Nabal is the typical fool of the Old Testament Scriptures. And David and Christ are the typical “liberals.” See how David prepared for the temple, feted his people, and divided the spoil. And see how Christ, “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. viii. 9).

The particular villainy or folly that is to be remedied by the reign of Christ is defined here. It embraces “hypocrisy” and the “uttering of error against the Lord,” as well as the destruction of the poor with lying words. How far this will affect Church and State may be known when “the truth” as against “error” is brought to bear as a measure. How did the Jewish Church and Roman State treat Christ? Was there “hypocrisy” and “the uttering of error against the Lord”? We have only to recall his terrible denunciations to get the answer. And that Christendom is really as antagonistic and Anti-Christian is known to all who know the truth, and suspected by many who do not. What greater “error against the Lord” could there be than the doctrines of Anti-Christendom? What greater hypocrisy than the profession of the clergy from the Pope downwards? Here is the “Holy Father” of Christendom usurping the very name of God, and proclaiming that dead men and women are either in heaven or purgatory; and if in the latter, that he has the power to liberate them for a consideration in cash, and send them to the realms of the blest, apart from resurrection and judgment altogether!

And all Protest and Dissent is merely a variation of the same doctrines. And all this is associated with a merciless and churlish system of grinding the faces of the poor to enrich a class of Nabals who would grasp the whole earth if they could. Is it to be wondered at, that revolutions are threatening with increasing gravity in the opening of the twentieth century? There is no hope in man. Join the side of "the liberal," and wait for the King. This is the only enlightened policy in the crisis.

But from the standpoint of Isaiah, as he looked forward by the Spirit 700 years before Christ, there was yet a very long period of desolation for the careless daughters of Zion before the reign of righteousness, judgment, and true enlightenment of which he had just spoken. Hence the challenge of the last half of this chapter. Many overthrows of the city for the carelessness of its people have intervened between that day and this, and still the day of Christ has not dawned. But it will come. The limitation of the desolation is here defined in the Authorised Version by the singular conjunction of terms "for ever . . . until" (verses 14-15).

"The palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever (*adolam*), a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks, *until* the spirit be poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

With reference to the forsaking and desolation of the city and palaces, Jesus himself makes a similar limitation. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth *until* the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke xiii. 35). "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles *until* the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (xxi. 24). The "for ever" of Isa. xxxii. 14 is therefore terminable by the expiration of these "times." This is not the only place in the scriptures where "for ever" expresses limited duration.

But the outpouring of the spirit at the end of the times of the Gentiles has already been assured by the earnest of the outpouring on the day of Pentecost succeeding the resurrection of Jesus. And, although no literal horticultural revolution followed,

there was, in another sense, a great transformation of "wilderness" into "fruitful field;" so that an apostle said to some who had been transformed, "Ye are God's husbandry," or "fruitful field," in which Paul and Apollos planted and watered, and God gave the increase (1 Cor. iii.). But the Jews did not discern the paradisaical character of this planting any more than they discerned "the true Vine" in Jesus. They esteemed it "a forest." A paradise is a park or garden enclosure, with fruit trees and ornamental timber and shrubs. A forest (*yaar*) is an open, unprotected, uncultivated growth of trees and thickets, thorns and briars. The case was exactly the reverse of the Jewish estimate of Christ's day. *They* were the "forest," the "briars and thorns" as against "the true Vine" and the branches. They were plants which the Father had not planted, and therefore were to be "rooted up," as Jesus told his disciples. Jewish life was spiritually a wilderness, and Jesus arose in it as a plant out of dry ground (Jer. xii. 10; Isa. liii. 2). It was like Christendom is now in the sight of God (Rev. xvii. 3), a "wilderness" of wild beasts, considered a paradise only by themselves.

Judgment came upon the Jewish wilderness and forest, and so it will on that of the Gentiles, as the last-named chapter of Revelations elaborately specifies. As the result of the Lamb's overcoming the confederated kings, who are the same group of powers pictured in the prophets under the names of "the Assyrian," "Gog and all his bands," &c., judgment is implanted in the wilderness and righteousness remains in the fruitful field (v. 16). "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." What the nations so ardently desire, and so vainly endeavour to secure on the basis of *unrighteousness*, God has thus provided, and will enforce on the world against its will.

And in that day God's people are to dwell peaceably and secure, and verses 18-19 convey the idea of shelter from the storm of the transition time, when the kingdoms of men are being broken up to make room for the Kingdom of God, "When it shall hail, coming down on the forest, and the city shall be low in a low place." What city is this? There are only two cities

visible in these great prophetic pictures of the ages—Jerusalem and her Rival. In Isaiah's days it was Babylon that was "the city of the terrible ones." In Christ's day it was Rome, which abides to this day, the self-styled "Eternal City," divinely named "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." There is no eternity for this city. That is reserved for the new Jerusalem. The Rival City is to be "low in a low place"; or, as Rotherham prefers to put it: "In a sunken place shall the city sink." This is what Isaiah had previously revealed in Jerusalem's song of triumph in the day of the resurrection (ch. xxvi.): "The lofty city He layeth it low! He layeth it low, even to the ground; He bringeth it to the dust!" How low Rome, architecturally or topographically speaking, is to descend, is illustrated by the fates of Sodom and Babylon, and by the stone like a great millstone that the mighty angel cast into the sea (Rev. xviii. 21). The armed hosts of "the great city" fall on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix.) before the hail and fire and brimstone, and the city itself falls into the volcanic abyss over which it stands. Who would belong to such a municipality, when the freedom of Zion is offered by God in Christ?

In view of the survival of Zion and her children, the prophet exclaims, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." We are at no loss to appreciate these beautiful figures. Christ and the apostles illustrate them to the full. Christ is the great Sower, and his "precious seed" is "the word of the kingdom;" which, germinating in good and honest hearts, in the field, which is the world, develops seed again as "the children of the kingdom." And, to follow out his parable, "the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels." Now is the sowing time. What are we doing? Sowing wheat or tares? Preparing for glory or consumption? None can answer for us. Let us examine ourselves, and having respect for the promises and commandments of God in Christ, labour patiently on the side of the "blessed."



CHAPTER XXXIII.

WOE TO THE SPOILER—THE LORD EXALTED.

HAVING drawn a glorious picture of Messiah's kingdom, Isaiah turns and apostrophises the spoiler, prays to God as His waiting servant, and further depicts the judgment to come, resulting at last in Zion being "a quiet habitation," wherein is seen the King in his beauty, in the midst of those who, having been forgiven their iniquity, have no more need to say, "I am sick."

The spoiler most closely related to Isaiah's and Hezekiah's times was the Assyrian, whose operations under Sennacherib threatened the overturn of the Kingdom of David, in the names of the gods of Assyria as against "the God of Jerusalem." But, as Isaiah by the Spirit spoke and wrote for all ages and generations of the future, as well as for his own, we are warranted in regarding Sennacherib's invasion, the pointed "controversy of Zion" of his days, and the angelic smiting of his army, as a type of the greater invasion, the greater controversy, and the much greater overthrow of *the Assyrian of the latter days*.

The Assyrian in Sennacherib's day "ceased to spoil," and was spoiled, when his army was decimated, and Israel appropriated its substance. Afterwards Babylon "ceased to spoil," and was spoiled by the Medes and Persians, whose leader, Cyrus, was a type of Christ. And of modern Babylon, which has spoiled the saints and the Jews for centuries, it is written: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity." "Reward her, even as she rewarded you." "Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xiii. 10: xviii. 6, 20). This is connected with the "war of the Lamb" (xvii. 14), and is related to the

operations of the Northern Spoiler on the Mountains of Israel (Ezek. xxxviii.), which are the immediate cause of the revelation of the Lord at the seat of war as the manifestation of the Father's "presence" (v. 20). When Gog and his hosts "cease to spoil" they become a spoil, their hosts are given to the birds and beasts as Yahweh's "sacrifice," their bones are buried, and their weapons burned, and Israel "shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxxix. 10). This will be a quietus to the "Jewish Question."

From the foregoing and similar scriptures, it is evident that Isaiah's picture of the ultimate fate of the spoilers includes the crisis of the latter days. So also does his prayer breathe the spirit of his brethren of the latter days:—"O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." It is a test of the truth that it brings a man into sympathy with the prophets and apostles. The theologies of Christendom do not so. They deceive people as to their true estate, and delude them with false hopes, and therefore prevent them from waiting for Christ in the spirit of the prophets.

It is this "tumult" and "scattering of nations" that Isaiah sees by the spirit in this place (verse 3). Yahweh arises to take the spoil of the "peoples" and "nations." This idea is not to be "endured" in the congregations of Christendom, but is rejected as a grossly carnal doctrine. They seem to forget, though they profess to believe, that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," and that He has expressly given it all into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ for distribution to his friends at his discretion. They are forward to remember, in a certain way, his sufferings and shame as depicted in Isa. liii., but when the Spirit, in the same place, says: "*Therefore* I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; *because* he hath poured out his soul unto death," they will not believe. But the unbelief of Christendom will not make the promise of God of none effect. Christ will avenge his people, and take the spoil of the nations just as surely as he suffered

death, and as surely as his people have been spoiled among the nations.

It would be encouraging to Hezekiah, in the presence of the Assyrian threatenings, to be assured that God would "fill Zion with righteousness and judgment," and that "wisdom and knowledge should be the stability of *her times*, even the strength of salvation." Expositors who cannot see much beyond Isaiah's immediate surroundings seem to endeavour to exhaust the matter by referring it to Sennacherib and his operations. The "valiant ones who cry without, and the ambassadors of peace who weep bitterly," are to them Hezekiah's messengers reproached and insulted by the Assyrian. The "everlasting burnings" they regard as the Assyrians' destruction of the cities and villages of Judah.

But while we may admit the application of the prophecy to those times proximately and as a type, we can by no means admit that it is therein exhausted, for Zion remains downtrodden by the Gentiles, and wisdom and knowledge are conspicuously absent. In a word, Christ is absent, and David's throne and kingdom are in the dust. For the prophecy to be fulfilled, it is evident to anyone who knows the gospel of the kingdom, that Christ must return from heaven and re-establish the throne and kingdom of David, according to God's everlasting covenant with David (2 Sam. vii.) This is the great crisis in which Yahweh "rises and is exalted" (verse 10), and in which the "everlasting burnings" are kindled that are prepared "for the devil and for his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). At that time there will be many valiant ones that will "cry without," and many ambassadors of peace who will "weep bitterly." A connection is visible in this prophecy between the fate of "the sinners in Zion" and the external enemies of God. Both are alike obnoxious to the consuming fire of His indignation, and "our God is a consuming fire."

Jesus associates the fate of disobedient professors with that of the external enemy, in the passage already quoted (Matt. xxv.). On another occasion, when he was in Jerusalem, in reply to a question, "Are there few that be saved?" he spoke these words: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you,

will seek to enter in and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is *risen up* (compare Isa. xxxiii. 10), and ye begin to *stand without*, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be *weeping and wailing*, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves *thrust out*" (Luke xiii.).

The "crying without," of which Isaiah speaks, has likewise reference to Jerusalem; to which "the Kingdom of God," of which Jesus spoke in the above passage, is to come. There are those who are citizens of Zion, and those who "are without," many of whom vehemently protest that they are within, the distinction between "within" and "without" having been lost in Christendom. At the crisis of which Isaiah speaks, the outsiders take the city, and for a while appear to have the best of the argument. But the Lord makes good his claim by the execution of judgments written, and they are expelled and consumed, and he enthroned, with his friends. And in the ensuing judgments, "the winepress is trodden without the city" (Rev. xiv. 20), which then becomes "a quiet habitation," as God has decreed.

We perceive that there is thus a blending of the literal and metaphorical in the prophets, without in any way introducing confusion. Jerusalem is at once a literal city, and metaphorically "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. xxi. 9). And so there are at the crisis of Christ's arising to Judgment, literal enemies "without" the city walls, and dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars "without" the gates of the mystical city which represents the community of the redeemed. To this community belongs the literal city of God's choice when the Lord inherits Judah, his portion in the Holy Land, and chooses Jerusalem again (Zech. ii. 12). Thus we see the due relation of the literal and figurative in the word.

The conceptions of the Powers of Christendom of the latter days, and their schemes for the disposal of Jerusalem, and for the establishment of universal empire, are described by God as "chaff," and "stubble," and the peoples as "the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up (to be) burned in the fire" (verse 12). And in view of this consumption the Spirit says: "Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done, and ye that are near acknowledge my might." And the question is asked, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" And the answer is, "He that walketh righteously," &c.

One of the features of the covenant that God made with David was that the sons of Belial should be all of them "as thorns thrust away," though they could not be abolished by human hands. But the man that should touch them should be pierced with a spear, and they should be utterly burned with fire in the same place (2 Sam. xxiii.). Isaiah had already spoken of this burning of thorns — whether the sons of Belial were of Jewish or foreign origin according to the flesh (vii. 24 : ix. 18 : x. 17 : xxx. 33). The apostle Paul also uses the same figure (Heb. vi. 8), where he speaks of apostates as thorns and briars, "whose end is to be burned."

Much fearful nonsense has been preached over the expression "everlasting burnings." The preachers have gone wrong upon the character of the burning; its locality; the time of its manifestation; its fuel and its duration. They have expatiated on the gruesome horrors of a "dreadful hell with everlasting pains," whose flames gave no light. Where this might be none of them can say; nor when it began to burn, if it ever did begin; only they are quite sure it will never end! They say the immortal souls of the condemned are the subjects of the fire, though they do not attempt to explain how immaterial "souls" can be hurt by material flames.

Against all their dismal fables the truth declares plainly the nature of the burning, its locality, the time of its kindling, the objects of its consumption, and the limitation of the punishment inflicted.

First then the burnings of "*olam*," or the age to come, are to consume the Lord's enemies — "the peoples," "the thorns" who rise up against him. These are very material foes, and their enmity of a very material kind. We see it as we look at Christ nailed to the cross, or at the blazing faggots that have consumed so many of his friends. When, therefore, we hear the mandate: "Reward her even as she rewarded you," we can gauge the experiences of the enemies of the Lord in time to come. We know what happened at the siege of Jerusalem, when the crucifiers of Jesus became the crucified all round the city till the wood gave out for the crosses. Thus God "destroyed those murderers and *burned up their city*."

Thus even in that day "Yahweh's fire was in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem" (Isa. xxxi. 9). And this is the centre of the everlasting burnings spoken of for the future, when the Assyrian falls but not by the sword of man. Another siege and fire and brimstone of war pass over the city, and over the mountains of Israel at large. At a certain crisis, the rejected professors of Christ's name are dismissed from his presence to become fugitives and vagabonds in the earth like Cain, among the wars and fightings of that terrible time. In his picture of the judgment seat (Matt. xxv.), Jesus alludes to this, using the very expression of Isaiah (xxxiii. 14), for the "everlasting burnings" of the prophecy are the same as the "everlasting fire" of Christ's speech, and the objects of consumption the same in both cases. "The peoples," "the thorns *cut up*," "the devil and his angels," are all parallel expressions, and relate to those obnoxious to God's fiery judgments "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory" to cause the blessed to "inherit the kingdom prepared for them." The kingdom is to be on earth, in Palestine, in Jerusalem. And there will be the "everlasting burnings."

But it must not be supposed that by this is meant that the fiery consumption is to be restricted to the land of Israel. Far from it, "for by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with *all flesh*, and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isa. lxvi. 16). Fire and brimstone torment is prepared for the worshippers of the beast "in the presence of the holy angels and in

the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. xiv. 9-11). If any in the European countries reject the warning proclaimed from Zion, war, pestilence, and tempest will be their portion till they are consumed. And as regards the future worship in Zion, when all flesh comes to worship before God, it is written: "They shall go forth and look upon the *carcasses* of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Is. lxvi. 24). It is from this last passage that Jesus takes the language recorded in Mark ix., when he forewarns his disciples of the fate of offenders in the fire of Gehenna. Gehenna fire consumed "carcasses" outside Jerusalem. It did so in Christ's day and in the siege of Jerusalem, and will do so again when Christ returns.

But the "carcase" of an individual having been consumed, the burning has ceased with regard to him, though many others follow him. But the individual transgressor's fate is inevitable; and because fresh fuel is always coming, and, during the remainder of the age of sin and death, fresh carcasses are always becoming food for the worm and the flame, we have the expression, "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." But a time is decreed of God when there shall be no more fiery consumption, sin and death having been abolished. "The *last enemy* that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. xv. 26). Hence an everlasting hell of deathless souls is a fiction. In fact, it is said that "death and hell (hades) were cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 14). That is to say, in the post-millennial crisis of the distant future, after the last resurrection and judgment, the remainder of the rejected—the sons of death and the grave—will be finally swallowed up of "the second death." And then, it is added: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). "There shall be no more curse" (xxii. 3). When there is "no more curse," the burning of *olam*, or "everlasting fire," is a thing of the past.

That the righteous are *among* these “everlasting burnings,” though unconsumed by them, is evident from the prophet’s question, and quite out of keeping with popular superstition. “Who among us *shall dwell* with the devouring fire? Who among us *shall dwell* with everlasting burnings?” That is, who shall abide the fiery trial, and be counted worthy to ascend Zion’s holy hill? The verb in the original is the same as that translated “abide” in Psalm xv., where these questions are asked and a similar answer given to that of the prophet. “He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil. *He shall dwell on high.*”

Under the law of Moses the spoil of the Midianites was purified: “Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless, it shall be purified with the water of separation” (Num. xxxi. 23). This was not merely a hygienic process, but was a shadow of the purification of human vessels unto God’s service. So it is written of Jacob (Isa. xliii. 2, 4). “When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned. . . . Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable.” This, of course, refers to the elect, for the mere fleshly descendants of Abraham, unsubdued by the gospel, are neither precious nor honourable in God’s sight, either individually or nationally, save that He will not destroy the nation for His great name’s sake.

Then again, Paul, in 1 Cor. iii., under the figure of a house, speaks of men and their building in God’s house abiding the fire, or being destroyed by it, after the literal example of gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. The gold, silver and gems are God’s jewels, who abide the fire, when “the day cometh that shall burn as an oven,” and the wicked are reduced to “ashes.” The wicked are the “wood, hay, and stubble” of the situation, whose consumption shall, as Malachi says (ch. iv.), “leave them neither root nor branch.” “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers soap” (Mal. iii. 2). These

scriptures sufficiently illustrate the question of Isaiah in ch. xxxiii. 14, which has been so strangely perverted in certain quarters.

So when the "everlasting burnings" consume the "sinners" and "hypocrites," the true children of Zion "dwell on high," and "behold the king in his beauty"—"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty, they shall behold the land of far distances." In the absence of the King, and during the times of the Gentiles, his saints and his nation are exiled from Palestine. It is to them "the land of far distances," to which, however, from the various points of their sojourning, their hearts and eyes turn longingly, as did Daniel's in Babylon. When the Lord arises to take his inheritance, they are invited to "Come and see."

And then, "thine heart shall meditate terror," says Isaiah by the spirit. That is to say, the terrors of the King and his people will fall upon the world as did the terror of Joshua and Israel upon Jericho of old, as Rahab testified to the two spies (Josh ii.). The King girds his sword upon his thigh, and rides forth in majesty on behalf of the truth, meekness, and righteousness; and his right hand accomplishes "terrible things;" and his arrows are sharp in the hearts of the enemy. Such is the picture of Psalm xlv.

And then, truly, "Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where is he that counted the towers?" It was a question that Paul asked in his day, with reference to the logical position of adverse philosophers, scribes, and disputers (1 Cor. i. 20). But, though powerless before the apostle as to argument, they were potent enough for persecution, and at last took his life. But when the Lord arises to judgment where are they all? The day of the subjection of prophets and apostles, and the friends of Christ in general to Greek and Roman barbarians will have passed away. "Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue that thou canst not understand" (verse 19). Israel has had much of that experience. Moses told them they would, and it has come true (Deut. xxviii. 49, 50). Assyrian, Babylonian, Roman, and other "fierce people" have desolated them. The Lord himself was crucified under an

inscription in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. And his saints and the Jews have been tormented among the "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" of so-called Christendom ever since the civilised world took his name in vain. But when he comes there is an end to all that.

Christendom at present is exercising itself among other things over the question, Which of the "tongues" of Babel shall attain the distinction of becoming the universal language? If Isaiah were believed they would not need to ask it. God who confounded tongues at Babel of old, and bestowed the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, has decreed that tongues "shall cease" (1 Cor. xiii. 8) through the operations of His providence in a Hebrew kingdom. And the preservation, and rise of the Hebrew tongue (which has actually displaced Latin in a University course in England), is an earnest that His promises will be fulfilled. Zion's times will bring Zion's language, which the Lord Jesus spoke to Paul on the plain near Damascus (Acts xxvi. 14), and which is referred to more than once in the book of Revelation (ix. 11: xvi. 16).

The prophecy goes on: "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities ("set feasts" R.V. marg.): thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken" (verse 20). There are many scriptures which thus appeal to "the children of Zion." Psalm xlvi., speaking of the same time, says, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." In these palaces are held the "solemnities," or "set feasts," of which Isaiah speaks. (Compare Ezekiel xlv. 17: xlv. 9-11). "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. O Judah, *keep thy solemn feasts*, perform thy vows, for the wicked shall *no more pass through thee*; he is utterly cut off" (Nahum i. 15). This is the similar picture of a prophet contemporary with Isaiah.

Among the Jews of the present day the tendency is to deny the restoration of sacrifice in the solemn feasts, even where faith in

any restoration at all survives. While as to Christendom, the idea is scouted as mere Judaising fanaticism. Perhaps the best comment on this, is the fate of the incredulous lord in Samaria in Elisha's day, who was caused to see the miraculous deliverance of the city, but not permitted to taste of it, but was trodden to death in the gate (2 Kings vii.). "According to your faith be it unto you" is Christ's principle. The present generation has no faith in these divine promises, and therefore few indeed will participate in them.

It will be a new experience indeed for Jerusalem to be "a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." No city has such a record of disquietude and takings down. So terrible have been her multiplied overthrows that in many places about 80 feet of rubbish bury the original rock foundations. This again brings to mind the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the city shall be built again upon her own heap (*tell*—mound of ruins), and that "the palace shall remain after the manner thereof" (Jer. xxx. 18). Even "the valley of the dead bodies" is to be "holy unto the Lord for ever" (xxx. 40). The fate of the mystical "holy city," or body of Christ, has been like that of the literal. It has been trodden under foot of the Gentiles for an appointed time, now expired (Rev. xi. 2). The day of its establishment and vindication is dawning.

That there is this blending of the literal and figurative in Isaiah's prophecy in this place, is apparent from the concluding verses of chapter xxxiii. "There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars; neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king—he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided, the lame take the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

It will not seem incongruous to us to read of Yahweh being "unto us a place of broad rivers and streams" when we remember the figure that Isaiah uses to represent "the King of Assyria and all his glory." This he styles "the waters of the river strong

and many," which overflowed Israel and Judah, filling Immanuel's land (ch. viii.). Substitute for these "the waters of Shiloah," *the King of Israel and all His glory*, and we perceive the meaning of this beautiful figure. There will be literal rivers flowing down from the altar in the place of Yahweh's throne (Ezek. xlvi.), but these are another element in the situation, and are in turn a visible representation of the body of Christ out of which the water of life flows (John vii. 38; Rev. xxii. 1-2). Like the laver and the brazen sea of old, they will point to a substance other and higher than themselves.

When Yahweh reigns and is clothed with majesty, it is said that He "on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psa. xciii.). Here the "many waters" are the hosts of the enemy. But in another place (Rev. xix. 6), they are symbolic in their "voice" of the "great multitude" of the redeemed. On these waters passes "no galley with oars." That is to say, the one body is not subject to any military or clerical exploitation. There is nothing in their case answering at all to the dreadful figure of the body politic of "Christendom"—"the waters . . . where the whore sitteth" (Rev. xvii.). These "waters" are navigated by "galleys" and "gallant ships" of all sorts, whose cargoes are specified in Rev. xviii. Rome's "merchandise" will not be borne on Yahweh's "waters." The saints in the days of their flesh will have seen enough of that.

As to the literal waters that flow down from the temple to the Dead Sea, it does not at all appear that they will be navigable. Their course will be short, steep, and swift. True, there are to be great physical changes in the Land (Zech. xiv. 4-5); but it is evident from Ezek. xlvi. 11, that the Dead Sea level is not to be materially altered; and it is also evident that Jerusalem is still further to be elevated (Ezek. xl. 2: xliii. 12). This necessitates the conclusion stated.

As to the shipping of the "waters" of "Babylon the Great," its fate is wreckage. Literally at this crisis "the day of the Lord is upon all the ships of Tarshish" (Isa. ii.). He breaks the ships of Tarshish with an east wind (Psa.

xlvi.iii.): and mystically the shipping of Babylon is unable to weather the storm of Yahweh's indignation, and becomes "a prey" to those upon whom it had preyed in past times. The shipmen of mystical Tyre likewise in the latter days bring the British "ship of state" into "great waters," where it is "broken in the midst of the seas" in the day when Yahweh shall gather the house of Israel from among the heathen, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen (Ezek. xxvii. 26: xxviii. 25). However carefully they steer, the Powers are in full drift to total wreckage on the mountains of Israel that they may become a spoil for Christ and his brethren—"them that dwell before the Lord"—the people that are healed from their sicknesses, having been "forgiven their iniquity."





CHAPTER XXXIV.

YAHWEH'S SWORD UPON EDMOM—"THE YEAR OF RECOMPENCES FOR THE CONTROVERSY OF ZION."

A STRIKING series of contrasts is placed before the brethren of the prophets in that section of Isaiah's writings which ends with chapter xxxv. Chapter xxxiv. introduces Edom. The prophet turns from the Northern "spoiler" of chapter xxxiii. to the Southern rival and related power of Edom. He had been all along saying, as it were, "Woe to Israel's enemies—They shall perish, but Israel shall endure."

Thus, in ch. xxiii., it was Woe to Tyre. She should fall, and her substance be appropriated by the Lord's people when they should reign in Zion. So also it was Woe to Ephraim (ch. xxviii.), and even to "Ariel, the city where David dwelt" (xxix.) till Jacob should turn again to God. Then it was Woe to Egypt, in whom the house of Israel foolishly trusted (xxx.-xxxi.). They should fall; but in Israel a King should at last "reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment" (xxxv.). Then, Woe to the Spoiler of the latter days (xxxiii.), when the "everlasting burnings" should be kindled. He should become a spoil; but Zion and her children should "abide." And now it is Woe to Edom (xxxiv.). It shall be desolate in the "day of vengeance and year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." But *Zion's* wilderness shall blossom abundantly (xxxv.), and the ransomed of the Lord at last return in triumph to her.

Written for all time by the Spirit of God in the prophet, these things at once excite our highest admiration and praise, and shed light upon our times, assuring us that the Lord has not forsaken the earth, and encouraging us to wait for His Kingdom in patient well-doing.

The opening of this chapter is an emphatic challenge of wide-reaching application, that at once tells us that we must not limit the matter to the times of Isaiah or a century or two later, nor to the few hundred square miles of territory that properly belonged to Edom in his days. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken ye people: let the earth hear and all that is therein; the world and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of Yahweh is upon *all nations*, and his fury upon *all their armies*: he hath utterly devoted them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter."

Psalm xlix. contains an illustration of a similar proclamation in its opening verses, and the matter of its setting to music is one upon which "all people" sadly need enlightenment. Moses' song, Deut. xxxii., is another instance, where, although he at first appeals to the "heavens and earth" of Israel, he at last turns to the nations saying, "Rejoice, O ye nations with his people"; which Paul in Rom. xv. applies to the bringing in of the Gentiles to the Kingdom of God. Isaiah likewise speaks of this in ch. xi., as Paul also shows in Rom. xv. But here in chap. xxxiv. his "message" to Edom covers the preliminary judgments on the nations before the Kingdom of God is established.

"The indignation of Yahweh" is a phrase of terrible import, and shows that He is not regardless of the operations of "all nations." It is true that He knows them not as He knows Israel (Amos iii.), but since His word has been sent abroad among them by the ministry of the apostles, they have had a degree of responsibility thereby that did not attach to them before. Moreover they have persecuted His saints and His nation; and He has sworn to avenge them both. We shall see how this is connected with the enmity and the fate of Edom.

The highly figurative language in which the judgments to come are introduced is intelligible enough to those versed in the scriptures. "The host of heaven dissolved," "heavens rolled together as a scroll," falling stars, "sword bathed in heaven"—all these expressions find ample illustration in Bible symbolism elsewhere, where the historical outworking of the judgment is unquestionable. And even here the context itself prevents the

possibility of mistake, for the parallelism of verse 5 runs thus :—

My sword shall be bathed in heaven :
Behold it shall come down upon Edom,
And upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

Here the "heaven" is "Edom," the "people of the curse." A sword in Mars or Jupiter would not affect these at all. The heavens and earth of Israel to which Moses, as we have said, referred (Deut. xxxii.), were similarly to be the subjects of the sword, fire, pestilence, and famine (verses 22-25). So also the Babylonian constellations and sun and moon were to be darkened in the "day of the Lord" upon Babylon, as Isaiah had declared (ch. xiv.). Jesus likewise associated the coming desolation of the Land of Israel, with similar darkening of sun and moon, and falling of stars; "and," he says, "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. xxiv. 29). Peter, when this catastrophe was imminent, likewise reproduced the language of the prophets (2 Pet. iii. 10-13), adding, in view of the passing away of the Mosaic order of things:—"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Those for whom he wrote would know well where that promise was, and what it meant—namely, that Christ should return, and "Jerusalem become a rejoicing and her people a joy" (Isa. lxv.).

The Lord Jesus has, in the Revelation (chs. vi. 12-17: xii.), similarly revealed the judgments by which the Pagan order of the Roman Empire was done away to make room for the new order of Antichristendom, in which his real friends, "which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," are represented by a fugitive and persecuted woman pursued by "the serpent," and warred against by "the dragon." These references will illustrate the language of Isaiah xxxiv. Upon close study it will be perceived that its exact terms are reproduced in many of them. Then again, in Heb. i., Paul shows by quoting from Isaiah and the Psalms, that Messiah was to abolish the heavens and earth that were obnoxious to God's judgment, and change them as a vesture, that his own heavenly order might remain.

But why in this prophecy of Isaiah should such universal "indignation" and "fury" be associated with Edom? Why and when this great sacrifice in Bozrah, and slaughter in the land of Edom? (The Revised Version, in Isa. xxxiv., and Ezek. xxxv., xxxvi., rightly reads "Edom" and not "Idumea," which latter form, in the A.V., tends to obscure the prophecy.)

The true answers to these questions are only to be arrived at from a study of the divinely-revealed history of Edom, and of the purpose of God from the beginning as so strikingly announced therein.

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON ESAU AND EDM.

Edom, like all the other names of the early makers of human history in the directly divinely-controlled line, is a typical name, and was applied to the twin-brother of Jacob under peculiar circumstances. It is a monument to the prevision and purpose of God, as Paul forcibly argues in Rom. ix.—one of those notorious developments in human affairs that can be ignored, but not effaced, and against which the shafts of a sceptical criticism must ever be broken.

In Edom or Esau, and Jacob, we see perpetuated the division of *the two seeds* that was ordained of God in the days of Adam and Eve (Gen. iii. 15): "Thy seed (O serpent), and her seed" (the woman's). Then came the Cainite and Sethite lines (Gen. iv., v.). At the Flood, a remnant only of the Sethites was saved, and "the world of the ungodly" perished. Then came the Shemites on the one side (that of the blessing—Gen. ix. 26), and the descendants of Ham and Japheth on the other. Then, in the Shemite line, came the call of Abraham, which separated him from the idolatrous apostates of Chaldea; and made another division. Then, even in Abraham's line, Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, was rejected, that "in Isaac," the child of promise, might his seed be called. Finally, "when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—(for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth)—it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it

is written (in Malachi, about 1,600 years after the birth of the children) : Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. ix. 10-13).

The circumstances attending the birth of Esau and Jacob are recorded in Gen. xxv. Esau was red from birth, and hairy; but the name Edom (red) was bestowed upon him not merely because of the characteristics that were his by birth, but because of the character he afterwards manifested in profanely selling his birth-right. He came in from the field faint, and, setting longing eyes on Jacob's lentil pottage, exclaimed, "Feed me with that red, that red (pottage) (*adom*), . . . therefore was his name called Edom."

The genealogy and habitation of Edom and his descendants are given in Gen. xxxvi., Mount Seir being there defined as his dwelling place. By a remarkable coincidence, the very country harmonised in its colour and roughness with the character of Edom. Its ruddy sandstone is said to contrast remarkably with the white limestone of most of the hills of Jacob's inheritance. And Mount Seir by name is "the rough mountain" —the word Seir being in the original only a different pointing of the word translated hairy. So in a rough, red, mountainous land dwelt the rough and ruddy Edom or Esau, who thought more of hunting and sport than of birthrights or divine promises, and became a type for all subsequent ages of those who prefer profane things to patient continuance in well-doing in the way of God's commandments.

The boundaries of Edom are nowhere plainly specified in any passage in the scriptures, but are deducible from many scattered allusions. This is ably done by Conder, of the Palestine Exploration Fund, in a brief but very thorough article in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. It is interesting to see such thorough British knowledge of a country with which Britain is hereafter to have so much to do. The general result of scriptural investigation is to show that Edom lay to the East of the Arabah, or valley that runs from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah, in the Red Sea. Its northern boundary appears to have been the river Arnon, and its

southern the sea, while its eastern extension was indefinite. From Deut. ii. 8 and Judges xi. 18, which refer to the circuit that Israel made round Edom in the days of the Exodus, it appears that the Arabah was not reckoned in Edom. Mount Hor is said to be in the border of Edom (Num. xx. 23: xxxiii. 37), and Kadesh Barnea is described (Num. xx. 16), as "a city in the uttermost parts" of Edom's border. Elath and Ezion Geber were the ports of Edom (Deut. ii. 8; 1 Kings ix. 26), whence (from the latter) Solomon's navy went to Ophir. The water has apparently receded many miles since those days, as is also the case in the Gulf of Suez.

It may be remarked here that the Arabah is divided by a watershed, south of Petra, which is some 650 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. From this the waters descend northwards nearly 2,000 feet to the Dead Sea, which is 1,292 feet below the Mediterranean; while to the South they of course run into the Gulf of Akabah. Mount Hor is about 3,000 feet above the Mediterranean, and the Edom hills were visible, as Josephus tells us, from the tower of Psephinus in Jerusalem, where Titus pitched his tent (Wars, v. 4, §3). A magnificent prospect is now obtained from the top of the Russian tower on the Mount of Olives.

Bozrah, of which such fearful things are written in Isaiah, was the capital of Edom in his days and long before (Gen. xxxvi. 33). After lying forgotten for many centuries, it was rediscovered by Burckhardt early in the 19th century. It is identified with "Buseirah on the plateau of Mount Seir, about 25 miles south of Kerak in Moab." There is another Bozrah once mentioned in the scriptures (Jer. xlviii. 24), a city of Moab, probably the same as Bezer in the tribe of Reuben, the city of refuge (Deut. iv. 43; Josh. xx. 8). This is not to be confounded with Edom's capital, which is the subject of the prophecies by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos.

In later times Edom extended his border, so that in the Greek and Roman periods the "Idumea" of the references of the book of Maccabees and Josephus is of much wider extent than Edom of old. Hebron, in the days of Judas Maccabeus, was

an Idumean city, smitten by him when he "fought against the children of Esau" (1 Macc. v. 65). Josephus speaks of the lot of Simeon as including part of Idumea (Ant., v. 1, § 22), which shows that in his days Idumea stretched further westward than ancient Edom, for it was a special divine declaration that not a foot breadth of Esau's land was to be given to Israel (Deut. ii. 5).

This brings us to the question of the history of Edom from the days of the Exodus and onward. When Yahweh became Israel's salvation in the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, Moses in his song of thanksgiving made mention of the amazement that would seize the dukes of Edom at the prowess of the seed of Jacob (Ex. xv. 15). Towards the end of the sojourn in the wilderness, Israel came to "the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh," and requested permission to pass through Edom. This being refused, they made a circuit by the way of Mount Hor, where Aaron died, and Israel then passed round Edom on the East (Num. xx.).

Thenceforward we hear no more of Edom till DAVID's day, when he smote and garrisoned Edom and reduced the country to tribute (2 Sam. viii.). This is celebrated in Psalm lx., among other victories, in all of which David is but a type of his "Greater Son," who shall inherit all these countries. Then SOLOMON, in his apostacy, married Edomite wives among others, and God stirred him up a "Satan" in the royal family of Edom—"Hadad the Edomite, . . . of the king's seed" (1 Kings xi.). Long afterwards, when Judah was invaded by the Assyrians and Babylonians, Edom kept up the traditional enmity which is rebuked by Obadiah with such detail, and which was visited by the subjection of Edom to the Babylonian yoke (Jer. xxvii., xlix.). It would be to this judgment, proximately, that Isaiah, in ch. xxxiv., probably refers.

In the days of the MACCABEANS, as we have seen, Judas warred against "Esau," and took Hebron. Later on Hyrcanus more completely subdued Edom, and by a remarkable providence, paved the way for *that Idumean dynasty, under which Messiah himself suffered*, and which was the cause of the overthrow and

affliction of Jacob until this day. Graetz, in his *History of the Jews*, thus refers to it :—

“Hyrcanus laid siege to their two fortresses, Adora and Marissa ; and after having demolished them, he bade the Idumeans choose between the adoption of Judaism and exile. They chose the former alternative, and became, outwardly, followers of that faith. The temples of the Idumean idols were of course destroyed, but the priests secretly adhered to their worship. Thus, after more than a thousand years of enmity, Jacob and Esau were again united—the elder serving the younger brother. . . . The enforced union of the sons of Edom with the sons of Jacob was fraught with disasters to the latter. It was through the Idumeans and the Romans that the Hasmonean dynasty was overthrown, and the Judean nation destroyed.”

This Conquest by Hyrcanus happened about B.C. 130 ; and, according to the reckoning of Josephus, the Edomites, by the circumcision of their flesh, “were hereafter no other than Jews” (Ant. xiii. 9, §1). Herod the Great was one of these “Jews” ! No wonder Paul has some trenchant remarks on circumcision of the flesh, and of the heart (Rom. ii. 28-29 ; Phil. iii. 2-3 ; Col. ii. 11).

After this, ANTIPATER, the Idumean, took the side of the Romans when, in B.C. 63, Pompey sent Scaurus against Petra ; and this led ultimately, to his son Herod the Great being proclaimed King of Judea by the Senate in B.C. 40. Such was the relation of Edom to the House of Jacob when the time came for the manifestation of Messiah.

Afterwards, the Idumeans formed a faction in the history of the siege of Jerusalem, when they participated in the fall of the Jewish State before the Romans. Idumea itself was annexed to Rome under Trajan in A.D. 105, so that thenceforth we must, as it were, *seek Edom in Rome* : a quest only too easy for the unhappy sons of Jacob under that “dreadful and terrible” dominion.

When Christianity arose, it was represented in a manner in Edom until the uprise of MOHAMMEDANISM. And it is remarkable that *this scourge of God upon the Eastern Empire came*

out of *Edom* into Syria. The Christians of the country were put under tribute.

From the time of the Crusades, *Edom* appears to have no history: and it is only just emerging, as it were, from the obscurity of centuries, with the revival of the East in preparation for the world-shaking events that will usher in the Kingdom of God.

The ground of *Edom's* responsibility to the judgments of God, and the nature of his "blasphemy," is revealed in the prophets. Amos tells us that God would not turn away His judgments from *Edom*, "because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever" (i., ii.). We see this as we glance down his history. As it is said in Ezekiel, he "greatly offended" by his dealings against the house of Judah (ch. xxv. 12). Because of this, God said that His vengeance should come upon *Edom* by the hand of Israel; which, whatever fulfilment it may have had already in the days of the Maccabees and subsequently, certainly remains to be more signally fulfilled in the day of Christ (Isa. xi. 14).

Ezekiel likewise (ch. xxxv.) speaks by the Spirit "against Mount Seir," because of the "perpetual hatred." It was considered "blasphemy" by God that *Edom* said that the mountains of Israel were laid waste and given to him to consume (v. 12). This was boasting against God and making Him a liar concerning the everlasting covenant with Abraham and David. Therefore, "Thus saith the Lord God; When the whole earth rejoiceth I will make thee desolate" (v. 14). The kind of blasphemy that *Edom* thus exhibited is fashionable in Christendom, which mocks at the promises made to the house of Jacob, and thinks to possess the mountains of Israel. There will be a great awakening when "the Heir" returns, like Jacob from the house of Laban, to enter upon his inheritance.

In the crisis of his return he has to do with *Edom*. Isaiah in another place (ch. lxiii.) sees him coming to Zion by the way of the Exodus of old. He speaks of him as Zion's "Salvation"—

“his reward with him and his work before him”; and he asks the question, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” And the answer is, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” And the question is then asked, “Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?” The answer of the Saviour is, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For *the day of vengeance* is in mine heart and *the year of my redeemed* is come.”

This is the same crisis as that spoken of in chapter xxiv. 8, as “the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.” It is that day of judgment which Jesus himself avoided mentioning in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he read a short portion of Isa. lxi., and stopped short before the words, “the day of vengeance of our God.” There is a time and place for the vengeance just as there was for his preaching “the acceptable year of the Lord,” and for his suffering death under Herod and Pilate.

In the crisis of the day of vengeance, or at “the time of the end,” Edom is represented by the angel who enlightened Daniel concerning Messiah, as escaping the dominion of the King of the North when he overruns many countries and occupies the glorious Land (Dan. xi. 41). As pointed out by Dr. Thomas in *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka*, we recognise in Britain’s occupation of these ancient territories the Edom and Moab of “the time of the end,” and in Russian aggression the overspreading power of the rival “King of the North.” Britain’s part in Egypt is already notorious, and “the precious things of Egypt” are being developed apace by the irrigation works just completed. The next thing is the standing up of Michael the Great Prince in the time of the dead (Dan. xii.). Then, after the judgment scene is past, he goes forth with his conquering heroes to subdue the peoples after the type of Israel of old. Moses and Joshua will be with him, and Caleb, and all the faithful remnant of the days of the Exodus, besides the hosts of all subsequent times. They will come upon the old familiar

country with unspeakably different sensations from those of the days of their mortal pilgrimage.

It is impossible to speculate how far history may repeat itself in the possible unfriendliness of the latter-day Edom (at first) to the Prophet like unto Moses, and His people. Certain it is that there are sanguinary scenes to be enacted in the ancient country, and that nothing but carnage will effectually humble the powers that be, whether British, Russian, or any other; all of whose ignorant ambitions amount to nothing more than a blasphemous setting aside of the revealed purpose of God in the earth, and lust for universal dominion upon their own principles.

Habakkuk, as well as Isaiah, saw that Edom and the South were connected with the incoming of Messiah in the day of vengeance. Habakkuk's sublime prayer, which was set to music for the temple service, says:—"God cometh from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran" (ch. iii.). The "Holy One" is the Lord Jesus, who comes to fulfil "the oath to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham" in the setting up of the everlasting Kingdom of God in Israel and the destruction of the enemy. Habakkuk looked forward to "rest in the day of trouble," which is what Paul also preached (2 Thess. ii.).

It is a work of difficulty accurately to trace the great divine programme of events in these countries subsequent to the return of Christ. Dr. Thomas has made a notable essay in this direction when commenting on Rev. x., and the position of the angel of the rainbow there spoken of. To this we must now refer readers, in the full assurance that the events of the near future will further illustrate these great developments. The passage in question is to be found in *Eureka*, Vol. ii., pp. 544-566.

Because Esau and Jacob stand for two manners of people—the people of the curse, and the people of the blessing—the wrestlers with God for His blessing (Jacob-Israel), and the despisers and sellers of the birthright (Esau-Edom)—some passages of the Scripture are not very intelligible if this fact be lost sight of. Paul, illustrating the fact that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel," refers not only to Ishmael and Isaac, but also to Esau and Jacob, as we have seen (Rom. ix.).

And just as Rome annexed the territory of Idumea, so Rome spiritually appropriated the principles of Edom in opposition to "the hope of Israel," and has been hostile to the Jews and to the saints in all the times of her supremacy.

With regard to the Jews themselves, they have not been slow to recognise the Roman inheritance of Esau's antagonism to Jacob. When Constantius sent Gallus to the East to operate against the Persians in the middle of the 4th Cent. A.D., the Roman legions were quartered in the cities of Judea. Their taxes and levies were very oppressive, and the rabbis denounced them in such language as the following: "In the same way as when a garment hanging on a hedge of thorns has been disengaged from one side it is immediately torn by the other, so does it happen to us under the rule of Esau (Rome). . . . Wicked Esau behaves with artful cunning towards Israel."

So when the Goths came in on the Roman Empire, and the unhappy Jews were between two fires, this was an example of their lamentations: "See, O Lord, how many are mine enemies! If Esau (Rome) hated Jacob, he hath at least some specious ground . . . but what hath Israel done to the barbarians and to the Goths?" The Roman Captivity was referred to among the Jews as the *galuth Edom*. And the experiences of "Jews inwardly" in Roman Christendom have harmonised with those of the natural seed of Israel.

This spiritual extension of Edom, as it were, is visible particularly in Obadiah's prophecy. There Edom and Jacob, the house of Esau and the house of Jacob, Mount Zion and the Mount of Esau, are contrasted in their relations one to the other until the coming crisis, in which the captivity of Israel returns, "and saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." In the execution of this judgment, it is said that "all the heathen" shall drink of the cup of Yahweh's indignation, which, as in Isaiah xxxiv., shows the wide scope of the prophecy. As a matter of later revelation, it is the European Powers who are to make war upon Christ at his coming at a time when the

land of Edom shall be in the occupation of their British rival. But British Power itself must be humbled by Messiah as David conquered Edom of old, for, in its ecclesiastical relationship, it is only the daughter of the Roman Mother, and but little less antagonistic to the way of God. The friendship for the Jews (which, however, as regards the nation, is only a matter of political expediency), and the traditional veneration for the Bible (now more and more assailed in high quarters), are the mitigating features in the British case.

The "streams of pitch" to which Edom's waters are to be reduced are in striking contrast with the "streams and broad rivers of the glorious Lord in Zion" (xxxiv. 9, compared with xxxiii. 21). The literal fate of Sodom and Gomorrhah, of which this reminds us, is associated with the fate of the Roman city and system (Rev. xi. 8; xvii.), that is to be overthrown, as they were for their wickedness.

The desolation of Edom, that is still a monument of God's indignation, to all that pass by, speaks not only of the past, but of the overthrow that awaits the great anti-Jewish world of the latter days. "They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing." But the fallen tabernacle of David shall be raised up and built as in the days of old, "that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord that doeth this" (Amos ix.). We are of those heathen upon whom God's name is called, and we look for the time when Jacob shall be redeemed out of his time of trouble, and caused to inherit the high places of his enemies in "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion."





CHAPTER XXXV.

ZION'S WILDERNESS TRANSFORMED.

JUDGMENT having been pronounced upon Edom, Isaiah turns to the final consolation of Zion. Her wilderness shall at last be glad; and her desert rejoice and blossom as the rose (crocus or narcissus). What is involved in this? Is it a prophecy chiefly concerning the land itself—now neglected and unproductive—or does it chiefly concern the people? In the beginning, the curse for disobedience came first upon Adam, and then upon the ground *for his sake*. And so, in the remedy proposed, the people must first be healed, and then the ground itself will be blessed and bring forth abundantly. The condition of the Land, and of all lands, is more intimately bound up with the moral condition of Israel and of all peoples than they have any conception of.

With regard to Zion's wilderness, the testimony is plain: "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness" (Jer. xii. 10). It was in such a wilderness that the Lord Jesus arose "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. liii. 2). Jewish life was a wilderness, and he a despised and neglected "plant." As already remarked on Isa. xxxii., he wrought some transformation, and introduced some "plants" of the Father's planting; but these, though "the blessed of the Father," were removed from the Land, which was given over to destruction for a long time. The fulfilment of this prophecy was then far future. The Land and the Nation and the Saints had for ages to lie in the wilderness condition till the time of transformation should arrive.

And so "the word" passed westward, and as with Israel, so with Christendom, "many pastors" destroyed and trod down this new "planting of the Lord." The Apostacy triumphed, so that

John in Revelation xii. saw the faithful remnant as a fugitive woman flee into the wilderness from the face of the serpent. And when, afterwards, he was shown by the spirit the fate of the Great Roman System, he was "carried away in the spirit into the wilderness." So that Christendom is regarded of God as was Israel of old—a destroyed, downtrodden, and desolate vineyard, broken down by wild beasts, and turned into a *wilderness*.

It is to alter all this, both with relation to Israel and to the world, that Christ comes. He is the kernel of this vision of the conversion of the wilderness into Paradise. It is Israel first, of course, for "Salvation is of the Jews," and the kingdom, even the first dominion is to come "to the daughter of Jerusalem." "The Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody" (Isa. li. 3). "Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree; and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (lv. 13). "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified" (lxi. 3).

Here the "myrtles," and "trees of righteousness," are the constituents of "the name of Yahweh," chief among whom is the Lord Jesus himself as the "Plant of renown." This is in harmony with the language of the chapter under consideration. "*It shall blossom abundantly. . . they shall see the glory of Yahweh and the excellency of our Elohim*" (verse 2). The trees and plants of Zion's Paradise that once was a wilderness, are the constituents of the glory of Yahweh; they are "our Elohim," trees or "mighty ones of righteousness."

In view of this, the mission or "message" of the prophet in this place is to comfort such in prospect. "Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful ("hasty," or fluttering) heart, Be strong, fear not; behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" (verses 3-4). That is, the Lord Jesus will come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know

not God and obey not the gospel," but to give "rest" and "glory" to those who are "troubled" for his sake in that day (2 Thess. ii.).

So long ago as Job, he, according to the testimony of Eliphaz, did what the prophet here enjoined by the Spirit. He "instructed many," "strengthened the weak hands," upheld the falling, "strengthened the feeble knees" (Job iv. 3, 4). And so long after Isaiah's time as A.D. 60, or thereabouts, an apostle enjoined the same course on his "chastened" Hebrew brethren (Heb. xii. 12). "Looking unto Jesus," was his motto in this connection, which he exemplified in his life. And the Lord Jesus himself had something to say of God's avenging "his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them" (Luke xviii. 7). "I tell you," said he, "that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find the faith in the earth?" Here, then, is the very picture of the prophet reproduced in a sentence—earth a faithless wilderness, and God (the Son of Man) coming with vengeance. Looking unto him, and his endurance of "the contradictions of sinners against himself," we shall be strengthened, and our fearful hearts calmed.

And when he comes "with vengeance," "*then* the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: *for* in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert." In the days of his flesh, the Lord Jesus was always healing the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the dumb; and there was water in the wilderness in connection with it all, though it was not an external hydropathy. His words of life and power were among the multitudes as the water from the smitten Rock was among the Israelites in the wilderness of old. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." So he spoke (John vii.); but, though many literally tasted of his healing power as concerns the flesh, few had their eyes and ears sufficiently opened to "the word" to accept his gracious invitation. Few indeed of halting gait among the "dumb dogs" in Israel (Isa. lvi. 10) became strong men to run the race of life, and eloquent to show

forth the praise of God, and to set forth "the truth." A few were thus healed in the higher sense—mentally and morally—but even they were still mortal, and presently passed away.

But when he comes with vengeance, these partake of the water of life and live for ever. They partake of his healing power, and are even empowered to do "greater works." With him they will be able to literally heal the blind, the deaf, the lame, the dumb; but not only so, with him they will also be able to spiritually transform a world full of mental and moral cripples of all sorts, which is a "greater work" than those the Lord wrought 1,900 years ago in Israel. And they will do it by "the waters in the wilderness." "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John vii. 39). He was at that time the Word made flesh. Hereafter he will be revealed "in Spirit." And in the day of vengeance, "his name is called the Word of God" (Rev. xix. 13). And of this "name" and "glory," those that believe in him are then constituents. And here Isaiah pictures their mission. Is it not a picture calculated to "strengthen weak hands, and confirm feeble knees"?

"And the parched ground shall become a pool." Literally, the "glowing sand," or mirage, as the Revised Version happily puts it. The mirage is a striking phenomenon. The writer has witnessed it more than once. Riding or driving across the "glowing sand" in the heat of summer, with the atmosphere all trembling with the radiations, you suddenly see in the distance a beautiful vista of a lake and palms, &c. As you approach the spell is broken, the fair vision vanishes, and nothing but the "glowing sand" and scorching heat remains. The mirage is a vision either of an unreality, or, possibly, a distorted image by refraction of a reality elsewhere than where the spectator beholds it.

Such is the paradisaical vision of "the wilderness," Jewish or "Christian." The "glowing sands" of its desert present to its wayfarers a "mirage" of "kingdoms beyond the skies," of "souls" of the deceased in glory there, of angels with

wings and cherub heads with wings, a dreamy cloudland of aimless bliss. It is a grievously distorted vision of a reality related in "the word" to "the Holy Land," to "spiritual bodies," to "an innumerable company of angels" (without wings), to a ruling of the nations with a rod of iron upon earth (Rev. ii. 26, 27). The moment a wayfarer of the wilderness advances in *God's way*, his fairy vision is evaporated into thin air.

But when Christ comes, though the mirage vanishes, real waters remain. The Kingdom of God is revealed—a blessed reality, surpassing the wildest dreams of ancient and modern Paganism. The enlightened Gentiles under its beneficent sway go up to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth and confess, saying, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. xvi. 19).

"And a highway shall be there, and (even) a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but He himself shall be one of them, travelling the road; and the perverse shall not stray thereinto. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon—they shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there" (verses 8, 9—R.V. and Rotherham).

Even in Eden we read of "the way of the tree of life." Literally, this was the approach to the tree; but, metaphorically, the appointments of God, which, patiently observed, culminate in life. At the flood, all flesh had corrupted "His way," and He gave "the world of the ungodly" over to destruction by water, saving Noah and his family by the Ark, which was to him and his "the way of life," or preservation from the avenging waters. Ages afterwards, Jesus appeared in Israel and said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He was to his generation like Noah's Ark to his, a comparison that an apostle actually makes (1 Pet. iii. 21), and that is implied by Jesus' own words (Luke xvii. 26). In sacrifice, he, by his blood, opened into the holiest "a new and living way" (Heb. x. 20); which is illustrated in the apostolic preaching of his Name for the remission of sins upon belief of the Gospel of the Kingdom and baptism into Him. This is "the way of

life" of our dispensation. But it has been lost; and he is absent, and does not intervene by his almighty power; and the voice of reason (reasoning out of the Scriptures) makes no impression in the world.

But when he returns all is made plain. "The way of holiness" is openly and palpably manifested in Jerusalem. "I am the way" is then the voice of a divine multitude of which he is Head. "And he himself shall be one of them travelling the road" or "walking in the way"; that is, he will be manifested in the divine nature to direct mankind to God, so that his saying, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," will receive ample vindication, and further illustration for a thousand years.

Like the way of the tree of life in Eden, this "way of holiness" is jealously guarded. He and his traverse it, and have access to life eternal; but not "the unclean," not "fools," not "lions," nor any "destroyers among beasts"—only the redeemed. As he himself declares of the Holy City (the symbol of "his redeemed"—Rev. xxi. 27); "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." "And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (verse 21). Gold is the symbol of a tried and precious faith (Rev. iii. 18; 1 Pet. i. 7), so that this "street," or "way," is composed of the "called and chosen and faithful" like Christ.

The popular interpretation of Isa. xxxv. 8, or a certain version of a sentence of it, is a fallacy. "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein," is taken to mean that the gospel is so plain that any mortal can easily understand and appropriate it, no matter how neglectful and ignorant of "the word" he may be (for the words are generally quoted as an excuse for ignorance). But this is not true. Fools do err grievously concerning "the way." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. i. 7). Here the word *evil*, a fool, is the same as in Isa. xxxv. 8 and is "always morally bad." Such despisers of wisdom and

instruction never get into "the way," even as pilgrims, let alone as immortal constituents of the golden "street" of the new Jerusalem. It is quite true that Christ's wayfarers are accounted fools now for his sake; but that is not the idea before the prophet's mind. He is speaking not of now but "then" (verses 5, 6). And the truth is that fools (*evilim*) will then be excluded, with the "unclean" and "ravenous beasts," from "the way of holiness" in the sense of exclusion from the Kingdom of God.

The "fools" do not "err" *in* the way of God, but *out of it*. Thus it is written: "The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are *out of the way* through strong drink, they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isa. xxviii. 7). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (liii. 6). These and similar passages in Isaiah illustrate the relation of fools to the way of God. And as it was with priest and prophet in Israel, so it is in Christendom—"they are out of the way through strong drink" (compare Rev. xvii.). But when Christ returns, they will be awakened and compelled to come up to Jerusalem to learn of Yahweh's ways, and to walk in His paths. And at last they will be only too glad and thankful so to do.

"And the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This is the end to which the prophet saw all things tend. All the apostacy of Israel, all the antagonisms of his enemies, all the judgments to come upon them for their spite against Israel, all the rivalries of Gentile dominions in all the ages, are but transient phenomena working out in their complicated inter-actions the eternal purpose of God in Israel, as declared in the covenants of old.





CHAPTERS XXXVI.—XXXIX.

SENNACHERIB'S CHALLENGE.

IN Chapters xxxvi.-xxxix. we come upon a historical section in Isaiah's prophecy. The work of the prophets sometimes included the writing of history, of which there are many illustrations throughout the scriptures. The history of Hezekiah is (considering the brevity of the scriptures) very fully recorded. When we put together the accounts of Kings, Chronicles and Isaiah, we see quite a large picture of his life and work; and the important crises with which he was contemporary and in which he figured so prominently.

In 2 Chron. xxxii. 32 we are told that "the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his goodness . . . are written *in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz*, and in the book of the Kings of Judah and Israel." This quotation is made to show that in Ezra's time there was no hint of that alleged composite authorship of Isaiah of which so much is heard in the circles of the "higher critics" of our days. But it is with reference to Chs. xl. and onwards that the critics affirm a "second Isaiah," so we can defer a passing word on the subject.

Acting on the principle that divine history is "written for our instruction," and is often, like that of the Israelites, directly typical and hortative in its character, we direct our minds to the things written of Hezekiah.

Taking the accounts of Kings and Chronicles in conjunction with Isaiah's we learn the following:—Hezekiah began to reign at the age of 25 years and reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. Consequently his "fourteenth year" was, as it were, the half-way house of his days, when God gave him a new lease of life. It is said that he did right in the sight of the Lord, and his right doing is the subject of considerable definition in detail—

particularly in the book of Chronicles. He ruthlessly destroyed idolatry, even to the extent of breaking up the brazen serpent, because Israel had made a god of it (2 Kings xviii. 4). He cleansed, sanctified, and restored the temple, and reinstated the worship of Yahweh and the service of the Levites. He even sent messengers through the northern kingdom inviting the people to return to the God of their fathers, but with some exceptions they were despised and ridiculed. This was in the first year of his reign, and his friendly and righteous action formed, as it were, a last warning and invitation from God to the kingdom of Israel. In another five years it was overthrown; *i.e.*, in the sixth year of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria, and smote the Philistines, both of which powers had prevailed over Judah because of his father Ahaz' wickedness. But in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah we see Sennacherib coming to reassert and enforce his claims, and succeeding to a certain extent; for we are told in 2 Kings xviii. 13-16 that he took all the fenced cities of Judah and put Hezekiah under tribute, which he raised by spoiling the temple and his palace of the silver and gold. But when Sennacherib undertook to take Jerusalem also, *in spite of the best efforts of "the God of Jerusalem,"* in whose service Hezekiah was faithful, a new situation was created, in which it pleased God to make His power known in the vindication of His Name and honour, and the delivery of His King and people and chosen city.

This is the pith and marrow of this historical section of Isaiah: Yahweh, challenged by Sennacherib, and intreated by Hezekiah and Isaiah, vindicates His Name and honour, and delivers His people and city; and the record is written for the latter days, when a still greater Assyrian crisis is to come, and a still greater deliverance to be wrought. Add to this the lessons derived from the prayers and praises of Hezekiah, his new lease of life and how he "occupied" therein, and we realize how deeply instructive is this portion of the word.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—The opening of this chapter takes us back to the days of Ahaz, when, in the same spot, "the conduit of

the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field" (vii. 3, with xxxvi. 2), Isaiah and his son Shear-Jashub had gone forth by God's commandment to calm Ahaz concerning the invasion of Rezin and Pekah, and instruct him concerning the final advent of Immanuel and the "return of a remnant." This would be, perhaps, about twenty years before Hezekiah's fourteenth year; and now the prophet was an old man.

And now "Rabshakeh" (the name is an Assyrian title), with his host, stood on this historic spot, and Eliakim, Shebna and Joah, went forth to negotiate. What dealings Isaiah had had with Eliakim and Shebna, and their allegorical significance concerning Christ and the future, we have already seen, when speaking of Isa. xxii., and "the burden of the valley of vision." Eliakim was to be exalted and Shebna deposed as Isaiah by the Spirit had decreed. But both were as yet in their respective offices, dealing with Sennacherib's captain.

Rabshakeh ridicules Egypt as an ally for Hezekiah, and goes on to challenge Yahweh by comparison with the gods he had overthrown. What might almost be called a prophetic summary of this challenge had been given by the prophet long before (Ch. x. 5-11), and *now the very words were uttered by the Assyrian before the walls of Jerusalem.* Rabshakeh's endeavour also to turn the populace against the king by representing his reforms as a destruction of the national religion, was an especially cruel and crafty bit of serpent wisdom. But it came to nought.

Eliakim, Shebna and Joah returned mourning to Hezekiah, and he in turn went mourning into the temple, sending them with the elders to the aged prophet, with the request that he would "lift up his prayer for the remnant that was left." Isaiah did so; and the answer of God was quick and comforting:—"Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed ME. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."

Not a word of an agreement was made with Rabshakeh, who returned and found his master warring against Libnah, having

broken up his camp at Lachish, and being moreover distressed by the rumour of the advance of the King of Ethiopia. Drawn off thus from Jerusalem, and mortified by the resistance of the city, he sent a letter to Hezekiah repeating his blasphemous challenge against God and the King.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—On receiving this letter, Hezekiah went into the temple and spread it before the Lord and prayed in these brief but pregnant terms:—

“O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, inhabiting the cherubim, thou art the God (*ha Elohim*), thou alone of all the Kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ears, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore O Lord our God, save us from his hand, *that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.*”

The closing words of this prayer are but the reflex of God’s own words spoken in connection with the overthrow of an earlier tyrant—Pharaoh, in the days of the Exodus from Egypt: “I will multiply my signs . . . and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord” (Ex. vi. 3-5). This principle runs through all the “signs.” (Compare Ex. vii. 17; viii. 10, 19, 22; ix. 13-16, 29, &c.). Hezekiah’s prayer is thus conceived in the spirit of knowledge and faith. He had respect to the law of Moses and the records of the mighty deliverance of the Exodus.

With such enlightened faith God is well pleased, and hence another and this time more ample answer was given by the mouth of Isaiah. It is recorded in ch. xxxvii. 21-35. The virgin daughter of Zion is represented as despising and laughing at Sennacherib; and it is declared that his power to destroy was expressly given by the Lord God of Israel, whom now he despised. Therefore God would put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips, and lead him captive far from Jerusalem, the “remnant” of which should at last again “take root downward and bear fruit

upward." And God would defend Jerusalem for His own sake, and for David's sake.

The allusion to the hook in the nose is illustrated from Assyrian sculptures of captives thus dishonoured. The fulfilment of the prophecy is notorious. An angel destroyed the Assyrian army in a night, and Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, where his own sons slew him in the presence of his god. Rationalising critics exhaust their ingenuity in the attempt to explain the military disaster on natural principles; but it is a failure. A candid confession of unbelief and refraining from meddling, would be infinitely more dignified and respectable than perverting the record of a miracle into that of an "old wives' fable."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—"In those days" (that is, in his fourteenth year) "was Hezekiah sick unto death." And Isaiah was sent from God to say: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live." And Hezekiah did not want to die. He turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed. He was a righteous king, and according to clerical theology, would have gone to heaven at death. But God said nothing about going to heaven, and Hezekiah was loth "to depart." The Bible does not fit clerical theology.

Hezekiah's prayer on this occasion is on record—brief, simple and touching. "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done good in thy sight." That is all. But that is much in few words; for as an apostle afterwards said: "God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name" (Heb. vi. 10). God "remembered" Hezekiah's "work and labour of love," and by Isaiah the prophet said, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years." And, it was added, God would deliver Jerusalem, and give Hezekiah the sign of the returning shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz.

This was a *unique case of a literal and formal "new lease of life."* It was granted to the King on his appeal to the divine memory of his righteousness. How suggestive is this. Where would he have been if he had had no such righteousness to

remember? Ahaz his father could not have prayed so, nor Manasseh his son, though he did pray and obtain some favour of the Lord. It was a matter of personal "works." "I will give every man," says Jesus, "according as his work shall be." Hezekiah is a type of the accepted in the day of his coming. His case is a great incentive to those who come after to "walk before the Lord in truth and with a perfect heart."

And it is a type, as it were, of that lengthening of the days of Messiah himself which is the subject of the prophetic psalm. "He asked life of thee and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." Why? Because "the King" did always "the things that pleased the Father"—"walked before Him in truth and with a perfect heart," doing good. But this was life eternal, reached through death and resurrection.

Hezekiah, on recovery, wrote the beautiful psalm of praise recorded in ch. xxxviii. 10-20. It is out of harmony with the ideas of clerical theology, but in harmony with "the word" in its doctrine of life and death. Clerical theology sends the righteous to heaven at death. Hezekiah said, "I shall go to the gates of *sheol*, the grave." Hezekiah contemplated death as being "made an end of" (verses 12-13). Clerical theology says this is a mere sentiment of infidelity, and that no "immortal soul" can possibly be "made an end of." Clerical theology says that the "souls" of the righteous are not related to "the pit of corruption," and that none of the righteous "go down into the pit;" it is only their bodies that so go down as "a worn-out fetter that the soul has broken and cast away"! Hezekiah says just the opposite of all this. Clerical theology says that the grave and death can and do praise the Lord—yea, "When my voice is *lost in death*, praise shall my nobler powers employ."—*Dr. Watts*. Hezekiah, however, restricts praise to "the living," in harmony with scripture and common sense. But it is a profanation of his beautiful psalm to compare it with the fables of the apostasy. Yahweh as good as resurrected him, and he rejoiced before Him accordingly, saying, "Yahweh was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life in the house of Yahweh."

CHAPTER XXXIX.—And so the Assyrians were smitten, Sennacherib slain, Jerusalem delivered, and Hezekiah raised up to praise God. What is the sequel? If ever a man should have “redeemed the time” it was Hezekiah; but here he failed. It is so written, and “written for our instruction.” We have a lease of life. How are we using it? Glorifying in the shadows of the present, or preparing for the substance of the future? Hezekiah, in the last fifteen years of his life, manifestly to some considerable extent did the former. Merodach Baladan sent letters of congratulation on Hezekiah’s recovery, and a present. “And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things,” and all his estate. It would appear that he ought to have known the mind of God with regard to Babylon from Isaiah’s ministrations.

At any rate, the comment in 2 Chron. xxxii. 25 is quite severe: “But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.” And again, verse 31: “Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” Isaiah’s last recorded message to Hezekiah was to say that all that he had showed the Babylonians should be carried away to Babylon; even his own sons also should be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon, which was fulfilled as recorded in Dan. i.

So then, from this concluding episode in the reign of Hezekiah it is evident that if people do not wisely use the life they have, it would be no guarantee that they would do otherwise should God grant them another “fifteen years.” It was a prayer of Moses which said, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. xc. 12). We may well appropriate it.

And here, at the end of ch. xxxix., modern criticism, or a certain school of it, would have us believe that we part company with Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and enter upon a varied

compilation of uncertain date and authorship. With the alleged reasons for this we do not propose to concern ourselves, but here set down a few facts from the scriptures that support the contrary and traditional view of the unity of the book.

They are in the form of references to the book by the name "Isaiah" in the New Testament writings.

First Jesus himself mentions "Esaias" when quoting from ch. xxix., in Matt. xv. 7-9. That, of course, is in what the critics themselves call "Isaiah." Next, we are told in Luke iv. 17, that in the synagogue at Nazareth there was delivered to Jesus "the book of the prophet Esaias;" and that he read therefrom a portion of chapter lxi. This is from the portion which the critics call "II. Isaiah," without any good reason in the world. Then, again, we have the following quotations, made by Matthew, Luke, and John, all of whom name "Isaiah," the portion quoted being ch. xl. 3: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness" (see Matt. iii. 3; Luke iii. 4; Jno. i. 23). This, to an unsophisticated mind, appears fatal to the learned speculations current.

Chapter xlii. 1, "Behold my servant," is expressly attributed to "Esaias the prophet" in Matt. xii. 17, 18.

Chapter liii., "Himself took our infirmities," is said to have been "spoken by Esaias the prophet" (Matt. viii. 17). And "Who hath believed our report?" (liii. 1) is likewise, both by John and Paul (John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16), described as "the saying of Esaias." And Luke, in Acts viii. 32, records how the Ethiopian eunuch read this same ch. liii. in "the prophet Esaias."

Chapter lxxv. 1, "I am sought of them that asked not for me," is, by Paul, in Rom. x. 20, described as a "very bold" utterance of "Esaias."

Thus, the words of these inspired men of God convince us that the later part of the prophet is as much "Esaias" as the former, all that the "higher critics" can say to the contrary notwithstanding.



CHAPTER XL.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

ISAIAH having completed the historical details that occupy chapters xxxvi.-xxxix., returns to the comforting of Zion in a prophecy of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Messiah, and as the preparer of His way. This prophecy is intimately related to that of chapter xxxv., where *the rejoicing of Zion's wilderness* is spoken of, and the revelation of "the glory of Yahweh and the excellency of our Elohim."

The kingdom of God is always the ultimate objective of the prophetic word, and to encourage God's people to wait for it in faith and obedience, the ultimate aim of their ministry; but their word having to serve for so many ages and generations, the visions are not restricted and localised. Their leading features are made plain by those who come afterwards and speak "by the same Spirit." And the accumulating expositions of these in turn become the basis of the enlightenment of their uninspired brethren who succeed them, so that to this day the sure word of prophecy shines as a light in a dark place, for the guidance of those who, by searching the scriptures, let the light into their minds.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Here, "my people" and "Jerusalem" are the subjects of the comfort. We must remember who these are. Not Israel after the flesh—not Jerusalem of B.C. 700 or A.D. 30 as concerns her natural population in bulk. All things are for the elect's sake, and this must be borne in mind when studying the prophets. Isaiah and his brethren were but "a remnant," yet God overruled

Jerusalem's affairs for their sakes. Jesus and his brethren were but "a remnant" numerically, and apparently of no account in the presence of Jews and Romans; yet "all things were for their sakes." And so we must be prepared to recognise a great work underneath a small exterior in the fulfilment of the prophets' words, until, in the crisis of the Judgment, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

The chapter introduces the preaching of John the Baptist, but it is evident that the opening verses look far beyond his day. Jerusalem's warfare is not yet "accomplished," for it is in the hand of the enemy, and we know from Zechariah that the city is yet to be taken in the crisis in which the Lord fights against the assembled nations (ch. xiv.). Not until Jerusalem sees and acknowledges Jesus as he declares she will (proclaiming him the blessed of the Lord—Luke xiii. 35, and mourns over him with great lamentation—Zech. xii.), can it be said that "her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity pardoned," or, as the Revised Version more correctly puts it, "her punishment accepted" (by her, compare Lev. xxvi. 43). When that great crisis comes, for which the Zionist movement is unconsciously preparing, she will have "received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins," and will acknowledge the justice of it and be graciously pardoned.

Some have been troubled over the expression "double for all her sins," as though the Lord had *unduly* punished Jerusalem and Israel. The difficulty is purely imaginary. "The wages of sin is death; and the gift of God is eternal life." God alone has the prerogative of instituting rewards and punishments for His creatures. He appointed a law in Israel which promised great blessings for obedience and great curses for disobedience, and Israel solemnly accepted His covenant. They broke it, however, flagrantly and perpetually, and God visited upon them the "full measure," "counterpart," or "double," for all their sins. In like manner He declares He will render "double" for faithfulness, even eternal life (Isa. lxi. 7; Zech. ix. 12). And in like manner also does He declare that He will render "double" vengeance to Jerusalem's hated Rival, "Babylon the Great" (Rev. xviii. 6), over which the ["holy apostles and

prophets will rejoice." When Jerusalem finally "accepts her punishment," Rome will be made finally to accept hers; but the difference between the fates of the two cities will be that Jerusalem shall abide for ever, while Rome shall perish for ever like her prototypes, Babylon, Sodom, and Gomorrah.

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make straight in the desert a highway for our Elohim." What "voice" was this that the prophet thus heard "in spirit" 700 years before Christ. That of John the Baptist, upon his own testimony, supported by the open attestation of the Father. All four histories of the life and work of Christ—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, agree in telling us this (Matt. iii.; Mar. i.; Lu. iii.; John i.). Of all these, the most elaborate account is that of John the apostle, though even that is very brief. He tells us that "there was a man sent from God whose name was John," and that, though "a burning and a shining light," as Jesus himself afterwards styled him, "he was not that Light of men" of whom he had been speaking, but was sent to bear witness to Him. "He," says John, referring to Jesus, "was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world (*kosmos*)." He was *the Word made flesh*, full of grace and truth, who dwelt in Israel, revealing the glory of the Father to those who, like John, had eyes to see and ears to hear. "The law," says John, "was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," even that word of comfort of which the prophet spoke beforehand, and over the rejection of which by his countrymen Jesus was so deeply grieved.

John further tells us that the preaching of John the Baptist "in the wilderness of Judea," attracted universal attention. His declaration that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand," supported, as it doubtless was, by appeals to the prophecies of Daniel and the times revealed, was sufficient to greatly exercise "Jerusalem and all Judea," and multitudes went out to be baptized of him in Jordan, "confessing their sins," for John's baptism was for the remission of sins. In obedience to his divine commission, he preached the coming of the Christ, and God having "sent him

to baptize," forgave the sins of those who obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine revealed, and looked for the Coming One. But John was soon imprisoned and beheaded, and when Jesus rose from the dead John's baptism was altogether superseded, and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ took its place. Hence, some twenty-five years after John's baptism, some of his disciples, being deficient in knowledge concerning Christ, found their way into the congregation of Christians at Ephesus, and were perfected in knowledge by Paul, and "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus," and approved by God by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Seeing the popular excitement, the Jews sent priests and Levites to John, demanding "Who art thou?" Was he the Christ? Or Elias? Or "that prophet" (of whom Moses spoke). No, he was not. What then? They must return answer to Jerusalem. "What sayest thou of thyself?" And John answered, "I am *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." Why then, asked the deputation, do you baptize? And the answer was, "There standeth One among you, whom ye know not, and I baptize with water *that He should be made manifest to Israel.*"

And even the details of the "making manifest" are related. John the Baptist added: "He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Here, then, is "the voice in the wilderness," and the then present preparation of "the way of the Lord." It was a voice in the wilderness in more ways than one. Literally it was a voice "in the wilderness of Judea," and metaphorically it was a voice in the wilderness of Jewry, out of whose "dry ground" the "Plant of Renown" was springing. The "way of Yahweh" then being "prepared" was the Lord Jesus, manifested as the Son of God, and "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." "I am the Way," said he in his doctrine, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." But although in a sense, as both John and Jesus declare, the glory of the

Father was then manifested, all flesh did not then see it together, the "highway for our Elohim" was not then cleared and levelled; countless mountains and valleys and rough and crooked places remain "in the way," and Jesus is absent personally, although "crowned with glory and honour"; while his brethren are almost all covered by the prophetic descriptions, "dwellers in dust," the spirit's "dead body" (Isa. xxvi.).

We get a glimpse of the ultimate "making straight in the desert of a highway for our Elohim," in the later prophecy of the Lord Jesus himself (Rev. xvi. 12), where the waters of the Great River Euphrates are dried up, "that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared." These "Kings of the East" are members of the body of Christ, as the apostles declared, to whom he promised regal honours in those countries (Matt. xix.). They are, therefore, comprehended in the prophetic phrase "our Elohim," and related to the universal manifestation of the glory of the Lord of which he spoke. Thus, in the same words is covered a description of the mission of John the Baptist, and the manifestation of the Lord Jesus as a sacrifice; and the future manifestation of the way of God hereafter in the triumphant establishment of the Kingdom of God in the land of Israel in the hands of Jesus and his brethren.

The Turkish Empire is "in the way," being a possession of "the inheritance" by the worst of the heathen. Therefore it must go, whether the symbol of its departure be a levelled mountain, or a dried-up river. The Great Antichristian World is similarly "in the way," being a nominal dominion of Christ ("Christendom"), in which he is symbolically crucified, his truth rejected, and his people persecuted. Therefore, like Babylon of old, it must go. It will become like it, "a burnt mountain" (Jer. li. 25). "Who art thou, O great mountain?" asks Zechariah the prophet, adding, "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. iv. 7). These sayings illustrate the levelling, clearing, and straightening operations that must be conducted on Earth by Omnipotence before the glory of the Lord is revealed, so that "all flesh shall see it together."

“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

“The voice” is John, and he who responds concerning the evanescence of all flesh is the Bringer of good tidings, or the gospel, unto Zion alluded to in the following verse. The preaching of Jesus had much reference to the poor estate of all flesh, and the abiding character of the word. Himself “the Word made flesh,” he taught that of itself the flesh profited nothing, but that the words of God that he spoke were spirit and life. His doctrine concerning flesh and the Word is diametrically opposed to what is now taught in his name. It is now, and has been for centuries, taught in the name of Christ that all flesh has life in itself, apart from relation to the word of Christ and of God. This doctrine is the universally received notion of the “immortality of the soul.” According to this, “the people” are not grass. It is only their bodies, their “mortal coils,” not the “real men,” that can be truthfully so described. “The people,” according to this view, are “spirits,” of endless destiny in weal or woe, and the comparison of the prophet incongruous and vain. If it be answered, No, that applies to the body, the answer is that in the prophet’s mind the bodies of “the people,” or the “all flesh,” are “the people,” and not a merely unimportant fraction of them.

Christ’s doctrine of flesh and spirit and life mortal and immortal is this. “The Father hath life in himself.” “The Father is spirit.” “He hath given to the Son to have life in himself, that he may give eternal life to as many as he will.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” Birth of the spirit includes resurrection and *bodily* change, so that the subjects of it become “spiritual bodies,” “spirits” like unto and equal unto the angels, who are so-called. The conditions upon which “flesh” may be transformed into this incorruptible bodily existence are that one

“eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood;” otherwise, says Jesus, “ye have no life in you.” What is meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood is defined by him to be the mental assimilation of his spirit and life words, the affectionate and obedient comprehension of his doctrine. In absolute harmony with Isaiah and all the prophets he declares that “the flesh profiteth nothing.” His flesh and blood were the true meat and the true drink, not because of any physical superiority in his case, but because he was God’s Holy One who pleased the Father in all things, and “did no sin.” Flesh and blood innocent of transgression was found in him alone. Therefore his blood is “precious” and cleanses from sin those who, believing his word, put on his name in the appointed way. All his teaching is an illustration of the prophetic proclamation, “All flesh is grass,” and a magnifying of the word that shall stand for ever. He is himself in his exaltation to eternal life an earnest of the abiding nature of the Word. “His name is called the word of God” (Rev. xix. 13). Once “made flesh,” he is now “the Lord the Spirit” hereafter to return to judgment. The Apostle Peter, in his quotation of this part of Isaiah, says that, “this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. i. 25).

The Bringer of good tidings to Zion is emphatically encouraged, saying, “Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.” “Behold,” it continues, “Behold the Lord God (*Adonai Yahweh*) will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

Looking back now on the preaching of Jesus, we see he brought “good tidings to Zion,” but not those here spoken of. In a sense it was said in his proclamation, “Behold your God;” but the assertion of his divine Sonship was met by rejection, and the time of reward and the rule of a rod of iron was far distant. He truly fed the flock of God as the “Good Shepherd,”

but then was the time for the fulfilment of another prophecy which said, "I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And so it came to pass.

For the fulfilment of the word we look forward. The cities of Judah will yet behold him and his as their God. The day of resurrection and judgment is the day of recompense or reward as he taught. The notion that the reward is not "coming" "with him," but is to be reached by going to him is subversive of his own express teaching. And his work before him is the re-establishment of the throne and kingdom of David in the earth and the subduing of all things on earth to the Father in the Kingdom of God.

And then the word changes, and Israel is challenged concerning the majesty and counsel of God, before whom all nations are as nothing. Their rejection of the divine counsel is thus rebuked, and their idolatry, copied from the heathen, notwithstanding the great deliverances that God had wrought in Israel. These things had an obvious bearing on Isaiah's own day; and when John the Baptist and Jesus ministered in Judea the rebuke still applied; also afterwards when Paul quoted some of the words with reference to Israel's unbelief and God's providence in calling the Gentiles. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, shows abundantly how it was foreseen by God that He would be rejected by Israel, and what provision He made for the time of their stumbling, when "blindness in part happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in." He contemplated with great marvel and admiration the unsearchable judgments of God, quoting from Isaiah: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor" (Rom. xi. 34). He again quotes the same passage in 1 Cor. ii. 16, in illustration of the hopelessness of a merely natural man discerning and receiving "the things of the spirit of God." The word must be allowed to subdue the natural man, and then the mind's eyes are opened to behold wondrous things out of God's law.

The days of John and Jesus illustrate how even the chosen nation, with the exception of a remnant, failed to discern. "The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against

themselves, being not baptised of John." And when Jesus himself was rejected of them, and an angry demand was made for his "authority" for cleansing the temple, he put them in a dilemma by propounding the question, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or of men?" And though they had sent a special deputation to enquire of John, they were reduced to the discreditable position of having to say, "We cannot tell." So God manifested their ignorance and malice in those days. The principle illustrated holds good to this day—namely, that it is only in a whole-hearted "turning to God from idols and waiting for His Son from heaven," that a reasonable course of human action is to be found. Anything else is madness, the folly of which will sooner or later be manifested. And idolatry is not necessarily of the gross material kind illustrated in Asia, Africa, and other countries nearer home. An apostle says, "Beware of covetousness, which is idolatry." Anything set up in opposition to God and His claims on the heart and affections is an idol.

There was much pathos and depth of reason in the divine expostulation with Israel on this head: "Have *ye* not known? Have *ye* not heard? Hath it not been told *you* from the beginning? Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God. Hast *thou* not known? Hast *thou* not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." What could be done more than God had done in Israel? This is His own enquiry in the song of the vineyard (Isa. v. 4). And although miracle be absent, we may apply the matter to ourselves. If the Gospel of the Kingdom, attested as it is, is not enough to keep us in God's way, what hope is there?

Not only is the history of the nation and God's dealings with it thus appealed to, but the works of God in the starry universe: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number, he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his power; not

one faileth." Abraham had lifted up his eyes on high, and believed the promise, "So shall thy seed be." David had lifted up his eyes on high, and marvelled that the Creator of these worlds should take any account of man at all. But the bulk of Israel were not of that way of thinking, and the appeal was in their case vain. Tennyson has a trenchant line in a poem called "Despair," which runs:—

Doubt is the Lord of this dunghill, and crows at the Sun and the Moon!

And that is only too truly illustrative of the way in which many lift up their eyes on high nowadays. It is a passing scene. It will not always be so. The withering grass that is gone almost as soon as it is sprouted, is not the final type of human life on earth. The ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus, of which Isaiah here speaks, is proof of that, and of the reliability of the beautiful promise with which the chapter concludes:—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."





CHAPTER XLI.

THE FIRST TO ZION—(*RISHON-LE-ZION*).

A CHALLENGE to the islands (coasts of the earth), and peoples, forms the opening of what is now known as the forty-first chapter of Isaiah. Of course, the prophet knew nothing of the conventional divisions of his writings now extant. The true divisions of this part of the book do not readily appear. Chapters forty to sixty-six are in fact a series of visions, denunciations and exhortations in which Christ appears sometimes in the attitude of a Conqueror, and at others as a Sacrifice. And Israel is seen, sometimes under the blighting dominion of idolatry and apostasy, and at others rejoicing in salvation—and again the Gentiles appear as having unexpectedly found Yahweh without seeking Him, and at last incorporated with Israel in “everlasting salvation.” Cyrus is mentioned by name, a circumstance which has caused the unbelievers to invent a “Babylonian Isaiah” (of whom the Jews know nothing!), because they cannot conceive of God naming a man a century or so before his birth, and speaking of his future prowess in the language of accomplished fact. On this principle they might almost as well say that Isaiah was written after A.D. 34, since it actually reports the words of Yahweh’s servant, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

Cyrus and the overthrow of Babylon, however, are to be taken both as a literal fulfilment of the prophecies, and as a striking allegory of the still more “precious” servant, and his overthrow of “Babylon the Great.” This becomes incontrovertible when we hear an apostle apply Isa. xlv. 23 to Jesus in Rom. xiv. 11. The downfall of Babylon and the Return from the Captivity are thus to be taken as an allegory of the overthrow of “this present evil world” and the return of the Saints and of the

Jews to their possessions. Jerusalem divorced and Jerusalem re-married are interpreted by Paul in harmony with this; and believers of "the gospel of the kingdom," now as ever, pose as watchmen upon the walls, giving Yahweh no rest until He "make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

It is not to be wondered at that learned men, crammed full of archæological and philological lore, and absolutely empty concerning the first principles of the oracles of God, should be unable to make much of the prophets. Their training and lack of training are alike fatal disqualifications to them. "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." So said Jesus. And the learned, almost to a man, are not childlike in their acceptance of truth. And again: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." And few, indeed, are content to subordinate their wills to God. Consequently, the writings of the prophets are reduced on the one hand to the impossible level of merely human speculations, as of the Bedawin of the desert; or tortured, on the other hand, into fancied agreement with a system of theology with which they have nothing to do but to condemn it. The true and just estimate is, that they are the writings of the Spirit of God by human instrumentality, concerning things which God has covenanted in Israel to establish on Earth in the hands of Christ and the Saints. With this view they become indeed "a light that shineth in a dark place."

But, to end a digression, and seeing that no set and formal division of the last twenty-six chapters of Isaiah suggests itself, let us return to the challenge that opens chapter xli. It is in the form of a question put by God to the peoples concerning ONE whom He has raised up to rule over kings and subdue armies. Who is this? And to what "peoples" and "islands" or coasts of the earth is the question addressed? Proximately, CYRUS is the conqueror, presently to be mentioned by name. And the peoples, those of Babylon and the nations subdued, who are afterwards similarly challenged in the prophecy. But it is a well-recognised fact, as before remarked, that all this is but a type of CHRIST as a greater conqueror, and a challenge to "all flesh," with which

God is said to "have a controversy." The answer is the same at both epochs: "Who hath wrought and done it? . . . I, Yahweh." Those who only see the human element in the fall of Babylon, see only half the picture, and that but dimly; and are but ill equipped to discern the true nature of the terrible times that are coming upon the world.

But the answer divinely given to the question divinely propounded is couched in peculiar terms: "I, Yahweh, the first, and with the last; I am he." So the English version runs. But, as Dr. Thomas and others point out, "the first" here is singular, and "the last" plural. Who, then, is "the First ONE"—a manifestation of the Father among "the generations from the beginning"? Who but JESUS, who says: "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last"? (Rev. xxii. 13: i. 8.). It is He who, in verse 27 of this chapter of Isaiah, is styled "*Rishon-le-Zion*, the First to Zion . . . One that bringeth good tidings," the Servant, the Elect, upon whom the spirit of the Lord is poured.

He came in the Father's name, and he spoke of his true disciples as being "in him," and prayed "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xvii. 21). Here, then, "*the last ones*" are visible, together with the Lord Jesus their head, a manifestation of Yahweh, who, by Cyrus, subdued Babylon of old, and who by them will yet subdue all things on earth unto Himself.

"The isles saw it and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came" (v. 5). History repeats itself, or rather God repeats it. Great Babylon feared, and strengthened herself in her gods in the days of Cyrus of old. But it was in vain, for he was Yahweh's servant to destroy them all. And so "Babylon the Great" will strengthen herself in the name of "the Blessed and Holy Trinity," the "Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God," and all the patron "Saints" and "Souls" of her pantheon, when Christ is in the earth again, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." But it will be in vain, for "the Lamb shall overcome

them," avenge His slaughtered saints, and gather Israel again to the covenanted land.

The idols of Pagan Rome have already been subdued by His name in an earthquake that shook the world, and swallowed up the old order of superstition in the fourth century A.D. (Rev. vi. 12-17). The idols of Anti-Christendom were in turn subdued by His sword when Constantinople fell before the Turkish "angel" in 1453 (Rev. ix. 13-21; *Eureka*, vol. ii., 532). And the unrepentant survivors (Rev. ix. 20), contemporary with "the day of his coming," will be similarly subdued "by fire and sword" in the day of the great victory of the Seed of Abraham, God's friend. Jesus himself suffered rejection and death at the hands of apostate Israel and their idolatrous oppressors the Romans. And the saints and the Jews have in turn suffered ever since under Roman Christendom. "Under the rod" has been the status of both during the past nineteen centuries. The saints individually and collectively, as well as the nation of Israel, are all, like the Head, being "made perfect through suffering;" but, unlike him, have by transgression incurred punishment. Nevertheless, there is forgiveness with God, and victory is on their side. In the light of this we may read these exhortations of Isaiah as words of encouragement, warning, and comfort to the faithful remnant of his day, to the Lord Jesus "the Servant" of Yahweh pre-eminently, and, after him, to all of the one body who have ears to hear. Thus, in the face of an idolatrous and antagonistic world, it is said:

"But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend, thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee thou art my servant; I have chosen thee and not cast thee away. Fear not thou, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish" (verses 8-11).

“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” So says Paul; and therefore we are justified, if we are of Abraham’s faith and works, in appropriating this comfort. The Lord himself has “overcome” personally, and holds out a wealth of promises to “him that overcometh.” A faithful testimony incurs many being “incensed against thee,” now as ever. We need to remember the time of Jacob’s arising to “thresh the mountains,” that we may be encouraged to endure unto the end.

When the day of vengeance comes, it goes on to say that there will be a great break-up of spiritual drought, and a planting of the paradise of God in the earth that He may be glorified. This is the import of verses 17-20. At present “the poor and needy seek water, and there is none.” It was so in the days of Jesus. The water is the word of life. In another place in Isaiah (ch. lv.) it is a sign for the “everlasting covenant,” “the sure mercies of David.” But Israel had not the word of God in them, as Jesus told them. In the language of the prophet Ezekiel, the shepherds of Israel had trodden down the pasture and fouled the water, and the flock, said he, “drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.” It was greatly different with “the Good Shepherd” when he came. He ranked it among the miracles that he commended to the memory of John the Baptist in prison, that “to the poor the gospel was preached” (Lu. vii. 22). What the disciples of Jesus enjoyed under his ministration is what is promised to “the poor and needy” of all the earth in the day of his coming again—yea, and more, for it will be immortal administration, “rivers of living water” (John vii. 38). The gospel of the age to come will be preached by Christ and a multitude like him, strong in the possession of the divine nature.

And they will be the “cedars, acacias, myrtles, and olives” of the paradise of God, “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isa. lxi. 3). They “shall be to the Lord *for a name*, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isa. lv. 13). They will be “for the healing of the nations” (Rev. xxii. 2). There will be no mistaking this

development; it will be made plain "that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of Yahweh hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

In view of this certain pre-determination, and the universal incredulity of Israel and the Gentiles, and in the midst of gross superstition, coupled with the assumption of superior wisdom and penetration, the Spirit challenges the idols and the gain-sayers with an invitation to them to PROPHECY! "Produce your cause saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and *shew us what shall happen . . .* declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter."

This is a strong argument. Baal ought to have known what Gideon was about; or what Elijah would do on Mount Carmel; or Jehu in Samaria. Bel and Nebo ought to have been prepared, with all the astrologers, to warn Belshazzar of approaching fate, and the departure of the Babylonian power. The priests of Jupiter and the progeny of gods and goddesses ought to have declared how the great Roman Empire should be broken up before the name of a Jewish Carpenter. But they did not and could not, any more than could the gods of Egypt upon whom "Yahweh executed judgment." And the leaders of Israel in Christ's day, corrupted by Oriental and Hellenic gnosis, or "science falsely so-called," and given over to "covetousness which is idolatry," ought to have known that Jesus was "for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa. viii. 14), "a stumbling-stone and rock of offence," but they knew not, and could not discern the fearful doom but 40 years distant, "though it was declared to them." And Anti-Christendom, "whose real God," according to the true testimony of a popular writer, "is Mammon," is equally powerless to "shew the things that are to come hereafter." Hence in our own day we have Pope Pius IX. solemnly proclaiming his infallibility, with the revolution at the door ready armed to exhibit his folly in a few weeks time to all the world, and pave the way for the taking away of the remnant of the temporal power. So it came to pass in 1870. And can any of the mighty men of the present day, so

dead sure of their own judgment, and so intensely sceptical concerning the Bible, tell us "what shall happen"? Not in the least degree. Apart from God's intervention, the future is a sealed book to all flesh.

But what the idols and their supporters cannot do, God can. He foretells the end from the beginning, and appeals to Israel, saying, "The former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare." He had raised up many prophets before Isaiah's day, as He has many since. He now spoke of CYRUS and his conquests, and also of the Heir, of whom Cyrus was but a type, even the "First to Zion," "One that bringeth good tidings," the "arm of the Lord," revealed because there was no "counsellor" among the best of Zion's sons (xl. 9: xli. 27-29: lxiii. 5: liii. 1).

This was "that prophet" promised in Moses' writings, and dimly expected by the nation. Isaiah speaks of him elsewhere as Zion's "man-child," the first-born (by resurrection) of all her children—"Christ the first-fruits." Even at his first coming, he was not manifested alone. John the Baptist "prepared the way of the Lord," and at his baptism proclaimed him, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." This had the immediate effect of creating a following for Jesus, who chose his apostles, and sent them forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom, which was the "good tidings" of the prophetic word. Hence the plural form of expression: "Behold, behold *them*." With Christ, the apostles were considered as having been begotten by the word of God's truth, "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." But, at the resurrection, "Behold, behold them" will have a higher fulfilment, for "all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed" (lxi. 9). "*The last ones*" will then have been added, forming the completion of the one body in its millennial manifestation.

There was truly a return from Babylon after the captivity, but nothing that then transpired satisfied the language of this prophecy, while the Bringer of good tidings is manifestly associated with Yahweh's Servant in the immediate context (xlii. 1), "Behold my Servant," that is the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the nation of Israel, as the Jews, or some of their leading lights,

foolishly suppose. The scope of the prophetic visions is large and distant. We cannot be guided by those who seem to have no place for the word of God in the latter days, but desire to finish it all up in the history of the past.

Contrasting the shortsightedness and folly of the idolaters of Israel and the Gentiles (ancient and modern), with the omniscience of "the Spirit of the Lord" in Jesus, the result is striking. Jesus foretold his own death and the mode of it, and so it came to pass. He said his words should not pass away, and they have not and will not. He said a certain woman's affectionate extravagance in anointing him with ointment should be advertised for ever; and so it has been to this day, and is growing in notoriety continually. He said he would rise again, and he did. He said Jerusalem should be destroyed within the lifetime of the then present generation; and so it was. Further, that the city should be trodden down of the Gentiles "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"; and it has been so trodden down to this day. At the end of the first century he declared elaborately, by special revelation to John in Patmos, the "things which must be hereafter." And not a line has failed thus far. The nations now, like those of Isaiah's time, are "mad" through Babylonian intoxication; but the truth goes on. A remnant now, as then, has been enlightened as to "things to come." And to them the word of the Lord, by the prophet, comes with the encouraging message: "Fear not, I will help thee."





CHAPTER XLII.

YAHWEH'S SERVANT GIVEN FOR A COVENANT.

AN attentive study of the prophets shows that there is a national and individual application of their writings; the basis being always the true "Israel of God," that is "the elect," Christ and his brethren, for whose sake are all things, whether "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come" (1 Cor. iii. 22). God had spoken to this kernel of the nation as it were in ch. xli. 8, exhorting them to "Fear not." "Thou Israel art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend" . . . "Fear thou not." Here the "servant" is the elect of the nation, for it was these against whom the adversary was "incensed"; and it was these alone who had no cause to fear, and who should be "chosen and not cast away."

But in the opening of ch. xlii., Jacob is called upon to behold God's individual "SERVANT," full of the Spirit of God, a quiet but invincible Man, who should be *given for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles*. Many Jews and Gentiles have blundered over this distinction. The Jews, in their blind and impotent objections to Jesus, press the national view to the exclusion of the individual "Servant" of Yahweh; a procedure which infallibly involves them in endless incongruities, particularly in Isa. liii. As to the Gentiles: whatever belief in Jesus there may be in Christendom, there is little indeed in the true "service" he is to perform in "bringing Jacob again to God," in "the restitution of all things" of which the prophets have spoken.

Isaiah and his faithful brethren, of course, knew that the "Servant" here spoken of was the promised "Son of David," and of God, a man delightful to God, "Immanuel," born of a virgin of the house of David, according to the word of the Lord

given to Isaiah in the days of Ahaz. But neither Isaiah nor any of his contemporaries could look forward with absolutely clear vision to his relation to Israel and the Gentiles in the days of his flesh and afterwards.

It was a strange proclamation: "He shall not strive nor cry," though full of the spirit of the Lord, and anointed to deliver Israel. What could be the explanation? Looking back now, after 2,600 years, it is plain to be seen. Matthew, quoting this chapter (Matt. xii. 14-21), shows that when Jesus, by his miracles, attracted attention and admiration on the part of the people, and excited envy and murderous hatred on the part of the leaders of the people, he withdrew from the public gaze and "charged them that they should not make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my Servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

He was no popular agitator or revolutionary of the type of Theudas, Judas of Galilee, or Bar Cochbar. These had their places, in their day and generation, in the work of God on earth; but the difference between them and Jesus was that they sought to subvert the ascendancy of the Gentiles, and to set up a Jewish dominion on the "this world" basis, the substitution of a further manifestation of Jewish mortal rebellion for the galling Gentile oppression. Whereas Jesus, by the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God and the laying down of his life *for the confirmation in his blood of the everlasting covenant*, sought to take out a people for the Father's name on principles of faith and obedience, that these, with him, might reign deathlessly over the restored nation "in the regeneration," when he should come in his glory and sit upon the throne of David in Mount Zion.

This was a quiet work in its first stages, though in its ultimate development it involves devouring and destruction such as earth has not known since the days of Noah's flood. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." Pharaoh, in the estimation of Rabshakeh about the time Isaiah spoke, was "a bruised reed"—that is, a useless man to rely on. Israel in apostacy, in the days of Abijah, was a "shaken reed," to be smitten of the Lord and uprooted (1 Kings xiv. 15). John the Baptist, on the other hand, was *not* "a reed shaken with the wind" (Matt. xi. 7), but a good staff to lean upon, a man who was "more than a prophet," even the Lord's messenger to prepare his way, "a burning and a shining light," in whom the Jews were willing for a short season to rejoice. These comparisons and contrasts elucidate the beautiful figures of the prophecy. The beloved "Servant," at his first coming, would neither break away any such "reeds" in Israel, nor put out the feeblest of "burning lights." He would strengthen and enlighten, and defer judgment to a distant day.

He himself was no "broken reed" nor smoky light; but a strong and beautiful "rod out of the stem of Jesse," and "a burning and shining light" that eclipsed John altogether, even "the light of the world," "the true light," to whom John so emphatically gave witness (John i.). This is the comparison made in verse 4 of this chapter of Isaiah, as is better seen in the Revised Version, adopting the marginal readings, which are to be preferred. "*He shall not burn dimly, nor be bruised (in the sense of being broken) till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*" And so it came to pass. He shone brightly in Israel during the time appointed, and though given for a sacrifice, he was not prevailed against, but like Aaron's rod that budded and blossomed and brought forth fruit though cut off, he survived by resurrection, that the pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand.

The proclamations made throughout these chapters concerning the "Servant" of Yahweh are very emphatic in their revelations of the Majesty of the Father "of whom are all things." Trinitarian doctrine has obscured the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments

concerning the Unity of God ; but it has arisen out of the perverse disputings of men who let go the Word. This chapter, among others, shows clearly how the Father is the Source of all the power to be manifested in the Son, His beloved Servant. The words, "My servant, *whom I uphold,*" are an example. So also it is said, "*I have put my spirit upon him.*" "*I, Yahweh, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant.*" Much more of like import could be quoted from this and other passages of Isaiah. The doctrine is that all things are of God, and that the Servant should be a manifestation of God in human nature, "Immanuel," "God with us."

The names of God, in their revelation by the prophets, all agree in this. In chapter xli. we saw how God proposed to reveal Himself, in a "First One" and then in a multitude, "the Last Ones." In this chapter this is further related to a Covenant, the Mediator of which should be the "First One" in question. In verse 5 it says: "Thus saith God the Lord." But this by no means expresses the idea of the words Isaiah was inspired to use. It is: "Thus saith Ail himself, Yahweh." The idea is that the ONE POWER of the Universe, HE WHO WILL BE manifested for ever in Israel, says thus and so. The Name Ail, which occurs some twenty-five times in Isaiah, means, radically, Power, and the question at issue in Israel was, Who or what is the great Power? the God of Israel or the gods of the nations after whom Israel was so often wandering? The affirmation of the Father through Isaiah was throughout this part of his prophecy. "I am Ail, and there is none else" (xlvi. 9: xliii. 10-12: xlv. 22). Further, the revelation was that this One Power was "Yahweh" who revealed Himself to Moses at the bush, and would, according to this later revelation, reveal Himself in the Servant who would be the long-promised prophet like unto Moses. All this is lost when the ideas underlying "God" and "Lord" are not perceived; and the exclusively Israelitish character of the divine work is also obscured. In verse 8, we read, in the English version, "I am the Lord, that is my name." And if we neither know that "Lord" wrongly represents Yahweh, nor what doctrinal truth "Yahweh" stands for, we cannot enter into the counsel of God in the matter.

But to return to the proclamation in verse 5: "Thus saith Ail himself (*Ha Ail*), Yahweh, he that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it; *he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and Spirit to them that walk therein*: I, Yahweh, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am Yahweh, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

This is a challenge to all the earth, as well as a gracious proclamation in and for Israel. It raised the question, Was it indeed Yahweh who created all things, and gave breath and spirit to all people? The question has been always before the world wherever the Jewish revelation came. It is with us to-day, and is hotly debated in many circles. The answer, likewise, is with us, more completely now than ever before. In Israel's history, it was given frequently by works of power that left no reasonable doubt behind. The time of the sojourn in Egypt, the plagues of the Exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Manna in the Wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan, the destruction of the Nations of Canaan, the burning of Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and many other mighty works attested the great truth of Yahweh's existence and supremacy over the ordinances of heaven and earth and the gods of the nations.

But now a new test is laid down, a new assurance given concerning the Coming One. And in Jesus the promises, so far as they concern the initial part of his mission, have been redeemed. At the appointed time he came, declaring that he was sent of the Father in righteousness. Acknowledged by direct voice and sign from heaven at his baptism, he wrought miracles which he declared were but the manifestation of "the finger of God." Word and work he attributed to the "Spirit of the Lord" upon him. And above all, he laid down his life, declaring beforehand that his shed blood was "*the blood of the new covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins.*" A covenant in the divine dealings with Israel,

consisted in the typical confirmation of divine promises by the shedding of the blood of animals according to the divine appointment. The original word conveys this idea—a *killing and eating*. The case of Abraham (Gen. xv.); and the giving of the Law (Ex. xxiv. 7-8), are illustrations. And in the Passover, which was instituted before the Law was given, the flesh of the slain lamb roasted with fire was eaten, after its blood had been sprinkled on door-post and lintel, in the night on which God brought Israel out of the “house of bondage” of Egypt.

This being the idea of a *covenant*, what is to be understood when God says He will give His beloved Servant for a covenant, to open blind eyes and bring prisoners out of prison? It is not only in this place that it is so said. The promise is repeated in ch. xlix. 8. “I will preserve thee and *give thee for a covenant.*” Again, Dan. ix. 27, “He (Messiah the Prince) shall *confirm the covenant.*” And again, Zech. ix. 11, “As for thee (O King of Zion), *by the blood of thy covenant* I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” What, then, is to be understood? Manifestly that the Beloved Servant, Messiah the Prince, the King of Zion, must be put to death as a sacrifice, and rising from the dead, according to the scriptures, be endowed with all power to raise up his prisoners of hope and carry out the terms of the covenants of promise that God made with the fathers.

These were the things to be looked for in harmony with many other scriptures which spoke of the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow. If these things be not fulfilled thus far in Jesus, for whom does Israel look? Will they say that the nation is the servant in this place? How could the nation be given for a covenant? Nay, it is “Messiah,” “thy King,” who is for a covenant *of the people*, as well as a light of the Gentiles. A smoky light has the nation been, for the Gentiles or itself. The Jews are very complacent in their assurances that “Israel is the prophet among the nations,” preserved to enlighten the world. They will know better when their King returns from heaven and exhibits in his hands and side the evidences of his having been “*given for a covenant.*”

Many "blind eyes" were opened by Jesus in his ministry, and many prisoners liberated from darkness and bondage. Literally he gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. And this he accounted not more wonderful than calling men out of their native darkness and enlightening them in the gospel of the kingdom of God. Matthew quotes Isa. ix., identifying Jesus as the "great light" that shone in the regions of Galilee among a people who "sat in darkness . . . and the shadow of death" (Matt. iv. 16). What was done then, though a mighty work, was small by comparison with the greater work that lies in the future—the full enlightenment of Israel and the Gentiles. But the world has seen the earnest of it in the coming to pass of what the prophets have spoken concerning the time that has so far elapsed.

When it was said, "I am Yahweh, that is my name," Israel was directed to the revelation of the Memorial Name in the days of Moses. It reminded them of God's gracious and everlasting purpose in the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the Land in which they sojourned and the "Seed" for which, if faithful, they looked. And when it was added: "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images"; it was a rebuke of the then current idolatry, the relics of which are being dug up in the hills of Judea at this day.

And the appeal: "Behold the former things are come to pass," was one that could not be rejected by the least learned of Israel who knew the most elementary facts of the nation's history. Had not God brought them out of Egypt and given them the Land as He had promised? Had He not chastened them for their iniquities and delivered them in their distresses when they cried unto Him? Had He not given them a King in the tribe of Judah as He had promised? Nothing had thus far failed. And now the new things were foretold that Israel might know when they came to pass that it was the word of the Lord. Who can miss the force of this? Has not all come to pass? The time, place, and circumstances related to the manifestation of Christ are the most striking and infallibly con-

vincing proofs that it is the word of the Lord that the prophets have spoken. There is no need to particularise; the frequent use of the expression: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" is a New Testament illustration.

But, whatever "new things" bore testimony to the truth of God in the days of the preaching of Christ, the greatest of them that should be the occasion and theme of the "new song" (v. 10-12) were still in the future, as they are to-day. When the Father brought Messiah himself "out of the prison house" of the grave, or "the horrible pit," He put "a new song" in his mouth, a song of rejoicing and praise to God for the great deliverance (Ps. xl. 3). Many have seen it, and feared, and trusted in God, as the Psalm goes on to say. But they have not "seen" as he saw—as a matter of personal experience. This they will see when "he cometh to judge the earth" (Ps. xcvi. 1: xciii. 1; Rev. v. 9-10). Personally sharing in the victory on the scene of their past struggles in the days of their flesh, when multitudes encountered death in the strife like their Lord, they will "sing, as it were, a new song before the throne" (Rev. xiv. 3), "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; *for thy judgments are made manifest*" (Rev. xv. 3-4).

But the judgments occasioning the new song were to succeed *a long time of divine silence*. "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once" (v. 14). This foreordained silence of God, which has now endured for so long a time since the apostolic age, has been considered in very different ways by different classes of men. God's people, on the one hand, have endured in faith and patience; the blood of thousands crying from the earth for vengeance; and the prayer of all being expressed in the yearnings of the Psalms of David: "Why standest thou afar off, O

Lord, why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Ps. x. 1). "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause; remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily" (Ps. lxxiv. 22). The adversary, on the other hand, has misinterpreted the silence of God altogether, even to the extent of construing it as evidence of His non-existence! There is trouble, say they in effect, and He doth not deliver us; there is wickedness untold, and He doth not arise to judgment. Therefore He is not. Therefore, we must steer the course of our own troubled lives without regard to Him, or the more or less mythical documents that the Jews wish to foist upon us as the revelation of His will that claims our obedience.

From all such deadly fallacies the word delivers us. "The silence of God" is as much a part of His purpose as the thunders of Sinai, and as plainly announced beforehand. It is not alone here that it has been foretold. Micah about the same time foretold a night of darkness for Israel, wherein should be no "vision," "no answer of God" (Mic. iii. 6). Amos foretold a "famine, not of bread, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos viii. 11-12). There was a break in this famine when Jesus was manifested in Israel as "the bread of Life"; but when he ascended into heaven, and the apostolic age passed, famine again supervened; and so far as the voice of divine authority is concerned, endures to the present day. *The written Word* is all that is left us; and is the most direct approach that can now be made to the mind of God. Seeing this was predetermined, we are reconciled to it, and cleave to the Word in the assurance that the "silence of God" will presently be broken as He has declared.

"The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." So all the prophets testify (Isa. xlii. 13; Jer. xxv. 30; Hos. xi. 10; Joel iii. 16; Amos i. 2). When this occurs, and His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. But before this terrible time follows the prevailing silence, there have been prepared a people who have believed and obeyed notwithstanding that silence. Israel's blindness has been the Gentile's opportunity. These have partaken of the holy things which Israel short-sightedly rejected. This is

before us in Isaiah's prophecy in this place, and in a later message still more clearly.

Rebuking the idolaters, God says: "Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind but my servant? or deaf as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is at peace with me (R.V.), and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not." Here the *national* "servant" comes into view again, the national "messenger," or rather the leaders in the priesthood; "For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for *he is the messenger* of the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. ii. 7). But this "messenger" became culpably blind and deaf, though professing great acuteness of mental vision, and though "seeing many things" with the natural eyes, and hearing the words of God which Jesus spoke. When he came, he encountered the "messenger" and showed him "many things." He healed a man born blind (John ix.), and thereby came in collision with the Pharisees because he had done it on the sabbath. They therefore blindly pronounced him a "sinner"; and when the man maintained the contrary on account of his eyesight, they excommunicated him. And Jesus, finding him, further enlightened him mentally and morally, and said, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not, might see; *and that they which see, might be made blind.*" And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

This incident graphically illustrates the blindness of the Lord's "servant" and "messenger," who saw these things, and yet could not see Jesus in the true light, and who heard his words, and yet could not hear aright. "Why," said he, "do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word (*logos*, doctrine)." "They could not believe, because Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them" (John viii. 43: xii. 39). From

all this, it appears (as from other scriptural considerations) that men may become so hardened that even "many miracles" may fail to cause them to see the truth. This blindness is incurable; but the blindness that is merely native ignorance, and not related to deliberate wickedness, is not so, as Jesus says. Many such blind persons were enlightened by the preaching of Jesus and the apostles, while the leaders of the nation wandered on in darkness unto judgment and death.

But if the national "servant" and "messenger" was blind and deaf, the individual "Servant" and "Messenger of the Covenant" was not. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, so that even in the days of his flesh he judged not after the sight of his eyes, nor reproved after the hearing of his ears, but with divine insight and justice (Isa. xi.). "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law and make it honourable." God, in Christ, magnified the law and vindicated it against the blind and deaf who were corrupters of God's way. While these stumbled and fell, the word was fulfilled which said, "Build up the testimony, seal the law *among my disciples*" (Isa. viii. 16). These were the people in *whose heart* was the law of God (Isa. li. 7), who were not to fear the reproach of men, and in whom the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in that they walked not after the flesh but after the spirit (Rom. viii. 4).

Christ himself said he was not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil (Matt. v. 17, 18), and that not a jot or tittle should pass from the law till all was fulfilled. Probed with hard questions, he resolved the law into two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." And, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 34-40). And he personally illustrated this in perfection, and became "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4). He alone of all the sons of men "continued in all things that are written in the law to do them." Yet even he came under the curse

of the law, for Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; *for it is written*, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." "God sent forth His son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iii. 13: iv. 4). Being sinless and obedient unto death, he was raised from the dead and exalted above all "for his righteousness sake." Thus he "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in himself of twain (the circumcision and the uncircumcision—Jew and Gentile) one new man, so making peace" (Eph. ii. 15).

"In himself"—the way "into Christ" was made plain by the apostolic preaching. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved:" such was the Lord's commission to them. They preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and repentance and remission of sins "in his name." By this means, while the bulk of Israel were, as Isaiah declared, "a people robbed and spoiled, snared in holes, hid in prison houses, and appointed for a prey" (v. 22), some were delivered. The question, "Who among you will give ear to this? Who will hearken and hear *for the time to come?*" found considerable answer in the days of the apostles, and at one time even "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The question is still in season, and Jacob is still spoiled. "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law." This is the explanation of Israel's unparalleled sufferings. Few indeed discern it aright; but these few the truth has enlightened. And in the national aspirations in Jacob that are now arresting the attention of the world, these few see an earnest of that final redemption of Israel of which the prophet goes on to speak.



CHAPTER XLIII.

GOD'S WITNESSES.

THE forty-third chapter, which ought not to be divorced from its context by the chapter division, goes on to say that the end of Jacob's being given for a spoil is marked, and the redemption of Israel from the robbers assured. Who is covered by these terms, Jacob and Israel? And what manner of time does the spirit of Christ in Isaiah signify by the expression: "*But now*, thus saith the Lord"?

As regards the first question, we are instructed by Paul that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. ix. 6, 7). Again, "As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom. xi. 28). And elsewhere he tells us that "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly . . . but he is a Jew which is one inwardly" (Rom. ii. 29). And if we ask, "How can a man be a Jew inwardly?" he answers, "By being baptised into Christ," for, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29).

When, therefore, we read these prophecies of Isaiah concerning Jacob and Israel, we must bear in mind the divine distinction between "the children of the flesh" and "the children of the promise." The former will indeed be the subjects of a *national* vindication and redemption "for the fathers' sakes," in fulfilment of the ancient covenants. But the latter only will experience the highest and individual redemption, and enter upon "eternal inheritance" in the kingdom of God.

So then "Jacob" and "Israel" cover first, Christ and his brethren, and secondly, the national Israel, "the children of the flesh" of Abraham. Christ has already personally passed through the waters (Psa. xviii. 16: lxix. 1, 2, 14), by which, however, he was not fatally submerged. He has individually passed through the fiery trial and come forth as gold. His people, from that time forth, have been in process of suffering the same experience. And nationally Israel has been going through fire and water for the last twenty centuries or more. What is to be the end of it all?

This brings us to the question of the time signified by the *now*." This is indicated in this place not arithmetically (as it is in others); but inferentially, by historical allusions that are elsewhere defined to be related to *a divinely determined repetition of history*. That is to say, we are not here told that the vision shall be for 2,400 years, or any other arithmetically-measured time; but that it relates to certain developments in Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba, and North, South, East, and West, in relation to Israel, which, when they should happen, would herald the redemption of Israel, both "the children of promise" and "the children of the flesh," and their return to the covenanted land, that the throne and kingdom of David might therein be established for ever according to the divine covenant.

Apostolic allusion indicates this beyond question. Thus, Paul says that "Blindness in part is happened to Israel (the "blind servant"—Isa. xlii.), *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel* shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them *when I shall take away their sins*" (Rom. xi. 25-27). The advent of the Deliverer, then, is the time alluded to in the "now" of Isa. xliii. 1.

And this Deliverer, the manifestation of the Father in Israel, is "the Holy One of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. xliii. 3), to whom it is given to "bring Jacob again to God" (xlix. 5). But what relation has he to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, and to North, South, East, and West in the national "regeneration," in which he promised his apostles "twelve thrones"? (Matt. xix.). Christendom

would say, "No relation at all; it is a grossly carnal conception of a spiritual kingdom." But the most ardently "spiritualizing" preacher of Christendom would have to admit that Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, and other countries, have had very much to do with Israel's redemption in the past national history. The question is, leaving out of account the "blind servants" of a Laodicean Israel or Christendom: Is the allusion here historic only, or prophetic? And if the latter, How does past history afford a precedent for the fulfilment of the prophecy?

The answer to the first question is that it is both historic and prophetic, and invites "the children of the promise" to a study of historical deliverances as an earnest of the greater and complete redemption that is to come. As to the second question: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba have already in some measure been given for Israel's ransom, as the Bible and profane history testify.

And first as to the Bible. Abram himself went down into Egypt at the first because of the famine in Canaan; and Pharaoh, having taken possession of Sarai, was plagued because of her, and therefore restored her to Abram, and sent him away (Gen. xii.). Thus God rebuked a King of Egypt for Abram's sake. Joseph was sold into Egypt, where he was made perfect by suffering, and exalted to lordship over the Land preparatory to the settlement of Jacob and his whole family in the Land of Goshen. After this, in process of time, God gave Egypt for Jacob's ransom when he plagued the people with great plagues, slew their first-born, executed judgment upon their gods, and finally drowned Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, which Israel crossed in safety, and were "baptised into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." This is the great typical deliverance, foreshadowing what is coming under Jesus, the prophet like unto Moses.

Long after this, even after Isaiah's time, Egypt was given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, as both Jeremiah and Ezekiel testified it should be (Jer. xliv. 30). That was a time of Israelitish apostacy and worship of the Egyptian "Queen of Heaven." But as the result of the overthrow "a small number" escaped the sword and returned to the Land of Judah, and knew that the word of the Lord

stood fast. Afterwards came the Persian dynasty that proclaimed Israel's return from Babylon, some of the proclamations being recorded in the Bible (Ezra and Nehemiah). Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were given to the Persians for Israel's ransom, as it were. Cyrus conquered Ethiopia, and put it under tribute, as Xenophon informs us. And afterwards Cambyses conquered the whole country, and brought to an end the line of Egyptian kings. Henceforth Egypt became "a base kingdom," in harmony with the word of God (Ezek. xxix.).

So far we see the historical bearings of the matter before and after Isaiah's time up to the advent in the flesh of "the Deliverer." When he appeared he was brought out of Egypt in his infancy, just as the nation had been under Moses his prototype. But from that day to this, there has been no ransom of Israel comparable at all with the days of the Exodus or the Return from Babylon. Israel is more widely scattered than ever, and there has as yet been no bringing from the East, gathering from the West, compelling the North to "give up," and adjuring the South to "keep not back," but to bring the dispersed from afar to Mount Zion (Isa. xliii. 5-6).

Yet there are many signs that this is about to be accomplished, and the lands of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba are manifestly associated with the divine purpose of the latter days. It is, of course, notorious that these countries are now occupied by Britain, and that the Khedivate and Turkish suzerainty are practically mere formalities that cannot hide the fact that Britain is virtual ruler of the country. In fact, at the present time, Britain may truly be said to occupy at once the positions of latter-day Tyre and Egypt, or "the King of the South" of Dan. xi. 40. In 1882, and during subsequent and recent years, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, have been very much mixed up with British military enterprise, and most of the territory corresponding to these ancient names is now in British occupation. And Britain alone among the Great Powers is amicably related to oppressed Israel.

The bearing of these things was clearly discerned over fifty years ago by Dr. Thomas, who wrote as follows, in *Elpis Israel*, in 1849:—

“Britain will not interest itself in behalf of the subjects of God’s kingdom from pure generosity, piety towards God, or love of Israel; but upon the principles which actuate all the governments of the world—upon those, namely, of the lust of dominion, self-preservation, and self-aggrandizement. God, who rules the world, and marks out the bounds of habitation for the nations, will make Britain a gainer by the transaction. He will bring her rulers to see the desirableness of *Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, which they will be induced, by the force of circumstances, probably, to take possession of.* They will, however, before the battle of Armageddon, be compelled to retreat from Egypt and Ethiopia; for “the king of the north shall stretch forth his hand upon the land of Egypt, which shall not escape; and the Libyans and Ethiopians shall be at his steps.” Hence, these will become the battleground for a time, until the seat of the war is removed to the mountains of Israel, where, by the Autocrat’s discomfiture, the war is brought to an end between the image-giant of Assyria and the Lion of the north and east.

“The possession, or ascendancy of Britain in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, *will naturally lead to the colonization of Palestine by the Jews.* Thus the proverb will be verified which saith, ‘The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.’ Though generations of the Jews have been ‘stiff-necked and perverse,’ yet their nation is a ‘holy nation,’ which other nations are not, inasmuch as Israel is the only nation God has separated to Himself for a peculiar people. In view of what has been presented, Jehovah saith to them, ‘Fear not, O Israel; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.* Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee; *therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.* Fear not, for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the

east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, even every one that is called by my name: for *I have created Israel for my glory*; yea, I have formed him; yea, I have made him' (Isaiah xliii. 1-7).

"Thus the Lord disposes of nations and countries as it pleases Him. To 'the land shadowing with wings,' which shall proclaim their return to the dust of their fathers, He will give Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as their ransom; and enable them, through its power, 'to lay their hands upon Edom and Moab'; and to obtain the ascendancy over 'the children of Ammon.' Thus they will settle in these countries of the Red Sea; to which they will be attracted by the riches to be acquired through their connection with the commerce of the east; which will then resume its channel of the olden time, when Israel and the British, like Solomon's servants and the men of Tyre, will drive a thriving trade between the Indian and China seas, and the nations of the west."—(*Elpis Israel*, pages 398-9.)

From this it will be perceived how well "the hope of Israel" was understood from the prophets by Dr. Thomas fifty years ago. The events of the past half-century have entirely justified his expectations, and proved, like all preceding centuries, that the sure word of prophecy is indeed "a light that shineth in a dark place."

At the risk of some little repetition, it may be permissible to recall the circumstances of Israel's position when Egypt was given to Nebuchadnezzar for wages for his army, because of his service for the Lord against Tyre (Ezek. xxxix.). At that time, Egypt was the confidence of Judah, who were in a state of national apostacy, despising the word of the prophets, and worshipping the Queen of Heaven. To carry out the latter-day repetition of the history (which is divinely proposed), Russia must receive Egypt for her humbling of Britain, in whose shadow Israel vainly trusts, while rejecting the prophecies concerning his "Deliverer," and being befuddled with the latter-day Gentile theology, which is the direct lineal descendant (through Alexandrian philosophy) of

the ancient Egyptian superstition concerning "the Queen of Heaven." It is certain that Israel will never be converted to the truth and the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and "Deliverer," until he does actually deliver them after the types of Joseph and Moses of old, each of whom in his turn was rejected and despised of his brethren.

As to the type of Cyrus and the Return from Babylon, we have seen in a previous chapter, that Cyrus was a figure of Christ himself, whose special function it is to bring Jacob again to God.

Egypt, Ethiopia (or Cush), and Seba are in many other places associated with the latter-day deliverance of Israel. Psalm lxxviii., speaking of the triumph of God in Christ and the restoration of Israel, says, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" (v. 31). Joseph, Moses, Jesus, and many subordinate "princes" will have to do with the second Exodus. And as to the forwardness of Ethiopia, it is to be remembered that even now there exists in Abyssinia a corrupt form of Christianity, sprung from the planting of the gospel through the Ethiopian eunuch, the servant of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles (ch. viii.). Isaiah, in ch. xi., associates the second Exodus from Egypt and Ethiopia (Cush), and other countries with the standing up of the Root of Jesse for an Ensign. In ch. xix., upon which more light is to be anticipated in the near future, he speaks of the Lord's advent in a time of commotion and civil war, in which, at length, the land of Judah becomes a terror to Egypt, and the country itself is at last delivered and turned to the Lord with Israel and Assyria. Again, in ch. xxvii., he speaks of the "outcasts in Egypt," and of the trumpet of Jubilee, that shall cause them to return to their possessions and "worship the Lord in the Holy Mount at Jerusalem."

Zephaniah, speaking of the latter-day "indignation," says that Yahweh's suppliants shall come from beyond the rivers of Cush, or Ethiopia (ch. iii.). And Micah says (ch. vii.) that the latter-day performance of the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham shall be "according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt,"

and that by reason of the judgments executed, the nations shall be confounded at Israel's might.

It is superfluous to add more. The time and nature and place of the coming deliverance are established beyond question, although to Israel and the nations all these are absolutely unknown. This, indeed, is contemplated in the prophecy:—"Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified; or let them hear and say: It is truth" (verses 8-9). But neither Israel nor all the nations are now in a mood to do either. Both are under the veil. "Strong delusion" prevails over them, and their case is hopeless until the Lord Himself is made known in judgment.

"But ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my Servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared and have saved, and I have showed when there was no strange God among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?"

Where Israel and all nations are impotent, the Eternal Father thus reveals Himself as the Fountain and Source of all things, and the Revealer of His purpose with man. The "I" so often repeated in this proclamation is a challenge to all the gods of the heathen, not excepting the Trinitarian phantom of Anti-Christendom. The Unity of God is the doctrine of Moses and the Prophets, and Jesus and the Apostles, consistently throughout the Scriptures, and a more emphatic declaration of it than this passage could not be conceived.

The "witnesses" are of different orders. "The children of the flesh" are witnesses of one order, in their experiences of suffering and deliverances in all their history. They are impassive and involuntary witnesses, and are at the present time, even in

their dispersion, somewhat complacent over the matter. "Israel is the prophet among the nations" is the sentiment. And, in a sense, it is true. But "the children of the promise" are witnesses of a higher order. With them the covenants of God are made, and they "witness" in a higher manner by faith and obedience, "showing forth the praises of Him who has called them." Of this class are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and all the prophets; and, above all, the Lord Jesus Christ, "the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." The worthy dead, from Abel downwards, are apostolically described as "a great cloud of witnesses," who, by a figure, are said to "compass us about." And the exhortation apostolically based upon the prospect is: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

For the sake of these witnesses, the word of God continues:—"Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sakes have I sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships." And the passage goes on to declare that the hosts of Israel's enemies "shall lie down together, they shall not rise, they are EXTINCT, they are quenched as tow," or as flax, or a wick; contrast the unquenched "smoking flax" of ch. xlii. 3.

But whatever extinguishing there was of Israel's enemies in the fifth century before Christ, in the overthrow of Babylon and the subsequent liberation of the captives; there was nothing at all comparable with the "quenching" that is here foreshadowed, and the subsequent gathering of Israel from the four quarters of the earth. Moreover, ancient Babylon and Chaldea was not anything of a maritime power by comparison with mystical Babylon of the latter-days, "who sitteth upon many waters." There are literal and mystical elements combined here; but without confusion. "Whose cry is in the ships" points to the naval scramble of the latter-days, when Tarshish has to put to all his strength to keep pace with the growing navies of European Babylon. "The king of the north," says Daniel, is in the time of the

end to come against the king of the south "with chariots and with horsemen and WITH MANY SHIPS" (Dan. xi.). In 1877, in the Russo-Turkish war, there was an endeavour to see the fulfilment of this prophecy, or at least an incipient fulfilment, in the Russian employment of many boats to cross the Danube. There were premature expectations in those days. Now, however, there are "many ships" with a vengeance, and their number is still growing. What a veritable "lake of fire" in the midst of the earth will the Mediterranean be in the crisis that looms in the future! Imagine, off the ancient Tyrian shore, the combined navies of Russia, Austria, Germany, France, and Italy, on the one side, and Britain, the United States, and Japan, on the other, and we see something like the vision that the prophet spoke of. Both Tyrian and Babylonian powers are doomed, for "the Lord of Hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth" (Isa. xxiii. on Tyre). But mercantile Tyre will survive, and be subjected in humble alliance with the greater than Solomon, according to the ancient type. But "Babylon the Great" will be overthrown like Sodom, and "every shipmaster, and all the company in ships" will bewail her irretrievable fall; while the apostles and prophets will correspondingly rejoice (Rev. xviii. 17). Thus the Lord will "make a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters." "For the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters (whereon Babylon the Great sits), yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psa. xciii.).

But Israel remembered not the former things, neither considered the things of old, which were but typical of his final and world-wide deliverance. Therefore God, as He had beforetime revealed through Moses, now through Isaiah again declared that He would be honoured even by the unclean beasts of the Gentiles; "Behold, I will do a *new thing*; now shall it spring forth: shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall know me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people,

my chosen. *This people* have I formed for myself; *they* shall show forth my praise. But *thou* hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel" (Isa. xliii. 19-22).

Here the "now" points to the days of the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. When he appeared in the "wilderness," he said: "I am the way . . . no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And when he ascended into heaven, and the Word had been rejected by Jacob (though a goodly "remnant" responded to the Gospel), God specially revealed to Peter, on the housetop at Joppa, about A.D. 40, by vision from heaven thrice repeated, the divine purpose to cleanse the wild and unclean beasts of the Gentiles, that they, with the faithful in Jacob, might "honour" Him, and become "witnesses" that He is God, and wait for the consolation of Israel. This is written in Acts x.-xi., and is further argued out and endorsed by the Holy Spirit in chapter xv. Hence, as we have obtained "like precious faith" by the apostolic word, we find ourselves included in the gracious purpose of God here spoken by the prophet, and take the words as an exhortation to "remember" and "consider" our past and present estate, and to "honour" God accordingly in obedience and waiting for His Deliverer.





CHAPTER XLIV.

JESHURUN, THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.

THOUGH Jacob should be given to the curse and Israel to reproaches, yet there was hope in his end, as is proclaimed in chapter xlv., which, like the preceding chapter, suffers from the division introduced by the chapter heading. Again, the divine distinctions between “the children of the flesh” and “the children of the promise” must be borne in mind, lest the promises be misapplied. There is a national and temporal salvation for Israel, and there is an individual and eternal salvation for “Israelites indeed,” whether of Jewish or Gentile extraction, of which Christ is the great example and Author.

Therefore we read these assurances and promises and encouragements first with reference to Him, next with reference to “his seed,” and finally with reference to the national salvation of the seed of Abraham, the signs of which we now see so plainly appearing.

This application of the matter, which is necessitated by the gospel of the kingdom, throws much light on all the expressions of the spirit of God by the prophet, and deeply impresses us with the divine authority of the record, and the necessity of holding fast to the Word in faith and obedience, that our eyes may be opened, and not closed for disobedience; and that we may have hope in Israel’s salvation about to be revealed.

“Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, JESHURUN, whom I have chosen.”

Here is Christ before us: the personal Servant of God; Jacob, who shall supplant and supersede the children of Esau;

Israel, the Prince with God, who has wrestled for the blessing and prevailed; JESHURUN, the beloved Righteous One, whom the Father has chosen; "who rideth upon the heavens in Israel's help, and in his excellency on the sky" (Deut. xxxiii. 26).

This term JESHURUN (*Delightful, Righteous One*) is only found in the prophets in this place, and only three times elsewhere, namely, in Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii. It is there found in Moses' song, and in his last blessing of the tribes. In the song it is applied to the nation of Israel, "Yahweh's portion and the lot of his inheritance." Though delivered from bondage and blessed abundantly, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked . . . and forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." He provoked God to anger and moved Him to jealousy by his idolatry, so that God determined to provoke him to anger and move him to jealousy by the call of the Gentiles (Rom. x.). In the accomplishment of this purpose the individual JESHURUN comes into view—in contrast with the national—for *He* waxed not fat nor kicked, nor forsook God who made him, nor lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

He it is (and "his seed") who is the subject of the gracious promise: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour *my spirit* upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (v. 3). "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." These sayings of Jesus at once identify him with the prophecy, and define the thirst in question and the nature of its satisfaction. In John's account in the last passage quoted (vii. 39), he goes on to say: "This he spake of *the Spirit* which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." But when Jesus was glorified, then, on the day of Pentecost, and in fulfilment of this and other prophecies, the spirit was poured out upon "his seed," and God's blessing upon "his offspring," in the manner recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. But even this was only an earnest of what shall be, for their "hunger and thirst"

was only partially satisfied. Like David, they still longed exceedingly for the time when they should, like their Lord, "come and appear before God." But in following JESHURUN the Chosen One, this was at last assured. In due time they will come forth from the grave as he did, and the spirit will be poured upon them to the extent of swallowing up mortality of life, and revealing them as "the spirits of just men made perfect," even as "the Lord the spirit"; for, as he said to Nicodemus, "that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

The things recorded of "the elect" of Jacob in v. 5 bring before us other beautiful features of the work of Christ, past and future. "One shall say I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

More emphatically the first clause may be rendered, "This one saith, For Yahweh am I." Looking at Christ as the Head and source of it all, we realise at once that this was his motto. It reminds us of the superscription on the holy crown of the High Priest of Israel: "Holiness to the Lord." This crown of pure gold with its engraved legend had attached to it a lace of blue by which it was "fastened on high upon the mitre." The pure gold is the refined and precious faith, and the blue is the healing, and the symbol finds its substance in the holiness and faith of Christ, and his wonderful works of physical and moral healing, which are yet but the earnest of "greater works" to come as he has promised. And as he was on earth (and indeed as he will be), so will "his seed" be. The immortal declaration of every one will then be what now is but a matter of blemished aspiration—"For Yahweh am I!"

"And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." Here again Christ, past and future (and "his seed" after him), comes into view. Jacob is Supplanter—the last who became first—and who took away the birthright from the profane, by whom he was hated and threatened with death. Look at Christ in conflict with the priesthood, by whom he was hated, and at last slain; and whom nevertheless he supplanted by resurrection, superseding the

whole Mosaic economy. Truly he is Jacob by pre-eminence. And "his seed" after him share his experience in the flesh, and will share his victory. The whole existing disorder of Anti-Christendom will be supplanted by them. They are of Jacob already, and will thoroughly carry out the doctrine of the name hereafter.

"And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord;" or "shall write on his hand, For Yahweh." Here, again, we are reminded of the consecration of the High Priest, the thumb of whose right hand was cleansed with the blood of the ram of consecration, the substance of which is the blood of Christ, that sanctifies himself and his companion priests for the service of Yahweh's house. The right hand of the healed leper also was cleansed with the blood of the sacrifice, and afterwards anointed with oil by the priest, who poured the remnant of the oil that was in his left hand upon the head of the healed leper (Lev. xiv.). Jesus, when *he*, with a touch, healed "a man full of leprosy," said that this was "for a testimony unto them" (Lu. v. 14). Afterwards, in crucifixion, the blood of consecration dyed his own hands when he stretched them forth in sacrifice, saying, "For Yahweh am I." And when, in the glad healing of the resurrection and change into the holy spirit nature, he exhibited those same wounded hands to his disciples, the antitype of the anointing oil, "the oil of joy" was revealed. Henceforth he was exalted as Zion's first-born man-child (Isa. lxvi. 7), of whom, as of herself, it is written, "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands (Isa. xlix. 16). Those who follow Christ in "taking up their cross," write upon their hands "For Yahweh." And if they draw not back, they, with him, will be graven upon Yahweh's hands for ever.

There is in the world another marking of the hand which is not "For Yahweh," but "For the Beast." By Papal decree the priests and monks are anointed in the hand "in the form of a cross." The hands of these marked ones are *against* Yahweh, and against His people, whose blood they have shed abundantly in times past. Hence the proclamation hereafter of condign punishment upon any who shall, after

due warning, dare to receive such a mark in their hand (Rev. xiv. 9-11). And the *absence of this mark* is actually one of the conditions of reigning with Christ (Rev. xx. 4). There is thus great discrimination called for here. Because we happen to see certain men professing Christ marked in the hand with much unctuous ritual, we are not to suppose that they are therefore acceptable to Christ and to the Father. Far otherwise. Those for whom now we write are well aware of this, and of the distinction with so vital a difference between the "mark of the beast," and "the seal of the living God." In belief of "the gospel of the kingdom of God," and baptism into Christ upon repentance, they have written upon their hands "For Yahweh." They have "set to their seal that God is true." They have come out from the unbelievers; and, unless "blotted out" for apostacy, will hereafter be "written in the Lamb's book of life."

"And another shall surname himself by the name of Israel," or "shall entitle himself by the name of Israel." Here again are Christ and "his seed." He is Israel, the Prince with God, who has successfully wrestled for the blessing, and by reason of whom his forefather Israel himself will come forth from the grave to eternal life. And his brethren, like him and like Jacob of old, are wrestlers for the blessing "till the breaking of the day." They are entitled Israel now by reason of the wrestling; they will be entitled Israel in the Resurrection because by Christ they will be "made princes in all the earth" (Psa. xlv. 16).

And all these units of the "one body" are of "one Father"—His "many sons," whom He is "bringing to glory" by the Chosen One (Jeshurun), even the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is again proclaimed by the prophet: "I am the First, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (v. 6). Here, "the last" is singular, and not plural, as in xli. 4. But the doctrine is the same. The Father, manifested in Christ, is "THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. i. 8). This was not the world's doctrine in Isaiah's day (and Israel had gone

off after the heathen); nor is it the world's doctrine now, even in Christendom. As an abstract proposition, Mohammedanism is nearer the truth *in this respect* than Christendom, for it at least recognises that there is but One God. From a remote antiquity the doctrine of the Trinity has come down from Egypt and Babylonia, corrupting the truth of God enshrined in the Holy Oracles. In Isaiah's day, the Baalism of Damascus and Assyria, and the corresponding superstitions of Egypt, combined to corrupt and suppress the true worship of the Father in Israel. Hence these emphatic remonstrances, these appeals to the national history and experience, and these pungent exposures of the vanity of such idolatry.

We can imagine, in some measure, the experience of Isaiah and his brethren in Israel in such a state of affairs. Christ afterwards, of whom Isaiah and his sons were a type, is the great example, declaring the name of the Father, against those who professed the knowledge of God but in works denied Him. But Isaiah and his circle foreshadowed Christ's experience, and that of his people after him. Theirs it was to suffer shame and contempt for His name's sake in a dry and thirsty land. Theirs it was to "witness" for the truth; and theirs was the comfort which, by the Spirit, the prophet was caused to put on record for the generations to come: "Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have not I told thee from old time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no Rock. I know not any" (v. 8).

The fall of Sennacherib and his host would be a very great comfort to the prophet and "the poor," his companions; and a very sweet vindication of his words and attitude in Israel. But though "the Rock of Israel" triumphed in this, so bad is flesh and blood that "Israel soon forgot," as in the former days, and the gods that had been smitten, still were worshipped, and Yahweh still insulted.

Abstractly, it would strike us as an extraordinary thing that God should have to explain to Israel that molten and graven images are unprofitable vanities, and that a thing made by a workman cannot be God (Hos. viii. 6). Yet, as a sorrowful matter of history, such has been the case throughout all Israel's genera-

tions down to the present time. When the word passed on to the Gentiles, Paul, on Mars Hill, used the same argument with beautiful appositeness to the circumstances surrounding the Greek superstitions he encountered (Acts xvii.). "Certain of your own poets," said he, "have said, We also are his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art or man's device." Some yielded to his argument, and turned from "these vanities" "to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven."

But as with Israel before, so with Christendom afterwards; though God revealed Himself in so unmistakable a manner in the person of Christ and in the works of the apostles, yet it was soon forgotten, and they lapsed into idolatry as gross as any that had defiled Israel of old. Even in the apostles' days the germs of apostacy were there. Paul wrote to the Corinthians against idolatry, and John concludes an epistle with the exhortation: "Little children, keep yourselves from the idols," which, of course, involves all that alienates from "the true God and eternal life."

But in the course of centuries veneration of martyrs and worship of relics and pictures, after the style still current in Russo-Greek, and Roman Christianity, waxed worse and worse. In the seventh century God sent the Mohammedans against the image-worshippers, who were by them regarded as "infidels" and idolaters. They "tormented" the "unsealed" for a period of three hundred years. Yet they were not cured. Then came the great Turkish inundation, which, in nearly four hundred years more, resulted in the overthrow and taking of Constantinople and the extinction of the Eastern Empire. In this crisis the images again proved themselves to be vanity, for "the celestial image of the Virgin," which was paraded by the Greeks, could not deliver itself or them. But even this great overthrow did not make the image-worshippers repent, as we are told in Rev. ix. 20, "They repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils (demons, the ghosts of the Virgin and "saints" and "souls"), and idols of gold and silver and brass,

and stone and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk."

Nearly four hundred years later the Napoleonic wars tormented the idolaters of Europe who still "repented not of their deeds." And the system remains to this day. Christendom, Romish and Protestant, is one vast monument of idolatry, differing not in essence, but only in form, from that rebuked by Isaiah seven hundred years before Christ. In our own country there is unceasing war against the advancing Romanising tendencies of the age; but the Protestants themselves are but a daughter of the same "mother" (Rev. xvii.), faithless of the promises of God, and only a little less pronounced in their worship of the Virgin, and the "saints" and "souls" of Rome's calendar. Judged by the word of the prophets it is true of the whole body politic of Anti-Christendom, as of Jacob of old: "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turneth him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (v. 20). "They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes (or literally *daubed* their eyes, because of their daubing with untempered mortar, see Ezek. xiii. 10, &c.). He hath shut their eyes so that they cannot see; and their hearts that they cannot understand" (v. 18).

This is truly "a marvellous work." Christ himself expressly declared that it was part of his work—"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind" (John ix. 39). And those who were made blind were the ecclesiastical lights of the chosen people. And those who were enlightened were an obscure remnant. And what has been may be again—and is. "God shall send them strong delusion that they believe a lie," says Paul (2 Thess. ii. 11). Why? "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved . . . because they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Here is the plain philosophy of the matter, and here is our opportunity for examining ourselves. If we hold not the love of the truth in obedience and the hope of salvation, we shall repeat the history of the idolaters, and from us will be taken away even that we

have. Every generation illustrates this in some individuals. Let us therefore be warned.

“Remember these things, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me” (v. 21). To every one who has by the gospel become incorporated in Israel this exhortation applies, and this word of comfort. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud thy transgression, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.” Individually our sins are blotted out as concerns the past in baptism. Thenceforward we have an Advocate with the Father, who intercedes on our behalf if we sin not wilfully. But ultimately sins are only blotted out finally “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ” again from heaven in the times of restitution of which Isaiah and all the prophets speak (Acts iii. 19). Then also Israel nationally will be forgiven and return to God, and all the earth will rejoice “because the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel” (v. 23).

Then follows a proclamation concerning the next great historical and typical deliverance of which Israel should be the subject after suffering the term of judgment for their sins—that is, the return from the Babylonian captivity after the fall of Babylon before the Medes and Persians. It is introduced by a rehearsal of Yahweh’s majesty and mighty works—His forming of Israel, His creation of the heavens and earth, His defeating of the adverse wisdom of the world, His confirmation of the word of His servant, and counsel of His messengers, His decree for the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah, His mandate for the drying up of the Babylonian deep—these are the excellencies the rehearsal of which prefaces the sudden introduction of Cyrus, His “shepherd,” as a type of the Greater Shepherd of Israel, and his commission to destroy Babylon and liberate the captives of Jacob. The name and attributes and work of Cyrus belong to the following chapter.



CHAPTER XLV.

CYRUS AND JESUS.

IN the twenty-eighth verse of the forty-fourth chapter, Cyrus is abruptly introduced by name as though standing in the presence of Yahweh. We read of Yahweh "that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

From this it has been supposed that this portion of the prophecy must belong to the time of Cyrus himself, and that Isaiah could not have written it. Therefore the "higher critics" have invented "the Babylonian Isaiah," "Isaiah the second"; notwithstanding the fact that the New Testament quotations of the prophet all assume unity of the authorship.

Josiah was named about 300 years before his birth, and why not Cyrus? And if it be objected that the form of speech here is a direct apostrophising of Cyrus, it may be answered that in Isa. viii. 8, we have as direct an apostrophising of Immanuel. And Immanuel, be it remembered, was the name of Mary's son, and not of an angelic being of prior existence. There is really no need for the supposition of a later authorship, nor any difficulty in God's speaking of a man or even to a man before his birth. It was expressly said by the Spirit to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). This illustrates the case of Cyrus.

Various definitions of the name Cyrus are proposed; but the one that seems best to fit the history and typical necessities of the case is that which takes it to mean "Like the Heir." The allusions

of this prophecy bear this out in a striking manner. Cyrus is called "my shepherd"; and Jesus "the Heir" is "the good Shepherd." Cyrus was to build Jerusalem and the temple, and let go the captives from Babylon; and Jesus is "the man whose name is the Branch," and who shall build the temple of the Lord; and he will let go Yahweh's captives, for he is already said to have "led captivity captive and given gifts unto men" (Eph. iv. 8; Psa. lxxviii. 18). Cyrus is actually called Yahweh's Messiah or Anointed (Isa. xlv. 1), "the only place in Isaiah where the term Messiah occurs; and the only instance in the scriptures where it is borne by a heathen king." And in this he is "like the Heir"; for Jesus is the Messiah.

And other illustrations may be adduced; but let these suffice here. But not only the allusions of the scriptures, but the testimony of history, further illustrates the matter and attests the truth of the prophecy. Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, a Persian of the royal family of Archæmenidæ, and Mandane, daughter of Astyages the Mede. Astyages had given his daughter to a Persian as a political expedient, and by reason of certain dreams concerning a son she would bear, sought to have him slain as soon as he was born. In this he was defeated by the officer to whom he entrusted the matter, and the babe was sent out into the country, and preserved alive by the actions of a herdsman and his wife. Whether this be merely legendary or not, it is certainly "like the Heir"; for Jesus was similarly threatened with death in infancy because of royal fears and jealousies on the part of Herod, and was similarly preserved. Even the story of Cyrus' solemn assertion of his royal prerogatives when only a boy is not without a suggestion of the seriousness of Jesus in "the Father's business" when only twelve years of age. In the quickness of his understanding, the simplicity of his life, the thoroughness of all his actions, his singular sobriety and temperance, his humanity to all men, Cyrus was "like the Heir" — "a man more precious than gold of Ophir," though only a type of the Greater than he.

We do not now trace the history of Cyrus and the gradual uprise of the Persian power and suppression of the Median, of

which the prophet Daniel spoke. Nor do we now refer to the history of the taking of Babylon. That came under notice in a previous chapter. For present purposes, we trace a comparison between Cyrus and the still more "precious" Servant of Yahweh, of whom he was a type. The following is a sample appreciation of the character of Cyrus and his bearing towards the peoples he subdued :

"Cyrus' policy was in every case conciliation, and self-identification with the national feelings, aspirations, and religion of the nations which he conquered. Under his rule, contentment was to be found everywhere. The Babylonians did not find fault with him ; and the Jews became even enthusiastic over him."

This is a shadow of the policy hereafter of "the Heir." Having been born and bred in adversity, he "can be touched with the feeling of the infirmities" of the peoples, and when resistance is past and conquest an accomplished fact, he will be a father to them in every way. He will not, however, like Cyrus, tolerate the Babylonian religion, but will suppress it, and show the Babylonians "a more excellent way." And at last "they will not find fault with him." As to the Jews, "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." Like Cyrus, he will proclaim their return from all the lands of their captivity, and the building of the temple of the age to come is his especial function, for the Lord God of heaven has given *him* all the kingdoms of the earth, and charged *him* to build the house (Ezra i. 2; Zech. vi. 12-13).

The whole work of Cyrus, as of Jesus, is of Yahweh. This is the most emphatic testimony of this prophecy, and is in harmony with all the scriptures and the equally emphatic testimony of Jesus as concerning himself. Trinitarian doctrine has obscured the truth. It is YAHWEH who raises up Cyrus, who anoints him, who "holds his hand," who "calls him by name," "girds him," and makes his way prosperous. Exactly similar things are testified of Jesus "the Heir" himself. Yahweh raises up Christ to sit upon David's throne (Acts ii. 30); anoints him (x. 38); holds his hand and keeps him (Isa. xlii. 6); and gives him for a covenant. All this Jesus testified of himself with relation to the Father's purpose in Israel.

But in one particular there is a great contrast between Cyrus and Jesus. It was said to the former that Yahweh did all these things, "that thou mayest know that I, Yahweh, who call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel" (xlv. 3). Yet it is immediately said, "thou hast not known me." And that this is not a mere reference to the fact that Cyrus was as yet unborn, is evident from his posing as a worshipper of the gods of Babylon, which no true servant of Yahweh—of the type of Daniel and his companions—would ever have done. True, Cyrus makes reference to "the Lord God of heaven" having charged him to build the temple (Ezra i. 2); but this does not necessitate his being a true worshipper of Yahweh, any more than Rabshakeh's allegation of Yahweh's commission to him, made him one (Isa. xxxvi. 6). But when we look at Jesus, we see the knowledge of the Father in the highest possible manifestation; so that he was Immanuel, God with Israel, as he himself testified in his doctrine.

Again, there is a comparison and a contrast when we apply the phrase "for Jacob's sake" to Cyrus and Jesus in turn. It was not wittingly and primarily "for Jacob's sake" that Cyrus made his conquests and took the great city Babylon; and as to the ultimate destiny of "Israel, God's elect," it was, of course, altogether outside his policy. Just as the Assyrian was employed as God's "rod of anger" to chastise Israel; but "meant not so," but only to "cut off nations not a few"; so Cyrus was employed as God's "shepherd," but meant not so, but only to consolidate a great dominion according to his ideas of humanity and justice.

But when we look at "the Heir of all things" and *his* shepherding for God "for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect," how far does the antitype exceed the type in glory? Anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit and with power, he went about doing good, and at last, as "the good shepherd," laid down his life for the sheep. And laying it down, he took it again, as he had a right by the commandment of the Father, and lives immortally to carry out the covenants to Jacob to the uttermost. The life of the fathers of Israel and of all "the elect" is "hid in him." When he appears they will appear with him in glory, and be caused to inherit the land for ever.

All the typical work of Cyrus was defined to be for the making known of the name of Yahweh and that there was no God besides. And truly, in his career, he accomplished so many striking things that the prophets had foretold, that it was a great and notable testimony that the God of Israel, and not the gods of Babylon, was the Master of the situation, the Avenger of His people, and the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth.

But what was it all by comparison with the manifestation of the Name of Yahweh in Jesus Christ, now past and to come? Greater works than those of Cyrus He has done and will do; "and the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it."

Somewhat abruptly, as it at first sight appears, the word goes on (v. 7). "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, Yahweh, do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, Yahweh, have created it."

Taking the proximate and more remote views of this with reference to Cyrus and Babylon of B.C. 540, and Jesus and anti-typical Babylon of the twentieth century A.D., what can be the signification of the word? First as touching light and darkness, and peace and evil with reference to Israel in the days of Cyrus. God had enlightened Israel at the first and redeemed them from Egypt; but upon apostasy had "created darkness," so that "the light was darkened in the heavens" of Israel (Isa. v. 30), and the people were "driven to darkness." He had given them peace; but they walked not in His counsel and He decreed that evil should overtake them, which it did, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, at last. Some, like Daniel, went into captivity "for their good" (Jer. xxiv. 5), and some for evil, "for their hurt." But it was all Yahweh's work.

But did "the heavens drop down" in the days of Cyrus and the Babylonian captivity, or "the skies pour down righteousness," and "the earth open," that salvation might be brought forth? Nothing of the kind is on record. True, there were angels' visits, as when the angel delivered Daniel's companions from the fiery furnace, or when Gabriel, sent in answer to Daniel's prayer,

enlightened him concerning things to come. But as to salvation by resurrection, Gabriel himself instructed Daniel that that pertained to the time of the end, a time of trouble such as never was, when Israel should be finally redeemed—not by Cyrus, the man “like the Heir”—but by “the Heir” himself, here entitled MICHAEL, “Who like God,” the great Prince, who stands up for Israel. “At that time,” said Gabriel to Daniel, “thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. xii.). And Daniel himself was promised a participation in the glory then to be revealed.

It is very evident that this greater deliverance is the final objective of this far-reaching prophecy concerning Cyrus. Indeed, the context specifically alludes to it in the declaration that “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an *everlasting salvation*.” And this, moreover, is the apostolic application of the prophecy. Paul, writing to the Philippians, and exhorting them to imitate the humility and obedience of Christ (that had been dimly typified in Cyrus), says: “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of JESUS every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and *things under the earth*; and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord* TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER” (Phil. ii. 8-11).

Here is a return from a greater captivity than the Babylonian, and by an Israel angelically defined as “every one written in the book,” which includes many righteous of Gentile extraction as concerning the flesh. Death and the grave are scripturally considered as the great captivity and prison-house of bondage. Hence it is said of Jesus: He “loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that *he* should be holden of it” (Acts ii. 24). “He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men” (Eph. iv. 8). “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out

of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. ix. 11). Other illustrations will occur to those who know the scriptures. Thus, like Cyrus, who regarded not silver and delighted not in gold (Isa. xiii. 17), Jesus will let go the captives, "not for price nor reward saith the Lord of Hosts" (xlv. 13).

And just as Babylon resisted Cyrus and fell before him, and as the result of his victory, Israel, "God's son, His firstborn" (Ex. iv. 22), was liberated and exalted; so will it be under Jesus. Babylon the Great will make war upon him and will fall before him (Rev. xvii. 5, 14: xviii.), and his victory will be associated with "the manifestation of the sons of God." This is what is before us in the picture of the strife of man with his Maker that is presented in the prophecy in connection with the allusion to the resurrection of the dead in the time of the end.

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith to a father, What begetteth thou? or to a woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, and *his* Maker, Ask me of *things to come* concerning *my sons*, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me" (verse 9-11).

In the days of the Babylonian captivity, the strife of man with his Maker was illustrated only in such matters as Nebuchadnezzar's boast over Great Babylon, his institution of the worship of the image, and attempted burning of the servants of God who refused to worship; also in the blasphemies of Belshazzar in his feast, and dishonouring of Yahweh and the vessels of the temple from Jerusalem. Who is Yahweh? was in effect the question of these kings, as of Pharaoh of old. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands"? (Dan. iii. 15). Who is Israel, "His son, his firstborn"? "What hath he brought forth? Only a nation of slaves whom we hold in bondage." But Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by his madness and sojourn with the beasts of the field; and Belshazzar was slain in the taking of Babylon, according to the decree traced the same night by the angelic hand on the Palace wall (Dan. v.). Such were the woes

that came upon Babylon in those days, the last by the hand of Cyrus the Liberator.

But Jesus himself, who is the personal "Jacob" and "Israel," the true Messiah and Shepherd of Israel, was the subject in turn of strife among the potsherds of the earth. Even the priests in Israel, in effect, said to the Father concerning him, "What makest thou?" "What begettest thou?" and to the woman, "What hast thou brought forth?" Though the Son of God, his own received him not. "Whom makest thou thyself?" was their scornful challenge. "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this *the carpenter's son*? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James and Joses and Simeon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence, then, hath this man all these things? And they stumbled at him" (Matt. xiii. 55). "But as many as received him, to them gave he power (right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Jno. i. 12). In learning of Jesus, such "asked Yahweh of things to come concerning His sons," and were greatly favoured and enlightened, receiving the spirit of adoption and the promise of eternal sonship after the type of Christ at last (Rom. viii.; Phil. iii. 20; 1 John iii. 2).

And there is still to come the great strife of the potsherds of the earth in "the great day of God Almighty." "Whom makest thou thyself?" will be the question put to him at last by "Babylon the Great." "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?" Such are the questions that are increasingly common in Great Babylon, where the endeavour to make him out a mere man is always present, and will culminate at last in an appeal to arms to decide the issue: Roman Babylon *versus* Zion. Those who truly belong to "Israel mine elect" enquire of the testimony delivered to and through Daniel about the time of Cyrus concerning "the Son of Man," as well as of all the other scriptures. And they know that Jesus is more than man, even the manifestation of the Father in Israel and hereafter gloriously in Jerusalem and to all the earth.

This dominion of Zion is the next element of this beautiful picture (v. 13-17). Hers shall be the dominion—over Babylon, and over Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba; and the subdued peoples shall fall down and make supplication, saying, “Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.” How deeply the truth brings this home to us. Israel is scattered among the nations, the truth is hidden in the world, Christ is “hid with God,” Yahweh is silent. With what dumbfounded consternation will the Lord’s “roar out of Zion” be received by an incredulous world! How spontaneous and sincere will be the confession of the preserved remnant, “Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit” (Jer. xvi. 19).

There is a beautiful concealed contrast between the chaotic condition of the Gentile heavens and earth, and the order and glory of the new heavens and the new earth of Zion that are to succeed them. “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end (unto the ages of eternity). For thus saith Yahweh, that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain (R.V.: “a waste,” or “void,” *tohu*—Gen. i. 2), he formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain (in “a waste,” *tohu*); I, Yahweh, speak righteousness: I declare things that are right” (v. 17-19). Israel’s *kosmos* has been wrecked, and Gentile *chaos* remains; but not for ever. The earth has been emptied, made waste, turned upside down, and its inhabitants scattered. The city of confusion (*tohu*) is broken down; that is, apostate Jerusalem (Isa. xxiv.). In the language of Jesus, the sun of Israel has been darkened, the moon eclipsed, and the stars have fallen from heaven (Matt. xxiv. 29). Heaven and earth have passed away (Luke xxi. 33). But when Yahweh shall “punish the kings of the earth upon the earth,” then “the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients

gloriously" (xxiv. 23). In "the regeneration," Israel's universe will be recreated; and the Gentile world, or "the kingdom of men," will pass away in judgments like those that came upon Israel of old, and worse.

Then, indeed, "the escaped of the nations" will come to the knowledge of God, and all the ends of the earth look to the God of Israel for salvation. "Look unto ME" is, by Paul to the Philippians, interpreted to mean "Look unto JESUS." "I have sworn *by myself*," says the Spirit by Isaiah, "the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that UNTO ME every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in Yahweh have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In Yahweh shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory."

Twice in his writings does the Apostle Paul apply this to Jesus. To the Romans, forbidding them to judge one another, he says (xiv. 9): "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, *for it is written*, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then *every one of us* shall give account of himself to God."

And again in Phil. ii., already referred to, this passage is referred to God's exaltation of JESUS for his obedience, "that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." When the "things under the earth" come forth to bow before Jesus, among them will be those who bowed before Cyrus, his typical forerunner, in the sixth century, B.C. The prophet Daniel will be conspicuous among these, and many not now particularly known, but nevertheless "written in the book." Such is the prospect put before "the house of God" and before the world by "this word," which will certainly be fulfilled in its season.



CHAPTERS XLVI.-XLVII.

RUIN OF THE GODS OF BABYLON.

“**B**EL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; your carriages were heavy laden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden; but themselves are gone into captivity” (Is. xlvi. 1-2).

Thus the contrast is drawn between Yahweh, in whom “all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory” (xlvi. 25), and the idols of Babylon. Bel is equal to Baal, and signifies Lord, Master, Possessor, as against the claim of Yahweh (recognised by Abraham—Gen xiv. 19), that He is “the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth.” This Babylonian God was the chief male deity of their pantheon, and his name and worship are the subjects of frequent allusions and illustrations on the monuments. They are found in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser, and of Cyrus, with whom Isaiah’s prophecy has here to deal. On the broken cylinder of Cyrus from Babylon we read of his re-establishment of the Babylonian gods:—

“The gods of the land of Shinar and Accad. . . . in their own shrines I made inhabit (again), a dwelling of heart’s delight. May all the gods whom I brought (again) into their own cities, daily before Bel and Nebo, speak of length of days for me! May they utter words in my favour, and to Merodach, my Lord, let them say, Cyrus the king that feareth thee and Cambyses his son made them dwell in a quiet habitation.”—(*Light from the East*, p. 225).

“Nebo or Nabû, *i.e.*, the Prophet, was the Babylonian god of learning and the special patron of the scribes. His great sanctuary was the temple called E-Zidda, at Borsippa, the principal seat of

learning in Babylonia. In Isa. xlvi. 1, Nebo represents the scribe and priest caste, as Bel represents the civil power."

The god Nebo gives the name to Nebuchadnezzar, which to a Babylonian meant, "Nebo is the protector against misfortune." He is called "the far hearing," "he who possesses intelligence," "he who teaches, or instructs." The wedge or arrowhead—the essential element of cuneiform writing—appears to have been his emblem; and hence he bore the name of *Tir*, which signifies a shaft or arrow.

An inscribed statue of Nebo has been discovered, and it (or a copy) is now in the British Museum. The attributes above named are taken from the inscription. The figure is bolt upright, straight as an arrow, with clasped hands, and is not lacking a certain type of rude dignity. The "boweth down" and "stoopeth" of the prophecy is no doubt in pointed allusion to this. And with the arrow of Nebo contrast Yahweh's "polished shaft," hidden in his quiver, and who is to liberate Jacob and have dominion over Babylon and all the earth (Isa. xlix. 2).

The monuments illustrated by Layard and others show us the gods carried in procession by warriors; also gods carried captive by soldiers, after the example of the Danite raid on Micah's establishment in Mount Ephraim (Judges xviii.). The allusion of the prophet is to the latter kind of experience. Bel and Nebo were to "go into captivity."

There is a powerful argument in what follows this denunciation of judgment. The Babylonians had to carry their gods (when their enemies did not carry them captives), but Yahweh really and truly carried "the house of Jacob" from the very beginning. "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you."

The appeal is here to the national history, and is frequently found in the prophets. Where did Abraham come from? And how? And for what purpose? Bel and Nebo were not in this.

It was a purpose higher than them, and in antagonism to them. Babylon thought to endure for ever, a mere monument of the magnificence of the flesh—of human pride and prowess. Yahweh willed otherwise; therefore the confusion of tongues, therefore the call of Abraham, that all families of the earth might ultimately be blessed “*in him*” and “*in his seed*,” the Christ. And Isaac, Abraham’s son, was a child of promise. “I have made,” is illustrated in his birth, which was out of the ordinary course of nature. So all the national history, to a reasonable mind, would bring home the force of the divine appeal, and the surety of the divine promise: “I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

“They bear him,” though he cannot move nor answer, is a fine piece of irony on the gods of Babylon; and the folly of making graven images. “To whom will ye liken me and make me equal,” is a question that needs forcing upon mankind at all times. Paul, at Athens, put it beautifully to that generation, with a quotation from certain of their own poets. And even where there are no actual images of Bel, Nebo, Minerva, or others, it is still the fashion to liken God to man. “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,” is the saying of God to the wicked. The true knowledge of God is only to be found in His revelation in Israel; all else, whether ancient or modern, is as vain as the Babylonian idolatry here rebuked. And of that idolatry it is to be remarked, that it was itself a corruption of “God’s way,” just as was that which was destroyed by Noah’s flood. An ignoring of this fact has induced an immensity of false philosophy on the subject.

The exhortation to apostate Israel to “remember this” and show themselves men, is coupled with a declaration aimed at Nebo, the imaginary “prophet.” God says He “declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” What Israelite could ignore the force of this appeal? Nearly fifteen hundred years of fulfilled prophecy was before them, and was enough to give assurance of the fall of Babylon now foretold. What wonder that the

Spirit of God should exhort them, saying: "In understanding be men."

The counsel of God upon Babylon is further illustrated by the following:—"Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country." Here Cyrus is the "ravenous bird" and "the man" in question. Throughout the scriptures the eagle is the symbol of conquerors in their flesh-devouring operations. Ezekiel's parable of two eagles and a vine (ch. xvii.) introduces the Kings of Babylon and of Egypt as the eagles and Judah as the vine. Moses, in Deuteronomy, had spoken of a nation coming against Israel "swift as the eagle flieth," and "thy carcase," said he, "shall be meat unto all the fowls of the air" (xxviii. 26, 49). Jesus, when the time came for the fulfilment of Moses' prophecy, said of the Roman eagles, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. xxiv. 28). And he connected this with the unseen though real "coming of the Son of Man" to judgment on the nation at the end of that age. The Romans were "the king's armies to destroy those murderers and burn up their city" (Matt. xxii. 7).

But this was in the future when Isaiah spoke of the "ravenous bird" to come upon Babylon. Cyrus, like the Romans afterwards, and other powers at present, is said (by Xenophon) to have adopted the eagle as his symbol on his standards. In his coming upon Babylon as the eagle upon the carcase, he is again "like the Heir." Even at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus this finds some illustration; but it must hereafter be *for* Jerusalem and *against* Babylon to conform to the type. And it will be so. Jesus is now, according to his own parabolic teaching, God's nobleman in "a far country," whence he is to return to execute Yahweh's counsel—against Babylon and for Israel. He is to rebuke the stouthearted, to bring God's righteousness near, and to place salvation in Zion for Israel, God's glory (Isa. xlvi. 12-13).

At his coming the remnant of the nation of Israel is in great affliction in modern Babylon, and especially on the mountains of Israel, then invaded by the hosts of Gog (Ezek.

xxxviii.). He comes upon these as "a ravenous bird from the east." His kings and princes are called "the kings of the east," and the Son of Man assembles every feathered fowl to his great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. xxxix. 17). "The face of an eagle" in the symbolic cherubim is another intimation of this purpose upon Babylon (Ezek. i. 10; Rev. iv. 7). The nation of Israel under his almighty rule and that of the saints, are at last no longer the "carcase" devoured by the Gentile "eagles," whether of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Rome, or Europe; but themselves become "a ravenous bird" and "fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west, and spoil them of the east together" (Isa. xi. 14). There is no place in current theological conceptions of Christ and God's purpose for any such developments as these; but they are written in the prophets, and will come to pass just as surely as Cyrus came upon Bel and Nebo in Babylon in the sixth century before Christ.

Turning then from Zion to Babylon, the rival Queen, the word of God says: "Come down!" (xlvii. 1). "Come down, and sit in dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground, *there is no throne*, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt be no more called tender and delicate."

The Lady or Mistress of Kingdoms was to be put to shame and servitude. "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered—yea, thy shame shall be seen; I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man (or, I meet not a man). Our Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel" (ver. 3-4). Contrasting Zion with Babylon in view of this, we read that she is to be comforted, and the Redeemer is to come to her and end her widowhood, "For thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isa. liv. 5). Again, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, *those that remember thee in thy ways*" (Isa. lxiv. 5); that is, in the day of recompense. The meaning of this threat, then, as applied to Babylon, appears to be that God would not accept her as He would Zion, whom she despised and afflicted. This is what is affirmed of the Apocalyptic Babylon in contrast with the Heavenly

Jerusalem—"the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." Roman Babylon, like her prototype, has been a Mistress of Kingdoms, and is still a Mistress of Churches ("Mother Church"); or, in the language of the Apocalypse, "the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth." When the Redeemer returns, she is judged and destroyed; though she considers herself "the irreproachable Spouse of Jesus Christ," and her high priest His Vicar upon earth. But Zion he meets with "everlasting kindness." He comes for the salvation of those that "rejoice and work righteousness, and remember him in his ways." And with these he will save the nation and Land of Israel and the Holy City. This is what runs through these prophecies of Isaiah concerning Babylon and Jerusalem, and "the remnant" who shall belong to Christ in the day of his coming.

The ground of Yahweh's displeasure against Babylon, as here stated, is that whereas He used the Babylonian power as the instrument of His chastisement upon Israel; Babylon herself "meant not so," but showed them no mercy, afflicting them with spiteful mind. And not only so. Her *pride* and *forgetfulness* were also an offence to God. "Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever; so that *thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.*" Therefore, it is said, loss of children and widowhood should overtake her in a moment, for the multitude of her sorceries and the great abundance of her enchantments.

Was it so, then, that Babylon was expected to "lay it to heart," and to "remember the latter end"? Certainly. It was afterwards most explicitly argued out by Daniel before Belshazzar, that after all God had revealed by him in Babylon, and after all that Nebuchadnezzar, the servant of Nebo, had suffered, and after all that he had put on record, he (Belshazzar) was inexcusable—was, in fact, "weighed in the balances and found wanting," and nothing remained but that he should be slain, and his kingdom given to the Medes and Persians.

Apply this sentiment to modern Babylon with all these records in every man's hands. Is it so that God does not expect men to "lay these things to heart," nor to "remember the latter end"?

Far otherwise. It would be a grave omission on the part of Zion's latter-day watchmen if they were to foster any such idea among those of "the great city." It is true that "man that understandeth not is like the beasts that perish." But there is such a thing as culpable ignorance and obstinacy, as well as lack of understanding due to never having heard the word of God. If God had never spoken to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar would not have been so culpable. And if Christ had never revealed his mind concerning "Babylon the Great" in the Apocalypse, those who first departed from the truth would not have been so culpable. True, there is nothing now akin to the miracles of Daniel's time, or of the apostolic age; and, therefore, so much not being given so much is not required. But the Word is with us, and where it is "known" and its bearing apprehended, as when Belshazzar knew the history of his ancestors, a proportionate responsibility ensues. Of the measure of this God, in Christ, is judge. It belongs only to Daniel's brethren of the latter days to interpret the handwriting on the wall, and proclaim the truth in all its bearings without fear or favour.

It was said that Babylon should not know whence arose the evil that should come so suddenly upon her (v. 11). Belshazzar's feast and the night of pleasure that ended in such swift disaster is the historical counterpart to this. Cyrus was in the city "as a thief" before the Babylonians were aware of it. The dried-up river bed gave the troops access, and the brazen gates were opened before them. In all this, as those who know the scriptures and the history of the past are well aware, there was a most dramatic allegory of the fall of the Apocalyptic Babylon. "Thou shalt not know" is still the order. Nothing is further from the minds of Popes, Cardinals, Priests, Kings, and Emperors than the idea that Christ is behind the Eastern Question, and that he will come upon the scene "as a thief in the night," and destroy the powers that are contending over his Land and Nation, and re-establish the kingdom of God in Israel on a new and immortal basis for a thousand years.

The "sorceries" (Rev. xviii. 23) of modern Babylon deal not with such things, but with "immortal souls," heaven, hell,

purgatory, "doctrines of demons," &c., &c., in which the "astrologers" "weary themselves" as of old, being supported in their profitless enterprises by the "people," who "love to have it so." How truly the doctrines and practices of the churches and chapels are answerable to the old Babylonian system, they know well who know the truth by comparison with these ancient fables. But the people who do not concern themselves with these things, nor "lay them to heart," but are content to pay others to do their religionisings for them, have no conception of the true state of affairs. Nothing but the return of Christ will rouse them up, and when that happens there will be panic, as there was in Babylon in the night when Cyrus entered, and Belshazzar was slain.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

NO PEACE TO THE WICKED, "WHO SAY THEY ARE JEWS BUT ARE NOT."

FROM Babylon the prophet turns to the house of Jacob again. "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth nor in righteousness*. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel: the Lord of Hosts is his name" (ch. xlvi. 1, 2). And it goes on to say that God foreknew their froward disposition and had spoken of it beforehand.

There is a challenge to Israel after the flesh here. It was not enough to be "called by the name of Israel," to "call themselves of the holy city," if they did not exhibit the faith and obedience of Jacob by reason of which his name was changed to Israel, and did not behave as true citizens of Zion. The expression, "Come forth out of the waters of Judah," which is treated in our version as an allusion to national extraction, seems rather to indicate the apostacy of the people who had come or gone forth from "the waters of Judah" to drink at other sources. In a similar expostulation in Jeremiah God says (ch. ii. 13): "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." And in an earlier chapter of Isaiah the house of Israel is rebuked for "refusing the waters of Shiloah" (viii. 6), which was literally despising the word that God sent to Judah, even the everlasting covenant with David.

Be this as it may, it is quite plain that insincerity and hypocrisy, coupled with fair profession, is the thing rebuked in Jacob. There were those who were of Judah and yet not of Israel

from God's point of view. They were of Judah after the flesh, but not princes with God in obediently striving for His blessing. Christ himself afterwards had much to say of such, and to such. In him "the waters of Judah" were made manifest and accessible as never before. "If any man thirst," said he, "let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37). But the invitation was refused, in that the leaders of the people refused his word and work. On this he told them they were not really Abraham's children, or they would do his works, and not seek to kill "the Seed" so long promised (John viii. 39-40).

And after Christ the apostles spoke plainly on the same matter; Paul declaring to the Romans that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (ix. 6). And elsewhere, he forbids communion with "any man that is called a brother," who flagrantly disgraces his name and calling. The Lord Jesus himself, in Rev. iii. 9, is very severe on such a class, and says: "I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." This necessitates the post-resurrectional humiliation of the hypocrites, among whom no doubt will be those who specially Satanized Isaiah in his day and generation.

As to "the holy city" of which the hypocrites delight to "call themselves" citizens, Jesus says: "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. xxi. 27). This "holy city" is, of course, the body politic of the redeemed. But it is also true of Jerusalem herself under Messiah, that "there shall no more come into her the uncircumcised or the unclean."

But "treacherous" professors have their place. God declared by the prophet that He knew all about them from the beginning, which is very evident when we turn to the prophecies of Moses in the law. In Deut. xxxii. especially, in view of the foreseen corruptions of "the latter days," Moses, by the Spirit, recounted God's kindness and wonderful works in Israel, His jealousy at their forsaking Him for other gods, His purpose to provoke them

to jealousy by forsaking them (for a time), for other people, and His last crowning mercy to His land and people in the restitution of all things. It is to this ancient pronouncement, and others like it, that Isaiah directs the attention of the people.

And God said that for His Name's sake He would defer His anger, that His Name might not be polluted (v. 9, 11). This was a frequent declaration in the Law and the prophets. Moses was anxious concerning God's Name and glory when He threatened to disinherit Israel and make of Moses a nation (Num. xiv.). Probably this was said to prove Moses, and to elicit from him the beautiful intercession recorded in the context; but the fact remains. Even the restoration yet to come is explicitly defined to be, not for Israel's sake, but for the sake of God's Holy Name (Ezek. xxxvi.). Israel has ever been exceedingly complacent with his notions of posing as "the Apostle among the nations," though, at the same time, inveterately rejecting "the Apostle" of God, that is Christ Jesus. All flesh will be given to understand that the coming Kingdom of God upon earth is established for His Name's sake, and that both Israel and the Gentiles, so long astray from "truth and righteousness," can only partake of its blessedness on the basis of righteousness learned under judgment.

And "for the elect's sake," as well as for His own Name's sake, God "bears long" with the hypocrites, who are only vessels unto dishonour in His house, where the others will abide for ever as vessels of honour. It goes on to say here (xlviii. 12) "Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel, my called; I am he; I AM THE FIRST; I ALSO AM THE LAST. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them they stand up together. All ye assemble yourselves and hear; which among them hath declared these things. The Lord hath loved *him*, he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be upon the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him and he shall make his way prosperous."

Here was a prospect of One who should be truly "called by the name of Israel," and who should be a manifestation

of the Father. And not only so but "in Him" should be a multitude of "Israelites indeed," in whom, at last, God should be all in all. This is the doctrine underlying the expression cited, as we have previously seen on an earlier occurrence of the same (ch. xli. 4). God, who created the heavens and the earth at the beginning, will, in Christ, establish the new heavens and new earth of Israel, which none of the Babylonian astrologers, ancient or modern, have dreamt of. Cyrus it was who did Yahweh's pleasure on Babylon in the sixth century before Christ; but Christ will do His pleasure on the Apocalyptic Babylon, causing the holy apostles and prophets to rejoice over the vengeance manifested (Rev. xviii. 20). These two very remote but related crises seem to be covered by the prophecy in this place. It is certain that modern Babylon needs convincing of the reality and majesty of the God of Israel as badly as her ancient Chaldean prototype.

Then the spirit of Christ in Isaiah goes on to speak in the character of the called and sent One, and laments the short-sighted folly of Israel in the encountering of trouble and anguish by disobedience:—"Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." And in the lamentation that follows we are forcibly reminded of the later lamentation and weeping over Jerusalem by Jesus when he said he would have gathered her children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; but they would not. But both Isaiah in this place and Jesus on that later occasion, look through the deepening gloom to everlasting glory at last. The limitation that Jesus puts to Jerusalem's duntreading is expressed in the words, "until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And here the prophet at last calls upon Israel to go forth out of Babylon and declare with singing and rejoicing that "The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob." But the section ends with an emphatic warning, running all through these prophecies, between real and sham Israelites: "There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked."



CHAPTER XLIX.

THE ALPHA AND OMEGA TURNS TO "THE ISLES."

THE called and sent One of Yahweh turns to "the isles" and "peoples" afar off from Judah; as Moses long before had intimated in his prophetic song of witness:—"Listen, O isles unto me; and hearken, ye peoples from far; Yahweh hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me, and said unto me, Thou art my servant O ISRAEL, in whom I will be glorified."

Some would have us take this of the national "servant;" a noted Jewish historian among them. To such it is sufficient to point out that this "Servant" was to bring the apostate national "servant" *back to God*, and to be "abhorred" of that same national servant in the process. No, it is an individual "Israel," a true Prince of God who is here before us, namely, JESUS OF NAZARETH. The features and attributes of his commission are all in harmony with the prophecy. Yahweh calls him from nativity. Isaiah had previously (vii. 14) spoken of that nativity: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The promise of "the seed of the woman" who should bruise the serpent's head was an earlier "calling." The birth of Isaac was a parabolic heralding of the same thing; and the allusions to "the Son of Yahweh's handmaid" in the psalms (lxxxvi. 16) was only in harmony with the covenant with David: "I will be his Father, and he shall be my son."

The "mention of his name" revealed a manifestation of God: Immanuel. "I am he," "I AM THE FIRST ONE," was shewn in Israel when Jesus appeared. "He that hath seen me hath seen

the Father" was his own declaration on the subject and was supported by convincing works.

"*He* hath made my mouth like a sharp sword," was illustrated in Jesus even on the testimony of his enemies, who averred that "never man spake like this man." And he himself always most scrupulously insisted that his words were not his own, but the Father's who sent him. It was "God's words" that he claimed to have been sent to speak, and that he did speak with such power. The "mouth like a sharp sword" is memorialised in the Apocalyptic visions (ch. i. 16): "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword," with which he fights against apostate professors (ch. ii. 12, 16); and at last against the nations in open war (ch. xix. 15). In the days of his flesh he denounced the leaders of the people and prophesied the doom of Jerusalem, which came to pass in the same generation.

It was all the purpose of Yahweh and accomplished by His power. The expressions, "hidden in the shadow of his hand," and "made a polished shaft in his quiver," are strikingly illustrative of this same doctrine, and as strikingly out of harmony with Trinitarian speculation that endows the Son with co-equality with the Father who called and made him thus; and glorified him as His Servant Israel.

It is a wonderful revelation that God should raise up a Man who should embody in his own person all the attributes and excellencies of all the holy men of old. Such is the case in Christ Jesus. And here it is Israel whose name he bears. And how gloriously! Was there ever such wrestling for a blessing as is brought to a climax in Gethsemane and on the cross. We know a little of what passed between Jacob and the angel when the name of Israel was bestowed in token of the blessing promised. We know nothing of what passed between Jesus and the angel (perhaps the same angel) in the garden of Gethsemane. But the strife, though not physical like Jacob's, was, nevertheless, a "resisting unto blood striving against sin," even at that stage, for it produced an agony and bloody sweat. But so glorious was the triumph that on the third day after the crucifixion the doctrinal import of the name Israel was perfectly illustrated in

Jesus, for he was raised from the dead and glorified, and made a "Prince of God" for ever.

But the prophetic word foretold the dreadful prelude to this glory, for Yahweh's Servant speaks beforehand of apparent labour in vain: "Then said I, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with Yahweh, and my reward with my God" (v. 4). We are very familiar with the fulfilment of this foretold apparent failure in the history of Jesus; and with the sublime confidence with which he considered the end saying, "I know that the Father's commandment is life everlasting." The spirit of Christ is illustrated in the body of Christ. Where are the "Israelites indeed," labouring in vain and spending their strength apparently for nought? Wherever they are their policy and confidence is the same as their Master's. Through the prophets beforehand, and through his exemplification of the word in the days of his flesh, they have learnt that the Father's commandment is life everlasting, and are content to labour and wait.

When Yahweh formed Jesus from the womb to bring Jacob again to him; and those of Jacob to whom Jesus spoke refused him; there immediately remained, not a gathering but a scattering, as he sorrowfully declared. And so it came to pass in the Roman overthrow under Titus. But though Israel nationally was not gathered, Israel, God's personal servant—that is, Jesus—was made glorious before Yahweh, and strong for ever with the divine nature, for he was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. Yet though he was thus personally removed from the earth, his interest and work in Israel as Yahweh's Servant was increased and not diminished. The vastness of the Universe is no barrier to the Spirit as to mortals; and Jesus left behind him a body of "Israelites indeed" to carry on the divine purpose which he supervised invisibly from heaven. This was prophetically defined in the words following:—

"He (Yahweh) said, It is a light thing (or, too small a thing) that thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the dispersed of Israel: I will *also* give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (v. 6).

In passing, it is to be insisted on, that God's order be respected: "to the Jew first and *also* to the Gentile." If Gentiles are to be saved, they must become Jews in the way the New Testament provides. But seeing that Jesus was removed from the scene of his labours, and that the leaders of Israel had cast out his name as evil, how was he to be a light to the Gentiles? He had been "a great light" in Galilee, as Isaiah had declared (ch. ix.), and in all Israel besides; but now, what should happen? The commission of Christ to his disciples and the life and work of the apostles, is the answer. No sooner was he raised and glorified, than, on the day of Pentecost, his name was proclaimed to Jews in Jerusalem for the remission of sins. And in a few years' time, by express revelation from heaven, Peter introduced his Name among the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, and God signified His approval of the work by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven (Acts x.).

Paul and Barnabas some time afterwards illustrated the prophecy in their preaching at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii.). Paul had addressed the Jews in the Synagogue concerning Christ, and how God had so far fulfilled the covenant with David that He had raised Jesus from the dead. And he had warned the Jews of the consequences of despising the word of Christ; which nevertheless they did. But the Gentiles besought Paul to speak to them, which he did, thereby moving the Jews to jealousy and making them contradict and blaspheme. Then Paul declared that Isaiah had foretold such a crisis, and "seeing ye put the word of God from you," said he, "and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded *us* saying, I have set *thee* to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

The interest of this apostolic quotation of the prophecy lies in no small degree in the manner in which they couple themselves with Christ personal, as the "light" in question. It is only in accordance with the true facts of the case, and his own express declaration, "Ye are the light of the world."

And his exhortation in the sermon on the mount finds illustration and re-echoing in the faithful labours of the apostles. They "could not be hid"; they did not hide the light or put it under a bushel, but sounded forth the word of Christ even on pain of death. The apostles are dead and gone; but wherever the word of God in the prophets, in Jesus and the apostles is understood and proclaimed and obeyed, there is "the light of the world" to this day, though not openly attested by the Spirit of God. It is for the latter-day brethren of the prophets to measure themselves by the word they ministered.

But the Light of the Gentiles and of the world was to be "despised" and abhorred of the nation, even a servant of rulers, though at last kings would fall down before him. Even if Jesus be not the Messiah, as the Jews say, does Israel look for such a Messiah at all? Alas, no; these are times of "gross darkness," in which Jew and Gentile are for the most part alike blind and deaf to "the words of the book." In Jesus we see just such an experience as the prophet delineates here, in addition to all the other features revealed for the identification of Messiah.

But though despised and abhorred of the nation, he was to be heard and helped of God (v. 8). And here again apostolic quotation of the prophecy (2 Cor. vi. 2) identifies the body of Christ with Jesus himself in the application of the promise to the Corinthian believers. We beseech you as workers together with Christ, says Paul, "that ye receive not the grace of God in vain, (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation)." And will it be presumption to bring the "now" down to the twentieth century? Not where the same faith and hope and obedience exists. The only difference is that the hand of God is hidden; there is no open expression of His mind in approval or otherwise of any man's work. But that the hope of Israel is current in the earth is demonstrable, and the consequent privilege and responsibility of its holders is demonstrable likewise.

But the despised and abhorred Servant of Yahweh was preserved that he might be given "*for a covenant of the people.*"

Again, if Jesus be not he, where is he who hath been, or shall be "given for a covenant"? Does Israel look for such a One? What is a covenant? Every Jew knows (as its very name, *berith*, imports) that it involves the killing and eating of sacrificial animals. How was the Servant of Yahweh to be killed and eaten? And it is not a chance expression, "given for a covenant." We saw it before in ch. xlii. 6. And Daniel and Zechariah speak of the covenant and "the blood of the covenant." What, then, does Israel look for? They know not what.

But we listen to Jesus and all the prophecies are appropriated by him. Instituting the memorial cup before crucifixion we hear him say, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Appropriating the type of the manna, and exhibiting himself as "the bread of life," we hear him declare at the Synagogue in Capernaum that "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). In the mouth of any other, such a proclamation would only have provoked ridicule; but here there was power. Here Yahweh, according to the ancient promise, heard, helped, and preserved the Speaker, who, then and there, declared that it was "the Father's will" that he was doing and would triumphantly accomplish "at the last day." And no man could afford to ridicule a Speaker who had just fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. Without doubt Jesus is "the Mediator of the New Covenant."

But while this, though denied by the Jews, is universally admitted by "Christendom," it is by no means so universally admitted that Jesus will hereafter do *all* the things that are here assigned to the Covenanted One. "I will preserve thee," saith Yahweh, "and give thee for a covenant of the people to establish the earth (or, "raise up the Land."—R.V.), to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves." These things are always associated with the giving of Messiah for a covenant. In the similar prophecy of ch. xlii., he is to bring forth the prisoners, to set judgment in the earth, and make the isles wait for his law. In Daniel's prophecies he is to awake

the sleepers in dust, avenge the Holy Land and Nation, and pour upon the desolator the judgments determined. In Zechariah's prophecy he is to bring forth his prisoners by the blood of his Covenant, to raise up Zion's sons against the sons of Greece, cut off the enemies of Ephraim and Judah, and speak peace at last to the nations. All this is foreign to the theology of Christendom, which has relegated him to the skies and regards not the terms of the everlasting Covenant.

It all hangs on the promise of God to the fathers at the first. A resurrection from the dead to everlasting inheritance of the land of their sojournings was what God caused them to hope for. And it is this that is before us in prospect in Isaiah's prophecy. There are, of course, no "desolate heritages" in heaven.

The prisoners "in darkness" are the dead, called by the Spirit in a previous prophecy "my dead body" (xxvi. 19). Jesus himself was made to "go forth" out of prison and "show himself" when he came forth from Joseph's tomb and appeared to the disciples. He had previously made Lazarus come forth and show himself on the hillside at Bethany, and had at that time claimed the attributes of the Coming One in declaring himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life." And so potent was the testimony thus illustrated that many believed, and the rulers could only seek to put Lazarus to death again. The prison is a common Scriptural figure for the grave. Hezekiah speaks of "the gates of *Sheol*." And Jesus reproduces the figure in the expression, "the gates of hades," and the promise that they shall not prevail against his ecclesia. Both in doctrine and practical illustration there is no misunderstanding the meaning of the prophetic word in this place.

The prisoners of hope being liberated, they come forth to green pastures and springs of waters on the high places of Yahweh's mountains; never more to be troubled with hunger and thirst, nor the scorching heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand (v. 10). Almost every word of this prophecy seems to have been taken up by Jesus or the apostles in some place of their teaching. "I am the bread of life," said he; "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth

on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). And the language of the Apocalypse in the vision of the white-robed palm-bearers (Rev. vii. 16, 17) reproduces the language of the prophet almost verbatim.

"The way" of these victors is said to lie on the mountains of Israel: "I will make all my mountains *a way*, and my highways shall be exalted." Jesus himself speaks of "the way of the Kings of the East" (Rev. xvi. 12), which he represents as being "prepared" by the "drying up of the Great River Euphrates," that is the decline of the Turkish power that now holds these mountains under its dominion. Isaiah and all the prophets agree in representing that dominion over the mountains of the Lord, that is of Israel, passes into the hands of Christ and the saints in a time of trouble and war such as earth has not yet seen. As to "the way" after "the war of the great day of God Almighty," Isaiah has spoken of it already in chapter xxxv., and what was then said on that place need not be repeated here.

"The way" being prepared, there is a great gathering from all quarters: "Behold these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim" (v. 12). The gathering to take place is first that of the saints, and then Israel after the flesh. Both the children of promise and the children of the flesh are before us in the prophecy; and both will be gathered from all parts of the earth, though at different times and upon different principles. In the verse quoted, some obscurity attaches to "the land of Sinim." The Septuagint version rendered it "the land of the Persians," and this, together with the fact that the name Sin, for China, has come through from the Arabs, has led to the belief that probably China is meant by Isaiah. But it cannot yet be conclusively determined. The context necessitates that the land should be either east or south. If it be permissible to venture a suggestion as to the south, it would be Sinai, where the law was given by Moses, and where, according to Psalm lxxviii. 16-17, Jesus will yet be revealed with his liberated prisoners. The objection to this would be that "Sinim" appears to be spoken of as a people; and this

would favour the eastern idea. As a matter of fact, one of the most interesting features of the Jewish movement of the latter-days is the bringing to light and development of remnants of Jewish peoples in China. Wherever they may be—the saints and the Jews—above ground or below, they are not finally lost. God will gather them, as He has so long declared.

Though exhorted to sing and rejoice in prospect of the promised comfort and restoration divinely promised (Isa. xlix. 13), Zion cannot rise to the occasion; but is depicted as still mourning her apparent forsaking by Yahweh, and being forgotten by her Lord. Upon this, the strongest bonds of affection known to humanity are introduced by God to reassure her. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

The city, of course, stands for the true "citizens of Zion" as well as for Jerusalem topographically. It is all for the sake of Christ and his brethren. He said that Jerusalem should see him again and acclaim him as the Blessed of the Lord. And he promised his disciples that at that time they should occupy thrones over the restored tribes of Israel. Here we get a glimpse of the "children of Zion" with whom she is to clothe herself as with an ornament, and bind them on as bridal array. This beautiful figure is common to the prophets and the New Testament scriptures. Jeremiah's girdle (ch. xiii.) was a symbol of "the whole house of Israel" which God had by a figure girt upon Himself. Paul considered the faithful brethren to be his hope and joy and crown of glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming (1 Thess. ii. 19). And Paul in this connection, as in all others, only enunciated the mind of Christ. The apocalyptic figures of the "clothing" of the symbolic Son of Man are not exhausted in the signification of his personal excellence and righteousness and immortality. He is not to be alone, but to "be clothed with a cloud" of witnesses of whom the world was not worthy (Rev. i. 13: x. 1; Heb. xii. 1).

Further, he will clothe himself with the regathered and purified nation, which will no longer be typified by a marred girdle buried by the Euphrates in the Kingdom of Babylon; for they will have been caused to "cleave unto Yahweh" in deed and truth; "for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi. 34).

The scene of this great salvation is so plainly revealed in the Scriptures, that one would suppose it impossible to err concerning it. Yet it is transferred from earth to "heaven beyond the skies." Let us, therefore, read again, "Thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away." How impossible to apply such language to heaven. The land is there in desolation, and Israel's devourers have never been "far away" since the time of the great overthrow and scattering in A.D. 70. What must happen is the redemption of the land from the hand of the enemy, and their overthrow and expulsion—of which, indeed, the prophet goes on to speak in the same chapter.

When we read in v. 20, "Thy children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other," we are reminded strongly of Christ's own words concerning "the children of the kingdom." It was when the centurion manifested such striking faith in God (Matt. viii.) we read that "Jesus marvelled . . . and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here, then, are children lost, and children found—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are joined by Romans and other Gentiles of like precious faith; and the unbelievers, even of Jewish extraction, as well as others, are lost in the day of judgment.

Besides, what a loss of children has Zion suffered in the national sense throughout the centuries of exile. We may truly

speak of Israel's history as one long wail of mourning. About the time of William the Conqueror, Ibn Gebirol, a poet among the Spanish Jews, thus voiced the wail of Zion :

"My exile has already lasted a thousand years, and I am like the howling bird of the desert. Where is the high priest who will discover to me the end of it all? . . . Our years pass on in darkness and misery; we look for the light, but darkness and humiliation greet us; slaves rule over us. Till she fell, Babylon held sway over me; Rome then reduced me to sore straits; Javan and Persia scattered me far and wide; and now Ishmael for already four hundred and sixty-one years (from the time of the Hejira), despoils me" (*Hist. Jews.—Graetz*).

Attentive readers will catch the echo of Isaiah's words in this pathetic lamentation. Zion has "lost the others," but she is not finally and fatally bereaved. Even her "lost ten tribes" will be found, but not as "Anglo-Israelites"! The prophet pictures her sweet surprise at the gathering of a new and happy family: "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone: These, Whence are they?"

The answer is that God (in Christ) had begotten these. He had "brought up" these, not only in the sense of nourishment by the word of life, but, as concerning the immortal children, literally, by resurrection of the dead. And as to whence they come, their Head comes down from heaven, whither He ascended in fulfilment of the prophetic word nearly nineteen hundred years ago; and they came up from *sheol* by his resurrection-and-life power. He himself is called "the first begotten of the dead," and they are "his seed," and are begotten with the word of truth (Jas. i. 18); of which operation Onesimus was an example (Philemon 10); also the Corinthian brethren (1 Cor. iv. 15).

The astonishment of Zion at the manifestation of these "children of the resurrection" will be in proportion to her hopelessness and despondency, and the greatness of the deliverance which the Lord Jesus shall have accomplished. The history of Joseph in Egypt is the never failing type of the revelation to be

made to the house of Israel, when the Lord Jesus is discovered to be the Redeemer.

A tremendous reversal in Gentile policy towards the Jews is assured by the following verses (22-23). "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: *for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*"

"They that wait for me." These are the real children of Zion in the highest sense. Most, we might almost say all, of the natural "children of the kingdom" of the class of which Jesus spoke do not wait for God. They are lost among the vanities of the Gentiles as they were in the first century, and have been ever since. But there has always been a small remnant that has waited for God in the way of His judgments with great endurance, as in a dark night (Isa. xxvi. 8-9). To them these gracious promises are especially addressed. A great justification awaits them in the eyes of all the world—before men and angels. Where will all the power of the adversary be in that day? Czars, Kings, and Emperors will have to acknowledge the new order of kings who, having learned to govern themselves according to the will of God, are by Him accounted worthy of "power over the nations."

But the nation also comes in for its avenging, for the Spirit says: "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame" (Zeph. iii. 19). Imagine the nature of the change in Jew-baiting Russia and Roumania—in proud Catholic Spain, Anti-Semitic France and Germany! What could be suggested as a sufficient cause to produce it? Certainly no human solution of the Jewish Question is proposed or put forward as a matter of practical [politics that has any such revolutionary design. Indeed a Quarterly Reviewer chaffs Dr. Herzl and the Zionists on this head. He says:

"The unaccustomed meekness of the scheme (Zionism) is perhaps its most surprising feature. Isaiah said, 'Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' . . . But now contrast with Isaiah and his appeal to racial pride (Not so.—Ed. C.), the apologetic tone of Dr. Herzl in defining the destiny of the race. . . . It is worse than satire, it is treason."

But this gentleman does not rightly discern the situation, though he writes with the full assurance of unfaith. There is a time for everything. The present phase of Zionism is but the preparation for the later crisis of which Isaiah and all the prophets speak. First the feeble colonies on the mountains of Israel, and then the gatherings of the Kings and "the war of the great day of God Almighty." And *after that* the subjection of the Gentiles to Zion in blessedness and peace.

But even in this chapter of Isaiah the nature of the great crisis is plainly introduced, for, after revealing the picture of humbled Gentiles sustaining and nourishing regenerated Israel in the hands of the saints, the word goes on to indicate how it is to come about. It says:

"Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob" (v. 24-26).

By comparing this with the pictures of the crisis of the latter days given by the other prophets, we are at no loss to identify the "Mysterious Rightful Tyrant-Captor," as Rotherham well and faithfully styles him, nor to localise the judgment and understand the issue.

The main features here defined are these: After Yahweh's Servant has been "given for a covenant," and before he is "set up as a standard or ensign to the peoples," his people are dis-

covered as the prey of the mighty, who has taken them captive "lawfully," upon his own principle that "might is right." Accepting the principle, Yahweh reveals himself as a mightier than he, and triumphantly decides the issue before the eyes of all flesh.

Ezekiel (chs. xxxviii.-xxxix.) reproduces the scene in much greater detail. The "Mysterious Tyrant-Captor" here is "Gog and all his bands," that is, Russia and the confederate powers named. The time is "the latter years" (v. 8). The locality is "the mountains of Israel" (*ibid*). The "prey" is the defenceless colonies of Jews, the Land of Palestine, and especially the city Jerusalem (v. 11, 12). The divine purpose of the crisis is "that the heathen may know Yahweh" (v. 16), even "many nations" (v. 23). And Yahweh's "presence" is revealed (v. 20), contending in fury with the oppressor. It is especially explained that Ezekiel's graphic and detailed revelation concerns the power of whom, saith God, "I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days [of] the years that I would bring thee against them" (v. 17).

Zechariah also shows that the invasion is successful to the point of taking Jerusalem, which becomes the prey of the mighty, and a "lawful captive" of war according to their reckoning (ch. xiv.). But "then shall Yahweh go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle" (in Joshua's time, Josh. x.). The second Joshua (Jesus) stands again upon the Mount of Olives; the earth shakes at his presence as Ezekiel also testifies. Earthquake, hailstones, "fire and brimstone" destroy the oppressor, and, adds the prophet Zechariah, "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (v. 5). Afterwards follows a picture of the purged and purified remnant of the nations going up to Jerusalem from year to year "to worship the King the Lord of Hosts and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (v. 16). This is the same picture, or nearly so, as Isaiah presents for the comfort of the children of Zion in this place.



CHAPTER L.

WHY ZION WAS "PUT AWAY."

I SAIAH now turns from the picture of the latter-day deliverance of Zion and resumes the expostulation he was commissioned by God to deliver to Israel. "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement whom I have put away?" The argument is that it was Zion's own faithlessness that procured her divorce, most reluctantly on God's part. Jeremiah is very emphatic on the point (ch. iii.); and in this place the reason is made plain in the context. Zion did not respond to God's call, though she had abundant proof of His power to destroy and build up. That there should be nobody in Zion fit to stand in the gap and bring the nation again to God, was an offence to Him.

"Wherefore when I came was there no man? When I called was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" Then follows a rehearsal of the works they had seen. The time in which the prophecy finds its great fulfilment is when God "came" in Christ, because there was "no man," "no intercessor"; and when, therefore, Jesus himself, as "the Arm of the Lord," brought salvation. "He marvelled because of their unbelief," it is said (Mark vi. 6). "Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not," says John (xii. 37).

"There are none so blind as those that won't see." There *are* those who "do not want to believe anyhow." This is denied by some philosophical souls, but such denial is an absurdity on the face of it, and contrary to every-day experience. It is likewise contrary to scripture, which says of some: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they *will not see*" (Isa. xxvi. 11), a saying that was superabundantly illustrated in the days of Jesus in

the first century. This rejection of Jesus by those who "would not see," no matter what miracles were wrought, was the filling up of Zion's cup of iniquity; and "divorce" followed speedily, culminating in the wreck of her heavens and earth within the lifetime of that generation.

Our times are not like those; the voice of God is silent, and in the language of the Psalm it may be said with almost universal application: "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there any among us that knoweth how long" (Psa. lxxiv. 9). Yet God is not without witness and "signs of the times." But there are those who "will not see," even now. Such, in the language of the prophecy, are "selling themselves" unto destruction, when the Gentile heavens and earth shall pass away in judgment before the face of the Lord "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 8).

The spirit of Christ in Isaiah then goes on to speak of Yahweh's instruction, of Messiah's inflexible faithfulness thereto in spite of every ignominy. Here, as in chapter viii. 18 and elsewhere, Isaiah is "for a sign" of Christ; that is, he personally in his language and in his experience represents that of Messiah at his coming.

"My Lord Yahweh (*Adonai Yahweh*), hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. My Lord Yahweh hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (verses 4, 5).

Whatever illustration this may have found in Isaiah, it is certain it was fully and perfectly illustrated only in Christ. The terms of the prophecy refer everything to Yahweh as the Source of all life and light and learning. This is a conspicuous feature of the teaching of Jesus, and is just as conspicuously absent from modern Trinitarianism, which makes Jesus "co-equal" with the Father. Of "the Son of Man," Jesus said "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27). Again, "The words that

I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (ibid v. 63). "He that is of God heareth God's words" (John viii. 47). "He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak" (John xii. 49). "Say to my brethren, I ascend to *my Father* and your Father, to *my God* and your God" (John xx. 17).

These and similar sayings of Jesus illustrate the prophecy concerning Yahweh's instruction of His beloved "Servant" and "Son," who was begotten by the spirit and endowed with it without measure, so that it became a matter of surprised enquiry in Jerusalem: "How knoweth this man letters, having *never learned?*" (John vii. 15). Jesus answered them saying, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;" or, in the language of Isaiah, "My Lord Yahweh hath given me the tongue of the learned." How the doctrine of Jesus found expression in "*words in season to the weary*" is illustrated in all the records of his "gracious words." Never had the like been heard, even in Israel. Here was a man who said to his little band of disciples, and all who should follow in their steps: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.*" And this too when a whole country side had contemptuously turned its back on him. From any other man such a saying would have been a mockery; but from Jesus it is (if we may so speak) natural. What are the facts now? The "wise and prudent" but "rebellious" are dead; the Galilean lake-side is a desolation, and Jesus is in heaven, having "entered into his rest;" and only awaits the time to give his disciples the "rest that remaineth" (Heb. iv.).

"I was not rebellious, neither turned away back," is in contrast with the general attitude of Jerusalem and her children, and all the land, as so strikingly illustrated in Capernaum and Chorazin, now blotted out of existence. He submitted to the "smiting" and the "shame and spitting," as the record of his life shows (Matt. xxvi. 67). The ground of his confidence and secret of his endurance is that which chiefly and most practically concerns us now. It is the same as that which sustained Isaiah in his day and generation, and will sustain all the servants of God unto the end.

“For my Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, my Lord Yahweh will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and the moth shall eat them up.”

Such adamant confidence and resolution must have strong foundation, and it is found in the *promise of help* running through all the divine covenants. He should “bruise the serpent’s head”; he should “possess the gate of his enemies”; he should consume the sons of Belial like thorns; and triumph over death itself. How literally Jesus appropriated these promises, and even the language of this prophecy, we see from the New Testament. Challenging the Jews when they plotted his destruction, he said: “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” Who should condemn him? His adversaries could not stand before him. Even going forth to death he said: “I know that His commandment is life everlasting.”

These things are written for “the ecclesia” as well, and hence the apostles so apply them. Thus Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, speaking of those “who walk not after the flesh,” but “have the spirit of Christ,” and are “led by the spirit of God,” says: “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. . . . If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. *Who is he that condemneth?* It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. viii.).

Thus the mind of Christ is characteristic of all “the sons of God.” They believe God’s promises with “full assurance of faith” and set their faces like flint against all opposition, in the confidence that ultimately they will not be ashamed. And Christ is the proof of it all.

And then the spirit of Christ in Isaiah, having thus spoken beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, personally and individually, goes on to comfort and encourage "his body" as against "the rebellious," by exhorting them to confidence unto the end and devoting the others to extinction.

"Who is among you that feareth Yahweh, *that obeyeth the voice of His Servant*, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of Yahweh, and stay upon his God (Elohim—the Lord Jesus Christ, Psa. xlv. with Heb. i., &c.). Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of *your fire* and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand. Ye shall lie down in sorrow" (verses 10, 12).

It has been pointed out by Dr. George Adam Smith (quoted by Rotherham) that the translation might better run thus: "'Lo! all ye players with fire.' Kindlers of fire is the literal rendering. But the word is not the common word to kindle, but is here used of wanton fire-raising." Then again, it may be remarked that "sparks" would be better rendered "fire-brands." Sparks do not give light to walk by, but fire-brands or torches may. The "players with fire" are those who "fear not Yahweh" and "obey not the voice of His Servant." Their "fire" and "firebrands" are easily discoverable.

"God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29). When He revealed Himself to Moses at the bush, it was in flaming fire. When He led Israel out of Egypt, it was by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day (Ex. xiii. 21, 22). In the crisis of the Exodus the pillar of cloud went from before the Israelites and stood behind them. "And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was *a cloud and darkness* TO THEM, but *it gave light by night* TO THESE, so that the one came not near the other all night" (Ex. xiv. 20). The Egyptians had to get along in the night by such light as they could raise on their own account, which was only enough to cause them to walk into the capture and destruction that Yahweh had prepared for them in the Red Sea. All of which

is an allegory, with a strong bearing upon the "Egypt" of Christ's prophecy in Rev. xi. 8.

About a year after the Exodus another illustration of "players with fire" occurred—this time in Israel, and in the High Priest's family. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord (Lev. x.), reasoning presumptuously, as do the moderns to this day, that any kind of incense offering would do. But "there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." Thus, by His hand, they "*lay down in sorrow,*" and their dead bodies were carried out of the camp, and the High Priest of Israel and his sons mourned not over them, lest they also should die. Which things also are an allegory, with deep significance.

God is the Light of Israel and "a consuming fire." Christ, being God manifested, is "the Light of the World," antitypical of the Pillar of Fire and Cloud that went before Israel's camp to "lead them the way." He is also the altar of incense, upon which, and kindled by the fire thereof, the "prayers of the saints" (Rev. viii. 4) must ascend to the Father. This is "the voice of His Servant" Jesus: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John xiv. 6).

But the "players with fire" of the "outer court" (Rev. xi. 2) will have none of this. In the true spirit of Nadab and Abihu, they contend for the inalienable right of every man "to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience." It is true they profess belief in Jesus, or most of them do, but it is "another Jesus." Some have made him a mere "Son of David," like the Pharisees of old. Others have made him a superior god, even "co-equal" with the Father who begat him. Almost without exception, they consider themselves "sparks of the divine essence," or "precious immortal souls," to the pattern of which they have striven to make Jesus conform. However outrageous it may seem to affirm it, "the covenants of promise," "the Hope of Israel," "the gospel of the kingdom of God," and "the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ," are unknown and untolerated in "Christendom."

Its whole system is the work of "players with fire," like the wreckers' beacons of old, to follow which is to steer to certain destruction. "If ye believe not that I am he," says Jesus, "ye shall die in your sins," and it is certain that "Christendom" does not believe what is testified of Jesus in the Old Testament scriptures. If it did, its kings would never make war upon him, as he declares they will (Rev. xvii. 14). "Christendom" is really "hastening after another God," and its incense rises not from the Jesus-altar, but is repudiated by him. Its prayers, if answered, would make God a liar, for they seek a rest in heaven for "immortal souls," and take no account of the coming glory of His kingdom on earth that He has promised.

In a sense mankind in general are "brands in the burning," and the Lord Jesus "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech. iii. 2). He is now of the divine nature—incorruptible; but they are still in the combustible state. He now shines by the light of God the Father; but they flame for a little while by "the light within," consuming flesh and blood, and then "lie down in sorrow," even in the natural order of mortality. But by-and-bye an international crisis in human affairs will be reached, in which, as in the days of the Exodus of old, it will be a question which is to prevail, God's light, or the "light" of "Egypt" (which is "darkness," Matt. vi. 23). Isaiah had before spoken of the issue when he spoke of the fate of the Assyrian, both in Hezekiah's day and in "the day of Christ": "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and His Holy One for a flame, and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day" (Isa. x. 17). In the plainer language of the New Testament: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven . . . in flaming fire taking vengeance," and shall at that time give "rest" with the apostles and prophets to those who "are troubled" for his name's sake (2 Thess. i. 7). The reward of obedience to the voice of Yahweh's Servant will then be manifest in all the earth.



CHAPTER LI.

“LOOK UNTO ABRAHAM.”

TURNING from the “players with fire,” the prophet, by the spirit of Christ which was in him, calls to the Israel of God: “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit (quarry) whence ye are digged. *Look unto Abraham* your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isa. li. 1-3).

The people to whom this beautiful exhortation is addressed are very particularly described, in the context and throughout the chapter: “*Ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord*” (v. 1); “*My people . . . my nation*” (v. 4); “*Ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law*” (v. 7). These are Abraham’s true children, whether they be his natural descendants, or “his seed” by adoption in Christ. Apart from the faith and works of Abraham, fleshly descent counts for nothing. “We be Abraham’s seed,” said the Jews to Jesus, though they rejected God’s truth which he taught them. But he repudiated their claim altogether: “If ye were Abraham’s children,” said he, “ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John viii.).

These were not the people addressed by God in the place in question. They could not appropriate the prophetic word, as

was manifest in their treatment of Jesus. But a remnant received him and learnt the truth at his mouth, and inherited the freedom he promised. The Galilean fishermen whom he called to his side were the type of people addressed, and the true "seed of Abraham." And those who have learnt "the truth" in turn by their word are of the same family, and in proportion as they "follow after righteousness," and "hide the law of God in their heart," so they can extract strength and comfort from the words of their brethren, the prophets who have gone before.

A knowledge of "the truth" naturally brings obedience to the divine exhortation: "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you." Ever since Abraham's day "the truth" has begotten an earnest desire on the part of its children to see the fulfilment of the promises that God made to him. The prophets themselves are emphatic on the point. Micah exults in the prospect, saying, "Thou wilt perform *the truth* to Jacob, the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. vii. 20). The rejoicing over the birth of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Seed, goes back upon "the oath which he sware to our father Abraham" (Luke i. 73). A paganised theology has distracted attention from the Life and Land covenants that God made with Abraham, and has substituted the modified fables of the Egyptians and Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, with their notions of "shades" surviving the death of the body and departing to their "hades," "fields of peace," and so forth, the location of which no one has ever been able to define.

But, "look unto Abraham." God *called him out* from Ur of the Chaldees where he was an idolater (Josh. xxiv. 2). And He called him into the Promised Land and declared that He would give him all of it for ever (Gen. xiii.). Also that all families of the earth should be blessed *in his seed*, which, says Paul, "is Christ" (Gal. iii.). The times were disturbed and Abraham was "alone." Lot, his nephew, was carried off in war; but Abraham armed a retinue and recovered him, and was blessed on his return by Melchizedek, king of Salem, to whom he gave "tithes of all."

For ten years Abraham went childless; but God assured him of His purpose and directed him to look at the stars, saying, "So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. xv.). And thus, says Paul, Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. iv.). At the end of the ten years Ishmael was born of Hagar (Gen. xvi.), but he was not the seed; and Hagar was cast out before the child was born because of her presumption and Sarah's jealousy; and fourteen years afterwards, having returned from her first short exile, she was cast out with her son, who mocked at Isaac, and returned no more.

This was after about 25 years' sojourn in the Land, and after the covenant of circumcision. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90—a very unlikely thing from a natural point of view; but "is anything too hard for the Lord?" It was after this that Ishmael was cast out. Then, when Isaac was grown, God commanded Abraham to offer him up for a burnt offering on the mountain which He appointed. Abraham obeyed:—"By faith Abraham *when he was tried*, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called;' accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. xi. 17-19). Thus he was justified by works. "Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness'; and he was called 'The Friend of God.' Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. ii. 21-24).

Then Sarah died, and was buried in the sepulchre, in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron, which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. And lastly, Abraham himself died, knowing that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and at the end of 400 years should come again into the land of his sojournings; and believing with all his heart that he would at last rise from the dead to inherit it for ever with Christ, his Seed. "Your father

Abraham," said Jesus to the Jews, "rejoiced to see *my day*; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56).

Therefore, "*Look unto Abraham*," as Jesus himself did in his day. Like Abraham, he was called "alone," but "blessed and increased." Who knows but this very passage may not have been the subject of converse between himself and the angels, who at times "ministered unto him," and "strengthened him"? The offering up of Isaac was but a parable of the offering of the Lamb of God afterwards on the same mountain. What more personally strengthening than for him to contemplate the obedience of his prototype and the emphatic oath of blessedness that followed? (Gen. xxii. 14-18). What more encouraging, in view of the agonies of crucifixion, than this ancient declaration, "Thy Seed *shall possess the gate of His enemies?*"

And the body of Christ as well as Jesus himself is exhorted to "Look unto Abraham." Are they "called out from country and kindred?" So was Abraham. Are they few and feeble in the midst of enemies and war's alarms? So was Abraham. Are their prayers for years apparently unheeded, and hope deferred till despair almost threatens? So it was with Abraham. Is the promise of life so far outside the bounds of human probability that it stirs incredulity? So it was with Abraham. Do they believe against all appearances? So did Abraham; and as he was justified by faith so are they, when, upon belief of the gospel of the kingdom, they are baptised into Christ for the remission of sins. Do they wrestle against fleshly affections and desires and crucify the old man with Christ? "Look at Abraham" offering up Isaac, and receiving him back, as it were, from the dead. Do they look for the day when the heathen shall be expelled from the land before an avenging generation of Israel under a Joshua who shall give them rest? So did Abraham till he closed his eyes in death.

Such is the "rock" whence the true Israel is hewn — the "quarry" whence the stones for the temple are "digged." Only the truth reveals the matter as it really is, and introduces us to the fellowship of the fathers, the prophets and apostles.

When Abraham sojourned in the Land it was full of "waste places," wildernesses and deserts literally and metaphorically, and

though it had in Isaiah's time been subdued by Israel, and under the kingdom in the days of David and Solomon become comparatively a paradise; there was still a long period of desolation in store. Zion has now been comfortless, and her land waste and desolate for many days. Her crowning iniquity in crucifying Christ has brought it about as he said it would; but the vision hath an end, and he is about to return to establish the Kingdom of God in joy and gladness in her midst.

This is the true paradise of the prophets—the "Eden" or "garden of Yahweh" of which they speak. The clerical speculations on Paradise, which have nothing to do with Zion's "waste places" or the land of Abraham's sojourning which God promised him for ever, are mere sublimated paganism. One of the speculators has recently given, as the result of the distillation of his wisdom from beneath, the following ripe conclusion: "So Paradise is Hades, but all Hades is not Paradise; just as Abraham's bosom was Hades, but there was a part of Hades which certainly was not Abraham's bosom."

Now the writer of this does not "look unto Abraham" or he would know better than to write such pagan nonsense. The notions concerning Abraham's bosom in Hades were held, as Josephus shows us in his "Discourse upon Hades," by the Jewish leaders of the first century, who were not the true seed of Abraham at all, but, as Jesus told them, the children of the devil, and blind leaders of the blind. That he should adopt their phraseology in a parable in which he made Abraham condemn them (Lu. xvi.) is only in harmony with the declared fact that he spoke to them in parables because, on account of their blindness and disobedience, *it was not given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xiii. 11). And if they *did not know*, why need we trouble with their stupidities concerning Paradise and Hades? Let us "look to Abraham."

Paradise is where Adam was made, and whence he was exiled. That is not Hades. Eden was the territory in the East, and the "garden eastward in Eden" was "the garden of Yahweh" where Elohim held peaceful converse with our first parents before

Hades was even dreamt of by them. Hades is simply the grave, the invisible, and no such "place of departed spirits" as is popularly imagined. Abraham sojourned in Eden (though not in the garden of Eden) just as afterwards the King of Tyre shone there in regal splendour (Ezek. xxviii. 13). It is the place of these ancient sojournings, and rivalries and tragedies, that is to become a Paradise "in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory." And Abraham will be there, and so will be these Pharisees and others who withstood Jesus in the days of his flesh, for, he said: "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out."

This suggests the new heavens and earth that the prophet speaks of in this place, and which are to take the place of those that he says shall pass away. In verse 6, God's people are addressed, saying, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for *the heavens shall vanish away like smoke*, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." And in verse 16, ONE is addressed, saying, "I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, *that I may plant the heavens*, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people."

The Founder of the New Order in Zion is Christ, in whose mouth the Father's words were found challenging the attention and admiration even of his enemies. The language here is akin to that of ch. xlix. 2, already considered. It is Yahweh's work through Christ that is before us. He is "the arm of the Lord" (Yahweh), to plant the heavens.

The "heavens and earth to vanish away" are of course those of Israel under the Mosaic economy, of which Christ and the apostles often spoke. Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, spoke of this crisis "and the days of vengeance, that all things which were written might be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 22; Matt. xxiv. 29). And he declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Paul, who wrote

many years afterwards, referred to the same thing, saying, "That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. viii. 13); that is the Mosaic or "old covenant," in the judgments that were coming upon the Jewish nation. Peter also speaks of "the heavens and earth that are now," which, says he, are "by the same word (of God) kept in store and reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and *perdition of ungodly men*" (2 Pet. iii. 7). The contrast in Peter's allusion is between the Antediluvian heavens and earth or "world of the ungodly" that had been destroyed in Noah's day, and the Mosaic heavens and earth or Jewish "world of the ungodly" that was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. Of course, the literal heavens and earth remained unchanged through all these fleeting generations of mortality. The contrast also is made between the Mosaic heavens and earth and the Messianic "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). In the old heavens and earth dwelt wickedness, and not righteousness, and therefore they were destroyed. But the apostles and their brethren looked for the "new heavens and new earth, *according to God's promise*"; that is such as here found in this fifty-first chapter of Isaiah, and more plainly still in ch. lxxv. 17.

Christ is the Sun of the new heavens, and his Bride is the Moon, and her constituent units, by another figure, the stars, like Joseph's brethren in his celebrated dream (Gen. xxxvii. 9). For "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3). And "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). It is Christ who establishes the kingdom of the Father upon earth, and centrally in Zion. This is how Yahweh by His hand "plants the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and says unto Zion, "Thou art my people."

In view of this great and glorious transformation, those that "know righteousness" and in whose heart is God's law, are encouraged against the reproach of men and their revilings.

"For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool." In this place these words are the exhortation of Yahweh to His people. In the previous chapter (l. 9), they are enthusiastically adopted by His Servant: "My Lord Yahweh will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Lo they all shall wax old as doth a garment; the moth shall eat them up." We look back—where are those who condemned Jesus? Eaten up in *sheol*. But where is he? "Helped" and exalted to the Father's right hand, and made strong for ever for the glorious work he is yet to accomplish on earth. Truly his "salvation is from generation to generation."

Then the theme changes, and we have as it were a prayer of the prophet (and more remotely of Christ) in the experiencing of the reproaches and revilings of men. It says, "Awake, awake, put on strength O arm of the Lord: Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab (Egypt)? and wounded the dragon (the crocodile, the symbol of Egypt)? Art not thou it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over."

These references to the mighty works of old "in the ancient days" are valuable as indicating at once the currency of the Law of Moses, and the faith of the prophets as based upon it. In this chapter alone there are references to "Eden," "the garden of the Lord," Abraham and Sarah, the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea. A very convincing answer to some of the theories of modern criticism can be developed on the lines of a study of *the Law in the prophets*. The Bible is an historical development, and cannot be pulled to pieces in the way that some have attempted. Moses is the foundation, and upon "Moses' writings" all that comes afterwards is founded. Those who would make the Pentateuch not "Moses' writings," but the work of a number of unknown "editors" of comparatively modern date, run counter to all the facts of the case, and involve themselves in endless confusion, besides reflecting upon the judgment of the Lord Jesus himself.

It was because of Zion's helplessness and the absence of any deliverer that Christ was appointed to save her. This is a challenge to merely human prowess. Those who can see no further than man may boast of Jewish intellect, Jewish continuity in the midst of adversity, Jewish faithfulness and so forth; but where is the Jew who is sufficient for the present situation? Who will undertake to "plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" for Zion? Her sons have but brought her to desolation, and there is none to comfort her but Jesus. He has declared he will do so: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate, and ye shall see me no more henceforth *until* ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

It is he who shall take the cup of trembling out of Zion's hand and give it into the hand of her tormentors. He has revealed the principles upon which it will be done. He will gather the kings of the earth against Jerusalem in war, and will overthrow them and wrest his city from their grasp. We see the situation preparing. A Zionist movement for the restoration of the Jews is attracting the attention of all the Great Powers, who all have "interests" of one sort and another in the Holy Land. Up to a certain crisis the manipulation of these rival interests is apparently human and nothing else; but at last the hand of God is revealed as it was in the days of Joshua, and more gloriously still, for in the last crisis of Jerusalem's degradation, "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zech. xiv. 5).





CHAPTER LII.

THE AWAKENING OF ZION.

FOLLOWING the assurance that the afflicted city should “no more” drink of the cup of God’s fury, the prophet calls again to Zion:—“Awake! Awake! put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments; O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall *no more* come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isa. lii. 1).

The language is to be taken both literally and figuratively—that is to say, the literal city Jerusalem is to arise from the dust of ages and be rebuilt upon her own heap, and the Gentiles cast out from possessing and defiling it with their rival superstitions; and the mystical “holy city,” or body of Christ, is to awake from the dust of death, and, putting on the strength and beauty of immortality, to take possession of the city and land for ever. Both elements must be kept in sight in their relation to the “covenants of promise” to the fathers, which are the foundation of all the promises in the prophets.

The “strength” of Zion is Yahweh, and the “putting on” of strength involves the “greatness of the Holy One of Israel in the midst of her” (Isa. xii. 2, 6). The Lord Jesus, who has “put on immortality,” returns and takes possession of the city. The “beautiful garments” of Zion are the immortal hosts of her true children. The wicked are like cast-off moth-eaten garments (1. 9: li. 8); but the righteous, when clothed upon with their house which is from heaven (2 Cor. v.) are like “beautiful garments.” God said by Jeremiah (ch. xiii.) that He had caused to cleave unto Him the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, “as a girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man.” But this girdle was marred by the river Euphrates. A conqueror is said to array himself with a conquered land “as a shepherd putteth on a

garment" (Jer. xliii. 12). These figures show how, when the Lord Jesus and the saints return to Zion, and the Jews are regathered from their captivity, and the land wrested from Gog and "the terrible nations," Zion may be said to have "put on her beautiful garments."

"Ye have sold yourself for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money." Such is the promise of God in this place. This has been supposed by some to exclude the idea of any money basis in the pre-adventual colonization of Palestine by the Jews. But this is evidently not the scope of the prophecy. That colonization is by no means the redemption in question, but only the premonitory sign of it. The redemption in question involves the resurrection of the dead, the taking of the kingdom by the saints, and the expulsion of the enemy from Palestine.

Ascertain what the "selling for nought" was, and the antithetic redemption without money becomes visible. It was not that there was no monetary transaction in the "selling for nought"—far from it. Ahaz, for example, took the Lord's silver and gold from the temple and presented it to the king of Assyria to secure his alliance against Syria. Proximately this was a buying of help from Assyria. Ultimately, however, this (and other iniquities of Ahaz), was a selling of the people for nothing into the hands of the Assyrian (2 Kings xvi.; 2 Chron. xxviii.). Later, Zion sold herself by her iniquities into the hands of the Romans, when her rulers bought Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and put him to death. When Israel "went down aforetime into Egypt" (Isa. lii. 4) the selling of Joseph into captivity was the iniquity by which they really sold themselves into Egyptian bondage for over two hundred years; at the end of which they were "redeemed without money" by God in the days of the Exodus under Moses. But even in Joseph's day his brethren found themselves sold into his hands, to be by him redeemed and most graciously pardoned in the long-suffering and forbearance of God.

These things are illustrative of the present condition and future prospects of Zion and her children. Jesus, as another Joseph, and the "prophet like unto Moses," is to redeem them without money, to their utter amazement. The present monetary

schemes in connection with Zionism, though they may forward the pre-adventual colonisation of the land, will only develop a more hopeless position than ever, in that *they will furnish a tempting bait* for the great Northern invader (Ezek. xxxviii.). He will come "like a cloud to cover the land," and to take a spoil and prey of the regathered and defenceless people. And though Gog be antagonised by the lions of Tarshish, it is not these, but the Son of Man, who redeems Israel and destroys the hosts of the spoiler.

It was through the rulers of the people that they "sold themselves for nought," and were "taken away for nought." The influence and example of such men as Ahaz, Manasseh, Zedekiah, Caiaphas, and Herod was only such as "made the people to howl"! They "blasphemed the Name" continually every day, and involved themselves and the nation in ruin. Paul, who was contemporary with "the last days" of the Mosaic economy, quotes this passage in his epistle to the Romans. Apostrophising the Jews, he says: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written" (Rom. ii. 24). How "blasphemed"? By transgression of the law; by profession of righteousness and practice of iniquity; by condemning sinners and doing the same things. The apostle argues that by such a course, circumcision in the flesh is "made uncircumcision," that is, if a man walk according to the desires of the flesh and of the mind, the "token of the covenant" is meaningless in his case; he is "uncircumcised of heart and ears," and is as truly one of "the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. lii. 1) as any of the Gentiles who desecrate the Holy City.

Blasphemy is but little understood by the people. It is not mere profanity, though that is a feature of it; it is a much wider and more insidious thing, and is found in quarters where most people never suspect it. A Name stands for a character and purpose. The Name of God is not an appellation to distinguish Him from some other gods; but is the memorial among men of His character and purpose, as may be seen from Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7 and other places. The name of God is said to be "in" the angels. They are His "ministering spirits" who excel in strength, hearken-

ing to the voice of His Word and doing His pleasure. They are the subordinate though immortal expressions of the divine character and purpose.

Men also, though mortal, may be "in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. i. 1), and therefore "in the Name." Being so, they are expected to reflect the character of God and to conform to His purpose. If they do not so, but reflect the character of the devil and conform to this present evil world, they are guilty of blasphemy, which is really a bringing of discredit upon the Name. The contrary course may be anti-thetically described as euphemy—an adorning the doctrine of God, after the example of the Lord Jesus, and walking as *a son who is a credit to his family*.

That this is the true doctrine of the Scripture concerning "blasphemy" will be evident to those who study the New Testament. Jesus rebukes "the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie" (Rev. ii. 9); that is the ungodly walk and conversation of unworthy professors of the Name. Paul exhorts servants to honour their masters, "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (1 Tim. vi. 1). Elsewhere he exhorts young women to be "discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus ii. 5). Roman ecclesiasticism is symbolised by Jesus as "a scarlet coloured beast full of names of blasphemy" (Rev. xvii. 3 : xiii. 1), because the faith and works of Popes, cardinals, priests, monks, and nuns are in every way an outrageous travesty of the Name.

It was so in Jerusalem when Isaiah spoke. Kings, priests and nobles profaned the Name in many ways, some of which the prophet specified from time to time, and which are sternly scheduled by another prophet (Ezek. xxii. 7-12) in a catalogue of the "abominations of the bloody city."

Because of, or notwithstanding, the all-prevailing blasphemy, God proposed to manifest His Name in Jerusalem in a way never before seen:—"Therefore my people shall know my Name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold it is I"

(Isa. lii. 6). This is Immanuel, of previous prophetic promise in the days of Ahaz—God with Israel. The life and work of Jesus in Jerusalem and in all the land of Israel, is the making known of the Name of which Isaiah speaks thus beforehand. Jesus said “I am come in my Father’s Name,” and the Father proved the truth of his assertion by endorsement in audible voice from heaven, and by miracles, signs, and wonders.

In verse 7 the “I” of verse 6 becomes “him”: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *him* that bringeth good tidings.” The “I” is the speaker: “I am he that doth speak”; but the “him” is the mouth of the speaker of the good tidings. This is exactly what Jesus insisted. “If I say the truth why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth *God’s words*” (John viii. 46). “I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak” (John xii. 49). “I am in the Father and the Father in me. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John xiv. 10).

Paul, who quotes this passage from Isa. lii. in Rom. x. 15, introduces by the Spirit a variation which enlarges our conceptions of the prophecy. He says, speaking of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel to Israel and the Gentiles, “How shall *they* preach except *they* be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace.” There are two ways of treating this—the Christ way, and the merely critical way. The Christ way is to regard the body of Christ as speaking Christ’s words, and Christ as speaking God’s words. “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke x. 16). The critical way is to regard the apostolic variation as a “discrepancy,” and an evidence of human frailty and forgetfulness, and of no further use nor interest than as warning us that we must not become bibliolators, nor stand in the way of advancing human science! The Christ way leads us into the company of Christ and the apostles, and to the Father in heaven. The critical way leads us to destruction.

The "beautiful feet" were God's feet—whether of "him" or of "them." God gave His only begotten Son, and he gathered round him a subordinate "body" of preachers of the glad tidings of the coming reign of Zion's God in righteousness and peace. The prophecy is intelligible only in the light of the truth, in which all is of the Father, in whom "we live and move and have our being." Men are "workers together with God" when they understand the gospel of His kingdom, and are baptised into His Name, in being baptised into Jesus Christ. Even now where such adorn the doctrine of God, and proclaim the things that Jesus preached, there are the "beautiful feet" of the prophecy, for they walk up and down in the earth with *the same message*, waiting for the same consolation of Israel.

The watchmen of Zion still have some representatives in the land of the living. Wherever the same glad tidings are believed, and the same "hope of Israel" held fast, there they are, and the promise is to them as to all of the same class who have gone before: "They shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion" (Isa. lii. 8). They shall "see" in the sense not merely of witness, but "know," "enjoy,"—see, not "through a glass, darkly," but "face to face," being made like Christ, partakers of the divine nature. In the language of the Psalm (xlviii.), which will doubtless be used in the temple courts of the coming house of God in Jerusalem, it will be said by these who now only see by faith and hope: "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever." And again (Isa. lxvi. 14), "When ye see this, your heart shall rejoice and your bones shall flourish like an herb," like the incorruptible "flesh and bones" of the Lord Jesus himself (Lu. xxiv. 39).

But all the ends of the earth are to see the salvation of God. That, however, will be upon another and inferior principle, though multitudes will attain to immortality at "the end" appointed. The nations will "see" in the way that Egypt saw at the Exodus, and in the way that the Queen of Sheba saw in the days of Solomon, only on an incomparably grander scale in

both cases. They will first be made to see against their will, for the Lord is to be known by the judgments he executes. But when the nations have learned righteousness under compulsion, they will "see" with a clearer vision than ever, and, perceiving the beauty and goodness of Yahweh's appointments, will confess unto him from the ends of the earth and say: "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. xvi. 19). They will learn of his ways and walk in his paths in righteousness and peace and long life, marvelling at the blindness and wickedness of their ancestors who opposed the establishment of such a Kingdom.

Following upon the declaration of the joy and redemption of Jerusalem by God's judgments and the manifestation of the truth to all the nations, comes a proclamation of another exodus: "Depart ye! Depart ye! go ye out from thence; touch no unclean thing. Go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward" (verses 11, 12).

This cannot refer to "the holy city," the redemption of which has just been proclaimed. It is not "the clean," but "the uncircumcised and the unclean," that are to depart out of her in that day. The point of departure here is the rival city—Babylon the Great, and the prophecy doubtless finds an incipient fulfilment in the restoration from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. But Jerusalem was only partially redeemed then, and "all the nations" did not see, and have not yet seen, "the salvation of our God." Further, the Exodus from Egypt *was* "with haste," and the return from Babylon was not without fear though overruled by God.

The second exodus will fulfil all the conditions specified. The watchmen of Zion themselves in their later generations will have "come out" from Babylon the Great, like Abram of old (Gen. xii.). They will have come out from country and kindred for the sake of God's covenant, and will at last come into immortal inheritance of the land. And of the day of Zion's redemption and the fall of Babylon the Great (Rev. xviii. 4),

it is said that the apostle heard in vision a voice from heaven saying: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The holy apostles and prophets rejoice over her in that day, because God has avenged his people on her (verse 20).

And the scattered children of Zion in the sense of the outcast and persecuted Jews, of whom Jesus once spoke as "the children of the kingdom," will, under the leadership of new "kings and priests," depart from the lands of their dispersion and persecution, especially those European countries called Christendom by the Roman and Greek churches, but "Babylon" and "Sodom and Egypt" by Jesus in the Revelation. The prophet Ezekiel (ch. xx.) tells how God will bring them out from all countries, and purge out the rebels as in the wilderness of old. These things were indeed unintelligible "parables" to those of the Babylonian captivity; but now, after two thousand five hundred years, they are much more intelligible, and so much the more as the day of Zion's vindication draws on. All things point to the coming of Yahweh's Servant, and the astonishment of the kings of the earth in his presence.





CHAPTER LIII.

THE SLAIN LAMB.

THE last three verses of Isa. lii. are considered, apparently with good reason, to belong to the vision of the sacrifice and subsequent exaltation of God's "righteous Servant," which is the subject of Isa. liii.

"Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle (or startle,—R.V., marg.) many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider" (Isa. lii. 13-15).

The astonishment is twofold, first at the marred vision and form of the Servant in his sufferings, and next at the marvellous international developments that ultimately result from it. Of the first, the reception that Jesus met at the hands of the Jews is the illustration; and of the second, the world has as yet heard but little. In what sense is it said, "So shall he sprinkle many nations"? Translators and commentators are by no means sure about the answer. "Sprinkle" is a perfectly good translation of the Hebrew, as is manifest by its many other occurrences. "Scatter," "startle," "cause to leap," "gather to himself," all of which have been proposed as alternatives, do not seem to throw any more light on the matter. It is perfectly true that Messiah will do all these things to many nations; but the question is, Which, if any, is here described? And the answer the scriptures appear best to warrant is "sprinkle," in the sense of purify by his sacrifice, in causing the many nations at last to know, believe, and obey "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ."

The great work of Messiah's age is *not destruction but construction*. It will be a much more glorious thing to build the house of God in the earth than to destroy the house of the devil—more blessed to establish the kingdom of God than to destroy the kingdoms of men; and that is what appears to be here indicated.

Paul quotes verse 15 with reference to his proclamation of the name of Christ. He says (Rom. xv. 20), concerning his carrying of the gospel into Rome, "I have striven to preach the gospel not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation; but as it is written, 'To whom he was not spoken of they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.'" But, although Paul carried the gospel into Cæsar's palace, it was but an incipient fulfilment of the prophecy. There is much more mouth-shutting in store for "the kings" than anything they have yet experienced; and they have never yet "seen" as they are destined to see in the day of Christ. Nevertheless, Paul's quotation yields a clue to the true understanding of the phrase "sprinkle many nations." The strangers to whom he and the apostle Peter effectively addressed themselves with the gospel were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience, and *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. i. 2). They had come "unto Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to *the blood of sprinkling*, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 24).

Imagine this apostolic work revived in the earth in their immortal hands, and those of a host like them under the Lord Jesus at his return (as it will be), and the "sprinkling of many nations" is readily intelligible. Israel will be the first of the nations so sprinkled, as it is written, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25). This is the anti-typical water of separation "sprinkling the unclean" (Num. xix.), which Paul expounds of "the blood of Christ . . . purging their conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14). Apostolic preaching and practice is the literal illustration of it all.

But, "*Who hath believed that which we have heard?*" Such is the remarkable question that the Spirit of God puts into the mouth of the prophet, *speaking of and for his brethren*. And, "To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. liii. 1.). There was to be something so incredible about the person and experience of the Servant of Yahweh, that, though he should be "the arm of the Lord," the testimony concerning him, even though strengthened by miracles, should be almost universally rejected. If Jesus be not the Messiah, this must still be the experience of "him that should come," no matter how distasteful it may be to Israel.

It was not a new doctrine in Israel that Isaiah proclaimed. The offering of Isaac had dramatically foreshadowed the sacrifice and resurrection of the Seed. The rejection of Moses had hinted at the rejection of "the prophet" who was to come. The covenant with David had spoken of the chastening of the Son of God and of David (2 Sam. vii.). And the Psalms had breathed beforehand the spirit of his agonised prayers and entreaties when in the presence of death by violence and wickedness (Ps. xxii.). Therefore, it was nothing new that Isaiah now spoke. But it was, as it were, the reaching of a climax. It is beautifully suggested by Rotherham that in Isaiah's own prophecy this is the case: "*First*, a mere hint of temporary discouragement (xlii. 4); *second*, an open lament over failure (xlix. 4); *third*, personal ill-usage (l. 6); *fourth*, here, violent death!"

Paul refers to these things when he quotes this passage in writing to the Romans about the unbelief of the Jews, and the subsequent, but predetermined, call of the Gentiles. "They have not all *obeyed the gospel*. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report—or the hearing of us?" (The quotation is from the Septuagint, as are others; but the apostles did not quote the blunders of that translation, but, being guided, according to Christ's promise, by the Holy Spirit into "all truth," used it as a familiar and substantially correct version, correcting it only where it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them.) "So then," continues Paul, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 16, 17). "Every man," says Jesus, "*that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me*"

(John vi. 45). But he immediately guarded his expression—"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." Again he said, "I speak that which I have seen with my Father. . . . I have told you the truth *which I have heard of God*" (Jno. viii. 38-40). "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness" (Jno. iii. 11). "*What he hath seen and heard*, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony" (John iii. 32). "Though he had done so many miracles before them ("the arm of the Lord"), yet they believed not on him, that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled when he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (John xii. 37-38).

But *some* believed—imperfectly at first, but perfectly at last, as is sufficiently manifest from his promise of their enthronement with him "in the regeneration." "Ye are my friends," he said, "if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things *which I have heard of my Father* I have made known unto you" (John xv. 14, 15).

Here, then, is the full unfolding of "*that which we have heard.*" The prophets—the greatest of whom was Jesus—"heard and learned of the Father." None of them "saw" like him, for in none of them but in him was God manifested in the flesh. The limitations of their "hearing and learning" are expressly affirmed by Peter (1 Pet. i. 10-12); while on the contrary, it is as expressly affirmed that the Father "giveth not the Spirit by measure" unto Jesus (Jno. iii. 34). And he himself claims the superiority, and the Father Himself attests it by audible voice and visible sign, and by "many miracles."

But the matter for us is that "that which we have heard" was (and is) *on record*. And the only faith worth anything is the "one faith" which is built upon that written word. It was because the Jews knew not the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath, that they fulfilled them in condemning Jesus (Acts xiii. 27). It is for the same reason

that his doctrine and people are still condemned in Christendom. Again, it is because of this that he says, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth" (Luke xviii. 8). And it is because of this that the kings of the habitable will make the tremendous mistake of fulfilling his own prophecy in making war against him! (Rev. xvii. 14). Thus the native incredulity concerning "that which we have heard" persists until the day of judgment, and the arm of the Lord remains, in a sense, unrevealed, until He breaks the nations as a potter's vessel! (Psa. ii.). What a fatal thing it is to turn a deaf ear to "the ministry of the prophets"!

Whole libraries of disputations have raged round this celebrated prophecy: especially since the days of Jesus. Rejecting his claims, the Jews have sought to make out that it refers either to Jeremiah, or to the prophets as a body, or to the nation of Israel. Only the necessities of a theory in straits can account for such perverse ingenuity. The Servant of the text is not the nation, for he is "righteous," whereas, as has been pointed out, that is a "sinful nation" (Isa. i. 4). It was not Jeremiah (though there was a likeness here, for Jeremiah was a man of sign, who represented the "righteous Servant"), for Jeremiah was not offered as a sacrifice, and raised from the dead. It was not the body of the prophets, for *they* say, "All we like sheep have gone astray"; but the "righteous Servant" went not astray at any time, and was wounded, not for his own transgressions, but for "ours."

No, the Servant of Yahweh here and elsewhere spoken of by Isaiah is an individual, and one of such majesty as to be prefigured by "the arm of the Lord." The "he" and "him" that run through the prophecy necessitate it, and the comparison of his sufferings with those of other men. But the applications made by Jesus himself authoritatively settle the matter for ever, and the New Testament quotations by the apostles are all in harmony therewith.

Yet it must be admitted that *a certain substratum of truth underlies the idea that the sufferings of the nation and of the body of the prophets are here before us.* It is indicated by the

apostolic allusions to "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10), "the partaking of Christ's sufferings" (1 Pet. iv. 13). I "now rejoice in my sufferings for you," says Paul, "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for *his body's sake, which is the church*" (Col. i. 24). "The ecclesia," being "in Christ," is considered as being "crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20), and *in this sense* is comprehended in Isa. liii. But this is a very different idea from that which would apply the prophecy to the retributive sufferings of an unbelieving and Jesus-rejecting nation !

Messiah is before us in this prophecy in his relations to the Father, to the nation of Israel, and to "the elect." It is denied by some that it pertains to Messiah at all ; but that is only part of the perverseness foretold in the prophecy itself. Who can it be but Messiah ? Who is this exalted Servant of Yahweh before whom the kings are to shut their mouths in astonishment ? Who is this "arm of the Lord" ? Who is this that "prolongs his days," and in whose hand consequently "the pleasure of Yahweh" prospers victoriously ? Who is this mighty victor who divides the spoil with the strong ? Who is this prophet like Moses who "maketh intercession for the transgressors" ? To any "Israelite indeed," there can be but one answer, and that is, Messiah. And further, to such a one, in the light of Israel's history in the first century, A.D., there can be but one further conclusion, and that is, Jesus of Nazareth is he.

In relation to the Father, he was the "righteous Servant" and Son of God. "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v. 8). "Being in the form of God, he counted it not a prize to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him *the form of a servant*, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath *highly exalted* him" (Phil. ii. 6-9). This is the very spirit of Isa. liii. Again, Jesus himself put it to his disciples when in the crisis of the last supper "there was a strife among them which should be the greatest" (Luke xxii. 24-27). He said

to them: "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But *I am among you as he that serveth.*"

"He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." The allusion is to the earlier Messianic reference of Isaiah to the "rod out of the stem of Jesse" and the Branch to "grow out of his roots" (xi. 1). "Dry," indeed, was the "ground" when Jesus thus came forth to the house of David. The nation was under the yoke of the Romans, and its religious leaders sunk in the cold formalism that Jesus afterwards so scathingly denounced. Yet from obscure and despised Nazareth, though born in David's own city, Bethlehem, arose the "tender plant" of promise, "beautiful" to God, though the nation could see "no beauty" in him. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." This indicates the divine point of view, and the beauty of Jesus therefrom.

But the nation could not see it. To them Jesus was only "a stumbling stone and rock of offence" (Isa. viii. 14; 1 Pet. ii.), as Isaiah and other prophets had declared beforehand. As Jesus himself told them in parable, he was "the stone which the builders rejected," but which was destined to become the head of the corner by the Lord's doing, and to be marvellous in their eyes (Psa. cxviii.; Matt. xxi. 42). A crucified Messiah was "to the Jews a stumbling block" (1 Cor. i. 23). "We have heard out of the law," said they to Jesus, "that the Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" (John xii. 34). But what these said "We have heard," was not the same thing as what the prophets describe as "that which we have heard" ("our report," Isa. liii. 1). It was a distorted and perverted "report," corrupted by "the traditions of men," as Jesus told them, and this led to their "despising" and "rejecting" him, and to the "hiding of their faces from him." They were agreed only upon one thing concerning him, namely, "that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John ix. 22).

But there remained "a remnant" whom Jesus styled "the elect," and to these he appeared in his true light—not all at once—very dimly at first—but at last clearly and strongly as the exalted Servant of Yahweh spoken of by the prophet. While the nation, with deceitful and desperately wicked heart, rejected him, these, being called by him, gathered round him in ever increasing knowledge and admiration.

They witnessed him bearing the people's "griefs" and "sicknesses." At Capernaum he healed Peter's wife's mother "and when even was come they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 17). How literal a matter this was we realise when we look at the case of the woman who touched his garment by stealth (Lu. viii. 43-46). "Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue (*dunamis*, power) is gone out of me."

And they heard his own application of the prophecy to himself in his teaching. "It is written of the Son of Man that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought" (Mar. ix. 12). And at the last supper: "This that is written must yet be accomplished *in me*, And he was reckoned among the transgressors" (Lu. xxii. 37). And after his resurrection, with a strange, new and joyful interest, they heard him say, "O thoughtless ones, and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken*. Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Lu. xxiv. 25).

Then there was a change and a great enlightenment. The Holy Spirit bestowed in the name of Jesus came upon the witnesses, and they became more like their Master, "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," so that when a wayfarer was found studying this prophecy of Isaiah, they could begin at that same scripture and "preach unto him Jesus."

Thus it was in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 26-40). He had been to Jerusalem to worship, and, returning in his chariot *via* Gaza, was reading Isaiah liii. (It would be

the Septuagint translation which was then current in Egypt and Ethiopia.) He was sufficiently unspoiled by anti-Christian philosophy which has since become so aggressive, as to perceive that "*the prophet or some other man*" was in question. Philip, who had been directed by the Holy Spirit, saw him reading this, and said, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The eunuch humbly and candidly answered, "How can I except some man should guide me"; and invited Philip into the chariot. Having read Isa. liii. 7, 8, the eunuch enquired, "I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man. Then Philip opened his mouth, and *began at the same scripture*, and preached unto him JESUS."

This then is the special and providential identification of JESUS with the exalted and righteous "Servant" spoken of in Isa. liii. God had said He would give believing eunuchs and sons of the strangers a place in His house better than of sons and daughters (Isa. lvi. 3, 5), and here was a prominent fulfilment of His gracious promise. Sons and daughters of Israel after the flesh had cast Jesus out, and were consequently given over to "wrath to the uttermost"; while Gentiles from afar were gathered unto the house of God. It is even so to this day. Israel makes void "the voices of the prophets" with traditions, while "the truth" is in Gentile hands. But "the regeneration" is coming.

But what did Philip say to the eunuch? What is covered by that brief and almost tantalising allusion: "He preached unto him Jesus"? We can get a satisfactory answer to the question by referring to what the apostles said of the prophecy in connection with the name of Jesus, and by comparing with it the teaching of Jesus himself. We cannot get a satisfactory answer from the theology of Christendom. According to this we shall be presented with utterly unscriptural and impossible conceptions concerning the sacrifice of Christ.

We shall be told that he died as a substitute—the innocent instead of the guilty. And that "his soul" made an offering for sin, was his "immortal soul," which, of course, *could not die*. And that, in virtue of this, our "immortal souls" escape from

the everlasting pains of a fiery "hell" when we "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But we shall not be told aright what to believe concerning him, but that he is the Second Person of a co-equal and co-eternal Trinity of gods, and that in some mysterious and inexplicable manner he came down from heaven and underwent "incarnation," and "died" (though he was immortal), and arose from the dead and returned to heaven, whither the saints of previous ages had preceded him. And we shall be told that he will come again at "the last day," not to "divide the spoil with the strong," nor to fulfil any such carnal notion, but to "judge the quick and the dead" (hosts of whom—of "the dead"—had been in "heaven" and "hell" for ages), and to burn up the earth, and take the righteous to heaven, and send the wicked to hell. We shall be told that if we believe these things, and have been sprinkled on the face with water, and marked with the mark of the cross in babyhood when we knew and believed nothing, our "immortal souls" will be saved. And that if we had died in the blissful ignorance of infancy, we should be saved notwithstanding the absence of knowledge and belief, on the strength of what our "godfathers and godmothers did promise and vow for us." It cannot be gainsaid that this is in the main a true indication of what Christendom says of "the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ."

But we turn to the apostles. If Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch from Isa. liii., how did Peter and John preach? We have an illustration in Acts iii. They first wrought a "notable miracle" in "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." A well-known beggar at the Beautiful gate of the temple, who had been lame from birth, was healed in a moment, on the word of Peter, in the name of Jesus. Being immediately surrounded by an astounded and admiring crowd, Peter addressed them concerning the name of Jesus whom God had raised from the dead and glorified, though they had slain him and desired a murderer in his stead. It was through his name (powerful in the days of his flesh to heal the sick, and even raise the dead, as they knew) that the man stood healed in their presence. Now brethren, said Peter, you did it in ignorance; but God has so fulfilled His

purpose declared in the prophets concerning the sufferings of the Christ. But now do you repent, that your sins may be blotted out when he comes again as promised to "the restitution of all things." And, as elsewhere (Acts ii.), he would add: "Be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ." In Acts viii. 13, the R.V. establishes a direct reference to Isa. liii. in the rendering "God hath glorified his *Servant* Jesus"; that "Servant" of whose sufferings Isaiah there spoke so particularly.

So again, when Peter and John were, because of this matter, imprisoned by the priests and Sadducean objectors to the resurrection. They repeated the explanation given to the people. And, since it could not well be considered a crime to heal a lame man, they were let go, the people being on their side. In their beautiful prayer recorded in Acts iv. 24-30, there is another apparently direct reference to Isa. liii. in the expression (v. 27) "thy holy *Servant* Jesus" (R.V.).

The apostolic preaching (supported by miracle) consisted in reminding the people of God's ancient promises and covenants concerning Christ, and then drawing attention to the life and work and suffering of Jesus, and showing that they fulfilled the prophets, and finally, testifying to his resurrection, and proclaiming the remission of sins in his name.

This was what Philip would preach to the eunuch, who was doubtless familiar with most of the premises (comp. Acts x. 37). Philip's preaching begat in him a desire to be baptized, and coming to certain water, "he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts viii. 38). And the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." He now understood Isa. liii. perfectly, and when he read: "By his knowledge shall my righteous *Servant* justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities," he was able to include himself among the "many" who, by belief of "that which we have heard," and by repentance and obedience, have found, and shall find, justification in the name of Jesus.

The "justification" thus illustrated is something altogether different from clerical representations of the sacrifice of Christ and

its effects. The sacrifice of Jesus was not vicarious, but representative, and the apostles have left on record their explanation of the saying: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Peter's exhortation based upon the passage under consideration is this: "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self *bare our sins in his own body to the tree*, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye are healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. ii. 21-25).

This is the spirit (and very much of the language) of Isaiah's prophecy in its application by the Holy Spirit to the name of Jesus. The sins of his people are said to be borne (or carried up, R.V.) *in his own body* on (or to) the tree, *in crucifixion*. This is a very different idea from that of the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty, an injustice which is nowhere in the scriptures attributed to God.

The federal principle involved is expounded by Paul in his epistle to the Romans (ch. v. 12-19). It is, in effect, this: that sin entered into the world by one man, Adam, and death by sin: that death (dissolution and return to dust) has thus passed upon all, even upon babes who have not themselves sinned, and that thus, through one man's disobedience, all were made or constituted sinners, and all (with the single exception of Jesus of Nazareth) themselves became actual sinners by individual transgression. That God, in His grace and forbearance, raised up Jesus as a second Adam in the family of Abraham and David, and, commanding him to lay down his life, thus gave him as a sacrifice for sins in his obedience unto death, and for his righteousness' sake raised him from the dead, and gave him as the head of a new generation of the race which should be begotten upon a higher principle. All men are sons of Adam by fleshly descent; but no man is a son of the Second Adam, or son of God, otherwise than by belief of the gospel and baptism into him.

In the belief of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, and in obeying the same in baptism, a man is said to be "washed," "sanctified," and "*justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor. vi. 11). Justification is a matter of "grace" and "forbearance" in such a case. As a matter of ordinary usage justification may be a vindication or declaration of the innocence and righteousness of anyone; but in this sense it is affirmable of Jesus alone, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." The justification he imparts to his people, or rather, God by him imparts, is not such a declaration at all, but is apostolically defined as "the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. iii. 25). The conditions are that men believe the gospel, repent and are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts ii. 38; Matt. xxviii. 19).

"With his stripes we are healed." The healing is first mental and moral; in the putting on of his name; but the ultimate effect is physical also, for he "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21). He associated the forgiveness of sins with bodily healing in a striking way when he healed the sick of the palsy, saying to him, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . Arise, take up thy bed and walk" (Matt. ix. 6). This was but an intimation of the greater healing that awaits those who, having been by him forgiven, "go and sin no more," but "endure unto the end" in the way of his commandments.

The expression, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter," found authoritative application to Jesus when John the Baptist, the forerunner "sent from God," bore witness to him on the banks of Jordan. On two separate occasions it happened, and John said, "*Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*" (John i. 29, 36). Had there been any of sufficiently "quick understanding," they would have instantly connected John's proclamation with Isaiah's prophecy of Yahweh's "righteous Servant" who should be led "*as a lamb to the slaughter.*" But it was "dry ground," and none understood; and even John himself, and the disciples who thenceforward followed Jesus, had still very much to learn concerning him.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the accurate coincidence of historic fact with prophecy in the matter of the violent, and, humanly speaking, unlawful death of Jesus, and the circumstances of his burial. This phase of the matter is well recognised in Christendom, though it is not perceived that it was his claim to kingship as against Cæsar that, so far as man was concerned, sealed his doom. As regards one detail, some of the learned have stumbled over the bracketing of "the wicked" and the "rich" in verse 9, as though "rich" should be read as an equivalent to "wicked." A simple acceptance of the New Testament account delivers us. The rich man (it is singular in the original, while "the wicked" is plural) was a disciple, and not a wicked enemy. It was Joseph of Arimathea, whose new rock-hewn tomb was the fitting temporary receptacle of the body that had been once offered for the sins of the world (Heb. x. 5, 10), and was destined not to see corruption (Psa. xvi.; Acts ii.).

If we ask the question, Why did it please the Lord to bruise his "righteous Servant," to put him to grief and to make his soul (body, life, blood) an offering for sin? we ask a question which touches the roots of divine philosophy (if we may so speak) with regard to man. It is the one great principle enunciated from the day of the expulsion from Eden, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). But why so? Because God is "a great King" and His name dreadful among the nations (Mal. i. 14), and because He will not allow a continuance of life in sin. The clothing of Adam and Eve in the skins of slain animals, and the rejection of their fig-leaf devices, was an intimation of this, and so was every shedding of blood under the law of Moses, in the sacrifices of which the offerers, ritually at least, if not discerningly and humbly and affectionately, illustrated the same great principle. It was, as has been well said, "Heaven's etiquette" that God would not be approached by sinners except upon the recognition of their standing, His offended majesty, and the gracious provision He had made for reconciliation.

If it were so in the shadow (the law of Moses), it was to be so in the substance, Christ. In his own person, though sinless,

he was to learn obedience by the things which he suffered, that he might teach others, who were sinners, the same obedience. He was even baptised, though sinless, because he partook of sinful flesh, and that he might be manifested to Israel. His answer to John's objection was this, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was appointed, and that was enough.

So, although he was sinless, *it was appointed for him to die by bloodshed*—"this commandment," said he, "I have received of my Father" (John x. 18). Isa. liii. is one place where "this commandment" is on record. And so Jesus obeyed, and went forward to accomplish "the pleasure of the Lord" in laying down his life that he might "take it again," a thing possible in his case because of his righteousness. And God raised him from the dead the third day. In becoming connected with him in the appointed way, believing men and women approach the Father through the blood of His slain Lamb, recognising their hopeless estate as sinners, and humbly accepting and conforming to the conditions of the divinely provided reconciliation.

It is a great and noble philosophy which excludes anarchy from the universe, and makes the pagan and clerical dreams of an eternal duration of misery an utter impossibility. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vi. 23). In the crucifixion of Christ, through brief but bitter suffering, followed by the glad healing of resurrection to eternal life, a public exhibition for all ages is made of the majesty and justice of God in His dealings with sinners, and at the same time of His great kindness and forbearance in providing in Christ such a means of escape.

"He shall see a seed." The family of the second Adam is developed on a higher principle than that of flesh and blood begettall, namely, upon the principle of faith and obedience and *adoption*. Fleshly descent is nothing, as Jesus told the Jews when they boasted of being Abraham's children and rejected him (John viii. 39). "As many as are led by the Spirit of

God they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). They are accepted by the Father "in Christ" when they obey from the heart the form of doctrine delivered by the apostles. They will, like him, be declared sons of God with power by resurrection from the dead at his coming to judge and reward every man according to his works (Rom. i. 4: ii. 7, 16).

"He shall prolong his days." This promise concerning God's "righteous Servant" had been given in former times. For instance it was said of the King, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even *length of days for ever and ever*" (Psa. xxi. 4). And again, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Psa. xlv. 6; Heb. i. 8). The whole substance and beauty of this gracious promise is obscured by that Trinitarian doctrine which represents "the Son" as co-equal and *co-eternal* with the Father who "gave him life," "prolonged his days," and establishes his throne for ever and ever. According to the doctrine of Trinitarianism such a thing as the *prolonging of days* for the Son is inconceivable, since "his days," according to that, are of necessity "from everlasting to everlasting," like those of the Father. The confusion arises from the fable of the immortality of the soul, which makes them regard "the Son" as a "precious immortal soul," and not as a "body prepared" of the Father (Psa. xl. 6; LXX.; and Heb. x. 5). Yet the angel Gabriel declares the Son of God to be the body born of Mary (Lu. i. 35). This body had no existence before then, and it was the days of *this body* that were "prolonged" by the Father, for it was not suffered to see corruption; and it was of this body again, when raised and healed, that Jesus said to the disciples, "Handle me and see that it is I MYSELF" (Lu. xxiv. 39).

"The pleasure of the Lord" *has* "prospered in his hand" ever since, as is most strikingly evident to those who can see in his prophecy in the Revelation, and subsequent history interpreted in the light thereof. But this is scarcely perceived upon earth yet, and the Kingdom of God still remains a matter of hope for the great fulfilment of the prophecy. It will come just as surely as he was crucified.

And when it comes, he will "divide the spoil with the strong"; that is with his then almighty brethren. Why should he not? The Gentiles have divided his inheritance among themselves long enough; and his unresisting submission to their indignities in obedience to the will of God was but the preparation for "the day of vengeance" that is coming. And so it is with "his body, the ecclesia." His people have been oppressed and spoiled ever since he suffered. They have not avenged themselves, but have awaited the day of Christ when he will "justify" them in the sense of publicly proclaiming their righteousness before men and angels, and cutting off their enemies from the earth.

It is "because he hath poured out his soul (blood, life) unto death" that this is to be; "because he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and maketh intercession for the transgressors." The tense of the verb marks continuance. The prophet spoke as a spectator in a vision. The apostolic doctrine of the mediation of Christ abundantly illustrates this closing feature of the character and mission of Yahweh's "righteous Servant"—he maketh intercession! He said he would—not for the world—but for transgressors who had repented, for the straying sheep of the house of Israel whom he found and gathered into his fold (John xvii. 9; Isa. liii. 6; John x. 11). And not only so, but he said he would pray for them also who should believe on him through their word (John xvii. 20), those "other sheep . . . not of this fold" (John x. 16), which he said he would gather in, so that there should be "one fold and one shepherd."

And so it comes to pass that in the remote islands of the northern seas a people is found who, like the Ethiopian eunuch, have come to understand him of whom the prophet speaketh these things; and, having been baptised into his name, are going on their way rejoicing in hope of his coming again in "the restitution of all things."



CHAPTER LIV.

NEW JERUSALEM AND HER CHILDREN OF PROMISE.

THROUGH the obedience of Yahweh's "Righteous Servant," and his sacrifice and intercession, a great change comes over Jerusalem. This is the natural sequel, and is the substance of the beautiful exhortation of Isaiah liv., "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord."

There can be no doubt as to who is here addressed, for the apostle Paul has settled it in his quotation of the passage in his "allegory" in the epistle to the Galatians. Speaking of the Law of Moses, and the Abrahamic covenant of promise, he reminds the Galatians that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, one by a bondmaid (Hagar), and the other by a free woman (Sarah). But, says he, "He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was *by promise*. *Which things are an allegory*; for these are *the two covenants*; the one from Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, *which now is*, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above (and hereafter to be manifested from above), is free, which is *the mother of us all*. *For it is written*, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are *the children of promise*. But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bond-

woman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free" (Gal. iv. 23-31).

This passage, which is the key to the right understanding of Isa. liv., indicates with certainty that the New Jerusalem is the subject of the prophet's exordium in this place; and that the good things promised are based upon "*the new covenant*" confirmed in the blood of Christ outside the walls of Jerusalem nearly nineteen centuries ago in fulfilment of the previous prophecy.

It is apparent from the apostolic use of the passage that the contrast is not between earth and heaven in the literal sense; but that it relates to time and condition and not to locality. The city that was (and is) "desolate" is the city to be comforted and glorified. "The desolate cities (are) to be inhabited" (v. 3). This, of course, excludes the literal idea of heaven that finds so large an illustration in popular theology, especially in hymns. The contrast is between "*now is*" and "*then shall be*", the place remaining the same, but the time and conditions being changed.

Jerusalem was figuratively spoken of by God as being married to Him. A striking illustration of this is seen in Ezekiel xvi., where Jerusalem's history is figuratively set forth by the word of the Lord from her wretched Amorite and Hittite infancy onwards, till God gave her into the hands of her enemies for her iniquities; not however without a promise of remembrance of "the everlasting covenant" at last.

Jerusalem's barrenness relates to "the children of promise" and not to the Ishmael seed, of which there was no scarcity in Isaiah's day and afterwards. In the history of Israel God had often interposed His providence in connection with barren women, so that the figure ought to have been appreciated in Jerusalem had any been "of quick understanding." At the very start, the son of Abraham through whom the promise came was the son of a barren woman (Sarah). Rebecca was barren for twenty years before Esau and Jacob were born. The beloved and faithful Joseph was the son of a barren woman (Rachel). Samuel was the

son of a barren woman (Hannah); and Samson likewise, for Manoah's wife was barren. John the Baptist, the Lord's forerunner, was the son of a barren woman (Elizabeth); and Jesus himself was the son of a virgin.

In all this the power is of God, and "by promise," and everything "after the flesh" is excluded. And it is so with "the children" spoken of in this prophecy, to whose number the above-named belong. Indeed, Hannah's song at the dedication of Samuel (1 Sam. ii.) may be taken as an inspired commentary on the passage: "Yahweh killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. . . . He raiseth up the poor out of the dust . . . to make them inherit the throne of glory."

The "children" of Jerusalem's re-marriage after widowhood have already been referred to under Isa. xlix. 18-23. They are the children of the resurrection, now brought down to *sheol*, but to be brought up as Hannah prophesied, by the Lord's Anointed in the latter day. They will awake to a new state of affairs altogether. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will see the land of their sojournings transferred from the hands of the latter-day Canaanites, and made a Paradise in the hands of the Seed "which is Christ." Moses will be permitted to enter at last, under the covenant of which not he, but the Prophet like him, is the Mediator. Samuel will forget the sad days of Saul in the glory of the Son of David. Noah will see the salvation of which his water-borne ark was but a figure. Daniel will inherit the kingdom of which he spoke so much, and Job will rejoice in a final deliverance from Satan in the presence of his "Redeemer." And all others of whatever degree will "break forth into singing and cry aloud" for joy of heart in the realisation of hopes long deferred, but then attained in everlasting satisfaction.

Looking back thus, we see the "great cloud of witnesses," of whom "the world was not worthy," and can understand what "enlargement" of Jerusalem and her dominion will be necessary to fulfil the prophecy. In the context here it is described as a resettlement of the Land of Promise ("make the desolate cities to be inhabited"), and a world-wide empire spreading out from Jerusalem ("thy seed shall inherit the nations"). Isaiah had

already spoken of this many times, as for instance, concerning "the last days" (ch. ii.); or the great revival of "the land of Zion's destruction" (ch. xlix.). It seems impossible that such terms should ever have been divorced from earth, and applied to "heaven beyond the skies"; but one false step has necessitated another, until, by the adoption of the Gentile doctrine of the immortality of the soul, popular religion has become a conglomeration of "lies and vanity and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. xvi. 19).

The other prophets speak of the "enlargement" that is coming, notably Ezekiel, who in the last nine chapters of his book describes "the place of thy tent" very minutely. His visions show how that in "the city which was smitten" by Nebuchadnezzar in his own days, there is at last to arise a temple of such dimensions that it is a city in itself, "as the frame of a city" (xl. 2). He reports the word of the Lord which declares that it is the place of his throne, where he will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever (xliii. 7), and he tells the measure of "the breadth of the tent" (xli. 1). Further, he tells of the service, the rivers of water, the Prince and his portion, the new settlement of the tribes of Israel, all his revelation giving a literal geographical basis for the glory of the new Jerusalem which in the Apocalypse is said to come down from God out of heaven (Rev. xxi. 10).

New Jerusalem geographical and architectural is the basis for New Jerusalem, "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," the glorious community that is to be made "one spirit" with him in the divine nature as Eve was made "one flesh" out of Adam. The truth combines these two elements—"the house of God" in the sense of divine family, and "the house of God" in the sense of the temple in Jerusalem—without confusion. It is so in the prophecy of Isaiah, which is reproduced with other Old Testament revelations in the Apocalypse.

It goes on to say: "Fear not . . . For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." The Maker of all things is God the Father, but upon earth

all things are by and for the Son of his love to the Father's glory. The first husband and wife were a type of this. God created Adam from the dust, and then when it was manifest that it was not good for the man to be alone, God threw him into a deep sleep, and taking one of his ribs made an help meet for him, a woman, of whom when brought to the man it might have been said, subject to God's appointment, "thy maker is thine husband," and of whom Adam did say, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, *because she was taken out of man*" (Gen. ii. 23).

So in the case of the New Jerusalem, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." God created the second Adam, even Jesus; not from the dust, however, but of "the seed of Abraham"; and throwing him into the deep sleep of death by sacrifice on the cross, figuratively took from his side a rib which he is building into a "woman," hereafter to be brought to the Man, and by him to be accepted as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. The apostle uses this expression concerning "the Lord and the Church." "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. v. 30). We are members now by faith and obedience, by belief of the gospel of the kingdom and baptism "into Christ." But it remains for him to pronounce the sentence which shall bring about the consummation of union with him in the divine nature.

"The Lord of Hosts, *Yahweh Tzvaoth*, is his name." Literally it means, He who shall be hosts, and expresses the purpose of the Father to be manifested in hosts, of whom the Lord Jesus is the head, and of whose "eternal salvation" he is said to have become "the Author," having been made perfect by the Father through suffering (Heb. v. 8, 9). He is the "Redeemer" and "the Holy One of Israel," being the Father in manifestation. And he is the God, *Elohim*, of the whole earth, the divine Head and Ruler the Father has given to this world over the "hosts" of its "redeemed."

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters

of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the *covenant of my peace* be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (v. 7-10).

These things are said "for the elect's sake." By comparison with the eternity of the prosperity of the New Jerusalem, the "forsaking" is truly "for a small moment." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So an apostle speaks (2 Cor. iv. 17). And again, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). Even Jesus was "forsaken," but only for a small moment. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was his agonised cry on the cross. But after three days, "everlasting kindness" was his portion.

He himself speaks of "the waters of Noah" in connection with the end of the age. Sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking down upon the city where he was so soon to be crucified, he foretold to his disciples things shortly to come to pass in the end of the Mosaic economy, and things related to the end of the times of the Gentiles, when the restitution of all things Israelitish should become due. "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv. 37). This is true of both ends in question. The Son of Man came at the destruction of Jerusalem, though he did not then *appear*, and the gathering together of his elect was still a matter in the remote future.

Isaiah introduces the waters of Noah for the comfort of the elect, who like Noah and his family shall be saved in the coming overflowing of the wrath of God. Jesus introduces the matter with reference both to the attitude of the world and that of the elect, with an exhortation to the latter to take heed and "watch." "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. . . . Be ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

The mountains that shall "depart" in that day are the Gentile dominions—the kingdoms of men (like Babylon, Jer. li. 25), while, by "the covenant of peace," the mountain of the Lord's house is to be "established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, (so that) *all nations* shall flow unto it" (Is. ii.). The Kingdom of God becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (Dan. ii. 35, 44, 45).

Then follows the description of the precious stones and foundations of afflicted and tempest-tossed Jerusalem; in which connection it is said, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace (prosperity) of thy children" (v. 13). What have precious stones and "foundations" to do with such divinely instructed children? The answer is prominently before us in the notable discourse of the Chief of them in the synagogue at Capernaum. Jesus, who is God's tried and precious sure foundation stone, laid, and hereafter to be laid, in Zion (ch. xxviii. 16), applied this prophecy to himself when, after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, he spoke about the Manna and the "meat that endureth unto everlasting life." When certain "children of the kingdom" in the lower sense "murmured" at his doctrine, he said, "Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man *therefore* that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me" (John vi. 45).

Here, then, is the Lord's own identification of "thy children." Even his own disciples were at that time but imperfectly "taught of God," as the context shows, for many "went back, and walked no more with him." But the twelve, with the exception of Judas, who was a devil, remained with him, and were afterwards further "taught of God." And many others in course of time were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone" (Eph. ii. 20).

In the Revelation this feature of Isaiah's prophecy is reproduced in the glorious description of "the holy city, New

Jerusalem"—"the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." It is said that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 14). The precious stones which "garnished" the foundations are detailed in the same place (v. 19-21). They are "the precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold" (Lam. iv. 2); and "jewels" (Mal. iii. 17). They are the garnishing of the apostles in that they are the crown of their rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming (1 Thess. ii. 19), precious stones built upon the Christ foundation (1 Cor. iii. 12), who abide the day of fiery trial at his coming.

Such are the elements of "the holy city" which shall be "far from oppression and from terror." Not that there will be no attempt on the part of the rival "city" to strike terror into them. There will be such an attempt, as is here declared:—

"Behold *they* shall surely gather together but not by me: whosoever shall gather together *against thee* shall fall for thy sake. Behold I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment shalt thou condemn. This is *the heritage of the servants of the Lord*, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (v. 15, 17).

"They" of the opposition here are the hosts of Antichristendom, who gather together against Jerusalem in the latter days to frustrate the purpose of God. They are the ten kings of the habitable who seek to impose the dominion of "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth" upon the New Jerusalem! (Rev. xvii. 5, 12-14). True, God gathered together the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Roman *against* Jerusalem of old, but the time for that is passed. "The time to favour Zion" comes at length, and then Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone to all the nations that burden themselves therewith (Zech. xii. 3). The Assyrian rod of chastisement was broken and thrown away when the Lord's work with it was done (Isa. x. 12). The Babylonian and Roman likewise; and so

it will be with Antichristendom. It will be broken by terrible judgments, and at last subdued and blessed in the Kingdom of God when the kingdoms of this world shall have become Christ's.

As an illustration of current misapplications of the words of the prophets, it may be mentioned that the Anglo-Israelite theory has applied this verse (17) to the British Power! But as was pointed out in debate, many weapons have prospered against this power, and will yet so prosper. Neither Britain nor any other Gentile dominion is addressed by the prophet, nor even Israel after the flesh. It is "the Servants of the Lord," "the New Jerusalem," the glorious community of every unit of which Jesus says, "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, New Jerusalem, which cometh down from heaven from my God, even my new name" (Rev. iii. 12). This is promised "to him that overcometh." And every one that hath an ear is invited to hear.





CHAPTER LV.

“HO, EVERYONE THAT THIRSTETH !”

THE sacrifice of God's Righteous Servant having been accomplished, and the heritage of the servants of Yahweh defined, then follows the loud and free proclamation to all so reasonably disposed, to join without money and without price in the benefits proposed.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. lv. 1).

The interjection is striking. It is as though the prophet (standing as a man of sign for Another, and for others beside himself), raised the hand and shouted aloud to certain ones, Hoy! Come here! (The Hebrew word has the same sound as our own interjection).

But, as before said by the prophet, “Who hath believed that which we have heard?” Who would respond to the free and gracious invitation so emphatically announced and afterwards to be continually proclaimed? “Everyone that thirsteth,” is the answer in the terms of the proclamation itself.

“Everyone that thirsteth.” Others would hear and turn away; but these would respond. The figure was intelligible enough to such. Had not David himself used it most pathetically in the Psalms? “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul *thirsteth for God*, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa. xlii. 1-2). “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul *thirsteth for thee*. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land (the wilderness of Judah, literal and spiritual), where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary” (Psa. lxiii. 1-2). And Amos, who for some

time at least was contemporary with Isaiah, had said by the spirit : "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst" (Amos viii. 11-13).

Even without looking further than the context, the nature of the thirst and of that "water" which should slake it was evident to normal understanding. It was the desire of the fulfilment of the everlasting covenant in the person of the promised Son of David that was the "thirst." And the "waters," "wine," and "milk" were the word of life related thereto. There could be no mistake about it to normal discernment; but to "ears dull of hearing," the plainest message would be unintelligible.

Then again, Isaiah had already said in connection with this "everlasting covenant" (ch. xlix. 10), that the "prisoners" of hope belonging to the Messenger of the Covenant should at his commandment come forth from darkness, and should "hunger and thirst" no more; a figure that he himself reproduces in his own last prophecy from heaven (Rev. vii. 16); for he says of those who have been sealed in the forehead of all the tribes of Israel, and who are thereafter seen with the Lamb in white robes : "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

About seventy years previous to this revelation, HE himself had voiced the invitation : "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." We hear it on the hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee : "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6). We hear it under quite different circumstances at the brink of Jacob's well (John iv.). "Whosoever drinketh of this water," said he to the wondering woman of Samaria, "shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, *shall never thirst*; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And it is not a little striking that the earliest and plainest assertion of his Messiahship

was in this connection, for to this same woman of Samaria he presently said, in answer to her allusion to the coming of Messiah: "I that speak unto thee am he."

And then again at Capernaum later on, when the true bread was in question, and they had challenged him in the Synagogue with Moses and the manna, he said: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35).

And finally at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and on the occasion of the rejoicing at the drawing of water—rejoicing so marred by the flesh, and so little related to the true substance in their midst by the gracious gift of God:—"Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst let HIM COME UNTO ME and drink.* He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37-8).

Did ever Isaiah speak like this? Nay, did ever any man speak like this? Never, even on the testimony of those who were no friends of Jesus: "Never man spake like this man."

Jesus then has appropriated to himself the words of the Spirit by Isaiah saying, "Incline your ear, and come unto me." Some of the critics can see no further than Isaiah himself in the premises, or than David himself in the promised Prince. That is because "the word of Christ" does not dwell in them—because they do not "thirst" after the manner of David and the prophets and their brethren.

Jesus also in his teaching lays hold on the "without-money-and-without-price" aspect of the invitation. In the sermon on the mount he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Again he makes it a sign of the times to be commended to the reflection of John the Baptist in prison, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 5). The "poor" who "thirsted" and were disposed to "buy without money and without price" were not the merely impecunious. Plenty of these were poor enough, but quite without appetite for the gospel. It was "the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God" (Jas. ii. 5), who were the people in

question, and if we would have concrete illustrations they are at hand in the twelve apostles. We know for certain what kind of men the Lord Jesus gathered round him in the days of his ministry, and how he did it, and what he taught them, and what he promised them. It is all there in the word of God divinely recorded and preserved. *Those who "thirst" will drink.*

Though "without money and without price" in a sense, that is of the free grace of God, the promised life in the Kingdom of God and of David is not "without price" in another sense. It is Jesus himself who says so. Some of his kingdom-parables (Matt. xiii.) represent it as a matter for which a substantial price is paid. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Here, whether the thing was a matter of accidental discovery, or a matter of diligent search rewarded, the result was the same—intelligent discernment promptly and joyfully *paid the price.*

What is the application? It is this. The kingdom of heaven is "without money and without price," in that the gift of God cannot be "purchased with money," as Simon Magus discovered for himself (Acts viii. 20). Neither wealth, influence, nor works of any kind can of themselves in the least degree open the kingdom of heaven to men. It is of grace: "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 8-10).

At the same time the acceptance of the grace of God through faith is so overruled by God in the world that it is infallibly a matter of sacrifice, as indicated in the parables above quoted. A man or woman "thirsting after God" after the type of David as referred to in this prophecy of Isaiah, immediately comes to understand by the same word that causes

the "thirst," and by painful experience, that the world is of other tastes altogether. Hence there is a painful separation involving a price beside which money is often of little worth. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me," says Jesus (Matt. x. 37). "And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it. And he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The apostles are the illustrations of the working out of the principle, and on the negative side may be placed the rich young man to whom Jesus gave the command to sell all that he had and give to the poor that he might have treasure in heaven (Matt. xix.). Paradoxical as it may appear, it is nevertheless true that the young man was too well off to pay the price. And the dictum of Jesus has been in force from that day to this: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." He himself was a poor man, and so were his apostles. "Without money and without price" has its highest illustration in him and them. It was not, however, their poverty, but their "thirst" and "faith" that commended them to God. Where these things are co-existent with possession of substance, as with Abraham, David, and Joseph, and his namesake of Arimathea, it is altogether beautiful. But how rare it is.

The Spirit in Isaiah expostulates with those who preferred the chaff to the wheat: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" And the word goes on to commend the "true bread" of the "everlasting covenant." What is the nature of the two things thus figuratively described? And wherein lies the great difference?

No true answer can be given to these questions apart from a knowledge of and belief in the terms of the "everlasting covenant" in question. A man must know and believe "the gospel of the kingdom of God"—"the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" before he is competent to

discriminate between the wheat and the cheat, between the sustaining and satisfying "fatness" of the promises of God, and the delusive shams by which they have been perverted in a demented world.

The word of truth says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear and *your soul shall live.*" The perverted word in the mouth of the clergy says your "soul" (meaning thereby a phantom unknown to the scriptures) *doth* live whether you incline your ear and "hearken diligently" or not. It *must* live eternally. "O the value of one 'immortal soul.' Countless worlds cannot be placed in the balance with it"! And so forth, in the style which is only too familiar.

Does this "satisfy"? Some of them say (without much fervour or certainty) that it does. But in truth it "satisfieth not," as many can truly testify who have tried it. See them over a dead body or a grave, and their sorrow (or rejoicing) is that of ignorance and hopelessness. The sham gospel sends a phantom to heaven apart from resurrection and judgment, in the face of the plainest testimonies that both are indispensable before eternal life can be entered, and that heaven is forbidden to men, and that the Lord Jesus is returning to cause the righteous to inherit the earth for ever, and further that these things relate not to a ghost or phantom, but to men and women of angelic bodily nature such as the Lord possesses, and such as he revealed to his disciples after his resurrection.

The theology of the apostate Christendom which "satisfieth not" affirms that men and women "come unto Christ" in the mere unintelligent profession of his name without understanding in the least the testimony of God concerning him, and quite apart from any form or ceremony connecting such with Christ. There are exceptions of course, but "salvation on the spot," as it is phrased by the "Salvation Army," in a manifesto current at this time of writing, is an idea by no means restricted to that body.

But the word of the "everlasting covenant" teaches that men and women must be "taught of God" that they may truly come to Christ. They must understand what the Father has promised concerning Christ in the terms of the "everlasting

covenant"; must believe "the word of the kingdom," and thereupon "come unto Christ" in taking upon them his name in baptism for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God. This *satisfies*. Such an obedient believer *knows the will of God and does it*, and if he hold fast the hope and endure unto the end, he will be satisfied for ever in partaking at last of the holy things of the covenant—namely, eternal life with Christ in the Kingdom of God.

It is remarkable that there should be such aversion to accurate knowledge carefully acquired in these matters. Men justify "hearkening diligently" in everything else on earth. How minutely and laboriously the intricacies of philology or archæology are followed. With what infinite labour and research are problems of biology attacked, and with what paucity of result as regards the root of the matter. What pains will not men bestow upon science, finance, or even sport. But the things of God—No. "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." That is the prevailing attitude—now as always. What is to be said of it? Only this, that the invitation is not to such, and the "sure mercies" or "holy things" of David are not for such, but only for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. How few these are in any age is manifest from the fact that six thousand years are occupied in providing a sufficient number of them to rule the world in righteousness during the millennium. But time is no object to God, and were it six million years it would not affect the majestic and beautiful principle upon which He is providing "a people prepared for the Lord."

Concerning "the sure mercies of David," it is said, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader (or Prince) and commander to the peoples." It is plural (peoples), as in the R.V. Who is this? Some of the learned say, David. This shows that they do not understand the terms of the "everlasting covenant." God promised David a Son who should be Son of God as well, and who, being offered as a sacrifice, should be raised from the dead and live for ever, and establish David's throne and kingdom for ever before his face, having raised him from the dead for the purpose. All who hungered and thirsted for righteousness

in Israel were well aware of this, and, like David himself, looked for nothing else. It was to them, as to him, "all their salvation and all their desire."

Isaiah had spoken much of this Son of David. He should be "Immanuel," God with the house of David (ch. vii.). He should deliver the nation in war, and receive of the Lord God the throne and kingdom of David (ch. ix.). He should bring Jacob again to God, and fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord (chs. xlix., xi.). He should be despised and abhorred of the nation, and *given for a covenant* (ch. xlix.). All these things converge and focus in Jesus, and in no other name under heaven. Application to this prophecy to him is made by the Spirit in an apostle. Paul, in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, preached Jesus to them, saying, "God hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And, *as concerning that he raised him up from the dead*, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Acts xiii. 33-34)—("the holy and sure *blessings of David*"—R.V.).

This is authoritative, and proves that the prophet spoke beforehand of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This becomes more evident the closer we look at the words. The term rendered "*sure blessings*" by the R.V. is a compound from the root *Amen*, and this, with all the other terms, has been appropriated by the Lord Jesus himself in the Revelation: "These things saith the *Amen*, the faithful and true *Witness*" (Rev. iii. 14). "Jesus Christ, the faithful and true *Witness*, and the *Prince* of the kings of the earth" (ch. i. 5), "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. vi. 13; John xviii. 37). It is he, and not his father David, who is the *Witness*, *Leader*, and *Commander* of peoples promised in the Covenant, and the plural form of the term rendered "*sure blessings*" comprehends the idea of the body of Christ as well as Jesus personally.

This is further evident from verse 5, "Behold THOU shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee." The antecedent to

"thou" is Jerusalem the exalted, of the context (ch. liv. 17), so that we must include in the term the Lord, the Holy City, and the Bride, who are all of them elements of the glory of the Lord which is to cover the earth by radiation from the New Jerusalem for the illumination of the nations which "knew not" God.

It is with reference to this great salvation about to be revealed on earth, that the free and gracious invitation to apostate Israel and benighted Gentiles is given: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man *his thoughts*, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

We see the first great practical illustration of the application of this manifestation of the kindness of God in the personal ministration of Jesus in Israel nearly nineteen hundred years ago. Though personally sinless, he himself illustrated that "redeeming of the time in the evil days," which was afterwards the subject of apostolic exhortation. When his disciples sought to dissuade him from risking his life by going into Judea to raise Lazarus, he said, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John xi. 9). "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke xiii. 33). And when the time came for him to "perish at Jerusalem," he said to the Jews, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John xii. 35).

"While he may be found . . . while he is near." How accessible was God to the people in the person of Jesus? How "near" he had come to them in "Immanuel"! And yet how few responded. The time soon came that he departed, and "darkness" settled down over the land, and at last it was left desolate.

Afterwards the body of Christ took up the position of the outcast "children of the kingdom," and repeated in its experience the old apostacy. Hence the same expostulations are found in the New Testament writings. Thus, the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, reproves the church of the Laodiceans for its yea and nay lukewarmness and unfaithfulness (2 Cor. i. 19-20), saying, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. iii. 19-22).

The concluding words above quoted, bring the matter down to ourselves. "He that hath an ear" is Christ's equivalent for "everyone that thirsteth." There are doubtless some left here and there who will give heed. They will recognise that a *forsaking* of ways of wickedness is what God desires, and not a weekly ritualistic confession that they are "miserable sinners in whom there is no health." They will "hearken diligently" to the word of the everlasting covenant and come unto the Lord in the appointed way in the "one baptism."

The ultimate success of the word of God is assured by the prophecy. Christ (the Word made flesh) and his true disciples are the "bud," "seed," and "bread" of the beautiful figure of the rain-watered produce of the earth. He is the earnest of the transformation of the earth proposed, when thorns and briars shall be banished, and figs and myrtles take their places. What has already been accomplished in him in fulfilment of the words of this chapter, is enough to develop full assurance of faith as to the remainder, and the coming manifestation which "shall be to the Lord for a Name, and for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."



CHAPTER LVI.

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLES.

IN view of the good things promised in the everlasting covenant with David, and of the free and gracious invitation to "everyone that thirsteth" to partake thereof, the prophet goes on by the spirit to exhort to obedience, with further promises of the blessedness to be revealed.

"Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isa. lvi. 1).

The salvation and righteousness were first "made manifest" in the death and resurrection of Jesus some centuries after Isaiah spoke; but the lifetime of any true fellowservant with the prophets was all that practically separated him from a participation in the good things to be revealed, for "the dead know not anything," but awake in the day of resurrection without the consciousness of any interval between their death and the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Servant" of Yahweh, to reward them according to their works.

But what *is* "keeping judgment and doing justice"? It is to "*lay hold on*" the things revealed, to "*take hold of the covenant,*" to keep the Sabbath from polluting it, to choose the things that please the Lord, to join themselves to the Lord, to love his name and to serve him (verses 2-6). None could do any of these things who were ignorant of the terms of the Lord's covenants with David and the fathers, and were consequently faithless concerning the promises therein revealed. The only difference between Isaiah's days and our own time, with respect to these conditions, is that we are not called upon to observe the Sabbath after the ordinances of the Mosaic Law, which is done away in Christ. This is impossible, and both he and the apostles were found fault with for desecrating the

Sabbath, as their enemies affirmed they did, but without true reason. Even under the Mosaic Law they only could truly observe the Sabbath who were "willing and obedient." Hence it is said by the prophet in another place, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord and honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. lviii. 13-14).

The "blind watchmen" who found fault with Jesus for doing good on the Sabbath days did none of these things, and had no faith in the heritage of Jacob, nor in Jesus as the Son of David promised. They were lost in Rabbinical superstitions and quibbles (especially concerning the Sabbath), and blundered into "the ditch" as Jesus said, with all who were led by them.

A Bible Christian of the true apostolic type calls the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord, and honourable, in looking for the sabbath rest that remaineth (Heb. iv.), and labouring to attain it. He remembers his Lord and Master who "hath entered into rest" in breaking bread and drinking wine as appointed by him every first day of the week according to apostolic custom. He abstains from his own ways and his own pleasure, and speaks not his own words, but the word of the kingdom which Jesus preached, and waits with patience his return to cause him to ride upon the high places of the earth in the heritage of Jacob his father. The "adoption" of the gospel enables him to do this.

"Blessed is the man who doeth this," says the prophet (v. 2), "and the son of man that layeth hold on it." The "frail man" and "son of the earth-born" as Rotherham translates it, in harmony with the spirit of the succeeding verses. If we would enlarge upon this, we might ask of the scriptures the question: Who are the blessed? What a large, harmonious, and beautiful answer we get. We listen to Christ on the Mount, when, as the Salvation of Yahweh and His Righteousness, he was

manifested in the land as "Immanuel," God with us. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. v.). "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii.). "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Rev. xvi. 15).

These, and many other sayings in the Psalms and in the apostolic writings, give us the scriptural answer to the question "Who are the blessed?" There is no happiness or blessedness in any other course than waiting for God in the way of His commandments, in hope of the good things promised in the everlasting covenant. All else is vanity, though it be preferred by all the world.

Even the eunuchs and the sons of the strangers who *take hold of the covenant* are joined in the emphatic promise of blessedness to come (verses 3-8). Under the Law it was provided that a eunuch "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord" (Deut. xxiii. 1). But here is a promise that looks beyond "the end of the Law." We are at once reminded of some of the illustrations in Israel, and of Christ's own words on the subject. The eunuch was literally, in his social relations, "a dry tree." No society of "sons and daughters" could brighten his horizon, and in the inevitable course of nature, in a few years at most, his "name would be cut off." This is the literal, and must be borne in mind to appreciate the gracious promise of God by the prophet.

When Hezekiah had been granted fifteen years further lease of life, and had shown the Babylonian princes all his treasures, the word of the Lord came to him and told him that all these should be carried away to Babylon, and, continued Isaiah, "Of thy sons which shall issue from thee which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (2 Kings xx. 18; Isaiah xxxix. 7). Accordingly

we see Daniel and his companions in Babylon in charge of Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs; and in Daniel himself an eminent example of one who "loved the name of the Lord, chose the things that pleased him, and took hold of the covenant." The assurance of the Lord to him that he should "stand in his lot at the end of the days," and the abundant revelations he had the honour of receiving because of his whole-hearted service of God, may be taken as an inspired commentary upon this prophecy of Isaiah.

Another phase of the matter comes before us in Christ's words when he forbade the putting away of wives "for every cause." His disciples were surprised at his doctrine, and ventured to suggest that under such restrictions it were good not to marry. "But he said unto them, *All men cannot receive this saying, save those to whom it is given.* For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mothers' womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*" (Matt. xix. 12).

Are we "able to receive it"? Yes, in view of what has come to pass since the words were spoken, namely, the gathering together into one small volume the whole counsel of God, from Genesis to Revelation. The Lord divides the matter into three cases: (1), the impotent from birth; (2), the humanly mutilated; (3), the unmarried of choice "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Of this last class, he himself is the most eminent example, and John the Baptist and the apostle Paul are others.

"He shall see a seed." Many "sons and daughters" will be unto him upon a higher principle than being "born of the will of the flesh or of the will of man," though he was "cut off out of the land of the living"—yea, *because* he was cut off out of the land of the living—in sacrifice. CHRIST, Daniel, John the Baptist, and Paul are before our minds as we read the promise of Isa. lvi. "Sons and daughters" after the flesh they had none; but in the day of recompense Christ under the Father will "bring many sons to glory," being himself the firstborn among many brethren.

As concerning the flesh, "it profiteth nothing." Moses was super-excellent, but a grandson of his profaned the Name in the days of the Judges. Samuel was a model of integrity, "but his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment." There will be no place for ancestor-worship or progeny-worship in the kingdom of God. Its family relationships are on a higher plane. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." They that turn many to righteousness sustain to those they so turn, the spiritual relationship of fathers to sons (Psa. xlv. 16; 1 Tim. i. 2); and in this sense Christ is the Head and Father of all; and Daniel, Paul, and others, though physically "dry trees," will be surrounded in the day of Christ with sons and daughters the sweetness of whose society will incomparably transcend anything they could have met in merely mortal relationships.

Outside even the eunuchs of Israel were the "sons of the stranger," to which category we in our far-off generation naturally belong. But even these are covered by the gracious promise of God by the prophet in harmony with other and earlier declarations of his counsel, such as Paul quotes in the epistle to the Romans (ch. xv.). "Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, *and taketh hold of my covenant; even them* will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others unto him beside those that are gathered unto him" (verses 6, 7).

Under the law of Moses the stranger who was joined to the Lord was first circumcised, and then drew near in the sacrifices and ordinances appointed. Under Christ the stranger who is joined to the Lord is "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. ii. 11). He is the subject of

this operation by a belief of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, and by a subsequent baptism into Christ, in which he signifies that he is cut off from his old life according to the flesh. As Paul expresses it in the next verse: "Ye are buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead."

His objective then is "the Father's house," "His holy mountain," "the high places of the earth," "the heritage of Jacob;" and not "kingdoms beyond the skies," which were certainly never promised to David in "the everlasting covenant." As before remarked in these chapters, "the Father's house" is both literal and spiritual; that is to say there will be a literal temple in Jerusalem, "a house of prayer for all peoples," and there will be a "house of God, which is the church of the living God" (1 Tim. iii. 15), the totality of the redeemed in the day of Christ, of which the community of Paul and Timothy's day was only a formative part.

Ezekiel, in the last nine chapters of his book, particularises as to the offerings in the temple of the future age in a manner that leaves no doubt as to the literality of the transactions; while John in the Revelation exhibits the mystical symbols of "the church of the living God," with many interpolated explanations that render the revelation highly intelligible to the initiated. "Strangers who love the name of the Lord" will not fail to make themselves familiar with the matters revealed.

Just before his lifting up in crucifixion, Jesus himself referred to the prophecy in the temple in Jerusalem. He had ascended up from Jericho and had spoken the parable of the absent nobleman (Lu. xix.) to correct the natural impression current, "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Then he came to Bethphage and Bethany, and gave instructions to his disciples for the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy concerning his entry into Jerusalem, "just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. ix. 9). It was a strange royal procession, the king riding to be crucified, and weeping because the royal city "knew not the time of her visita-

tion"; while the multitude shouted in undiscerning, anticipation of immediate deliverance from the Roman yoke by supernatural power.

And he "went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and said unto them, It is written, *My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations*, but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. xxi.: Mar. xi.; Lu. xix., xx.). It was the second occasion on which he had done the like (compare John ii. 15), and it is in this sole connection that we see Christ resort to violence. The whole matter is very suggestive, in comparison with the prophecy he quoted, with his association (on a former occasion) of the profanation of "the temple of his body" (John ii.), and with the revealed fact that hereafter judgment is to begin at the house of God, the temple of "his body" in the larger aspect.

We see from his application of the prophecy, in conjunction with his parable of the nobleman, how he looked forward to the time of his "return" for the ultimate cleansing of the Father's house. As all the scriptures tell us, then, and not till then, will Jerusalem be finally avenged and cleansed from every defilement and made the place of God's throne, that is the temple of the age to come. And then, and not till then, will "*the Father's house of many mansions*" be manifested, and the "places prepared" be filled by the apostles and all who are to be honoured by incorporation into that glorious society. He himself has already been "made joyful," for "the temple of his body" has been raised and glorified as he foretold when he cleansed the temple the first time. As "sons of the strangers joined to the Lord" we wait his coming, hoping to partake of the same glory.

Christ also spoke of the "others" whom the prophet declares God would gather *with the regathered outcasts of Israel* (v. 8). Speaking of himself as "the good Shepherd," in contrast with those shepherds who "could not understand," he said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd" (John x. 16). The apostolic extension of the

gospel to the Gentiles by the will of God is the illustration of the prophecy, and the fulfilment thereof, and of Christ's words; and we ourselves are the witnesses of the continued power of the Word in our day and generation.

With verse 9 a new note is struck by the prophet:—"All ye beasts of the field come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own ways, every one for his gain to his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

Some of the critics are puzzled with this abrupt transition. It is said that the section "seems out of place here." This may be so to critics unilluminated by the truth, but it is certainly not so to those who are content to take the word of God as it stands, and Christ's applications thereof. The immediate consequence of Israel's rejection of Christ, of which the prophet had spoken so wonderfully, was the gathering together of "the beasts of the field" against the "blind watchmen" of Israel. Christ himself said of *his coming against Jerusalem to judgment* in the tribulation of *those days* (Matt. xxiv. 27-29): "Wheresoever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together." This was but another description of the coming of the Roman "beast" against apostate Israel, of which Daniel the prophet had spoken.

But before that, and subsequent to Isaiah's time, the "beasts of the field" had come to devour Israel. Nebuchadnezzar "devoured" Zion, and "swallowed her up like a dragon" (Jer. li. 34). "Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away; first the King of Assyria hath devoured him; and last, this Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, hath broken his bones" (Jer. l. 17).

Since the profanation of the temple of God in the days of Jesus, and the destruction of the temple of his body in crucifixion, many "beasts of the field" have devoured Israel, from the Roman

Eagles to the Russian Bear, under whose claws they are still prostrate. The blindness, ignorance, dumbness, greed, and somnolence of the watchmen of old, have passed over into an apostate "Christendom," where a great host of "shepherds who cannot understand," still look to their own ways, each one for his gain to his quarter. But among it all is the sign of the regathering of the outcasts of Israel and the gathering of others to him. Blind and ignorant indeed are those who, with Bible in hand, cannot see that ZIONISM heralds the resurrection of the dead, and the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth. It is for the watchmen who *can see*, to speak and not be dumb; and for shepherds who *do understand*, to seek the lost sheep to the best of their ability, against the time when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, and give to all whom he approves a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and make them joyful in the Father's house.





CHAPTER LVII.

“THE TROUBLED SEA” AND ITS “MIRE AND DIRT.”

FOLLOWING the terrible denunciation of the blind watchmen of Israel, the prophet in chapter lvii. dwells a moment on the hopeful death of the righteous, and then resumes his scathing rebuke of the people's sins:—

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil. He shall go in peace. They shall rest in their beds, every one that walketh in his uprightness.

“But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom do ye sport yourselves?” (Isa. lvii. 1-4).

Before thinking of the full scope of the prophetic message, pause a moment over the expressions concerning the death of the righteous. “The righteous *perisheth*,” is lost or destroyed, for that is the meaning here. “Merciful men are taken away,” often by violence, none considering the resurrection, when “the earth shall cast forth the dead” (Isa. xxvi. 19). *Then* they shall “enter into peace.” “He shall go in peace” (the margin of the A.V.), is to be preferred as harmonising at once with the first principles of divine truth and the recorded deaths of the righteous. Thus, of Abraham it was said by the Lord God: “Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou *shalt be buried* in a good old age” (Gen. xv. 15). And the aged Simeon, having lived to see the Lord's Christ according to the promise of the Holy Spirit, prayed: “Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace according to thy word” (Luke ii. 29).

“They shall rest in their beds, every one that walketh in his uprightness,” is a beautiful metaphor for the profound sleep

of the grave. The Psalmist says: "If I make my bed in *sheol*, behold thou art there" (Psa. cxxxix. 8). Isaiah himself had already said by the spirit: "Thy dead shall live. . . . Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust" (xxvi. 19). And the angel revealed to Daniel that the time of this awakening would be "the time of the end," when Michael the Great Prince should stand up for the Israel of God (ch. xi. 40: xii. 2). Then, said the angel, "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life."

These allusions sufficiently illustrate the prophet's meaning in this place; and it would be unnecessary to refer to so plain and self-evident a matter but for the obscurity in which it has become involved by the unscriptural doctrines of Christendom. These suppose that the righteous "enter into peace" in heaven above at the moment of death, independently of the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. These ideas have somewhat affected even the translation of the passage; but the version given above, and obtained by choice from the R.V. and A.V. margin, and comparison with other scriptures, represents the obvious truth of the matter.

What was in the prophet's mind when he said: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart"? And to what did the spirit of God point in the future? Isaiah would no doubt remember the base ingratitude with which Joash the king had slain Zechariah and other sons of Jehoiada the priest who had saved his life in infancy, caused him to be enthroned after the cutting off of Athaliah, and instructed him in the ways of God in truth and righteousness. But "they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols, and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them to bring them again unto the Lord, and they testified against them, but they would not give ear" (2 Chron. xxiv. 18-19).

This, of course, was before Isaiah's ministry which began in the last days of Uzziah; but the evil course of the people was continued, and is specifically recorded in connection with the

wicked reign of Ahaz, with whom Isaiah personally had much to do. Ahaz erected images to Baal, burned incense in the valley of Hinnom, made his son to pass through the fire, sacrificed in high places and under every green tree, and in general "debased himself unto hell" (2 Kings xvi.; 2 Chron. xxviii.).

Under these circumstances no doubt many righteous protestants against the royal declension, which was only too readily followed by the common people, perished as in a previous reign.

Hezekiah, however, reversed the insane policy of his father, and did much towards purging Jerusalem and Judah. But there was a relapse again in the reign of Manasseh, his son, who attained an evil eminence that is on record in the scriptures, and in whose early years, according to the tradition in the Talmud, and in the early Christian ecclesias, Isaiah himself perished, being sawn asunder. Manasseh "filled Jerusalem with innocent blood from one end to the other" (2 Kings xxi. 16). And "the Lord would not pardon it," but gave Jerusalem into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxiv. 4).

It was in this massacre of the innocents that Isaiah is believed to have "perished," and the reference of Heb. xi. 37: "sawn asunder," is considered to support the Jewish and Christian tradition, since no other case of such an end is current in the annals of those "of whom the world was not worthy."

Thus arises the reflection that the prophet spoke beforehand by the spirit of his own approaching doom. We can well imagine that he would often and painfully recognise that his fiery denunciations would expose him to such possibilities, even if it were not, as in the case of Paul afterwards, that he was directly forewarned by the spirit. What proportionate comfort then would there be in the thought of "rest in *sheol*" till "the day of vengeance of our God," when he should "awake and sing" and rejoice in the triumph of the Son of David in a new, and purified, and glorified Jerusalem.

And again of that same Son of David, and "Righteous Servant" of Yahweh, the Spirit of God thus spoke before-

hand: "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart." He, like Isaiah before him, rebuked the apostacy of Jerusalem, and was therefore "destroyed," "cut off out of the land of the living." But *his* rest in *sheol* was short, only three days and three nights; and he now walks before Yahweh in the land of the living, awaiting the time to return and raise Isaiah and all the prophets from the dead, and take possession of his royal, but long defiled inheritance.

And later still, of all in Christ who have "perished" in obedience to his commandments it may be said in the words of the prophet: "The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart." What does the world care for the death of such? It accounts itself well rid of them and their tormenting testimony. The consolation, however, of "the righteous" is sure, and is where the prophet looked for it, in the return of him who once was "cut off," upon whom the Lord "laid the iniquity of us all," and who returns to divide the spoil with the strong "because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. liii.).

But the righteous were the natural "sport" of "the seed of the adulterer and the whore," whose ways are here so terribly denounced. Rightly to appreciate the prophet's position and the divine indignation against that which he denounced, it is necessary to have some acquaintance with the manners and customs of the nations dispossessed by Israel, and whose ways they copied with such fatal result. The following extract from a note by Rotherham on "The Destruction of the Canaanite Nations," will be a sufficient indication of the true state of the case, monumental evidences of which are being brought to light in Palestine by excavations at the present time. In the above-named note, at the end of the book of Joshua, Rotherham says:—

"In reviewing the destruction of the nations of Canaan, it is most important to bear in mind the terrible nature of the crimes for which they were exterminated. Their very worship was grossly sensual and revoltingly cruel. In honour of their deities, women surrendered their virtue. Their sacred places were brothels. The generative organs were openly represented by disgust-

ing symbols. The peoples had holy (!) prostitutes, male and female—*kedheshim* and *kedheshoth*. Lustful gods are cruel, and demand to be worshipped with human blood. Hence, to the king-idol Molech, the Canaanites, with some contiguous nations, immolated their sons and daughters. At such crimes as these, nature shudders; and Palestine was fain in abhorrence, to eject her inhabitants. Who shall say that the Most High has not the right to extinguish such polluters of the earth and contaminators of mankind as these? . . . Divine equity warned the Hebrews that if they fell into the same sins, they should receive a like punishment. For their fathers' sake, indeed, they were not to be utterly annihilated; but short of that, if they would sin, they must suffer. We know the sad sequel."

This is enough; we need not trace the proof, which is accessible enough both inside the Scriptures and without, and is implied in the allusions of this denunciation, softened as they are in the translation. "The king-idol Molech" of the foregoing note is thought to be that meant by the allusion here in v. 9 to "the king" (*Melek*, or Molech). And the reference to the "slaying of the children in the valleys" (v. 5), with the history of Manasseh's crimes, seems to justify the conclusion.

In view of such "debasement unto hell" (v. 9), God "gave them over" (Rom. i. 28), and said by the prophet: "When thou criest, let thy companies (multitude of idols), deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them; but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain" (v. 13). We are witnesses of the fulfilment of the first half of this prediction, which is but the earnest of that of the last. Where are the apostates of Isaiah's time? The wind has taken them all away, and the city that was polluted by them has been in disgrace among the Gentiles for about two thousand years. And if it be retorted, "But the prophet also is 'taken away,'" the answer is, "Yes, but not for ever." He will inherit the holy mountain at the time appointed, which is not yet.

"And he shall say (R.V.), (or, And one shall say), Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block

out of the way of my people. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell *in* the high and holy place, *with* him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls (breathing creatures, *neshamoth*) which I have made" (v. 14-16).

Isaiah did his best to "prepare the way and take up the stumbling-block," and perished in the task. John the Baptist, of whom he spoke beforehand (ch. xl.), was a later "voice in the wilderness" going "before the face of the Lord to prepare his way: to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins" (Luke i. 76). By angelic proclamation he was to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. "He shall go before him," said the angel Gabriel, "in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke i. 17). As he preached he rebuked the "generation of vipers" with which he was contemporary, and exhorted those who came to him to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," and to cease boasting in the flesh. But John, like Isaiah, "perished" in the work, though not before he had introduced Messiah and presented to him as Bridegroom, the Bride of the Father's appointment (John iii. 29). This done, he was soon imprisoned for his testimony and attempt to remove the stumbling-block in the shape of Herodias (Matt. xiv.), and the sword of Herod's executioner soon "took him away from the evil to come."

But though John was "taken away," Jesus remained, proclaiming himself "the way," and in his preaching taking up the "stumbling-block out of the way of God's people." He was himself "a stumbling-block" to the wicked, as they were to the righteous and to themselves. They "set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face," and could not endure his preaching; while he unsparingly

rebuked their hypocrisy, and counselled reformation at any cost, in words by which they might have been saved if they could have received them. But "they stumbled at the stumbling-stone," and as it could not be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem, he also was there "taken away" by crucifixion.

But he was not thus finally disposed of. Being raised from the dead he became more than ever a stumbling-block to the Jews; while to the Greeks his doctrine was only "foolishness." But in process of time his own people repeated the history of the apostacy of Israel of old; and hence the rebuke of the ecclesia at Pergamos: "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii. 14).

The history of Balaam and his tragic fate, recorded in the book of Numbers, is the basis of this symbolic prophecy, and must be studied in connection with it. It is true that the language of the Revelation is highly symbolic and metaphorical; but the fact that flesh and blood remains the same from age to age, and the study of the New Testament combined with that of the history of Christianity, alike forbid the exclusion of the literal element in the first or any succeeding century. Stumbling-blocks there have always been, and they remain to this day.

The truth as it is in Jesus is the moral power of persuasion in any individual case; but a more drastic "preparation of the way" remains, and the Lord himself will apply it. It consists of the "taking away" of the wicked of all sorts at his appearing. We get a glimpse of it in his expounding to his disciples of the parables of "the tares of the field." "The field," he said, "is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of Man shall

send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend (all *skandala*, stumbling-blocks), and *them which do iniquity*. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear*" (Matt. xiii. 38-43).

This is the end to which the prophecy of Isaiah looks. Then indeed the Father will dwell *in* and *with* the contrite ones, and an end (though not "*the end*") of the spirit's contention with flesh will have been reached, in which, though the slain of the Lord will have been many, a remnant sufficient for the Father's purpose will have been saved.

Meanwhile Israel is smitten and God's face is still hidden from him, while Christendom, professing Christ's name and service, like Israel of old "goes on frowardly in the way of its own heart." But the word of God says of Israel, "I will heal him" (v. 18), "I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him and to *his mourners*. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, Peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

"The Israel of God" is, of course, the kernel of these promises, the true seed of Abraham and Isaac, who believe God's promises and keep his commandments, "The fruit of the lips" spoken of here is "the fruits of the spirit" of apostolic preaching. "What fruit had ye *then*," asks Paul, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. vi. 21-22). God has created this in Christ Jesus. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. *If we live in the spirit let us also walk in*

the spirit” (Gal. v. 22-25). “Chastening yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. xii. 11). “By him (Jesus) let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of the lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. xiii. 15-16).

This is sufficient indication of what is meant in the prophecy by “the fruit of the lips.” It is all of God, and will result in everlasting peace and prosperity. It was God who sent the word to Israel, “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts x. 36); and it was God who made him joyful for ever, after he was despised and rejected and slain. And it is God who, by him, will satisfy every humble and contrite soul who trusts in him.

But—let us remember, for there is as much need as ever—
“No peace, saith God, to the wicked.”





CHAPTER LVIII.

FASTING, AND YET REJECTING "THE BRIDEGROOM."

"CRY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isa. lviii. 1).

The prophets were, by the divine command, constituted watchmen to the house of Israel. Ezekiel (ch. xxxiii.) is an example, and Isaiah here is another. The commission was not one to rejoice in after the flesh, for no modest and reasonable man delights in fault-finding, especially when it subjects him to grave consequences, and even to death itself. But the prophets were solemnly warned by God that if they failed to warn the wicked, and he perished in his wicked way for lack of warning, his blood would be required at their hands; which is a thing to be remembered by the latter-day brethren of the prophets in their ministrations to those within and without. Isaiah here had to do with those "within," with "my people," "the house of Jacob."

What was the ground of the divine complaint? It was not the lack of religious observance; there was plenty of that. It was an outward "delight in approaching God" coupled with unrighteousness of the sort specified so frequently by the prophet. It was what an apostle defines as "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5). While fasting with much outward show, they found their own pleasure, oppressed the labourers, indulged in strife and debate, and smote with the fist of wickedness. This was made manifest in their treatment of Jesus, whom they contemptuously rejected, while professing superior holiness. Jesus alluded to them as "hypocrites": "When ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a

sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matt. vi. 16). They approached him, through some of John's disciples, with the question, "Why do we fast oft but thy disciples fast not?" He replied by another question, "Can the children of the bridechamber *mourn* as long as *the bridegroom* is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast" (Matt. ix. 15).

And the days came when they did "mourn" and "fast," and in their ministration of the gospel they did the things neglected by the "hypocrites," and here enjoined by God through the prophet. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seeest the naked that thou coverest him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

The Lord Jesus had himself exemplified all this among the "hypocrites" when he "went about doing good" among them, healing the sick, feeding the shepherdless multitudes, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. In his parable of the self-righteous Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the temple to pray, he makes the former say, "I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all I possess," while the latter could only say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." And of this type was Zaccheus, whom he honoured with his presence in his house at Jericho. "They all murmured" at this impropriety. "He is gone to be the guest of a man that is a sinner!" But Zaccheus, in no boastful, but rather in an apologetic spirit, said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." And Jesus as good as said, "I know it." What he really said was this: "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as *he also is a son of Abraham*. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

This was an interesting illustration in real life of the right and wrong kinds of fasting. Mere abstinence from food while indulging in all sorts of wickedness was simply an abomination. But "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and living soberly, righteously, and godly in an evil age, was acceptable to God, and would be rewarded by him in due time.

The reward is divinely set forth in glowing terms by the prophet: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. . . . And they that be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

There are some who consider that this reference to "old wastes" proves this passage to be post-exilic; just as though the spirit of God could not, and did not speak of the desolations before they were accomplished facts.

But there was no "repairer of the breach" to be found in the house of Jacob—no "restorer of paths to dwell in." Hence, as was immediately foretold, God himself interfered by "his own arm." The Jews are complacent about what they call their "mission." "Israel is the prophet among the nations" is a favourite formula with them; but God repudiates this in their own scriptures. They could not and did not produce a Saviour of themselves, and will not at present have Him whom God has provided: which is also according to the same scripture. The conditions of blessedness were constantly breached in Israel, and hence the scattering and desolation, which endures to this day.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasures on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. *Then* shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (v. 13-14).

But all these conditions were broken. The observance of the sabbath degenerated into a mere performance, and rabbinical superstition exhausted its ingenuity in making it ridiculous, and binding upon its disciples burdens grievous to be borne. Under it, it was impossible for any one to "call the sabbath a delight." They did their own pleasure, and spoke their own vain words, as do the modern clergy where there is left any respect for "the sabbath" (as Sunday is wrongly called).

Jesus himself, the "Lord of the Sabbath," came under the condemnation of the "hypocrites" for profaning the sabbath (as they conceived) by works of mercy and healing! But he publicly denounced their hypocrisy (Luke xiii. 15); and showed that they suited their own convenience in watering ox or ass on the sabbath, or rescuing a sheep from a pit.

The true observance of the sabbath was only possible with those who had respect to the covenants, and looked for "the heritage of Jacob" in faith and obedience. Jesus and the disciples illustrated this, and were obedient to the law, though not as construed by the "hypocrites." This is also illustrated in the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus. They in turn were accused by the Judaisers; but Paul withstood them with great emphasis, as in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians. "Let no man judge you of the sabbath," is his dictum (Col. ii. 16); which is the answer to misdirected Sabbatarian zeal to this day on the part of Christ's people. They look for the "heritage of Jacob" in "the rest that remaineth," when Christ shall return, and cause his people to "ride upon the high places of the earth"; and they delight in gathering together on the first day of the week in remembrance of Christ, not speaking their own vain words, but "the word of the truth of the gospel," that the ecclesia may be edified and the public instructed. Those who forsake the assemblies—"as the manner of some is"—are, of course, not included in this category. They do not really belong to "the house of Jacob" in the highest sense, as "that day" will show.



CHAPTER LIX.

THE HINDERED BLESSING OF GOD.

GOD is willing to bless if only men will let Him. That is the burden of chapter lix. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." And then follows a further catalogue of the sins and iniquities in question, like those of the previous chapter.

The apostle Paul quotes from this chapter when arguing in Romans iii. concerning the advantage of the Jew in the possession of the Holy Oracles, and the impotence of their unbelief to frustrate the purpose of God in Christ Jesus the Redeemer. The personal element comes in when he asks (v. 9), "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin, as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one." And he goes on to quote from Isaiah lix. and other places.

Then he adds: "We know that what things soever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law, *that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become subject to the judgment of God*, inasmuch as by deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 19-20).

This is the apostolic exposition of the prophet's mourning in Isa. lix. 9-15. "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light but behold obscurity, for brightness, but we walk in darkness. . . . We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves. . . . For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: *for*

our transgressions are with us, and as to our iniquities we know them. . . . And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey."

This is the mourning of a righteous man like Daniel (ch. ix.), or Ezekiel (ch. ix.), "sighing and crying for the abominations that be done." *It justifies God absolutely, and confesses righteous subjection to His judgment.* It acknowledges the true reason of the prevailing "obscurity" and "darkness," and is a frame of mind which is exceedingly rare in any age or generation, and is proportionately precious in the sight of God. The Bible philosophy of the prevalence of evil is at once simple and profound. It is God's visitation upon sin, upon the Jew first, and then upon the Gentile. But the wise of this world will not have this, but seek for some explanation more in harmony with the carnal mind, so that they can get rid of the responsibility attaching to the truth.

But no sooner was the mourning voice silent, than the prophet by the spirit announced the divine remedy in the Redeemer promised from the beginning. "The Lord saw, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was *no intercessor*; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him" (v. 16).

Jesus is the "arm of the Lord," the intercessor, redeemer, and avenger of the promise. His armour, equipment, and zeal here figuratively described, is by apostolic exhortation (Eph. vi. 17) commended to his body "the church." It is written of him that "he marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark vi. 6), and it is recorded that although "the Lord's hand was not shortened," he could do no mighty works among his own countrymen because of their unreasoning jealousy and stubbornness.

"He put on righteousness as a breast-plate," and no weapon could penetrate it. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" was

his triumphant question to his enemies. And he put on the "helmet of salvation upon his head"—"the hope of salvation" as Paul explains it to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. v. 8). "I know that his commandment is life everlasting," said the Lord, as he went forward to obedience unto death, being assured of "salvation" but three days distant therefrom. We look back upon his victory. Well may the apostle exhort us to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, (and to) put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. vi. 10, 11).

But what are these "garments of vengeance?" What is this coming "fury to his adversaries" and "recompense to his enemies" in all the coasts of the earth? Most people have no place for such a conception of the work of Jesus. It is certainly not to be seen in past history: and it is as certainly to be seen in his own teaching concerning the future. In the parable of the nobleman (Luke xix.), he speaks of his "return," and says, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." "*So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.*"

We are in "the time of the end," and the vision speaks. We know that this could not apply to the Roman "flood" (Dan. ix. 26), for the Spirit of the Lord was then with, and not "against," the Romans. And although the Lord "recompensed his enemies" in Jerusalem at that time, the Roman empire was not affected in the islands or coasts of the earth. It is the Gogian "flood" (Ezek. xxxviii.) against which the Spirit of the Lord raises up Jesus as a standard. The fury of the Lord God comes up in His face, and the land shakes at His presence; and so the nations are made to know the Lord God of Israel.

"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and *unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob*, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon *thee*, and my words which I have put in thy

mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever" (v. 20, 21).

"Them that turn from transgression in Jacob," is not to be restricted to Jews. It is Paul who says so by the same spirit in Rom. xi. 25-27: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins."

Those who have obeyed the gospel and have "the hope of Israel" are candidates for admission in "the fulness of the Gentiles." And the assurance of the fulfilment of the promise of God is always before them in the endurance of the word as here ordained. We listen to Jesus on the Mount of Olives before he suffered, and hear him solemnly appropriate this divine assurance, saying, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away*" (Matt. xxiv. 35).

Nearly nineteen hundred years have passed away since this memorable utterance, so impossible from the lips of a mere son of man. Many generations of believers have come and gone, but still a new generation is always being born, in whose mouths the word of truth remains. This is God's "covenant *with them*." It is our turn. We are dying, and shall soon be gone if the Redeemer tarries. But the word will live on. Every year brings fresh fulfilment of the word scattered in many millions of Bibles throughout the earth. The crowning testimony of all is near—the return of the Lord to his inheritance.



CHAPTER LX.

SUNRISE UPON ZION AFTER A DARK NIGHT.

“**A**RISE, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isa. lx. 1). The voice of reproof is silent; the lamentation over triumphant iniquity is a thing of the past; the Redeemer has come, with his seed, and rejoicing takes the place of mourning.

It is the sunrise upon Zion after a dark and dreadful night. The heading in the Authorised Version tells us that it is “the glory of the church,” which is not amiss if it be understood what “church,” and the interpretation proceed upon New Testament principles. But, alas, this is what is so rare. But if we ask categorically, Who or what is to arise and shine? the answer in the words of inspiration in the context is “Zion” (ch. lix. 20); “the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (ch. lx. 14); the same Zion that has been “forsaken and hated so that no man went through her” (verse 15). This is the city that is to become “an eternal excellency,” and not an imaginary “Jerusalem above.” The confounding of the literal with the mystical in this prophecy and in the Apocalypse has arisen out of a departure from the first principles of divine truth concerning the nature of man and the place of eternal inheritance.

If we further ask categorically, Who or what is Zion’s “light” that shall “come”? the answer in the words of the Holy Spirit is, “the Lord” (Yahweh) (verses 2, 20); “the Redeemer” (ch. lix. 20). The Father revealed Himself in the city nearly nineteen hundred years ago as “the light of the world” in the person of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was that “great light” which then broke in upon the almost impenetrable darkness of “Galilee of the nations,” as Isaiah had foretold (ch. ix. 2). He was “the glory of the Lord,” even in the flesh, as

an apostle emphatically testifies, saying, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14).

But the "darkness" of this prophecy is a long subsequent manifestation, and of much more extensive overspreading: "the darkness shall cover the earth, and *gross darkness* the peoples" (nations). And not only is the darkness deeper and wider spread, but the light that shall dispel it is more glorious. The light of nineteen hundred years ago was "seen" by comparatively few. The great Roman Empire went on in its darkness, and not for three hundred years and more was even a nominal subjection to the name of Christ revealed in its political heavens. This time it will be altogether different: "his glory shall be seen upon Zion." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (ch. xl. 5).

In what way the Lord shall arise to enlighten Zion and the Gentiles is indicated by the concluding references of ch. lix. to the Redeemer and his seed. The Lord Jesus arose from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea on the third day, according to the Scriptures. Having showed himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, he ascended to the right hand of the Father, and, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, his name was convincingly preached for the taking out of a people from among Jews and Gentiles, upon the belief of the gospel of the kingdom, repentance and baptism into his name. Those who in faith and obedience endure unto the end are "his seed," the "many sons" who are said to be "brought to glory" by the Father through him (Heb. ii. 10). They are the "sons of Zion" in the highest sense—"the precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold" (Lam. iv. 2). The natural descendants of Abraham are of altogether inferior rank, as the apostles argue.

The arising of the Lord upon Zion, then, comprehends the arising of those who are his "glory and joy" in that day. As "the Resurrection and the Life," he calls them forth from the obscurity of the grave, and "glorifies" them with "glory, honour,

and incorruption." Unto them that fear his name, he arises as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in his beams" (Mal. iv. 2). And they become "the Kings of the East," or Kings from the Sun-rising (Rev. xvi. 12). Such is the instrumentality by which the darkness of the land and earth, and the *gross darkness* overspreading all nations (Isa. xxv. 7; Rev. xviii. 23) is to be so effectively dispelled.

This revelation entirely disposes of the notion that the world is to be converted to Christ before his return from heaven. That idea is based upon a misunderstanding of his promise to the disciples in Matt. xxviii. 20: and of his prophecy in Matt. xxiv. 14. And it is also based upon an entire misconception of the true nature of conversion, and of the purpose of God in causing the Gospel of the Kingdom to be preached. Christ fulfilled his promise, and was with the disciples "unto the end of the age." And we have the apostle Paul as witness to the fact that the Gospel was preached "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. i. 23); that is throughout the Roman Empire, before the end came upon the Jewish State by the hands of the Romans. Moreover, the conversion of the world is not to be solely by the preaching of the Gospel (let alone by the preaching of the clergy, which is not "the Gospel"), but by conquest, as is visible in this prophecy of Isaiah. And the expressly declared purpose of the apostolic preaching immediately after the ascension of Jesus, was "to take out . . . a people for his (God's) name" (Acts xv. 14). In a sentence, the Lord arises upon Zion not because Zion and the world *are enlightened*, but to *enlighten* Zion and the world, and to dispel the gloom of ages.

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (verse 3). A great change comes over the nations in the day of Christ. At his coming in upon the world as a thief (Rev. xvi. 15), the kings of the earth and of the whole habitable are angry and in battle array, preparatory to being gathered together to Armageddon. They nearly all profess his name, but are in reality gathered together in two great opposing confederacies to seize upon his Land and City, and that

the Victor may found a Universal Dominion. This is the revelation of the prophets (Ezekiel xxxviii., xxxix.; Mic. iv.; Zech. xiv., &c.). While they are so occupied he steals into the world "as a thief in the night," gathers *his* forces, and at length overcomes all the power of the adversary "as in the day of Midian." He takes possession of his ancient city, and being enthroned therein, summons the world to surrender to his sceptre (Rev. xiv. 7). Whatever measures of obedience founded upon true enlightenment may be found, it is manifest that refusal is the rule, for "the war of the great day of God Almighty" follows, in which the nations and kingdoms that *will not serve Zion* are utterly wasted (Isa. lx. 12). This is the only alternative where divine argument and proclamation fail. It is a blessed fact that Might is ultimately on the side of Right; and that "there is no power but of God." There is a certain logic in the Papal struggle after the lost temporal power, on the ground that righteousness itself is of no avail if it be not backed up by force. But, of course, admitting the abstract principle, the question at once arises, Is Romanism righteousness? The answer will be obvious enough when Christendom is taken red-handed in rebellion, and divinely dealt with upon its own professed principle.

But this prophecy does not dwell upon that transient, though dreadful, development; but looks forward to the peace of Jerusalem beyond. Isaiah and his brethren of Hezekiah's day required such a vision for their encouragement and comfort, and so do we. By the eye of faith we see through the deepening gloom the gladsome vision of subdued and enlightened nations flowing unto Jerusalem, no longer as contending hosts, but as favoured strangers uniting with the restored house of Israel to "show forth the praises of the Lord" (verse 6).

One feature in this "showing forth the praises of the Lord" has always challenged the native incredulity of the natural man. It is that specified in v. 7, "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory." This unmistakably

decrees the restoration of sacrifice. But natural thinkers, among the Jews and "Christians" alike, are exceedingly loth to admit it. Their argument is that bloody sacrifices belonged to the old dark days, and that the world is now considerably in advance of all that.

Against this it has to be retorted: That is fitting which God ordains; and The world, whether Jewish or "Christian," is not enlightened in God's ways. The world needs enlightenment on the subject of sacrifice as badly as ever; and God has decreed that it shall be given in the form of slain beasts as of old. There is no doubt about it; the testimony is various—and plain. Here are illustrations:

"The Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall *do sacrifice* and oblation" (Isa. xix. 21). That is in the day of Christ when Assyria and Egypt are blessed with Israel. The righteous "sons of the stranger" and eunuchs, "even them," saith God, "will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; *their burnt offerings and their sacrifices* shall be accepted upon mine altar: for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. lvi. 7). It will be remembered that Christ referred to this passage when he cleansed the temple. He also referred to another notable scripture which tells of the restoration of sacrifice, namely Psa. cxviii. Speaking of the day of Christ, in which Israel shall say, as Jesus told them they would, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (verse 26, with Matt. xxiii. 39), the psalm continues, "God is the Lord which hath showed us light; *bind the sacrifice with cords* even unto the horns of the altar" (verse 27). "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. Neither shall the priests, the Levites, want a man before me to *offer burnt offerings*, and to kindle meat offerings, and to *do sacrifice continually*" (Jer. xxxiii. 17, 18). That is in the day when "Judah shall be saved."

How all this is to be brought to pass is very explicitly revealed through Ezekiel, as a man peculiarly representative of

“the Son of Man,” a title borne by that prophet some ninety times in his book. In his last nine chapters the details of the “house of prayer for all peoples” are very elaborately specified, as also are all the ordinances of the house. Among these is provision for sacrifice, both for the Prince and for the people. Chapter xlvi. provides for the entry of the Prince by the east gate; “and the priests shall prepare *his burnt offering* and his peace offering, and he shall worship” (verse 2). His offering on the sabbath “shall be *six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish*” (verse 4). “Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the Lord of a ram of the first year without blemish. Thou shalt prepare it every morning” (verse 13). In the corner courts are “the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall *boil the sacrifices of the people*” (verse 24). The dual character of the priesthood must not detain us here. The remnant “of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the king the Lord of Hosts, and to *keep the feast of tabernacles*” (Zech. xiv. 16). This involves the offering of the sacrifices appointed for that feast, as Ezekiel declares (ch. xlvi. 24). The Messenger of the Covenant “shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, *as in the days of old, and as in former years*” (Mal. iii. 3-4).

If, *against all this testimony*, it be argued that Jesus offered one sacrifice of sins for ever (Heb. x.), and that, *therefore*, there can be no restoration of sacrifice, it must be answered that that cannot be a right division of the word of truth which would exclude any of its appointments. The bread and wine instituted by the Lord Jesus in memorial of “Christ our passover sacrificed for us,” was expressly limited by him in its use as “until he come.” Then, as he declared—and as the prophet Ezekiel, by the Spirit, had foretold—he will keep the passover anew with his disciples in the Kingdom of God (Ezek. xlv. 21-24; Luke

xxii. 16, 30). The bullocks and rams then sacrificed will point to the Prince as an object of faith on the part of the people, who will be required to believe that he "died unto sin once," as the basis of acceptable approach to the Father in the worship over which he is the High Priest of that glorious age. Men will then come to understand the true nature of the long Gentile interregnum in which they now so foolishly boast; and they will confess that it was but an age of "lies and vanity, and things wherein there was no profit." As a matter of fact, one of the foremost elements of the glory of the Father's house will be the renewed and emphatic exhibition of the ancient divine principle that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows (or cotes)?" (v. 8). The question is unanswered, although the following allusion to the return of Zion's sons in "the ships of Tarshish first," gives a clue to one phase of the answer. The answer in brief is, the saints and the Jews. The former are referred to (in their exemplars) as "a great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. xii. 1). They are to be "caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him" (Rev. i. 7).

The expression "as doves to their cotes" is very beautiful. The "homing instinct" of the pigeon tribe has always challenged the admiration of mankind, and from time immemorial the dove has stood as the symbol of purity and tenderness. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism in bodily form as a dove. Noah's dove *returned* to him in the ark with the olive leaf token of the abating of the flood. In the day when God arises and His enemies are scattered, the redeemed are revealed as with "the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (Psa. lxxviii. 13). In Solomon's Song the Bride is frequently referred to under the figure of a dove—the "dove in the clefts of the rock" (ii. 14). All the individual constituents of the Bride from the beginning yearn after Zion. All their "instincts" are Zionwards. God has put it in their hearts by the operation of a higher law than that which causes

the pigeons to traverse unerringly hundreds of miles of land and sea to the ardently-desired "home."

And even in the nation of Israel the same "instincts" are only in degree less intense. Poor mourning captives in foreign lands! Like "silly doves" they have lost their way meanwhile, and are taken in God's net (Hos. vii. 11, 12). But "they shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria, and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord" (Hos. xi. 11). That is why we see a Zionist movement among the Jews in these latter days.

It is well remarked by Rotherham that the reference to "the isles" and "the ships of Tarshish" necessitates an oversea restoration from the west, and excludes the restriction of the prophecy to the restoration overland from Babylon. Tarshish, as has been abundantly demonstrated in these pages under remarks on the twenty-third chapter of Isaiah, is Britain, and the phrase "ships of Tarshish" stands here for Britain's mercantile marine. Her naval supremacy has been broken before the condition of things seen in this vision obtains. "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind" (Psa. xlviii. 7). This takes place before the "bulwarks" and "palaces" arise as the glory of Zion.

The humbled "sons of strangers" are employed to build up Zion's walls (Isa. lx. 10); and we are enabled even now to appreciate the readiness with which the remnant of "the unemployed" that survives from the chaos of the judgments of the dreadful "day of the Lord," will respond to the commandment to come and build again Jerusalem. Vast multitudes will be required, as the dimensions of Ezekiel's specifications assure us.

Those who look at the Land and city now, without regard to the word of God by the prophets, may perhaps be pardoned for uncertainties concerning Paradise. But the word of God is definite. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify *the place of my sanctuary*; and I will make *the place of my feet* glorious" (verse 13). The expression, "place of my feet" is found again in Ezek. xliii. 7, "the place of the soles of my feet," that is,

in the city which was smitten (ch. xl. 1); where nearly nineteen hundred years ago the "beautiful feet" of the Son of Man trod the courts of the Father's house that Israel turned into "a den of thieves."

Isaiah's prophecy is often confounded with the vision of the symbolic city in Rev. xxi., but a careful reading in the light of the first principles of the truth will deliver anyone from error. John was expressly told by the angel that his vision was a symbol of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" (verse 9). Hence this city can only be a *divine corporation*; while Isaiah includes this in his vision, with added details of literal topography. It is the departure from the first principles of the truth that has obscured the matter. Men are not "immortal souls," and they do not "go to heaven." Christ's people will be like him—"spiritual bodies," and they will, with him, "inherit the land for ever." New Jerusalem, topographically, is old Jerusalem restored; and New Jerusalem, symbolically, "coming down from God out of heaven," is "the Bride," whose "place" is "the city of the Great King," but whose dominion extends to "the uttermost parts of the earth."

Zion's Sun, no more to go down, is Christ; and her moon, no more to be withdrawn, is her royal priesthood under him, and whose light is derived from him. Both he and they together are the manifestation of the Father, as it is written, "Yahweh shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

These are they who, being "all righteous," shall "inherit the land for ever," the branch of Yahweh's planting, the work of His hands that He may be glorified. Under their dominion "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (xxvi. 9).

"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time." Such is the final assurance in this glorious vision. The earnest of it is Christ glorified. Once "a little one," he is now endowed with almighty power to "make all things new." The kingdom of heaven is indeed, as he declared, like a grain of mustard seed at the first, but at the last it "becomes a great mountain and fills

the whole earth." The nation of Israel is "small" indeed, and despised and oppressed, but a full end of all other nations than Israel is decreed. Are we near the "time" decreed? Yes, the signs of the times assure us of it. And foremost among them is that Jewish movement so strikingly harmonising with the spirit of this prophecy. "Arise, shine (O Zion)," says the word of God by the prophet; and lo, in the latter days, a Jewish rising known all over the world as "Zionism"! The sequel is sure.





CHAPTER LXI.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN ISAIAH.

THE spirit of Christ was in the prophets; so the apostle Peter says (1 Pet. i. 11). And this being so, the prophets not only spoke beforehand of Christ, and typically represented him, but of necessity they spoke things that were only partially and proximately applicable to themselves. This is very evident in the words of Isa. lxi., words which Jesus appropriated to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth.

The eunuch's enquiry of Philip, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" (Acts viii. 34), is one that must often have been put before the manifestation of Christ. It is an enquiry that we need to bear in mind, in connection with the apostolic answers to be found in the New Testament, when we study the writings of Moses and the prophets concerning Christ.

Sometimes the prophet spoke things, as it were, in his own name, which were utterly inapplicable to himself individually, as, for instance, when David said, "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. xvi. 10). David individually is not the subject of this prophecy, though, of course, included in its operation. So Peter and Paul alike argue (Acts ii. 29: xiii. 36). So it is in the case before us: Isaiah was truly inspired to preach and prophesy, and dramatically to foreshadow the coming One; but many of the things he here proclaimed were for that One to accomplish and not for him, except as a subordinate participant both then and hereafter.

This view, which is the divine view presented in the words of Christ and the apostles, can scarcely be taken by those who regard the prophets as little more than gifted natural thinkers. Such an

estimate does violence to the express declarations of the prophets themselves. Here is Isaiah protesting: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me." He declares that his inspiration is from God, and superior to "the will of man" (2 Pet. i. 21). It would not be so necessary to harp upon this, were it not so persistently obscured by modern criticism. How could David, by merely natural gift, proclaim the immunity of God's Holy One from the corruption of the grave? How could Isaiah, by merely superior intuition, foretell his entombment "with the wicked and with the rich in his death," and then the "prolonging of his days"? We may press the enquiry concerning a multitude of details of time and place and circumstance that were absolutely beyond the ken of any. The only explanation is "the spirit of the Lord."

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. lxi. 1, 2).

These are the words quoted by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lu. iv.). We look first at Isaiah. He did some of the things spoken of here, but not all. He was indeed inspired, and, being anointed with the Holy Spirit, he did preach good tidings to the meek, when he thus spoke of the coming One and his glorious work. It might perhaps even be said in a figure that he bound up the broken-hearted, and proclaimed liberty to the captives in foretelling the return from Babylon (Isa. xl. 13), and even the resurrection of the dead (xxvi. 19). But it was not his to "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Nor could he announce the actual presence of "the day of vengeance of our God"; and comfort to all Zion's mourners. And the further we read on the more is Isaiah personally and individually left below and behind; the more we find ourselves to be in the presence of "the Redeemer" himself thus revealed beforehand by "the spirit of the Lord."

There is no sufficient explanation of even the opening words above cited till we find ourselves in the presence of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. There, indeed, the light breaks in.

We read in Luke (ch. iv.) that after the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of him through all the regions round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, *he found the place where it was written*: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

The law and the prophets appear to have been divided into sections for the "reading in the synagogue every sabbath day" (Acts xiii. 15, 27: xv. 2), after the manner found among the Jews to the present day. What may have been "the portion" for the day, according to the prevailing division, we know not; but the portion of God's appointment some seven hundred years before was unerringly "*found*" by the same spirit in Jesus that had before spoken in Isaiah of that day.

Jesus read the words quoted above, and no more. And he added an astonishing comment—astonishing to the worshippers in the synagogue, but only natural to him, if we may so speak. "He closed the book and gave it again to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" And although Luke does not tell us what he said, he does tell us that "all bare him witness, and *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.*" It was as though the people, astounded as they were at his claims to be the Anointed of the Lord, could not withhold their testimony that he did indeed speak in the strain of the prophecy he thus so strikingly quoted.

The division of the word made by Jesus in his quotation was a striking one, marking off his work of preaching in the flesh from his work of judgment in the spirit: "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord—and the day of vengeance of our God." He spoke then of "the acceptable year" and left out "the day of

vengeance." We perceive the fitness of this when we have sufficiently learned from the scripture all the details of his mission.

The "anointing" of the prophet's reference was afterwards the subject of apostolic testimony and appeal. Peter in the house of Cornelius challenged the memories of his hearers, "how that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him" (Acts x. 38). He drew attention to that memorable preaching of the gospel to the "meek," and the "healing" and liberating even to the extent of raising the dead. The testimony of God was in it all; it was the work of the Father through Jesus by the Spirit, as Peter again testified on the day of Pentecost. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did by him in the midst of you" (Acts ii. 22). This is the true exhibition of the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy in this place.

The immediate effect of the words of Jesus of Nazareth was to cause his rejection there, notwithstanding the admiration that could not be withheld. "Is not this the son of Joseph?" they asked. And Jesus said that No prophet was accepted in his own country. Had not Elijah and Elisha both been rejected and persecuted on those same hills centuries before? And had not God, passing over the widows in Israel, sent Elijah to a Sidonian widow of Sarepta? And again, had not God, passing over the lepers of Israel, cleansed Naaman the Syrian through Elisha? And what now if God would pass over these Nazarenes and send His Anointed forth to others? They were filled with wrath, and tried to throw him over the precipice, but in some unrecorded way he was delivered, for his time had not come, and "he passing through the midst of them went his way." Had they known the scriptures they would have perceived that he was indeed that "arm of the Lord" spoken of by the prophet whose words he so appropriated, that "Servant" of Yahweh, the "Redeemer" who should indeed be "given for a covenant," but who should "prolong his days" by resurrection, and in whose hand the pleasure of the Lord should prosper.

Jesus being thus authoritatively connected with the prophecy in its opening words, we go forward in "the spirit of Christ" in the context. He will proclaim "the day of vengeance of our God." The apostles say this of him. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire *taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess. i. 8). And in the context Paul declares that for those who do know God and obey the gospel, that is the season of "rest"—"rest with us," as it is said. Then Zion's mourners will be comforted; then when "this corruptible" shall be exchanged for the glory of the divine nature, such will be given "beauty for ashes." Abraham in that day will no longer say, "I am but dust and ashes" (Gen. xviii. 27), for he will be "equal to the angels." "The oil of joy for mourning," another beautiful related contrast, finds illustration in the reference to Jesus in Heb. i. 9, "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The change to spirit nature after the resurrection, and the first rank in the kingdom of God, are the literal elements involved in the beautiful figure. So the "garments of praise, for the spirit of heaviness" find illustration in the apocalyptic references to the "clothing," both of the Lord and of the saints (Rev. i. 13: iii. 4: xix. 8, 13, 14). It is an investment with a change of nature befitting a change of character. Sinners believing the gospel and repenting and being baptised into Christ are clothed with his name. In the flesh, if obedient, they labour in faith, and pray and praise, but it is often in "the spirit of heaviness," "groaning, being burdened." But when made immortal like the Lord, praise will find perfect expression in and from the spiritual body, which is the gift of God. Such will be "trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh that he may be glorified." Jesus himself is the tree of righteousness, and of life. He promises in the Revelation to give to him that overcometh to "eat of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God" (ch. ii. 7), that is, to partake with him of the life and glory of the Kingdom of God. In the last chapter of the Revelation the figure is reproduced, the "trees of

righteousness" are fruitful unto God, and their "leaves are for the healing of the nations;" that is, Christ and his people will glorify the Father in directing the nations of the earth in His way in the age to come.

And the "old wastes" are to be rebuilt to the glory of God. This of course refers to the land of Isaiah's prophecy, "Immanuel's land." These prophecies have been wrested to apply to "heaven beyond the skies," but the absurdity of such an idea is manifest upon reflection. There are no "old wastes," and "waste cities," and "desolations" in heaven, surely. The error arises out of the ancient and demoralising doctrine of the "immortality of the soul." From the days of Babylon downwards this has corrupted the word of God in Israel. But when this is discarded and *the express terms of the word of God alone received*, all becomes clear and beautiful, and the ancient Life and Land covenants of God become the basis of "a hope that maketh not ashamed."

"Strangers" are to do the manual work in the case (v. 5). Of this there is an illustration in the history of Joshua (ch. ix.), when "the Gibeonites by craft obtained a league," and, being spared from the sword, were made "bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God." Of course the merely natural man will revolt at the suggestion; but in those "times of restitution" to come men will have been greatly humbled by the Lord's judgments in the earth, and will have learned righteousness, and consequently the survivors will be only too thankful to throw themselves on the mercy of the Lord, under whose beneficent rule they will enjoy privileges that will contrast greatly with the enslavement they endured in the kingdoms of men. Solomon's employment of the "strangers" in the preparation of material for the temple (2 Chron. ii. 17; 1 Kings x. 13-18) is another illustration. Here it will be seen that the work was not slavery: "A month they were in Lebanon and two months at home." The Greater than Solomon will not be a slave-driver after the type of the magnates of the present evil world. "He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." Knowing what toil is himself, he will mercifully regulate that of

“the strangers” that labour in the restoration of Zion, and indeed the “labour” of all the earth.

Over it all will be the new priesthood of the age to come, of which Isaiah himself will be a constituent, as is implied in this prophecy. Speaking in “the spirit of Christ,” he thus addressed his brethren of that day, some of whom probably will be found to have been his contemporaries in the days of Hezekiah: “Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore, *in their land* they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them.”

The very name of priest has become hateful on earth through the iniquity of man; but we must endeavour to eliminate this present evil world from our ideas, and go back to the appointment of God in Israel to get some true idea of the true glory and beauty of the divine regulation of the world in the age to come. The world is God’s, “that he may be glorified”; this is the first principle, the recognition of which is almost absent from the earth now. True well-being for man upon earth is impossible till it be reinstated in its true position.

In Israel everything was for God. The nation was of God. Its first father was called of God. His son Isaac was given of God. His descendants were delivered from Egyptian bondage by God, constituted “*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” by solemn covenant at Sinai. Not only its worship, but its whole life was regulated by God through a *priesthood*, which in its highest order held direct communication with God. The law of God was administered by this priesthood, a law the true character and beauty of which is only just beginning to dawn upon the minds of modern thinkers, and which was at once a blessing in its regulation of the life that now is, and a wonderful shadow of the conditions of the life to come with Jesus Christ.

Before Moses’ time, there had been the Melchizedek order of priesthood in Salem (Jerusalem), in which the royal and priestly functions were united. Melchizedek had blessed Abraham on his

return from the slaughter of the kings, bringing forth "bread and wine," the symbols and memorial of the blessings to come upon the seed of Abraham hereafter by Jesus Christ. This priesthood was the order that God declared in Psa. cx. should be the portion for ever of David's Lord. "The Lord (Yahweh) hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Consequently Jesus, who is that Priest, must be King of Righteousness (*Zedek*), King of Peace (*Salem*), King of Jerusalem, and Priest of the Most High God. This is the argument of the epistle to the Hebrews.

And under him are his immortal brethren made kings and priests unto God, and to reign on the earth (Rev. v. 10). All this is involved in this prophecy of Isaiah; but it is all foreign to the theologies of Christendom, which have no place for so real and tangible a salvation. The idea of such a priesthood eating the riches of the Gentiles and boasting themselves in their glory is scouted as grossly carnal; but it is written here, and will come to pass just as surely as Jesus appeared in Nazareth in fulfilment of the context some nineteen hundred years ago. Unbelief will not hinder this, as it did not hinder that. No doubt there will be strenuous objection on the part of the Gentiles; so there was on the part of Pharaoh in the days of the Exodus. And this, like that, has been foreseen and foretold by the word of God, whose purpose has never been frustrated by any hard-hearted sinners.

The retribution promised is extremely fitting. Jesus himself was put to shame and death in Jerusalem. What more fitting than that he should reign there in glory. So with a multitude of others: "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Isaiah himself suffered shame and death there, as is supposed; and the body of Christ, in whatever age and country, belongs to that land and city. "Therefore *in their land* they shall possess the double (the counterpart of glory proportionate to their shame and suffering), and everlasting joy shall be unto them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people, and all that see them shall

acknowledge them that they are *the seed* (Isa. liii. 10: liv. 3) which the Lord hath blessed."

Jesus himself emphasised this in his teaching when exhorting his disciples not to be afraid to encounter shame and confusion for his name's sake. For, he said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32). "He that overcometh, I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels" (Rev. iii. 5). And the converse is equally true and emphatically declared: He that denieth shall be denied. We look at Isaiah; we look at Jesus—in the days of "shame" and "confusion"—and then in the days of life and glory "in their land." Shall we not still strive to "overcome"?

As in the opening verses, so in the close of the chapter, "the spirit of Christ" in the prophet speaks of Jesus in a very direct and personal way; although doubtless including the prophet himself as a member of the "one body." I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a *bridegroom* decketh himself with a priestly crown (marg.), and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. *For* as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth *before all the nations.*"

Who is it that is here spoken of? Not the prophet himself *primarily*. Who is that heavenly "bridegroom" clothed with garments of salvation and robed with righteousness? There can be no hesitation in the answer. It is the Spirit's answer by the mouth of John the Baptist and by Jesus himself. "*He that hath the bride* is the bridegroom," said John, "the friend of the bridegroom," as he directed his disciples to Jesus (Jno. iii. 29). "Can they mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them" (Luke v. 34), said Jesus *of himself* concerning his disciples. He is the bridegroom "decked with a priestly crown." He intercedes even now in heaven for his people "making themselves ready" as a bride in his absence. Most of the scattered elements of "the

bride" are in the earth ready to "spring forth before all the nations" in the resurrection. The earnest of it all is Jesus himself, who appropriated this wonderful prophecy in the synagogue nearly nineteen hundred years ago; who suffered shame and confusion in his land for our sakes; who rose from the dead at Jerusalem, and ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives in the presence of individual members of "the bride." The time draws near for the great consummation when Isaiah shall realise the full import of his words of long ago. Already it is faintly "known among the Gentiles" in prospect, and in far-off lands and isles of the seas is caught the echo of a heavenly song: "Halle-lu-Yah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!" (Rev. xix. 7).





CHAPTER LXII.

HEPHZI-BAH — BEULAH.

WE have only to imagine the authorship of chapter lxii. to be restricted to the prophet apart from the control of the spirit of God, to reduce the whole matter to absurdity. It begins :

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and *all kings thy glory*. And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.”

How could the prophet speak this “of himself”? How could *he* guarantee the salvation of Zion? How could he know the purpose of the Lord unless the Lord revealed it to him? And how could his prophecies have so far come true, unless the spirit of Christ was in him?

No, it is not the utterance of Hebrew “genius.” It is “the word of the Lord by the prophet” concerning Christ. It is, as it were, Christ speaking beforehand in the person of Isaiah by the spirit. It has become obscured because popular theology—the theology of Christendom, wrongly so-called—has no place for such a work of Christ as is here, and so frequently elsewhere, specified. They, in effect, say, He has no more to do with Zion; his realms of bliss are in other spheres, and the city which once was forsaken will be forsaken of God for ever.

But Isaiah and the other prophets, as well as the apostles, all declare that it is Christ’s express mission to bring about the restoration of Israel. He was “formed from the womb to bring Jacob again to God” (Isa. xlix. 5). He should be “their Prince *for ever*,” and make their land “like the garden of Eden” (Ezek. xxxvii. 25 :

xxxvi. 35). When he was raised from the dead his apostles naturally thought the time had come; hence their enquiry: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). And after this again, though times and seasons were hidden from them, they preached his return from heaven for the restitution of all things God had spoken by the prophets (Acts iii. 21).

And Christ himself, in his own last prophecy from heaven, the book of Revelation, has appropriated the terms of this prophecy and declared himself to be the Righteousness and Salvation of Zion, and the Giver of her New Name, proclaimed by the mouth of the Lord.

This chapter, like others in the same prophet, is full of plays on names; by which the attention of the living was arrested, and knowledge hidden for the generations to come, who should arise to witness the fulfilment of the prophet's words. Thus Azubah=Forsaken, was the name of Asa's queen, the mother of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 42). Her name applies to the Holy City during the long time of the "great forsaking" (*Azubah*, Isa. vi. 12). We know nothing of her character; but if it was anything like that of Maacah, Asa's mother (2 Chron. xv. 16) there may be a correspondence between the name and the cause of the "forsaking." The final promise of this chapter is that Jerusalem shall be called "a city *not forsaken*."

Then again in the days of Hezekiah=Yah is Strength, when Isaiah uttered these words, his queen was named Hephzibah=My Delight is in Her (2 Kings xxi. 1). She was the mother of Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and made the people "do worse than the heathen." Her name, however, applies to the city in the time of restoration when "Yahweh delighteth in her." Hezekiah was a good King, and it is probable that he was supported in his energetic suppression of idolatry and restoration of the worship of Yahweh, by Hephzibah his Queen.

Thus the events of those days and the names of the chief actors of the times were connected in measure with the message of the prophet, as will be more distinctly seen in the resurrection. But the substance is all of Christ. The New Name is representative

of a new experience. It was referred to by the other prophets before Christ himself made it clear for ever. Daniel in captivity, remembering the promise of restoration, prayed for the city *called by God's name*, saying, "Defer not, O my God, for thy city and thy people are *called by thy name*" (Dan. ix. 18, 19). Ezekiel concludes his visions of the restoration of the city which had been smitten by the declaration, "The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there" (Ezek. xlvi. 35).

This is the rendering of the Authorised Version; but it is not quite satisfactory. It is quite true that the Lord will be there in the person of Jesus; but the New Name means more than that. Ginsburg (quoted by Rotherham) is doubtless correct when he suggests that *shem* and not *sham* is the true pointing, *name* and not *there*. This would make the statement run thus: "Yahweh (is) the name thereof," or "Yahweh (is) her name." The Septuagint gives "the name thereof" as the translation, but omits "the Lord," perhaps because the translators could not rise to the idea of the divine name being named upon a city. From Isaiah's prophecy, however, it is manifest that the city is to be married to God as a virgin is married to a young man. When this occurs the man's name is named upon the woman, who becomes one with the man and partakes of his affection and care and all his substance.

But Christ has settled the matter for ever by his promise to the church in Philadelphia: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, (even) *my new name*" (Rev. iii. 12). Here the name of God, the name of the city, and the new name of Jesus Christ are diverse figures of the great salvation to be brought to his people by the Lord Jesus at his return. Hence the following beautiful remarks by Dr. Thomas in exposition of this passage—*Eureka*, vol. i., p. 399:

"To write the name of the city of the Deity upon one already inscribed with the name of the Deity, is indicative of all such constituting a *Body Politic*—a Divine Municipality. It is called 'New Jerusalem' in contradistinction to the Old Jerusalem under

the Mosaic constitution, 'in bondage with her children.' The latter was the mother of those whose name was good for nothing, but the former is the mother of all who believe the promises concerning the glorious things spoken of her approaching future. At present she is barren and desolate, having no children; nevertheless, this same shall break forth and cry, and become *the higher Jerusalem*, 'the free city,' which is the mother city, or metropolis, of the kingdom and dominion of the Millennial Aion. Jerusalem under Solomon the Second will be 'higher,' or more exalted than Jerusalem under Solomon the First, because the Municipality—THE INCORPORATE DEITY—will be her glory. In the times of Solomon, her state and municipal corporations were mortal men, and the glory of the Deity was confined to the temple, between the cherubim; but in the coming reign, the administration from the King to the least in the kingdom, will be immortal and greater than all that are born of women, and of such excellency in the estimation of Deity as to be compared to 'gold and precious stones' (1 Cor. iii. 12; Rev. xxi.)."

It is of this great consummation that the spirit of Christ in the prophet speaks, saying: "I will not hold my peace . . . I will not rest till it be accomplished." What though appearances are against it? The purpose of God required not a *continual* manifestation of divine power, but the intervening of a time when God *would* "hold his peace"—and that "a long time"—as it is written: "I have a long time holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once" (Isa. xlii. 14).

There is a time for the silence, and it does not argue inactivity or lack of progress in the divine work. Behind the veil Christ is preparing the situation all the time. A people is being taken out from among the Gentiles by faith in the promises and obedience to the divine commandments. One by one they are laid aside in the dreamless sleep of *sheol*, and are clean forgotten by succeeding generations, but not by God. He appoints a set time, and will remember them. This was Job's hope in his day. And then there is the punishment of Israel and the nations, and the preservation of Israel for the crisis of the latter days. Moreover,

there is the subjugation of the earth by the advancing march of what is called "civilisation," that it may be ready in time for transfer to the King and his people at his coming. Could we but penetrate the invisible with our faithful scrutiny, we should see the angels of God at work just as much now as in the days of Daniel and the Persian kings. There is progress though there is silence, and in this sense, God "rests not."

Jerusalem is rising in token of the approach of the time when she shall be made "a praise in the earth." There are now many more Jews in the city than the number that returned in the days of the Restoration from Babylon. And though the purpose of God is scarcely known in its purity and fulness, there is here and there an increasing belief in a certain sort of Millenarianism, which is, at any rate, nearer to the truth than the old views that relegated Zion and Jerusalem to spheres "beyond the realms of time and space." It is beginning to be realised in certain quarters that the city that was Forsaken is the city that is to be the Delight of the Lord, and to be married to her God, even to the Sons of Zion.

How far this may be due to the personal testimony of Zion's true "watchmen" will never appear till the return of the Lord; but these are here exhorted to pray day and night for the peace of Jerusalem, which they do unceasingly. This is indeed the test that decides between the false and the true watchman. Both are spoken of by the prophet, who himself illustrated the true in his own person. He spoke of the blind, ignorant, dumb dogs of watchmen, greedy dogs who could never get enough. By another figure these were "shepherds who could not understand" (ch. lvi. 11). The others, the true, were, like the prophet, of clear vision and good understanding, not at all greedy; and as shepherds they intelligently guided and protected the flock against the evil beasts that abounded on all hands.

The situation remains in measure unchanged. "Christendom" is full of the blind, ignorant, and greedy watchmen, of "shepherds that cannot understand." The faithful watchmen contend with these concerning the purpose of God, and warn the wicked of the error of his ways. They get little thanks for it, but

they must not refrain, or the blood of the unwarned will come upon their heads. Their time is coming, when they will be able to say in Zion: "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever" (Psa. xlviii. 8).

In the day of Jerusalem's deliverance, it is said that her children shall eat and drink and praise the Lord in "the courts of his holiness." This involves the rebuilding of the temple, which is particularly specified by Ezekiel and Zechariah. Ezekiel, in the last nine chapters of his book, particularises on the details of construction and ordinances related to the courts of Yahweh's holiness, and sees in vision the glory of the Lord enter the house by the way of the east (ch. xliii.), which portends as real (and more glorious) an occupation of the temple as that in the days of Solomon. Elsewhere Ezekiel sees "upon the tables the flesh of the offering" (ch. xl. 43). The whole vision has greatly troubled commentators who are ignorant and faithless of God's purpose to restore again the kingdom to Israel. They sing:

"Pleasant are thy Courts above,
In the land of light and love,"

but they have no delight in the coming glory of Jerusalem. They dream of "souls" departing to shadowy realms of bliss, and neglect the promise of everlasting inheritance of the earth in Christ Jesus. And because the watchmen of Zion challenge them and tell them the truth, they are accounted enemies. It is a grievous situation, but when once the glory of the Lord is revealed in Christ returned, then "all flesh shall see it together."

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones, lift up the standard for the people. Behold the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken."

Thus the climax is reached in the proclamation of Christ's second coming in the glory of the Father with the holy angels as he said, when he shall reward every man according to his works. There is no mistaking the time now that the word of Christ in the apostles has made it clear. Nineteen hundred years ago John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord in the sense of preparing a situation and a people for the manifestation of Messiah. But he did not "prepare the way of the people" so that they might be proclaimed as "the holy people, and the redeemed of the Lord." On the contrary, John himself was imprisoned and beheaded, and the Lord Jesus himself "lifted up," not as a standard in victory, but "as the serpent in the wilderness" was lifted up by Moses, a sacrifice for sins. The "reward" was far distant in the future, the "salvation" was only revealed in Jesus personally in his resurrection from the dead to life eternal. And the city was "forsaken" and given into the hands of the Romans, who profaned the sanctuary, and deluged the courts of the temple, where Christ had ministered and had been rejected, with the blood of the blind and guilty watchmen who could not discern the day of their visitation.

It was not then that the prophet's divine proclamation of the coming of Zion's salvation found fulfilment. It is still future; but now not far distant. "A set time to favour Zion" has been appointed (Psa. cii. 13), and her true children know that it is nigh. Therefore, like Daniel, they set their hearts to understand, and chasten themselves before God, praying for the peace of Jerusalem, and that they may be remembered for good in the day of her deliverance.





CHAPTER LXIII.

“WHO IS THIS THAT COMES FROM EDMOM?”

“**W**HO is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat?”

“I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the peoples there was *none with me*; for I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

“And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the peoples in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury; and I will bring down their strength to the earth” (Isa. lxiii. 1-6).

This is the vision which follows the proclamation of the marriage of the Land, and the return of Zion’s salvation—“his reward with him and *his work before him*.” This is some of the WORK BEFORE HIM. There is need to emphasise this, and the “manner of time” spoken of, because of popular misapprehension on the subject. The truth alone enables one rightly to divide the word of God in the prophets. Apart from it even the mightiest of the mighty grope in vain for a solution in the fogs and mists of their own learning and speculations.

The truth informs us that the earth and not heaven is the arena of the Lord’s bestowal of “reward,” and execution of the

"work before him." It instructs us in revealing the fact that the time of reward is "the time of the dead, that they should be judged" (Rev. xi. 18); the time of his "coming" (Isa. lxiii. 1). It points us to the countries where anciently the divine manifestation was made in connection with Israel's history; and assures us that in the near future this revelation of the visible hand of God is to be resumed. Deny these first principles, and you must wander in darkness without hope.

Extraordinary are the misapprehensions that have arisen concerning this prophecy, and that are still current. It has been supposed that the verses above quoted relate to the sacrifice of Christ and that *in crucifixion* he trod the winepress alone! Thus, in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 146, and under the text, "By *his own* blood he entered in once into the holy place," there occurs the following verse:—

"O Saviour, who for man hast trod
The winepress of the wrath of God,
Ascend, and claim again on high
The glory left for us to die."

While in another Anglican compilation, *The Hymnal Companion* (No. 55), we are exhorted to remember that, on Calvary,

"For us he bore the weight of woe,
For us he gave his blood to flow,
And met his Father's anger."

But it is not "his own blood," but "their blood" (verse 3), his enemies' blood, that is to flow to fulfil *this* word. And when one treads the winepress ("treading down peoples in anger"), he himself is not trodden to death. Yet notwithstanding these elementary considerations, and the protests of the more enlightened in Christendom, these incongruities are perpetuated by reason of a lack of understanding in the first principles of the oracles of God.

The winepress of the wrath of God is for the enemies of God, not for His beloved Son. The shedding of the blood of Jesus was the expression of the Father's *love*—"God so loved the world" (John iii. 16). "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." "Therefore doth my Father love me,

because I lay down my life" (John x. 17). The Father's anger truly was manifested *against the wicked* who put Jesus to death; but the expression of the hymn is entirely subversive of the truth.

The "winepress of the wrath of God" is a figure reproduced by the Lord Jesus in the Apocalypse, as well as found elsewhere in the prophets. Referring to the overthrow of Jerusalem by Babylon, Jeremiah, in Lam. i. 15, lamented, saying, "The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me; he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as in a winepress.*" The blood of the wicked who would not be warned by the prophets was that which flowed from the wine-press in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Jeremiah.

In Rev. xiv. 19-20 Babylon's turn has come—not the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar, of course, but the Babylon of apocalyptic symbolism—"the great city"—the rival of Jerusalem—the polities of "Christendom" united against the Son of Man returned to Jerusalem. He, and certain subordinate angels, are symbolically represented in this chapter as being armed with sharp sickles to gather the clusters of "*the vine of the earth.*" And it is said:—

"The angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs."

Again, in Rev. xix. 15, and in connection with "the marriage of the Lamb," and after "the judgment of the great whore" (Babylon), John has a vision of heaven opened, and the Lord Jesus and his immortal hosts going forth to war:—

"And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should *smite the nations*; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

From a comparison of these passages with Isaiah we learn the truth concerning the time, place, and circumstances connected with "the winepress of the wrath of God." It is to be when the Lord returns, in "the day of vengeance," the day of Judgment on European Babylon, the day of "the marriage of the Lamb."

As to the place: Isaiah sees that there had been a treading of the wine-press at Bozrah in Edom, about twenty miles south-east of the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. John, in more symbolic language, and speaking of a later development, says the wine-press was trodden "without the city," the only city of the context and *no longer to be trodden*, being Zion (Rev. xiv. 1). And he gives the measurement of wine-press—"by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs" or two hundred miles. This is approximately the length of the Holy Land, in which is the "place" where the Kings of the earth are to be gathered together for judgment, namely, "Armageddon" (Rev. xvi. 16). Here, "in the latter days," as Ezekiel testifies (chaps. xxxviii., xxxix.), God will gather the hosts of the enemy that He may be sanctified in their overthrow. "I will call for a sword against him (Gog and all his bands) *throughout all my mountains*," says God by the prophet, and the context depicts the deluge of blood from the "great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel."

But, of course, other countries will not be exempt from the judgments of God. It is written also in the context, "I will send a fire upon Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles, and they shall know that I am the Lord." Both Ezekiel and John leave room for this. The "smiting of the nations" does not cease until righteousness be enforced; the blood of the trodden winepress does not cease to flow until the vintage of the earth be fully reaped.

Isaiah had before connected the idea of the cutting down of the vine of the earth, with the "great sacrifice" and the preying of the wild beasts of the earth and birds of the air upon the slain, when he spoke, in chap. xviii., of the restoration of Israel by the instrumentality of the ships of "the land shadowing with wings." And he had also spoken (ch. xix.) of Egypt and the South in connection with the advent of the mighty Saviour here introduced

in ch. lxiii. It becomes a question of endeavouring to follow and connect the scattered details of the revealed progress of the Saviour from the time of his return to earth and onwards to his enthronement in Jerusalem in righteousness and peace for a thousand years.

To attempt this with any degree of thoroughness would lead us all over the scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. Dr. Thomas, in his exposition of the Apocalypse, *Eureka*, vol. ii., pp. 544-567, makes such an attempt, and, so far as we can discern, with a wonderful degree of success. It must suffice here to draw attention to the fact that "the days of Moses" indicate typically the days of the Prophet like unto him in the time of the second Exodus. That is to say, the history of the judgments upon Egypt, of the Exodus and the Wilderness wanderings, and the entrance into the Land of Promise under Joshua, and the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God in the land in his days, is to be studied, not only for its own sake as illustrating the ways of God in the past, but also as being an allegorical representation on a small scale of what is about to come to pass under Christ returned.

Just as Moses and Israel came out of Egypt long ago, and just as Jesus came out of Egypt in infancy, so hereafter he with Israel will come out of Egypt again, and carry out the allegory until Israel is settled in Palestine under the saints, and all enemies are subdued.

Edom, as has been shown in a previous chapter (ch. xxxiv.), is to be considered literally and mystically. We must remember the origin of the name, the past history of Esau and his descendants, and of the country, as well as the prophetic references thereto, to be able to understand the revelations of the prophets. We need not now repeat what was said in the previous chapter referred to, but may draw attention to the fact that the time, place, and scene of Isa. xxxiv. are the same as those of ch. lxiii., namely, "the day of vengeance," "the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion," Bozrah in the land of Edom, and the great sacrifice and slaughter that soaks the land in blood because of the indignation of the Lord upon *all nations*. Chapter lxiii. more clearly indicates the Executor of the judgments.

When Jeremiah spoke of the wine-press visitation in which Zion was overwhelmed by Babylon (Lam. i. 15), he at the same time denounced judgment to come upon "the daughter of Edom":—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz; the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken and shalt make thyself naked. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins" (Lam. iv. 21-22).

This belongs to the latter days, for Zion is still in Gentile hands, her King absent, her Princes sleeping in the dust of the earth, and her national children scattered in all the lands of the Gentiles. "The daughter of Edom" refers to the antagonistic "manner of people" (Gen. xxv. 23; Rom. ix. 10-13) who possess the ancient territory in the latter days.

When Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, he sought passage through the land of Edom, but was refused; and, being forbidden by God to molest Edom, passed round the land of Edom and Moab on the east, and then attacked and overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, appropriating the conquered lands.

In the latter days, Britain, being driven out of Egypt by the Russian King of the North, takes refuge in Edom and Moab (Dan. xi. 41). The allegory appears to point to a sparing of a British remnant, friendly towards Israel from motives of policy, and the destruction of the invaders to the north. Of course, the British Empire, equally with the Russian Empire, will be humbled by the judgments of God, especially by the destruction of the navy (Psa. xlvi. 7); but there is a place for the anti-typical alliance of the latter-day Tyrian with the Greater than Solomon; and this agrees with the experience of Moses, and the neutrality of Edom and Moab in the days of the Exodus; and with the friendship of the King of Moab for David, when he was as yet a fugitive in the land, and before he came to the throne (1 Sam. xxii).

In the Song of Solomon there are glimpses of the ascent from the wilderness of the Greater than Solomon. These recall the marvels of the Exodus. Thus in ch. iii. 6-8:—"Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness, *like pillars of smoke*, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchants? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword and are expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night" (R.V.).

And again, in ch. viii. 5:—"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?"

Thus, in harmony with Isaiah and Revelation, both Messiah and the Bride are seen advancing upon the inheritance by the ancient route, and, like Israel of old, prepared to execute the judgments written upon the peoples obstructing their way.

"Of the peoples there was none with me." The plural, "peoples" (R.V., &c.), helps the understanding, and diverts the mind from Israel to the nations. It is quite true that at his first appearing, "of the people (Israel) there was none with" Jesus. And it is true that "he marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark vi. 6). Also that he attained to "salvation" notwithstanding.

But this is not the meaning of this passage, nor was *that* the day of vengeance and year of the redeemed. He expressly avoided mentioning "the day of vengeance," when, in the synagogue at Nazareth, he quoted Isa. lxi. 1-2, and affirmed the fulfilment of the words quoted, to be then and there before his hearers in himself. And it is testified that the people will be "willing in the day of his power" (Psa. cx. 3), and be no more trodden down, least of all by Him who comes to redeem not only the saints but also the nation of Israel. But it is really unnecessary to follow the matter further; the scriptures already referred to are sufficient indication of the meaning of the passage. It is astounding that it should have been so misinterpreted.

From the vision of the terrible advance from Bozrah, the prophet turns to the ascription of praise to God for the loving kindness and goodness bestowed "on us" (verse 7). We remember

that Isaiah and his children were types of Messiah and the seed that God has given him (Isa. viii. 18; Heb. ii. 13-18). And also we remember that Isaiah "*saw his glory, and spake of him*" (John xii. 41; Isa. vi.). Therefore we can read these things, as it were, from the standpoint of the Kingdom of God, when Isaiah, like John the apostle, shall "*prophesy again,*" and, *with Moses and all the Redeemed*, ascribe their salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reference is at once historic and prophetic. There is the remembrance of God's goodness to the house of Israel in the deliverance from Egypt, and of the endurance and afflictions of Moses. And these things are but the type of the greater deliverance to come, and the celebration of the sacrifice of the Prophet like unto Moses. "In all their affliction he was afflicted," is true of him in a greater degree even than of Moses; for he laid down his life for the house of Israel, whose immortal kings in the age to come celebrate his death on their account, saying:—"Thou art worthy . . . for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign upon the earth" (Rev. v. 9-10).

God Himself was grieved for Israel in the bondage of Egypt, and sent Moses to deliver them; and afterwards sent His beloved Son. "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." This is true of both visitations; and Israel is still scattered for their sins. But their unbelief does not make the promise of God of none effect. So Paul argues. And the days of Moses are still remembered by God, who, in the return of the Lord Jesus to judgment, will "make himself an everlasting name," with even more effect than in the days of the Exodus of old. So we are assured by Micah (ch. vii. 15-17).

"To make himself an everlasting name"—the words should be well pondered, and the history of the Exodus studied in the light of the purpose thus defined. The expression is repeated in v. 14: "So thou didst lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name." Has this really come about? Look around for the answer. What name fills Christendom to-day? Christ,

who is but the complement of Moses. What book fills the world to-day? The Bible, which is the record of the work and purpose of the Lord God of Israel, a record started by Moses in the days of the Exodus. What nation, in the midst of all other nations, is making a "noise" out of all proportion to its numbers, and wielding a growing influence that the others view with increasing fear? "The Jews, your Majesty," as Frederick's court chaplain said to him when he demanded an argument for the truth of Christianity expressed in a word.

Yes, already God's "everlasting name" is revealed in the earth, and what *is* is the earnest of what shall be according to the same divine purpose.

This indeed is the basis of the prophet's prayer—verses 15-19, with which this chapter concludes, but which really continues to the end of chapter lxiv. Coupled with the vision of the Coming One and the winepress of the wrath of God, is the prayer for his return. And the prophet, in the spirit of Christ, prays, as it were, as an exile among his people:—

"Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? Are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return (thou) for thy servants' sake, (for the sake of) the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while; our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine; thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name."

Abraham was "ignorant of," or "knew not," the prophet and his brethren, for he was dead; and "the dead know not anything." And the natural seed of Abraham knew them not, in the sense of discerning them not at their true value, just as afterwards they "knew not" Christ and his brethren (John i. 10, 11). Isaiah and his brethren were not "acknowledged" in Israel but counted as

"pestilent fellows," disturbers of the peace, especially by such as Shebna, and those to whom they administered such unwelcome rebukes.

Isaiah's "fellowship" was a restricted thing:—"For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should *not walk in the way of this people*, saying, 'Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread'" (ch. viii. 11, 12).

In the prayer before us we see evidence of Isaiah's faith and obedience. He is "unacknowledged," but his hope is in the Lord of hosts, and his "return" to Israel. It is a great example and encouragement to the brethren of the prophet in all ages, who, like him, are unacknowledged by professors by whom they are surrounded, and in proportion to their faithfulness are hated by the world for their testimony that its deeds are evil, and that the day of judgment is at hand. By and bye, as Isaiah had before testified, there will be a great reversal; for the Coming One having returned, and the judgments of God being abroad in the earth, then "all that see them shall acknowledge them, that *they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed*" (Isa. lxi. 9).





CHAPTER LXIV.

“RIGHTEOUSNESS” IN RELATION TO “FINE LINEN” AND “FILTHY RAGS.”

THERE is no break between Isaiah chapters lxiii. and lxiv. The prophet's prayer runs through to the end of ch. lxiv. The Hebrew makes the division at ch. lxiv. verse 2; but the same remark applies. Some of the critics will have it that ch. lxiii., verses 17-19, must be post-exilic, as also ch. lxiv. 9-12, because they represent the sanctuary downtrodden and Zion a wilderness. They do not apparently give the spirit of God credit for being able to see the end from the beginning. They might as well argue that the beginning of ch. lxiii. was written *after* “the day of vengeance of our God.” There is no help in “the wise and prudent”; we must turn to the scriptures, and to enlightened “babes” to whom the Father has revealed the truth.

The prayer of ch. lxiii. 15: “Look down from heaven and behold” is continued in ch. lxiv. 1: “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, *to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.*” God had already frequently promised by the prophet that this great development should be revealed in the latter days; hence the prayer was most natural, as we might say. It was quite unlike the prayers of the religionists of our day that take hold of things that God has never promised at all, and that do not even recognise the coming revelation of God to the nations upon the basis of the “everlasting covenant” with the house of David. The prophet had respect to the covenant, and, like Abraham before him, rejoiced to see the day of Christ afar off. The revival of the truth in the latter days has revived this “hope of Israel.”

It is noteworthy that the prophets, in their prayers and prophesyings, *all take hold of the birth of the nation in the days of the Exodus from Egypt as the earnest of the greater deliverance to come*, when "a nation shall be born in a day." "The days of Moses," and the making of God's "everlasting name," are the great *precedent* for what is to come upon earth in the day of Christ, and the revival of God's work in the midst of the years. This cannot be too strongly insisted on. The following passages may be consulted in proof of the fact: Psa. lxxviii. 7, 22, 31; Isa. xi. 10-16: xxvii. 12, 13; xliii. 3-6: lxiii. 11, 12: lxiv. 3; Jer. xvi. 14, 15: xxiii. 8; Ezek. xx. 36; Dan. ix. 15; Hos. xii. 9-13; Amos ix. 7, 11; Mic. vii. 14-20; Hab. iii.; Mal. iv. 4-6.

Connecting the past with the future deliverance, the prophet here prays:—"When thou didst terrible things *which we looked not for*, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. *For* since the beginning of the world (*meolam*, from of old), men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared *for him that waiteth for him*. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance (*olam*, the stability of the *olam*, or age to come), and we shall be saved."

The Revised Version in the margin here hazards the conjecture that "the (Heb.) text is probably corrupt"; and, in the translation in the text, turns *olam* into *this* world instead of that which is to come; and questions the salvation thus:—"In them *have we been of long time*, and shall we be saved?" But this is not satisfactory. By the light of the truth, and of Paul's quotation of the passage in 1 Cor. ii. 9, we are led greatly to prefer the Authorised Version, which, whether the text be corrupt or not, makes very good sense, and is in harmony with the gospel of the kingdom.

Paul, speaking of the revelation of the mystery of God by the apostolic preaching of the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ and him crucified, says, "None of the princes of this world

knew (it); for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, *the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*. But (adds the apostle) God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit: for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And he goes on to speak of *the day of Christ*, when God, in the person of Jesus, shall "rend the heavens and come down," and institute that day of judgment and fiery trial for which Isaiah had prayed nearly 800 years before.

The spirit, in the revelation of *the things prepared of God for them that love him*, speaks of two *olams* or ages, this age and that which is to come. As illustrating Paul's statement concerning the native emptiness of the human heart, apart from revelation, concerning things to come, we read that Solomon, by the spirit, says: "He hath set *the world* (*ha olam*, this age) in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (Ecc. iii. 11); a phenomenon with which we are only too painfully familiar. But the spirit, in "the deep things of God" revealed to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to David, spoke of another *olam*, called by the Jews, who rejected and still reject Jesus, the *Olam-ha-Ba*, or Age to Come, and by the apostle, in the passage quoted, "the day of Christ." It is this age to which Isaiah, in his prayer, looks forward—to "the day of vengeance of our God"—the time of the revelation of "the things prepared of God for them that love him."

At that time God in Christ will "meet him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness," those that remember him *in his ways*. Isaiah had before said, "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee" (xxvi. 8). And again, "It shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (xxv. 9).

"The days of Moses" typically illustrate the nature of this "meeting." Moses, having been rejected by his brethren, and

repudiated as prince and judge over them, was exiled for forty years in the land of Midian. Then God appeared to him at the bush, and sent him back to Egypt to deliver Israel, and reveal the name of Yahweh by miracles, signs, and wonders. And God told him that Aaron his brother was *coming forth to meet him*, and that when he saw him he would be "glad in his heart." And to Aaron God said, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. *And he went and met him* in the mount of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him" (Ex. iv. 14, 27).

So Jesus, who is the prophet like unto Moses, *after his resurrection met his disciples*, and told them of the salvation the Father had bestowed on him, and commissioned them to bear his name abroad in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and finally into all the habitable, with signs and wonders which God gave them by him. Of the future "meeting" he had before spoken in the parable of the ten virgins who went forth *to meet the bridegroom* (Matt. xxv.). This was his illustration of the nature of the affairs of "the kingdom of heaven" at his return. Then again, Paul, his "chosen vessel," explained to the Thessalonian brethren (1 Thess. iv. 17), how at "the coming of the Lord" the disciples, living and dead, should be caught away in clouds "*to meet the Lord.*" Thus Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, all speak of *a meeting of God with the righteous in a future age*, when they "shall be saved." It is the coming of Christ, who, in Isa. lxiii., is seen *at a later stage of his work upon earth*, coming from Edom, "with dyed garments from Bozrah."

Then the prophet lapses into a lamentation that has been sadly misinterpreted: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (literally, "as a menstuous garment"): and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Upon this arises a question concerning "righteousness" in relation to "fine linen clean and white" on the one hand, and "filthy rags," "filthy garments" (Zech. iii. 3, 4), "garments spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23), on the other.

Popular Christianity, which is a lie pure and simple, has propounded a demoralising doctrine concerning "righteousness" or "good works." It declares that there is nothing at all to do but to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ"; that "Jesus did it, did it *all*, long, long ago!" And it is fond of quoting this particular passage from Isaiah in support of this doctrine; and this in face of the explicit declaration of Christ himself in the end of the sermon on the mount:—"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine *and doeth them*, I will liken him unto a *wise man* which built his house upon a rock" . . . but "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine *and doeth them not* shall be likened unto a *foolish man* which built his house upon the sand" (Matt. vii. 24, 26). Are the righteous deeds of "a wise man" likened unto "filthy rags," or "a garment spotted by the flesh"? Surely they ought to look again.

But, it will be said, there is the prophetic phrase—what, then, *does* it mean? The answer, in the very words of the context, is "*our iniquities*": that is, the iniquities of the pious frauds of the nation who *professed righteousness and practised iniquity*. Of these Isaiah had already spoken, saying, by the Spirit: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord . . . that *cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit*, that they may add sin to sin" (xxx. 1). "Yet," said the Lord, "they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, *as a nation that did righteousness*, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God" (lviii. 2). The whole religious service of such a people was an unendurable abomination to God—it was "iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (i. 13). And Christ afterwards said to his disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, *ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. v. 20). Such was *the righteousness that was iniquity*—a mere "filthy garment spotted by the flesh." When the moderns apply this passage of Isaiah to themselves and their failure to do the commandments of Jesus, they do but unconsciously establish their brotherhood with the Scribes and Pharisees of old in the eyes of all who can really see.

The following beautiful comments on Rev. i. 13 will further elucidate this important subject:—

“ While Daniel informs us that the Spirit-Man he beheld, was ‘clothed with linen,’ John states simply, that he was ‘clothed to the feet.’ Now, this clothing is significant of the character and office of the person represented by the symbol. The holy garments of Aaron and his sons were of linen, ‘to cover their nakedness,’ that when they ministered in the holy places, ‘they bear not iniquity, and die’ (Ex. xxviii. 42). ‘Nakedness’ and ‘iniquity’ are convertible terms in scripture; as it is written, ‘When Moses saw that the people were *naked*, for Aaron had made them *naked to their shame*,’—that is, they had transgressed in worshipping the golden calf. ‘Blessed is he that keepeth his garments, lest *he walk naked*, and they see his shame.’ Hence, to be ‘*clothed*,’ and *to keep the clothing white and clean*, is to be ‘righteous,’ or holy. When Adam sinned, ‘he knew that he was naked,’ and he was ashamed and afraid; but the Spirit appointed for clothing skins of sacrifices, and his sin was covered. Hence, ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose *sin is covered*,’ or clothed. Joshua, son of Josedec, a type of Jesus in the flesh, is first introduced as *clothed with filthy garments*, representative of the flesh with its propensities and lusts; but when the type is changed to represent Jesus in *pneuma hagiosunes*,—that is, in Holy Spirit Nature, such as he acquired after resurrection, Joshua’s raiment is represented as being changed—‘Take away,’ says the Spirit, ‘*the filthy garments* from him.’ When this was done, then the Spirit addresses him, and says, ‘I have caused thine *iniquity* to pass from thee, and I will *clothe thee with change of raiment*.’ And when the time came to do it—to clothe Jesus, and *all in him*, symbolised by Joshua and ‘his fellows,’ ‘they set a fair mitre (or priestly crown) upon his head, and *clothed him with garments*.’ These are indicated in the visions of Daniel and John (Zech. iii. 3-10).

“ ‘I put on righteousness,’ says Job, ‘and it clothed me;’ and in Psa. cxxxii. 9, ‘Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.’ In Rev. xix. 8 it is said of the community styled

‘the Lamb’s Wife,’ that ‘to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white,’ which is declared to be ‘the Righteousness of the Saints.’”—*Eureka*, vol. i. p. 169.

From all this it is very evident that “the righteousness of the saints” is not the thing symbolised by the “filthy rags”; but rather the outward righteousness of disobedient professors so sternly rebuked by the apostles (Jude 3, 4, 8, 10, 23). Such was the character of Israel’s righteousness in Isaiah’s days. He was in the midst of it, but he was not of it. He contended earnestly for the faith in his day against the ungodly men who “defiled the flesh.” He was like the “few names in Sardis” who had “not defiled their garments” (Rev. iii. 4), and of whom it was written by the Lord, “They shall walk with me in white, *for they are worthy.*” The worthiness consists of faith and obedience. “*To him that overcometh,*” is Christ’s invariable formula of promise to all the seven churches. Christendom’s righteousnesses are truly “filthy rags.”

“But there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared.” The prophet pleads this in his beautiful entreaty for himself and the nation: “But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord, Wilt thou hold thy peace and afflict us very sore?”

The answer, as concerning that generation, was a terrible one; but, as concerning the truly righteous remnant in all generations, a glorious one, opening up a prospect which is now all our salvation and all our desire.



CHAPTER LXV.

“NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH.”

“**W**ILT thou refrain thyself . . . O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?” So Isaiah concludes the prayer of chap. lxiv. In the next chapter comes the answer of God, which was in effect that God would reveal Himself to another people because of Israel’s rejection of His goodness; and that He would “afflict Israel very sore” for a long time to come. During this the long-looked-for Seed should be manifested; and afterwards the true “Israel of God” should be saved, and all nations blessed in the glory of the “new heavens and new earth” that should at last be manifested.

We are told by one eminent critic that “Ch. lxv. 1-7 is *not*, properly speaking, an answer to the prayer of the preceding chapter, though *possibly inserted by the editor with that intent.*”

What preternaturally good “editing” some of the critics believe in. Here is a man who “possibly” slips in *as an answer of God* a disjointed passage from somewhere else, and his “scissors-and-paste” arrangement is so excellent that it works out true in the national history centuries afterwards, and receives the recognition and approval of an inspired apostle! Surely it requires as much faith to believe in such “editing” as to believe with the apostle Paul, that it was the work of the spirit of God by the prophet Isaiah.

We decline the guidance of a criticism which, whatever may be its value in certain technical proficiencies, nevertheless invites us to discount the judgment of Christ and the apostles. With us the construction of Christ and the apostles comes first, and nothing is acceptable that in the least disturbs it.

Paul in Rom. x., xi., xv. is our guide. *He* does not distinguish between Isaiah, Isaiah II., and “Tritojesaia.” He says:—“*Esaias*

is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. *But to Israel he saith*, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. x. 20-21). And his argument throughout this epistle to the Romans is a beautiful exposition of God's purpose concerning the "everlasting salvation" of Israel, and the participation therein of an grafted Gentile remnant.

The apostolic construction of the passage in question is that it is the answer of God to the prophet, to the effect that before God "rent the heavens and came down," He would bring in "the fulness of the Gentiles, and so all Israel should be saved." This purpose, as Paul reminded the Roman believing Gentiles, had been revealed by God from the beginning, even by Moses (Rom. x. 19; Deut. xxxii. 43), and was frequently referred to in the Psalms and the prophets. In the light of this revelation we can read ourselves into Isa. lxv. 1, and examine our standing with reference to the great principles unfolded in the context as to the acceptability of the prophet and the obedient remnant of Israel with that of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the hypocrites.

It might be added that Christ's parable of the great supper, in illustration of God's invitation to the kingdom of God (Luke xiv.), is the divine comment upon the earlier message of Isa. lxv. 1, 2. The slum-dwellers, and people of the highways and hedges of Christ's parable, correspond to the "nation not called by God's name" in Isaiah; and the people who "with one consent began to make excuse," are the "rebellious people" of the previous divine allusion. They "walked in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts" (v. 2). They did not heed the word of God through the prophets, in gracious invitation and in reproof and correction, but "did evil, and chose that in which God delighted not" (v. 12). Christ, in his parable, indicates what "their own thoughts" ran on, to the exclusion of all ideas of the kingdom of God. It was lands, cattle, marrying and giving in marriage, till there was no "convenient season" left for thinking about God and His kingdom.

Worse than that, they perverted God's appointments in their idolatrous practices, while all the time professing superior holiness:

"I am holier than thou." They sacrificed in gardens, burned incense on bricks, remained among graves, and ate swine's flesh. All these things point to direct infractions of the Mosaic law, and to participation in the worship of the "heathen round about," as is elsewhere and so often rebuked in the prophets. They were the spiritual ancestors of those whom Christ himself denounced as "graves which appear not" (Luke xi. 44); and elsewhere as graves which do appear, even "whited sepulchres"; outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of corruption. They were the spiritual progenitors of all those, to this day, who turn the truth of God into a lie, and walk in pride and "strong delusion," "after their own thoughts."

God said He would visit the transgressors, as "it was written," and "measure their former work into their bosom." But the covenant with the fathers should not fail by reason of the unbelief and disobedience of that generation. In the language of Paul, the elect should obtain it, though the rest were blinded (Rom. xi. 7).

"Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy *it* not; for a blessing is in it; so will I do for my servants' sakes (or Servant's sake, as the LXX. and some MSS. have it—that is, 'for Christ's sake') that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me" (verses 8-10).

The "Seed," "Servant," "Inheritor of Yahweh's mountains," the "Head" of the elect, and "Blessing" for Israel and all nations, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Accordingly, after many generations had come and gone, and many neglecters and blasphemers had been destroyed, he appeared and spoke of "the regeneration" which God proposed, and promised to the disciples who "sought God" and who followed him, the eternal inheritance here promised beforehand. He even adopted the similitude of the "new wine," saying concerning himself as the bridegroom, and concerning his doctrine as opposed to that of the Pharisees:

“Men do not put new wine into old bottles (wine skins), else the bottles break and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish : but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved” (Matt. ix. 17). Hence he committed his “gospel of the kingdom” to new men, even to the apostles, his “elect,” and both were preserved. The Pharisees could not contain this doctrine, neither can the clergy to this day. The twentieth century situation with reference to Christ and the inheritance is far more closely analogous to that of the first century than at present appears. When Christ comes there will be a wonderful revelation.

Sharon, meaning “plain,” is the low country that stretches north from Jaffa to the foot of Mount Carmel. It was conquered by Joshua (xii. 18), and in the zenith of the glory of the kingdom of David and Solomon was a place of pasturage for cattle (1 Chron. xxvii. 29). But it was overrun by the enemies and invaders of Israel, and will yet be overrun once more by the invading hosts of the latter days (Isa. xxxiii. 9); but ultimately, as is here stated, will become a “fold of flocks,” whence will come the sacrifices to Jerusalem, as in the days of old.

Achor, meaning “trouble,” is the rugged ravine that runs out into the plain just west of Jericho. It took its name from Achar (LXX.), the “troubler” of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed at the outset of Israel’s conquering career in the land of promise, and caused the death of many of his brethren. He was here stoned to death and destroyed, with all his belongings. Afterwards, Israel prospered in the war, and the valley of Achor became “a door of hope” for the conquerors. The literal and allegorical are mingled here without confusion. Israel will come this way again, after the type of the Exodus of old; and, after the expurgation of the “troublers,” will “sing there as in the days of her youth, even as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hos. ii. 15). The very name of the place is an exhortation to all who know its history.

“But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Gad, and furnish the drink-offering for Meni” (verse 11). The Revised Version translates the terms—“Fortune” and “Destiny”; but it appears

that they are the names of "two well-known Syrian deities," and that they go back to the old Babylonian star-worship. The Septuagint speaks of "the table for the devil" (demon); and Paul connects the Corinthian worship of Venus with the older idolatry rebuked by the prophet. Speaking of the bread and wine with which he taught the Corinthian converts to remember Christ, and warning them against even appearing to fellowship the abominable idolatry current in Corinth, he says:—"The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons) and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and *the cup of devils*: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of *the table of devils*. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" (1 Cor. x. 20-22).

This is an allusion to Isa. lxv. 11, and brings the subject of the prophecy down to about A.D. 60, and to the lands of the Gentiles. And it is to be remarked that it may be brought down to our own times and country; for the "tables" of the apostacy, from Rome downwards, are "tables of demons." This may seem monstrous, but it is strictly true. Thus, for instance, "Father Ignatius" says: "Far worse than any kind of idolatry is the Christian religion if the Host on the Altar is not Very God." And again, a certain "Rev." Grantham says: "Every crumb on the paten, every drop in the chalice, has now become the whole Body, Blood, Soul, Spirit, and Divinity of Jesus. Now is the time for you to worship him." These are not Roman Catholic sayings; they are only those of ritualists within the pale of the Church of England.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven; the "demon" in question is "another Jesus," an imaginary "Very God," *made* in multitudes of conventicles week by week by the presiding priests of the cultus, and worshipped by their devotees. Is it surprising that "the sword and slaughter" have not departed from "Christendom"?

Sometimes some of the weaker latter-day brethren of the prophets are seduced from the truth and allured back again into these associations. They do not discern the situation, nor perceive that

they are traitors in the camp of the Lord's enemies, and thereby "provoke him to jealousy."

Whatever dimness of vision may obtain among men, God has very clear ideas as to who are His servants and who are not, and the distinction and division is very sharply drawn in the following verses. Earnest men of clear vision will ask of the scriptures the question: "In what does Yahweh delight?" (v. 12). And they will find the true answer, and choose accordingly. They will experience the truth of Christ's saying, "Henceforth there shall be division," for they will find themselves separated from the sects of Christendom in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Of the hypocritical professors it is written (v. 15), "Ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name. Thus he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes."

The "other name" is "the name of Jesus Christ." He is "the God of truth" (Heb., *Amen*, faithfulness), "for how many soever be the promises of God, in *him* is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen unto the glory of God" (2 Cor. i. 20). Therefore unto the "yea and nay" "luke-warm" Laodiceans he writes, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14), exhorting those "wretched and miserable, poor, blind and naked" professors to buy of him "gold," and "white raiment," and "eye-salve," to "be zealous and repent," and promising those who should hearken and obey, a place and throne in the Father's kingdom, that is, a place of honour in "the new heavens and new earth," of which the prophet Isaiah here speaks by the same spirit. Of these also the apostle Peter spoke when contemplating the destruction of Jerusalem, and more remotely the destruction of the kingdoms of men. "Nevertheless," he says, "we *according to his promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). The old heavens and earth were destroyed because of the prevailing unrighteousness.

In the Apocalypse the Lord Jesus also enlarges upon the symbolic glory of the "new Jerusalem," and the vanishing of "the former troubles." Anyone can see, even upon a superficial examination, that the Apocalypse is rooted in the prophets, as it declares, saying, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he shall sound, the mystery of God shall be finished *as he hath declared to his servants the prophets*" (Rev. x. 7). To Isaiah God declared His intention to make Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy, saying, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." The Apocalypse is the more mature revelation of the mystery through the "Seed," the "Inheritor," "the God of truth," that is, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under him the saints will "rejoice for ever," while the nation of Israel and the nations of the earth will rejoice in such long life that "the child shall die an hundred years old." "As the days of a tree"—(some trees live more than a millennium) will be the days of God's people, and they will "wear out the work of their hands." The wild beasts of the earth will be tamed, especially the national "beasts" (see Daniel and Revelation); "but as for the serpent, dust shall be his meat" ("His enemies shall lick the dust"—Psa. lxxii. 9; "the nations shall lick the dust like a serpent"—Mic. vii. 17). "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord."





CHAPTER LXVI.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

THE book of Isaiah concludes with a revelation concerning the temple of God, in relation to Isaiah's time and to the then distant future of Messiah's reign.

"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord (and so all these things came to be. R.V.): but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2).

Three things are before us in this brief but pregnant proclamation: God's throne, the house that Israel built unto God, and God's "house of many mansions" that shall hereafter be revealed. The truth alone enables us rightly to discern them.

Heaven is God's throne. It is the doctrine of Jesus, in harmony with that of the prophets in the Old Testament, that the Father dwells in heaven in light and glory unapproachable. "Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place" was Solomon's prayer, and "Our Father which art in heaven" was the form of prayer given to the disciples by the Greater than Solomon. Many times in Israel's history God had given proof of his possession of heaven and earth. He had controlled the powers of nature in the plagues of Egypt and upon other occasions, so that no reasonable doubt could be left. Heaven as "God's throne" was, and is, inaccessible to man, as Jesus himself declared, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." And Peter afterwards said of David: "David is not ascended into the heavens." The Lord Jesus himself was afterwards the sole exception to the rule, as it had been

declared beforehand by the spirit in David: "Yahweh saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand *until* I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. cx.). This, as Peter testified, was fulfilled in the ascension of Jesus (Acts ii. 32-36). And Stephen afterwards, quoting this sixty-sixth chapter of Isaiah (Acts vii. 49), had a vision of "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Afterwards, in Rev. iii. 21, the Lord Jesus from the throne of the Majesty on high, dictated this message to the church in Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in *my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in *his throne*." The throne of the Father is in heaven; but the throne of the Lord Jesus is upon earth, for the Lord God hath given him the throne of his father David, and he is about to return to take possession.

At first sight it seems strange to find the man of poor and contrite spirit, and who trembles at God's word, placed in the same category as God's throne, and the house that Israel built. But when we are sufficiently enlightened by the Word, we perceive the true relation. Both the movable tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness, and the immovable temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, were more than mere places of worship of the Father, either movable or fixed. As Stephen says, "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." These structures represented the dwelling-place of the Father in a MAN, who, in the language of inspiration, is called "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. viii. 2); and who said of his mortal body: "Destroy *this temple*, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19).

CHRIST is the substance represented by the "temples made with hands," whether the tabernacle, or the temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod, or of Ezekiel's visions. "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.*" Much more gloriously will God be in Christ when the world is reconciled unto himself. It will be an immortal manifestation, not only in the Lord Jesus individually, but in a multitude of his brethren made "like him." This is "*the Father's house of many mansions,*" or abiding-

places, of which he spoke in promise to his disciples (John xiv.), and concerning which he said that he went away to prepare for them places therein, that he might come again and receive them unto himself in his everlasting inheritance.

All this is present beneath the surface in the opening of Isaiah lxvi., as becomes more obvious as we read on.

Then, after the allusion to the worship the Father seeks, "in spirit and in truth," follows another denunciation of the offensiveness of the sacrifices of those who chose their own ways. The language of verse 3 is almost exactly like that of ch. i. 11-15, which the higher critics assign to a different "author." Of course, the "author" is God in both cases—"the word of the Lord"—"thus saith the Lord;" and there is no real reason for supposing another prophet than Isaiah, especially in view of the sayings of Christ and the apostles, as has already been pointed out.

As an example of the uncertainty attaching to the critical views, the following remarks may be cited:—"It is not easy to assign a satisfactory date to chapter lxvi. or to summarise it in a few sentences. If composed after the Return its statements would have been too glaringly opposed to what men's eyes then beheld. It appears to us Isaianic, though probably 'worked over' by a later hand. It describes the glories of the Return, and the exclusion of the sinners from the congregation of the holy. The destruction of these ungodly is represented as taking place on earth. But the visions, though connected with the real, are concerned with matters beyond those of earth. Both in describing blessings and judgments there is no fixed line of demarcation between the things seen and those not seen."

From this paragraph alone it is evident that the word is not, to the writer, "a light that shineth in a dark place," by which he can walk with sure and certain step.

It is otherwise with those who know the truth. It is not difficult to summarise the chapter in a few sentences, as is shown above. The "satisfactory date" is the opening of Manasseh's reign, for he reinstated the idolatry which Hezekiah had excised, and even "set a graven image of the grove, *asherah* (idol, *semel*, in 2

Chron. xxxiii. 7), that he had made, in the house of which the Lord said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever" (2 Kings xxi. 7). The allusions of Isaiah lxvi. 3, 17 seem to connect naturally with this. As to the "working over" by later hands: it was not the custom of the Jews to treat the prophetic writings thus. As to "the Return": there are more Returns than one, and no one having the true "hope of Israel" could confound the return under Ezra and Nehemiah, with "the regeneration" and "restitution of all things" to come under Christ, and of which Isaiah, by the spirit, speaks so often and so eloquently. The visions concern the blessedness of the Millennial reign of Christ over all the earth. The line of demarcation between things seen and those not seen is quite easily drawn, as we shall see. Christ is the key, and the gospel of the kingdom which he preached. But where this "key of knowledge" has been taken away, what can men do? They can only stand without in a quandary—some wistfully, some defiantly, but all ignorantly.

Hezekiah had brought Israel back to God's way, but now again they "chose their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abominations." Therefore, said God, "I also will choose their delusions." So God "gave them over to a reprobate mind," "because," He said, "when I called, none did answer; when I spake they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not."

Those who know the apostolic writings and the history of Christianity, are well aware that this was not merely a rebuke applicable to that generation, but that it was at the same time the enunciation of a great principle that should find its application in every generation down to the present time and beyond. Paul forewarned the Thessalonians of the "strong delusion" that God would send upon disobedient professors "who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 12). Jew and Gentile have alike fallen into this condemnation. The Jews crucified Christ and have ever since wandered in darkness. And Christendom has crucified to itself the Son of God afresh,

and put him to an open shame. "Strong delusion" is the characteristic of the religious world to this day, and if we are to be saved from it it must be by choosing and holding fast the things in which God delights. The worship of the Father in spirit and in truth consists in the belief of His promises and the obedience to His commandments. Anything less than this must end in "strong delusion," and ultimately in death.

We can well understand how in Isaiah's time the prophet and his brethren would be hated and excommunicated for God's sake. What part or lot could they have in such idolatry as Manasseh reinstated? How could they look upon the desecrated temple and take part in the profane worship? They could not and would not, but protested against it with all their might, especially Isaiah by the spirit of God; and according to tradition, apparently supported in Heb. xi. 37, the prophet was "sawn asunder" in the early part of Manasseh's reign.

Under these circumstances we can appreciate the comfort of the divine message of verses 5-9 concerning the appearance of God to their joy, and the shame of their enemies who hated and excommunicated and even slew them: for "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another."

The time of the Lord's appearing and of the "voice of noise from the city, even a voice from the temple," is indicated enigmatically, and is quite hidden from "the wise and prudent," who declare that "there is no fixed line of demarcation between the things seen and those not seen." They should say, "*We can see* no fixed line;" but, of course, this would be an admission of possible blindness. And when it comes to a question between the infallibility of the prophet and that of the critics, we must expect their decision to be adverse to the prophet.

Paul indicates the "fixed line of demarcation" that is drawn in Isaiah lxvi. 7-8. The word of God said: "Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children." Zion's "man-

child" is Christ; and her "children" brought from the earth are "the children of the resurrection." And Paul draws "the line of demarcation" thus:—"In Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 22-24).

History has revealed the time of the birth of the "man-child." Now, nearly nineteen hundred years after, we are close upon the birth of "the nation in a day"; and a thousand years from that (Rev. xx. 4), will come "the end." This is the "demarcation" plainly written in the word of God.

"It is as little possible," says Graetz, truly, in his *History of the Jews*, "for an historical event to be evolved, as for a natural birth to occur, without labour. For a new historical phenomenon to struggle into existence, the comfortable aspect of things must be destroyed, indolent repose in cherished custom disturbed, and the power of habit broken. This inexorable upsetting of existing things, although at first painful, is eventually favourable to them, provided the new creatures are healthy and possessed of vitality; for thereby all vagueness is dissipated, all semblances destroyed, and the dim unseen reality brought more clearly to light."

It was "before" such an "inexorable upsetting of existing things" that Zion's man-child was to be born. And so it came to pass. Christ was born in Bethlehem (Mic. v. 2, 3; Matt. ii. 1-16) about seventy years before the destruction of the Jewish State by the Romans and the passing away in blood of the old order under the Mosaic economy. And he was "born of the spirit" in resurrection and immortalization in Jerusalem about forty years before the same event. Then, at his resurrection and ascension, Paul says there was completely fulfilled the Psalm which says, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts xiii. 33; Psa. ii.).

But then, as during his mortal lifetime, he made no "noise in the city"; nor was there any "voice from the temple," the "voice

of the Lord rendering recompence to his enemies." Before that "day of recompence" another "man-child" had to be born—the man-child not of Zion, but of Rome. And he was afterwards to develop into a Power called, by Paul, "that Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition" (2 Thess. ii. 3).

About the end of the first century A.D., Zion's "man-child" spoke in symbolic prophecy, revealed by his angel to his apostle John in Patmos, concerning this rival-Power (Rev. xii.). Those who know the Apocalypse and the true historical unfolding of the visions (see *Eureka*, by Dr. Thomas) are aware that the individual progenitor of this dynasty was the Emperor CONSTANTINE, who, in the third century, became the champion of a thoroughly paganised "Christianity," as Manasseh, in Isaiah's day, was the champion of the corrupted way of God, which He rebuked by the prophet. Out of this Imperial dynasty there at length arose the Papal dynasty that still survives in its decrepitude as "that Wicked" (the Lawless One), "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

The Pope is a rival Man in a rival temple, where he is worshipped as a god, and where he presides over a perverted system of iniquity. He has hated and excommunicated and slain the brethren of the prophets for ages, after the example of Manasseh of old. And they could only comfort themselves, like Isaiah before them, with the promise of divine intervention on their behalf, that is here and elsewhere on record. Christ himself was "faithful unto death," and it belongs to him to give "the crown of life" to those who suffer for his name's sake (Rev. ii. 10).

Even in the days of his flesh, and before he was revealed as the Son of God with power by resurrection and change into the divine nature, he declared himself to be "the resurrection and the life," and gave proof of the validity of his claim in the raising of Lazarus. And when he was himself raised and glorified God gave "assurance to all men" that he was the Life-giver of His appointment. Hence we look with confidence for the birth of the nation in a day.

It is Jerusalem the exalted, hereafter to be revealed, that is the subject of the prophecy when it says, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her." This we have already seen from ch. liv. interpreted by Paul in Gal. iv. 26. She is "the mother of us all," says the apostle, that is, of the true "children of promise" who alone are counted for the seed. The rival city, Rome, is a mother also, and has her children (Rev. xvii.), whose rejoicing terminates where the other begins. When this rival "city" is destroyed with her children, there is great rejoicing among the "children of promise," as it is written: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. xviii. 20).

Roman Babylon has made Christendom drunk with her doctrine just as ancient Babylon made the nations mad of old (Jer. li. 7), so that even some of the kings of Judah were transformed into bloodthirsty maniacs. But the day seen afar off by Isaiah and the prophets draws on, and great will be the sobering the world will get.

The nature of the salvation that the "holy apostles and prophets" and all their brethren will enjoy is here alluded to in these words: "And when ye see this your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb" (v. 14). This is too much for Babylon, ancient or modern. They have no faith in so tangible a salvation, but go mumbling on in their cups about "shades," and "immortal souls," and "hades," and "paradise" of their inventions. But against all this there stands the example of the Lord Jesus himself, whose heart rejoiced in the day of resurrection, and whose bones flourished like an herb, and who said to his astonished disciples: "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet that it is I MYSELF: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not *flesh and bones* as ye see me have" (Luke xxiv. 39).

When the children of the resurrection are made "like him," then judgment will be given to these "saints of the most high," and they will "execute the judgments written;" for "this honour have *all his saints*" (Psa. cxlix. 9). By these fiery judgments the

apostacy will at length be destroyed out of the earth, "For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many."

"They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens behind one (*tree*) in the midst, eating swines' flesh and the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. For *I know their works and their thoughts*: it shall come and I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory" (v. 17, 18).

The allusion is to the current idolatry copied from the nations. The R.V. margin says "One tree or Asherah, see Deut. xvi. 21." The commandment in this passage runs as follows: "Thou shalt not plant thee an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up a pillar (marg. *obelisk*); which the Lord thy God hateth." In the preface the R.V. explains that "The Hebrew word *Asherah*, which is uniformly and wrongly rendered 'grove' in the Authorised Version, most probably denotes the wooden symbol of a goddess." Thus we understand how Gideon cut down the "grove" by night (Judges vi. 27); and how Manasseh transgressed as before stated.

The fashions change, but the principle remains. The Lord Jesus, who takes up the divine proclamation, "I know thy works," in each of the epistles to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. ii., iii.), rebukes in Pergamos and Thyatira the "doctrine of Balaam" and that of "Jezebel," *i.e.*, the idolatry and abomination that was the perpetuation of these ancient principles and practices. The modern equivalents of the ancient "groves" and "pillars" are crucifixes and crosses, and pictures of the Madonna, who is Christendom's goddess or "Queen of Heaven." It is on record beforehand that the crimes of the Roman apostacy "reach unto heaven;" and that in "Great Babylon" "was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Rev. xviii.). And every student of history is well aware that there never could have been in Israel or elsewhere in human form, greater devils than were some of the Popes of Rome. If there be a little more liberty in the earth now, it

is because the time is up for the most effective "practice" of the Power. The Temporal Power fell in 1870, since which time there has been a little breathing space. But the principles remain, and although a wave of anticlericalism is sweeping over Europe, Satan cannot cast out Satan, and it remains for the Lord to do it as he has promised he will.

Isaiah does not here detail the incidents of the struggle. He passes over that in general terms, and speaks of God's message from Zion by the hands of a remnant that escapes:—"I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations to Tarshish, Pul and Lud that draw the bow, to Tubal (LXX., and Mosoch and to Thobel), and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory, and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles."

Dr. Thomas treats the phrase "that draw the bow" as a metaphor, equivalent to "that sound the truth," or "sounders of the truth," after the examples of 2 Sam. i. 18; Psa. lxiv. 3; Jer. ix. 3; Hab. iii. 9; Rev. vi. 2—*Eureka*, vol. ii., p. 130. It may be so. Or, if the Septuagint be right, the original text must have been somewhat different, and *Moschi* should be a proper name, Meshech, which is one of the nations mentioned in Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix. In any case the meaning is clear, only in the latter the geographical area seems to be more extended, even unto the remote dominions of the King of the North. But however we may construe it, it is certain, as is here revealed in another verse (18), that "all nations shall come and see God's glory."

And they then do what they would not dream of doing at present, namely, bring the scattered Jews, the national "brethren" of the prophets, out of all nations by many routes and various means, to God's holy mountain Jerusalem, "for an offering to the Lord." This is what Isaiah had already described in ch. xviii. as "a present to the Lord of Hosts" in the morning of Messiah's day. This is the end of the present Zionist movement. The Jews themselves do not and cannot bring it about. They can only providentially pave the way for divine interference, as in the days

of the exodus of old. They are frightened of offending the nations; but God is not. If only they could see what the prophets saw! But they will not till they see the Lord with his wounded hands and feet (Zech. xiii. 6). Then they will mourn and repent.

“And I will *also* take of them for priests, for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” This “*also*” implies another class of priests and Levites who have already been spoken of in chapter lxi. They are the saints who, in the day of Christ, are made “kings and priests” with him (Rev. v. 10). They “reign with him a thousand years” in immortal honour and glory. Under them is the mortal order of priesthood more particularly defined in Ezekiel xliv. They are the representatives of the class that ministered unto the house of Israel before their idols (v. 12). Therefore they are degraded from the highest service of the temple in the day of Christ. They “bear their shame” in that they are not permitted to “come near” to God “in the most holy.” They minister unto the people. Like the people, they marry and die. “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok,” who were faithful in ages past when Israel went astray, and in the day of Christ, are like him “clothed with salvation” —these come near unto God to minister (Ezek. xliv. 15, 16). Thus in the order of the temple service there is memorialised in a striking way the faithfulness of those who “endured unto the end” in obedience like their Lord in times of great apostacy; and the unfaithfulness of those who took the broad way to destruction, and who, having been “turned into *sheol*” (many of them perhaps a second time), leave behind them only this memorial in their surviving representatives of later generations.

And so all flesh comes to worship before the Lord. “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” A visible Gehenna tempers the goodness of God with the severity necessary, as all experience shows, to uphold the lesson

of His divine supremacy. The Lord Jesus refers to this in the much misunderstood language of Mark ix. 43-50. His doctrine is that any cause of stumbling should be removed—hand, or foot, or eye—so that one might enter into life rather than “into Gehenna fire where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” The fire takes hold of “carcasses,” not “immortal souls,” and the alternatives are life and death (*i.e.*, the second death). It is not a contrast between the life of an immortal soul in the bliss of heaven and that of an immortal soul in the eternal agonies of the traditional “hell.” In the Apocalypse, where the Lord again reproduces the figure, he says that all transgressors “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, *which is the second death*” (Rev. xxi. 8). There is a pre-millennial “lake of fire,” and a post-millennial, but the principle is the same. And there is a special “judgment of Gehenna,” indicated in Isaiah’s prophecy, of which perhaps the case of Achan may be taken as an illustration, as well as those of Nadab and Abihu, and Ananias and Sapphira. It will be terrible enough. All the judgments enumerated struck terror into the survivors; and so it will be again; but the aim is beneficent. God delights not in the death of the wicked. He declares He has no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth (Ezek. xviii. 23, 32), much less in their supposed eternal tormentation. And the severity illustrated in the object lesson of the fallen carcasses of the transgressors has only correction and life as its object. It is really what earth is crying for without knowing it. “When thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”



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